

**The Impact of  
School Division Amalgamations on  
CUPE Members:**

**An Overview of the Amalgamations in  
1997 and 2004**



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## Background

Saskatchewan has historically had a high number of school divisions in comparison to other provinces. In 1996, the provincial government introduced a policy to encourage voluntary amalgamations in this sector. The voluntary approach was in contrast to the forced amalgamation process that had taken place in the health care sector. Instead of legislating new school division boundaries, the provincial government provided guidelines and some financial incentives to school divisions to voluntarily amalgamate.

The response to amalgamations was limited at first. In the first round of amalgamations in 1997, the number of school divisions dropped from 119 to 99 after 20 school divisions restructured into 8 new school divisions. In the second round of amalgamations in 2004 the number of school divisions dropped from 99 to 82.

In 2004, the provincial government appointed an Education Equity Task Force to review school boundaries and, acting upon its recommendations, decided to legislatively enforce new school division boundaries that come into effect on January 1, 2006. Fifty-nine (59) rural public school divisions will be reconfigured into 12 school divisions. Only rural public school divisions are affected by the restructuring. The separate school divisions, francophone school division and urban school divisions in Regina and Saskatoon will not be affected by the amalgamations. However, there are two voluntary amalgamations among the separate school divisions. Effective January 1, 2006, there will be a total of 28 school divisions in the province.

### *How past amalgamations have affected CUPE members*

With the massive restructuring of school divisions taking place, it is important to have an understanding of how CUPE support staff workers have fared in past amalgamations. Overall, CUPE members have benefited positively in past amalgamations, achieving improved benefits, working conditions and wage parity with higher paid support staff in the former school divisions. Past school division amalgamations have had the effect of bringing lower paid workers up to the highest standard in the newly formed school division. At the same time, overall wages, in general, have continued to rise for all workers in the amalgamated division.

Each amalgamation described in this report has its own unique circumstances. In some instances, the amalgamating school divisions had existing CUPE locals. In others, there were non-unionized employees and CUPE members that were brought under the same employer with amalgamation. It is important to note that in all instances, where non-unionized employees voluntarily joined CUPE upon amalgamation, they fared very well as a result of organizing. Many received

wage adjustments of up to 20% in order to bring their rates of pay up to those of the higher paid CUPE members in their classification.

The following outlines what those achievements were through each amalgamation.

## **1997 School Division Amalgamations**

### *Battlefords School Division*

- The Battleford, North Battleford and part of Blaine Lake School Divisions amalgamated in 1997 to form the Battlefords School Division. Prior to amalgamation, the Caretakers, Clericals, Teaching Assistants, Library Technicians and Bus Drivers of North Battleford School Division were CUPE Local 1660.
- The non-unionized workers in Battlefords and Blaine Lake, excluding Bus Drivers joined CUPE just prior to the amalgamation. The newly organized members agreed to join the existing CUPE Local 1660 in 1997.
- In September 1998, they achieved a settlement similar to the one achieved in Landswest School Division. The previously non-unionized Battleford and Blaine Lake employees received wage adjustment of 4% to 20% in order to bring their pay rates up to those of the CUPE members in the first year of the new agreement. All CUPE members in the newly amalgamated school division received an additional wage increase of 7% over three years of the agreement.

### *Crystal Lakes School Division*

- Timberline and Canora School Divisions amalgamated in 1997 to form the Crystal Lakes School Division. Prior to amalgamation there was one CUPE local in each of the divisions. Local 3015 in Timberline included Caretakers, Clericals, Teaching Assistants and Library Technicians. Local 3492 in Canora included Caretakers, Bus Drivers, Teaching Assistants and Library Technicians. CUPE Locals 3015 and 3492 voted to merge in May 1998 and formed CUPE Local 4188.
- CUPE members in the newly amalgamated school division well outnumbered the non-unionized employees, who were later brought into the local union as a result of a Labour Relations Board decision.
- Bargaining commenced in May 1998 and was concluded in June 1999. The result was that the rates of pay for the lower paid workers were gradually increased over the life of the agreement until they were equal to the highest paid workers in each classification.

