

Board Chair Report

The results of the May 5, 2015 election took many people by surprise, but not as much the members of Public Interest Alberta. For over 10 years, the board, staff, task forces and membership have been working diligently to advocate for a stronger democracy in Alberta and the electorate of the province finally agreed. Enough is enough - and in a historic, landslide vote the 44 year reign of the Conservatives came to an abrupt end.

While the election changed the political landscape in Alberta, the work of PIA is far from over. Just weeks before the provincial election occurred, "A Just and Fair Alberta: Priorities for Change" was released. The report outlined priorities for change in revenue reform, early childhood education and care, education, post-secondary education, human services, poverty, environment, health care and seniors. Intended to serve as an election guide, Albertans were provided with facts of the current situation and urged to use the materials during the election in candidate meetings and forums. We hope this report will serve as a road map for advocating with the newly elected NDP Government for essential reforms needed to restore our democracy and

core public services.

Change comes with all new beginnings and the formation of a new government has resulted in our longstanding Executive Director Bill Moore-Kilgannon leaving us to assume a key role in the Ministry of Health. Bill's tireless advocacy and relentless defense of public services and justice in Alberta will be greatly missed at PIA, but we are justifiably proud of his accomplishments and recruitment to this post and wish him every success.

This summer PIA will move to our new office location. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank

the Ironworkers Local 720 who have kindly shared their space with us for the past 5 years.

In the remaining pages of this Annual Report you will find Bill's final Executive Director report accompanied by a summary of the work of our task forces, the Annual Advocacy Conference, general advocacy and a statement of our operations ending March 31, 2015.

Stay tuned for future upcoming events and activities.

It has been an honour to serve as your Chair during this transitional year.

Linda McCulloch, President



Executive Director Report

It has been another exciting year of advocacy and big changes for Public Interest Alberta and the province. It is hard to imagine that it was just one year ago that PIA launched the Alberta Could campaign to advocate for provincial revenue reform and the PC party was gearing up for the leadership race that would elect Jim Prentice as Premier in September 2014.

As you will see in the following reports, the task forces held many public events, spoke out in the media and were involved in a number of initiatives to advocate for better public services. Thanks to all of the members of the task forces, we developed a number of effective advocacy tools that helped shape the political debate on topics like the early childhood education survey and the annual report card on child poverty.

Our Outreach Coordinator, Julie Hrdlicka did a great job building PIA's network and public profile in Calgary. She represented us numerous times in the

media and at many speaking events. She also helped with the co-ordination of Avi Lewis's talk in Calgary in April. The exciting news for Julie is that she was elected as Trustee with the Calgary Board of Education in a by-election on April 13th. We are sad to have lost her dynamic energy and passion, but are happy to know she is now playing a key leadership role in supporting our education system.

The excellent work done by our Communications Coordinator Joel French has also really helped increase PIA's public and media profile. Joel was instrumental in helping to coordinate many media events, writing our bi-weekly E-News to our members, helping produce our newsletter "The Advocate," and regularly engaging on and greatly expanding our reach on social media sites.

As she has for the past 10 years, Karen Werlin continues to play a key role as our Office Manager. On top of coordinating all of the financial aspects of the organization, and making sure that all of

the bills are being paid and memberships are coming in, she takes great pleasure and does a fabulous job running our annual conference, laying out our newsletter and other publicity materials, and coordinating board meetings.

With the results of the recent change in government, I have been given the exciting opportunity to be the Chief of Staff to the Minister of Health and Minister of Seniors. It is with many mixed emotions that I am leaving PIA after close to 11 years. It has been an honour and privilege to work with all of the board members, staff and task force representatives over all of these years. Throughout this time, we have become friends and had lots of fun creating quality mischief and ultimately standing up and fighting for a just and fair Alberta. I will miss working with everyone through PIA, but look forward to working with all of you in my new role as we continue to "advocate for a better Alberta for all."

