

# Western Region News

Communications, and Paperworkers Union of Canada

December 2007



## Lockout by SGEU Continues

The dispute between CEP Local 481 and the Saskatchewan, Government and General Employees Union (SGEU) continues today without any sign of a resolution. A short time after the job action started, SGEU President Bob Bymoer personally served CEP with a notice of lock out, making it clear those CEP members were not welcome back at work.

After almost two years at the bargaining table, the employer continued to demand cuts to sick-leave provisions and is offering 0%, 1%, and 2% in wage increases. This at a time when the employer is enjoying a surge in revenues from wage increases bargained for SGEU members, by the same staff who

are now locked out.

Kelly Diebel, President of CEP Local 481 said, "We have not had to resort to job action to settle our agreement for over 30 years. All we



want from our employer is the same thing SGEU members want when they go the bargaining table, a fair settlement." Sister Diebel went on to say, "What makes this very

disheartening is that most of us came from within SGEU and in the course of doing our jobs, we provide service to those members day to day. Many, many of the members of SGEU are our friends. It is the leadership that has lost its compass."

CEP members have been leafleting government offices in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert to inform SGEU members of the action by the leadership of their union. Most were surprised to hear of the dispute as SGEU is not keeping their members informed about the lock out.

Local 481, originally a CLC direct-chartered local, joined CEP in 2003.

## A Bad Week in the Forestry Sector

"The citizens of Prince Albert must feel such a sense of betrayal upon hearing the news that newly elected Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall has scuttled the agreement to reopen the mill." Don MacNeil, Vice President for the Communications Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada said.

The union was informed by Domtar last week that the government's action gives them no option but to withdraw from efforts to negotiate a new collective agreement and that they are not prepared to continue in their efforts to reopen the mill.

The company and the union were optimistic that once the election was over and the new government had a chance to take a close look at the

memorandum of understanding, that they would rethink their position on it.

MacNeil went on to say "It saddens me to hear this news. There was so much hard work done by the previous government, the Forestry Task Force, the community, the union and the company. We worked from day one to get this mill reopened. Getting the mill up and running was a huge part of the plan to renew the forestry industry in Saskatchewan. This is a real blow to scores of northern communities as well as the city of Prince Albert."

In addition to the bad news in Prince Albert last week, AbitibiBowater Inc., created last month from the merger of North America's two largest newsprint makers, said it will close mills in the U.S. and Canada amid a slump in demand for paper.

The move will decrease the company's

production capacity by about 1 million metric tons and will indefinitely idle papermills at Donnacona, Quebec, and Mackenzie, British Columbia, as well as two sawmills at Mackenzie.

The town of Mackenzie will be hit hard. In addition to the bad news from AbitibiBowater that same week, Canfor announced the mill in Mackenzie will drop from three to two shifts, laying off 74 people. This is in addition to the 150 jobs which were cut earlier this year in an effort to save the Mackenzie mill from indefinite closure.

Western Region News is produced in the CEP Regina Office. The editor is Gord Hunter. Please send submissions to [gfhcep@sasktel.net](mailto:gfhcep@sasktel.net)

## A Message from Don MacNeil



I always have such mixed feelings as December rolls around. As our days grow shorter, people start to decorate their homes with lights, stores are crowded with shoppers and Christmas tree lots begin to spring up all over, it is easy to forget that December brings with it the memory of 14 women murdered on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1989 at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal for no other reason than because of their gender. December 6 is the *National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women* in Canada.

As well as commemorating the 14 young women who died that day, December 6 represents an opportunity for Canadians to reflect on the issue of violence against women in our society. It is also an opportunity to think about the women and girls for whom violence is a daily reality. It is a day on which we should be thinking about concrete actions to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

December is also a time when we compare our lot as Canadians to others in the world less fortunate than ourselves, we are struck by our own affluence. There is an article in this newsletter about a way we can all help to provide free rice to those in need. I urge you to seek out the website and to do your part.

This season is a time for friends and family. I hope you get the chance to spend time with those near and dear to you. With that, I would like to take the time on behalf of Don Boucher, Wendy Sol and I to wish all of CEP, the members, our staff and their families a great holiday season and the best of the New Year.

### Free Rice

Living day to day in affluent North America it is easy to forget that every single day about 25,000 people die from hunger or hunger-related causes, most of them children.

There is an easy way for you to help. If you visit [www.freerice.com](http://www.freerice.com) and play the word game, each correct answer you give provides 20 free grains of rice to people who need it.

The rice you donate makes a huge difference to the person who receives it. To a mother or father watching a loved child die in their arms from hunger, the rice you donate is more precious than anything in the world.

The rice is distributed by the United Nations World Food Program (WFP). This organization is the world's largest food aid agency, working with over 1,000 other organizations in over 75 countries. Wherever possible, the World Food Program buys food locally to support local farmers and the local economy. This helps hungry people become self-reliant so they can escape hunger for good.



For more news please visit [www.cep.ca](http://www.cep.ca) and follow the link to the Western Region

### Political Sea Change in Sask

After garnering just 49% of the popular vote the Saskatchewan Party, a mix of old Tories, Liberals and Reformers, swept to power, taking 38 of the 58 seats in the Saskatchewan legislature and handing the leadership of the Province over to a new Premier, Brad Wall.

After 16 years as the government, the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party find themselves sitting in opposition. They will have their work cut out for them in their new role as the new government attempts to implement their right wing agenda.

The new government has already announced that they intend to bring in essential services legislation and will rework the *Trade Union Act* as it pertains to organizing. Some of the best labour legislation in Canada is about to be changed to favour business interests.

Despite the fact that the province is running a surplus of about \$527 million, Wall says Saskatchewan is in financial trouble, a sure sign that cuts to services are coming.

CEP members worked hard during the campaign to support the NDP, but Don MacNeil, Western Region Vice President said, "The people of Saskatchewan have spoken and we accept their decision. It won't be easy but, the challenge for us, will be to find ways to work with this new government that will bring a much different agenda to the table."

### Gib Todd will be Missed

Early in November we were saddened to learn of the passing of our friend, colleague and retired National Representative, Gib Todd.

Gib was born in Elie, Manitoba but lived in several places on the prairies before settling in

Lanigan Saskatchewan where he found employment as an industrial mechanic at the potash mine.

He stayed there over 20 years and became

very involved in his local union, ECWU Local 922. Gib had a keen interest in the labour movement and served the local for many years. In 1990 he was one of the first graduates of the University of Saskatchewan's Labour Studies program.

Shortly after he graduated he was hired as a National Rep. He and his wife Diane moved to Calgary where he negotiated contracts and serviced locals for 18 years, a job he loved. In 2004, Gib returned to Saskatchewan to work out of the new CEP Saskatoon office.

Gib retired in October 2005. He really enjoyed his new found freedom, being able to spend time to enjoy his family and topursue his passions and interests. Gib passed away suddenly and unexpectedly at St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon on Sunday, November 4, 2007.

