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# ACTION PROGRAM TO CONFRONT THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT & CRISIS IN BC



*Prepared by*  
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## Introduction

This Action Program was prepared by the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice, a new organization committed to building the social and political power of poor and working people in BC. We believe that the only way to effectively challenge and threaten the government and their corporate agenda is through the organization of masses of people in motion, in workplaces and in the streets. We are an organization dedicated to mobilizing and unifying poor and working people against the Liberal Government and their anti-poor, anti-working people legislation and policies. This Action Program serves as the foundation of our group, and contains the political and organizational strategies that Fire This Time sees as necessary to build a broad-based, militant mass movement in BC to defeat this government and work in solidarity to build the power of poor and working peoples' movements internationally.

The Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice formed following a split in the Anti-Poverty Committee late in 2002. An earlier version of this Action Program was prepared by members of Fire This Time while we were still with the APC, and was based partly on strategy discussions that took place within the APC in the months before the split occurred. It also contained proposals for organizational and political changes that, in our view, needed to be implemented before the campaign strategies could be enacted. These principles were challenged only as unacceptable dissent and we were censored and excluded without ever being allowed to approach democratic dialogue. We were left with no alternative but to split off and form a new group that can carry out this Action Program. Since the original Action Program was intended to be implemented through the Anti-Poverty Committee, this Action Program has been revised to reflect the new reality we are facing. The original Action Program is more comprehensive and covers strategies for the six campaigns of the APC. This older Action Program is available on our website at <http://www.fire-this-time.org>; to obtain a hard copy, contact us by phone or email.

In Solidarity,

The Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice  
January 2003

## **The Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice Basis of Unity**

Humanity today is threatened by war, economic crises, starvation, poverty and crime: all created by the drive of capitalists to maximise their profits at the expense of the people of the world. To oppose each of these crimes against humanity, we must focus all our work and action to build a foundation for and advance the interest of an overall struggle against international capital, its tools of working class division and its local institutions. The fundamental principle of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice is the unity and active solidarity of all poor and working people, locally and internationally. We must recognize that this principle is meaningless without active struggle because the pursuit of this principle goes sharply against the interest of the ruling class and they will use whatever means they have at their disposal to keep us divided and hostile amongst ourselves.

Fire This Time is a politically based action organization committed to building the social and political power of poor and working people in BC. We believe the only way to effectively challenge and threaten the government and their corporate agenda is through the organization of masses of people in motion in workplaces and in the streets. We are dedicated to mobilizing and unifying poor and working people against the Liberal Government and their anti-poor, anti-working people legislations and policies. We are committed to organizing with working and poor people from the most attacked and exploited communities in the lower mainland and beyond: communities of colour, immigrants, refugees, “illegals”, low-wage workers, disabled people, queer people, indigenous communities, unemployed people and low-income families. We oppose all forms of oppression and exploitation: from sexism to racism, from homophobia to colonialism and all other institutions, thought, beliefs, actions and behaviours that humiliate and demean people to bring hostility and division amongst us.

The goal of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice is to build a broad based movement to defeat the BC Liberal Government. Our work is to provide the tools necessary to unify and activate the working class in BC to build a strong and effective broad-based movement to oppose the BC Liberals and their attacks on poor and working people. This movement must be integrated in the wider revolutionary context of international struggle against capitalism and imperialism; although we are mainly engaged in local politics, in essence the scope of our work is internationalist. Supporting the struggles of oppressed people abroad weakens the hegemony and power of the capitalist class in other lands and consequently weakens their rule at home, therefore aiding the battles of oppressed people in Canada. In addition, the practice of international solidarity solidifies the co-operation essential in building a world movement for social justice. The Liberal Government’s agenda is part of a global restructuring program known as “neo-liberalism”. To fight the BC Liberals is to fight neo-liberalism and global capitalism. We must expand on this both implicitly and explicitly to make the connections relevant to peoples daily domestic struggle, to overcome geographic division, and to make it clear that when we engage in struggle we do not struggle alone but alongside millions of working and poor people around the world. Within capitalist and imperialist globalisation there is no local struggle that does not have an international character. Every international is local and every local is international.

The Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice will support and engage with other progressive movements and struggles whether for immediate or long-term demands, locally, nationally and internationally. Our main goal is to end poverty and injustice through education, participation and direct action. We seek to reach a collective level of consciousness that allows oppressed people to think socially and act politically to achieve social justice by any means necessary.

