



Manitoba Federation of Labour

Policy Statements

Updated: June 13, 2012

Message From the President

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is the province's senior central labour body, chartered by the Canadian Labour Congress in 1956 to represent the interests of CLC affiliated unions in Manitoba.

Our affiliates have memberships in the private and public sectors, including the manufacturing sector, government offices, retail stores, hospitals, schools, the natural resources sector, tourism, agriculture, transportation and many others.

The MFL is a democratic structure, directed by policies decided at regularly held conventions, which are attended by elected delegates from our affiliates. Between conventions, the MFL's activities are determined by our Executive Council, made up representatives from our thirteen largest affiliates. Collectively, Executive Council members directly represent more than 90% of our grassroots membership.

Executive Council is constitutionally designed to ensure representation from five distinct regions of the province, from the five labour councils in Manitoba, from the Construction trades, and from the Manitoba Federation of Union Retirees (voice, but no vote). At least two of the six Executive Council seats held by our three largest affiliates are designated to be filled by women. The MFL is proud that it historically exceeds equity group representation requirements.

The Federation has established two Caucuses - The Workers of Colour Caucus and the Aboriginal Workers Caucus - in recognition of the need of workers in these areas to have a structure to discuss issues of interest and to develop strategies to meet their needs. These caucuses are represented on Executive Council by two vice-presidents (the chairs of the caucuses).

A major role of the MFL is to provide a forum for our affiliates to develop consensus decisions on common issues and to speak for our affiliates in dealings with the provincial government, the

business sector and with community groups. We coordinate the appointment of union representatives on government boards and commissions to ensure that the legitimate views of workers are put forward. We lobby government for progressive legislation and policies that will benefit working people and against policies that hurt them.

Other important roles of the MFL are to co-ordinate and provide educational opportunities to our affiliates, so that their members have access to the tools they need to provide key services to their union brothers and sisters.

The MFL assists affiliates, particularly those with limited resources, in their undertakings, upon request. Assistance in activities includes those related to organizing the unorganized, health and safety, workers' compensation, communications, media relations, education, political action, coordinating inter-union activities and dispute resolution.

The MFL has six standing committees and five ad hoc committees, made up of members elected or appointed by our affiliates. Their responsibility is to carry out projects on behalf of Executive Council, initiate activities to further the labour movement's objectives in specific interest areas and to provide advice to the MFL.

The MFL Committees have responsibilities for the following issues:

Women's Issues	Workplace Safety and Health
Education (ad hoc)	Political Education
Human Rights	Workers' Compensation
Environment	Apprenticeship (ad hoc)
Youth (Ad Hoc)	Pensions (Ad Hoc)
1919 Leaders (Ad Hoc)	

Our Committees organize conferences and educationals, and promote affiliates' views in their interest areas.

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From 1956 to 2006, the **Manitoba Federation of Labour Policy Book** was simply a compilation of resolutions passed by delegates to the MFL General Convention, with notations to indicate when the resolution was initially passed and in what years the same or very similar resolutions were passed.

In 2006, this publication, “**Manitoba Federation of Labour Policy Statements**” was compiled to draw our policies together as general statements that capture the spirit of resolutions rather than detailed statements that reflected specific resolution language. Users can continue rely on our publications “**MFL Convention Resolutions Booklet**” and “**Convention Proceedings**”, for specific resolution wording and summaries of debate from each General Convention. As well, the accumulated record of resolutions will continue to be compiled by topic in the “**Manitoba Federation of Labour Resolutions of Record**”.

The purpose of this new format is to make reviewing MFL Policy Statements easy and useful for members of our affiliated unions, researchers and the general public.

- Kevin Rebeck, President
Manitoba Federation of Labour
June, 2012

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1.0 Trade Unionism

The purposes of the Manitoba Federation of Labour are to promote the advancement and well-being of trade union members, all workers and their families and communities by working to ensure that they enjoy a fair and equitable share of the economic and social advantages that they are responsible for creating in Canada and Manitoba. This will be brought about by meeting the following objectives:

- To support the principles and policies of the Canadian Labour Congress.
- To promote the interests of its affiliates and generally to advance the economic and social welfare of the workers in Manitoba.
- To assist affiliate organizations in extending the benefits of mutual assistance, collective bargaining and union education to the workers.
- To assist wherever possible in the organization of the unorganized into unions for their mutual aid, protection and advancement, giving recognition to the principle that both craft and industrial unions are appropriate, equal and necessary, as methods of union organization.
- To encourage all workers without regard to perceived race, creed, colour, age, sex, sexual orientation, national origin or political beliefs to share in the full benefit of union organization.
- To secure provincial legislation which will safeguard and promote the principle of free collective bargaining, the rights of workers and the security and welfare of all people and give collective expression to our elected representatives.
- To protect and strengthen our democratic institutions, to secure full recognition and enjoyment of the rights and liberties to which we are justly entitled, and to preserve and perpetuate the cherished traditions of our democracy.
- To promote the cause of peace and freedom in the world and to assist and cooperate with free and democratic labour movements throughout the world.
- To aid and encourage the sale and use of union made goods and unionized services through the use of the union label and other symbols.

- To protect the labour movement from all corrupt influences and from the undermining efforts of all totalitarian agencies which are opposed to the basic principles of democracy and free and democratic unionism.
- To preserve the independence of the labour movement from political control, to encourage workers to vote, to exercise their full rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and to perform their rightful part in the political life of the municipal, provincial and federal governments.

2.0 Equity Group Social and Economic Inclusion

The Manitoba Labour Movement has an elevated consciousness about the diversity of the members of our unions and the need to ensure that all workers are welcome and safe within our structures, their workplaces and our communities. This diversity is vital to the union movement and society, both for today and the future.

The union movement has established democratic structures that provide members of vulnerable groups a forum to address critical issues and develop strategies to deal with them. These structures are an attempt to meet the needs of retired workers, women, workers of colour, aboriginal workers, young workers and workers who are gay, lesbian or bi-sexual, and workers with disabilities.

There are important roles played by these structures within the union movement. They serve to identify critical emerging issues for the union movement and its leadership at large and to provide education for workers and the community. They also provide invaluable advice and strategies on how to ensure that fairness and equity are earmarks of our movement and society.

The MFL will continue to promote cooperation among trade unions, both in the public and private sectors, and provide leadership to community based organizations to further the fight for fairness for workers and for social justice.

2.1 Women

A shameful feature of the history of Canada's workplaces is the persistence of gender discrimination and its anti-worker and anti-union impact on women. The workforce is virtually evenly split between men and women and most families with two parents are two income families. Very few women with children leave the paid workforce for an extended period of time and the majority of women with children are workforce participants.

Adult women are much more likely than men to be low paid, much more likely to be in part-time jobs and much more likely to be self-employed (and in precarious forms of employment).

Pay and advancement gaps between men and women can be partially attributed to the fact that women pay a heavy price for being the primary care-givers to their children and aged parents, despite high levels of education and training.

