

**FIGHTING
FOR OUR**





Board Chair Report

For people who care about the public good, public services and the public interest in our province, this has been a challenging and active year. I want to make it clear that these demanding circumstances are precisely why Public Interest Alberta exists, and I am convinced that our advocacy efforts over the past year have been both effective as well as badly needed.

The 2012 provincial election results were seen by many as a victory for “progressive” elements in the ruling party, with promises of sustainable funding for public services, the elimination of child poverty in five years, a comprehensive approach to poverty reduction and other positive initiatives.

The reality, of course, turned out to be the opposite: the worst cuts to public services since the early Klein years, devastating cutbacks in post-secondary institutions, attempts to bully labour groups, undermining services to the most vulnerable people in our society, and a complete abandonment of commitments made to voters – all in a province with the wealthiest economy in the country. At the same time, the provincial government made clear whose interests it really represents, with its absolute refusal to consider necessary tax increases on wealthy and corporate interests, its unrelenting advocacy for oil sands development despite environmental concerns, and its continuing reliance on wealthy individuals and corporations for funding, in the context of an electoral financing process that is clearly undemocratic.

PIA has worked with its member organizations and concerned individuals throughout this difficult year to fight back and to rally support for a dramatically different approach, based on strong public services, fair taxation and royalties, and a more democratic and inclusive Alberta.

I am particularly pleased with our efforts in such areas as seniors’ issues, as well as human services and poverty, where advocacy for those most at risk is most badly needed. I also believe that, working with our members, PIA has helped to change the nature of the debate on more government revenue and fairer taxes. Our effectiveness has increased in part because, through the generosity of our member organizations, we have been able to expand our capacity for advocacy across the province. The work of our communications assistant, our Calgary organizer and our community mobilizers in four cities has been of enormous assistance in helping to mobilize the growing support for the changes that are needed.

Success comes with fighting back in effective ways and in articulating and advocating for better alternatives. With your support, we look forward to doing “the hard work of democracy” even more effectively in the coming year.

Larry Booi, President

Larry has long worked to strengthen education and support the public good. He is the former president of the ATA and was a member of the Executive Board of the Canadian Teachers’ Federation. He has been actively involved in curriculum development, has written textbooks used in Alberta schools, and acted as a consultant for publishers and NGOs. Larry has played a central role in the establishment and growth of Public Interest Alberta and is Chair of the Democracy Task Force.

Executive Director Report



Public Interest Alberta has had a very effective ninth year of political advocacy for quality public services and democracy.

Unfortunately, even though we live in the wealthiest province with a growing population and strong economy, the Alberta government has chosen to slash funding to many vital public services rather than fix our unsustainable revenue problems that favour the very wealthy and multinational corporations. While the government said budget cuts were necessary due to the so called “bitumen bubble,” most Albertans are seeing through the spin and demanding the government fix the systemic revenue problems and invest in the public services that are vital to our families, community and economy.

As explained in the task force reports, PIA has played a key role in framing this political debate and mobilizing the general public to take action. Thanks to the ongoing support and commitment of our members, we have brought various organizations together to develop a shared analysis of the issues facing these seven public interest themes and advocate for solutions.

This past year we put significant effort into building our networks and advocacy capacity around the province. Our Calgary outreach coordinator, Julie Hrdlicka, has done an excellent job building connections with partner organizations and representing PIA in the media and at public events as have our community mobilizers in representing PIA in Red Deer (Stephen Merridew), Grande Prairie (Heather Haiste), Lethbridge (Lorinda Peel) and Medicine Hat (Alison Van Dyke). Thanks to this team, we received significant media coverage on our advocacy efforts and public events in these cities. I have had the pleasure of speaking at many events and advocacy training sessions for our member organizations across the province. Our seventh annual advocacy conference was also a great success.

Of course, none of this work would be accomplished without the amazing support of our member organizations and commitment of our dynamic board of directors. We were also pleased to be able to work with a number of students through the U of A Community Service Learning program, including Mireille Chamberlain, a student intern on our board of directors. PIA is also a long-time supporter of the Next Up program that trains young advocacy leaders and we benefitted from having one of the grads, Kathryn Lennon, work this past year as our communications assistant. While sadly for us she headed back to university for graduate studies, we are very happy to have our new communications coordinator, Sheryle Carlson, on staff as of May. Of course, Karen Werlin, our fabulous office manager continues to be the glue that holds things all together with dedication and good humour.

Bill Moore-Kilgannon, Executive Director

Prior to joining Public Interest Alberta, Bill worked in Ottawa as the Director of Campaigns and Communications of the Council of Canadians. He has served as the Executive Director of the Parkland Institute at the University of Alberta, and as coordinator of the Global Visions Festival. He is also the producer of two documentary films and studied Canadian and Latin American history, political science and economics at the University of Alberta and l'Université de Sherbrooke.

