

Economic Indicators and Labour News

October 2005

Labour Force Participation – Saskatchewan (September)¹

The Saskatchewan seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for September 2005 was 6.0 percent, which is an increase of 0.8 percentage points from the August 2005 rate of 5.2 percent and 0.3 percentage points higher than the September 2004 rate of 5.7 percent. The Canada seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for September 2005 was 6.7 percent, which is 0.1 percentage points lower than August 2005 and 0.3 percentage points lower than the September 2004 level of 6.7 percent.

The unadjusted unemployment rate for Saskatchewan for September 2005 was 5.5 percent. This is a 0.2 percentage points decrease from the August 2005 rate of 5.7 percent and is 0.6 percentage points higher than the September 2004 level of 4.9 percent. Canada's unadjusted unemployment rate for September 2005 was 6.2 percent. This is 0.9 percentage points lower than the August 2005 level of 7.1 percent. Canada's unadjusted employment rate in September 2004 was 6.5 percent.

	September 2005	August 2005	September 2004
Labour Force	507,700	521,700	508,100
Employed	479,700	492,200	483,000
<i>Full-time</i>	386,400	411,200	387,600
<i>Part-time</i>	93,400	80,900	95,400
Unemployed	28,000	29,500	25,100
Unemployment Rate (%)	5.5	5.7	4.9
Unemployment Rate (%) Seasonally Adjusted	6.0	5.2	5.7
Participation Rate (%)	67.8	69.7	68.1

¹ Government of Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics – Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey

Employment in Saskatchewan fell by 4,000 in September, continuing the weakness observed since the start of the year. The largest declines in September were in retail and wholesale trade, and in manufacturing. These losses were only partly offset by gains in educational services. Alberta had the lowest seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Canada in September at 4.1 percent. Saskatchewan was fourth at 6.0 percent, behind Manitoba at 4.8 percent and British Columbia at 5.7 percent unemployment rate.

Regina had the sixth lowest unemployment rate at 5.3 percent among 28 cities surveyed for the month of September. Saskatoon's 5.4 percent unemployment rate was tied with Winnipeg for the seventh lowest. Calgary posted the lowest unemployment rate at 3.7 percent.

Average Hourly Wages – Saskatchewan (September)²

	September 2004		September 2005		September 2004 to September 2005
	Number of employees* (thousands)	Average Hourly wage (\$)	Number of employees* (thousands)	Average hourly wage (\$)	% change in hourly wage
15 years and over	386.8	16.91	380.9	17.54	3.7
15 to 24 years	79.9	10.01	77.7	10.46	4.5
25 to 54 years	264.8	18.62	258.0	19.48	4.6
55 years and over	42.2	19.30	45.2	18.59	-3.7
Men	195.1	18.29	190.3	18.71	2.3
Women	191.6	15.52	190.6	16.37	5.5
Full-time	309.0	18.16	304.9	18.74	3.2
Part-time	77.7	11.95	76.00	12.70	6.3
Union Coverage* ¹	133.0	20.20	136.8	20.41	1.0
No union coverage* ²	253.8	15.19	244.1	15.93	4.9
Permanent job* ³	339.5	17.36	332.0	18.02	3.8
Temporary job* ⁴	47.3	13.72	48.8	14.25	3.9
Management occupations	25.4	26.26	19.7	27.60	5.1

² Statistics Canada

*¹ Employees who are members of a union and employees who are not union members but who are covered by a collective agreement or a union contract.

*² Employees who are not members of a union or not covered by a collective agreement or a union contract.

*³ A permanent job is one that is expected to last as long as the employee wants it, given that business conditions permit. That is, there is no predetermined termination date.

*⁴ A temporary job has a predetermined end date, or will end as soon as a specified project is completed. Includes seasonal jobs; temporary, term or contract jobs including work done through a temporary help agency; casual jobs; and other temporary work.

The Consumer Price Index – Saskatchewan, Canada, Regina, Saskatoon (September)³

In Saskatchewan, the All-items CPI increased 0.5 percent between August 2005 and September 2005. The Canada All-items Index increased by 0.9 percent. Regina's CPI increased by 0.4 percent and Saskatoon's CPI increased by 0.5 percent. The increase in Saskatchewan was primarily due to the increases in the prices for gasoline, fuel oil and other fuel, women's clothing and men's clothing. Prices also rose for furniture, sugar and confectionery and child care and domestic services. Moderating these increases were price decreases for fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, preserved fruit and fruit preparations and other food preparations. Prices also decreased for fresh or frozen beef, processed meat and non-alcoholic beverages.

	Index		Percent change	
	Sept 2005 (1992=100)	Aug 2005 (1992=100)	August 2005 to September 2005	September 2004 to September 2005
Saskatchewan				
All-items	133.6	132.9	0.5	3.0
Food	123.2	125.5	-1.8	-0.4
Shelter	142.6	142.0	0.4	3.8
Transportation	152.7	148.9	2.6	9.1
Health & Personal Care	116.2	115.8	0.3	1.0
All-items excluding energy	127.2	127.4	-0.2	1.2
Energy	202.0	191.2	5.6	18.0
Canada				
All-items	129.1	128.0	0.9	3.4
Food	127.3	128.5	-0.9	2.1
Shelter	125.2	124.4	0.6	3.3
Transportation	157.0	153.1	2.5	9.3
Health & Personal Care	121.1	121.1	0.0	1.6
All-items excluding energy	124.8	124.6	0.2	1.6
Energy	184.2	171.4	7.5	21.4
Regina				
All-items	134.4	133.8	0.4	2.8
Saskatoon				
All-items	132.6	132.0	0.5	3.0

³ Government of Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics – Statistics Canada

Labour News

The following news items are pulled from various sources and have been condensed from their original format. If you would like more information, please visit the respective website to find the full version, or contact Kathy Fiedelleck for a paper copy.

Economy

P.A. dealt huge hit (SK)

(Star Phoenix, October 5, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

The 690 workers at Weyerhaeuser's Prince Albert pulp and paper mill were shocked to learn Tuesday that they'd soon be out of a job...Weyerhaeuser announced the plant closure early Tuesday morning, prior to the opening of the New York Stock Exchange...The loss of nearly 700 high-paying jobs will have a devastating effect in a city the size of Prince Albert, a city of about 40,000. Government officials have struck a task force and are hoping a new buyer will be found. Workers aren't feeling optimistic though... Weyerhaeuser spokesperson Wayne Roznowsky said roughly one-third of the employees work in the section that produces paper, which will close in early January. The remaining staff in the pulp mill will work their last shift sometime next spring...Roznowsky cited oversupply of paper in the world market as the main reason for the closure. The strength of the Canadian dollar also hurt profits, he said. For every penny the dollar increased, the plant's profits decreased by millions of dollars, he said. The plant is also far from Weyerhaeuser's major markets and "is no longer a strategic fit," he said...The Prince Albert mill produces both pulp and office paper, also known as "uncoated free-sheet" paper. It is Weyerhaeuser's second-largest plant in Canada after a Dryden, Ont., operation, which employs 850 people. The Prince Albert plant has received numerous facelifts, with the company spending about \$750 million on it over the years, Roznowsky said. Weyerhaeuser still has partial or complete ownership in a number of smaller Saskatchewan operations in Big River, Hudson Bay, Carrot River and other locations...The closure comes just one week after the hoopla surrounding the grand opening of the provincial government's \$12.7 million Saskatchewan Forest Centre in Prince Albert's downtown. [MLA Eldon] Lautermilch said there are still many unanswered questions, such as the status of the 20-year leases held by Weyerhaeuser on various pieces of land in the province. Mark Partridge, Canada Research Chair on the new rural economy at the University of Saskatchewan, said those 690 jobs are not the only ones that will be lost. There will also be about 400 other job losses in related areas, such as the plant's suppliers. Many towns recover eventually after being dealt such a blow, but it can take five to seven years, he said...

Sask. labour force productivity increase among nation's best (SK)

(Star Phoenix, October 14, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Saskatchewan has shown the second-highest increase in labour productivity in Canada in recent years but continues to lag behind the national average, a new study indicates. That study, by Doug Elliott, the publisher of the Sask Trends Monitor newsletter, shows labour productivity in the province increase by an average of 1.8

per cent between 1987 and 2004. Elliott's study, which is published in the September edition of the newsletter, indicates the average annual productivity increase in Saskatchewan was above the national average of 1.4 per cent in the years that were studied...But the study also indicates Saskatchewan labour productivity continues to lag about seven per cent behind the national average. In a provincial comparison, the Saskatchewan labour force was judged to be more productive than four other provinces but less productive than five others...What labour productivity is really about is capital investment and providing workers with the equipment and technology to work as efficiently as possible, [Elliott] said. Among the other factors that have an impact on labour productivity in a province are the quality of natural resources, the mix of industries, the education and skill level of the workforce, the regulatory environment and the quality of public infrastructure...Elliott said Saskatchewan's heavy reliance on agricultural industries, where the wealth created is low in comparison to the hours worked, is one of the factors that pushes the province's overall productivity rating down.

Labour shortages looming (SK)

(Leader Post, October 17, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Young people leaving the province, baby boomers retiring and a growing economy will all contribute to a skilled worker shortage in Saskatchewan in the very near future, a new report suggests. Saskatchewan as a Place to Work, the third and final installment in the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan's annual financial checkup, says while there was some job creation in the province in 2004 – 4,500 new jobs – total job growth was still less than one per cent. By comparison, Alberta, with three times Saskatchewan's population, created nine times as many new jobs. And Manitoba, with roughly the same population as Saskatchewan, upped their job levels by 20 per cent. Nola Joorisity, CEO of the institute, said Saskatchewan is poised to see more job growth in 2005, particularly in the resource sector...Saskatchewan's employment rate also grew in 2004, to 64.4 per cent from 63.9 per cent, though Joorisity said those gains can be attributed to weak population growth and moderate job growth...And while Saskatchewan's real wages grew by 2.6 per cent to the average equivalent of \$16.33 per hour, the province still ranks last in the western provinces and more than \$1.30 below the national average. Joorisity though said that can be an advantage when it comes to brining in new businesses...The solution to creating jobs, retaining population and increasing wages, she said, hearkens back to the institute's first report, *Saskatchewan as a Place to Invest*, in which they called for reforms to the province's tax structure in order to attract more private sector investment...

