



FRONTLINE WORKER

21 NEWS / VIEWS
Union Work – Union Proud

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Membership Meeting: 2nd Tuesday of each Month (5:00 pm – Italian Club – 2148 Connaught St.)

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Newsletter

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**CUPE National
Representative**
Aina Kagis

Pension News ...

Regina Union Members step-up to Support Pension Plan

January 2011 - CUPE and other groups representing employees in the Regina Civic Pension Plan sent a strong message to City Council when they voted to support a contribution rate increase. At last month's meeting, 12 of the 15 of the unions and associations in attendance voted to accept the rate increase. Two out of three dissenting groups represent civic managers.

"The vote clearly shows members are willing to step-up and pay more to protect their defined pension benefit," says CUPE 7 President Lorne Chow, who represents Regina inside city workers. "They want City Council to do the same," he adds. The Regina Civic Pension Plan, like many defined benefit plans across the country, is facing a serious funding shortfall due in large part to the financial crisis in 2008 and reduced expectations for investment returns.

The employers in the plan – which include the City of Regina, the Regina General Hospital, the Regina Public Library and the Regina Public School Board – want to deal with the deficit by replacing the existing plan with a vastly inferior one. But the employers' proposal is not finding much support among the plan's 3,900 members. More than two-thirds belong to CUPE.

"If we lose these benefits, we'll never see them again," says CUPE 21 member John Gangl, who represents Regina outside city workers around the pension table. "That's why members are prepared to pay more to safeguard the plan."

The contribution increases, recommended by the plan's actuary, will see rates rise to 12.38% of earnings for both employees and employers up to the Yearly Maximum Pensionable Earnings (YMPE) and 18.34% on earnings above the YMPE.

"It's going to be tough because a lot of my co-workers are single income earners who have to stretch their pay cheques," says Janet Craig, who represents CUPE 1594 members at the Regina Public Library. "But their pension benefit is all they have for retirement and they're determined to keep it."

Although the employers are complaining the required rate increases are "an unacceptable burden," the civic unions suggest City Council needs to view the increase as an investment in the civic workforce.

"If City Council can find the money to give Mosaic – which had profits of \$2.35 billion last year – a \$1.6 million tax exemption for moving 150 jobs here, it can find the money to support almost 4,000 employees who have made serving this community their life's work," says CUPE staff representative **Aina Kagis**.

The Headlines

Contract Out Committee

Yes – Let’s Talk about Trash ... a blast from the past ... (Brother Greg Moyer – Contract Out Chair)

Garbage and recycling back in-house in Port Moody BC

Garbage decision will cost taxpayers - Coquitlam NOW Friday, February 13, 2009

Local newspapers have recently reported that Coquitlam homeowners will face a 49% increase for garbage, recycling and yard waste pickup this year. Reporters in both local newspapers explain that this high cost accounts for the new supplier contract costs, rising from \$1.9 million a year to \$5.2 million.

Council failed Coquitlam residents by hiring a new private contractor instead of bringing solid waste collection in-house. This shortsighted decision will cost Coquitlam residents an increase of \$3.2 million each year. Privatizing public service not only compromises service quality, it means increased costs for residents.

Ken Landgraaf - President, CUPE Local 386 - Coquitlam Civic Workers

Garbage and recycling collection was a publicly-delivered service June 29, in Port Moody BC, for the first time in ten years. CUPE 825 members held a pancake breakfast on the first day of the new contracted in service to celebrate.

"Our members care very deeply about our community and the residents. Quality public services and CUPE are one and the same," said CUPE 825 president Maria Wahl. "The residents of Port Moody will finally receive the same quality in solid waste as they have become accustomed to in all of the services that CUPE members provide."

Claude Généreux (CUPE National Secretary Treasurer) was on hand to congratulate the local, Port Moody residents and council. "Bringing waste collection back in-house controlled by the city, done by city workers, means that it will be completely public and fully accountable," he said.

Nova Scotia Highway Workers' Union welcomes asphalt initiative

February 4, 2011

The Nova Scotia Highway Workers' Union is welcoming the provincial government's initiative to bring some of the province's asphalt and chip seal work in house. CUPE Local 1867 president Gareth Drinnan says, "Our union has been telling previous governments for years that our members can do quality work at a reasonable cost. We are glad to see the current government is interested in thinking outside of the box a little, especially if it will mean cost savings for taxpayers.

"Nova Scotia highway workers and the Department of Transportation are more than capable of getting this work done and saving money in the process. In fact, we have slowly been bringing many aspects of our work back in house with good success," says Drinnan.

CUPE Nova Scotia president Danny Cavanagh, meanwhile, says, "We are a little disappointed, but not surprised, at the reaction from the Road Builders Association who don't seem to be too interested in saving taxpayers money."

"Twenty years ago the province had its own asphalt plant, which produced a world class product. Previous governments chose to contract out that work and Nova Scotians should be asking themselves if the quality of our roads has gotten any better since that happened," says Cavanagh.

Fiacco and crew give Mosaic 5 year free ride

So, does a huge global multi-national corporation really need Regina taxpayers and individual home-owners to pick up the property tax tab for them? How can any politician say they are acting responsibly and in the interests of the citizens when they hand over 1.5 million dollars of taxpayers' money to a corporation that never expected to receive the grant in the first place?

