



Statement of Solidarity with Occupy Edmonton and Occupy Calgary

October 14, 2011

The Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) believes in fairness for working families and all Albertans. As a result, we support the Occupy Edmonton and Occupy Calgary movements in their call for democratic and peaceful intervention into an economic system that has been failing to address the concerns and meet the needs of working people locally, nationally, and on a global scale.

The Alberta Context: Economic Unfairness

In Alberta, economic policies that raise concerns for us include a system of flat taxation that unfairly burdens working families and the middle class. We are also troubled by government policies that treat profitable corporations and their owners to tax cuts and billions in corporate giveaways. These generous rewards for the affluent do not reach the majority of working families. Instead, everyday Albertans have been forced to stomach the instability that comes from the ups and downs of volatile and inadequate funding for their schools, universities, hospitals, and vital public services.

The Labour Context: Attack on Workers

Across the country, we are also witnessing an aggressive attack on unions and the right to access free and fair collective bargaining with employers. Paid maternity leave, occupational safety provisions, and equitable pay are the results of collective bargaining efforts by Canadian unions. Proposed changes to the provincial labour code as well as unprecedented use of federal back-to-work legislation threaten the ability of working people to negotiate fair conditions from their employers.

Combined, these forces undermine the interests of Alberta families, make way for reduced wages, weaken education and health care and, most alarmingly, reward those responsible for the global economic crisis rather than holding them to account.

Given our province's obvious wealth, an unequal and insecure future for Albertans is simply unacceptable.

Albertans are taking a stand and joining broader protest movements in financial districts across North America. What began with the Occupy Wall Street movement in New York has taken root in Canadian cities that desire meaningful economic reform in their own communities.

Unions Take a Stand, for All Albertans

Unions in Alberta will not remain silent as inequalities grow. We will not remain silent as the wealth generated by our collectively owned resource wealth is captured by the few while the majority are asked to lower their expectations and accept less and less. We support the Occupy movement as a legitimate expression of frustration and a call for policies that put people ahead of ideology and the narrow interests of the powerful.

Most importantly, we support the Occupy movements because they offer a sign of hope that a better, fairer, and more tolerant world may yet emerge from the ashes of the ongoing global financial crisis.

This statement was endorsed by the Alberta Federation of Labour Executive Council on October 14, 2011