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- Alberta's Health-care Reforms
- Child Care in Canada
- Writing Effective Press Releases

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Lawrence Cannon Appointed to Key Post

By combining the Infrastructure Ministry with Transport, Stephen Harper has made the ATU's lobbying efforts a little easier as it will be a kind of 'one-stop shopping' experience for public transit lobbyists.

The appointment of Lawrence Cannon to head the 'new' department has also garnered praise.

Transport 2000 Canada President David Jeanes and CUTA President & CEO Michael Roschlau have both expressed their approval of Cannon's appointment. "We are encouraged to see a minister with strong ties to urban transit in this role, and trust he will use his expertise in this new and strengthened portfolio" said Roschlau.

As outlined below Mr. Cannon's vast experience in urban public transit could bode well for the industry. The ATU's enthusiasm is somewhat tempered, however, by the fact that the Conservative government campaigned on relaxing the rules for the use of the New Deal funding.

Formerly, municipalities with a population over 500,000 were not permitted to use this funding for road/bridge construction or repairs if the latter were not linked to public transit improvements. The government has indicated that they will permit more latitude in regard to such expenditures which could limit the amount of funding for public transit expansion and improvement projects.

What remains to be seen is whether we'll be dealing with Lawrence Cannon the public transit advocate or the Conservative minister toeing the party line.

Here's a brief look at Lawrence Cannon, Conservative MP for Pontiac:



Age: 58.

Political history: Correspondence secretary to then-Quebec premier Robert Bourassa prior to his defeat

in 1976; elected to Quebec legislature for La Peltrie, 1985; served until 1994; served as deputy house leader; deputy speaker; minister of communications; elected municipal counsellor for City of Gatineau in 2001; chairman of urban transit authority; vice-chairman of Quebec Association of Urban Transit; named deputy cabinet leader of Conservative Party of Canada in Quebec, 2005; won Quebec's Pontiac riding in Jan. 23 election.

Political views: Social liberal in favour of same-sex marriage; went to Conservatives when he saw sovereigntist support rise. Former provincial Liberal.

Career: Financial analyst for Societe de developpement industriel, 1979-81; head of Les Radiateurs Roy Ltee. 1981-1985; vice-president of Unitel; also worked at other firms mainly involved in information technologies; senior counsel for GPC Public Affairs.

Education: Graduated in political science, University of Montreal, 1971; MBA from Laval University in 1979.

Website's On-Line Survey: Have You Participated?

Our new website atucanada.ca, launched in February, has a very interesting feature. There is a survey that can be completed either on-line or on paper if your print it out.

The current focus of the survey is violent assaults. We're trying to find out the types and the frequency of assaults against ATU members. There is a consensus that violent assaults have been on the rise in the last few years. This is why we have decided to hold a conference, for local executives and industry representatives, on violence and security.

Since the industry itself has not been forthcoming with statistics in this area, we need to collect this data in order to effectively lobby politicians for more funding for security measures and for possible amendments to the criminal code. Unlike the US where, in most states, an assault against a public transit or inter-city bus worker is a felony, it is, in Canada, treated as misdemeanour more often than not.

If you don't have internet access to complete the on-line survey ask someone to print it out for you and mail or fax it to us (see contact information on page 4).

The focus of the on-line survey will change every four months. This will allow us to collect data on a variety of issues of importance to our members.



If you have an idea for a survey please let us know at :

research@atucanada.ca

“Neo?” Isn’t he that guy from the Matrix?

I recently received a notice about a conference on Neoliberalism and realized that I had no idea what that term meant. So, since the political landscape in this country has recently changed, I’ve decided to give myself, and you, a primer on the two “neos.”

Neoconservatism and neoliberalism are labels given to a strains of political thought in Canadian politics, that began in the 1980s and rose to prominence in the 1990s, especially in Ontario, Western Canada and the federal government. The prefix “neo” signifies a “new” strand of Canadian political thought, breaking with many of the traditional values of Canada’s two historic parties: Liberal Party of Canada and the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada.

Neoliberalism in Canada broadly parallels the rise of neoliberal policies in the United States under Bill Clinton and the Labour Party’s “Third Way” in Britain. It repackages tradi-

tional left-wing values with support for some fiscally conservative or classically liberal policies, such as free trade, deregulation, small deficits and low tax rates.

Neoconservatism, on the other hand, broke with the old PCs by encouraging closer political cooperation with the United States, and was aloof towards the party’s interventionist Keynesian economics and traditional support of Canada’s colonial ties to Britain. Neoconservatives advocate a realist, self-interested approach to national and international relations and tend to support socially conservative policies, although there also exists a deep libertarian strain that brings the two into conflict.