### *Landswest School Division*

- Wilkie and Kerrobert School Divisions amalgamated in 1997 to form the Landswest School Division. Prior to amalgamation, all of the employees, with the exception of the Bus Drivers in both school divisions, were CUPE members. Local 1972 was in Wilkie and Local 78 was in Kerrobert. The Bus Drivers in Wilkie joined CUPE just prior to amalgamation. The Bus Drivers in Kerrobert remained contracted out. The Locals agreed to merge in 1997 and became Local 4119. They concluded their first agreement in 1998. It incorporated the best language of the two previous agreements.
- The previously lower paid employees received wage adjustments of between 4% and 19% in order to bring their pay rates up to those of the highest paid employees in the first year of the agreement. In addition, all CUPE members received a general wage increase of 7% over the three-year agreement.
- In 1999, the Kerrobert Bus Drivers joined CUPE and formed Local 4259. They were merged with CUPE Local 4119 and are covered by the 4119 agreement. Eventually all bus drivers were brought in house.

### *Sask Central School Division*

- Last Mountain and Long Lake School Divisions amalgamated in 1997 to form Sask Central School Division. Prior to amalgamation, CUPE Local 3084 represented caretakers, school secretaries, teaching assistants and library technicians in the Last Mountain School Division. Long Lake employees were non-unionized. The non-unionized employees in Long Lake were higher paid (up to \$3.00/hr more) than the unionized employees. They declined joining CUPE.
- Local 3084 opened negotiations for a new agreement in December 1999. By May 2000, a new agreement was reached. Over the term of the three-year deal, Local 3084 members reached parity with their non-unionized counterparts, which resulted in increases of 6 to 30% for different classifications.

### *Saskatchewan Rivers School Division*

- Prince Albert Rural, Prince Albert Public, Carleton Comprehensive High School and Kinistino merged in 1997 to form the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division.
- There were existing CUPE Locals in Prince Albert Rural, Prince Albert Public and Carleton Comprehensive with four separate collective

agreements covering some of the classifications. Prior to amalgamation, the non-unionized employees in Prince Albert Public and Prince Albert Rural decided to join with CUPE members in their school divisions. Kinistino employees joined shortly after amalgamation, when they had discovered that the Employer had applied to the Labour Relations Board to merge the four CUPE Locals into one and had excluded Kinistino employees on the application.

- In 2001 a new agreement was reached covering all support staff employees in the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division. This agreement now covers more than 400 employees. There were vast differences among the four previous agreements and the non-unionized employees. Major improvements include a reduction in the number of classifications (from 50 to 39); the creation of a new salary grid; and a signing bonus for employees. This agreement resulted in many benefit gains for employees and limited red-circling of positions.

#### *Souris Moose Mountain School Division*

- Oxbow and Arcola School Divisions amalgamated in 1997 to form Souris Moose Mountain School Division. Prior to amalgamation, there were two CUPE locals in Oxbow – Local 3357 representing Bus Drivers and Local 3951 representing Caretakers.
- In April 2001 School Secretaries, Teaching Assistants, Library Assistants and Student Service Workers joined CUPE and were members of Local 4432. Later, the Labour Relations Board ruled that all three bargaining units be certified as one bargaining unit. There is now one CUPE local – Local 3951.
- When the first collective agreement was negotiated, benefits, sick leave, compassionate leave and other provisions were brought up to the highest level of the three former groups.

(acknowledgement: this section on 1997 amalgamations was written by Patty Brockman as part of an organizing report in 2001)

## **2004 School Division Amalgamations**

In 2004, CUPE members in nine school divisions were affected by another round of amalgamations. As with the 1997 amalgamations, CUPE members received improvements in pay, benefits and working conditions when merging collective agreements. In a few cases the amalgamation had neither a positive nor a negative impact on the CUPE members in the new school division. What is clear

in all of the amalgamations is that CUPE members did not see reductions in wages, benefits or working conditions.

Here is a summary of the 2004 amalgamations:

#### *Aspen Grove School Division*

- Broadview, Regina East and Scenic Valley School Divisions amalgamated to form Aspen Grove School Division. Of the three school divisions, only one had unionized support staff. CUPE Local 3243 represents about 47 support staff in the former Broadview School Division.
- To date, there has not been any organizing of new members in the school division. In the last round of bargaining the local achieved improvements to their collective agreement, but it is not directly related to the amalgamation.

