

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Forced union dues funding fake front group in Alberta

Vancouver, BC (January 24, 2008) – “Forced union dues funding fake front group in Alberta”

The Canadian LabourWatch Association condemns Alberta legislation that allows unions to force unionized Albertans to pay union dues that can be used for political purposes. An example of this is the current TV and radio attack ads run by Albertans for Change. Albertans for Change is a coalition of unions run by the leaders of the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) and the Alberta Building Trades Council (ABTC).

John Mortimer, President of LabourWatch states, “The AFL and ABTC have not obtained the consent of their 190,000 forced members to claim they are ‘Albertans for Change’ and use their forced union dues for political purposes let alone negative attack ads. It is deceitful for AFL and ABTC leaders to say they speak for all unionized employees in Alberta.” The current Albertans for Change TV and radio ads do not disclose to viewers their union connections.

“The real issue behind this union-funded ad campaign”, says John Mortimer, “is the use of forced union dues for political purposes. Unionized Albertans must pay these dues in order to get and keep their jobs.”

Today the AFL issued a press release hiding behind the 1991 Supreme Court of Canada Lavigne decision. However, Lavigne was premised on a set of facts that included voluntary not forced union Membership. Ironically, the AFL’s uses a quote from Lavigne demonstrating that the high court relied on that fact in allowing Merv Lavigne’s dues to be used for political purposes. Many of these Albertans are forced union Members. The international law that the 1991 ruling also relied upon has evolved substantially. Clearly the time for a 21st century assessment of these issues is coming.

LabourWatch sponsored a 2007 national speaking tour of leading Swedish human rights lawyer, Jan Södergren, to educate Canadians on the fact that in the 47 countries comprising the Council of Europe, it is illegal under European Human Rights Court rulings to use dues paid by non-members for political purposes. This tour included a stop in Calgary.

The European Court also ruled it illegal to force union Membership on unionized employees. Dues paying non-Members are still covered by a collective agreement however actual Membership is a guaranteed voluntary choice. Employees can not be required, unlike in most Canadian unionized workplaces, to become or remain a union member to apply for, obtain or maintain a job.

In addition to the 47 countries in the Council of Europe, these practices are illegal in the United States, New Zealand and Australia.

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