

MEMBER UPDATE

ENSURING FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY ACT 2019

WORKERS' RIGHTS UNDER ATTACK...AGAIN.

PENSIONS

While a number of items in the massive bill introduced in the legislature on Monday will affect members and your union, we know you are particularly eager to hear news about your pensions, so we'll address that first.

Although the government has not said outright that they intend to strip us of joint governance of your pensions (which we fought for for decades), the legislation contained in this bill could be a first step towards it.

For example, the joint governance board agreed that Alberta Investment Management Corporation (AIMCO) continue to invest the billions of dollars in the pension funds, but that arrangement would be revisited in five years.

The legislation ignores this decision and stipulates that investments through AIMCO continue indefinitely. This is an obvious move by the government to undermine the independence of the Pension Boards.

Under joint governance, the plans are doing well, and your pension is secure. So we all have reason to be concerned when the government interferes. Is this the first step in the government inserting itself politically to control all aspects of the pension plans, including how much pension you'll have at the end of your working life?

We are suspicious as to the government's motives for doing this. If they have good ideas for management, why not just bring them to the table? Why remove the table altogether?

After fighting for decades to get joint control of our pension plans, AUPE is not prepared to give that up without a fight. Joint governance is recognized throughout the Canadian public sector pension field as best practice. The best way to ensure that the LAPP and PSPP are sustainable is to have employers and employees equally represented at the decision-making table.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

The legislation reverses the ban on using replacement workers (scabs) in the event of public sector strikes or lockouts. That

means the employer gets to choose whether they would be using unionized essential services workers from the bargaining unit, or if they are going to use scabs. This would make the Essential Services Agreements process meaningless and put more power into the hands of employers. When employers have the ability to control strikes and lockouts in this way, it makes it easier for them to force the wage and benefits cuts that the budget outlined last week.

It is clear that the government is prepared to pit worker against worker in a race to the bottom for low wages and reduced benefits.

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYERS ACT

This legislation gives the government greater control over collective bargaining with public sector employees, not only in Government Services and Alberta Health Services, but also in boards and agencies. It permits the Minister to issue directives that the employer must follow during the collective bargaining process, including the term (length) of a collective agreement but also how much, or how little, the employer is allowed to negotiate. The wording of the legislation sends us a clear signal as to what bargaining is going to look like under this government and there is no way to sugar-coat it: it's going to be ugly.

AUPE members have only just begun to fight. We've rallied and fought back against Bill 9 and budget cuts that will hurt front-line workers and services to Albertans.

But these were just the beginning of the attacks. What we saw today, with Bill 21, is an example of how far this government is prepared to go to undermine your union rights, your pay, benefits and working conditions.

More legislation is likely on the way. But so is more resistance.

Now more than ever it's time for AUPE members, other unions, and our allies to come together and fight this government's anti-worker, anti-union agenda. Sign up at www.aupe.org/fightback, reach out to your local or chapter chairs and find out what we can do together to stand up and fight back.

Because when we fight, we win!