



For immediate release

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Workers question Norris on plans for fall sitting

Over 600 union members resumed their Annual Convention today in Regina.

This morning workers heard from Denis Lemelin, President of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, who warned delegates that Canada Post is on a mission to deregulate the postal service.

Delegates then endorsed the Food Safety First campaign, an initiative of the workers in the food inspection agency. The campaign exposes the dangers of budget cuts and deregulation in the food inspection industry.

Karl Flecker from the Canadian Labour Congress gave a presentation on the explosive growth of Canada's guest worker program. He told delegates that the program is "employer-driven and rife with exploitation and abuse". He called on the labour movement to expose the Harper government's racist and sexist immigration policies and to expose the corporations who are engaging in fraudulent and exploitative practices under the guest worker program.

Steelworkers from three locals currently on strike at the Saskatchewan Potash Corporation spoke to Convention this afternoon. 500 members have been on strike for 12 weeks. Pensions and wages are under dispute and the company is refusing to meet with the union.

Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour Rob Norris also addressed the delegation. He described the 'buoyant' Saskatchewan economy and spoke of the government's plan for debt reduction and infrastructure investments. He said the government has a 'difference of opinion with labour on Bills 5 and 6'.

Workers asked Norris if the government is planning to amend labour legislation in the fall sitting and he confirmed that the laws are "under review". He indicated that he was concerned about 15 year-old workers who had recently been fired from a fast food restaurant for not being of legal working age. He refused to commit to consulting with unions before amending labour legislation.

"It's very disappointing and frustrating for union members to hear that the Minister of Labour does not believe he needs to consult with working people before he makes changes to the laws that most affect them. Our Labour Standards Act is designed to bring fairness and safety to workers and we need it to be strengthened, not weakened. And now this government won't even discuss it with us. Our Minister of Labour is obviously not a Minister for labour," said SFL President Larry Hubich.

On Friday morning at 10:45 Erin Weir, an economist from the United Steelworkers, will make a presentation on resource royalties. The SFL will host special guest speaker Buffy Saint-Marie at 1:45.

The SFL represents approximately 95,000 workers from 37 affiliated unions across the province.

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