# Overall Strategy

## Campaigns

We use campaigns to identify ourselves to people and communities we want to work with (our constituency). Through campaigns we show that we understand the conditions that affect poor and working people and that we are fighting against these conditions for concrete gains that we illustrate in demands specific to each campaign.

Campaigns develop out of a need to identify the most important issues that poor people face. We pick campaigns that will deal with issues affecting a broad segment of the working class. We also pick campaigns based on where the ruling class is making key attacks on us.

It is important that the campaigns are accessible to all poor and working people in the lower mainland, not only in presentation but also in involvement. The campaigns must be clearly laid out and developed, not based around a specific event, but with an approach that shows the issue as a vast problem that affects everyone and that everyone can easily identify with. There will be problems with some segments of the working class denying that some issues affect them directly (ex: working people and welfare rights etc...) but through education and alliance building, a lot of these false divisions can be and must be broken down. Campaigns must be structured in such a way that people can easily become involved, not only in the grunt work but also in the strategizing and planning.

We need to ensure coordination within and between our various campaigns. Generally, we should bring people into the organization through our campaigns. However, when people become involved as members, they should have a clear understanding of all the campaigns we have. They should have a clear understanding of why we are doing these campaigns to move beyond the politically isolating 'single issue' mentality and develop a broader understanding of why we are under attack. We need to ensure that clear connections are made between the different issues that we address, and allow coordinated efforts between them.

The four primary objectives of campaigns are:

1. To mobilize and activate people
2. To unify the working class against the reactionary divisions created by the ruling class.
3. To develop our skills organizationally and to expand the notion of who "we" are.
4. To bring focus to our work by selecting key issues that best approach our goals.

## Networking

If the various other organizations that are already established were launching an effective fightback campaign against the government (and capitalism), we would simply join them rather than start our own organization. Nonetheless, many of these groups are useful in their own capacity in terms of resources, experience, membership etc. We need to network with groups that have something to offer in the movement against the BC Liberal Government.

Many poor and working people are organized to some extent through unions, churches, community centres, support services centres, cultural centres... through networking with these

groups we can gain exposure to their membership. Developing working relationships with organizations that people already work with and trust enables them to develop trust in our group. Networking also allows for effective intervention in the politics of other organizations. Joint projects with other organizations are a crucial part in shifting these groups towards a more militant politics, while expanding the political dimensions of our organization, our analysis, and our capacity.

## **Prioritizing our work**

### ***Campaigns:***

We are working in an incredibly dynamic environment, where the BC Liberals are attacking on many fronts in a series of consecutive, well-timed policy changes. First, the Liberals attacked indigenous people in the province with a racist referendum. Then they froze social housing. Then they brought in the \$6 training wage. Then there was “Black Thursday”, where tens of thousands of jobs were cut. Then we were faced with drastic cuts to welfare and a gutting of employment standards. This strategy of spreading out the attacks over an extended period of time is designed explicitly to confuse us, forcing us to jump from one issue to the next before we have a chance to develop an effective defence on any issue.

To deal with this, we need to reassess our campaigns whenever new cutbacks happen. In some cases, previous cuts may pale in comparison, and we will need to pare back and focus on the more important fronts. Generally, however, when new attacks are launched, we need to stick with the campaigns we have and develop new ones where necessary.

When it is necessary to launch a new campaign, we need a small number of people to lay the groundwork for the campaign, then bring in new people to work on it. This reverses the trend from spreading ourselves too thin to expanding our organization with each new campaign.

### ***Communities & Regions:***

As for prioritising communities and regions on which to focus, there are two factors we have to keep in mind: 1) the diverse demographics of the working class in the lower mainland, a diversity which must be reflected in our organization, and 2) the number of areas in the lower mainland where poor people live.

The Downtown Eastside is but one of the areas in the Lower Mainland (or BC for that matter) with a high concentration of poor people. There are several other neighbourhoods throughout the lower mainland (such as Whalley, South Vancouver, areas of Port Moody and Richmond, etc.) that are clearly poor neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods are diverse, with many ethnic communities concentrated in particular areas. It is extremely limiting to focus on the downtown eastside if the goal is to build a diverse, broad based movement of poor and working people. We need to branch out as much as we can to other areas, establishing contacts and bases of support throughout working class communities in BC.