#### *Eastland Lakes School Division*

- Eastland Lakes School Division was formed with the amalgamation of Crystal Lakes and Kamsack School Divisions. All 182 support staff were represented by CUPE in these two school divisions. CUPE Local 4188 represents all support staff in the former Crystal Lakes; CUPE Local 832-4 represents bus drivers and CUPE Local 832-6 represents clericals, teacher assistants and library assistants in the former Kamsack School Division.
- Because support staff in the new school division is already unionized, there has been no organizing in this division. The locals have not merged and have not yet decided to merge their three collective agreements.

#### *Golden Plains School Division*

- Golden Plains School Division was created from the former school divisions of Gravelbourg, Wood River/Makota and Lady of Fatima. The CUPE membership was limited to 5 caretakers in Gravelbourg. There was no additional organizing or changes in wages or working conditions as a result of this amalgamation.

#### *Holy Trinity Separate School Division*

- Holy Trinity was formed through the amalgamation of Moose Jaw Roman Catholic Separate School Division, Swift Current RCSSD and Shaunovon RCSSD.

- CUPE Local 55 represents the employees of the former Moose Jaw RCSSD. To date there has not been any impact on new organizing or changes in wages or conditions of employment.

#### *Lakeview School Division*

- Lakeview School Division was created in 2004 by the amalgamation of Shamrock and Wadena School Divisions and Ituna School, which had been part of Deer Park School Division. All 107 support staff in the new school division were already represented by CUPE: Local 2452 represented support staff in Shamrock, Local 3078 represented workers in Wadena and Local 3926 represented Deer Park support staff. Because the new division was fully organized, there was no organizing as a result of amalgamations.
- Prior to the amalgamation of the new school division, the locals merged to form Local 4699. In 2005 the local negotiated a new collective agreement from the three former agreements. Most classifications received a pay increase as a result of creating one wage schedule from three. All CUPE members also received a general wage increase.
- The former collective agreements provided different levels of benefit coverage. Through the negotiation of a new collective agreement, all workers were brought up to the highest level of coverage of the three former agreements. Former Wadena members received a Vision plan and other members received a group benefit plan that they did not have previously.

#### *Melfort-Tiger Lily School Division*

- The Melfort and Tiger Lily School Divisions amalgamated to form the Melfort-Tiger Lily School Division. CUPE represented only bus drivers (Local 3610) in the former Tiger Lily School Division but prior to the amalgamation, 30 caretakers, TAs and secretaries from Tiger Lily decided to join CUPE and became members of Local 2554, which already represented about 49 support staff in the Melfort School Division.
- In 2005 Local 2554 negotiated one collective agreement for all support staff, bringing lower paid employees' wages up to a higher level. Depending on the classification, some employees received up to a 52% increase in their wage rates. The only classification that did not see a wage increase was probationary caretakers, but once they pass probation they will receive significant increases. On average, employees received a 15% increase.



- The former employees of Melfort School Division also received the same benefit plan that had been offered to Tiger Lily employees that includes core benefits, dental plan and extended health care plan. Former Tiger Lily employees received improvements in vacation entitlement.

#### *Melville-Deer Park*

- Melville School Division and most of Deer Park School Division (except for Ituna school) amalgamated to form the Melville-Deer Park School Division. CUPE represented all support staff in both former school divisions (both represented by Local 3926). Only bus drivers and contract caretakers are not organized but to date there has been no new organizing.
- In the negotiation of a new collective agreement, the former Deer Park employees had their wages brought up to the level of the Melville School Division employees.

#### *Northern Lakes Disestablishment*

- In 2004, the Northern Lakes School Division was “disestablished”. This was not considered an amalgamation by Sask Learning. Glaslyn School became part of Turtleford School Division and the rest of Northern Lakes became part of Battlefords School Division.
- Former Northern Lakes employees at Glaslyn School, who remain members of Local 3076, received an average wage increase of 25%, extended health care benefits, improved bereavement leave, and reduced wage grid for different classifications. EAs, Library Techs and Clericals went from 6 steps to 4 steps and Caretakers went from a 6 step to a 1 step pay grid. The Glaslyn School employees are the only unionized support staff in Turtleford School Division.
- Former Northern Lakes employees who went to Battlefords School Division became members of the existing CUPE Local 1660. These employees received wage parity with the other Battlefords School Division employees, worth 3% of payroll. Teacher Assistants went from \$12.14 to \$14.88 an hour, Secretary/Clerk went from \$12.14 to \$16.36 an hour, Library Aides went from \$12.14 to \$14.88 or \$15.39 an hour, and Caretakers went from \$12.14 to \$15.79 an hour. After these adjustments, all positions will receive wage increases of 8% over the three years of the new agreement.