Young workers choosing oil and gas industry (SK)

(Leader Post, October 22, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Great people, challenging work, and fun are just some of the benefits that are attracting young people to Saskatchewan's oil and gas industry. Chris Bendfeld and Aaron Patzer, both plant operators with Encana in Webburn, say the industry is full of opportunities for people looking for exciting new careers...As a plant operator, Bendfeld is responsible for monitoring the oil and gas plant and ensuring everything is operating within normal parameters. He also checks equipment such as pumps and compressors to ensure they are working properly...Bendfeld has his fourth level steam ticket which provides him with the education and training to work as a plant

operator...Training is available through a series of options, but in Saskatchewan, many receive their training through the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), which offers a program from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT). Other courses are available through correspondence, but practical experience is required before receiving certification at the various levels. Bendfeld is pleased with his career choice. It provides the opportunity to use new technology, work on a variety of projects, and collaborate with people his own age. The salaries and benefit packages are also strong incentives. With his experience and training, there are many other avenues open to him in the future as well...Patzner has similar praise for the industry...After working in the maintenance yards for a few years, Patzner progressed through the ranks to become a plant operator. He says the ability to move to different positions with [Encana] is a big benefit...

Bargaining

Health

Workers protest length of talks (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 15, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

A demonstration was held Friday in front of the T.C. Douglas Building in Regina to protest the pace of contract negotiations for 25,000 health-care providers in three unions...The contract expired on March 31 of last year and negotiations that began in September 2004 still have not reached the stage where wage increases have been discussed...The unions have experienced frustrations in negotiations with the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations – which represents health districts across the province – in addressing a variety of non-monetary workplace issues...About 100 protesters participated in Friday's noon-hour demonstration...The unions also want to inform the general public about the issues being discussed in the negotiations and to send a message to SAHO that the unions are determined to get those issues resolved...Tonya Duffy, a spokesperson for SAHO, conceded negotiations have been going slowly. But negotiations with all three unions are continuing, Duffy said, adding that SAHO would like to reach contract agreements as quickly as possible...Information released at the demonstration indicated the workers (in addition for their desire for wage increases) have concerns about four main workplace issues including:

- Respectful and fair treatment for all employees;
- No contracting out or privatization of the public health system;
- Healthy workplaces, including improved language about workload, stronger protection against harassment, and solutions to problems about recruitment and retention of employees;
- Improved family and caregiver leave.

SUN, SAHO talks see progress (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 15, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

The president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN) says the issues are narrowing after another round of bargaining this week between the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) and SUN...Talks are on hold until Oct.

25 after the union, which represents 7,900 registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses, tabled its position on outstanding issues including wages, hours of work, health benefits funding and staff development. According to [Rosalee] Longmore, SAHO said it could not respond Thursday or Friday because it had not received an updated mandate from the government. SUN has been in negotiations with SAHO since its contract expired in March.

Education

Teachers vote to return to school

(BCTF, October 23, 2005)

<http://www.bctf.ca/newsreleases/Archive/2005/2005-10-23.html>

Teachers across British Columbia have voted 77% to return to their classrooms tomorrow morning, confident in the knowledge that they have reasserted their rights and raised quality public education to the top of the political agenda. BCTF President Jinny Sims and her Executive Committee voted to recommend acceptance of the settlement package crafted by Vince Ready...Of the 30,427 votes cast, 23,632 were yes and 6,795 were no...B.C.'s 38,000 teachers walked out in protest of Bill 12 on October 7, and maintained picket lines at all public schools throughout the province for the next ten school days. About 25,000 CUPE members who work in the school system demonstrated solid support, along with other co-workers from the IUOE and BCGEU. In addition, thousands of parents, students, and community members joined their teachers on the picket lines and at public rallies...To the surprise of many political commentators, public support for the teachers remained strong even after the strike was declared illegal...Sims assured parents that teachers will be working hard to help students make up for lost time, and she is confident they won't have problems catching up...Sims said teachers will be watching and holding this government accountable for their promises to amend the School Act to include firm class-size limits for students in Grades 4 through 12, and to address the serious issues of class composition and support for students with special needs. Tomorrow, Sims and three other BCTF representatives will attend the first meeting of the Learning Roundtable in Victoria.

CUPE slams University of Saskatchewan for flouting job evaluation arbitration (SK)

(CUPE, October 14, 2005)

http://www.cupe.ca/www/media/CUPE_slams_Universit

University workers represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) are slamming the University of Saskatchewan's decision this week to request a judicial review of a recent arbitration award regarding job evaluation. In September an arbitrator found the U of S in breach of the collective agreement with CUPE Local 1975, which represents 2,400 university workers, for refusing to continue participating in the joint job evaluation process until its completion. The province's two universities and CUPE signed a tripartite agreement in 1998 to start the process to achieve wage parity and pay equity for the union's members. In 2003 the U of S abandoned the job evaluation process to unilaterally develop its own pay system. The university's administration now claims the job evaluation process was flawed from the beginning, pointing to the mixing or "cobbling" of different job evaluation ratings at the two campuses. But Rhonda Heisler, CUPE Local 1975 first vice-president at the U of S,

says both universities and the union were equally involved in every decision relating to the job evaluation project...Although the University of Regina was not found in breach of the collective agreement, they have stated publicly that they fully support the actions of the U of S administration...The employer continues to insist that pay equity adjustments be paid out of the general compensation package that is being negotiated at the main bargaining table. But Heisler says pay equity increases need to be negotiated separately at the job evaluation table...Heisler warns that the judicial review will only have a negative impact on current contract negotiations, which have dragged on for over 22 months...CUPE Local 1975 represents about 1,800 members at the University of Saskatchewan and 600 members at the University of Regina who work in a variety of areas including clerical, technical, maintenance and food services.

Support staff demonstrate over pay equity (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 20, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Unionized support staff with the Regina Public School Board are seeking pay equity, with potentially significant costs to the school board. And a union representative says those workers are getting frustrated with the lack of progress at the bargaining table in achieving contract terms to end wage inequities, including inequities between traditional male jobs and female jobs. Eden Guidroz, a staff representative with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), said there is no excuse for the school board not to take action to end wage inequities among the approximate 600 support workers it employs...The workers would like a general wage and related monetary increase of about eight per cent over three years plus additional money to address pay-equity concerns, Guidroz said...There are two separate CUPE locals that represent a portion of the workers. Other workers are represented by the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees Union and by the independent Union of Office Employees. The support workers do secretarial, caretaking and maintenance work. They also work with special-need students, and perform a variety of other functions...Inequities exist in the Regina public school system, particularly in a comparison of traditional male jobs compared with other jobs that have been traditionally held mostly by women, Guidroz said...

Federal Government

Pay equity ruling will cost Canada Post \$150 million (CA)

(Star Phoenix, October 8, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

A pay equity ruling in a long-standing dispute gives about 6,000 current and former Canada Post clerical workers at least \$150 million in back pay, according to the Public Service Alliance of Canada. In a ruling released Friday, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decided Canada Post could not adequately demonstrate there was, in its personnel or wage policies, an explanation for a wage gap between clerical workers, who were mostly women, and male-dominated employees in an operations group. The decision points to "systemic sex discrimination" as the only apparent explanation. The Crown corporation immediately filed an appeal with the Federal Court, which will prolong the lengthy case. The Public Service Alliance filed its initial complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission in 1983...The tribunal ordered a back-pay period retroactive to Aug. 24, 1982, and up to June 2, 2002. It

ruled that workers were eligible to receive half the payment sought by the union because evidence of relevant job information and non-wage forms of compensation was of “lower reasonable reliability.”...[PSAC national president Nycole] Turmel said the alliance will not appeal the amount of employee compensation, adding she was disappointed that Canada Post will appeal...

Labour dispute officially over (CA)

(The Leader Post, October 11, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

After seven acrimonious weeks of negotiations and feuding, the CBC labour dispute is officially over. But the fighting may not be. The Canadian Media Guild said Sunday that 88.4 per cent of the 3,514 members who voted chose to accept the proposed contract. But it will take a few days before programming is back to normal and the union warns workers may not be all smiles when the cameras and microphones are off. Most of the CBC's 5,500 unionized workers are expected back at work today but it'll take days, in some cases even weeks, to get everything back up to speed...The official tally in the ratification vote was 3,106 votes for, 394 against and 14 ballots were either spoiled, or challenged and not accepted. The labour dispute centred on a CBC plan to hire more contract workers, which the union opposed. The deal caps contract workers at 9.5 per cent of the full-time workforce. CBC wages are to rise by 12.6 per cent over the life of the contract, which runs through March 31, 2009, including full retroactivity and a \$1,000 signing bonus.

Other

Province-wide boycott of Sobeys planned (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 8, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

More picket lines, and a province-wide boycott of all Sobeys stores, are in the works as the strike at the south Sobeys location in Regina continues. The employees of the Regina Sobeys store on south Albert Street have been on strike since Sept. 11, and Chris Banting, spokesperson for the union representing the workers, the Retail and Wholesale and Department Stores Union (RWDSU), said that the plans are underway to get the attention of the employer...Don Anderson of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour confirmed that the federation is in the process of orchestrating a province-wide boycott of the stores. Anderson said that the SFL feels that the employer is not taking the union's demands seriously...The strategy, which is currently being designed, would involve contacting all suppliers and asking them to stop delivering to the Sobeys stores, and asking consumers to stop shopping at all Sobeys locations in the province...A conciliator has been appointed to mediate the talks between the RWDSU and Sobeys. A new offer has been put on the table by the employer since the conciliation began, said Banting, but he fully expects the union membership to reject it...Banting wouldn't discuss the details of the most recent offer from the employer before it is addressed by the union membership, but said that some aspects of the proposed contract were moderately improved, while others showed a digression from what the union wants...