For these and other reasons, the MFL is committed to developing and supporting campaigns and strategies to ameliorate inequities faced by women in the workplace and community. These strategies include campaigns to:

- End violence against women,
- Establish affordable, universally accessible and high quality child care,
- Establish crisis shelters to meet the needs of women and their children who are victims of domestic violence,
- Support the delivery of abortion and reproductive health clinics, fund by the public health care system,
- Extend the benefits of pay equity strategies to all women in the paid workforce,
- Foster the development of women trade union leaders, activists and staff representatives,
- Set and meet affirmative action goals and timelines, both within the public and private sectors,
- Establish education and action plans to end sexual harassment in the community and workplace.

2.2 Aboriginal Workers

The Manitoba Federation of Labour recognizes and deplores the degree of under-representation of the Aboriginal community in the workforce and the national fabric, and is committed to developing and supporting strategies that will lead to recognition within the constitution of the national identity of the native peoples, of full rights of their language and culture, regional self-government and satisfaction of their land claims.

It is also committed to ensuring that the House of Labour is a safe and welcoming haven for Aboriginal workers. The MFL has established an Aboriginal Workers Caucus that is expected to advise and communicate with the MFL Executive Council on issues relative to Aboriginal

workers and to respond to requests and direction from the MFL Convention through Executive Council.

Issues related to aboriginal workers include, but are not limited to the following:

- discrimination due to perceived differences in race, ethnicity, and other perceptions of difference amongst people
- discrimination based on union activity
- enhancement of lives of aboriginal peoples through the labour movement.

2.3 Workers of Colour

Similarly, the MFL has established a Workers of Colour Caucus to communicate with the MFL Executive Council on matters related to workers of colour and to respond to requests and direction from the MFL Convention, through Executive Council. Aspects related to this mandate include:

- To support initiatives that enhance, develop and implement actions which include Workers of Colour in the building and strengthening of the union movement.
- To organize conferences, workshops and seminars that specifically address the issues and interests of Workers of Colour
- To work with CLC/MFL affiliates and other Labour friendly organizations/coalitions to improve the situation of Workers of Colour throughout our communities/world.
- To provide support to our Sister/Brother Workers of Colour – in their development for leadership positions within their unions and the Labour Movement overall.
- To make recommendations to the MFL Executive Council on issues affecting Workers of Colour
- To develop and implement campaigns and other activities endorsed by the MFL Executive Council which are referred to the Caucus.

2.4 Workers with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities are seriously disadvantaged in employment. In Manitoba, about 13% of the population between 15 and 64 years of age live with a disability. Only about half have jobs, and many of those who are working are under-employed and earning low wages.

Underemployed and marginalized within the workforce, persons with disabilities are restricted by a workplace that is not designed or operated to accommodate individual disability - related needs. While society claims a commitment to remove barriers to the participation of people with disabilities, efforts to remove them have need inadequate. In addition, persons with disabilities are routinely victimized by limiting stereotypes and generalizations and practices that undervalues their worth as workers and restricts their employment opportunities.

True equality in the workplace is only possible within a model of equality which recognizes and respects differences and responds to individuals according to their individual needs and abilities.

Labour activists are increasingly aware of the issues of workers with disabilities and have been raising the issues within union structures, with rank and file membership and at their workplaces.

Greater efforts are needed by unions in negotiating contract language which supports and values the employment of workers with disabilities. We must advocate for increased rights for disabled workers. Increased protection is a benefit for all members as anyone can become disabled through a work injury or otherwise. Internally, greater efforts are also needed by labour in encouraging the participation of their members with disabilities in union activities and ensuring that any barriers to their participation are eliminated.

In response to its responsibility to advocate for the rights of workers with disabilities, the MFL supports the following principles and encourages affiliates to do the same:

- Commitment to full participation and equality for workers with disabilities;
- Commitment to full accessibility in all union activities, including availability of alternate media and other accessibility measures;
- Commitment to job protections through job retention, retraining and re-employment;
- Commitment to support and promote equality and equity measures in labour organizations, unions and unionized workplaces.

This policy makes specific reference to a number of equity groups and the spirit of these remarks is meant to apply to unmentioned groups, not exclude them.

3.0 Human Rights

The organized labour community in Canada and Manitoba has devoted substantial resources in support of human rights. It is our goal to make our workplaces and communities safe places that are free of harassment and discrimination for all workers, no matter what their gender, their race or colour, their physical and mental abilities, their religion, their sexual orientation or their age.

Historically, one out of every five complaints received by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission contains allegations of harassment in the workplace. Usually, the alleged harassment is sexual or racial harassment.

3.1 Racism and Harassment

Racism, as is the case in other forms of harassment, is the natural enemy of human rights; it is anti-worker and it is anti-union. Opposing racism need no more justification than it is the right thing to do.

The MFL is committed to supporting and carrying out the spirit and intentions of resolutions and policies directed at ending racial discrimination and harassment. The MFL fully supports the role of organized labour in the fight against racism:

“...we condemn the existence of systemic racism in Canada and throughout the world....we also acknowledge the positive contributions of Aboriginal Peoples and People of Colour in our unions and throughout the world in fighting racism, discrimination, bigotry and in helping to build our unions and country.” - CLC

3.2 Diversity in the Workforce

Canada’s workplaces are far more socially diverse today. Immigration accounts for virtually all labour force growth in many urban centres with a significant portion attributable to the aboriginal workforce in Western Canada. Low-paid precarious jobs are highly racialized as well as highly gendered. Workers of colour, recent immigrants and aboriginal workers are much more likely to be in low-paid, insecure jobs. Promoting greater equality and inclusion; narrowing pay, job

quality, employment security and opportunity gaps between these workers and other workers ought to be a major goal.

4.0 Labour Law

4.1 Manitoba Labour Relations Act

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is committed to the truism that every worker has the democratic right to join a union, the right to free collective bargaining and the right to strike. We believe that these rights cannot be taken from us through policy or legislation. They may not be respected by governments or employers, but nonetheless, these rights remain to be ours.

The preamble of the Manitoba Labour Relations Act states "...it is in the public interest of the Province of Manitoba to further harmonious relations between employers and employees by encouraging the practice and procedure of collective bargaining between employers and unions as the freely designated representatives of employees."

Such a straightforward concept, yet so difficult to realize. In our experience, the legislative pendulum swings between an Act that is weighted substantially in the employers' favour and one that is a substantially fair balance between employer and workers rights, depending on which political party happens to be forming government. Success in attaining the goal of harmonious relations fluctuates with the swing of the pendulum.

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is committed to the proposition that the Labour Relations Act should set the framework for an equal balance of employer and worker rights, a balance that should not be easily disturbed by political ideology. That balance is characterized by fairness for workers and their unions before an application for bargaining agent certification is filed, during the application review process and during the labour relations period that follows.

The Canadian and Manitoban trade union movement is scrupulously democratic in their policies and practices – controlled, in the end, by the workers that belong to them. Consequently, workers and their unions should be free of interference by government and employers.

Those opposed to workers' rights and the democratic structures established by workers justify their attitudes by saying that ownership of property and plant through financial investment gives

employers the right to operate as they see fit. This does not recognize the equal investment of time, effort, skills and education made by workers. Labour law, such as the Manitoba Labour Relations Act, must reflect that de facto equality of investment by itself being fair and balanced.