Bill Moore-Kilgannon, Executive Director



The picture above was taken at the December 2014 board meeting where Bill and Karen were presented with Certificates of Appreciation for 10 years of service with PIA. (Back row left to right - Larry Booi, Guy Smith, Lori Sigurdson, Linda McCulloch, Ricardo Acuna, Carol Wodak, Siobhan Vipond. Front row left to right - Bill Moore-Kilgannon, Karen Werlin, Elisabeth Ballermann, Heather Smith. Pictures to the right - Joel French, Julie Hrdlicka



Childcare Task Force

A major project the task force embarked on in 2014-2015 was a survey on childcare access. Sent out to approximately 1000 childcare day home, daycare and afterschool care providers, over 200 were completed and returned to the task force with the results published on National Child Day. The Childcare Task Force would like to thank member Ryan McIntyre for his hard work creating the survey and collecting and compiling the data. The surveys revealed that over 82% felt that government investment was lacking, with 72% reporting that subsidized parents (those with the very lowest incomes in Alberta) were still paying over \$200 over and above the subsidized rate. Access for parents in rural areas and parents of children with special needs are particularly marginalized with regard to access and affordability and only 1 in 3 providers accept infants.

The task force put a great deal of effort into making connections with other community groups and developing ally networks. PIA Outreach Coordinator Julie Hrdlicka was especially busy in Calgary, not only participating in several

community events promoting the task force work, but also canvassing Calgary neighborhoods on childcare issues.

Executive Director Bill Moore-Kilgannon presented the Alberta Could progressive tax campaign at the national Childcare 2020 conference. Several members of the task force attended this historic conference along with several hundred activists, advocates, workers and parents from across the country.

This year's advocacy conference

presented the opportunity for the task force to explore our "Priorities for Change" document alongside members of the other task forces in a workshop co-facilitated by the Human Services and Poverty Task Force. In May, Albertans elected a majority NDP government. The task force looks forward to working with the new government and to the opportunity for progress in the care and learning of Alberta's youngest citizens.

Sherry Hunt, Chair



Democracy Task Force

In retrospect, it was a very good year for democracy in Alberta, but that didn't become apparent until the remarkable provincial election of May 5, 2015.

The work of PIA's Democracy Task Force during the past year was mainly focused on opportunities for advocacy on campaign and party finance reform, first during the leadership campaigns of the Progressive Conservative and New Democratic parties, and then during the lead-up to the provincial election.

The PC party leadership contest was once again fueled by large contributions to the winner, Jim Prentice, by corporations and wealthy individuals, which reinforced the growing demand by PIA and others for genuine campaign and party finance reform.

The Democracy Task Force contributed three priorities to the PIA election

advocacy document, "A Just and Fair Alberta for All: Priorities for Change":

1. Campaign and party finance reform, including reduced contribution limits, a ban on contributions by corporations and unions, instituting reasonable spending limits on parties and candidates, extending the rules on contributions and spending to cover party leadership and constituency contests, and instituting much stronger rules on disclosure of contributions and spending.
2. Electoral reform, based on a call for a preferential ballot to replace the first-past-the-post system, a high profile provincial task force to recommend a specific proposal for proportional representation, more representation by population through constituency size reform, and stronger fixed election legislation.
3. Strengthening citizen engagement in governance and decision making, through reforms to ensure more effective citizen and civil society engagement in public policy making, ensuring that the full range of affected groups of citizens is heard, and requiring an annual report on the nature and extent of citizen and civil society participation.

Both the new NDP government and the Official Opposition had aspects of campaign and party finance reform as part of their election platform, so the prospects in this area are encouraging. The Priorities for Change document should provide a solid foundation for the Democracy Task Force's advocacy in the coming year, in a much more promising political context.

Larry Booi, Chair

Education Task Force

This has been a year of much activity for the task force leading up to the provincial election on May 5th. This has also been a year when the long term efforts and hard work of advocacy for change in education played an important role in the larger change in expectations Albertans have come to hold for their government.

In September, the task force began its work by developing a leadership candidate survey that was distributed to each of the candidates in both the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party. None of the PC candidates responded while all NDP candidates did. We also made questions available to attendees at the by-election forums in October.