### ***Tasks and tactics:***

A variety of tasks and tactics are used in our work. Mass demonstrations, forums, direct actions, leafleting, press work. With the pace of change inherent to our work, we always need to assess

which tactics and tasks are the most important. Calling demonstrations when momentum is low only demoralizes us. On the other hand, when momentum is high, we need to fan the flames.

### **Popular and internal education**

In order to be a successful and dynamic organization and movement, we have to always be developing, both internally and externally. In our external education work, we are providing information to working class people about the different attacks being waged against them. We are also giving people information about what we think about the situation, our political analysis, and the action we are taking against these attacks. The education is not one-way; through leafleting, public forums, and workshops, we put ourselves in direct contact with people, and are given the opportunity to learn from them. From peoples' experiences and analysis, what they think of the government, what they think of us and our approach, and what they would like to see happen, we can better assess the consciousness of people. We get a better idea of how people perceive our politics and we see our shortcomings. It is very educational for us to be humiliated in public by the poor and working people we claim as our constituency. This education would be abstract and pointless without the development of this two-way relationship. We must engage in the challenge of building the level of consciousness that empowers oppressed people to think socially and act politically.

Internal education is essential for building a conscious, stable organization comprised of conscious, stable people. Knowledge is empowerment: the more educated and skilled we are, the more effective we are in all aspects of our work, and the less we rely on simply a few people to do most of the work, be it the practical, strategic, or political.

There is educational work on racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression that is essential to elevate consciousness within the organization and ensure that we have a broad-based working class group. By this, we don't mean simply workshops or reading: we also mean education through work. For example, a non-Native who does not understand the importance of sovereignty for First Nations will learn best by doing work with a First Nations organization that is dealing with sovereignty (assuming that this person is not too racist for Natives to even want them around). There is educational work in terms of what our enemy is up to: people in the group should know which MLA's head which ministries, the specific pieces of legislation important to our work, basic statistics on employment and unemployment, the demographics of the working class in BC. There is also educational work in terms of skills necessary for organizing: use of computers, typing press releases, layout, public speaking, networking, research. Most of these skills are developed directly in practice, and it is good to have members with certain skills share them with others.

Finally, educational work on the international situation is essential. We need to encourage people in the group to look outside of BC and consider the broader picture. This raises our understanding of how capitalism and imperialism create poverty and oppression. To see the international dimensions of our struggle is at the same time humbling and empowering. It allows us to see the true scope of our struggle, the tasks we have ahead of us, and the need to work as part of an international project in the long run.

# Campaigns

# Campaign to End the Training Wage

## WHY FOCUS ON THE TRAINING WAGE?

Our Campaign to End the Training Wage is about organizing low-wage workers in the fight against the provincial government. In BC, the service sector is one of the largest sectors of the economy in terms of labour participation. In 2001, 12% of all jobs in BC were in the retail sector. It is also in this sector where most workers earn the training wage, minimum wage, or poverty wages. The average weekly earnings for a person in the service sector was \$225.73 in 2000, compared with an average of \$626.45 for all industries. Considering that one would need to make \$10 an hour working fulltime to just to be at the low-income threshold, this means that the average job in the service sector provides 56% of this amount.

For any campaign to organize low-wage workers, then, it is essential to do work in the service sector, and to focus on this sector when pushing for increases in wages and rights for all low-income workers. The Campaign to End the Training Wage lays bare the attacks that Campbell is making against the working poor, and puts our work in building the anti-Liberal movement firmly in the working class tradition of fighting for higher wages.

What differentiates this from a significant amount of union organizing is that it is a fight to raise the wages of ALL workers by starting at the bottom. A raise in the minimum wage always raises wages across the board. With this campaign we are also attempting to organize where unions traditionally stay away from: the working poor, women, people of colour, immigrants and youth.

## OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Because of the range of people in terms of demographics that need to be involved in this campaign, we need very broad-based outreach. There are, however, key groups that we must focus on for this campaign.

### 1. Youth

Young people are one of the most important groups we need to organize in this campaign. First, these are one of the main groups being ‘legally’ paid \$6, and second, it is always the youth who play the most active role in any successful movement. The parents of young people earning the training wage are another important group to connect with.

Working class university students also need to be involved in a movement against the training wage. Over half of young adult minimum wage workers, and 12% of adult minimum wage workers, are full-time students.

