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Amalgamated Transit Union, Canadian Council

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Special points of interest:

- Kyoto vs. Made in Canada
- Legislative Agenda
- Hot Weather is Here: Are You ready?
- Promote Your Local's Community Efforts!

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Transit Funding & Kyoto: Federal Sleight of Hand Tricks

As we reported in our initial analysis of the federal budget delivered in May approximately \$1 billion of the Conservative's new tax break for transit users cost is expected to be taken from the climate fund the Liberals set up for emissions-reductions projects.

There is a fundamental flaw in the logic of such a measure. On the one hand, you afford funding to public transit in order to encourage people to use it and, consequently, reduce greenhouse gases through a reduction in automobile traffic. On the other hand, you take the money for that measure from an established fund dedicated to emissions reductions projects.

Such sleight of hand is not entirely surprising, however, as the Conservatives continue their illusion of a "Made in Canada" approach to the reduction of greenhouse gases while letting the Kyoto accord fall through the trap door. On the surface, this appears to leave us in a quandary: Do we say thanks for the funding and ignore the destruction of the Kyoto Accord or do we say thanks for the funding but

What's Going On?

This is the 5th issue of the ATU-Canada Newsletter and I can't help but think that something's missing. That's when Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On" comes to mind-What's going on in your local and why haven't you let me know so that I can include it in the national newsletter for everyone to see?

As the Media Watch article this month states, labour unions need to publicize their participation in their communities. If your local, or a member of your local has done something for the local community, let me

please don't take it from an existing fund designed to reduce GHG's?

Our own Kyoto Policy document delineates the importance of funding public transit *in tandem* with a variety of other initiatives (alternative energy source development for one). While we will have to wait until the fall for Rona Ambrose, the Minister of the Environment, to actually outline what this "made in Canada" approach will entail, there's little doubt that it will be little more than 'Kyoto-Lite'.

Ms. Ambrose's recent statement that "we would have to take every train, plane and automobile off the streets in Canada to comply with Canada's Kyoto accord targets" is, as Diana Gibson and Gordon Laxer have pointed out, little more than a scare tactic to undermine popular support for the accord. Why else point a finger at transportation modes used by everyone than at another obvious source of pollution such as the Alberta Tar Sands?

"The tar sands are the single largest contributor to the growth of greenhouse-gas emissions in Canada, because

it takes so much of Canada's diminishing supply of natural gas to make tar sands oil," say Gibson and Laxer.

The previous question was a rhetorical one, we already know the answer: Alberta's booming, the Tar Sands are fuelling that boom, don't mess that up with silly environmental concerns.

Breaking Canada's Kyoto commitments is not a "Made in Canada" solution. Canada should continue to honour its commitments to the accord and strive to be a global leader on environmental issues.

The ATU needs to continue to lobby for funding for public transit as part of a broad ranging effort to reduce GHG's and to be critical of the elimination of legitimate and established programs designed to reduce emissions.



Rona The Amazing

Lake Ontario) just let me know:

"What's Going On?"



See the back page for contact information.

know.

If one of your members, or their family members, has achieved something of note (scholarship, honour, Lotto-649 jackpot, whatever!) let me know. If you've achieved a recent contract settlement or won a hard-fought and/or contentious grievance and you want to publicize it, let me know.

Send me an email, send me pictures, send me a URL, send me smoke signals, send me an article, send me a note in a bottle (we're not too far from

Health & Safety: Beat the Heat this Summer

In the summer of 2005, extreme temperatures and humidity, lack of rain and severe storms plagued southern Ontario and placed considerable stress on energy supply, infrastructure, emergency services, health-care systems and water resources.

Well, considering that Toronto issued its first 'heat alert' on the 29th of May this year, it's probably safe to say that we're in for more of the same. And, it won't be restricted to southern Ontario either. Indeed, Environment Canada's national weather map for May through July is predominantly an angry red, indicating higher-than-normal temperatures are expected everywhere except for parts of British Columbia and the territories.

Most of Ontario has a 100 per cent probability of experiencing higher than average temperatures for May, June and July. A belt of land that includes Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal is 80 per cent likely to have

warmer weather than usual.

We all know from experience, like that ill-conceived camping trip on the May 24 weekend, that weather forecasts are not always that reliable. It is, however, in this age of global warming and Conservative governments who shun Kyoto, advisable to be prepared for increasingly warmer, and smoggier, conditions.

It is important for transit, inter-city bus and school bus workers, whether they be driving a vehicle without air or working in a hot paint shop, to be aware of the dangers of hot weather. Below is an outline of some of the potential health hazards to watch for when working in hot conditions.

Heat Rash

Cause: Hot humid environment; plugged sweat glands.

Symptoms: Red bumpy rash with severe itching.

Treatment: Change into dry clothes and avoid hot environments. Rinse skin with cool water.

Prevention: Wash regularly to keep skin clean and dry.

Heat Cramps

Cause: Heavy sweating drains a person's body of salt, which cannot be replaced just by drinking water.