Don't let anyone spin it to you in any other way, Mosaic had already decided to set up their corporate headquarters in a new downtown Regina office tower before the brain trust over at Regina City Council got generous and voted to give them an early Christmas present.

According to an article in the December 15, 2010 Regina Leader-Post, the city, school boards, and libraries will all feel the pinch so that Mosaic corporate executives can enjoy their nice new offices. "Mosaic is to save about \$326,000 in taxes annually for five years. The city's annual share works out to nearly \$128,000 a year and \$134,000 for schools and about \$64,000 to the library."

A check of Mosaic's October 2010 investor fact sheet from their website will reveal that the company is doing quite nicely already. In fact, their net assets are stated to be \$13.1 billion. The President and CEO of Mosaic is James T. Prokopanko. According to Forbes, his base salary for 2010 was \$933,333.00 plus stock options of \$2.4 million + other compensation for a total of \$6,255,588.00. Not bad, eh?

So there you have it, this company can afford to pay their CEO more than \$6 million a year, but Fiacco, Fougere, and the rest of them, think they need a tax-payer funded subsidy and a 5 year free-ride. Has your street been plowed yet? p.s. Mosaic was formed in 2004 by IMC Global and Cargill. Cargill holds 64% of Mosaic shares.

SFL - Saskatchewan Federation of Labour

Mayor apologizes over snow removal

POSTMEDIA NEWS; EDMONTON JOURNAL - JANUARY 29, 2011

It was a very Canadian political moment. Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel said he's sorry for the city's handling of snow removal and vowed to do better in the future.

"I want to thank our citizens and apologize to them . . . for not doing the type of job should have done," in what has become a daily news conference as of late on the state of Edmonton's streets. The city says the cost of snow clearing this month in Edmonton will probably top \$10 million, approximately twice the normal amount.

More than 19,000 people have telephoned the city's service line about the snow since the near record series of storms started January 6th. While the mayor praised the grader, plow and other equipment operators, many working long hours with little time off, he said the city should have decided sooner to clear residential roads to the pavement. He also said it hadn't been made clear when areas would be cleared.

Vancouver mayor finds new respect for sanitation workers when he walks a day in their shoes

Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson found out what it's like to work collecting garbage in a Vancouver neighbourhood when he appeared on an episode of CBC series *Make the Politician Work*. Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson steps out of City Hall and onto the streets to collect his city's garbage.

On a mission to make Vancouver the greenest city in the world by 2020, for two days he opts to tackle the city's mountains of trash head-on. In an interview in the *Vancouver Province*, Robertson said the experience gave him a new respect for the people working on the front lines of the city's waste-disposal system. "They're tough jobs," said Robertson who spent the day picking up garbage and recycling in a Vancouver neighbourhood.

General Information & Updates

- ▶ **Retirements:** Bernie Blackett, (JR) Jimmy Richardson and George Bajnok. We wish the brothers the best in health and happiness for many years to come.
- ▶ **Local 21 Clothing:** Contact Hugh Bigler at Traffic or attend a General Membership meeting to place an order for your clothing selection(s).
- ▶ **Local 21 Website:** It's taking a bit of time but we hope to have it on line in the next couple of weeks or so. We are uploading information - some sections will still be under construction.

The current attitude towards organized labour within our provincial and civic governments is troubling to say the least --- A low rated local morning radio program regularly preaches its disdain for unions. I feel it is necessary to include the following article in this edition of our newsletter. I do not know who the author is, but I thank him or her for putting it together, and now I would like to share it with you. I believe it speaks for itself.

Wade Zalopski – Recording Secretary

Unions Are No Good; Nothing But Trouble Makers? Nonsense

For many weeks now, I have been reading the paper and listening to radio talk shows containing statements made by individuals who believe that Unions are “no good” and are “nothing but trouble makers”.

History is the best educator and it reminds all of us what working conditions were like for generations of the past. Looking back in Canada's labour history, one can clearly observe that many rights and benefits that exist today were initially fought for and won by Unions.

The “no good” Unions or “trouble makers” (yes, possibly your parents and grandparents) busted their butts working long hours with minimal wage earnings (with NO benefits) risking their lives daily in unsafe working conditions. It was the Labour movement that was in the forefront of the struggles for public health care and education, minimum wages, holidays and employment conditions.

Unions have also been in the forefront and negotiated issues such as safer working environments, good wages / benefits, weekends off, government pensions, medicare, family allowances, public libraries and medical / dental.

So, to the individuals who believe that Unions are still “no good” and “nothing but trouble makers”, please now remember that it is Unions who fought for and will continue to fight for a better way of life for all, including you.

It was the labor movement that helped secure so much of what we take for granted today. The 40-hour work week, the minimum wage, family leave, health insurance, Social Security, Medicare, retirement plans. The cornerstones of the middle-class security all bear the union label.

President Barack Obama

Accommodation Tip of the Day

Arbitration awards indicate that it is not reasonable for an employer or union to simply override the provisions of a collective agreement in the course of an accommodation without first considering alternatives that respect the provisions of the collective agreement.

Committed to our Community