### 2. People of colour and ‘Illegal workers’

Racism in Canadian society lays itself bare in its class structure, and one need only check out any McDonald’s restaurant, textile factory, cranberry field, or janitorial agency to see this. Workers from other countries are heavily exploited and face severe, illegal working conditions at the hands of Canadian business. The training wage is but the latest abuse, where workers from other countries are lied to about their rights (“you need work experience in Canada to make \$8”) or accept \$6 because they have no choice for fear of joblessness and/or deportation. No campaign for the rights of low-wage workers can ignore this situation.

### 3. Women

All the available statistics show that women routinely make far less money than men, and they make up the majority of low-wage workers. The paid work of women (like the unpaid work they do) living with a male partner is almost always undervalued, viewed as ‘secondary’ or supporting work, whereas their male partner is considered the ‘primary’ earner. In fact, for poor families, this ‘second wage’ is very important

for the family's well-being. There are also a high number of single women both with and without children who rely solely on minimum wage jobs to get by.

#### UNIONS

The BC Federation of Labour has a Six Bucks Sucks campaign that was launched back in November of 2001. We need to encourage those in the BC Fed that are involved in this work to use the resources they have available to expand their current work against the \$6 training wage. We also need to encourage unions like the CAW to get more involved in the fight for the rights of low-wage workers. We need these unions to organize businesses that are using the training wage: it makes sense to use the tools that already exist for exploited workers.

#### TARGETTING BUSINESS

With this campaign, targeting business as well as the government is essential. We have to go after the businesses that pushed for and are benefiting from the training wage. This can take the form of picketing and leafleting, organizing campaign meetings around specific employers, action at business headquarters. We might want to look into boycotts, but generally it is best to only call boycotts when the people working for the particular business support it or are calling for it.

## Legal Defense Strategy Proposal

### Objectives:

- To defend ourselves and our allies against political attacks (arrests, legal charges, physical assaults, media propaganda, internal division agitation) by the state government through its agitational infiltrators, repressive police force and corrupt legal system by establishing internal security protocol and targeted legal defense mobilizing and fundraising.
- To build a network of allied communities and groups around the commonality of these attacks and the need for unified defense.
- To outsource our concrete legal needs to supporters and expand our contacts, knowledge and skills in order to activate quiet supporters and expand the movement against the Liberal Government in BC.
- To expose the Liberals and all governments as reliant upon racist, sexist and overall oppressive policing to cripple social movements and control poor and working people, indigenous peoples and immigrant / refugee / “illegal” communities of colour in BC.
- To develop an offensive against the Canadian Government to force them to abide by their legislations that guarantee our democratic rights. To expand upon these rights so they are representative of the needs of the people who are systematically denied them.

### Why a strategy around Legal Defense?

Social Movements and organized unity in oppressed communities are a threat to the absolute power held by the Liberal government in BC. The government’s understanding of this threat is illustrated by their attacks on radical political organizers and on indigenous, poor and immigrant communities throughout the past months. The government and its police forces have attacked us through individual arrests, and general harassment / increased presence and antagonization at demonstrations, actions and even leafleting. They have attacked oppressed people by isolating individuals in the communities who actively resist the poverty and segregation that the government has created in their neighbourhoods, towns and reservations. It is the role of the police to criminalize and intimidate people involved in radical politics and resistance movements to create divisions between them and others in the province who have not yet been activated. The interests of the police are the interests of the government and the profit driven corporations that we attack in defense of ourselves and our rights. When we organize against the government, we are attacked by the police and are forced to develop a strategy to defend ourselves against them. The need for this is clearly illustrated most recently by the massive police mobilization around the Woodward’s Squat and their attempts to isolate and alienate organizers in this incident, by the charges and convictions of the Skwelkwew’welt Protection Centre Defenders, and finally, by the Britannia Police Riot on October 3<sup>rd</sup> and the subsequent arrests. When it is necessary, we must take the fight from the streets to the courts and we must fight in the same way we do in all places; united and growing.

This campaign could be expanded into an internationalist campaign that opposes the oppression of people by the governments and corporations that control their migration, forbid their self-determination and threaten their survival. We must take advantage of the sympathy that young white activists receive when attacked by government forces and politicize that sympathy into solidarity to fight the racist system that attacks poor people and people of colour on a historical and daily basis.

