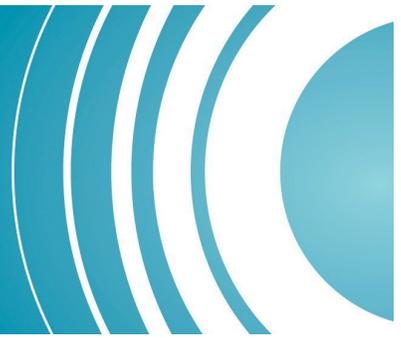


Voice



THE NEWSLETTER OF CUPE ALBERTA | FALL 2017

Labour law changes make life better for Alberta workers

The first major overhaul to Alberta labour laws in three decades has made it easier to form a union, and provides new workplace rights to all employees.

This is the third time the Notley government has improved the life of Alberta workers since the last election. The Alberta NDP brought agricultural workers under the protection of workplace laws, and the province is in the midst of raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour by 2018.

The latest update to Alberta labour law comes in the form of The Fair and Family Friendly Workplace Act, passed on June 6th. The legislation changes Employment Standards rules to allow workers to take time off work without pay for illness, to take care of critically ill children, mourning the death of a family member, or fleeing domestic violence.

Amanda Jenson of Lethbridge, Alberta was fired from her job when she took leave to care for her son Jake, after he developed leukemia.

“Three weeks after we were released from the hospital, I received an email from my employer terminating my position,” said Jenson. “I made a call to Employment Standards and was quite incredulous to learn that I would be offered no protection.”

“A thousand thoughts went through my head about supporting my family financially,” said Jenson. “I wasn’t going to be able to just focus on Jake’s recovery, and on his life saving treatments. I knew that part of my mind and energies now were directed elsewhere.”

Other changes to Employment Standards included:

extended maternity and parental leave, overtime, vacations and holidays and removing the ability of employers to pay less than minimum wage to disabled workers. Most of the changes brought Alberta up to standards long ago adopted by other provinces.

The legislation also made changes to the Labour Relations Code, which sets rules governing how workers join unions, and how collective agreements are managed once they do. Workers trying to form a union can now avoid a disruptive vote if 65% of the employees in a unit sign union cards or a petition asking to form a union.

Employees trying to get a first contract with an employer (often the hardest deal to negotiate) now have the option to apply for an imposed contract, allowing a period of stability for the union to take hold. 🌸



Our NDP government announcing sweeping changes to the labour relations and employment standards regimes in Alberta.

Alternative bargaining: when zeros aren't zeros

This year saw municipal and school board elections take place with many collective agreements coming up for renegotiation. The change in municipal and school board leadership can create challenges in bargaining. With the recovering economy still dependant on the rollercoaster of the oil and gas industry, bargaining monetary issues will be challenging. So we need to think outside of the box and consider various bargaining tactics to gain victories.

Improving work/life balances, improving job security, strengthening and cleaning up language can be explored in non-monetary ways. The NDP has made significant improvements to Employment Standards, now is a good time to implement these changes into our contracts. We need to ensure future governments cannot take away these improvements by getting them enshrined into our collective agreements. Engage with members and find out what they would like: increased job security, better holidays, new benefits, etc. Look at other collective agreements in your sector to see if there are things that would be beneficial for your members.



VOICE is produced by the CUPE Alberta Literacy & Communications Committee:

Deborah Stewart
Sheila Stewart
Crystal Sali
John Vradenburg
Gary Warren
Elaine Bambridge
Bukola Aboina
Michael Taylor

Back issues are available at:
www.alberta.cupe.ca



Employers who are on the defensive about monetary issues may present us with the opportunity to amend or add non-monetary clauses we wouldn't otherwise get the opportunity for. This is where we can strengthen our agreement language by: building worker retention clauses, fighting contracting out and exploring other areas to enrich the lives of our members.

Another approach is to scrutinize the operation of the workplace to find areas where changes could be made to save money that could be used as a bargaining tactic with the employer. Although the approach to this tactic must be carefully weighed and dependant upon the cohesive working relationship between both parties.

As CUPE National President Mark Hancock said in a recent address to members "we do not bargain concessions" so talk to your members, review other collective agreements, and prepare your bargaining committee members for what is going to be another interesting and challenging year for bargaining.

Strength in solidarity, together we bargain, alone we beg. 🌸

Life cycle thinking

Remember how your grandparents kept everything? I remember my grandmother getting flour in cotton sacks. Once the flour was used or put in a different container, that cotton sack was cut up, embroidered and made into tea towels. When the tea towels were worn or stained, they became rags. Things were reused and repurposed. Very little actually went to the trash. Clothing was bought because it was good quality. Grandma didn't have 30 dresses or pairs of shoes. A few, well-made articles were all that were necessary. Well-made items could be laundered over and over and not lose shape or wear out. 'Things were made to last,' because things were bought to last.

Environmental awareness has increased in the past number of years. Recycling is an important part of many municipalities' waste collection system. Diverting waste from the landfill by recycling is a focus for many. However, reuse is often forgotten. Reuse is linked to life cycle thinking. "To be concerned with the ecological footprints a product makes, in all its life stages, is known as life cycle thinking." This includes recognizing the ecological footprint from the resources used in the production of a product, the manufacturing process, the use, and finally the end of life of the product. Reuse can extend the life of a product.



