



Canadian Labour Congress

Congrès du travail du Canada

**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY (SEP) REPORT**  
**to the**  
**CLC EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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**OTTAWA, ONTARIO**

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**Manufacturing, the High Dollar and the Good Jobs Crisis**

SEP staff provided input to a major report on the manufacturing crisis from Informetrica Ltd., funded by the labour movement (CLC, USW, OFL, FTQ) which underlined the importance of manufacturing to a strong Canadian economy. The report received some media coverage, and a CLC summary - "The Manufacturing Crisis: Why Should We Care? What is Causing It?" - was prepared and widely distributed ([http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/Jobs\\_Economy/1276](http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/Jobs_Economy/1276)).

A major background paper on the causes and impacts of the high Canadian dollar was released, and also published in the CCPA Monitor. The CLC sent two widely publicized letters to the Governor of the Bank of Canada on the need for an interest rate cut to lower the dollar, including a joint letter from the CLC and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. SEP arranged a half-day meeting between senior Bank of Canada officials (including the new Governor designate) and union economists in November 2007, where we also pushed the case for major interest rate cuts. The Bank of Canada did cut interest rates in December 2007, though much more should be done.

Submissions on the manufacturing crisis were made to the Finance Committee of the House of Commons in November 2007, and the House of Commons Industry Committee in December 2007, with other labour organizations.

In conjunction with the Communications Department, SEP continues to provide regular commentary on the Labour Force Survey, monetary policy, job quality, etc., and works closely with other union economists, the CCPA, and the Progressive Economics Forum to develop a progressive economic agenda.

## **The Federal Budget, Tax Cuts and Fair Taxes**

SEP responded critically to the Fall Economic and Fiscal Update, which committed the federal government to further large corporate tax cuts and to another one point cut to the GST. A research paper by Brother Andrew Jackson on the case for a more progressive personal income tax in the context of fast-rising income inequality was released in December 2007 as a background paper to the CCPA's Alternative Federal Budget, and Brother Erin Weir has prepared a major critique of corporate rate tax cuts which will be released in the near future. Work proceeds on the CCPA Alternative Federal Budget which will be released before the next Federal Budget, expected in late February or early March.

## **Unemployment Insurance**

The CLC participated critically in the formal process leading to the setting of the 2008 premium rate, and has commented on proposals for revising the process. A successful CLC UI Committee meeting was held in November 2007. The CLC helped publicize a report from the Canadian Institute of Actuaries, arguing that the federal government has no right to pocket the \$54 Billion accumulated surplus and should establish a more independent UI Commission.

## **Women's Economic Equality Campaign**

SEP has prepared a major background paper and issue sheets for the coming campaign.

## **Better Choice**

Materials are being revised.

## **Pensions**

Brother Joel Harden with members of the CLC's Pension Advisory Working Group organized the most successful CLC Pension Conference yet from November 1-3, 2007 in Ottawa. The conference drew 317 delegates, thoughtful speakers, and generated tremendous debate. A five-point CLC pension campaign was proposed in a discussion paper, which will now be revised as a policy document for the upcoming CLC Convention.

The CLC won a major victory as Bill C-12 was passed by the Senate. Pension contributions are now protected under federal bankruptcy laws, as are the integrity of collective agreements from bankruptcy trustees. President Ken Georgetti made a presentation to the Ontario Expert Commission on Pensions in Ottawa on November 1, 2007.

## **The Security and Prosperity Partnership and International Trade Issues**

Sister Teresa Healy has helped create a very active labour and coalition partners research network on the SPP; and pursued Access to Information requests on the North American Forum Banff 2007 which will provide the basis for a major research paper. Several presentations have or will soon be made to conferences on the issue; a communications strategy has been developed; and two SEP papers were translated into Spanish for use by ORIT in its ongoing educational work.

The Department maintains close involvement in the Trade and Investment Research Project and attended its Fall meeting in Toronto. SEP lent support to the work of the International Department by preparing materials for CLC statements on Canada-Korea bilateral negotiations and the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

## **Temporary Foreign Worker Program**

Sister Salimah Valiani has continued to provide research support on this file with the Anti Racism and Human Rights Department, including as part of the Changing Canvas project, and has participated in international discussions on issues facing migrant workers. A research paper on the Live-in Caregiver program is being prepared.

## **Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA)**

Brother Erin Weir made presentations to provincial government representatives, union activists and the media in Yukon, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia. To date, TILMA has still not expanded beyond the BC/Alberta government as a result of these and other efforts.

## **Public Health Care and Pharmacare**

SEP continues to be active on the health care front, especially in working for a national pharmacare program. Sister Healy helped develop the Fall campaign of the Canadian Health Coalition (CHC) sub-committee on pharmacare which obtained stories from across the country from individuals facing problems as a result of lack of public coverage for pharmaceutical drugs. Material is being integrated into CLC campaigns. SEP has been actively involved in the CHC, including the annual strategy session and a round-table discussion on the shortage of health care workers, and has supported the work of the CLC President to address the issue of queue-jumping in the public health care system. SEP continues to respond to affiliate requests for support on health care issues, and maintains a distribution list of researchers who work on labour and health care issues.

## **Municipal Issues**

SEP continues to support the work of the Political Action and Campaigns Department in this area.

## **Training/Work and Learning Knowledge Centre (WLKC)**

The CLC Training and Technology Committee had a well attended meeting in December 2007 which engaged federal government officials and focused on the current negotiations between the Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments regarding the devolution of the support measures in Part II of the *Employment Insurance Act*, and new labour market agreements aimed at people who are not eligible for EI Part II programs.

The series of Labour Round Tables on work and learning organized by John Hugh Edwards, CLC co-ordinator with the WLKC, were completed after well-attended sessions in Toronto, Vancouver, Regina, Halifax, St. John's and Moncton. A full report is being prepared.

Organization has begun for a joint CLC/CME project aimed at increasing the participation of women in non-traditional occupations, specifically the skilled trades.

The WLKC is partnering with the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre to organize a literacy conference in February 2008 which will attract representative of labour, government, educational institutions, and non-government organizations.

A series of round-tables on employer investment in training is being organized by the WLKC with the Canadian Policy Research Network. The first session was held in Toronto in November 2007 and the next is planned for Halifax in February 2008.

The WLKC is sponsoring a conference being organized in Toronto by the Labour Education Centre and focusing on innovative learning practices by unions.

## **Corporate Accountability**

Brother Harden has been working with the CLC's allies in the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability to ensure better rules are in place to regulate Canadian mining, oil and gas firms operating beyond Canadian borders. The federal government has yet to respond to a joint industry and civil society report (released in April 2007) recommending progressive policy changes to existing rules.

## **Victory for US Iraq War Resisters**

Brother Joel Harden has been supporting the CLC's help for US Iraq war resisters currently attempting to stay in Canada. He assisted CLC President Ken Georgetti in submitting a brief to the Parliamentary Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, which held public hearings on US Iraq war resisters.

## **Departmental Changes**

Brother Erin Weir has joined the USW research staff and Sister Shanaz Moloo has retired. Both made major contributions to the work of SEP which will be greatly missed as we move forward.