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2012 – 2013

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PIA Staff



Karen Werlin, Office Manager

Karen Werlin has been Office Manager with PIA since October, 2004. Before joining PIA, she was on staff at the Alberta Federation of Labour for 27 years. A life-long activist, she served her union in many capacities, including president of her local and regional officer on the National and International Executive Boards. She is currently involved with the Alberta Labour History Institute and sings with Notre Dame de Bananes, Edmonton's own left-wing socialist choir.



Kathryn Lennon, Communications Assistant (outgoing)

Kathryn Lennon has contributed to Terra Informa, an independent environmental news radio show on CJSR, and Alternatives Journal, a national environmental magazine. She has also organized with PowerShift Canada, the Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre and the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians. A common thread in her work has been tackling how those with less access to power have their voices heard by decision-makers.



Sheryle Carlson, Communications Coordinator

As an activist and filmmaker, Carlson has worked in various roles in Alberta and around the globe, such as Community Services Learning Liaison with the University of Alberta in 2006, Development Manager of the Global Visions Film Festival in 2007, Multimedia Coordinator for the Alternative Information Centre in 2009, and Associate Director of Sierra Club of Canada, Prairie Chapter in 2010. She recently finished her masters studies in Human Ecology relating the degrowth framework to the Cooperativa Integral Catalana in Spain.



Julie Hrdlicka, Calgary Outreach Coordinator

Julie Hrdlicka has been working in the areas of social and environmental justice for over a decade in Calgary. Julie has been the Outreach and Promotion organizer for a number of organizations in the city including: CANESI (The Canadian Network to End Sanctions on Iraq), Faith and the Common Good (Calgary) and the Calgary office of the Parkland Institute. She has also been on the board of many organizations over the years including The Irma Parhad Programs at the U of C, Project Ploughshares Calgary, and more.

Community Mobilizers

Heather Haiste, Grande Prairie Mobilizer

Heather Haiste is devoted to action and advocacy promoting the dignity and respect that is the right of all people. She has been married for 22 years, and has five children and six grandchildren. Heather has worked in human services, nursing, home care and family and community supports. She has worked for a not-for-profit agency in Grande Prairie, Accredited Supportive Living Services, and is a program coordinator for family support, foster care division. She is also a foster parent and sits on the foster parent advisory committee for region 8. Heather is also the guardian of her mother, has recently taken training to be a level one advocate for seniors, and sits on PIA's Seniors Task Force.

Lorinda Peel, Lethbridge Mobilizer

Lorinda's experiences include being trained as a postpartum doula, coordinating music and arts festivals and promoting live music shows, working for peace, human rights and advocacy organizations, dabbling in environmental consulting, as well as working in a health and environmental store. She is passionate about supporting the arts and creativity, doing work that benefits society, igniting change, and being considerate of our community, diversity, environment, future generations and planet as a whole. Born and raised in Edmonton, she moved to Lethbridge a few years ago and is enjoying working, playing and gardening in the windy city with her daughter, cat and chickens.

Alison Van Dyke, Medicine Hat Mobilizer

Alison grew up in a civically minded family in the Medicine Hat area. She originally became involved in social activism through Friends of Medicare when her youngest daughter experienced a health crisis. She is the Co-Chair of Friends of Medicare - Medicine Hat Chapter. Alison spends much of her time volunteering at her daughter's school and with the Parent Council and Fundraising Society. She is also very active in her church and has previously volunteered for various community organizations and events.

Stephen Merredew, Red Deer Mobilizer

A graduate of the University of Alberta, Stephen started his teaching career in Northern Alberta before taking a leave of absence to volunteer in Southeast Asia. Upon returning to Canada he and his wife relocated to Red Deer, where he has been teaching and coaching basketball since 2008. His involvement with the Alberta Teachers Association has included serving as a Local Political Engagement Officer and Annual Representative Assembly delegate. A founding member of Public Interest Alberta, Stephen looks forward to helping tell the stories of the many great public service programs and workers in Central Alberta.



Childcare

This was a very busy year of advocacy for the Early Childhood Education and Childcare Task Force. During last year's provincial election, Premier Redford committed to develop a strategy that would eliminate child poverty in five years. We therefore actively participated in the consultation into the development of the Social Policy Framework to make sure that early childhood education and care would be included as a top priority in the new strategy.

