



News Release

For immediate release

December 19, 2007

Bills 5 and 6 are an Attack on Workers' Rights

Saskatchewan Federation of Labour President Larry Hubich said today that with the tabling of Bills 5 and 6, the SaskParty government has launched an attack on workers' Constitutional and human rights.

"We are very concerned that this government is tabling legislation that violate workers' human rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Human Rights Code, and the ILO. A number of legal decisions from the Supreme Court of Canada have determined that collective bargaining is a constitutionally protected right," said Hubich.

To name one recent example, the Supreme Court, in a groundbreaking June 2007 ruling, found the B.C. government engaged in heavy-handed and illegal attacks on hospital workers' (mostly female) collective bargaining rights by effectively cancelling their collective agreements. The ruling contemplates the constraints placed on a government's ability to legislate in a manner that interferes with collective bargaining.

"We will be taking a very close look at these Bills and from what we can already see, there are several aspects of the Bills that warrant a legal challenge," said Hubich.

"The amendment to the Trade Union Act that changes the certification process for organizing unions is fundamentally undemocratic. Ballot certification that counts employees who don't vote as a 'no' vote, flies in the face of the basic principles of democracy, as enacted at every political level. These changes are patently unnecessary, unjustifiable, and show that the government's goal is simply to break unions," he said.

"Any time a government seeks to attack workers' rights to unionize, we view this as an attack on democracy and the principles of freedom of expression and freedom of association," said Hubich.

... 2

Minister Norris has said that the legislation is meant to make Saskatchewan competitive with other jurisdictions.

“We argue that these amendments represent a race to the bottom in labour legislation. They send the message that Saskatchewan is an anti-worker, unfriendly province to live and work in. What a backwards move for a province who is experiencing labour shortages in so many sectors,” said Hubich.

Hubich also expressed his dismay at the fact that this government has engaged in absolutely no consultation with the labour movement on these Bills. “The imposition of essential services legislation and the amendments to the Trade Union Act will affect hundreds of thousands of people who work for a wage in this province. We expect that any government would engage in respectful and meaningful consultation with those whose lives they are about to affect,” added Hubich.

The SFL represents nearly 95,000 unionized workers from
37 affiliated unions in Saskatchewan.

For more information, contact Larry Hubich at 537-7330 (cel)
or Cara Banks at 533-3423 (cel).