

Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Glen Taylor

Interviewer: Don Bouzek

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Location: Hinton, AB

I'm Glen Taylor. I was born in Barrie, Ontario, on an army base. It was a great life. I was born on the army base, actually in Petawawa, but officially in Barrie, Ontario, and traveled the world with my family. I got to see all kinds of things. We lived for a few years in Germany on the army base in Zost. Moved back to Canada, lived in Victoria. Finally when dad retired we moved up to the interior of British Columbia. That's where I graduated high school, in MacKenzie, British Columbia. My father was a sawmill worker up there.

He enlisted early and served in Korea. Dad was underage, enlisted, snuck over, got sent home, waited a year and went back. And served in the Korean War, as a matter of fact. Then after we spent 23 or 24 years in the armed forces. Wonderful life, couldn't ask for any better than that. Dad retired, we moved into northern British Columbia, dad became an employee at BCFP. One of the members, IWA, I think... That was my first exposure to the labor movement. I was in British Columbia during the general strike times of the wacky Bennett days, and experienced what a strike does to a small town. We took my father in the garage, for example, when the boys were preparing to go out on the picket

line. It was a fairly violent affair. This would've been 1979. The liquor stores were on strike, tensions were high. Pulp mills were down, sawmills were down, and a lot of tension in a small community, 3000 people, where your neighbors were crossing the picket lines. We very quickly learned what it meant to be organized labor, and what it took to struggle for your rights and freedoms, and your dignity. We had a food bank back then. I recall going to the food bank with my father. It was at the outdoor municipal swimming pool. They set up a food bank there for strikers and their families. I have a fairly large family. We'd make the weekly trip down, we'd get the beans and the groceries, and go home and mom would do what she could to make sure that none of us went hungry. That was my first exposure to the labor movement.

I was a young man. I was in high school at the time. As a matter of fact, that's my first time getting involved in politics as well. I ran for the students union, and became president and represented my classmates to the school principals, administration, and authorities. My feelings at the time though, it was almost trial by fire. Because my dad was a pretty popular fellow, very genial, outgoing and easygoing, a lot of folks gravitated towards our house. My mom always ran an open house. If people needed a place to stay overnight, our basement was always available. There was always something going on in our basement or our garage. My earliest memories of labor confrontation was dad and the guys making the picket signs. You probably won't record this, but I recall them making the old potato bombs as well, that they'd strew on the road to give flat tires to the guys going across the picket line. I thought, hmm, this is pretty serious stuff. I remember gunfire. Somebody took out their long rifle and shot the windows out of one of the

neighbor's apartment buildings. It was pretty tense times back then. But I also really started to understand the solidarity in sharing these challenges together. It wasn't just our family that was struggling to get by, it was many other families that shared that. Those guys sitting around and a case of beer would somehow show up in the town during that liquor board strike. The boys would come by and they'd have a beer together. They wouldn't horde that in those days. What that instilled in me was a respect and understanding of what it takes to achieve what you believe is ultimately right. The good news is, in that particular strike, while it was fairly long and drawn out, it was a long couple of months. I don't recall exactly how long it was. But I believe they were successful. Dad went back to work, the mill guys went back to work. But coming from a military background, he had a respect for authority. I think this affected him very personally. He lost a lot of respect for the authority when he understood what was really happening. So went through the strike, survived the strike, within three years dad had quit his job and moved to Saskatchewan. All the gains that they gathered he never got to benefit in. He passed away a few short years after that. But it was interesting watching my father come to the understanding that the folks in charge, he was trained in the military to always obey and never to question. When he got into private life and he saw how he was treated and how his fellow workers and friends were treated, and he ultimately had the opportunity to stand up, he did.