Telecommunications Workers and Telus reach tentative agreement

(AB/BC)

(AUPE, October 11, 2005)

http://www.aupe.org/in_the_news/news.php?id=244

The Telecommunications Workers Union and Telus Corp. have signed a memorandum of settlement that if ratified by union members would end the current labour dispute between the two. The agreement reached late Sunday would bring to end the lockout that has seen approximately 14,000 TWU members in Alberta and British Columbia locked out of their jobs for nearly three months. In a joint news release issued Monday, the TWU and Telus said the tentative agreement is for a five-year agreement and that the union is recommending acceptance of the deal by its members. TWU President Bruce Bell said in the news release that he expects the ratification vote will be completed by Oct. 23...Telus agreed that within 72 hours of acceptance of the agreement by TWU members it would "begin the process of bringing all team members back to work as expeditiously as possible."

Lakeside strike could explode: union (AB)

(Leader Post, October 18, 2005)

Paper copy

The national director of the union representing striking Lakeside meat-packing plant workers warned Monday that violence on the picket lines could escalate if governments fail to intervene. Michael Fraser, head of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, held a news conference in Brooks, Alta., where he called on Prime Minister Paul Martin and Premier Ralph Klein to use their influence to bring both sides of the dispute back to the bargaining table...But a spokeswoman for Klein's office said the constant talk of violence is only aggravating the problem...Klein, she said, is in no position to wade into the dispute regardless of how volatile it may get...Fraser said his concern stemmed from incidents last week, especially a collision on Friday that involved union Local 401 president Doug O'Halloran in which he claims his SUV was rammed and forced off the road by company officials trying to serve him legal papers. Four men, including the former owner of Lakeside and three managers, have been charged with dangerous driving as a result of the incident... [RCMP spokesman Cpl. Wayne Oakes] said the RCMP is ready to handle any potential clash between the two sides. Two buses and several SUVs with officers in riot gear were visible from the highway on Monday. The union leader's remarks came after a relatively peaceful day of picketing in which the company sent only two buses across the line in front of the plant just off the Trans-Canada Highway. The union set up a picket line at the entrance to the feedlot on the south side of the highway and held up a line of workers, some waiting as long as four hours to get in the feedlot where they were to climb on buses and cross into the plant...[Gary Mickelson, spokesman for Arkansas-based Tyson Foods which own Lakeside] said 1,000 "team members" showed up for work. He said the company would explore its own options for a legal remedy that would prohibit strikers from delaying workers but he would not specify what form it may take. More than 800 Lakeside workers went on strike Wednesday after Tyson rejected a deal proposed by a provincial arbitrator. A judge order the union to limit pickets to 50 at a time and not impede the progress of vehicles carrying managers and supervisors into the plant compound...

Law and Legislation

Canada

Judge upholds ban on smoking (MB)

(The Leader Post, September 30, 2005)

Paper copy

Manitoba's sweeping smoking ban has survived a constitutional challenge that will set a precedent for other provincial governments that have, or are considering, similar measures. On Thursday a provincial court judge rejected a rural bar owner's argument that the law is unconstitutional because it doesn't apply to native reserves. Robert Jenkinson says he's being discriminated against and has lost lucrative VLT business at his bar in Treherne, Man., because his customers are flocking to two neighbouring reserves where they can puff away. But Judge Murray Howell convicted Jenkinson of all 13 counts he faced, for letting customers smoke and other related offences under that law the came into effect Oct. 1. He was fined \$2,550, an amount well below the maximum penalty for each offence. Jenkinson...said he was disappointed with the ruling and will consider an appeal...Howell said he believed the law has financially hurt Jenkinson's business. But he said governments regularly pass laws that can have "profound and varying" financial effects, pointing to taxation and licensing as examples...Health Minister Tim Sale applauded the decision, saying it validates the government's goal to protect the health of non-smokers in the workplace...But Sale said he'll take his concerns about smoking on native reserves to his federal counterpart, Ujjal Dosnjih, during next month's meeting of federal, provincial and territorial health ministers...So far, however, the federal government has been reluctant to wade into the debate...

National Union applies to intervene in Supreme Court case

(NUPGE, October 5, 2005)

http://www.nupge.ca/news_2005/n05oc05b.htm

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) has applied to intervene in the Supreme Court of Canada case on Bill 29, (the Health and Social Services Delivery Improvement Act), the notorious British Columbia law that eliminated job security protection from signed collective agreements with health and social service workers. The legislation, rammed into law by the Liberal government of Premier Gordon Campbell in November 2003, empowered health and social service employers to "contract out" to non-union employers, exempted new employers from terms of existing collective agreements and rewrote layoff and bumping provisions in favour of employers. Even severance pay was unilaterally reduced below even the standard provided for under provincial Employment Standards legislation. The British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU/NUPGE) is one of several appellants in the case. The National Union is asking to intervene to reinforce the case being put forward by the BCGEU, and to provide the country's top court with a national and international perspective related to the case...The National Union also intends to point out that Bill 29 was found by the International Labour Organization (ILO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, to have contravened the ILO's Convention # 87 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize...In the last two and half years, the ILO has condemned nine labour laws passed by the current B.C. government for trampling on the basic rights of workers, the worst record of any government in North America...

Supreme Court EI decision good for women and families

(NUPGE, October 21, 2005)

http://www.nupge.ca/news_2005/n21oc05b.htm

The Supreme Court's decision to uphold the federal government's right to offer maternity and parental benefits through the Employment Insurance program is welcome news for workers, especially working women and young families, says the Canadian Labour Congress. In a 7-0 opinion Thursday, the high court struck down a lower court opinion from Quebec that Ottawa had exceeded its jurisdiction by operating a social program through Employment Insurance. Under the Canada's constitution, provinces have jurisdiction over social programs. The high court issued its findings in the form of an opinion because it was responding to questions asked by the federal government, rather than ruling on a formal legal appeal. The three-million-member CLC says the finding strengthens federal responsibility for EI and increases the obligation on Ottawa to make the program work better...

Arbitrator's ruling on Ontario health tax upheld by court

(NUPGE, October 25, 2005)

http://www.nupge.ca/news_2005/n25oc05a.htm

The Divisional Court of Ontario has upheld an arbitrator's ruling requiring a Guelph nursing home to pay the Ontario health premium tax for its unionized workers. The ruling, which undermines the province's position that individuals are responsible for the tax, is expected to influence future challenges on behalf of workers. An arbitrator ruled earlier that collective agreements containing language dating back to Ontario's former OHIP (Ontario Hospital Insurance Plan) premiums also applies to the new health tax. OHIP premiums ended in 1991. The new tax, which ranges from \$300 to \$900, was imposed in 2004 by the Liberal government of Premier Dalton McGuinty. The Divisional Court ruling can be challenged in the Ontario Court of Appeal. No appeal has yet been filed.

Pensions and Benefits

Defined benefit pension plans endangered unless changes are made, industry report says (CA)

(Lancaster House, Pension & Benefit Law e-Bulletin, October 3, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

In a report released August 24, the Association of Canadian Pension Management (ACPM), which represents private and public sector pension plan sponsors and administrators, warns that "the future does not look bright for [defined benefit] pension plans in Canada." The report calls for a number of remedial measures, including legislation overriding the application of judicial decisions to pension plans; changes to defined benefit plan funding rules, methodologies and disclosure requirements; clarification of the respective roles of legislators, sponsors, administrators and actuaries; and modification of measures to increase the benefit security of plan members. The report cites a number of indices pointing to the decline of defined benefit (DB) pension plans in Canada. From 1992 to 2003, it says, Statistics Canada figures show that DB coverage dropped from 44 per cent to 34 per cent of the work force, and the number of DB plans decreased by 14 per cent. The proportion of public sector employees covered by a DB plan has fallen from 91.5 per cent in 1992 to 79

per cent in 2004, while in the private sector the proportion of covered employees has fallen from 28.6 per cent to 20.5 per cent, the report says. As well, the ACPM report warns that "[t]oday many DB pension plans are less than fully funded." At December 31, 2003, it says, 53 per cent of such plans supervised by the federal Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions were under-funded, with a solvency ratio of less than one. More than half of these were under-funded by more than 10 per cent. The situation of plans under provincial jurisdiction is similar, the report says, noting that the Certified General Accountants' Association of Canada estimated in 2004 that more than half of DB plans in Canada had a funding deficit, with a total shortfall of more than \$160 billion at the end of 2003...

NSGEU forces province to move on pension refunds (NS)

(NUPGE, October 11, 2005)

http://www.nupge.ca/news_2005/n12oc05a.htm

The Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union (NSGEU/NUPGE) has scored an important victory for about 150 members who were overcharged by the province when they purchased pension credit for casual service. A legal opinion, obtained by the union and provided to the government, prompted the province to review the issue and announce that it will reimburse members affected...The province acknowledged in a news release that regulations were improperly interpreted in "one specific area" from 2002 onward. Kim Blinn, director of pensions, says refunds, including interest, will be made to all affected plan members. Legislation and regulations governing the Public Service Superannuation Plan allow full-time Nova Scotia government employees who worked as casual employees for a period of six months or more to purchase this time as pensionable service for pension purposes. The average amount to be paid is estimated to be in the range of \$5,000. Employees may also take the amount as a credit to purchase additional time, if they are eligible.