The task force has identified five recommendations for accessible and affordable quality early childhood education and care:

- 1. Develop a provincial framework for early childhood learning and care in Alberta;**
- 2. Recognize and support our children's mentors and caregivers as professionals;**
- 3. Make early learning and care affordable for all;**
- 4. Support families with different needs; and**
- 5. Keep childcare public/non-profit.**

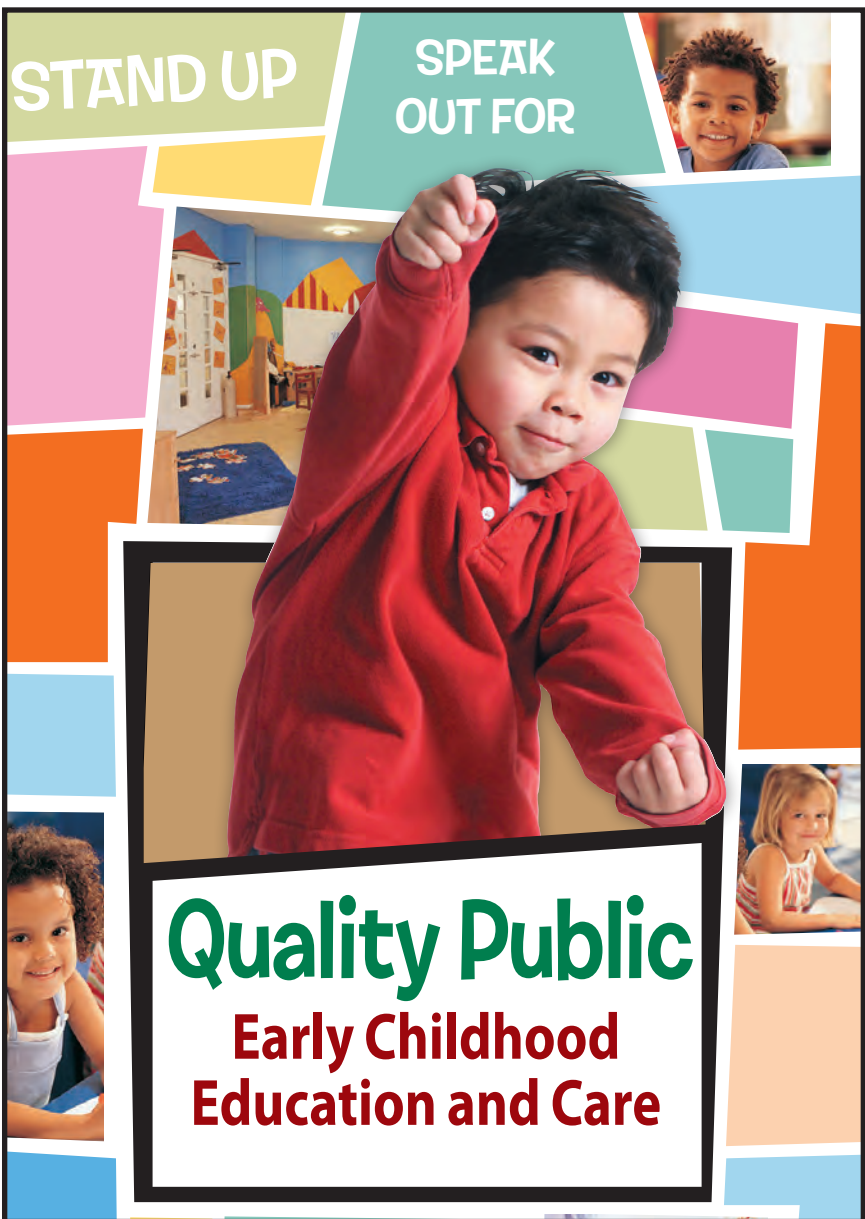
A new advocacy brochure that outlines these five points and calls on Albertans to stand up for childcare was printed and distributed across the province. Our Calgary Outreach Coordinator and our four Community Mobilizers played an active role in doing research and building connections with the local childcare commu-

nity and got excellent media coverage when we launched the campaign in September.

The task force held another media conference at the end of November to release new national statistics that clearly show the number of childcare spaces is not keeping pace with the rapid growth of Alberta's population of children. This media conference received significant media coverage and raised serious questions about why the provincial government cut its childcare space creation program.

Following the release of the provincial budget in March, we held another media conference to reveal that the government had decided to cut the quality enhancement grant. While the overall budget for childcare has actually seen a modest increase, the government has decided to cut the grant worth \$7.1 million that was available to all day home, childcare centres and before and after-school programs to support various initiatives for improving quality.

The task force continues to expand its outreach and advocacy efforts. We are pleased that there are a number of new members from around the province on the task force. We are also getting strong support for the campaign from the childcare community and hundreds of people are signing on to support the campaign and distribute our materials.



Task Force: Cherie Langlois-Klassen (Chair), Carol Sullivan (Terra), Christopher Smith (Muttart Foundation), Donna Staszewski, Elizabeth Tweedale and Kim Storebo (CUPE), Julie Hrdlicka (PIA Calgary), Karen Sputeck (AUPE), Kristy Thomas (McKernan Child Centre), Lana Fletcher (Primrose Child Care), Ryan MacIntyre (We Did It), Sherry Hunt (PSAC and Children's House Child Care Society Lethbridge), and Sue MacLean (Oliver Childcare Centre).



