

This segment from Jonathan Teghtmeyer's (Associate Coordinator – Communications, Government of the Alberta Teachers' Association) recent editorial outlines succinctly concerns regarding Bill C-377:

British Columbia Conservative MP Russ Hiebert has put forward private member's Bill C-377, which would require labour organizations to provide detailed financial statements for public distribution. While most private members' bills are doomed to fail, this particular bill has the support of the Conservative majority caucus and could pass easily this fall.

By placing the bill's reporting requirements in the *Income Tax Act*, the bill attempts to skirt the constitutional issue of provincial domain over labour relations. Hiebert's website (www.c377.ca) suggests that the public tax benefit received by unions compels public disclosure. The logic is spurious. Unions are obligated to report to their funders—members—not to the general public. If this bill is solely about tax deductions, then the reporting requirements should be no more onerous than they are for government, charities or private corporations (who take advantage of deductions on a wide array of business expenses).

In terms of financial transparency, the Alberta Teachers' Association's line-by-line budget is provided to, and approved by, locally appointed teacher delegates at our annual assembly. Our audited financial statements are posted to our website for our members and tabled in the Alberta legislature. Despite these current obligations, the additional reporting demanded by Bill C-377 alone would likely require the hiring of two additional full-time accounting staff at Barnett House.

Bill C-377 is intended to divert time, money and energy from labour's effective representation of its members. At the same time, the bill will produce a website outlining line-by-line union activities, costs and vendors. Such information will play nicely into the hands of anti-labour groups such as Alberta's Merit Contractors and B.C.'s Fraser Institute, who will distort the data to discredit unions. Employers will have a heyday with access to confidential and strategic information about union expenses.

The bill is a politically motivated attack on the association rights of workers. It attacks workers' organizational abilities through costly distractions, preoccupations and mischief making.

The complete text can be found at:

<http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Publications/ATA%20News/Volume%2047%202012-13/Number-2/Pages/Editorial.aspx>