Lockheed sweetens pension cuts with vacation boost (US)

(Benefit News, October 11, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Lockheed Martin Corp. is making its recent decision to switch from a traditional pension plan to a defined contribution plan more palatable to new hires by offering more vacation time. The defense contractor announced last week that it was joining the ranks of employers relinquishing defined benefit plans for salaried workers in favor of employee contributions plan, effective for new employees Jan.1, 2006...New employees will have the choice of Lockheed's salaried savings plan, or 401(k), or a new employee contribution plan minted as the Capital Accumulation Plan. Under the plan, Lockheed will match employee contributions on a scale graduated for years of service: 3% for zero to nine years of service, 4% for 9-19 years, 5% for 19-29 years, and 6% for more than 29 years.

GM, UAW engage in benefit brinksmanship (US)

(Benefit News, October 20, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

General Motors' plan to slash its workers' health care coverage has been followed by contortionist maneuvering worthy of Harry Houdini. GM and United Auto Workers reached a tentative agreement on Monday to reduce health care coverage for workers and retirees, a cost-cutting measure expected to save the financially beleaguered automaker about \$1 billion a year. GM lost \$1.6 billion in its most recent quarter. The benefit reduction will affect about 750,000 employees. Hard on the

heels of that announcement, UAW filed a lawsuit against GM, an unusual legal stratagem that, if successful, will prevent further cutting of health benefits and block workers from challenging the reduced benefits the union negotiated on their behalf. GM funds the health care of retirees through an uncommon program known as a Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association, an IRS-approved, tax-exempt trust...Contending that its VEBA was overfunded, GM withdrew \$6 billion from the fund in April, over the protests of union members. GM faces equally daunting pension-funding pressures that experts argue could push it into Chapter 11...

Retired teachers feel 'shafted' (MB)

(Winnipeg Free Press, October 19, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

The Manitoba teachers' pension plan is in financial crisis, their minuscule cost-of-living allowance (COLA) falling further and further behind inflation each year, retired teachers say. And they say that the prospects for active teachers are gloomy – the pension's funding formula was developed when there were seven teachers paying into the pension plan in the classroom for every retired teacher, but as teachers retire younger and live longer, that ratio is at 1.4-to-one and heading for one-to-one. There are about 14,000 active teachers in Manitoba...Manitoba's cost of living has gone up 31.3 per cent since 1992, while the COLA has increased by only 16.57 per cent...the Shreyer government dug deeply into teachers' pension funds in 1977 to give a retroactive cost-of-living increase to retired teachers, in return for promises of inflation protection that haven't been kept... "The average pension is around \$23,000. It's not as rich as people think it is," Manitoba Teachers' Society president Brian Ardern said. Teachers used to work 40 years, and collect pension for 10 or 15 years. Now they work 30 years and collect pension for 30 years, he said...Earlier this year, the provincial government increased pension contributions from 5.7 per cent of their paycheques to 6.8 per cent on their first \$40,000, and 7.3 to 8.4 per cent above that...

Tribunal hears retirement case (SK)

(Star Phoenix, October 25, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

The tribunal investigating a former Saskatoon librarian's complaint regarding mandatory retirement heard testimony from the complainant in its opening day. Louise Carlson, a former Saskatoon public library employee, told the tribunal Monday via conference call how she was satisfied and delighted with her "ideal" job before she was required to retire Oct. 31, 2003...The human rights commission is asking the tribunal to determine if the province's human rights code, which protects only those from age 18 to 64 from discrimination on the basis of age, is in fact discriminatory itself. The commission will argue the provision in the provincial human rights code which permits, but not forces, employers to require retirement at age 65 is contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Saskatchewan is among the minority of provinces that permit mandatory retirement based on age, according to the commission. Although the Supreme Court of Canada case dating back to 1990 permitted mandatory retirement, it allowed tribunals to determine whether the code violated the Charter in particular cases. The tribunal only has jurisdiction to rule in the case of Carlson, but appeals can lead the argument to the courts, which can make a judgment for all cases...

General

Government Services

Don't give away keys to parole system, OPSEU warns (ON)

(NUPGE, October 14, 2005)

http://www.nupge.ca/news_2005/n14oc05b.htm

An Ontario Liberal proposal to hand responsibility for Ontario's provincial parole system over to the federal government is a disaster waiting to happen, says the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU/NUPGE). Under the proposal, the province would abolish the Ontario Parole and Early Release Board (OPERB) and transfer responsibility to Ottawa for reviewing and approving parole applications from provincial inmates - along with supervision of parolees in the community...OPERB refuses almost 80% of parole applications, compared to the National Parole Board's refusal rate of only 41%. Ontario inmates on parole are supervised directly by an Ontario probation and parole officer in one of 125 offices province-wide. By comparison, Correctional Services Canada operates only 18 parole offices in Ontario and regularly contracts out community supervision to outside agencies. It costs \$3 million per year to operate OPERB, equal to less than 0.2% of \$1.75 billion annual budget of the ministry of community safety and correctional services. With parole so closely integrated with the much larger provincial probation system, the government's plan would generate virtually no savings from supervision, the union says...

Guards relieved to learn they are covered by new legislation (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 19, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

After initially raising alarms, guards at the Regina Correctional Centre were relieved Tuesday to hear they are covered under new provincial legislation that protects against exposure to bodily fluids. The confusion occurred Monday when the provincial government proclaimed the Mandatory Testing and Disclosure (Bodily Substances) Act. The law makes it possible for anyone who is exposed to bodily fluids while a victim of crime or providing emergency medical assistance to have a court order a blood sample from the source individual. The law is designed to allow the person exposed to know sooner if they are at risk of contracting any communicable disease. In launching the new law, the Department of Justice touted it as protecting emergency service personnel – particularly police. In turn, media reports focused on those occupations, leading guards to believe they were not covered by the Act. But the Act does not specify any particular occupation as being protected. Anyone – including police, paramedics or prison guards – is considered a victim of crime if bitten or spat upon...Jason Rattray, chief steward for the union representing guards, said he's happy to have things sorted out...Rattray said guards at the jail faces spitting, biting and other scenarios where they come in contact with bodily fluids on almost a daily basis...He is, however, still concerned about the accidental contact that may occur if they need to handcuff or subdue a bleeding inmate...While such contact is not specifically covered, the Act can be expanded in the future to have it included if necessary...

Health

Child abuse cases on the rise: study (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 6, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Canada saw a 125 per cent jump in the rate of substantiated child abuse cases between 1998 and 2003, according to a new study released on Tuesday. The study released by the Public Health Agency of Canada on Tuesday noted 135,573 child abuse investigations were conducted in 1998 compared to 217,319 investigations in 2003 across all of Canada, excluding Quebec...The rate of substantiated child abuse in Canada, excluding Quebec, rose from 9.64 cases per 1,000 children in 1998 to 21.71 in 2003 (involving an estimated 103,297 child investigations), the report stated. Saskatchewan is bucking the national trend. On average, the province's child protection caseload has gone down 30 per cent in the past five years because the government had created some other options, such as Kids First where family support workers work with at risk families, who are experiencing difficulties, said Marilyn Hedlund, executive director of child and family services with Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment...The department receives about 18,000 reports a year of possible child maltreatment and 20 per cent or 3,600 of those reports are investigated by a child protection worker. The other cases are either unfounded or referred to other community-based family support agencies, she said...

AG's report a reminder of need to fix continuing-care problems, AUPE president says (AB)

(AUPE, October 6, 2005)

http://www.aupe.org/in_the_news/newsarticle.php?id=240

Monday's massive report by Alberta Auditor General Fred Dunn highlights once again the need for quick action on appropriate funding, proper staffing levels and adequate standards for seniors' care in Alberta, says the president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees [Dan MacLennan]...Among its many recommendations, the Auditor General's report called for updating basic standards for services in long-term care centres, and implementing a system to regularly review standards, improving compliance monitoring in continuing care facilities and establishing standards of care in assisted living facilities...MacLennan also drew attention to the fact that the Auditor General had concluded that the Ministry of Restructuring and Government efficiency needs to more clearly define some of its performance measures and targets or developed systems to monitor and report results...

HealthLine answers 300 addiction calls (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 8, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Nearly 300 Saskatchewan residents have sought help in the last six months from the provincial government's health information telephone line. Just half a year after the government made changes to its HealthLine, its 24-hour phone service that provides round-the-clock public access to registered nurses and addictions counselors, the public response to the program has been overwhelming, said Graham Addley. The Legislative Secretary to the Premier on substance abuse prevention and treatment, Addley made recommendations last April to see the HealthLine expanded to include drug and alcohol addictions counselors...[Health Minister John Nilson] said the public wanted to access information anytime, anywhere, particularly information about

substances like crystal methamphetamine, and now that information is available through the phone line. Addley agreed the phone line is an essential service. He toured the province for six months and heard first hand the need for help...HealthLine is not only helping drug and alcohol addicts but reaching out to many more people across the province, said Addley...In April, government funding went to new staff, expanded hours and an awareness campaign aimed at distributing information about the warning signs of drug use, with emphasis on crystal meth use. The government has committed \$10 million of new annual funding for the project, which Addley hopes to see expand in the areas of promotion and advertising...HealthLine is a part of Premier Lorne Calvert's Project Hope, a three-year plan to prevent and treat substance abuse.

