



Canadian Labour Congress

Congrès du travail du Canada

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**REPORT TO THE CLC EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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**POLITICAL ACTION AND CAMPAIGNS/  
ANTI-RACISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS/AMERICAS**

**Political Action and Campaigns Department**

**Overview**

Most of the Departments work in the period since the last Executive Council has centered around:

- I. The passage of Bill C-12 – An Act to Amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, the Companies Creditors Arrangement Act and the Wage Earner Protection Program.
- II. Made in Canada Jobs Campaign Phase II.
- III. The CLC Municipal Program.
- IV. Labour Outreach – Connecting to the NDP.
- V. Campaign.
- VI. Capacity Building.

**Legislative Campaign and Advocacy**

On December 14, 2007 after a three year campaign Canadian workers won some legal protection for their wages and pension contributions when their employer goes bankrupt. The Bill, C-12 has received Royal Assent but still

awaits proclamation in which various government departments must prepare the necessary regulations to meet all the provisions of the Bill. The Bill originally Bill 55 had been renamed twice and was the result of hundreds of face to face MP lobbies by our collective membership across Canada. On two occasions, this Bill was part of the Executive Council lobby and a part of a lobby by advocacy activists on anti-scab legislation. The contents of this Bill had also been part of the CLC Made in Canada Jobs Campaign and what the Federal government needs to do. The role of the department was to assist in the tracking of this Bill, co-ordinate the face to face advocacy both in the field and on Parliament Hill and to ensure the Bill kept moving to the appropriate politicians and senators. Aside from the victory of its passage the important point to consider is that when the labour movement works together we can accomplish many things. The other point to consider is the length of time required to move a Bill through the Parliament minefield.

## **Made in Canada Jobs Campaign – Phase II**

Since the last Executive Council meeting the department has produced a lobby kit for our affiliates and labour councils to lobby on the jobs crisis. The CLC has made a number of demands to be taken by the Federal government to help alleviate the jobs crisis in the manufacturing and resource sectors. At the time of writing 97 MPs have been lobbied by the labour councils with many labour councils undertaken to lobby MPs in late January 2008. A number of affiliate unions have engaged in complimentary actions and many are building campaigns for a potential spring election in 2008.

The CLC has produced a brochure on Canada's jobs crisis that will be distributed to affiliates and labour councils across Canada. The CLC's Jobs Committee has decided to target 18 Conservative ridings with these leaflets in the potential pre-election period. This leaflet puts the blame for Canada's jobs crisis in manufacturing and resources squarely on federal government inaction.

The Department has also been working with the Canadian Health Coalition (CHC) and the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC) on their pharmacare lobby. This is the second issue that labour councils are lobbying (along with Jobs) and reports indicate good support for the issue.

At the time of writing, the Federal government has announced a review of work stoppages within the federal sectors. This is a cynical ploy by the federal conservatives to defend their opposition to anti-scab legislation around their vote against Bill C-257. Never the less, Bill C-415 (anti-scab Mario-Silva) is still alive and awaiting second reading. **This could see similar advocacy work on Parliament Hill co-ordinated by the CLC as in past anti-scab lobbies.**

## **CLC Municipal Programme**

Since the last Executive Council meeting we've been engaged in the Alberta Municipal elections. In addition to organizing visionings, training schools (a week long municipal course and a number of weekend courses), we developed a newsletter and voter cards that were used by the labour councils and with affiliates to get out the vote. We targeted 4 cities (Calgary, Edmonton, Hinton & Red Deer) and endorsed over 40 city councillors and mayors. **We helped to elect 24.**

We also moved into 'Phase 4 the Accountability' phase of our plan in Ontario & the Prairies. In both regions we held day long debriefs, with full attendance in both places (we invited all those labour councils who had participated in the first 3 phases of our plan, prior to their election days (20 in Ontario + 12 in the Prairies). The debrief launched Phase 4 which means we'll be moving into relationship building, municipal advocacy and building on our 5 priorities at the municipal level.

In the Atlantic Region we are preparing for 2 municipal elections in 2008, New Brunswick on May 12, 2008 and Nova Scotia on October 18, 2008. So far we have held 3 visioning sessions in Moncton, Saint John & Halifax. They were well attended and we received great media coverage locally. We will be moving those labour councils into Phase 2, the education & endorsement portion of our campaign this month. With the other labour councils in the region we are working on building municipal committees to get them active in the programme.

British Columbia will be going to the municipal polls on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008. We have started our planning process with the Regional Staff.

