President’s message

Coming up: 2012

2012 and beyond will pose more challenges for CUPE health care members. Our collective agreement expires March 31, 2012.

You’ve told us your issues for this next bargaining round through our membership polling, proposal gathering process, and bargaining conference held November 14-16.

Bargaining tours to present the proposal package to the membership will begin in February 2012.

While we expect that health employers and SAHO will come to the next bargaining table with a view to having full and fair discussion of the issues and conclude a fair agreement in a timely manner, we need to prepare for all possibilities.

Preparing to bargain

Essential services agreements will need to be negotiated in 2012. It is a requirement of the act.

Negotiating these agreements is a major undertaking for CUPE health care. CUPE National is funding ten full-time member organizers to help gather the necessary information in order to negotiate these agreements. Our member organizers, with the assistance local union representatives, will be holding union meetings and interviewing members about essential services over the next several weeks.

CUPE National has also hired an additional servicing representative to deal solely with health care grievances, during this exceptionally busy time.

Now that the Saskatchewan Party government is re-elected to a second term, it is possible we may see more legislative changes that negatively affect trade union members.

The fight continues through our charter challenge over the government’s essential services legislation and trade union act amendments.

We also are pursuing our unfair labour practice charges against SAHO and the health regions for the way they conducted bargaining during the last round.

Gord Campbell, President
CUPE Health Care Council

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Controversy continues over for-profit clinics

The controversy continues over the government and health region’s use of for-profit surgical clinics.

- **Omni sues health region**: Omni Surgery Centre, a for-profit clinic in Regina, filed a lawsuit against the Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region in October, after it failed to win a multi-year contract from the health region to perform more surgeries. The health region gave the contract to Surgical Centres Inc, a company which operates for-profit clinics in Alberta and B.C. Omni contends it was unfairly treated by the process and says it stands to lose more than $10 million.

- **Health region “reconciles” surgical data**: In November, CUPE issued a news release criticizing the government and the Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region for using for-profit clinics. Citing data on the government’s surgical website, CUPE noted the overall number of surgeries performed in the health region have dropped, not increased in the 11 months since Omni began operating. What was the response? The Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region changed all of the surgical data on the government’s website in November, retroactively for more than two years. The numbers now show the overall number of surgeries performed in the health region have dropped, not increased in the 11 months since Omni began operating. What was the response? The Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region changed all of the surgical data on the government’s website in November, retroactively for more than two years. The numbers now show the overall number of surgeries performed in the health region have dropped, not increased in the 11 months since Omni began operating. When asked to explain how this could happen, a health ministry spokesperson said the health region conducted “a reconciliation” in October and the numbers went up!

- **Health region sees no conflict**: Then in December, the head of surgery at the Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region, Mark O’Grady, accepted a second position as medical director for the Surgical Centres Inc – the for-profit clinic that secured the contract in Regina. CUPE cried foul, stating it was a huge conflict of interest. Although O’Grady resigned his new job with SCI a few days later, the health region said it could see no conflict of interest.

For more information, check out our website: keephealthcarepublic.ca

Season’s Greetings to CUPE Health Care Providers:

As 2011 draws to a close, I wish each of you a peaceful Holiday Season and all the best for 2012.

Remember, your work puts the “care” in health care.

In solidarity,

Paul Moist
CUPE National President

Once again the festive season is upon us. As the end of 2011 approaches, we have cause to reflect on the events of the past year and to celebrate our accomplishments, great and small, both personally and professionally.

We look forward to a New Year of peace and prosperity within our own lives and the lives of others.

No matter how you celebrate the season, the CUPE Health Care Council Executive & National Staff Representatives wish you and your families the best of the season and a happy, healthy New Year.

In solidarity,

Gordon Campbell
CUPE Health Care Council President

My very best wishes for the holiday season to all CUPE members working tirelessly to ensure Saskatchewan citizens’ health every day, every season.

Aina Kagis
CUPE Regional Director

Best wishes for a warm and safe holiday; and the best that good employment may bring you and yours for 2012.

Tom Graham
CUPE Saskatchewan President
Government to launch "shared services"

The government’s new provincial shared services organization (SSO) is set to open in 2012.

As its name suggests, the new shared services organization will bulk buy supplies for health regions.

But “shared services” goes far beyond purchasing supplies. The new organization also plans to take over responsibility for delivery of non-clinical services – sometimes referred to as “back office functions” – such as finance and administration, human resources and information technology. The Employers have not yet announced which services will become shared services.

Will other services such as dietary or laundry follow? That’s a worry if it means job losses in smaller communities.

Plans are underway to hold special membership meetings in each CUPE local to talk more about our concerns with shared services. Watch for details.

How much did SAHO waste?

CUPE health care providers are still seeking answers about how much SAHO spent last year on its massive advertising campaign, aimed at pressuring health care providers into accepting a poor contract offer.

SAHO’s campaign included a barrage of newspaper and radio ads, workplace posters – that were even posted on washroom stalls in health facilities – and letters to members’ homes. That campaign angered members who complained they felt besieged by the SAHO’s propaganda.

SAHO’s chief executive offer Susan Antosh told the Leader-Post in June 2010, the association had spent “about $200,00 on advertising related to its final offer,” a claim CUPE called “unbelievable.”

SAHO’s annual financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010, obtained by CUPE earlier this year, show over $471,000 was spent on “advertising and promotional” – and that’s only to the end of March 31 before SAHO’s campaign heated up. The ad budget reflects at 836 per cent increase over the year before, when SAHO spent $62,700.