Big numbers for treatments (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 13, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

One in seven patients in Canadian hospitals has a mental disorder, and despite a trend to treat them in the community, people with psychiatric illnesses make up one-third of all days spent in hospitals. A new national report shows that, in 2002-03, people being treated for depression, mania, anxiety, psychosis and other mental health problems accounted for more than 190,000 hospital stays, and stayed more than 7.7 million days. That represents six per cent of all hospital stays that year. A further nine percent of stays involved people with a "secondary" psychiatric diagnosis, meaning they were treated for something else but there was an associated mental illness – such as a patient with heart disease who was also severely depressed...People with mental illness stay in hospital, on average, more than twice as long as other patients. And most were hospitalized during the most productive years of their lives, between the ages 25 and 55...The report, released Wednesday by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), found the rate of hospitalization for a mental disorder in Canada has fallen over the past decade. So has the average length of stay, dropping from 66 days to 41 over the same period. Mood disorders and schizophrenia, a biological brain disease that can cause hallucinations and delusions, accounted for most hospitalizations for a mental illness among men. For women, it was mood disorders such as bipolar disorder. Among those with mental illness, 15 per cent of hospital stays involved youth aged 15 to 24; 38 per cent involved those aged 25 to 44.

Nurses' graduate survey suggests: good luck in finding a job (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 15, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Only one in every three new nurses in Saskatchewan will find a full-time job after graduation, according to a recently released survey that shows dropping employment rates among nursing graduates. The recently released 2005 Graduate Exit Survey for the Nursing Education Program of Saskatchewan (NEPS), compiled by Inghtrix, shows the percentage of students who had found a nursing job by graduation has dropped from 82 per cent in 2003, to 59 per cent this year. The number of first-time nurses who will work full-time dropped dramatically, from 68 per cent two years ago, to 57 per cent last year, and to 30.6 per cent this year. The Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN) president Rosalee Longmore said that the reason for the survey's results could be tied to a nursing shortage in Saskatchewan. The abundance of jobs for nurses, she said, means that many nurses will choose the flexibility of part-time and casual work, to stay in the bigger cities...A spokesperson for the Regina

Qu'Appelle Health region said that throughout the region, between 10 and 15 full-time positions are vacant, all in the critical-care and operating units – which are the last to fill during a nursing shortage. Also, an abundance of work options means that fewer nurses are taking posts in the rural areas and small towns. The Sun Country Health Region – which covers the southeast of the province, including Estevan and Weyburn – is finding that less nurses are looking for full-time jobs in the more rural region, according to president and CEO Lee Spencer...Spencer added that the survey's results may be tied to the growing number of graduates who feel that geography is an important factor in choosing a job location, up from 22 per cent last year to 40 per cent this year...For SIAST's Wascana campus in Regina, the survey's finding won't have a direct impact on the program, yet, according to vice-president of programs Claude Naud...

Province funding maternity ward (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 18, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

The province has committed itself to cover the entire \$9-million cost of a new Centre for Mother Baby Care at the Regina General Hospital, Health Minister John Nilson confirmed Monday. The new facility, which will replace the current maternity ward, will also be furnished and equipped by several private donations through the Hospitals of Regina Foundation, which will contribute another \$6 million...The plan, according to Nilson, includes drawing new specialists to the hospital, as well as having the facilities to accommodate overflow from the rest of southern Saskatchewan. The tendering process is expected to begin in the spring, but floor plans, equipment and décor have already been chosen. The facility will be housed in a 2,300-square-foot wing of the hospital, and boast state-of-the-art medical equipment, an expanded Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and a more family-friendly layout, according to Gail Rosseker, the nursing manager for labour and delivery at the Regina General Hospital. All private rooms, she said, will be the biggest change...According to Rosseker, fathers and support people for expecting and new mothers were unable to stay overnight, preventing what Rosseker said is an invaluable process of bonding. The current section for mothers and babies was not originally designed to be specifically a maternity ward, said Rosseker...

Nurses cite staff shortages (AB)

(The Leader Post, October 26, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Staff shortages and heavy workloads remain major issues for the province's nurses, suggest a telephone survey of more than 1,000 members of the United Nurses of Alberta. The survey indicated about 5,000 nurses will be retiring or leaving the profession over the next five years...[union president Heather Smith] said while the province has committed funding for capital costs, not enough is being done on the labour front...The survey suggests that nurses are worried about the quality of care they can provide in such an understaffed environment, both in hospitals and in long-term care facilities...

Education

Student enrolment down this year (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 5, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

In keeping with a Saskatchewan trend, kindergarten to Grade 12 enrolment dropped at Regina's public schools this year...The public school board projected enrolment would drop by 300 students in the 2005-06 school year, so the school system began its "renewal" process last spring with public forums...Currently there are 47 public elementary schools, 10 high schools and three associate schools. Based on dropping enrolment, the number of schools needed by 2009 is projected to be 37...While enrolment is dropping in Kindergarten to Grade 12 classrooms...a new initiative at Robert Usher Adult Campus has drawn 150 new students, 18 to 22 years, into the system.

Millions slated for training (AB)

(The Leader Post, October 5, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Alberta will increase immigration and bolster apprentice training to deal with a projected shortfall of more than 100,000 workers over the next decade. With \$107 billion in capital projects on the drawing board, political and industry leaders said Tuesday they want to ensure that the province's red-hot economy continues to roar. The government plan includes a policy to seek immigrants and help make them transition to live and work in the province, Economic Development Minister Clint Dunford said...While the Alberta government doesn't actively recruit trades workers from other provinces, Alberta-based employers routinely advertise for employees across Canada. The goal is to increase the number of permanent immigrants to at least 24,000 a year from 16,000. The plan includes marketing Alberta abroad as a place to live, encouraging foreign students to stay after the graduate, improving settlement services and expanding access to English as a second language training. The province also wants to speed up the rate at which professional skills of immigrants are recognized to ensure newcomers who are welders or carpenters don't end up driving cabs. In a separate announcement, Alberta's largest technical college laid out a \$50-million plan to boost the training of skilled apprentices and business students...

Public Education Network fights for more federal funding (CA)

(NUPGE, October 13, 2005)

http://www.nupge.ca/news_2005/n12oc05c.htm

The Public Education Network (PEN) has asked for a meeting with Canada's Council of Ministers of Education to discuss federal funding for post-secondary education across the country. The network, dedicated to improving the quality of public education, includes union and student groups from across the country, including the 340,000-member National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE). Larry Brown, NUPGE's national secretary-treasurer, is among those signing the PEN letter. The group says cuts totalling more than \$6 billion in transfer payments (including inflation) were imposed by Ottawa in the 1990s and have not been restored, despite significant federal surpluses in recent years...Because of this, universities and colleges in several provinces have been forced to seek alternate funding, resulting in a disturbing trend toward "greater commercialization of research and higher tuition

fees," the organization adds. It calls on education ministers to press the federal government to restore transfers on the basis of a formula tied to GNP (gross national product), noting that transfers 30 years ago equalled about 0.5% of GNP. "We are asking the Ministers of Education, Canada to publicly commit that increased public funding be directed to support the following objectives," PEN says. The list includes:

- Facilitating accessibility to postsecondary education for all qualified individuals, without financial or geographical barriers;
- Promoting quality teaching;
- Offering a range of programs of studies;
- Fostering academic freedom that encourages the pedagogical and intellectual independence of teachers and supports free and independent research; and
- Supporting collegial governance and public administration of institutions.

Apprenticeships key to fill worker shortage (BC)

(Leader Post, October 15, 2005)

Paper copy

"If you can think of anyone who wants to work, if they can lift a bundle of shingles they're hired." This recent exchange overheard at a house torn to pieces in a reno pretty much sums up the job situation in construction. Help-wanted ads plaster construction sites. Labourers, once lucky to make slightly over minimum wage for hauling and carrying, cleaning and helping out, can now command upwards of \$17 an hour. Schools and training institutions are struggling to turn out more grads to meet the demand and young people – long told by their parents and counsellors that the only route to prosperity lay through a university degree – now realize they could be earning high figures and even running their own business, long before their university counterparts have paid off their loans. However, while some high schools are proponents of apprenticeship programs and encourage students in apprenticeship trades training that can begin as early as Grade 10, for others, it's low on the agenda. For employers though, training is a priority. Brian Clewes, chief executive officer of British Columbia's Industry Training Association, said sectors that have not traditionally had apprenticeships are now approaching the association with a view to creating such programs. For example, the B.C. Road Builders & Heavy Construction Association proposing apprenticeships programs both to train workers in that sector and to enhance road-building work as a career option and not just a job...Employers that offer the prospect of recognized credentials and a range of working opportunities are winning out over employers who merely offer an hourly wage... [John] Friswell [owner of Canadian Constructors International Ltd.], who is on the board of directors of the Canadian Home Builders' Association of British Columbia, said for smaller companies, working conditions that allow employees to learn, with a variety of opportunities, can be an advantage over huge commercial and industrial jobs where they may be more limited in the scope of what they do...The skills shortage is leading industry groups to turn to non-traditional sources to recruit people into careers in construction. In one initiative, the construction sector has teamed with First Nations organizations and Human Resources Development Canada to create opportunities for aboriginal youth. Young people have a six-week introduction to construction training and if they choose, they can pursue apprenticeships and job placements...

Policy recommendations for younger workers with low levels of education

(Lancaster House, Weekly Work Report for October 17, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

A new research report, the second in a collaboration between the Canadian Policy Research Networks and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), analyses the school-to-work transition for high school dropouts and concludes that “many young Canadians are sinking into economic insecurity and even social exclusion.” Without a Paddle: What to do About Canada’s Young Dropouts draws on data from labour force surveys in 25 OECD countries and is part of the Project on Young Adults with Low Levels of Education (YALLE); the earlier report in this project was From Education to Work: a difficult transition for young adults with low levels of education. In addition to the analysis of data, Without a Paddle makes policy recommendations. Educators and governments are urged to extend the age of compulsory school attendance; create vocational options in high school to increase the employment benefits of a high school diploma, and improve counseling related to labour market realities. Employers are urged to make the educational requirements of their entry-level jobs explicit, and to emphasize the importance of education for advancement. The report also addresses equity concerns and the need for different policy solutions for women and immigrants.