The two policies are similar, and differ primarily in how they are pitched. Neoliberals, exemplified by the Liberal party, promise to reconcile the welfare state with modern, economically-friendly policies. It is endorsed as a wise alternative to

the bureaucratic, highly regulated policy of state socialism or the “compassionless” policies of conservatism. However, neoliberals are often accused of making unrealistic promises.

Neoconservatives, however, arise from the populist tradition of the Reform Party of Canada which was succeeded by the Canadian Alliance and now the Conservative Party of Canada. The latter party was formed by a merger of the Canadian Alliance and the floundering Progressive Conservative Party. The merger was widely regarded as unequal, favouring neo-conservative Alliance policies over conservative PC policies. They position themselves as social conservatives, supporters of small business and grassroots democracy.

While neoliberals sometimes self-identify by the term, Canadian neo-conservatives almost never use the term (unlike in the United States). It is instead a label applied by observers, often pejoratively.



The other ‘Neo’.

Media Watch: The Art of the Press Release

One of the keys to writing an effective press release is that it’s *news-worthy* and that it is properly presented. Here are some fundamental tips:

Formatting - A press release should always be double spaced and about a page long and never more than two pages.

Contact information - Contact information for your local should be included on the press release so that if a journalist has any questions regarding the press release, they can easily find someone to answer them. Include the contact’s name and direct phone number.

Organization information - A brief (one or two line) summary of your local’s, and/or the ATU’s mission can be added to your press release to introduce the union to reporters. Also, include your logo on all releases to help build recognition of your local.

Writing style - Press releases are written in short, concise paragraphs. The first paragraph begins with an interesting lead sentence and a general description of the event, message, or idea. This paragraph

must explain “the five Ws and one H” of the story – the who, what, when, where, why, and how.”

The second paragraph gives more detailed information, some background data, and perhaps a few quotes. If you use quotes in your release, they should provide factual information and not just someone’s opinion. Also, make sure that you accurately identify the exact sources of any information in the release.

The third and final paragraph includes a way for readers to get more information on the story. In effect, the release should be the story you would like to see printed. If you have a website, post information relating to the news story on the site and include its URL in the release.

Know the audience & the publications/stations - Before submitting a release, decide what audiences you would like to reach and find out which news sources reach those audiences. Targeting your release to relevant media outlets will help

ensure that your press release will be selected and reach the audiences you want to influence.

Know the journalists - If you are consistently submitting press releases to the same journalist (i.e. the transportation writer at a newspaper), find out how he or she prefers to receive the releases whether it be via fax, snail mail, or email. Also, find out the journalist’s deadlines for article submission.

Use a Press Release Service - Companies, such as CNN Mathews, offer online services which can be expensive but offer immediate access to a wide variety of media outlets across the country. You can make the release as wide (national press, radio, tv, community papers, etc.) or as narrow (national dailies in one province or city) as you wish.

Emailing press releases - If a release is to be sent via email, file attachments shouldn’t be sent. They are cumbersome and time consuming to download, and they may not even work.

Follow-up calls - Most writers don’t like receiving follow-up calls to find out if

(Continued on page 4)

The first paragraph must explain “the five Ws and one H” of the story – the who, what, when, where, why, and how.”

Focus on Legislation: Alberta's 'Third Way' Health Reforms

The Alberta government has laid out the framework for its so-called Third Way health care reforms, which include a plan that allows patients to pay cash for faster access to some non-emergency procedures.

"What we're looking for is some middle ground that accounts for capacity to keep the public system strong and protected by sufficient doctors," Health Minister Iris Evans said as she introduced Premier Ralph Klein's Third Way on health-care reform.

"You can talk about it being two-tiered, but it's no different than what's going on in Quebec. It's no different that what's going on in every place they have private clin-

ics. It's people making choices for themselves."

However, Quebec doctors don't have the option of switching back and forth between public and private systems and so must choose one or another.

Under the plan to reshape medicare, patients would have the option of paying for some non-emergency procedures, such as knee or hip surgeries. The health-care reforms would also allow doctors to practise in both public and private health care systems.

Another reform proposes to expand alternatives for private health insurance on treatments that may not be covered in the future, including emerging technologies and drugs

not covered by Alberta Health. Still another aims to free doctors by allowing nurses and pharmacists to make clinical care and treatment decisions.

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on Prime Minister Stephen Harper to block Alberta's plans to let patients pay for faster access to some medical procedures.