Symptoms: Painful cramps in arms, legs or stomach which occur suddenly at work or later at home. Heat cramps are serious because they can be a warning of other more dangerous heat-induced illnesses.

Treatment: Move to a cool area; loosen clothing and drink cool salted water (1 tsp. salt per gallon of water) or commercial fluid replacement beverage. If the cramps are severe or don't go away, seek medical aid.

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Media Watch: Community Events Raise Your PR Profile

One of the issues that this column has touched upon repeatedly is the fact that the mainstream media often portrays a rather negative image of organized labour. You don't need to be a media scholar to recognize this. The media will always gravitate toward the negative and the sensational in their coverage of any issue. Conflict and strife will, generally speaking, sell more ads as they generate more readers and viewers.

There is also good news as well, the lost puppy reunited with its family, new factory equals new jobs, new vaccines to fight fatal disease, etc.

Unless we 'make our own news', labour isn't covered until there's a strike, lock-out or court case. Would you see those images of striking Korean workers on your television screen if they were calmly picketing rather than clashing with the police? The answer is, unequivocally, no. Thus labour is often perceived, by the general public at least, as a

bunch of unlawful, greedy, potentially violent, ne'er do-wells.

We all know that is not an accurate perception but perception is itself shaped by experience. If one only sees images and/or reads accounts of unions in situations of potential conflict such as heated contract negotiations, strikes, etc. then one can understand how such perceptions, as inaccurate as they may be, can be shaped.

It is then extremely important for your local to extol all of the aspects of their organization. Labour unions, and the ATU is no exception, are involved in community events and charitable causes constantly. Unfortunately the public rarely sees this side of unions.

Locals need to publicize their participation in these events not only to their own membership through internal modes of communication but also externally. Locals can issue press releases, media advisories and simply contact reporters

and media outlets to let them know about their participation in community and charitable events and campaigns.

It's also extremely important that you get your 'brand' out there—your local's crest on a banner, ball caps and t-shirts will appear on TV and in press photos and provide you with free and valuable publicity. Positive publicity like that is crucial to countering the negative images of organized labour, and rectifying the consequent negative connotations about labour that the public may perceive.

So, the next time your local, or particular members, participate in a community event or charitable cause make sure that you blow your own horn and let everyone know!

Media Watch is a regular column offering comments on media for ATU locals.



Al Burrows, Pres., and Gloria DeFields, FST, of Local 846, St. Catharines, ON, participated in the "Pull for Kids" on the 27th of May which raised \$76,000 for asthmatic children.

Focus on Legislation: ATU CC Publishes Legislative Agenda: Exact Change

The most pressing matter on the ATU's first 'state legislative agenda' produced in the 1890's in the United States was requiring closed vestibules for streetcars. Drivers were working in sub-freezing temperatures and passengers were riding in unsafe conditions.

Yet, this was, believe it or not, a highly controversial issue at the time. Eventually, however, policy makers were convinced that protecting the riding public and transit employees was the right thing to do.

Today our goal is the same: to exact change. While the federal, and some provincial, governments have, after decades of neglect, begun to address public transit issues, their transportation policies

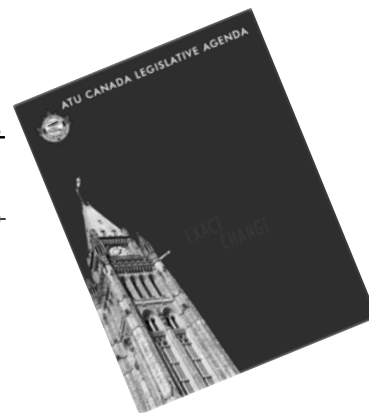
still do not do enough to encourage people to use public transit. As a result, our roads are congested, we spend too much time commuting at the expense of time with our families, we suffer through an increased number of smog alerts each year and we spend far too much money on foreign oil. It is time for a fresh approach.

This why the Canadian Council has produced its legislative agenda in print form. It's a colour document which outlines the Council's 8 point plan to effect change in Canada's public transportation.

1) Increased Funding – Legislation to provide long-term sustainable funding for public transit at the federal level and provincial legislation

for transit funding in the form of dedicated gas tax revenues, tolls, municipal congestion charges, motor vehicle excise taxes and municipal development charges.

2) Public Transportation Benefits – Legislation to provide tax exemptions for employer provided transit and commuter passes and legislation requiring provincial and federal em-



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Heat continued

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Prevention: Reduce activity levels and/or heat exposure. Drink fluids regularly. Workers should check on each other to help spot the symptoms that often precede heat stroke.

Fainting

Cause: Fluid loss and inadequate water intake.

Symptoms: Sudden fainting after at least two hours of work; cool moist skin; weak pulse.

Treatment: GET MEDICAL ATTENTION. Assess need for CPR. Move to a cool area; loosen clothing; make person lie down; and if the person is conscious, offer sips of cool water.

Fainting may also be due to other illnesses.