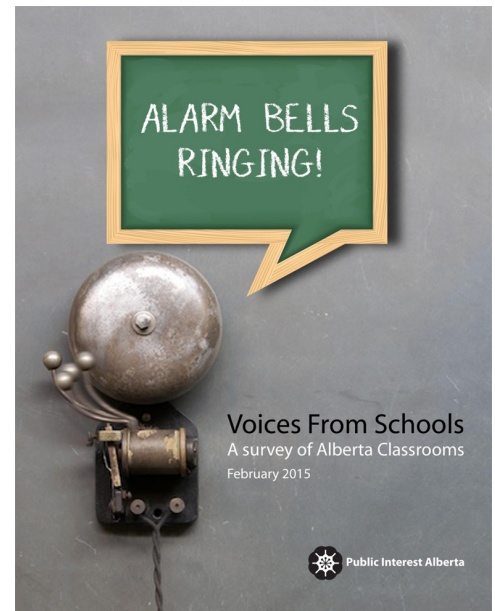
We supported the Alberta Could campaign and addressed a request to develop a Youth Engagement Task Force by working jointly with the Aspen Foundation to develop strategies and funding to engage youth in city high schools to address social justice issues. We also followed the Kids Not Cuts campaign closely.

The task force had conducted a survey on classroom conditions last year and decided in October that another survey

should be conducted with a view to using the information to influence the provincial budget and develop an advocacy strategy that would lead to a year-long effort at influencing candidates in the provincial election originally set for spring 2016. This proved fortuitous as political events unfolded in the province.

The classroom conditions survey was rolled out in early November. Results were organized into main themes and compiled into the document entitled "Alarm Bells Ringing: Voices from Schools – February 2015." The themes included the following: the impact of large classes combined with complexity and high needs; the challenges of dealing with impact of children with 'behavioural needs'; early learning challenges; English language learners; the need for support staff; conditions of schools and classrooms; and the importance of getting the right conditions.

While some of the 440 respondents gave accounts of how education works well where the right conditions exist, most spoke of shocking conditions in Alberta's classrooms. Alarm Bells Ringing was released at a news conference held in



Barnett House and was widely distributed through social media. It sparked discussions about education and helped put the focus on government priorities and the revenue problem this province faces.

For the task force, the new government provides hope for new approaches in addressing funding and issues in education.

Harold Neth, Chair

Environment Task Force

The advocacy work of PIA continued this year to promote a transition towards a greener economy and the environmental protection and public control of water.

Public Interest Alberta worked with many environmental, First Nations and labour groups to help develop the Green Economy Network. Through a series of meetings, various organizations have been able to build a common vision and mandate to advocate for policies and programs that will help transition off coal fired electricity and reduce fossil fuel consumption in our homes and transportation, as well as developing more green and sustainable jobs. With the change in the provincial government, the Network will continue to put pressure on the Alberta government



to follow through with its platform promises to phase out coal and develop a strong policy for transitioning the economy off fossil fuels. The Green Economy Network is also working with national partners to make sure that climate change and renewable energy solutions will be a major issue in the upcoming federal election.

The keynote speaker at this year's conference, Avi Lewis, emphasized how critical it is that organizations in Alberta work together to advocate for serious policies that address the crisis of climate change. Other speakers at the conference also talked about successful strategies to organize for grassroots mobilization on climate change issues.

The Our Water is Not for Sale steering

committee continued to monitor Alberta government policies towards the expansion of Alberta's water market. With the election of the NDP government, the network will continue to advocate for policies that will support local municipalities and authorities to manage water in the public system and to assure that water is protected for the ecosystem and basic human needs. Given that the federal government continues to push municipalities to use public private partnerships to address their water and waste water infrastructure needs, PIA and its partner groups will need to speak out on this in the upcoming federal election and beyond.

A special thanks for all the work done by Bob Hawkesworth, steering committee members and partner organizations of the Green Economy Network.

Bill Moore-Kilgannon

Human Services & Poverty Task Force

This past year, PIA continued to advocate for a comprehensive plan to prevent, reduce and ultimately eliminate poverty in Alberta. While the Prentice government abandoned any pretense to address the fundamental issues of inequality and poverty, the task force continued to speak out to raise awareness about who was being most impacted by poverty and cuts to public services.