## **Organization & Structure**

## **The Organizational Character of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice**

Why does organizational character matter?

Any organization serious about fighting for the rights of poor and working people must strive to become and maintain a dynamic organization. The Working Class of Vancouver is a diverse and complicated class of people. Everyone involved in Fire This Time are a part of this class of people. Who “WE” are as an organization clearly demonstrates how effectively we are organizing around the issues and needs of the Working Class. If the organization’s membership is predominantly white and young then we must critically analyze what type of organizing has been done to reach such a homogenous and privileged group exclusively. More important than that, we must examine what work we have NOT done and what we NEED to do in order to be in any way representative of the Working Class in the city. Only by this do we have any hope of mobilizing people in a genuine way against the Liberal Government. Only when we are representative of our “constituency” are we in any way a part of a democratic movement or any movement whatsoever. Our organizational character is all of these things. Our organizational character permits or forbids the type of organizing trumpeted in our campaign and overall strategies. We must develop an organizational character that builds and maintains a dynamic and representative organization. Every member of the organization must strive to live up to and improve the organizational character of the group, not just in meetings or at organizational functions but at all times. The status quo left in Vancouver has never managed to achieve this. To function without a politically disciplined, democratic character is to function beneath a shroud and to actively maintain the racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ablist and overall oppressive status quo the ruling class has constructed. We must fight through this status quo to approach and fight the ruling class. Anything less is delusion.

What does this mean?

1. We are a political organization.

We are not “action based”. We cannot defeat this or any government by action alone. All our actions must be driven and enforced by our politics. We must articulate our politics clearly at all times, even when not in action. Our functioning internally as well as externally must represent these politics. We cannot abandon our anti-racist / anti-sexist politics in rhetoric and we must be accountable for our politics at all times. Our goal is to unify the Working Class against the government and the ruling class and all our actions must point to this. This must be reflected in our literature, our structure and our behaviour through clear language, translations, accessible layout and artwork, transparent, inclusive structure and respectful behaviour.

## 2. Political Clarity.

We must discuss our politics without hesitation or embarrassment. We must openly discuss political motivations and differences in reference to all our campaigns and actions. We must discuss the political spectrum of the organization and its organizing at all general and campaign meetings. We must air our differences and work them out before they become irresolvable.

## 3. Strategic and political unity.

While we must air conflicts in meetings to address the politics behind them, we must remain fundamentally united behind the organizational politics and strategy. If people do not agree with the fundamental politics and strategy of the group, they cannot become members. It is important that all members understand and agree with the basic foundations of the organization. When we take action it must be unified.

## 4. Vision based on the movement rather than the organization.

We must pay attention to and respect the work other organizations do. We must build relationships with other organizations that represent poor and working people in many capacities. We must attend other groups meetings and observe and participate respectfully. At all times we are representing the movement we are part of and must respect it above all other things.

## 5. Formal membership.

We are not part of the organization by accident or for numbers alone. We must function with “quality, not quantity”. We must strive for a respectful and serious organization made up of members who are equally respectful and serious. Interested people must apply to become voting members, though anyone who agrees with the basis of unity can work with the organization in a supportive role.

## 6. Adherence to structure.

We make decisions in meetings. Appropriate committees handle situations. We cannot undermine that structure by making decisions independently, unilaterally or in unsanctioned meetings. We must fight against cliquism, against people having special privileges or not being accountable because they are “friends”. All members must know how they can become involved in all things.

## 7. Accountability to decisions.

Decisions made in meetings must be held to and carried out. Decisions must be talked out and understood before they are voted on. Anyone who undermines a decision by carrying out their own individual program or by intentionally misrepresenting a decision made by the group must be held accountable through accountability process.

## 8. Accountability to responsibilities.

It is necessary to delegate responsibilities to committees and individuals in the group. Failure to carry out these responsibilities in a way representative of the group and the tasks assigned will be noted. Repeated or gross irresponsibility will result in accountability process.

9. Adherence to code of conduct.

Respectful treatment of others both in the organization and outside is demanded of all members. Breaches of the code of conduct will result in accountability process.