On the outreach front, we are developing our relationship with the FCM, last week the CLC met with the CEO & Director of Policy & Strategic Politics. We are exploring how to forward our common agenda with a focus on the infrastructure issue. We also continue to build with the affiliates, to bring more people into the municipal programme.

We've assisted the Winnipeg Labour Council in their fight to maintain their municipal public services after the local city council has launched into one of the largest privatization quests this country has ever seen.

## **Labour Council Leadership**

We are currently developing a new Labour Council Leadership training that we took across the country since last October. We piloted this new training: in

Cornwall for the Ontario Region, in Glasgow, Nova Scotia for the Atlantic Region, in Gimly for Manitoba, in Regina for Saskatchewan, in Jasper for Alberta and in Harrison for the Pacific Region. The objectives of the course are to train labour council leadership to respond to ongoing political priorities by developing strategic planning, targeting and capacity building within their councils. In some areas, media training was also given. We've received very positive feedback from the Councils.

## **Labour Outreach**

We are working with the Federal NDP in several areas. First, the Director sits at caucus and liaises with MPs on NDP assistance and strategy. Second, the Director sits on the NDP Election Planning Committee. As a result of the lobby work and the work of the Labour Outreach Committee, several initiatives are occurring to assist the Federal NDP to:

- I. re-elect incumbent MPs
- II. target areas in ridings where the NDP can win
- III. build labour capacity in those areas to assist NDP candidates

As mentioned earlier, the jobs leaflet will be distributed in targeted ridings to emphasize the lack of federal government action on campaigns. Local union leaderships and activists in those areas will be encouraged to come together under the CLC banner to plan a campaign to help the local NDP campaign. This campaign will be initiated and followed up by the CLC in the January - March period. The NDP will also be encouraged to send Jack Layton, incumbent Mps, nominated candidates and their campaign managers.

This work is the culmination of 1½ years of work among the CLC and the affiliated unions of the NDP.

The other major initiative that will support the work of the NDP is the training of campaign managers across Canada. With the support of the affiliates the CLC will train approximately 100 new campaign managers. This training is to occur in Harrison, January 20th-25th, 2008 and in Winnipeg, Toronto, and Memramcook February 17-22, 2008.

The CLC views this training as an important resource to its growing municipal work and will serve to help the provincial and federal NDPs campaign management capacity. Most of these candidates have worked in previous Better Choice campaigns and as organizers in Municipal elections so they have a depth of experience in working on labours political campaigns.

## **Capacity Building**

To date the department has built our lobbyist list to over 400 people, our campaign organizers list to over 200 and have trained over 100 new potential campaign organizers through our week long schools. It is this capacity, when fully realized, that helps give us success. Through the creation of list serves the CLC will be communicating with our activists on a continuous basis. This will ensure collaboration and unity on all of our current and future efforts, giving us strength to move forward. The department's database has also grown to include all Federal politicians and our parliamentary contacts to continue building and nurturing our relationship with the Hill. A separate database will also be created to keep in regular touch with the over 600 municipal politicians we have helped to elect in the last 3 years.

## **Anti-Racism and Human Rights Report**

The Anti-Racism and Human Rights Department has been active on the following files since the last Executive Council meeting.

### **Guest Workers:**

- Developed and delivered a course at the SFL Equity conference addressing the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program. The course was well received and more affiliates and members are becoming engaged in the CLC advocacy campaign on this issue.
- Hosted a meeting of the Temporary Worker Advocacy Group (TWAG), which continues to grow in numbers on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Participants contributed to refining the CLC action plan.
- Received a briefing on government proposal to create a new path to citizenship for some TFWs. Presented a critique of this initiative and encouraged TWAG group to join in our critique and demands to expand the coverage of the initiative to more occupational codes.
- Continue to engage regularly with TFW program's Director General and senior staff on numerous critical flaws with the program, including calculation of prevailing wage methodology; prevalence of unscrupulous labour brokers, absence of compliance, monitoring and enforcement mechanism, rabid expansion of the program into new job sectors/occupations.

- Continue to raise the profile of the issue in a variety of media, including Briarpatch magazine, The Economist, Toronto Star, Globe and Mail Report on Business, CBC radio, Occupational Health & Safety magazine, and ethno-cultural media outlets. Worked with affiliates and allies to host events on December 18th to mark International Migrant Rights Day.
- Worked with Libby Davis, NDP labour critic to get questions raised in the House of Commons on this file to coincide with our letters of complaint regarding the treatment of the 'Filipino 11'.
- Developing a kit for affiliates on how to respond to introduction of guest workers into the workplace and working with Tony Biddle, Perfect World Productions to produce a 4-page comic in Spanish, English and French, to be ready by the CLC Convention.
- Exploring potential to support establishment of a unique website [www.migrants.ca](http://www.migrants.ca) as a central portal for materials.