On September 1st we released data from Statistics Canada on the number of low-wage workers in the province. The fact that one in five employed Albertans makes less than \$15/hour helped to set the debate for significant changes to Alberta's minimum wage policy in the lead-up to the election. The release of the annual report on child poverty, "No Change: After 25 years of promises, it's time to eliminate child poverty," took place on the 25th anniversary of the 1989 all party commitment by the House of Commons to eliminate child poverty. The report, published in partnership with the

Edmonton Social Planning Council and the Alberta College of Social Workers, revealed that 143,000 children live below the low-income measure in Alberta, almost exactly the same percentage of children in poverty as in 1989.

The positive solutions to reduce income inequality and poverty being advocated by the task force members were also presented in PIA's Alberta Could campaign. Many of the proposed investments in various programs and policies were adopted by the NDP and other parties in the lead-up to the election. These include such things as affordable quality childcare, an increase to the budget of Family and Community Support (FCS), full day kindergarten and an Alberta Child Benefit. The task force will continue to put pressure on the new NDP government to follow through on these commitments and on its promise to establish a \$15/hour minimum wage by 2018.

PIA also worked in partnership with a number of immigrant serving agencies

to raise concerns about the Federal government omnibus bill (C-43) that allows provinces to refuse refugee claimants income support when they arrive in Canada. PIA worked with national partners to help raise awareness about the implications of this bill through an online media campaign and held a rally outside the office of federal Conservative MP Peter Goldring. The task force will continue to speak out about the Conservative government's attack on refugees in the lead-up to federal election in 2015.

PIA would like to congratulate the long-time chairperson of the task force, Lori Sigurdson for her election victory and her portfolio as Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour, and Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education. Similarly, we would like to congratulate Joe Ceci who was a long-time task force member for his election win and for becoming the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Bill Moore-Kilgannon

Post-Secondary Education Task Force

This was a year of great accomplishments. The PSE Task Force focused much of its attention on planning and implementing this year's advocacy campaign, "Post-Secondary Education is the Answer." In its initial planning phase the task force set out to consult with as many PSE stakeholders from across the province. Meetings in Red Deer in August 2014 with AUPE locals representing workers at PSE institutions set the foundation for the province wide support required to make the campaign as effective as possible. Soon after, student governance groups from around the province also joined in the planning and provided essential feedback strengthening the key messages of the campaign.

This year's campaign incorporated a broad social media component along with use of an online video to communicate what an alternative society would look like if investment in PSE were made a priority in contrast to the current reality. Campaign materials were mainly web-based, encouraging citizens to send an



email to their MLA. The website provided various resources for people to help spread the word on specific issues and concerns as they related to the campaign as well.

Press conferences were held around the province, all of which were well attended and led to wide media coverage

in these localities. Partner organizations and concerned citizens from across the province were involved in advocating for increased government investments in PSE. The campaign advocated for building a highly-skilled, prosperous and vibrant society through investing in PSE.

The release of the Prentice budget highlighted a 1.2% decrease in the current fiscal year with a 2.7% decrease in the next to PSE institutions across the province. The historic election we experienced on May 5th was a clear indication that support staff, students, academics and others vehemently opposed the Prentice budget and with that in mind they cast an alternative vote leading to a very different political landscape for Alberta. The future of post-secondary education was but one factor in the political change achieved this year, an important one for many in this province.

I am proud to have been elected as a NDP MLA and look forward to working with PIA on this and many other important issues.

Rod Loyola, Chair

Seniors Task Force

Our year started in the post-Redford period while the PC party was in total disarray and preoccupied with selecting a new leader.

Accordingly, much of the fall was spent developing our third position paper, this one on long-term care. When this was completed, it was sent in mid-December to Premier Prentice with a request for a meeting.

This request was passed to Ministers Mandel and Johnson, but it took until March 25th for the two ministers to find the time to meet with us for 30 minutes. That meeting was not particularly productive, though we did seize the opportunity to highlight the findings of a Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) report indicating that in 2014, Alberta's per capita funding of

public dollars on seniors care was a full 19% below the average of all Canadian provinces and territories.

With the introduction of a provincial budget, our attention turned to the Alberta Could campaign. When it became clear that a provincial election was imminent, much of our focus turned to the development of the seniors' section of the "Priorities for Change" document.

