

REPORT OF THE AFL POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (PAC)

INTRODUCTION

Since the 2005 Convention, the AFL has continued to participate in and coordinate efforts with organizations to further the interests of workers and citizens in Alberta. Prominent political action allies include Public Interest Alberta (PIA), Parkland Institute and Friends of Medicare (FOM).

This report attempts to highlight political action related undertakings. The Political Action Committee (PAC) met seven times since the last convention. On three occasions a broader Political Action and Leaders Coalition met (the last in August 2005). However, political action is a daily activity of the AFL Executive and staff. Interviews, speaking tours, public events, affiliate meetings, the work with other groups and coalitions and the development of campaigns and publications is an incomplete list of undertakings that “happen”. The Political Action Committee acknowledges and appreciates the work of the AFL Executive and staff in communicating and promoting affiliate understanding of issues and participation in events.

Electronic communications have been central to AFL communications and political action initiatives. The AFL distributes action alerts calling on affiliates to support campaigns or to attend events, rallies and picket lines.

The AFL website contains a host of information, campaign materials and publications on issues such as health care, farm workers, first contract arbitration,

CLAC (Christian Labour Association of Canada), temporary workers, labour law (12 year old “employees”), oil sands development and much more.

2005-2006

- The AFL prepared and circulated a summary of the AFL’s position for the Employment Standards review. Affiliates were encouraged to participate in public consultation.
- UFCW Lakeside Packers strike in Brooks – affiliate mobilization, planning events to peak at the November 15th opening of the Legislature. The need for first contract legislation became a prominent message to the public and politicians.
- Efforts were made to establish a broader Political Action Coalition bringing together affiliates and non-affiliates.
- Medicare – active participation in the FOM “No to Third Way” campaign.
- Energy Policy & Industrial Strategy In September 2005 the Parkland Institute released **“Back to Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water”**. An Energy Forum led to the development of “Toward an Energy Security Strategy for Canada”. PAC created an Industrial Strategy Sub-committee and endorsed commissioning Parkland Institute to undertake a study and development of an AFL Industrial Strategy and Energy

Policy. Funding was sought from affiliates.

- Federal election – promoted public forums, CLC Better Choices Campaign.
- Public Interest Alberta – promoted Post Secondary Education tour and campaign.
- CLAC – A website dedicated to exposing the truths about CLAC has been established. Efforts to mount a broader campaign have been hampered by the number of Building Trades unions that are outside the Federation of Labour. While the AFL respects the autonomy of labour centrals and local unions we also recognize the need to find ways of working copoperatively on such an important campaign. The consequences of not working together could lead to dire consequences for all of us.
- Bill 27 Alberta Labour Relations Board (ALRB) – The AFL led a challenge of the ALRB impartiality surrounding the development and implementation of Bill 27 (affecting all health care bargaining units). Documents released subsequent to Freedom of Information requests show personnel from the ALRB helped to write the Regulations.

2006-2007

- Medicare – “Will You Be Covered” campaign. CATS (Citizen Action Teams) were established to mobilize public opposition across the province. PSAC released Cara More to lead and develop the CATS. The AFL developed and circulated a paper on the impact of bargaining health benefits if the Third Way proceeds. G. McGowan then presented the paper at union meetings and public events. Public polling was utilized in the development of TV

advertisements, which ran the week before the Conservative party convention in April 2006. Other events (rallies, etc) did not proceed. The anticipated departure of Ralph Klein brought an abrupt halt to “3rd Way” initiatives by the provincial government.

- “Re-tooling the Political Machine” – an AFL discussion paper on achieving political change was revised and discussed at a leaders meeting in February 2006.
- Labour Force Development Strategy – “Chicken Little” released in April 2006.
- Policy Statement on Temporary Foreign Workers developed in May 2006.
- Election Planning – The CLC held a workshop on “Capacity Building for Change” in September 2006. This was also provided as a weeklong course at the 2007 AFL/CLC Labour School. The AFL will support Labour Council initiatives related to municipal elections by promoting a list of candidates supported by labour. Anticipating a federal election in 2007 the CLC has identified the Strathcona riding in Edmonton as a priority for action.
- AFL affiliates were encouraged to participate in the CLC campaign in support of Bill C-257, anti-scab legislation.
- Public Interest Alberta – Promotion of affiliate awareness and participation in Child Care campaign, Seniors Deserve Better campaign, A New Democratic Alberta and Living Wage campaign.
- Change the Law campaign continues. First contract legislation and providing labour law and WCB coverage to farm workers are prominent messages. PAC will undertake to redraft the Alberta

Labour Relations Code, updating work previously completed by M. D'Entremont. The Code we want - A Code **for** Labour instead of the Government Code **against** Labour.