Democracy

Alberta's provincial election in 2012 and its aftermath provided numerous examples of the need for more determined advocacy in the area of democratic reform in our province: the resulting majority government with far less than 50% of the vote, the continued legacy of the first-past-the-post system, but most blatantly the ongoing and undue dominance of wealthy and corporate interests in the electoral process through our utterly undemocratic rules for campaign contributions.

This issue of campaign and party electoral finance reform was the central issue for the PIA Democracy Task Force in the past year. The task force made this topic its key focus in the provincial election, as it had during the various parties' leadership campaigns in the previous year.

The issue received more attention with PIA's work after the election on analyzing the source and amount of campaign contributions, and in particular with the finding that two-thirds of the Progressive Conservative funding came from corporate sources and wealthy individuals. The province's policies of allowing corporate contributions as well as individual donations of up to \$30,000 became an increasingly important issue in the past year, as the mounting evidence of the undemocratic nature of current policies becomes

even more clear with ongoing revelations, such as the ruling by Elections Alberta that the "bundling" of as much as \$430,000 in contributions in one cheque is legitimate under current rules.

PIA also pursued a formal challenge to Elections Alberta related to campaign contributions to Minister Manmeet Bhullar in the 2012 election, and we are currently waiting for the decision on the issue.

The task force is working on developing an advocacy campaign to reform the undemocratic nature of campaign financing by working to bring about three key changes: an end to corporate and union contributions, a more reasonable limit for individual contributions and spending limits for parties and candidates.

In addition, the task force is reviewing the basis of our advocacy efforts across the broad range of issues of democratic renewal and reform, including the need for electoral reform (proportional representation), openness and transparency, limiting the power of the premier and executive, strengthening the legislature and the role of MLAs, fostering citizen engagement and strengthening local democracy. In that context, we are also considering the opportunities to broaden the membership of the task force in order to enhance our advocacy efforts.

Task Force: *Larry Booi (Chair), Brian Staples (SALT), Harold Neth, Hans Smits, Heather MacIntosh and Jasmine Ing (Sheldon Chumir Foundation), Ricardo Acuna (Parkland Institute), and Tim Kabarchuk (Fair Vote Edmonton).*

Education



The Education Task Force continues to focus its advocacy efforts on our core value of developing the full potential of all Alberta's students. Education is about gaining mastery of knowledge and skills in the subject areas but more than that, it is about creating compassionate, thoughtful, and engaged citizens. Education is about children's futures and the future of our society.

Following the election, many hoped that the PC government would make education a high priority and commit to sustainable funding. The reality is that education faces greater overall threats now than at any time in the past twenty years. The government's recent budget has a slight increase in money in some areas such as inclusive education, but with no clear direction on how the money is to be used, while cutting in other areas like ESL. The net effect is that there are \$14.5 million in cuts while there will be an 11,000 increase in students come September.

Clearly, the task force will need to continue to pursue its six key directions to meet the educational needs of all of Alberta's students:

- 1. Improvements to early learning;**
- 2. Coordinated delivery of non-educational services to children at the school site;**
- 3. More effective language learning supports for immigrant children and families;**
- 4. Clear commitment to building and maintaining schools where they are needed;**
- 5. A renewed emphasis on the arts, trades, and language learning in our classrooms; and**
- 6. More effective supports for children with special needs;**

At present, the task force is compiling the results from a survey we have conducted regarding children's learning conditions in Alberta's classrooms. Many of the comments from teachers, support staff, and parents tell the stories of crowded classrooms, few aides, and a lack of resources. The task force plans to communicate some of these stories to the public, especially as we go into trustee elections in the fall.

In the wealthy province of Alberta, advocacy should be about fine tuning programs; instead it is a constant battle to preserve the public interest in the face of the siren call for ever more privatization.

Task Force: Harold Neth (Chair), Christopher Spencer (EPSB), Danny Burrell and Rick Klimchuk (CEP), Ed Butler, Gloria Nordin and Jennifer Ritchie (Edmonton Public Teachers), Jonathan Teghtmeyer (ATA), Kathryn Burke (LDAA), Larry Booie, Mary Dunnigan, Dan Raitz (ATA Local 18 – Wetaskiwin).



Human Services & Poverty

The past year has again proven to be a busy one. With the re-election of the Progressive Conservatives in the spring, under the leadership of Alison Redford, the government undertook an ambitious agenda. They began with consultations for the Social Policy Framework and ended the year with the 2013 budget. Sadly, the progressive language of the framework was incongruent with the reality of the retrenchment budget delivered. The political discourses remain the same in Alberta, despite a change in leadership.