### **Security and Racial Profiling:**

- Joined with the Canadian Arab Federation and 50-some ethno-racial/cultural, union locals and civil rights groups in a public statement condemning the new Security Certificate legislation.
- Working with allies to campaign against Bill C-3 that would allow the government to continue to use such information to justify indefinite detention, house arrest and deportation to torture security certificate detainees.
- Worked with CCPA to present a paper on racial profiling and the labour movement at a conference called THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS. A podcast of the event is at <http://www.rabble.ca/reviews/review.shtml?x=64132>. A similar event is being planned for B.C. in February of this year.
- Providing support to ILWU in their bid to challenge the Marine Security Clearance Process being applied to their membership.
- Secure Flight Initiative – Monitoring changes to all US bound flights and **for all continental flights over U.S. airspace** between Canada and Latin America / Caribbean (southbound and northbound). These changes will result in more intrusive passenger screening process, affect privacy rights and rely on racial profiling practices. The program will come into effect in February 2008. The Canadian government failed to

register any concerns before the October 2007 deadline with this US initiative. We can expect significant problems for southern air travelers flying over US airspace and potentially difficult situations for airline workers as a result of the Secure Flight program.

- Working with ICLMG to develop a research and action project with the aim to raise political and public awareness of new border control measures and surveillance policies being implemented by the Conservatives, with virtually no public debate. The project will include an examination of the impact on workers' privacy and mobility rights. The project has three main components: policy research, corporate research and campaigning and a documentation centre of individuals' experiences and human rights violations linked to security regimes in workplaces, and the broader community.
- Developed and delivered workshops that explain how racial profiling practices are becoming prevalent in more workplace and how unions can respond.

### **Aboriginal issues:**

- Advanced support with affiliates for the Jordan Principle, a child first principle – when Aboriginal children face jurisdictional disputes over what level of government will pay for medical services is moving in the House.
- Alongside the CLC International Department and affiliates, provided support to CONAIE, Indigenous people's organization from Ecuador, for a major Congress of Indigenous Peoples in their country, scheduled for four days in mid-January of 2008.
- Working with the Polaris Institute and the AFN to release a report, called Boiling point: An expose of the water crisis in 10 Aboriginal communities.

## **Changing the Canvass:**

- Website is now live and being populated with stories from racialized workers, check out [www.changingthecanvs.org](http://www.changingthecanvs.org). Recommend viewing the story featuring CUPE member Ajamu Nangwaya.
- Developed and delivering course modules to CLC schools in Alberta, B.C., as well as labour council leadership training sessions. Members are responding positively to the material and topics and are planning to incorporate the materials at the affiliates and local levels.
- Hosting a meeting of (im)migrants rights advocates in the Toronto area in March to explore future projects involving immigrant youth of colour.



## **Americas – International Department**

The CLC participated in the Working Group on Economic Integration of ORIT in December, one of the preparatory sessions to build strategies to guide the unification process in the region. The CLC also participated in a meeting of international labour organizations that provide cooperation funds for labour development in the Americas through ORIT. Plans continue for the unification Congress to take place in Panama at the end of March. CLC is putting together its delegation.

The work in the Americas during this period focused heavily on the Campaign to stop the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. The major thrust of the first phase of the campaign was to stop the Conservatives from signing the deal, hastily negotiated since June, 2007. The second phase will be to stop ratification in Parliament and generate a full and open debate about the labour conditions and human rights violations in Colombia.

The CLC held a Week of Action on Colombia at the end of November fulfilling a convention mandate. The events of the Week of Action included:

- a 'Fax your MP' link on the CLC main web page with an article on Ten Reasons Why the Canada-Colombia FTA is a Bad Idea;
- special events and resolutions passed at the Conventions of the BC, Ontario and Quebec Federations of labour;
- a march to the US Consulate in Toronto to protest the "Bush-Harper" Alliance as part of the larger OFL march to Queen's Park;
- protests outside Conservative riding offices in Calgary and Pictou County, NS; and,
- events at the University of Edmonton and at Amnesty International in Ottawa.

The CLC continues to play a key role in the campaign with civil society partners lobbying Members of Parliament and the media. We worked with brothers and sisters at the AFL-CIO to get a letter from the US Congress to Parliament explaining why they are opposed to THEIR deal and we hosted the visit of Congressman Michaud, a former Steelworker who took the time to come and speak directly with Parliamentarians, launching a new initiative of cross border linkages amongst law-makers on labour rights and trade agreements.