10. Accountability process.

Part of internal security is to have a democratic process to ensure that all members and people involved in Fire This Time are acting in favour of the organization, its basis of unity and its character. Part of the Steering Committees duty is to carry out “accountability process” against people who are acting outside of membership requirements. This process must be open and democratic though there are times that confidentiality is important. Accountability measures vary from verbal and written warnings to conditional suspensions and expulsion. (i.e.: Someone who displays sexist behaviours may be warned. The second time, suspended to seek education and then re-evaluated. The third time the person may be expelled. Someone who consistently misrepresents the interests, politics and character of the group in public appearances may be suspended from participating in public appearances.) All decisions are contestable by the person charged but all members must agree to and support this process.

This organizational character must be understood, accepted and actively upheld by everyone who joins the group.

## Structure

The vision of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice is to become a major opposition to the BC Liberals and build a broad-based revolutionary movement integrated in the wider context of international struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

The perspective of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice is two-fold: 1. To provide the tools to unify and activate the working class of British-Columbia to build a strong and effective broad-based movement to oppose the BC Liberals and its attacks on poor and working people. 2. To help understand and expose the ramifications and context of the BC Liberals policies beyond the province and the country in order to successfully build a strong long term and viable revolutionary movement in co-ordination and solidarity with other international struggles.

To implement this perspective, the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice must have a structure that is as simple, dynamic and as inclusive as possible. The structure must provide a framework that maintains the integrity of the organization and allows its members to take initiatives consistent with its overall strategy and vision. The structure is based on our political tasks and focus must be placed on networking, alliance building and engaging the public at large in the interests of the expansion and growth of the movement and the organization. It must provide space and direction to implement the most important task at hand: outreach.

The general decision-making structure of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice is:

1. The highest decision-making body is the **Bi-Annual General Meeting (AGM)**.
2. The second highest decision-making body is the **General Meeting (GM)** and their decisions must be consistent with the decisions made at the AGMs. Between the AGMs, the GMs are the highest decision-making bodies. All GM decisions are subject to review at the AGMs.
3. The last decision-making body is the **Steering Committee Meeting** and their decisions must be consistent with the decisions made at the GMs. Between the GMs, the SCMs are the highest decision-making bodies. All SCM decisions are subject to review at GMs and AGM's.

All decisions, except those regarding structural change of the organization, are made at meetings through a majority vote of 50% plus one of all voting members present at each meeting. A voting member can choose to abstain from a decision by abstaining from vote. Their vote will be counted as an abstention and will not contribute to the percentage of positive or negative vote.

Decisions regarding structural changes of the organization require a vote of 70% plus one and these proposals must be announced at the general meeting prior to the general or annual general meeting where the decision will be made.

The Steering Committee is a working body responsible for the carrying out and co-ordination of the work and actions of the organization and for urgent and unanticipated decision-making.

The Steering Committee is elected bi-yearly during the AGMs and should be made up of 15 % of the group, with a minimum of 5 members and a maximum of 9 members. Interim elections are to take place when at least two positions are vacant on the steering committee, and are to be held during General Meetings. If the group membership is under 15 members, the general membership takes on the tasks of the Steering Committee and no Steering Committee is needed.

The Steering Committee is elected by the greatest number of votes in the AGM but a Fire This Time member cannot become a Steering Committee unless they receive over 50% positive votes from the voting members at the AGM.

Two alternate steering committee members are also elected at the AGM to fill in for absent SC members at SC meetings and to take over seats on the SC should an elected SC member leave the Steering Committee. Alternate Steering Committee members can attend all steering committee meetings, including ones declared “in camera” and can speak at the meetings but their votes do not count towards decisions unless an elected SC member is absent.

Only elected SC members’ votes are counted at SCMs. Decision making quorum at SCMs is 50% plus one of the elected membership of the SC.

Steering Committee Meetings are open to general members, based on request, in order to speak to specific points or issues. The Steering Committee reserves the right, based on security and safety, to declare certain meetings or sections of meetings in camera. Under special circumstances, like the development of tendencies, factions, or serious political differences, members can attend steering committee meetings without request.

The work of the organization is divided in different Campaign Committees which work is to be coordinated by the Steering Committee, GMs, and AGMs:

- The Education and Communication committee
- The Low-wage Worker/Training Wage campaign committee
- The Legal Defense committee.

Other committees will be struck when their campaign structure is developed and the need for a committee is clear and consistent with the group’s vision.