The Human Services & Poverty Task Force took a leadership role in bringing community partners together to discuss the social policy framework consultation process. Significant concerns were presented regarding the short time frame of the process and the time of year when it was undertaken. During the summer months the government said they would host consultation sessions and invite other groups to do the same. They would accept feedback from these sessions until August 30th. Running these sessions during the summer months made planning difficult due to the vacation season and many of the people interested in contributing to the process were away. In addition, the short time frame was offensive considering the importance of the process.

To address our concerns, we decided to augment the government's process. Many groups hosted their own

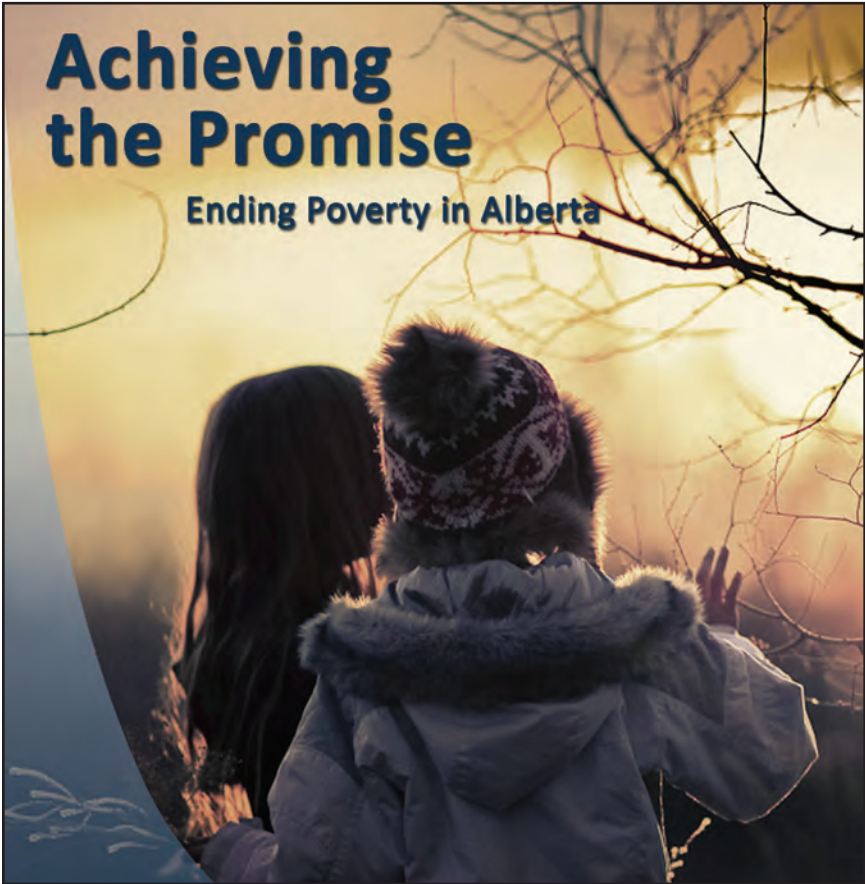
consultations and challenged the short timeline for submission. The government did respond to this challenge and continued to accept reports after the deadline. We also hosted a one day forum with groups gathered in Edmonton and Calgary linked via the internet. Dr. Jackie Sieppert, Dean of the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary hosted in Calgary and Lori Sigurdson, Manager of Professional Affairs at the Alberta College of Social Workers and Chair of the Human Services Task Force hosted the event in Edmonton. For those in other parts of the province internet access was available. Excellent presenters inspired those attending. Substantial actions underway were described. The forum was a great success.

The members of the task force continue to be involved in many initiatives that champion social justice. Our Campaign 2000 Child Poverty Report, titled *Achieving the Promise*, was published in November. The title was chosen to encourage the fulfillment of Premier Redford's promise to eliminate child poverty in 5 years. Unfortunately, little has been done by government to bring this to fruition.

The Idle No More movement came to the attention of the nation in the depths of winter. Flash mobs, press conferences, meetings and a myriad of other activities were supported by the task force members. The Action to End Poverty updated the 2012 *Poverty*

Costs report. Poverty Costs 2.0 will be published in late spring. Responses to the budget, cuts to funding for disabled adults, legislative changes in child welfare, and tax fairness were also undertaken.

Many thanks to all the task force members for their significant contributions throughout the year. Much appreciation goes to Bill Moore-Kilgannon for his leadership and support of the work of the task force.



Task Force: Lori Sigurdson (Chair and ACSW), Ann Nicol (ACDS), Bob McKeon (SJO, Catholic Archdioceses, Edmonton), William Macaskill, Mary Dahr (HSAA), Carolyn Pogue (UCW), Fran Savage (CFUW Edmonton), Gary St. Amand and Mark Holmgren (Bissell Centre), Dan Meades and Janet Eremenko (VCC), Joanne Currie (UW of Greater Edmonton), Joe Ceci (AEPA), John Kolkman (ESPC), Leah Kelly (WCC), Kimberly Mayer and Mezaun Lakha-Evin (CPA, Calgary), Ryan Geake (CSS), Sharlyn White (FCSSAA), Vasant Chotai (QLC).



