

Collective Bargaining Agreement Signed With CUPE Local

November 1, 2011

The Northwest School Division and CUPE local 4797 signed a collective bargaining agreement today in St. Walburg. The agreement, which will be in place for the next 44 months, covers leaves, salary, working conditions and grievance procedures as well as seniority, lay-offs and recalls. It guarantees the members a 7.5 % salary increase spread over three years.

Speaking to both sides at the signing, Superintendent of Human Resources, Cory Rideout, noted that the bargaining process had been very honest and civil: “One of the things that I often speak about at HR meetings,” he said, “is the relationship that we have with our employees – it is civil, non-confrontational, and very much appreciated.”

CUPE Local president Denis Ouellette concurred with Rideout’s sentiments, and expressed his satisfaction with the way the process went. “It’s a nice atmosphere when we get there,” he said, “and we leave in a nice atmosphere. We’re all trying to do our jobs and accomplish something, and we do. Plus we make friendships as we negotiate and that’s what we like.”

Negotiations for the new agreement started last April, as the previous 1 year agreement was coming to a close, and were concluded after three sessions. The bargaining was non-adversarial and followed a hybrid interest based / positional model in which each side began by stating their respective positions, and then proceeded to freely discuss what would be in the best interests of everyone.

“The sessions were open and honest, and, at the end of the day, both sides were trying to do what’s best for the kids,” said Rideout.

“I went home satisfied and felt good,” Ouellette agreed.

CUPE representative Cheryl Sayers also expressed pleasure at the process: “Both sides knew where they were coming from, they were able to share a lot of information with each other, and it went really well because of that open communication.”

The agreement directly covers and affects all of the support staff, caretakers, educational assistants and bus drivers in Meadow Lake and Glaslyn, as well as the caretakers in the southern part of the school division – or roughly 1/3 of the support staff. The agreement indirectly affects the remaining 2/3’s of non-unionized support staff as well, as Rideout noted: “all the employees in the same job classification are, and will be, treated the same.”

Commenting on the successful conclusion Director of Education Duane Hauk remarked: “When we went to the bargaining table we went with the outlook that we value what all of our employees are doing, and know that they are essential to the best interests of the students in the Northwest School Division. Having both sides work together with that in mind is what I think made this process so effective. You can tell that the relationship between the board, senior admin

and the employees – in this case with CUPE- is a strong one, because it was a case of sitting down, getting to business and doing what was best.”

Chairman of the Board of Education Doug Murray agreed. “We’re very happy with the process,” he said, “and I’m very happy that we have a good relationship with the employee group. As a board we really value our relationship with our employees. It makes us the great Division we are.”



(left to right) Superintendent of Human Resources Cory Rideout, Director of Education Duane Hauk, Board Chair Doug Murray, and CUPE Local president Denis Ouellette
Photographs by Murray McDonnell