Union alleges intimidation attempt by SIAST (SK)

(Star Phoenix, October 19, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Alleging discrimination and unfair treatment of its leaders, the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees’ Union (SGEU) has filed an unfair labour practice suit against SIAST management...The union claims Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science & Technology officials threatened to put two union leaders on indefinite leaves of absence, effectively causing them to forfeit their jobs. The union held information pickets during the lunch hour at all four campuses in the province Tuesday to protest what it calls the “intimidation and harassment” of the bargaining unit. [Bob] Bymoan, who attended the voluntary picket at the Kelsey campus in Saskatoon, said the union was not trying to stop classes, but wanted to inform people about SIAST’s actions. But Gary Mearns, SIAST’s chief human resources officer, said the union’s claims are not true, and he was surprised to hear of its decision to picket...Mearns said discussions about a leave have been ongoing for a couple of years because the two parties interpret the clause differently...But Jim Steele, one of the union leaders in question, said he’s not on a leave of absence, and nor does he want a leave...Steele said as chair of the academic bargaining unit, he’s entitled to “union release time” paid by the employer. He said the time is meant to allow him to leave his regular teaching duties to resolve union matters in any or all of the four SIAST campuses. Steele added union release time has been in place for almost a decade, and he thinks the program runs without any problems. The other union leader involved is Tracey Kurtenbach, chair of the administrative support bargaining unit. SGEU represents about 1,500 administrative and academic staff at SIAST campuses.

Crowns

SaskTel deal (SK)

(Star Phoenix, October 4, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

SaskTel will be the sole owner of Hospitality Network Canada after purchasing the remaining interest in the company for \$1.4 million. Hospitality Network provides television and telephone services in hospitals and long-term care homes across Canada. SaskTel purchased the remaining six per cent from Alan Simpson, former president and CEO. The business, based in Regina, employs 50 full-time and about 285 part-time employees nationwide.

Gov't settles Spudco suit; Opposition calls for details (SK)

(Star Phoenix, October 7, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

The NDP government has spent \$100,000 to settle what it hopes will be one of the last lawsuits against it over Spudco. The settlement further drives up the cost to taxpayers from the government's blighted potato venture to \$37.8 million brought in from the sale of potato sheds...The settlement, announced by [SaskWater minister Peter] Prebble when he appeared before the Crown and Central Agencies committee Thursday, was between the government's Saskatchewan Valley Potato Corp. and the Outlook-area family of David, Margaret and Thomas Dolan...Details of the settlement remain confidential, said Prebble, but the deal includes a commercial-lease arrangement for the last potato shed owned by the Saskatchewan Valley Potato Corp. in Broderick and a small cash settlement...But the Dolmans' Saskatoon-based lawyer, Nicholas Stooshinoff, said there is a third component to the settlement that he could not disclose...Saskatchewan Party MLA Dan D'Autremont said more disclosure of the settlement is needed...In their lawsuit the family alleged numerous wrongful actions by Spudco that raised costs and damaged their business, including misrepresenting that a potato processing plant was coming to the province, failing to pay crop-share compensation, providing inaccurate budgets and refusing to renew the crop-share agreement. The family claimed Spudco intentionally drove them out of the potato business...Last fall, the government settled two lawsuits at a cost of \$7.9 million. It also has spent \$1.8 million for legal and professional services around the case...

Most WCB rates to drop (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 13, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Saskatchewan employers will be receiving an average 6.6-per-cent decrease in Workers' Compensation premium rates next year, according to a proposal released Wednesday. That proposal, by the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board (WCB), would reduce the premium rates paid by an average employer to \$1.84 per \$100 payroll from \$1.97 per \$100. The proposed decreases, which are still subject to final approval by the WCB's board of directors, will be effective on Jan. 1 assuming that final approval is provided. If the rates are approved it will represent the second consecutive year that they have declined, as the rates went down by an average 3.9 per cent in 2005...The rates charged by the WCB are adjusted to account for the injury rates in various industries. More than 93 per cent of the 34,000 employers registered with the WCB will receive premium cuts next year or will have their rates frozen at the 2005 rates. About seven per cent of the employers will experience rate hikes, averaging 4.6 per cent. The rate decrease planned for 2006 and the one already in place for this year followed a series of increases earlier in the decade that

had prompted concerns in the business community. Rates went up by an average of 12 per cent in 2004, by 9.1 per cent in 2003 and by 2.47 per cent in 2002.

Private sector may help with plans (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 25, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Wascana Centre is looking at the private sector to champion even more development in the urban park, according to Wascana Centre Authority executive director, Van Isman...Isman said that the centre authority is also planning to unveil a new fundraising scheme within the next month, which he said will present "some significant opportunities for the private sector."...The City of Regina, the province, and the University of Regina are all partner organizations in Wascana Centre. Although the land has several owners, the authority was created by a provincial act to oversee the entire 2,300-acre property. They are mandated to review their master plan every seven years, and are just about due to reassess the 1999 plan that has already been altered as the centre evolved over the years...Isman and the Wascana Centre Authority have take it upon themselves to initiate a strategic planning process in the time leading up to the review, which began this past weekend with a planning summit, in which Isman said 80 organizations participated.

Community Services

Saskatchewan Association for Community Living celebrates 50 years of progress (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 7, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

For 50 years, the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living (SACL) has helped people with intellectual disabilities and their families achieve a better life in the community. The organization is part of a national network with more than 400,000 members across Canada, the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL)...Fifty years ago, the majority of individuals with intellectual disabilities were institutionalized soon after birth and completely isolated from mainstream society. After seeing what life was like in these institutions, a growing number of parents began a movement to bring their children home and give them a life in the community. The first of these shifts occurred in Regina and Saskatoon...The grassroots movement took on the name, Parents Council for Mentally Retarded Children, then soon became known as the Saskatchewan Association for Retarded Children. By 1958, 103 local associations had been formed across the nation, under the umbrella of the Canadian Association for Retarded Children. Primary education services were the first rights these parents sought to secure for their children. Their hard work led to the opening of the Harrow de Groot School in Regina and the John Dolan School in Saskatoon. Soon, other schools across the province established classrooms for children with intellectual disabilities. By 1959, there were 18 such classrooms across Saskatchewan...The parents of these children didn't stop there. Through their perseverance, special education classrooms became a total part of the Saskatchewan school system...The association continued to advocate on behalf of people with intellectual disabilities, to help them become more active and involved members of the community. A name change to the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living in 1988 reflected this broader vision and mission...Self-advocacy

has been a major initiative of SACL ever since. SACL is an active partner with Saskatchewan People First and established the Self-Advocacy Action Group (SAAG) which supports people with intellectual disabilities to speak up about rights and issues which concern them. People with disabilities also sit on the SACL Board of Directors, and on various committees, to ensure the voice of people with disabilities is kept strong. The SACL employs advocates at its branch offices in Saskatoon, Prince Albert and Regina, who support individuals with disabilities and their families to work through issues in their local communities, including educational, health and social issues...The SACL also provides an extensive range of support services for people with intellectual disabilities and their families, including SACL Family Network, and Employment Opportunities program and an initiative to develop housing options for people with disabilities. The John Dolan Resource Centre, Canada's most extensive lending library on disability, is located at the SACL provincial headquarters in Saskatoon...In 1990, the Saskatchewan Institute on Community Living (SICL) was established as the provincial fundraising arm of SACL. For 15 years, SACL and its fundraising arm, SICL, have enjoyed a strong partnership with Value Village...In addition to employing approximately 35 Saskatchewan people, the money received from the sale of goods goes to support innovative and ongoing projects, research and programs at SACL that benefit people with intellectual disabilities...

Retail and Regulatory

14 job cuts in Regina (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 5, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Sears Canada announced it is eliminating 18 jobs in Saskatchewan as part of nationwide job cuts the company hopes will streamline its operations and increase productivity without effecting customer service. The company announced late Monday it was cutting 1,200 jobs across the country, but that number will only reach 14 in Regina – four from retail stores and 10 from the distribution centre. The other four positions are split between Moose Jaw and Saskatoon...For the most part, front-line employees in stores and call centres were not affected, as the company found cost savings or efficiencies in eliminating jobs that were away from the public eye – in warehousing and administrative centres...The Toronto-based company hinted at job cuts earlier this year after the sale of its credit and financial services division. The retailer also said last month it was going on a cost-cutting drive that would result in \$100 million in pre-tax savings annually. The job cuts are just one part of that initiative.

BCGEU seeks successor rights at private Burnaby liquor store (BC)

(BCGEU, October 5, 2005)

<http://www.bcgeu.ca/3005>

The B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union has filed an application under the B.C. Labour Relations Code to gain successor rights for their members at a private liquor store in Burnaby. The Royal Oak Ave. store, which was operated by the B.C. government's Liquor Distribution Branch for nearly 30 years, closed its doors last November. It was reopened in the same location within one month by West Coast Liquor Company Ltd. selling the same products, using the former operator's furnishings, and sporting the same colour scheme and store layout as the previous government store...In an application filed at the Labour Relations Board (LRB)

yesterday, the BCGEU argues that West Coast Liquor Company is a successor employer...In recent months, the Campbell Liberals announced the closure of liquor stores in Vancouver, Richmond, Kamloops, Pitt Meadows, and Maple Ridge. In many cases, private operators have taken advantage of existing zoning and relaxed licensing standards to take over the business at the same location. The BCGEU is asking the LRB to rule that West Coast Liquor Company Ltd. is the successor employer to the provincial government, and that the union's collective agreement has been in effect since the day of successorship.