The MFL is committed to defending workers and their unions against the imposition of anti-worker and anti-union laws and policies whenever the occasions arise.

4.2 Employment Standards Code

Conditions in many workplaces are too often characterized by little or no job security, limited access to rights and protections and low wages. This includes an increased incidence of part-time employment, temporary employment, fixed terms of employment, self-employment; few, if any, benefits and reduced rights and protections.

We need a legislative framework that outlines employment standards that will create and sustain socially acceptable rights and standards for the workforce. A sensible legislative environment is needed by workers to offset the real and substantial imbalance of power between employers and employees that exists in the Manitoban workplace. This imbalance is directly responsible for the conditions that currently exist in some workplaces - conditions that include intimidation, involuntary part-time employment, no job security and poor rates of pay.

The imbalance also manifests itself in workers being vulnerable to other threats, such as unreasonable working conditions, psychological and physical harassment and discrimination based on sex, race or ability.

This is especially troublesome for groups of workers who are particularly vulnerable – women, young people, first-time job holders, immigrants, workers of colour, aboriginal workers and employees of small companies. Unionized workers have a level of protection not enjoyed by non-union workers, but even they are vulnerable to employer demands for working long hours, no or limited access to necessary leaves of absence and harassment.

For many workers, the Employment Standards Code is their only shelter. It describes the basic rights and responsibilities of workers and employers in every workplace in Manitoba. For this

reason, it is critical that the provincial government create and maintain provisions that are effective in protecting the rights of workers and rigorously enforce them.

The Code should apply to every member of the paid workforce and, in most respects, the unpaid workforce. No worker should be excluded from the Code's provisions, except in the most dire circumstances, and then only under tight controls and timelines.

There should be no limits placed on a worker's access to the Codes provisions by virtue of a worker's union or bargaining unit membership.

5.0 The Public Sector and Crown Corporations

5.1 Strong Public Sector Needed

The Canada that we know today is very much the product of a "mixed economy", the co-existence of strong and vibrant private and public sectors. Our history is one that is made up of a multitude of examples of this co-existence.

Public enterprise has been the tool that many governments have used to achieve specific and goals. In some cases, it was the tool that delivered necessary development that private enterprise refused to undertake because of cost and magnitude size. Canada's share of the canals and lock systems that make up the St. Lawrence Seaway; a national railway system; airports; telephone, electrical, water and natural gas utility systems, and the national broadcasting system are all in existence today because of the public's willingness to underwrite their development. In some of these examples, the public took over failed private sector companies that did not have the skills or determination to do the job.

The public sector has been used to deliver key and vital services to the people of Canada to ensure their quality, a cost that did not include a profit component, confidentiality, universality or to offset regional disparities. Examples in this category include our high quality national medicare system, education, pensions, regional economic development structure, public insurance, social security, corrections, and agencies that protect the public safety.

The public sector has often been utilized to accomplish important public policy objectives such as job creation and preservation, affordable housing, economic stabilization and stimulation, and protecting and fostering our cultural heritage.

In addition to direct public investment, many private sector initiatives would not have been undertaken without public assistance (sometimes on a massive scale) in the form of

grants, subsidies, tax breaks, tax holidays, research transfers or through direct equity investment.

The Public Sector has played an integral role in the development of our country's economy and, in many ways, has been a tangible expression of our national character.

5.2 Privatization

There has been a persistent inclination on the part of some governments to privatize public sector entities, using as an excuse the need to reduce and eliminate public debt and deficit budgets.

The underlying reasons for this campaign are obvious. The relatively successful labour relations climate in the public sector has resulted in fairer wages, working conditions and benefits than generally exist in the private sector. Private sector employers view this as increasing pressure from their own workers for similar conditions.

They also view the vibrant areas of public sector activity as lost opportunities for profit.

This campaign has been successful, evidenced by the privatization record. In addition to the high-profile and well publicized examples such as the CNR, Via Rail, Petro-Canada and Air Canada, the list of privatized public sector services includes child care services, occupational training, municipal services, postal services, rail branch lines, health care sector services, patient transportation, private education funding increases while public education funding stagnates or withers and recreation facilities.

Many of the privatization examples that one can point to have occurred with little or no public opposition because of the success of the deliberate campaign to discredit public sector workers and the programs for which they have responsibility.

Often, the result of contracting out or complete privatization is a lower level of service quality due to inexperience and a lack of training and at a higher cost when the profit margin is calculated in. As well, the public loses direct control over these services.

The MFL is opposed to the privatization of public sector services and crown corporations.

6.0 Workplace Safety and Health

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is committed to the premise that every worker has the right to a safe and healthy workplace, one that does not injure, sicken or kill them. Workers are entitled to three basic rights:

- The Right to Know – workers have the right to know what hazards exist in the workplace, be trained to recognize them and protect themselves, and to know what their legal rights are.
- The Right to Participate - workers have the right to participate in controlling workplace safety and health through participation on Joint Safety and Health Committees and selecting their worker Workplace Safety and Health Representatives.
- The Right to Refuse - workers have the Right to Refuse work they believed to be too dangerous, without disciplinary action by the employer.

Workplace illness, injury and fatality statistics continue to be recorded at unacceptably high levels – but can be and are reduced by amendments to the Workplace Safety and Health Act. To realize the full impact of an effective legislative and regulatory regime, stringent enforcement programs are necessary. Without fully empowered inspectors and Joint Committee members, unscrupulous employers will continue to require that work processes be done in an expedient and dangerous way.

6.1 Workplace Violence

Not all workplace injuries and fatalities result from controllable hazards. Injuries and deaths because of workplace violence is a growing reality that faces many workers in Manitoba. We will continue to urge the government of Manitoba to enact legislation that will establish the framework that will meet the needs of all Manitoban workers.

6.2 School Curriculum

The MFL believes that the earlier workers and future workers are exposed to a culture of workplace safety and health, the better. For that reason, we believe it is important to begin workplace safety and health training as early as possible in the education system.

7.0 Workers' Compensation

Workers' Compensation has been a fact in Canada since the part of the twentieth century. It is based on the following 5 principles:

- No Fault Coverage – when a worker was injured at work, they were eligible.
- Collective Liability – employers would be collectively responsible for all costs.
- Guaranteed Benefits – benefits are paid even if the employer went out of business.
- Independent Administration – run by a Board independent of Government.
- Exclusive Jurisdiction – quasi-judicial independence to make decisions.

For this system to succeed, employers agreed to compensate injured workers and workers in their turn gave up the right to sue their employer. However, nearly one hundred years later, not all workers are entitled to coverage. Every member of the paid workforce should be covered by Workers' Compensation.

Workers in Manitoba deserve to have a Compensation system that works for them. It must meet their financial and medical needs following an injury so they and their families don't have to worry or experience hardship. Workers should have very little difficulty going through the system and benefits should be provided in a timely manner. Wage loss benefits must not be less for one worker than another due to age or circumstance.

