



News Release

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New Labour Legislation Restores Fairness Across Construction Industry

Edmonton- Canada's largest open shop construction association, Edmonton-based Merit Contractors Association called yesterday's tabling of Bill 26 in the Alberta Legislature a much needed step to restore balance and fairness to all sectors of Alberta's construction industry.

Bill 26 addresses longstanding concerns with unfair organizing tactics and construction project subsidy schemes run by some construction union locals.

In Edmonton, Merit Contractors Association President Stephen Kushner stated, "The legislation follows extensive industry consultations and is intended to remedy American based union practices that a few affiliated Alberta local unions adopted after the Labour Code was amended in 1988. The rebalancing measures contained in Bill 26 will help ensure a competitive and stable labour relations regime exists for construction companies. These measures are desperately needed as the province moves forward developing the oil sands and building much needed infrastructure projects such as hospitals, schools and roads."

The proposed changes give more democratic control to construction workers during unionization elections. A loophole currently allowing union agents to vote on unionizing a company even after quitting work with the company will also be closed. In special situations, construction workers will also not have to wait up to 23 months to apply to the Alberta Labour Relations Board to hold a vote to have a union's certification as bargaining agent revoked.

Rules are also being tightened on schemes that see massive cash subsidies being poured into targeted construction projects to undercut more competitive bids. Just as it is now illegal for companies to give cash to unions, a new parallel provision makes it illegal for unions to give cash to companies.

Kushner added, "While a handful of internationally affiliated craft union locals use unfair organizing practices and bid subsidy schemes the impacts can have devastating consequences in critical trade areas such as carpentry, electrical work, plumbing, and pipefitting. The proposed changes simply level the playing field in terms of acceptable organizing and bidding activities and leave critical decision making in the hands of individual employees rather than union leaders. What could be more democratic?"

Merit Contractors Association is a province-wide non-profit association comprised of over 1,300 contractor member firms that employ over 40,000 people in commercial, institutional and industrial construction sectors. Merit is the fastest growing construction association in Canada. The Association was formed in 1986 to serve the needs of the open shop construction industry, particularly in the area of human resource programs.

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