Cabinet table next stop for Dakota Dunes plan (SK)

(Star Phoenix, October 6, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

...Eric Cline, the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, said he would soon take the proposed \$66-million capital plan for the casino on the Whitecap Dakota First Nation to the provincial cabinet for consideration. The Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority's (SIGA) plan must be approved by cabinet before the project can proceed...In July, SIGA president Edmund Bellegarde asked for quick cabinet approval because without it SIGA was having difficulty borrowing money for construction or tendering contracts. While SIGA had originally targeted June 2006 for the casino opening, that has been pushed back to sometime between September and November of next year. Bellegarde warned in the summer that further delays could push the opening into winter...Cline last week imposed a settlement on SIGA and Prairieland Park to resolve a long impasse in negotiations. It will see SIGA pay Prairieland Park \$2.6 million annually for 30 years in exchange for closing its casino and also offer an assurance of employment for Prairieland's casino staff. The government was criticized by the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees Union for not imposing union succession rights as part of the agreement. It was also attacked by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, which controls SIGA, as heavy-handed. FSIN Chief Alphonse Bird said the NDP government may feel the consequences among aboriginal communities in the next election...

Casino axes staff, hours (SK)

(Star Phoenix, October 25, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Emerald Casino will slash tens of jobs and reduce operating hours next year after a drop in customer levels in the aftermath of the city's smoking ban, Prairieland Park announced Monday...Thirty employees will be laid off after an internal review of operations found customer volumes had fallen since the smoking ban came into effect July, 1, 2004. The casino's hours of operation will be cut back during the afternoon beginning Jan. 2. Operation of VLTs will continue to start at 10 a.m. each day and noon on Sunday. Table gaming, which now begins at noon, will open at 4 p.m. on weekdays, noon on Friday and Saturday and 2 p.m. on Sunday once the changes take effect...The news comes weeks after an announcement by Eric Cline, minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority (SLGA), impose a settlement to resolve stalled negotiations between the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA) and Prairieland Park...The four existing First Nations casinos in the province have allowed smoking. The Painted Hand Casino in Yorkton began to allow smoking in 40 per cent of its space months ago, even though it had previously followed that city's non-smoking bylaw. The city sought a court injunction to force the Sakimay First Nation, which runs the Painted Hand Casino, to adhere to

the city bylaw. An out-of-court deal between the sides was recently reached. Its details are unknown.

Municipal Government

Automation dooms meter readers (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 1, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

The meter is running out on 22 unionized jobs at city hall. A report going to council next week says the City of Saskatoon intends to eliminate 22 position in the utilities section once it adopts an automated meter reading system...An automated system means an end to manual readings...City administration has met with union representatives from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and two Canadian Union of Public Employees locals to inform them of the plan. Immediately after the meeting, all staff who are potentially affected were also told of the plan. The city's priority is to find other city jobs for the employees through transfers, retraining "and other means to ensure no permanent employee suffers as a result," says the report going to council...However, the positions will be chopped and it's possible not everyone will be able to find work elsewhere in the city...Severance packages could be offered as well as bridging deals for early retirement...

Half the city's workforce laid off (New Orleans) (US)

(The Leader Post, October 5, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Mayor Ray Nagin said Tuesday the city is laying off as many as 3,000 employees, or about half of the city's workforce, because of the damage done to New Orleans' finances by hurricane Katrina. Nagin announced with "great sadness" that he had been unable to find the money to keep the workers on the payroll. He said only non-essential workers would be laid off and that no firefighters or police would be among those let go...Nagin described the layoffs as "pretty permanent" and said that the city will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to contact municipal employees who fled the city in the aftermath of Katrina, which struck about a month ago. The mayor said the move will save about \$5 million to \$8 million US of the city's monthly payroll of \$20 million. The layoffs will take place over the next two weeks...

First Nations Issues

Teen magazine for Natives hits stands (SK)

(Star Phoenix, October 4, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Aboriginal youth now have the opportunity to make their voices heard with the creation of Shout magazine. Shout is designed specifically for aboriginal youth between the ages of 14 and 18 and is the first of its kind in Saskatchewan. The magazine was created through a partnership between the First Nations University of Canada (FNUC), MGM Communications, The Saskatoon StarPhoenix and the Regina Leader-Post...In the premier issue, common magazine topics such as horoscopes, relationship advice, entertainment news and fashion spreads are

interspersed with career profiles, a culture section and features on promising aboriginal artists. [Shout editor Michelle] Hugli said she wants the magazine to not only be entertaining but to also inspire aboriginal youth to think about their future and furthering their education...Of the seven-person staff, five are aboriginal and the magazine relies on a number of freelance writers and photographers. Charles Pratt, interim president of FNUC, said he was pleased the university was a partner in a project that will provide opportunities and practical experience for students...Greg McLean, publisher of the Leader-Post, came up with the idea for the magazine after seeing the need for aboriginal youth to have an outlet. The expertise of FNUC and MGM Communications combined with the sales, publishing and distribution knowledge of the two newspapers to create the glossy, colourful magazine...Shout will be distributed free to 255 high schools, on and off-reserve, around the province, as well as to band and tribal council offices, friendship centres and government, community and business leaders each month. Shout will also be available through paid subscription and there are plans to make the magazine available on select newsstands in the future.

Chief recruited to Sask. gov't (SK)

(Star Phoenix, October 4, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

A high-profile veteran of First Nations politics in Saskatchewan is moving over to the provincial government. Richard Gladue, the chief of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council for the last 11 years, will become assistant deputy minister in the Department of First Nations and Metis Relations in January. It's a rare move, from a First Nations government to the provincial bureaucracy, and it will make Gladue one of the most senior aboriginal people within the civil service. In an interview Monday, he said that was the last thing on his mind when he applied for the position. Gladue was looking for a career change and his new job is a way to continue working in an area important to him...The government is trying to increase aboriginal employment at both the senior and entry levels of the civil service... First Nations and Metis Relations became a fully-fledged department last year. Its mandate is to co-ordinate programs under other departments to provide focus to government policy. It also run[s] programs relating to gaming revenues and Treaty Land Entitlement issues.

Panel may choose aboriginal judge (SK)

(Leader Post, October 13, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

The prospect of Canada having its first aboriginal Supreme Court judge will be on the minds of members of the new committee as they gather next week to select a replacement for retiring Justice John Major. The committee members, who will pick from a short list crafted by Justice Minister Irwin Cotler, don't know yet if an aboriginal name is among his chosen contenders to fill a Prairie vacancy on the court. But the panel appears already to be divided on how much weight should be given to aboriginal status when selecting one of the top nine judges in the country...The nine-member committee meets Monday for a first glimpse of the five to eight judicial contenders that Cotler has already chosen to replace Major, who retires Dec. 25 after 13 years on the high court. The justice minister has said publicly that diversity is one factor to consider for coveted spots on the Supreme Court and other courts, but he has stressed that it should not override merit...The idea of an aboriginal judge has been hotly debated in legal circles for almost two years, with the most recent support coming from the Canadian Bar Association, which wants the government to "give

particular focus” to appointing qualified aboriginals. Adding fuel to the debate is the fact the Supreme Court’s docket is heavy on aboriginal rights...Two aboriginal names that have been widely raised are Murray Sinclair, who sits on the Manitoba Court of Queen’s Bench, and Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, a Saskatchewan provincial court judge. There are also a handful of other potential aboriginal contenders. Court of appeal are the traditional drawing pools for Supreme Court judges, but there are no aboriginals sitting on high courts in any of the three Prairie provinces.

Chief has some unfinished business (SK)

(Leader Post, October 18, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

The chief’s chair is old hat to Joseph Quwezance. The 64-year-old, who served as Saskatoon Tribal Council chief from 1988 to 2000, is back in the office after beating incumbent Glenn Johnstone in an election last week...After returning to his home on the Yellow Quill First Nation for “a rest” in 2000, Quwezance served as a band councilor for Yellow Quill from 2002-05 before seeking the tribal council’s top job again. One of his priorities is to help beef up education, training and employment opportunities for the province’s rapidly growing aboriginal population. Saskatchewan government projections estimate the proportion of the province’s people who are aboriginal will grow from 13.5 per cent in 2001 to 33 per cent by 2045...As well as working with the City of Saskatoon and the provincial government to give aboriginals better access to training and education, Quwezance said he would also like to forge partnerships with industry to secure jobs for young adults. Mining, especially potash and uranium, and diamond exploration could all provide labour opportunities for First Nations and Metis people, he said. Urban and reserve housing standards are another priority for Quwezance. The amount of social housing available in Saskatoon is inadequate, he said, and he’d like to work with the province and city to get more affordable housing built. One source of revenue for better programs and facilities for First Nations people is gaming, and Quwezance said the tribal council must push ahead with development of the Dakota Dunes Casino planned for the Whitecap Dakota First Nation south of Saskatoon... Quwezance’s term as chief runs until 2008.

Program to help aboriginal business

(Leader Post, October 19, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

The NDP government unveiled a new program Tuesday to help foster aboriginal businesses in the province. The Saskatchewan First Nation and Metis Economic Development Program will provide \$5 million in grants over four years to aboriginal applicants who want to develop or expand a business. First Nations and Metis Relations Minister Maynard Sonntag said the program recognized the tough economic circumstances of many aboriginal communities...The government grant will amount to no more than 35 per cent of the project’s cost while the applicant will have to put at least 10 per cent of their own funding into the plan. The government has stipulated the businesses must be in the growing sectors of the economy identified in its economic summit earlier this year: oil and natural gas development, mining, forestry, value-added agriculture, manufacturing and tourism. First Nations and Metis economic development organizations will be designated to assess proposals and make recommendations to the government, which will make the final decisions. Sonntag said the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation will be utilized to make

recommendations on First Nations businesses but no group has been found yet for Metis applications.