#### *Qu'Appelle Valley School Division*

- Plans for the amalgamation of the former Cupar, Indian Head and Buffalo Plains School Divisions began several years before it was finalized in

2004. Two of the former school divisions – Cupar (CUPE Local 1937) and Indian Head (CUPE Local 2492) – were already organized and represent about 148 support staff. Buffalo Plains is a large school division near the city of Regina and its non-union staff receives higher wage rates than the more rural school divisions of Cupar and Indian Head.

- In anticipation of the upcoming amalgamation, the Cupar support staff did very well in their 2002 round of bargaining. They received wage adjustments between 9 and 34.9% in order to reach wage parity with the classifications in Indian Head. They also went from 50/50 cost-shared core benefits to 100% employer-paid benefits including extended health care and a dental plan. In 2003, Indian Head employees also went from 50/50 cost-shared benefits to 100% employer paid benefits plus extended health care and dental plan.
- In the 2005 round of bargaining for one collective agreement, former Cupar employees received further improvements in wages and leaves of absence. The former Indian Head employees had the number of steps in their wage grid reduced from 8 years to 4 years to the top of the scale, which resulted in wage increases for many employees. All support staff achieved improvements in the number of personal days in their collective agreement.

#### *Sunrise School Division*

- Sunrise School Division was formed when Prairie View and Weyburn School Divisions amalgamated. CUPE represents three caretakers in the former Prairie View School Division (Local 4377).

#### *York School Division*

- York School Division is an amalgamation of Yorkdale School Division and the Yorkton School Division. Part of the Yorkton School Division was the Yorkton Regional High School, whose support staff are represented by CUPE Local 2520. There are approximately 37 CUPE members who work at Yorkton Regional High School.
- To date there has not been any new organizing or changes in wages or working conditions as a result of the amalgamation.

**Table 1 - Saskatchewan School Division Amalgamations – 1997  
Impact on CUPE Members**

<b>New School Division</b>	<b>Former School Divisions/CUPE local</b>	<b># of organized support staff</b>	<b># of unorganized support staff</b>	<b>Impact of amalgamation - organizing</b>	<b>Impact of amalgamation – wages and benefits</b>
Battlefords SD 118	N. Battleford Rural N. Battleford Public/L.1660 Blaine Lake	110	57 +	57 support staff except bus drivers organized into L. 1660.	Wage parity reached in 1998 – between 4 – 20% adjustments for previously unorganized.
Crystal Lakes SD	Timberline (3015) Canora (3492)	103	None	Non-unionized substitutes brought into union result of LRB decision.	Wage parity for lower paid workers reached over life of new collective agreement.
Landswest SD 123	Wilkie (1972) Kerrobert (78)	120	Kerrobert: bus drivers (Hertz)	Wilkie bus drivers organized. Later Kerrobert bus drivers organized with CUPE and employer brought all bus in house.	Lower paid employees received adjustments between 4-19%. All CUPE members received 7% over 3 years of new agreement.
Sask Central	Last Mountain (3084) Long Lake (unorganized)	37	Long Lake: 25-30	none	Last Mountain employees achieved benefits & wage parity with unorganized. In first agreement after amalgamation wages increase by 6 – 30%
Saskatchewan Rivers SD 119	PA Rural (832 & 1634) PA Public (858, 858-1, 2627) Carleton Comp (2914) Birch Hills – Kinistino	311	Kinistino: 40	Kinistino organized into CUPE – 40 members Employer applied to LRB for one bargaining unit. Casuals brought in.	Wage and benefit parity achieved in bargaining of new agreement – some rural classifications achieved 22 – 32% increases. All workers received 9.5% over three years and signing bonus of 8%.
Souris Moose Mountain SD 122	Oxbow (3357, 3951) Arcola	Oxbow: 60	Oxbow: 125 clerical/TAs Arcola: all	In 2001, Secretaries, TAs, Library Assistants and Student Service Workers joined CUPE as Local 4432. Local 3951 new certification by order of LRB.	New school board equalized wage rates prior to unionization of clericals & TAs. Benefits such as sick leave, compassionate leave, etc. were brought up to highest level of 3 former groups in bargaining of one collective agreement.