# Membership Criteria

For the health and success of any organization a strong foundation must be laid. The membership of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice needs to be clearly defined to ensure the security and accountability of the group and its members. Members should clearly understand, agree with, respect and be held accountable to both the Basis of Unity and the Code of Conduct. Members need to have a clear understanding of the history and participate in developing the overall strategy of the group. Members must display an understanding and an initiative to engage with the organizational character, the structure and the strategies and visions of the different committees and campaigns underway. New members must understand these foundational and working structural elements of the group to make a conscious, informed and responsible choice in joining the organization.

To become an active member, potential members must go through an orientation session and review an information package (Action Program to Confront the Liberal Government and Crisis in BC). This would be followed by the new member's articulation of their motivation for joining the group and the level of commitment they can offer. A minimum commitment of active participation in one campaign and attending one general meeting a month is required in order to have voting rights. **Voting Members** are responsible for electing the Steering Committee and voting on current and structural issues during General Meetings and Bi-Annual General Meetings. **Voting Members** are allowed to run for Steering Committee elections.

## **All Voting Members must:**

1. Agree with the Basis of Unity
2. Agree to abide by the Code of Conduct
3. Attend an orientation session to read, discuss and understand:
  - The Basis of Unity
  - The Code of conduct
  - A history of the group
  - The overall strategy of the group
  - The different campaigns visions and strategies
  - The organizational character, including the structure
4. Be interviewed to clearly articulate their motivations for joining the group and potential commitment to the group. The body delegated the interview process would report at a general meeting and the general membership would then accept or refuse new members by vote (simple majority).
5. Actively participate in at least one of the campaigns or committees
6. Attend one general meeting a month

Members that are absent without notification for a period exceed one month or for a prolonged period of time might be required to go through the membership application process again.

## **All Supporting Members must:**

1. Agree with the Basis of Unity and agree to uphold the code of conduct.

Supporting members are able participate in all levels of work with the organization but cannot represent the group publicly or with other groups unless sanctioned to do so.

Supporting members can speak at meetings equally with active members but their votes are not registered in decision making. Supporting members are encouraged to participate in a CONSULTING VOTE to measure the support or dissent of the supporting membership for decisions made by the active membership and the direction of the organization.

## Code of Conduct

The primary objective of the code of conduct is to ensure that Fire This Time members are following the Fire This Time Basis of Unity, the principles outlined in the Organizational Character, the Overall Strategy and collective decisions made in the General Meetings and other organizational bodies.

The Code of Conduct must identify and block any methods of intervention used by the ruling class to divide oppressed people from or within Fire This Time. It must ensure that Fire This Time is a healthy organization with space for all oppressed people. Any behaviour or matter in contradiction with the basis of unity, organizational character or code of conduct will be stopped and violators will be put through accountability process according to the degree of their damage to the Fire This Time and its principles.

Principles of the Code of Conduct:

1. All members must adhere to the code of conduct.
2. No Fire This Time member can:
  - a. Perform any act of physical or verbal assault against any other Fire This Time member
  - b. Violate the honour or dignity of any Fire This Time member
  - c. When representing Fire This Time, no member can use inappropriate profanity that is in contradiction with the Basis of Unity, Organizational Character or Code of Conduct
  - d. Compromise the integrity of the group by committing unsanctioned or unrelated irresponsible acts that place the group or members of the group at risk, legally or otherwise
  - e. Perform or enforce acts of racism, sexism, homophobia, ablism or other forms of oppressive behaviour
  - f. Perform or tolerate acts of sexual harassment
3. Members shall not speak to the media on behalf of the organization unless delegated by the appropriate body
4. The organization encourages democracy in discussion and unity in action. When participating in public action or when representing Fire This Time, members must respect, carry through and defend decisions made at meetings.
5. Confidential organizational information (telephone numbers, addresses, internal documents and study papers, emails etc...) shall not be released to persons or organizations without clearance from the appropriate bodies

Implementation of the Code of Conduct:

1. Any political, legal or personal disputes between members shall be settled in a just and non-antagonistic manner by internal arbitration or mediation
2. For all situations that allege a breach of the code of conduct, basis of unity, organizational character or membership criteria against any member, a fact finding commission will be created. This commission will investigate the situation and bring a report with recommendations to the steering committee and the general membership for approval. The commission has the ability to recommend measures ranging from verbal and written warnings to expulsion. The members who have been charged have a right to defend themselves in the general meeting where the report of the commission is discussed and decided upon.

All members are expected to uphold the Code of Conduct in all areas of their work with the organization.