As previously mentioned, life cycle thinking requires full consideration of the production of a product. An interesting example is the electric car, and specifically, the batteries required. Before purchase, to look at the full environmental impact the mining of the lithium for the batteries must be considered. Most people would assume that there is a reduction of emissions produced during use, however, that may depend. In areas dependent upon coal for electricity production, it is possible that the emissions are only being transferred to the power plant from the vehicle tail pipe, but in hydroelectric areas, there truly may be a decrease in emissions produced. The environmental cost of hydroelectricity may be the loss of land due to flooding areas for dams rather than CO2 released. The disposal of the battery must be studied as no battery lasts forever. Are resources or services available to deal with the end of life of this product? This is a brief and incomplete illustration of lifecycle thinking.

Please don't misunderstand: electric cars are not necessarily a poor choice, it is just important that all aspects of environmental impact should be considered. This is just one example of a product bought that may have more of an impact than people realize as often only the "use" component of its lifecycle is focused on and advertised. The important thing is that the complete lifecycle of the vehicle/battery is considered.

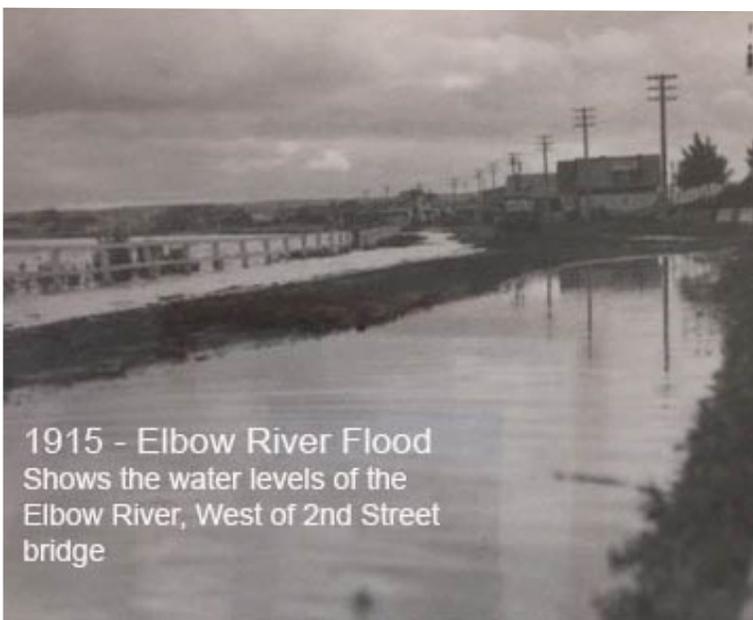
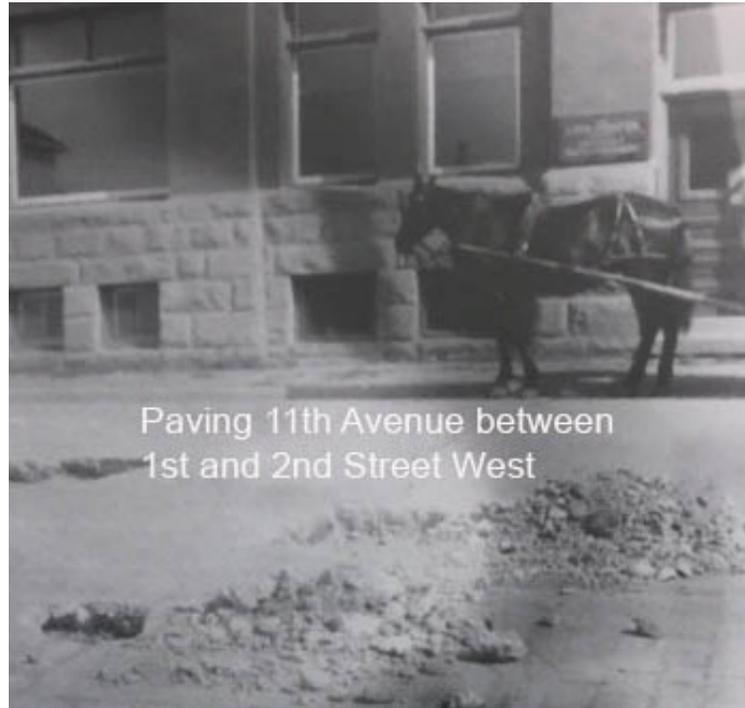
With environmental awareness being as prominent as it is, the Environment, Health and Safety Committee encourages everyone to reduce, reuse, recycle and think life cycle when buying. 🌱

100 YEARS CLUB

CUPE Local 37 is celebrating it's 100 years of striving towards solidarity of members and working to build the community. One hundred years of union relations is indeed considered a milestone.

It's hard to comprehend or imagine the vast number of brothers, sisters and community members that CUPE has touched over the past ten decades and we are still striving to pursue our mission. It's been a centennial of ups and downs, solidarity, growth, equality and diversity in culture; but most of all a centennial of serving the community.