**Table 2 - Saskatchewan School Division Amalgamations – 2004  
Impact on CUPE Members**

<b>New School Division</b>	<b>Former School Divisions/CUPE local</b>	<b># of organized support staff</b>	<b># of unorganized support staff</b>	<b>Impact of amalgamation - organizing</b>	<b>Impact of amalgamation – wages and benefits</b>
Aspen Grove SD (L. 3243)	Broadview (3243) Regina East Scenic Valley	47	Regina East Scenic Valley	None yet.	Achievements in bargaining but not directly related to the amalgamation.
Eastland Lakes SD	Crystal Lakes (4188) Kamsack (832-4, 832-6)	182	None	None	None
Golden Plains	Gravelbourg (1481) Wood River/Mankota LOF	5	All but 5 in Gravelbourg	None	None
Holy Trinity RCSSD	Moose Jaw RCSSD (55) Shaunavon RCSSD Swift Current RCSSD	115	Uncertain	None yet.	None yet.
Lakeview SD (L.4699)	Shamrock (2452) Wadena (3078) Ituna (Deer Park) (3926)	107	None	None	Vision plan new for all members. Group benefit plan new to some members. Pay increase to most classifications with the creation of one wage schedule from three.
Melville-Deer Park SD (L.3926)	Melville (3926) Deer Park (3926)	35	Bus driver assoc. & contr. Caretakers	None	Former Deer Park employees achieved higher pay and working conditions.
Melfort-Tiger Lily SD (L. 2554)	Melfort (2554) Tiger Lily (3610)	49 (Melfort)	30 (Tiger Lily)	30 support staff (caretakers, TAs, sec) from Tiger Lily came into 2554)	Former Melfort employees received benefit plan (core benefits, dental, EHC). Wages increased an average of 15% (from 0 – 52%)/ Improved vacation for former Tiger Lily employees.

<b>New School Division</b>	<b>Former School Divisions/CUPE local</b>	<b># of organized support staff</b>	<b># of unorganized support staff</b>	<b>Impact of amalgamation - organizing</b>	<b>Impact of amalgamation – wages and benefits</b>
Qu'Appelle Valley SD (L. 5252)	Cupar (1937) Indian Head (2492) Buffalo Plains	148	Buffalo Plains (100-180? with bus drivers)	None yet. Unorganized employees in Buffalo Plains have higher rates of pay.	In 2002, Cupar support staff received wage increases from 9 – 34.9% plus 11% in benefits to reach parity with Indian Head classifications. This was achieved in anticipation of upcoming amalgamation. In 2005 bargaining, former Cupar employees received further improvements in wages and leaves of absence. Former Indian Head employees saw reduction of steps in wage grid (from 8 yrs to 4 yrs to top of scale). Both groups achieved improved personal days.
Sunrise SD (L. 4377)	Prairie View (L. 4377) Weyburn SD 97	3 caretakers in Prairie View	?	None	None
York SD (L.2520)	Yorkdale SD 36 Yorkton SD 93 (Yorkton Regional High, L.2520)	37 (Yorkton Reg. High only)	29?	None	

**Note:**

Disestablished school division: in 2004, Northern Lakes School Division was “disestablished.” Glaslyn School became part of Turtleford School Division and the rest of Northern Lakes became part of Battlefords School Division. This was not considered an amalgamation by Sask Learning. Former Northern Lakes employees at Glaslyn School, who are members of CUPE Local 3076, received an average wage increase of 25%, extended health care benefits, improved bereavement leave and a reduced wage grid (from 6 steps to 4 steps for clericals, EAs and Library Techs and from a 6 step to a 1 step grid for caretakers). Former Northern Lakes employees who went to Battlefords School Division received wage parity (worth 3% of payroll), plus 8% increase in wages over the 3 years of the agreement.

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