Environment

The Redford government has made it clear that they are committed more to promoting the demands of the energy industry than developing plans addressing the serious environmental issues facing the province. Public Interest Alberta continues to advocate on three main environmental themes: public control of water, climate change and transition off fossil fuels.

We continue to coordinate the Our Water is Not for Sale coalition-based campaign. We have built an extensive advocacy network and are educating Albertans about the implications of a water licence market. In February and March, the Ministry of Environment held consultations in 20 cities and invited people to fill out a simplistic online survey. We encouraged campaign signees to use the “water conversations” to further challenge the potential plan for expanding and deregulating a water allocation market. We held events during world water week and have been working with first nation leaders and Idle No More activists to educate people about the issues of the campaign. Thanks to the support of CUPE, we have been able to update the campaign website and are

currently in the process of developing new print and advocacy materials.

PIA has been supporting the advocacy work of a number of environmental organizations to push for stronger policies to address climate change. Our communications assistant, Kathryn Lennon, was on the national steering committee for “Power Shift”, a conference that took place in Ottawa that attracted close to 1000 youth from across the country. We helped get media attention for the founder of 350.org, Bill McKibben, when he was speaking in Alberta. We signed on with a coalition of organizations who are challenging pipeline spills, while engaging with media.

As the majority of Alberta’s electrical power is generated from burning coal, which produces significant amounts of greenhouse gases and toxic emissions, we have recently joined with groups like the Pembina Institute and the Canadian Association of Physicians for Environment to pressure the government to transition Alberta off coal.

In the coming months, PIA’s Environment Task Force will be actively working to better link our member groups and key environmental organizations.

Task Force and Our Water is Not for Sale Steering Committee: Gerald Wheatley (Chair), Scott Harris (Council of Canadians), Marle Roberts (CUPE Alberta), Ricardo Acuna (Parkland Institute), Joseph Jobin (Treaty 8 First Nations), Chelsea Flook (Sierra Club Prairies), Pauline Clarke (AUPE Environment Committee), Jesse Cardinal and Helene Walsh (Keepers of the Athabasca), Evan Hammer (Next Up).

Post-Secondary Education



For many years, post-secondary education (PSE) in Alberta has faced on-going issues of access, affordability and quality. While we have much to be proud of in our various technical institutes, colleges and universities, the many years of inadequate support has meant that we still have the lowest student participation rate, among the highest costs in the country and serious issues of deferred maintenance and lack of program and academic supports.

The advocacy work of Public Interest Alberta's PSE Task Force continues to speak out for five themes:

1. **Create more quality spaces for students at Alberta's public universities, colleges and technical institutes;**
2. **Expand the number of faculty and staff in order to improve the quality of our public post-secondary education system;**
3. **Reduce tuition and restore cut student financial aid programs for students and their families;**
4. **Increase funding for graduate students at Alberta's universities; and**
5. **Support deferred maintenance and other infrastructure projects**

needed for the expansion of the system.

Despite promising an increase of 2% during the provincial election, the Redford government deeply cut post-secondary education funding by 7.2% in the March 2013 budget. This cut is resulting in many programs being eliminated or rolled back, increasing pressure to raise student fees, and threatens the quality of our post-secondary education system. Members of our task force have been speaking out and challenging the government's plans to force institutions to focus on the commercialization of research. We have supported and participated in public rallies against the cuts and have been speaking out at events and in the media at every opportunity.

PIA will be calling upon many different member groups to support advocacy efforts of the PSE sector. These massive and unnecessary cuts have sparked strong outrage that will help us mobilize people across the province. The task force is in the process of developing new outreach and advocacy materials and strategies to expand the support for effective political action.

Task Force: Amanda Nielsen (AGC), Anna Beukes and Terry Sway (ACIFA), Carol Neuman (ASEC), Duncan Wojtaszek and Petros Kusmu (CAUS), Jason Heistad (AUPE), John Nicholls and Lori Morinville (CAFA), Kelly Garland (HSAA), and Russell Eccles (NASA).



Seniors

The past year has seen an incredible shift in the political scene. We started buoyed by the *Beyond Acute Care* conference followed by the election of Premier Redford who had made a series of undertakings:

- **To increase the number of long-term care spaces by 1,000 per year for each of the next five years;**
- **To increase resources for Home**

Care so that seniors could remain in their own homes as long as possible;

- **To support the creation of patient/family councils in seniors care facilities; and**
- **To preserve the universal seniors' drug plan that had been threatened by former Minister of Health, Ron Liepert.**

The only "NOs" in the Premier's response to our survey was to the establishment of an Independent Seniors Advocate and increasing tax revenue.