Government to subsidize “for-profit” care homes

In its Speech from the Throne on December 6, the government announced plans to subsidize seniors in private, personal care homes.

The Seniors Personal Care Home Benefit will subsidize the difference between a senior’s monthly income and the cost of a personal care home.

According to the throne speech, this benefit would amount to over $3,000 annually in 2012, increasing to over $4,000 in 2015.

Meanwhile, there is no limit on what personal care homes can charge residents. The Saskatchewan government estimates personal care home fees range from $1,000 to $3,500 per month.

The throne speech repeated the government’s commitment to build 13 new long-term care facilities under a new funding formula where the government assumes 80 per cent of the cost. That’s good news. The Wall government postponed funding for these facilities in 2009, due to a budget shortfall.

Given that one of every seven people in the province is over 65, the Saskatchewan government needs to invest in many more public, long-term care facilities.
What should SAHO do?

At the CUPE Health Care Council Bargaining Conference in November, members were asked to share their thoughts about what SAHO should do differently this bargaining round on a couple of posters! Here are some of the results:

How should SAHO treat us this time?

- With dignity and sincerity
- Treat us as the way they would want to be treated
- With respect
- Share the wealth with the people of the province
- Share the wealth of potash with CUPE members. We deserve it.
- Fairly and equitably
- Like we are really valued
- Like people
- Bargain in good faith.
- Do not bargain in the public and media.
- With respect and dignity.
- Like we are an important part of health care.
- Pay us for the jobs we do.
- Treat us like they want to be treated.

What would you ask SAHO to do differently this time ’round?

- Stop trying to influence members.
- Get the job done – in a timely manner.
- Bargain without running to the government on every issue.
- We do the work so give us what we need!
- Bargain fairly!
- Listen
- Stop acting like little kids and grow up.
- Bargain in good faith with us.
- Stop the bullying.
- When you meet to consider how to save money, consider the gross waste incurred at the bargaining table.
- Acknowledge that the jobs we do are an important part of the health care team.
Preparing for bargaining

The CUPE Health Care Council Bargaining Conference was held at the Regina Inn in mid-November. Over 140 members representing the five CUPE health care locals attended the conference with the goal of reviewing, debating, and voting on health care proposals that will be taken to the bargaining table in 2012.

The lively debate and in-depth discussions resulted in the creation of a new bargaining proposal package.

Guest speakers at the conference included Tom Graham, President of CUPE Saskatchewan, who updated the members on provincial happenings and goals, and Cheryl Stadnichuk, researcher for CUPE, who presented her findings on the current landscape for health care bargaining.

Larry Hubich, President of the SFL, also brought greetings and inspiring words for members. CUPE staff rep Suzanne Posyniak spoke to participants about essential services and an employer/government plan to create a shared services organization within health care.

Kagis new CUPE Regional Director

Congratulations to Aina Kagis, the newly appointed Regional Director for CUPE in Saskatchewan!

Aina has been a lifelong social activist and came to CUPE through her activism at the Saskatoon Public Library while a member of CUPE 2669. During that time, she also worked for three years on the CUPE Saskatchewan Executive.

Aina was first hired as an organizer by CUPE in 1993, and then as a National Representative in 1994. She has represented members in all sectors in her years with CUPE in Regina.

Aina’s achievements are many, but one thing of which she is proud is her work with the Pay Equity Coalition of Saskatchewan, from 1991 to 2003.

While she loved working as a rep, Aina is now looking forward to her new role as Regional Director.

CUPE elects new National Secretary-Treasurer

At the CUPE National Convention held in Vancouver October 30 – November 4, Charles Fleury was elected to be our next National Secretary Treasurer.

Brother Fleury came to CUPE from Hydro Quebec and held many offices within CUPE Local 1500 and CUPE in Quebec. He has been active in CUPE for three decades.

Charles Fleury (left) with CUPE National President Paul Moist.
Bed closures remains hot topic

By Laurie Shiels

Sun Country Health District has been cutting back on the number of beds in new and current facilities. One of the communities, Wawota, has started to speak up, making their health district answerable to the people of the area. They have also brought their concerns to the government. Due to their activism, news has come that two of the five closed beds will be reinstated, but there will be delays in doing so.

Moose Mountain Lodge, in Carlyle also received notice that ten beds which had been temporarily closed would be permanently closed. It is not too late to fight this change, but it requires community involvement.

Blueprints for new facilities in the Sun Country towns of Radville and Kipling show the buildings will be smaller than those currently in use. There will be fewer beds for our seniors, and less access to health care for residents of the area. It is unclear at this time what this may mean for staffing and jobs.

There is also talk of two more buildings being developed in Sun Country. Estevan needs a new long-term care home and Weyburn is in critical need of a new hospital. It is unclear what size these facilities will be, but the trend is for smaller. I hope that the facilities will suit the public need. We are often touted as a “have” province by the Premier. I think that some of that “have” should go toward taking care of our seniors in public long-term care homes, and improving publically provided health care in the province.

Did you know?

By Donna Sarich

Christmas or New Years Day off

Article 28.03 indicates that an Employee shall have either Christmas Day or New Year’s Day off alternately, insofar as the operation of the facility permits, and upon agreement between the Local of the Union and the Employer.

Family illness leave

Employees are allowed to access time away from work, without loss of pay, where a family member is ill and requires their attention. Article 30.07 of the CBA goes into further detail about this leave.

Leave for serious illness

An employee shall be granted up to two (2) consecutive working days, without loss of pay, to attend to a seriously ill member of the immediate family, for whom the employee has primary care responsibilities.