"The ball is clearly in the prime minister's court now," McGuinty told reporters. "He (Harper) re-stated his position once again at our (premiers') dinner this past Friday. He specifically said he was going to encourage experimentation and innovation within the Canada Health Act."

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"It's the very system we had before we built medicare in Saskatchewan and built it in Canada," he said. "We see them all over the United States of America where many, many millions of people are left behind."

Lorne Calvert, Premier of Saskatchewan.

Do the Math: This is not a Child-Care Plan!

Liberal campaign spokesperson Scott Reid's comment that the Conservative party's plan to directly provide families with \$1,200 a year for child care would "give people 25 bucks a week to blow on beer and popcorn" during the last election was not only in bad taste but he didn't do the math. How much "beer and popcorn" can you buy on \$3.28 (after taxes) a day?

The Conservative's "alternative" child care plan was one of the central tenets of their election platform. Unfortunately it doesn't contribute much, if anything, to child care and doesn't bear any resemblance to a "plan."

A plan is defined as a scheme designed to achieve an objective. Sending out a cheque for \$1200 once a year for each child under 6 of years of age is not a plan. Obviously there's not much of a scheme here either so what's the objective?

Well, with your \$3.28 (after tax) you can go out and seek some quality child care or, if your looking after your children at home, you could buy three items for the kids at your

local dollar store.

I hope that you opted for the latter because the former is, however, going to be a little more difficult to achieve. The previous government, after decades of promises by various federal governments, reached agreements in 2005 with most provinces to support the development of more affordable regulated child-care opportunities.

The initial Liberal deals, promoted as \$5 billion over five years, were for five-year terms in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba. The Conservatives are using a clause that allows for the termination of the agreement after one year's notice. The other seven provinces had one-year deals in principle.

The Tories claim their program gives parents real choice especially in rural areas where daycare hours may not suit certain parents' work schedules.

As John Jacobs (rabble.ca) has pointed out, the Conservative's program comes at a high price. It cuts the federal and provincial in-

vestments that are designed to increase the number of regulated child-care spaces, and replaces them with an allowance to parents that has no direct connection to the development of child-care spaces. Parents will receive the allowance regardless of whether their children participate in child-care programs.

So, where is the choice that's being promoted? Granted, if you look after your children at home you'll have that \$3.28 to splurge with. But, if you're looking for quality day care, especially after having been on a waiting list for several years, your choices are severely limited on the Conservative's "plan."

Monica Lysack, executive director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, says that "The provinces get double-whammied here. They rolled out services they'll no longer get funding for, so they're going to have to pick up the cost or cut them. Either way, the citizens lose." And just when they were so close to the quality child care that they want and need.



DAY CARE

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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.

Surf the web to find us
at:
www.atucanada.ca

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they have gotten a press release. A follow-up call should only be made in the case of corrections to the article. Be prepared for your release not to generate the response you anticipated due to other current events taking precedence.

Fact sheets and other information - In some instances, it may be helpful to send an additional fact sheet with background information on the topic of the release and/or your local. You may even want to consider sending a press kit that includes the press release, fact sheets on both the topic and the ATU, a background sheet on any opposition that might exist, contact names and numbers, press clippings, and a list of other individuals and groups that support your cause (including their contact information).

Contact the Canadian Council -For help in issuing press releases contact us at:

research@atucanada.ca

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

(Legislation: Continued from page 3)

In Saskatchewan Premier Lorne Calvert said reforms that are part of Alberta's proposed "third-way" delivery system for health care are not an option in Saskatchewan.

"You will know this province will stand square behind the principles of the Canada Health Act," he told reporters Wednesday in Saskatoon.

"This province and its people say very clearly we are not interested in the Americanization of health care in Canada. We're not interested in two-tier systems. We're not interested in systems that allow people who have resources to bump the queues and get ahead."

Without naming Alberta, Calvert said there's "nothing new" about proposals to introduce two-tier health care in Canada.

"It's the very system we had before we built medicare in Saskatchewan and built it in Canada," he said. "We see them all over the United States of America where many, many millions of people

are left behind."

In Ottawa Prime Minister Stephen Harper signalled that he will not rubber stamp Alberta's "third way" health reforms, saying he wants to make sure any changes respect the Canada Health Act.

The implication is that Harper will defend the act if necessary, but his comment didn't address what Ottawa can do ensure compliance by a cash-flush province that may no longer be hobbled by a cut in federal transfer payments.

Nor did his comment reveal what must be a real political concern about taking on his party's 'home base' so early in his government's tenure. We'll all need to watch this legislation closely to see what the political ramifications are.

Focus on Legislation is a regular column highlighting specific legislation and legislative amendments at the provincial and federal levels.