

# REPORT OF THE AFL POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

## INTRODUCTION

“Political Action” is embodied in statements and actions by the AFL and affiliates on a daily basis. Electronic communication of issues, alerts, pickets and campaigns are now commonplace within Alberta. The AFL plays a central role in the distribution and dissemination of regional, provincial and national information.

The Political Action Committee and the broader Political Action Network (affiliates, non-affiliates, community and coalition groups) has continued to meet to identify issues and potential initiatives. Issues that the AFL PAC has dealt with include: privatization, health care, education, child care, labour laws, workplace safety and standards, income security, pensions, employment insurance and the environment.

At the most recent meeting of the AFL PAC, members discussed the importance of crafting a new labour approach to economic and political issues in “post-debt” Alberta. The committee also drafted a number of resolutions for convention dealing with current issues such as the Horizon Oil Sands Project.

In addition, the committee talked about the need for the labour movement to re-evaluate the way it does politics. In particular, committee members suggested that the AFL organize a

meeting or series of meetings after the convention to talk about issues such as vote splitting, political education for members and re-visiting the idea of a province-wide labour-issues campaign.

Going forward, the committee also identified several other issues as particularly important for union members. These included: CLAC, Wal-Mart and pensions.

## ELECTIONS 2004

2004 brought unique demands for resources (people and funds) due to the “triple whammy” of federal, provincial and municipal elections.

## FEDERAL ELECTION 2004

Many affiliates endorsed and utilized the CLC Labour Issues Campaign to promote issues significant to workers across Canada. Campaign organizers encouraged “member to member” discussions and distribution of Scratch and Win cards titled “Your Country, Your Choice”. The cards highlighted education, health care, pensions and employment. Fact sheets, radio ads and a “Better Choice” website supported the campaign.

The AFL gratefully acknowledges UFCW for sponsoring Katrina Piechotta and CEP for sponsoring Dave Malka as Labour Issues Campaign Organizers during the federal election.

## PROVINCIAL ELECTION 2004

Across the province, significant individual and organizational resources were dedicated to election initiatives. The New Democrats appreciated the release of Jason Foster, AFL staff member, for the duration of the campaign. Generous financial donations were also made to the party by individuals and unions.

Labour support for opposition candidates paid off with the election of four New Democrats (up from four) and the election of several Liberals with labour backgrounds.

Conscious information sharing combined with joint initiatives between the AFL and local Labour Councils in Edmonton and Hinton also impacted positively on provincial election outcomes.

## MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS 2004

Comprehensive information was not gathered about community specific activities across the province. However, it's clear that labour had a significant impact on the outcomes of local elections in several communities. Hinton, for example, now has a long-time labour activist for a mayor (CEP member Glenn Taylor). Other labour activists were also elected to the town's council. Labour friendly councilors were also elected in Edmonton, Calgary and several other towns and cities.

A joint initiative between the AFL and Edmonton & District Labour Council included the hiring of a full time coordinator for the municipal campaign in that city.

## 2005 RESOLUTIONS

The Political Action Committee (PAC) recommends the following:

- (i) PAC endorses the recommendations contained in the 2005 Convention Policy Paper, entitled ***Forging our Future: the Alberta Federation of Labour 2005-2010.***
- (ii) PAC recommends that financial resources contributed by affiliates to undertake a Labour Issues Campaign (as described in Resolution 505 from the 2003 Convention) should be reallocated to support initiatives articulated in the 2005 AFL Convention Policy Paper.

## 2003 RESOLUTIONS

The following actions have been taken over the past two years to address political action resolutions passed at the last AFL Convention in 2003:

### 2003 RESOLUTION 501

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the unions who make up the membership of the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) avoid splitting our vote by endorsing more candidates than there are seats in a given ward or area, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the AFL encourages its member unions to find candidates that they can support as early as possible.

**ACTION:** Although Resolution 501 was specific to school board and municipal elections, the concept was promoted during the federal election as well. The AFL circulated lists of

candidates, endorsed by local labour councils, across the province.

### **2003 RESOLUTION 502**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) adopt a policy of Just Transition, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the AFL in making submissions and presentations on all environmental issues which effect workers and their communities demand Just Transition for affected workers, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the AFL and by extension the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) ensure through effective lobbies the federal government does not renege on its promises to affected workers and communities regarding Just Transition.

**ACTION:** The AFL adopted the CEP&CLC declaration of support for Just Transition and continues to promote Just Transition in all public comments/statements pertaining to the Kyoto protocol.

### **2003 RESOLUTION 503**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL), through its Political Action Committee, establish a Political Action Network, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that affiliates be encouraged to provide the AFL with the contact information for individuals wishing to participate in this AFL provincial political action network, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this AFL Political Action Network be

activated for information sharing, networking, issues campaigns and mobilization before, during and after all elections.

**ACTION:** The development of a Political Action Network is ongoing. Internet web sites and e-mail broadcasts have played a significant part in information sharing and mobilization.

### **2003 RESOLUTION 504**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) invite a member of the Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE) to Alberta to share its history, experiences and structures with local Labour Councils and Committees, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this tour by COPE be sponsored by the AFL and organized by its Political Action Committee (PAC) in consultation with Labour Councils, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the purpose of this tour is to determine the feasibility of setting up similar civic structures in Alberta that will be able to affect public policy, raise issues and elect progressive candidates at the municipal and school board levels.

**ACTION:** COPE information sessions were held in Edmonton and Calgary. COPE initiatives were embodied in Labour Council strategies during the municipal elections.

### **2003 RESOLUTION 505**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) endorse and support the feasibility of a **Labour Issues Campaign** by:

1. Striking a Steering Committee of Heads of Unions
2. Undertaking a poll of our members to identify issues
3. Financially support a multi-media issues campaign
4. Utilizing interactive campaign materials, assist in organizing a face-to-face membership campaign, and
5. Assisting Issues Coordinators who will organize the canvas follow-up with the local unions and develop presentations to local union meetings.

**ACTION:** The Labour Issues Campaign envisioned in Resolution 505 did not materialize. Unfortunately, not all affiliates were able to participate in polling or contribute the financially support needed to undertake such a

campaign. Thrifty use was made of the CLC resources (refer to Federal Election 2004) and materials developed by coalition partners such as Public Interest Alberta, Parkland and Friends of Medicare. Refer to 2005 Resolution.

**2003 RESOLUTION 507**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) adopt a policy supporting proportional representation in all future discussions or hearings on electoral reform.

**ACTION:** Efforts in this area are ongoing. Information about Fair Vote Canada – a citizen’s group promoting proportional representation – was distributed to AFL affiliates.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

**AFL POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE, 2003 – 2005**

Dave Malka, Chair	CEP 777
John Fata	UFCW 401
Alex Grimaldi	CUPE 30
Brian Henderson	CUPW-Edm.
Real Labbe	PSAC 30015
Victor Patton	CUPE 40
Len Steparyk	TWU
Berend Wilting	CUPE 474
Heather Smith	AFL Liaison/UNA
Don MacNeil	AFL Liaison/CEP
Kerry Barrett	AFL
Les Steel	CLC

Committee members who completed partial terms:

Rick Arsenault	IAM District 14
D’arcy Lanovaz	CDLC/CUPE
Maureen Werlin	COPE 458

HS:mw\*cope458  
 File:\events\2005conv\rpts\2005-PAC Rpt-final