The rosy outlook began to fade when we met with Minister Horne and Deputy Minister VanderBurg last October to deliver thousands of our signed advocacy postcards, and accelerated with all the broken promises in the March budget.

In reaction to this deteriorating political environment, the PIA Seniors Task Force has worked to identify the common causes that all 16 organizations involved in the task force could act cooperatively to advance.

Through media conferences, public speaking, op-eds and other means, we have sought to highlight the predicaments facing many Alberta seniors and proposed constructive ways of addressing these problems.

We have developed a position paper on Home Care, a major obstacle for seniors who want to stay in their own homes and avoid institutional



settings, and we are in the process of developing a position on pharmaceutical policy in Alberta.

Another emphasis in the past year has been re-organizing our MLA Contact network into new Constituency Action Teams who can educate the now 87 MLAs on seniors concerns.



Task Force: Noel Somerville (Chair and SALT), Baldwin Reichwein (ACSW - Retirees), Bernice Rempel (CARP - Edmonton), Carol Wodak (SALT), Donna Durand and Gary Pool (ACA), Frank Horvath (WCPH), Gerri Keith, Sherry McKibben and Terry Inigo-Jones (HSAA), Glen Scott (AUPE), Gordon Voth and John McDonald (SUN), Heather Haiste (PIA – Grande Prairie), Heather Smith and Judith Grossman (UNA), Jack Hubler (UA 488 – Retirees), Jim Saltvold and Sam Denhaan (CACA), John Bachynsky (SCHC), Louise Yarrow (CARP - Calgary), Lynda and Ron Jonson (Seniors I Care – Hinton), Sandra Azocar (FOM), Sherry Robbins and Daniel Mulloy (ARTA).



General Advocacy

On top of the advocacy efforts of our seven task forces, PIA also works with organizations and individuals to develop short-term advocacy strategies on key public interest issues.

OUR LRT

Challenging the privatization of public services is an issue that is at the centre of all our advocacy efforts. Therefore, when we discovered that the Harper government had forced the City of Edmonton to privatize the new light rail transit line to Southeast Edmonton, we worked with key municipal unions and others to expose this in the media. The OURLRT campaign has established a website and conducted a public opinion poll that shows a majority of Edmontonians are opposed to this public private partnership. Thanks to the support of these unions, we are developing advocacy materials, will have research conducted by the Parkland Institute and will mobilize people during the fall election campaign.

Steering Committee: *Stu Litwinowich (ATU Local 569), Mike Scott (CUPE Local 30), Lou Arab (CUPE Alberta), Brian Henderson (EDLC), Ricardo Acuna (Parkland Institute), Scott Harris (Council of Canadians), Brendan Van Alstine (Transit Riders Union of Edmonton), Gil McGowan (AFL).*

Common Causes

While the primary focus of PIA's advocacy work is provincial politics, many organizations have joined together across Canada to challenge the Harper government's extreme

right-wing agenda. PIA worked closely with the Council of Canadians, many unions, environmental organizations, first nation groups, farmers and social agencies to explore how we can support this new national initiative called



Common Causes. As Common Causes was being developed in Ottawa, the Idle No More movement exploded onto the national scene in December and January. We therefore worked closely together with Common Causes and Idle No More to host a media event followed by a round dance in Churchill Square in Edmonton on January 28th. While events were held in cities across the country, the Edmonton events received front page and

national TV coverage. Currently, PIA is working with the partner groups in Common Causes to help coordinate a teach-in in Calgary during the Conservative Party of Canada's national policy convention at the end of June.

Block (the) Party Rally

PIA worked with AUPE and our many member organizations to stage a protest outside the PC Party policy conference on May 25th. The protest was staged as a block party with lots of live music and a series of “mock booths” that highlighted the implications of PC Party policies and cuts to public services. The booths included: a dunk tank for post-secondary education, a seniors care bed in a parking lot, a Whack a Broken Promise game, a Flat Tax Jeopardy show, a place to make your own bitumen bubbles, a stuffed classroom of the future and twitter photo booth where you could have a photo of you with a message tweeted into the Premier. Despite



the rain, the rally was well attended as AUPE organized buses to bring people in from other cities and from a labour media conference that was taking place in Edmonton. The event received significant media coverage and really helped to profile the implications of the cuts to programs for people with developmental disabilities, the closing of the Michener Centre, cuts to post-secondary education and Education. It also highlighted the need for the government to address the revenue problems and profiled the “Better Way Alberta” campaign coordinated by the AFL.





Annual Conference

PIA's seventh annual conference, held on April 10th in Calgary and April 11 – 13 in Edmonton, was a huge success.