People with permanent disabilities must be dealt with fairly and compensated for their loss. Workers who are ill from their workplace should expect to receive understanding, compassion and assistance to achieve their entitlements. Others who are ready to come back to their jobs when they are medically fit need to be guaranteed that access.

8.0 Wages and Incomes Policy

8.1 Minimum Wage

The MFL believes the minimum wage is, by definition, the lowest rate of pay possible for paid work. It is not to be reduced for any reason such as working in a job that includes gratuities, during a training period, age, or other considerations – with the possible exception of work done in life skills training environments for persons with disabilities and who receive adequate financial support from other sources, regardless of work done in the training environment.

In our view, the appropriate minimum wage should be sixty percent of the average weekly wage for Manitoba, as calculated by Statistics Canada. Historically, the minimum wage has been substantially below that level.

The Employment Standards Code should provide for an annual automatic adjustment to, maintain the minimum wage at 60% of the average weekly wage, taking the review process out of the political arena. As well, workers and employers will know well in advance what adjustments will be made to the minimum wage, enabling both to do sensible financial planning.

All members of the paid work force should be covered by the minimum wage provisions of the Employment Standards Code.

8.2 Construction Industry Wages Act

The Construction Industry Wages Act was enacted to create equity in the tendering process that involves direct competition between unionized contractors and contractors without a unionized workforce by eliminating wages and working conditions as a variable in determining the value of a tendered bid. This removes the temptation to pay excessively low wages and tolerate unsafe working conditions and practices in order to reduce the value of a bid as much as possible. Simply put, contractors willing to pay their workers a fair wage and spend money in order to have a safe workplace should not be penalized by being under cut by contractors not willing to meet these obligations.

It has brought fair wages to building trades workers. It has brought stability to careers that are made seasonal by our climate. It has ensured there is a stable supply of skilled construction workers. It has created a less complicated competitive tendering system by avoiding subsistence level wage strategies and rewarding expert management and sound business practices.

The minimum wage schedule contained in the Act is pegged at a fixed relationship to the wages contained in the master collective agreement negotiated by the Building Trades Council and the Construction Labour Relations Association.

9.0 Pensions

9.1 Registered Pension Plans

The MFL is committed to the following principles that we consider to be the foundation of an effective pension policy:

1. All Canadians should have access to an adequate pension plan, including mandatory workplace retirement plans which are vested, locked in, portable and subject to full disclosure requirements to plan members;
2. The Defined Benefit Model is the most effective and equitable currently available.
3. Pension's funds, including surpluses, are deferred income and are the property of the workers who are entitled to them. They are not the property of the employer and should not be used for any purpose other than retirement income for those entitled to a share in the fund without their knowledge and agreement.

In the view of the MFL, the requirement for employee representation on Pension Fund Trustee Boards should be extended to all registered pension plans, with the minimum number of seats for plan members set at 50%. The pension committee would be the Administrator of the pension plan as long as the plan members hold the majority of the seats on the committee, including Chair. This recognizes that pension funds are the property of the plan members and the administration of the funds should be under their control.

9.2 Canada Pension Plan

For many, their only sources of income in retirement are Old Age Security (OAS) payments and Canada Pension Plan (CPP) benefits if they qualify. The MFL believes that CPP and OAS need to be reformed in order to meet the needs of working people and their families, including retirement at age 60 with full benefits.

The investment of pension funds should be required to meet strict ethical standards, to ensure that pension funds, including CPP, are not used in a way that harms people.

10.0 Government

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is committed to the principle of government placing more emphasis on the needs of ordinary people than economic success. While these two priorities are tightly intertwined, an example would be the odious practice of past federal governments intentionally maintaining an unemployment rate of 8% and above to act as a brake on inflation. Having reduced inflation, the policy was maintained “just in case” there were future circumstances that would cause inflation to increase, even marginally.

The strategy worked on paper and in the economic indicator tables, but at a horrific cost to the workers who lost their jobs and anyone financially dependent on them. The toll fell on the provinces and municipalities as new programs and funding sources had to be developed to care for these victims.

Another example is the National Health Care system. Canadians have intentionally carved for profit, private sector business out of health care delivery and the results speak for themselves.

10.1 Selected Provincial Government Issues

10.1.1 Service and Program Delivery

It is critical that the provincial government maintain adequate staff levels to ensure the timely delivery of critical public services. Allowing staff levels to drop in order to meet budgetary targets places an unacceptable burden on remaining staff as they struggle to carry the extra workload.

Maintaining a staffing level below what is required does not mean the workload is reduced correspondingly – it is simply transferred to the staff that is still on the payroll. The result is workplace stress, more sick time and “burnout” and fewer services for members of the public.

The MFL urges the government to maintain staffing of its departments at a level that will make working conditions acceptable and the level and quality of public services adequate to meet the need.

10.1.2 Election Financing

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is on record as being supportive of the Province's Election Financing Legislation as it relates to the ban on corporate and union contributions to political parties – with the proviso that it includes a strong public financing requirement and a ban on third party advertising. These latter provisions have yet to be proclaimed. It is the position of the MFL that the positive impact of a ban on corporate and union donations to political parties is seriously undermined by not proclaiming those elements of the law.

We ask the government to proclaim these measures as soon as possible so that the democratic state of elections in Manitoba benefits fully from the Elections Financing Act.

10.1.3 Balanced Budget Legislation

In the 1990s, the provincial government erred when it enacted the balanced budget legislation with extremely stringent performance standards. The MFL said this when it was enacted and we say it again now.

The legislation is not based on sound economic and public policy principles. It was legislation designed from the perspective of a particular political vision and was intended to put future governments in a legislative straitjacket. Its effect was ultimately to diminish the ability of the following government(s) to undertake short- and medium-term economic strategies and to remove their ability to react to unforeseen events that affected the government's economic situation.

One example of the negative effect of this legislation was that it required the government of the day to make a payment of some form towards the government's long-term debt. However, there are opportunities for sound investment, as the legislation would allow for

the government to also pay down any liability, including the money owed to the Superannuation Fund. As it has been underfunded for a number of years, this would be a wise investment for any provincial government.

Since there are times when taxes need to be adjusted to account for unforeseen financial circumstances, the balanced budget legislation also hampers the ability for any government to increase taxes, as a referendum is required by the legislation. As there are increasing examples of programs that need additional funding to maintain a sufficient level of service to the public, this requirement of the legislation hampers the ability to deliver quality public services.

It is apparent that meeting annual balanced budget targets without regard to the realities of the financial and political landscape is neither practical nor desirable. For example, an immediate investment that would prove beneficial in the short-or medium-term would not be possible without violating the annual balanced budget requirements for one or two budget years. An opportunity for long-term gain and benefit to the citizens of Manitoba would therefore be lost because of weaknesses in the balanced budget legislation.

As much as we would like to see the legislation repealed entirely, we instead suggest an amendment to require a balanced budget over a government's four-year term, rather than as an annual requirement. Such an amendment would maintain the spirit of the law while giving the government a measure of latitude in formulating public policy in a slightly more sensible way.

10.2 Federal Employment Insurance Program

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is committed to restoring fairness, equity and effectiveness to the Employment Insurance program, gutted since the early 1990's.