Prevention: Reduce activity levels and/or heat exposure. Drink fluids regularly. Workers should check on each other to help spot the symptoms that often precede heat stroke.

Heat Exhaustion

Cause: Fluid loss and inadequate salt and water intake causes a person's body's cooling system to start to break down.

Symptoms: Heavy sweating; cool moist skin; body temperature over 38o C; weak pulse; normal or low blood pressure; person is tired and weak, and has nausea and vomiting; is very thirsty; or is panting or breathing rapidly; vision may be blurred.

Treatment: GET MEDICAL AID. This condition can lead to heat stroke, which can kill. Move the person to a cool shaded area; loosen or remove excess clothing; provide cool water to drink; fan and spray with cool water.

Prevention: Reduce activity levels and/or heat exposure. Drink fluids regularly. Workers should check on each other to help spot the symptoms that often precede heat stroke.

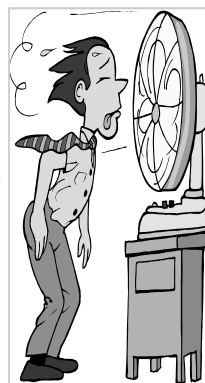
In addition to being cognizant of these effects of extreme heat, you

should enquire as to whether your employer has a "hot weather plan" in you workplace. A hot weather plan should take measures such as :

Exhaust hot air and steam produced by operations; Reduce the temperature and humidity through air cooling; Provide air-conditioned rest areas; Provide cool work areas; Increase the frequency and length of rest breaks; Provide cool drinking water near workers; Assign additional workers or slow down the pace of work; Train workers to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat stress and start a "buddy system" since people are not likely to notice their own symptoms.

Such a plan should also establish the implementation criteria, or "triggers", to put the plan into effect such as humidex alerts, heat waves, smog alerts, etc.

If your workplace doesn't have one ask your local executives to look into it. And, check the federal or provincial guidelines on heat stress. Your health depends on it



Does your workplace have a "Hot Weather Plan" that's a little more sophisticated than the above?

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The ATU Canadian Council's main purpose is to represent the interests of our members and to raise their profile and the profile of the industry in which they work, be it public or private.

We provide a central forum for:

- Lobbying;
- On-going education of members;
- Exchange of information between locals;
- Research, data collection and dissemination.

CONTEST

**The first correct answer received at
research@atucanada.ca
to the following question will win an ATU golf shirt:
"What year did Ken Foster become the 'Director' of the
Canadian Council?"**

(Contest open to Canadian ATU members in good standing)

(Legis-
lation: Continued from page 3)

ployees to be offered a qualified public transit benefit equal to their commuting costs.

3) Improving School Bus Transportation –

Call on all provinces to implement laws similar to Ontario's Act to Enhance the Safety of Children and Youth on Ontario's Roads a comprehensive package of safety measures to improve school bus safety; Standardized training across the industry for school bus drivers on managing student behaviour, safety and security awareness and emergency preparedness and response; The clarification of authority of school bus drivers to discipline students and/or enforce student conduct codes; Requiring school bus drivers to be appointed to provincial, local or regional committees on student discipline.

4) Labour and Transit Passenger Membership on Public Transit Boards, Commissions, Agencies and Authorities –

Provincial legislation requiring the appointment of a regular passenger and labour representative to all transit boards, commissions, agencies and authorities.

5) Safety and Efficiency – Provincial legislation and funding for Yield to Bus and Traffic control signal Preemption Technology to

ensure the safety and efficiency of transit vehicles.

6) Paratransit and Accessible Service Provision

- Provincial legislation requiring part of the funding for paratransit and accessible conventional vehicles and building modifications to come from a variety of ministries including, but not exclusive to: Health, Education and Community and Social Services, etc.; Requiring potential bidders for paratransit services to have a demonstrated ability of providing high quality paratransit services which equal or exceed the quality of services which could be provided by the public transit service; Formulate uniform paratransit safety standards for private companies that equal those of the public sector.

7) Upgrading Transit, Intercity Bus, and School Bus Security

- Amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada, Part II: Offences Against Public Order that would provide stiff penalties for assaults on ground transportation personnel; Requiring notice of such penalties to be posted on transit, inter-city and school bus vehicles and properties; Provincial and Federal regulations requiring transit systems, inter-city bus companies, commuter rail systems and school bus companies and/or boards of education to submit bi-annual reports on employee assaults to the labour union representing those workers and the government agency (Transport Canada and/or the provincial Ministry of Transportation) responsible for said

regulations.

8) Improving Transit Driver's Health and Welfare - Provincial and federal legislation requiring minimum restroom breaks for commercial motor vehicle operators.

The document is designed to publicize our key legislative concerns to our own members, the general public and politicians. It provides a focus on specific legislative issues in order to refine and enhance lobbying efforts by the Canadian Council. There are a limited number of copies but each local executive will have copies if you would like to peruse the document and the legislative changes that the Canadian Council is pursuing in the forthcoming year.

If your local does not have a copy available please contact Chris Byford, Director of Research and Communications, at the contact address above.