The conference kicked off in both Calgary and Edmonton with a panel featuring Linda McQuaig, journalist and author of many books including



the "Trouble with Billionaires." Linda gave an excellent keynote speech about the dramatic rise in income inequality and the implications for our democracy. Her keynote talk was followed by Gregor MacLennan with Amazon Watch from San Francisco and a special conference address via video from Peas Peas Ayui, one of the leaders of the Achuar people from Peru. They told the story of how they successfully fought off the destruction of their watershed and traditional land from a number of major oil companies.

The closing speaker on the panel was Crystal Lameman, a 30 year old mother and teacher from the Beaver Lake

Cree Nation in Northeastern Alberta. She did an excellent job showing how her community members have mobilized globally to challenge the over 17,000 permits and leases granted to oil companies on their territory.

Other plenary speakers during the conference included Afsar Jafri, Director of the organization Focus on the Global South, in Delhi, India. Afsar shared many lessons from successful civil society advocacy campaigns from India, including the fight to stop the introduction of genetically modified cotton. Friends of Medicare sponsored the talk by Wendell Potter, former Director of Communications for one of the largest health insurance corporations in the U.S. and author of "Deadly Spin, An Insurance Company Insider Speaks Out on How Corporate PR is Killing Health Care and Deceiving Americans." Wendell provided an amazing glimpse into how the US health care system is dominated by corporate spin doctors and lobbyists



FIGHTING FOR OUR

Chateau Louis Conference Centre, 11727 Kingsway Avenue, Edmonton

—Author of *The Trouble with Billionaires*

—Beaver Lake Cree Nation

—Amazon Watch

—Amazon Watch

Full Conference Registration: **Members**
Individual - \$180
Table of 7 or more - \$165/person
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Individual - \$240

For further information and to register contact:
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email: office@pia Alberta.org

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Tickets \$15 - available at PIA, Audrey's Books & Earths
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Plenary speakers: Afsar Jafri (Focus on the Global South), Rita Morbia (Interpares), Diana Gibson, Dennis Howlett (Canadians for Tax Fairness), Sean Devlin (Truthful Communications), Kevin Millisp (Next Up), Wendell Potter (Author of Deadly Spin), Julia Pope (Leadnow), and many more.



Sponsors:



Media sponsor



Thanks goes to all of the conference sponsors, the planning committee, the Next Up participants and the volunteers for making this one of the most successful conferences we have held.

The annual Public Interest Awards were giving out for the first time at our conference rather than at our AGM. We were very pleased that Alberta Views Magazine agreed to sponsor the awards this year by providing \$750 to the winning organizations. The Southern Alberta award was given to Evelyn Schuler, a long-time active member with many organizations from Medicine Hat. The Northern Alberta award was given to the Global Cafe, an exciting initiative at Jasper Place High School in Edmonton where high school students have their own space to create projects, including Ed Stake, an advocacy project that mobilized young people to speak out for public education and against the government cuts.

Statement of Operations

	2013	2012
Revenue		
Membership Fees	224,517	226,612
Conference Income	44,016	21,113
Campaign Income	36,704	14,453
Mobilizers	32,371	10,047
Fundraising Income	11,075	8,679
General Advocacy Fund	10,270	10,000
In-kind contributions	1,800	1,000
Miscellaneous/Interest Income	908	1,123
Speaker & writer Honourarium	600	350
Better Way Alberta	455	3,340
Join Together Campaign	0	50,000
	362,716	346,717
Operating Expenditures		
Staffing	206,271	200,479
Communications & Outreach	16,393	19,795
Rental	15,082	15,082
Amortization	5,738	5,239
Audit Fees	5,278	5,200
Telecommunications	4,204	4,115
Insurance	2,070	1,487
Janitorial	1,552	1,449
Annual General Meeting	1,147	1,082
Stationery & Supplies	882	1,356
Board Meetings	741	1,319
Interest & Bank Charges	710	449
Miscellaneous	465	747
Equipment/Programs	391	191
Public Interest Award	14	0
Furniture	0	73
	260,938	258,063

Year Ended March 31, 2013

	2013	2012
Program Costs		
Conference	46,178	25,609
Mobilizers	32,371	10,047
Human Services & Poverty Task Force	16,871	2,668
Childcare Task Force	4,095	97
Seniors Task Force	3,217	5,195
General Advocacy Campaign	1,061	0
Environment Task Force	612	1,354
Privatization Task Force	234	0
Post-Secondary Education Task Force	170	400
Education Task Force	87	147
Democracy Task Force	57	5,102
Better Way Alberta	24	1,406
Join Together Alberta Campaign	0	44,639
	104,977	96,664
Excess of Revenues over Operating Expenses	\$(3,199)	\$(8,010)



Public Interest Alberta (PIA) is a non-partisan province-wide organization focused on education and advocacy on public interest issues. PIA exists to foster in Albertans an understanding of the importance of public services, institutions and spaces in Albertans' lives, and to build a network of organizations and individuals committed to advancing the public interest.



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