The federal government continues to abuse workers who are without jobs in Manitoba and Canada. Its administration of the Employment Insurance Fund has resulted in scandalously low

numbers of workers eligible for benefits, benefits that are inadequate and benefits that do not last as long as they should.

Women have been especially hard hit by the high number of work hours needed to qualify for benefits. If a separate EI Fund still existed (2006), it would be in a surplus position of about fifty billion dollars, accumulating at a rate of about \$3 billion per year.

When the government folded the EI fund into general revenue, these surpluses were used for a wide range of other purposes, such as eliminating deficit budgets and paying down the accumulated debt.

We demand that EI be restored to its rightful purpose – that is, providing financial support to workers without jobs.

The following points sum up our vision of a sensible strategy:

- end the use of EI funds for non-EI purposes such as debt reduction or to avoid budget deficits.
- establish a uniform eligibility requirement of 360 hours as well as benefits based on the best 12 weeks of earnings.
- establish training insurance under EI to make lifelong learning a reality.
- establish a training benefit (pilot this program with health care workers).
- recognize and upgrade the skills of recent immigrants.
- address the serious and growing skills shortages.

10.2.1 Unemployed Help Centres

Unemployed help centres provide a valuable service to unemployed workers and are responsible for substantial economic benefit to the province. Governments must provide adequate funding to Unemployed Help Centres where they exist, and foster their development where they are needed to ensure that the needs of unemployed workers are met.

11.0 Economic Policy

Similar to our view of how governments should govern, the MFL is committed to bringing about the day where the quality of life and the needs and welfare of Manitobans and Canadians are the principal concern when economic and industrial strategies are developed by government and business.

Transnational corporations have attained the de facto status of nation-states, coercing governments around the globe to adopt economic plans that are meant to maximize profit-taking with no regard for legitimate national planning by governments that meets the needs of their citizens. Many no longer identify themselves as corporate citizens of the countries that they operate in or even of the country where their headquarters is located.

In most provinces, the drive to "remain competitive in the global economy" has resulted in round after round of personal and corporate tax cuts - pinching off or seriously compromising critical tax funded social programs at a time when people in need required them most.

In February 1997, an annual meeting of influential and powerful international business leaders occurred in Davos, Switzerland. Participants heard warnings from advisors within their own ranks and from political leaders that enough is enough. The international drive to maximize corporate profits at the expense of communities and people was building a backlash against globalization throughout the world.

11.1 Global Economic Strategies

In our opinion, focusing national economic strategies on economic growth in the absence of a meaningful discussion of the challenges facing working families and the elimination of poverty is short-sighted and misguided. Many of these challenges flow from more than two decades of globalization policies and trade agreements entered into by the Government of Canada.

In other words, the first order of business for today is to fix the problems globalization has created while promoting strategies that will help us avoid the recurrence of them.

11.2 Labour's Economic Alternative

The MFL is committed to act in concert with the CLC and other progressive organizations and individuals in order to produce an economic alternative plan to the right wing agenda. This alternative plan will include:

- full employment policies
- expansion of public services
- more equitable distribution of wealth
- expansion of the manufacturing sector and greater processing of natural resources in Canada
- planned and diversified trade

11.3 Taxation Policy

A fair, progressive tax structure enables our governments to do many things. Chiefly among these are to make sound investments in those public services which we hold to be most important, such as health care and education. Taxation enables governments to make strategic investments into areas such as public infrastructure, which benefits both the general public and the provincial economy as well. It supports police, fire and ambulance services, libraries, recreation facilities, personal care homes and many other necessary social programs that help to provide Canadians with a very high standard of living.

Revenue collected through taxation enables governments to ensure that all members of society are able to access programs designed to enhance their economic well being. These include Old Age Security, social assistance, disability pensions and other income support programs.

With these important programs in mind, it is important to realize that they are all available because of progressive taxation. In this light, taxation is better viewed as an investment in our collective future rather than something negative that must continue to be reduced. Taxation is not an unreasonable levy imposed on us by government.

Studies either conducted or analyzed by the Canadian Labour Congress have concluded that tax cuts are an ineffective tool in stimulating economic growth. These studies instead suggest that public investment creates substantially greater rates of economic growth in the short term. They indicate that the initial stimulus to GDP from public spending on service such as health care and education is double that of a general tax cut. A corporate tax cut of the same proportion has less than one-third the impact to the economy of an increase in transfers or an across-the-board tax reduction.

If tax cuts are deemed to be inevitable, we should aim to at least target them so they benefit those most in need in society. Usually these cuts benefit those who need them the least, and are of almost negligible benefit to those towards the bottom of the income ladder. We remain opposed to broadly-based, sweeping tax cuts and/or rebates because they simply do not produce the results that they have been designed to achieve.

12.0 Health Care

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is committed to the preservation and enhancement of our Medicare system, and through the CLC, the National Health Care program. We call on all Manitobans and Canadians to support and defend the five principles of health care contained in the Canada Health Act:

Universality: the health care insurance plan of a province must entitle all of the insured persons of the province to the health services provided by the plan.

Accessibility: the health care insurance plan of a province must provide for insured health services on uniform terms and conditions and on a basis that does not impede or preclude, either directly or indirectly, whether by charges made to insured persons or otherwise, reasonable access to those services by insured persons. Equally important, those providing the services must receive "reasonable compensation".

Public Administration: the health care insurance plan of a province must be administered and operated on a non-profit basis by a public authority appointed or designated by the government of the province.

Comprehensiveness: the health care insurance plan of a province must insure all medically necessary health services provided by hospitals, medical practitioners or dentists, and, where the law of the province so permits, similar or additional services rendered by other health care practitioners.

Portability: the health care insurance plan of a province must not impose any minimum period of residence in the province, or waiting period, in excess of three months before residents of the province are eligible for and entitled to insured health services. And it must provide for the payment of the cost of insured health services provided to insured persons while temporarily absent from the province.

These are the building blocks of a medicare system that basically works and delivers high quality care to Canadians.

The Romanow Commission Report has finally settled the debate over a public health care system versus a private system. There is simply no comparison using any of the important indicators identified in the Romanow Report.

However, there are improvements that can be made to our system:

1. Expand medicare to cover prescription drugs, home care and palliative care.
2. Enshrine Accountability as a core principle in the Canada Health Act. This must remain to be a key responsibility of the Federal Government to enforce.
3. More funding for diagnostic equipment such as MRIs. This is one of the most significant factors behind the development of lengthy waiting lists. The neglect of the public system in this area has spawned the growth of for-profit MRI clinics and queue jumping for those who can pay for it.
4. Enforce the already existing ban on user fees, extra billing, special health care premiums and medical savings accounts.
5. The establishment of a dedicated Health Care Transfer Fund, discrete from the existing CHST transfer payment.

12.1 Taxation Policy Impact

While the federal government has transferred spending responsibility for health care to the provinces, it hung on to the ability to pay for it. The power the federal government used to raise revenue to support health care and education was not transferred along with the financing responsibility. This has created much of the crisis in which the provinces find themselves.