Photos from Local 37's last 100 years



1917 - 2017

Over the last one hundred years, diversity has been our strength. By working together and looking out for one another, our CUPE family is our most valuable resource.

Through it all we are still ONE UNITED, UNSHAKABLE AND UNSTOPPABLE UNION!

Visit our website for stories and photos as families, retirees and guests joined together with CUPE Local 37 on August 19th, 2017.

On behalf of the Literacy, Communications and Technology Committee we say, "Happy celebrations!"
Solidarity forever. 🌸

Photos from Local 37's 100 year anniversary celebration



Bill 17: The Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act - What you Need to know!

Bill 17 includes a number of significant reforms to two important workplace-related laws in Alberta, being the Alberta Employment Standards Code, and the Labour Relations Code.

The Employment Standards Code and Labour Relations Code have not been significantly updated for almost 30 years. It was noted by Andy Sims, the former Alberta Labour Relations Board Chair and long-time arbitrator who provided advice to the government on Bill 17, “This is not a cutting-edge, lead-the-country reform. It is, in most respects, a bring-the-best-experiences-from-elsewhere to Alberta.”

The Employment Standards Code sets out minimum terms and conditions of employment (e.g. minimum wage, maximum hours of work, eligibility for maternity leave) and applies to mostly non-unionized workplaces. The Labour Relations Code regulates unionization and collective bargaining in the province.

Leaves

The Alberta government has introduced or expanded unpaid, job-protected leaves in the Employment Standards Code that address workers’ family responsibilities. Compassionate care and parental leave have been extended to align with Federal Employment Insurance provisions. Bill 17 also includes short-term and long-term job-protected sick leave, bereavement leave, and domestic violence leave, as well as leaves when a child becomes sick, disappears, or dies. The length of service required before being entitled to these leaves has been reduced and standardized to 90 days.

Overtime Agreements

Overtime agreements will require employers to provide 1.5 hours time off with pay for each hour of overtime banked (presently 1 hour for 1 hour basis). Time off with pay must be provided, taken and paid to employees within 6 months (presently 3 months) of the end of the pay period.

Holiday Pay

The requirement that an employee work for 30 work days or more to be eligible for holiday pay will be removed. Employees will be entitled to holiday pay even when the holiday falls on a day they are not normally scheduled to work.

Organizing

A representation vote will no longer be required to certify a union where there is evidence of support from more than 65% of the employees. A vote will be required where an application is supported by between 40% and 65% of the employees.

The expiry period for union cards obtained during an organizing campaign will increase from 90 days to 6 months. The Board will also be operating under shorter, mandatory timelines for the certification process.

Newly unionized workplaces where collective bargaining reaches an impasse will be able to refer disputes to a neutral arbitrator to determine the terms of the first Collective Agreement.

Employers will now bear the onus in cases where an employee has alleged an unfair labour practice based on discipline or discharge because of union affiliation.

Arbitrators have also seen an increase to their jurisdiction. The Bill proposes giving arbitrators specific powers to order particulars before a hearing, to require pre-hearing production, and to make interim or preliminary orders. Of note is the fact that appeals from an arbitrator’s decision will now be heard by the Board, and not by the Court of Queen’s Bench on judicial review. Appeals of decisions by the Board will be to the Alberta Court of Appeal, and will require leave from the Court of Appeal. 🌸

National Pharmacare Now

CUPE Alberta was pleased to join with Friends of Medicare and the Canadian Labour Congress to call for a National pharmacare strategy during a recent meeting of provincial Premiers in Edmonton.

A pharmacare plan would cover every Canadian, regardless of income while significantly reducing costs to governments, employers and workers.

The current prescription drug approach is based

on widely differing provincial plans depending on region, employment status and age.

In 2016, CUPE presented a submission to the House of Commons outlining major downsides to private insurance plans. Private plans are not available to all, drug costs are rising quickly, and these costs are almost entirely shifted on the backs of patients. The high number of public and private insurers reduces the capacity to save money through bulk purchasing of drugs.

To find out more about the issue and the Labour campaign, visit www.aplanforeveryone.ca



OH&S May 2017

Climate change is real, and we are lucky to have a government leading the country in fighting it. The carbon tax has put the funding in place for big improvements to making life more affordable for families in Alberta as energy prices go up. Programs include instant savings on energy efficient products, home improvements rebates, online rebates for efficient appliances and rebates for solar energy. Businesses and non-profits are getting funding for making a difference too, with incentives to choose high-efficiency products.

Some information you may not know about the carbon tax: Suncor Energy, Canadian Natural

Resources Ltd, Cenovus Energy Inc, and Shell Canada support the levy. Steve Williams from Suncor Energy Inc has said “We think climate change is happening.” “We think a broad-based carbon price is the right answer.”

Also, over 2/3 of Albertans will get a rebate, meaning most of us will pay less overall than we did before the levy was introduced.

A better climate, a better economy and more money in our pocket.

Check out <https://www.encyalberta.ca/> for information on these products.