Jobs a key focus: Merasty (SK)

(Prince Albert Daily Herald, October 21, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Hundreds of new jobs a year will be needed in aboriginal youth are to have a future in the province, says Gary Merasty, former grand chief of the Prince Albert Grand Council. Merasty talked about youth employment during his keynote speech Thursday night at the Prince Albert and District Chamber of Commerce chairman's gala...Merasty told the audience that when he became grand chief six years ago, little reliable information was kept on the status of aboriginal in the PAGC...So he and the chiefs of the PAGC's 12 member First Nations set out to make sure they not only began collecting accurate statistics, but focused on critical areas for success. Those areas included a strategy for youth and efforts to improve education and employment levels. But they wanted more than increased employment for band members...Among PAGC youth alone, at least 585 jobs each year for the next 10 years will be needed just to reach a 50 per cent employment rate for youth, said Merasty. And those numbers might have to get bumped up if birth rates continue their upward trend among aboriginals, he said...With the retirement of the baby boomer generation coming soon, he said aboriginal youth could represent a replacement boom for the labour market...

Other

Help poor with tax change, business group urges gov't (SK)

(The Leader Post, October 6, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

The government – not Saskatchewan's businesses – should take responsibility for low-income workers, the Saskatchewan Business Council told the Commission on Improving Work Opportunities for Saskatchewan Residents on Wednesday. The commission is meeting in Regina this week to hear presentations from interested parties, including business and anti-poverty groups. After the proposed most available hours legislation was scrapped by the province earlier this year, the commission was formed to create recommendations for Labour Minister Deb Higgins on strategies for improving the work situation for vulnerable workers, including those who are involuntarily part-time workers. "We take issue with the characterization of part-time workers and self-employed individuals as vulnerable workers," said Marilyn Braun-Pollon, representing the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), as well as the Saskatchewan Business Council (SBC), in an interview after its presentation to the commission. "When you look at the stats, the majority of part-time workers are working voluntarily as part-time." The most available hours legislation is "our worst nightmare," she said, adding that the SBC and CFIB believe that "heavy-handed legislation" should not be imposed on business owners. However, Peter Gilmer, on behalf of the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry, said: "We believe the most available hours needs to be brought back. I'm confused as to why it's such a nightmare for the business community," he said, adding that to call it a nightmare is a "huge over-exaggeration." Braun-Pollon offered a solution for relieving the burden on low-income workers to the commission, saying that it's the government, not the

employers that need to act. "What we need to do is increase the amount of income that workers can earn tax-free, combine that with improved training opportunities, and other tax relief, such as lowering the PST," she said...Gilmer, however, disagreed, saying "We do believe that there's a responsibility from the business community to provide certain things." That responsibility, he said, is one of basic workers rights...

Breakaway unions form new U.S. labour federation (US)

(Lancaster House, Weekly Work Report for October 3, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

Delegates from seven of America's largest unions gathered in St. Louis on September 27 for the founding convention of a new labour federation in the U.S. The Change to Win Coalition is the new home for unions that have broken away from the AFL-CIO: International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Laborers International Union, Service Employees Union, UNITE HERE, United Food and Commercial Workers Union, United Farm Workers, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. Delegates ratified a constitution and structure, passed resolutions on organizing, diversity, and politics, and designated Anna Burger as Chair and Edgar Romney as Secretary-Treasurer.

Printing company closure leaves schools in lurch (SK)

(Leader Post, October 14, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

A longtime Saskatoon printing company closed its doors at the beginning of October, leaving nearly 30 people out of jobs and schools across Western Canada without the student planner books they paid for in advance. Workers at Apex Graphics at Broadway Avenue and Ninth Street were phoned at home last Sunday and told not to come to work, says a former employee who asked not to be named. The employee said there are at least 30 employees, and a number of them are owed holiday pay and other wages. They have filed claims with the provincial Department of Labour. The unprinted student planners were produced by a subsidiary of Apex known as Think In Ink. The former employee said Apex and its subsidiaries are owned by Doug Heinrichs. However, Heinrichs denied Thursday he was the sole owner, saying the business is a partnership. Asked whether the business had entered bankruptcy proceedings, Heinrichs said that was not that case...The former Apex employee says in the past year, the business seemed to be running on a cash basis where customers were asked to pay a substantial portion of the work in advance. The employee says schools and colleges in Western Canada that prepaid for student planners more than a year ago should have received their planner books in September, but did not. He says Apex failed to deliver as many as 100,000 planner books this fall. The employee said company owners were rarely around, leaving middle managers to field calls from angry customers who didn't get their product or suppliers who were not being paid...

Unions facing tough times (US)

(Leader Post, October 15, 2005)

[Paper copy](#)

The outlook for organized labour seems to grow worse by the day in this year of turmoil for unions. Auto supplier Delphi Corp. filed for bankruptcy this week, putting thousands of union jobs at risk. Northwest Airlines, Inc., also in bankruptcy, is still flying despite a strike by its mechanics union. And the Teamsters and other unions broke from AFL-CIO this summer, saying the larger union confederation has lost its

effectiveness. Harley Shaiken, a professor at the University of California in Berkeley who has written extensively on labour issues, said the challenges are intensifying... There have been some successes. Boeing Co. machinists got increased pension pay and cash bonuses in a contract approved after a monthlong strike. In Canada, autoworkers prevented the closure of some facilities and got modest wage increases after contentious negotiations with General Motors Corp., Ford Motor Co. and DaimlerChrysler AG. But by and large, unions are in crisis. David Well, an associate professor of economics at Boston University, compares it to the birth of the modern labour movement in the 1930s and says unions could emerge from their current troubles looking very different... Bankruptcy has been used as a tool to negotiate before with unions in the steel and airline industries. But Peter Stergios, a labour and employment attorney with the law firm Greenberg Traurig in New York, said companies are more comfortable resorting to Chapter 11, which usually results in holders of common stock being wiped out. The advantages can be compelling. Besides winning the right from bankruptcy judges to cut workers' pay, it allows companies in many cases to escape the burden of billions of dollars of obligations in underfunded pension plans, which are offloaded to the federal Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp... Unions are also facing a shift in public sentiment. As union membership declines, fewer people are seeing the impact of unions on their lives. In 2004, 12.5 per cent of U.S. workers belonged to unions, down from a high of 20.1 per cent in 1983, according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics... Stergios said employers are more enlightened than they used to be, so fewer workers see the need for unions. People may also be less sympathetic to unions because they're worried about their own paycheques, Shaiken said... Still, predictions of the demise of unions are exaggerated, Shaiken said. While Northwest's mechanics union is relatively small, the UAW is large and powerful, with 1.1 million members and retirees. GM, Delphi's one-time parent, and other automakers depend heavily on it for parts and a strike could wreak havoc on the auto industry... Well said after years of stagnating, unions are thinking about new ways to recruit and represent younger workers and immigrants. Well said it's possible that new kinds of unions, such as Web-based groups, could emerge.

Ontario Labour Board gives weight to religious beliefs

(NUPGE, October 16, 2005)

http://www.nupge.ca/news_2005/n16oc05a.htm

The Ontario Labour Relations Board has set a precedent by ruling in favor of an electrician who refused to join a union on grounds that membership violated his religious beliefs. Victor Allan, a journeyman electrician, filed a complaint with the board after joining a company in 2004 and learning he was required to join a union as a condition of employment. Allan said he belonged to a fellowship or "brethern" of believers in Jesus Christ. A central tenet of his religion was that believers must not belong to any other assembly, including clubs, associations or unions, he said. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) opposed Allan's case at the board, questioning the sincerity of his beliefs. It also argued that union membership is necessary to fulfill certain Ontario Labour Relations Act requirements dealing with stability in the fast-changing construction industry. Despite his opposition to unions, Allan had no problem accepting a hefty union-won raise – from \$22 to \$30.37 an hour. He also accepted improved pension benefits. Allan's rationale was that he had not participated in union affairs, and that the company had agreed to make the improvements. Thus, his beliefs were not violated in accepting the union-won gains, he contended. Likewise, Allan said he could accept pension improvements, even

though they came from a pooled fund, because benefits are paid to an "individual" rather than a group basis. The board conceded that Allan's explanations were "somewhat tenuous" but it accepted that his religious beliefs were sincere, and thus ruled in his favour.

Ottawa to relax EI rules for compassionate care benefits

(NUPGE, October 20, 2005)

http://www.nupge.ca/news_2005/n20oc05a.htm

The federal government plans to relax employment insurance rules to allow anyone to qualify for benefits if they have been designated by a palliative care patient as a caregiver. Six weeks of benefits are now permitted under the two-year-old program but recipients must be immediate family members - parents, children or spouses. Human Resources Minister Belinda Stronach says the changes are coming soon... Approximately 25% of an estimated 2.7 million unpaid caregivers in Canada are friends and neighbours, as opposed to family members. Funding for the expansion is expected to be included in the next federal economic update or budget tabled by Finance Minister Ralph Goodale.

McMaster students say no to renewal of Coca-Cola contract

(NUPGE, October 24, 2005)

http://www.nupge.ca/news_2005/n24oc05a.htm

McMaster University undergraduate students have voted to oppose renewal of a \$6-million agreement with Coca-Cola. By a margin of nearly three to one, the students voted against the giant American soft drink company in a campus referendum. Opponents of the deal said the university should not support a company that is linked to paramilitary forces in Colombia and environmental destruction in India. The 10-year contract, signed in 1998, is due to expire in 2008. However, it could be extended for a further two years if Coca-Cola invokes a clause dealing with specified sales volumes. Ray Rogers, an American activist and head of Corporate Campaign Inc., said during the campaign leading up to the vote that paramilitary groups had murdered and tortured trade union leaders at Coke plants in Colombia. He also said entire villages have been ruined in India because of excessive use of groundwater by the company. Coca-Cola issued a statement denying the allegations. The university defended its contract with the company, saying that McMaster would have to look to government grants or higher tuition fees to make up for the loss if the contract is cancelled...