12.2 Privatization Still a Threat

It is certain that in some provinces, a share of public tax dollars will flow through provincial governments to the owners and investors of for-profit health care corporations. The issue of for-profit health care is central to the survival of Medicare. While public payment for health services will expand, so will the for-profit delivery of those services and as Romanow pointed out, all of the research shows that there are no efficiencies to be gained without an accompanying reduction in equitable access to services, and in many cases, without poor health outcomes.

13.0 Education

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is committed to promoting and enhancing a quality public education system, a system that is crucial to the success of working people and their children.

Graduates ought to have the skills, knowledge and dispositions that will allow them to exercise their rights to participate in society, and, where those rights are denied, to acquire them. A quality curriculum addresses issues such as racism, sexism, social inequality, social history (including labour studies and the role of unions and the union movement in society and the workplace) and political action.

The concept that the best outcome of a public school education is attending university, and that all other results are second best must be dropped. All students should be encouraged to examine such options as community colleges, co-operative education, and apprenticeship training.

13.1 Universities

A disproportionate number of children from working class families do not go to university. The fact that the lifetime incomes of university graduates have traditionally been much higher than non-university graduates marks this as a disturbing trend. Universities must become more accessible and they must become more inclusive. Universities communities recognize this and have become more sensitive to issues of access and equity. Universities must:

- work to make sure that their size and institutional culture do not intimidate students from non-traditional backgrounds;
- improve their level of academic counseling;
- re-examine their criteria for academic appointments; and
- work more closely with community groups and high schools.

13.2 Community Colleges

Community Colleges should be used to provide a broad range of technical and trade skills and to provide a degree of general post-secondary education that would allow students to pursue both academic and non-academic studies.

Manitoba's colleges have an enviable track record in the delivery of literacy upgrading. Adult Basic Education (ABE) has given thousands of citizens a second chance and has allowed them to pursue skill training that would have been closed to them. Closely related to ABE is the colleges' track record in expanding English as Another Language (EAL) training, again opening up career opportunities that otherwise would have been denied to new Canadians.

Closer links between community colleges and high schools and universities must be developed. The government should implement a college component to industry training to ensure a more portable skill development. Finally, community colleges must become community institutions providing a much broader range of courses in the sciences and humanities. Education at community colleges should not be reduced to training, it must be education of the whole person. These courses should be a component of all technical training and should also be credited by Manitoba's universities.

13.3 Post-Secondary Education Tuition Fees

In spring of 2008, Manitoba student groups reacted strongly to a government of Manitoba decision to remove a decade old freeze on post-secondary education tuition fees and sought support from the Manitoba Federation of Labour. Ever since the government rolled back tuition fees by 10% in 1999 and then froze them at that level, the MFL generally supported student group requests to continue the freeze. The government signaled its intention to gradually increase tuition fee back to the pre-1999 rates.

As a result of the Government's announced end to the tuition freeze, as well as the request by students to join them in their protest, the MFL Executive Council, at its April 2008 meeting, discussed the matter and passed the following motion:

M/S/C that the MFL support affordable, sustainable post secondary education with increased support for Students.”

The MFL Executive Council established a Tuition Review Committee to develop a formal policy to guide the Federation.

The Committee began its discussions by examining the issue of a long term tuition freeze, and the effect such a freeze has on post secondary education. There are those who argue that there should be no cost to students who wish to pursue post secondary education. Thus, they argue, any increases to tuition fees are wrong. Furthermore it is argued, tuition fees ought to be eliminated entirely.

While the Committee agreed in theory with the notion of free post secondary education for all, the Committee determined that a lack of public resources makes free post secondary education unrealistic at this time; however, the eventual goal should be to reduce tuition fees if it is not possible to entirely eliminate them.

The Committee proceeded with its work using the premise that high quality post secondary education ought to be equally accessible and affordable to all Manitobans.

The Committee found that a simple tuition freeze alone was not the answer to creating affordable, accessible, high quality post secondary education for all Manitobans who wished to be educated. Concerns were raised that the current system was not working fairly for all:

- Often, universities were considered the only kind of post-secondary education, with little or no emphasis placed on Community Colleges and the Apprenticeship model.
- Rural and northern students were at a disadvantage.
- Young Aboriginal people do not have equal access to post secondary education.

- Access to publicly funded, high quality education is every Manitoban's right.
- All levels of education should be delivered by government in a similar way as health care.
- There are too many barriers to people receiving education, including tuition fees, access to adequate housing and other basic essentials

The Committee's work resulted in a number of recommendations that are listed here. It is recognized that this is not an exhaustive list of goals, nor are they listed in order of importance.

1. Affordable housing for students, especially for those who must travel from their communities to attend school, must be an integral part of Manitoba's affordable housing strategy, and be made a core measurement in the Manitoba Student Aid Program.
2. Young people must be given more and better information about, and access to, the Apprenticeship option for post secondary education.
3. When discussing the issue of post secondary education, we must expand our dialogue to include Community Colleges, such as Red River, Assiniboine and University College of the North. These institutions need to be adequately funded and be fully accessible to students from underprivileged northern and rural communities.
4. The number of Aboriginal students must increase, in all post secondary education institutions. Both the provincial and federal governments must allocate more resources for Aboriginal students, and in particular, must contribute further investments in the Manitoba ACCESS programs, Manitoba Bursary must implement the immediate removal of the 2% funding cap on the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, as well as allocate appropriate funding to clear the backlog of students on waiting lists.
5. Assistance for rural and northern students' housing and other living expenses needs to be increased. The provincial government must improve the Manitoba Student Aid Program

- to ensure that rural and northern students receive a fair assessment of their assets and needs.
6. Financial cuts in post secondary education must not be achieved on the backs of those who work in post secondary education institutions.
 7. Both federal and provincial support for Post Secondary Education (PSE) should be increased in recognition of past shortfalls. In no circumstances should the level of funding adversely affect the ability of public PSE institutions to maintain current funding. It must be recognized that inadequate levels of funding adversely affect both tuition levels and faculty and staff retention, recruitment and the overall quality of post-secondary education.
 8. Governments should strongly encourage public post-secondary institutions to maintain or, preferably over a period of time, decrease tuition fees through a funding model that will meet the needs of the institution. Investment in PSE is especially important in times of recession and tuition fees should not be a barrier to those under financial strain who would benefit from additional educational and training opportunities.
 9. Where costs of ancillary services are increasing, the government should recognize those costs by providing additional funding. These costs must never be covered by increasing fees paid by students or by reducing wages.
 10. The tuition freeze thaw, no matter how gradual, must not become a justification for decreased government funding. Education is a form of infrastructure, and investment in it pays both short and long-term social, economic, and cultural dividends to the province as a whole.
 11. It is critical to emphasize funding for the core functions of public post secondary education institutions, above and beyond targeted financial support to students.

12. Above all, fairness needs to be built into the post secondary education system in order that access is available to all, regardless of family income. This access must be to all programs, including, for example, the professional facilities at universities, where higher fees are a serious impediment to enrolment for some students, and those with long apprenticeship periods during which earning power is seriously limited.