Throughout the year, we have taken opportunities to speak in public on seniors' care issues. Many of these opportunities were facilitated by AUPE's documentary "Numbers on a Page" which was shown around the province during the provincial election. Throughout this tour we focused on the three issues identified in the Priorities for Change document:

- Eliminating the under-funding of seniors' care
- Reforming and enforcing comprehensive care and accommodation standards.
- Discontinuing the subsidization of private, for-profit delivery of seniors' care.

The PIA Seniors Task Force's last meeting on May 27th was undoubtedly the most upbeat of the year. Not only did we know that we had a new majority government under Premier Notley, but that Sarah Hoffman had been appointed as Minister of Health and Seniors.

A request for a meeting has already been sent, and we look forward to continuing our advocacy work for seniors care, hopefully with much more positive results.

Noel Somerville, Chair

Annual Advocacy Conference

Our ninth annual advocacy conference, "A Just and Fair Alberta, Making it Happen," was another great success with the most attendees of any conference we've held to date. The keynote speaker, Avi Lewis, gave a powerful speech entitled "Our Power: Battling Austerity with a Bold Green Vision" to a sold-out audience in Edmonton. He challenged Albertans to connect the dots as the fight for social justice and the fight for climate justice are one and the same. There is an appetite for radical change and he contended the real power to drive this change is the social movements.

Asbjørn Wahl, advisor at the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees, gave a compelling talk on "Fairness and Justice: A Question of Social Power." He provided an overview of Norway's experiences, saying austerity is a class compromise not to regain economic growth and create jobs but to destroy the welfare state and trade unions. It's all about power and it is only through the mobilization of broad social alliances that restructuring is possible.

Plenary speaker Sarah Hains, Chicago Teachers' Union, talked about how competition and choice became primary, with their schools being run more like businesses than educational institutions.



The teachers came together to fight school closures, charter expansions and militarization of schools and ended up going on strike to defend public education.

Friends of Medicare sponsored Colleen Fuller, a health policy researcher, to speak to the conference. Her presentation focused on the expansion of privatization within health care in Canada, which makes it difficult for the average person to access much needed services.

The conference featured two panel presentations. With the first, "Effective Organizing for People and the Planet," the panelists shared their advocacy strategies and experiences while working on campaigns to phase out coal, coordinate on-line strategy campaigns and bring about environmental justice. The second

panel, "Getting there from here - Revenue Reform, Public Services and Democracy," was intended to help participants make the connection between three key elements that are instrumental in building the Alberta we want. The advocacy workshops were structured to allow conference participants to discuss the "Priorities for Change" document and delve into the areas identified as being necessary to bring about a better Alberta for all.

The closing session with Bill Phipps, Co-founder and Chair of the Faith and the Common Good Network, highlighted the challenges we face and laid the foundation for how we can take action together to achieve a just and fair Alberta.

Overall, the conference provides our members with an opportunity to meet and interact with a number of other activists and leaders to gain valuable knowledge and insight into the importance of working together to advocate more effectively for the common good.

A big thanks goes to our conference planning committee, PIA staff, volunteers and conference sponsors, particularly CSU Local 52, and our four sponsor members, UNA, HSAA, ATA and AUPE.

Karen Werlin

General Advocacy

In addition to the advocacy work of PIA's task forces, we are involved in a number of advocacy efforts, events and training.

Alberta Could Campaign

On April 30th of last year, we launched a new campaign called Alberta Could to generate a broad public discussion about what our province could do if we introduced a progressive income tax and fair corporate taxes. Based on moderate changes to both taxes, we calculated that Alberta could raise an additional \$2 billion, and we worked with each of our task forces to propose a number of improvements we could make to public services with that additional revenue. We proposed such ideas as re-establishing the STEP program cut by the PC government, operating an additional 1,000 long-term care beds for seniors, and achieving the government's own class size targets for Kindergarten to Grade 3.

We used a number of tools and tactics to get the word out about the campaign. We began the campaign with a press conference where we launched our new

website www.AlbertaCould.org, headlined by our "Fair Tax Clock," to lay out our proposal. At the end of May, we headed out with the University of Alberta's Parkland Institute on a 6-city tour to help Albertans learn more about our tax system and to hear from people what their priorities were for what Alberta could do if we had a progressive income tax and fair corporate taxes. It generated broad media coverage and also gave us the opportunity to partner with a wide variety of individuals and organizations across the province who wanted to see the government invest more in public services. Near the end of 2014, we had 20,000 Alberta Could pamphlets printed and distributed through mailouts, conferences and events across the province to raise awareness of the issues raised in the campaign.