Note: When the Alberta Government planned to further erode labour laws by allowing twelve years old children to work in bars, the swift actions of the AFL resulted in an immediate retreat.

- CLAC – The anti-CLAC campaign has been reactivated with AFL affiliates and established a new organization called the Alberta Workers' Rights Society. The CLC will provide financial assistance to support dedicating staff to the campaign.
- Energy Policy & Industrial Strategy – In the fall of 2006 affiliates were encouraged to make presentation at public meetings on the future of oil sands development in Alberta. In March 2007 President McGowan toured Alberta with "Don't Send Alberta Jobs Down The Pipeline" a campaign about fair royalties, piping unrefined bitumen out of the province and the increasing use of temporary foreign workers.
- PAC is anticipating the release of the joint Parkland Institute and AFL Energy Policy & Industrial Strategy in May 2007.

2007 CONVENTION DOCUMENTS

- 1) **The Political Action Committee endorses** the 2007 Convention Policy Paper entitled "**Making Gains for All: Political Change During a Boom**".
- 2) **The Political Action Committee recommends adoption** of the Action Plan for Political Action entitled "**Our Time is Now: A Labour Movement**

Action Plan for Progressive Political Action Change in Alberta", inclusive of the funding proposal contained within the Action Plan.

2005 RESOLUTIONS

2005 Resolution No. 501

BE IT RESOLVED that the AFL in consultation with affiliated unions, launch an information campaign aimed at highlighting the human and economic costs to Alberta resulting from the provincial government's refusal to develop clear energy and industrial policies, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the AFL develop an on-line petition that affiliates can sign, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the AFL lean a discussion with affiliates aimed at developing a detailed labour vision, energy and industrial strategy that will serve all Albertans.

Action:

PAC created an Industrial Strategy Subcommittee to work with the Parkland Institute to develop a n AFL Energy Policy & Industrial Strategy.

2005 Resolution No. 601

BE IT RESOLVED that the AFL lobby the provincial government to abolish Health Care premiums.

Action:

Abolition of health care premiums is advanced by the AFL and Friends of Medicare on an ongoing basis.

2005 Resolution No. 1021

BE IT RESOLVED that the AFL reaffirm our support for the CLC policy to oppose

war as a means to resolve political and economic problems, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the AFL calls for the immediate end to the military occupation of Iraq and the dismantling of all foreign military bases that have been constructed there, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the AFL continue to work with churches, student groups, peace groups, aid organizations and our political allies in opposition to war.

Action:

The AFL has promoted events and advised affiliates of activities organized by peace groups.

2005 Resolution No. 1026

BE IT RESOLVED the AFL join with peace groups and our political allies in opposition to vigorously oppose any Canadian involvement in the Ballistic Missile Defense System.

Action:

As with Resolution 1021, the AFL has promoted events and activities.

2005 Resolution No. 1046

BE IT RESOLVED that the AFL lobby the provincial government to make changes to the labour laws to include first contract legislation to force employers to bargain fairly.

Action:

The AFL President has lobbied Government and publicly advocated for changes to the Alberta Labour Relations Code and Employment Standards. This was a common call for action during the UFCW strike in Brooks. Allowing twelve year olds to work has been vigorously condemned by the AFL. The PAC intends to promote a Labour Code FOR Labour to replace the Government Code AGAINST Labour.

Fact sheet to assist in lobbying MLA's

2005 Resolution No. L-001

BE IT RESOLVED the AFL work with the CLC and its affiliated bodies to develop and coordinate activities designed to pressure the federal and provincial governments to:

- Have Labour legislation comply with the ILO's freedom of association principles;
- Ratify the ILO's core Conventions: No. 98 – the Rights to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention and No. 138 – the Minimum Age Conventions, and
- Establish an ongoing consultative process with the labour movement regarding the ratification of ILO Conventions that Canada voted for at the ILO's Annual Conferences.

Action:

This was raised in submissions during the government review of Employment Standards and promoted in materials circulated to affiliates.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

AFL POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE, 2005 – 2007

Heather Smith, Chair	UNAAFL Council Liaison
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Greg McMaster	CUPW-Edm.
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Gil McGowan	AFL
Kerry Barrett	AFL
Les Steel	CLC
Brian Henderson (alternate)	CUPW-Edm.
Jane Sustrik (alternate)	UNA
David Winter (information)	CLC

Committee Members who served a partial term:

Barrie Regan	UBCJA 1325
Len Steparyk	TWU
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