13. We recognize and support that, in addition to increased investment in post-secondary education, government needs to have an effective retention strategy. Tax rebates for graduates who remain in Manitoba ought to be increased so that more graduates will chose to stay in Manitoba, if possible, and their acquired skill sets are not lost to Manitoba's socio-economic fabric.

The Committee recognizes that the MFL, along with our affiliates and Young Members Committee, should continue to consult with all students groups, and not just those who represent university students, in order to work towards establishing a consensus based position. It is important that we have a long term policy on affordable, accessible, high quality post secondary education, in all its forms.

This report was adopted as MFL Policy at a meeting of Executive Council April, 2009.

14.0 Apprenticeship and Training

14.1 Training

A federal study has concluded that a skilled workforce "is a key, if not the key, to competitiveness and growth".

But action, so far, has not paralleled statements such as the above. The private sector has not met the challenge, either on its own or through government funded training. Too few companies in Canada maintain or contribute to corporate training plans and most of what is delivered is focused on training management, professional and technical workers;

This has contributed to the critical shortage of skilled labour. Serious skill shortages appeared in the 1990s as fewer young people chose careers in science, industry, the trades or technology – that trend has continued into the 2000's, exacerbated by the growing number of "Baby Boomers" entering retirement.

It should be government's role to facilitate the establishment of a comprehensive national training initiative by implementing a training levy. This would take the form of a national refundable tax on all employers with over ten employees to pay a tax of two per cent of payroll to the federal government. Employers who offer a company-based training program, supervised and trustee by a labour-management committee would receive a refund equal to the cost of the program provided it met or exceeded stated standards and objectives. It is estimated that this tax would raise \$7 billion a year.

But there are cautionary notes to sound when discussing corporate based training. When management talks of new methods of training we have to be wary of proposals which take the depth of knowledge away from a skilled worker. One company may only need an electrician who knows only about 50% of what a skilled electrician knows. But if we only teach our electricians that 50%, we are limiting both their mobility and their ability to contribute to production.

The values of the labour movement insist that the access to training should be a right, that training should be recognized, paid for and accredited, that labour and management should determine the contents of training programs, and that public money spent on training be used to further public goals. The following propositions underscore the basic element of the labour movement's training agenda.

- Training is a basic work right and an integral part of the job;
- Training objectives and goals have to be developed in specific and measurable terms, such as hours per worker, and all workers must be guaranteed that training;
- Training should be conducted within work hours and without production pressures;
- The goals, content and delivery of training programs should be co-determined and should be based on the principles of adult education;
- Training should be developmental. The programs should teach skills that go beyond a particular job or work area;
- Training programs should be open to all workers, not just the youngest or the fittest, and special efforts should be made to use training as a vehicle for social equality;
- Training should be tailored to the identified needs of the individuals and groups and be designed to build on the skills and competencies they already have;
- Training programs should make provision for the child care needs of their participants;
- Training should be geared to raising the level of skill of the entire workforce, not just selected occupations or selected areas;
- Training should support and develop a worker-centred definition of skill and not be restricted to job performance or academic factors;
- Training should support the development of good job design and technologies which respect the skills of workers;
- The provincial government should pass legislation which provides all workers under this jurisdiction with the right to paid educational leave.

Working together as equals, unions and employers will be able to plan for change and reduce or eliminate its harmful effects. While some unions have won the right to participate in training committees either through negotiations or invitation, we have to ensure that we can participate fully, have the ability to veto inappropriate programs, negotiate wage support for hours spent in

training, and ensure the training will have long-term benefits, not simply for the employer, but for the workers.

Recognizing that in some workplaces the employer's previous involvement with the union may preclude any co-participation in such program, the next viable approach is to negotiate money for the union to set up its own program and/or to negotiate for reimbursement of costs associated with upgrading and training. This can be done through collective bargaining with the employer or, if the employer refuses to commit to the program, directly with funding agencies. We would urge federal, provincial and municipal governments to develop contract compliance policies that favour employers who provide joint management-labour training programs.

Unions must also make sure that training programs which are negotiated at the industry or sectoral level have flexible implementation systems so they can be adapted to individual workplaces.

14.1.1 Public Not Private

Worker-centred, accessible, equitable and developmental, skills training is best achieved when training is conducted in conjunction with public educational institutions.

Private sector trainers have not been consistent in delivering a training program that meets labour's agenda. Private sector trainers focus on short term, bottom line practices that provide just in time skills in an increasingly replaceable work force.

Training that is publicly funded and delivered by public institutions is likely to be more democratic, accountable, and broadly-based, whereas the profit motive in private training can lead to an erosion of standards and quality of instruction.

Private training should be funded by employers as is done in many countries. The nature and delivery of such training should be decided jointly with the union representing the affected workers.

14.2 Apprenticeship

To fill anticipated skill shortages domestically, we need to be encouraging the participation of workers from less traditional sources. Only 12% of the total enrolments in apprenticeship programs across Canada were female in 1987. Current regulations require an apprentice to work under the auspices of a journeyman in order to have their hours credited. This puts aboriginal apprentices at a disadvantage since there are often no certified journeymen in their home community. Such barriers to participation will have to be addressed as an aspect of any human resources strategy regarding improved enrolment in apprenticeship programs.

Apprenticeship programs last from two to five years, and involve a mixture of academic and on-the-job training. Graduates of these programs are certified journeymen. Some of the programs provide certification which is recognized only in Manitoba, but in most trades, apprentices who score 70 per cent or more are issued an Inter-provincial Standards Red Seal which allows them to work in other provinces without writing further examinations. Students enrolled in apprenticeship programs draw a salary for their on-the-job work.

Employers who do not provide apprenticeship training are, in effect, piggybacking on their competitors' training programs. This means there exists a disincentive for employers to invest in training. This problem could be partially overcome by the refundable training tax on payrolls which is discussed earlier.

The current system of having provincial governments set standards simply serves to restrict the mobility of labour rather than reflecting any differences in skill needs. The provinces would retain responsibility for the delivery of the training, the instructors, institutions and different boards that report to the provincial ministries. We believe that matters such as changes to standards or course curriculum, or the establishment of new trades and the changing of existing ones must be under the control of a National Apprenticeship Board.

It is important that credits gained at one educational institution be recognized by other institutions. This should apply to apprenticeship training to make sure it does not become a dead-end. Trades people must be able to move, if they so desire, into an academic stream and pursue

technical training at universities and receive some recognition for their technical knowledge and skills.

Governments must pass regulations which require that contractors and their employees be certified when they practice certifiable trades. This move would serve to protect consumers and indicate, in a clear and unequivocal manner, the regard that society holds for apprenticeship.

While we see the need for a general revamping and revival of apprenticeship, there are a number of proposed changes which we oppose.

The current "time-based" programs, that provide an adequate period for the apprentice to learn from the journeyman, must continue and not be replaced by a "competency based" approach.

So-called "competency based" training assumes that all the skills a tradesperson needs can be identified, listed and tested. It takes training out of the relationship between the journeyman and apprentice. It denies that all trades are an art and a science. It fails to recognize that there is no substitute for experience which only comes with time.