For the last phase we launched an advertising campaign using five 30-second animated videos we had produced to show how Alberta could benefit from having fair taxation. Due to the generous support we received from our partner

organizations and individual members, the ads were seen by Albertans over 500,000 times!

The result? Just over one year after the launch of the campaign, Albertans elected a new government whose platform was built around the idea that by introducing a progressive income tax and fair corporate taxes, Alberta could properly fund public services. While we cannot take all of the credit for these issues being central to the provincial election campaign, we can be sure the influence of this campaign played a large role in making it so.

Other Advocacy Efforts

We have continued to raise concerns about the privatization of Edmonton's new Light Rail Transit (LRT) line. Edmonton City Council has already signed an agreement to have the line built, maintained and operated by a private corporation, but we are continuing to pressure them to increase the transparency of the deal. Unfortunately, the City continues to keep many of details secret from the public.

Joel French



Statement of Operations

Year Ended March 31, 2015

	2015	2014
Revenue		
Membership Fees	307,624	255,392
Campaign Income	71,649	50,795
Conference Income	53,217	32,063
Fundraising Income	24,370	10,655
General Advocacy Fund	17,703	15,000
Mobilizer Revenue	3,527	38,352
Interest Income	1,269	1,206
In-kind contributions	1,152	1,440
Speaker Honourarium	1,070	2,550
Calgary Outreach	-	18,000
Presentations and Awards	-	2,900
	481,581	428,352

Operating Expenditures

Staffing	236,654	215,340
Communications & Outreach	37,095	23,605
Rental	16,317	15,364
Audit Fees	5,108	5,187
Telecommunications	4,752	4,166
Amortization	4,235	5,594
Service Awards	2,000	-
Insurance	1,998	2,173
Public Interest Award	1,656	1,480
Stationery & Supplies	1,619	1,123
Equipment/Programs	1,617	1,603
Board/Executive	1,559	1,091
Janitorial	1,319	1,291
Annual General Meeting	750	1,700
Staff/Meetings	749	-
Interest & Bank Charges	335	299
Affiliations	215	125
Miscellaneous	189	565
Office Relocation	95	-
	318,262	280,580

Program Costs

Conference	63,238	33,826
General Advocacy Campaign	46,286	6,752
Post-Secondary Education Task Force	16,920	64
Environment Task Force	4,191	1776
Mobilizers	3,527	38,351
Human Services & Poverty Task Force	1,201	975
Childcare Task Force	909	729
Seniors Task Force	692	13,533
Education Task Force	527	377
Privatization Task Force	56	14,369
Democracy Task Force	0	0
	137,547	110,752

Excess of Revenues over Operating Expenses	\$ 25,772	\$ 37,020
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Board of Directors

2014-2015

Linda McCulloch, President & Chair
Individual

Larry Booi, Vice President
Individual

Lori Sigurdson, Vice President
Alberta College of Social Workers

Jonathan Tegtmeyer, Treasurer
Alberta Teachers' Association

Bev Ray, Secretary
Canadian Union of Postal Workers

Alex Shevalier, Director
Calgary & District Labour Council

Carol Wodak, Director
Seniors' Action and Liaison Team (SALT)

Elisabeth Ballermann, Director
Health Sciences Association of Alberta

Gerald Wheatley, Director
Arusha Centre

Guy Smith, Director
Alberta Union of Provincial Employees

Heather Smith, Director
United Nurses of Alberta

Marle Roberts, Director
CUPE Alberta Division

Siobhan Vipond, Director
Alberta Federation of Labour

Sherry Hunt, Director
Individual

Ricardo Acuna
Parkland Institute



PUBLIC INTEREST ALBERTA

Effective August 17, 2015

Suite 604, 12323 Stony Plain Road

Edmonton, AB T5N 3Y5

Ph: 780.420.0471 Fax: 780.420.0435

Email: office@pialberta.org

www.pialberta.org