

## **Frequently asked questions (FAQs) on Bills 45 & 46**

### ***Bill 46 - Public Service Salary Restraint Act***

#### ***What does Bill 46, the Public Service Salary Restraint Act do?***

Bill 46 imposes a wage settlement of 0%, 0%, 1% and 1%, plus a payment of \$875 in the second year, on workers represented by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE).

#### ***Is Premier Alison Redford government breaking a promise that Premier Peter Lougheed made?***

Yes, Alison Redford is breaking a promise made by Former Premier Lougheed. When Lougheed took away all public-sector workers' right to strike, he gave them the ability to seek arbitration in the event of a bargaining impasse as a compromise. It was a weak compromise, but it was at least a mechanism to resolve a deadlock.

Premier Alison Redford is preventing the union from seeking arbitration because she knows an independent arbitrator will award salary increases that are fair and modest and keep up with Alberta's booming economy.

#### ***Is this legal?***

Bill 46 is likely illegal. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that workers have the right to join together to negotiate with employers on workplace issues and terms of employment. The Redford government is trying to take away these rights by forcing an agreement through law, rather than negotiating.

#### ***Are public-sector workers really overpaid? Can't we pay them what they're worth?***

By the standards of Alberta's booming economy, public-sector workers are not overpaid. Wages in the civil service have not kept pace with increases across the Alberta economy. Managers, construction workers and oil and gas workers have all seen faster wage increases than government workers. Last year, private-sector wages increased by 3.9 per cent, whereas public-sector wages increased by only 2 per cent.

Premier Redford could pay them a fair and decent wage if she wanted to. Fact is, our economy is strong and wages are going up for all jobs – so are the costs of life's necessities in Alberta. Yet Alison Redford wants these workers to take a wage freeze for two years and then increases that are less than inflation – that's a wage **cut**, not a wage freeze.

The Redford government can afford quality public services and decent wages for those who deliver those services, but they choose not to. The government goes so far as to brag that it could raise at least an additional \$10 billion and still be the least taxed province in Canada. And yet it pleads poverty when it comes to providing the services and staff that Albertans deserve.

#### ***Will the government go after the pay of other civil servants?***

The United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) are currently at the bargaining table with the government. The Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA) will be in bargaining early next year. If Premier Redford is willing to use legislation as a tool to bully the AUPE, then there's little doubt that she's willing to use it on UNA and HSAA.

## ***Bill 45 – Public Sector Services Continuation Act***

### ***What does Bill 45 do?***

Bill 45 increases fines for unions and their representatives if they are accused of encouraging or threatening a wildcat strike. The government says this is to protect taxpayers, but the true intent of this Bill is to stifle dissent of any public-sector union member who dares to stand up for their rights.

There have been two wildcat strikes in the past year. Both were spontaneous acts by union members expressing their frustration with an obstinate and uncaring government, and both times the government had no choice but to listen. This bill aims to quash this sort of dissent with draconian fines – a \$1 million a day, in some cases - and by giving the Minister of Human Services the ability to fine individual workers as he sees fit.

The Bill makes a “strike threat” illegal. A strike threat is when a union or its representatives call for a strike. Polling or surveying members on whether they want to strike, and any act that “could reasonably be perceived as preparation for an employees’ strike” would be considered a strike threat and therefore illegal.

### ***Who’s affected by Bill 45?***

Every unionized public-sector worker and the unions that represent them will be affected by Bill 45, but some provisions will affect everyone. If Bill 45 passes, it will be illegal for everyday Albertans to encourage government workers to strike or commit a ‘strike threat.’

### ***Why is the government trying to bully and intimidate workers?***

Alison Redford broke an election promises not to cut jobs or services. Since the election, thousands of jobs have been cut from universities and colleges, healthcare and schools. Premier Redford is trying to bully and intimate union members because they’ve been effective in highlighting her record of broken promises. She’s trying to frighten working people into remain silent for the next two years until after the next election.

### ***Is the government limiting free speech of everyday Albertans?***

Yes, the government is limiting free speech with Bill 45. If passed, it will be illegal for anyone to encourage a government worker to slow down or stop work for any reason, including unsafe working conditions. The fine for this is \$500 a day. It will also be illegal for anyone, union member or not, to encourage a union to survey their members to see if there’s an appetite to strike. It won’t matter if that survey takes place or not; the act of encouraging a union to survey their members about striking will cost you \$500 a day.

TC\*unifor#445:mw\*cope#458  
File: G:\Communications\NEWS\AFL\2013\Bills 45 and 46\_FAQs\_2013\_Nov29.doc  
November 29, 2013