The in-school portion of training must continue to be interspersed with practical experience in the workplace. The government departments responsible for in-school portions should also track the accumulation of practical experience in the apprenticeship process.

Many potential apprentices welcome the chance to get educational and training that starts with practical work and introduces "theory" after having had experience. They would be less likely to participate in apprenticeship training if the academic portion were put at the beginning.

Placing the academic portion of the program at the beginning would also turn the colleges into agencies that sort out people before employers have to make a commitment to the apprentice. Such sorting on academic grounds is not necessarily the basis on which to decide who will be a good tradesperson.

Apprenticeship training must become accessible to all.

Affirmative action targets must be set and employers must be pressed to undertake apprenticeship training.

15.0 Agricultural Affairs

The Manitoba Federation of Labour has a lengthy history of participating in joint strategies with our social justice partners in the agricultural community. We share their concerns on a wide range on issues that include the erosion of the family farm base, the impact of large increases in input costs, attacks on the Canadian Wheat Board, social services for farm families, the impact of unfair trade practices the impact exports of farm commodities and more.

The Manitoba Federation of Labour fully supports the efforts of the provincial government to address these issues and to seek effective representation and fair treatment from the federal government on these matters.

16.0 Natural Resources

The Manitoba Federation of Labour believes that the use and care of our natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable, needs to be determined by careful planning involving all of the stakeholders, including workers and their unions who are employed in resource based industries. We are concerned that the highest targets for sustainable development be met, that include a carefully thought out labour force adjustment component to address any job losses or dislocation.

An important component of this plan should be the maximization of natural resource processing within Canada so that Canadians reap the benefit of job creation and, as a nation, we are more than “hewers of wood and drawers of water.”

As a movement, organized labour is deeply concerned about the unbridled export of both renewable and non-renewable energy resources, and the impact of international trade agreements that preclude Canadians from realizing a competitive advantage based on its energy resources.

Related to that, we encourage the development and use of alternative energy sources to augment traditional sources in tandem with aggressive conservation programs.

In these times of global instability and high prices for fossil fuels, the MFL urges the government to enact controls to prevent profiteering by petroleum companies. The government should negotiate a fair and equitable Canadian fossil fuel price strategy in cooperation with producer provinces.

17.0 Environment

Organized labour has a lengthy tradition of activism in order to improve the environment. While much of this activism has been focused on the workplace, in recent decades it has expanded to include many larger issues.

It is union members who help form the grassroots of the environmental movement. The issue of pollution prevention is an important environmental priority and efforts must be stepped up to improve the environment both within and outside the workplace.

17.1 Keeping the Environment Whole

The main concept that society has embraced to take on this challenge is that of *sustainable development*. The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) defines sustainable development as, "human activity which is compatible with environmentalism". As the CLC policy notes, "Environmentalism", in turn, means working for an environment which is clean and healthy, parts of which are subject to sustainable development and the remainder (wilderness) preserved free of development of almost any kind.

There must be active participation by trade unionists in discussions at the international, national and local levels on environmental issues and measures to address them.

There must also be certain environmental rights specifically for workers:

1. **The Right to Joint Union-Management Environment Committees** - These committees would have the same rights, functions and authority as joint health and safety committees. This would include the right to participate in workplace environmental audits (these would be required by law) as well as the right to participate in framing pollution prevention control plans and a toxic use reduction plan. As is the case with health and safety committees these would complement and not be instead of union committees.

2. **Whistle Blower Protection** - The right to divulge information to the public, the media or the government concerning pollution, excessive energy use or waste of natural resources should be entrenched in law. *This right would be exercised only after internal efforts to resolve the problem have failed.* This same Act or regulation would provide for full legal protection and effective redress if the employer takes sanctions. We may experience considerable resistance from the employer on this one as it flouts the traditionally sacred right to manage and the supposed duty of loyalty to the employer but we can be confident that the community would not support such rights and duties permitting environmental law breaking.
3. **The Legal Right to Refuse to Pollute** - At the very least this should mean the ability to allow work stoppage when the worker has reason to believe that the pollution is illegal, reckless, deliberate or in excess of the norm for the enterprise.
4. **The Right to Environmental Information** - Obviously, the ability to carry out the first three rights is dependent on full knowledge about the nature and extent of pollution. This right can only be effective if there are laws requiring the testing and measurement of emissions and effluent. Possibly a new category of environmental protection information relating to the safe use and disposal of the product can be added to the WHMIS MSDS sheet. Just as workers are now entitled to know the toxicity of the products they work with they should be entitled to know the eco-toxicity of the product.

The Manitoba Federation of Labour will work with everyone who recognizes the need for a fundamental shift towards re-establishing and maintaining a healthy environment.

17.2 Kyoto Accord

The MFL calls on all levels of government to implement the provisions of the Kyoto Accord and, as part of that implementation program, to establish an effective transition fund to protect workers and their communities in the areas of jobs, training and income protection. This is a key element in what should be a national scale program to protect the environment, workers and their communities.

18.0 Political Action and the NDP

The Manitoba labour movement learned very early in its existence that the best way to change laws and policies that victimize ordinary people was to be involved in the political process. If people want laws that put them first rather than large corporations and wealthy individuals, then you have to elect politicians that share those values. In short, as one observer noted, “Unions can’t leave politics alone because politics won’t leave unions alone.”

It’s no accident that many of the leaders of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike went on to political careers at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. They understood that if there were to be laws and policies passed that benefit working people, then working people would have to be elected to political office.

Organized labour has a tradition of supporting the New Democrats for a very good reason. We helped create the party. More than thirty years ago, the Canadian Labour Congress and the CCF Party pooled their strength, resources and abilities to create the NDP as a way to promote, on the political stage, principles such as equality for all, proportional participation in society – for example, if an ethnic group makes up ten per cent of the population, then their workplace representation should be at least ten per cent; and gender parity.

This “union” has resulted in some dynamic policies throughout Canada. It was pressure from the NDP that forced the hand of the Pearson Liberal government to implement a publicly funded, universally accessible national health care system, based on the plan created in Saskatchewan by the NDP government of Tommy Douglas. Similar pressure led to the Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, the Unemployment Insurance Plan (now called Employment Insurance) and many other progressive policies.

Where the NDP have formed provincial governments, progressive “people friendly” policies and laws have resulted.

Public motor vehicle insurance plans in Manitoba and Saskatchewan have brought us the lowest insurance rates in North America. The Schreyer and Pawley governments established important social policies that directly benefit every Manitoban - policies such as premium-free medicare and a cutting edge senior's homecare program, to name just two. These governments put job creation ahead of profit creation. They put people ahead of banks. They took effective action to make sure Manitobans had the best possible education and health care structures.

Trade unionists have to be involved in the political process as candidates, as activists and as campaign volunteers.

Political action by workers and their unions is a democratic right. It is also a democratic responsibility - one that keeps democracy healthy.

The MFL continues to endorse and support the NDP. All affiliated locals are urged to affiliate to the Party and encourage their members to participate actively in its activities at the constituency level by taking out personal memberships.

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