That's kind of a fun story. It's interesting how my life has been tied to the labor movement in many different ways. I was class president, as I said, had represented our students union. Had a few issues that I had to represent my fellow students on, the

membership I almost said. Shortly after graduation it was time for me to go out and explore the big bad world. A small town of 3000 in interior British Columbia, I moved to Prince George, British Columbia. I found work at the local Woolco Store. I worked my way up through a delivery boy, box boy, to their junior management system. I came to the realization this really doesn't work. I attempted to organize a union, not having a clue what that was about, in the retail sector in Prince George. I don't know what came over me. Contacted some friends of mine, some people I knew. Lost my job as a result of it, early on. Ultimately the union drive was successful, and then they shut the store down. Another lesson in how tough it is to get a first agreement, things like that. So I moved from MacKenzie into retail. Worked in the sawmills a bit, kicked around in the pulp mills for a bit, went to Europe, traveled again a bit. Became a ski bum. Was working in Lake Louise, didn't like how the boys were being treated. They don't like talking about organized labor on ski hills. Part time laborers, seasonal men and women that are out there to supplement their school income, take a break from school, etc., wasn't real successful. That didn't work either. Ultimately moved on again.

It truly is. And in this case, this was in Lake Louise, and there wasn't much for staff accommodations at the time. Essentially you were tied to your job. It was really interesting how they had some control over the workers back in the day. I think they probably still do, as a matter of fact. It was fun to ski. But your accommodations were supplied by the employer, as they tend to do in the federal parks. You could put food on your staff card, which came off your paycheck. Your accommodation costs came off your paycheck, and you could charge against your account all over the mountain. So come

payday, if you had \$15 or \$20 in your pocket, you were probably ahead of the game. At the end of the year, in order to have enough money in your pocket to get a bus ticket out of town, the employer would give you a 25 cents an hour bonus, which you could use to put towards a Greyhound ticket. But if you lost your job, for whatever reason, you lost your accommodations immediately. You were out on the street literally in the cold. You didn't have access to food, and if you hadn't saved any money, you don't even got a bus ticket out of town. It was pretty tight control of their employees. Most people, that's just the way it was. Some, unfortunately we'd get together in my room, watch the Saturday night hockey game on CBC and talk about, boy this isn't right. Sometimes when you try to make a difference, you pay the price. The snow conditions were good, the skiing was great. But I don't regret leaving when I did, either. Maybe the circumstances, but that's just the way it goes.

As a matter of fact, it was in Lake Louise that I decided I wanted to get married and raise a family. Being involved in the tourist industry, no private accommodations. If you wanted to raise a family, you had to somehow find a way you could do that. At this time I was working at the Lake Louise Inn as the bar manager. I just couldn't get a place for myself and my future wife to have our own accommodations. When we decided to make a go of it, ultimately we had to leave the park, which brought us to Hinton. I'll talk about that in just a minute. The other interesting thing is my mom and dad followed me from Saskatchewan to Lake Louise. Dad got a job at the ski hill. He ultimately ended up working for Parks Canada for a couple of years. Became a union member again, and my mom became the postmistress. So both connected to the union. It's actually because my

mom was a postmistress that I got to meet the Sisters from Hell, out of Banff at that time. They were a loud and proud sisterhood in the labor movement out of Banff, out of the postal union. My mom didn't know what to make of them. My mom is still there. She's now become a grandmother in Lake Louise. We had to leave so I could try and raise a family. When I left the pulp mill and sawmills in MacKenzie, I swore I'd never work in another place like that again. It was interesting, because about a decade later I found myself in Hinton, working in the bar scene again, working at building my future. A job opening came up in the pulp mill – guess where I was back? I've been there for almost 20 years now. I got involved with the local union.

At first I got on at the green chain. It's sorting 2 x 4s as they come out of the saws. Our job was to separate the good ones from the bad ones, which ones would go through to the planer mill and which ones had to get scrapped and made into chips. Very physical labor. You're on a production line, and there'd be two or three of us across from each other flipping boards and making decisions. We were part of the machinery, so to speak. I started in the sawmill, which was interesting because in high school I'd worked in a sawmill as a cleanup guy.

This would've been 1987, I believe. I know I'm coming up on my 19th year here in Hinton. It would've been about 1987. I was in a union now, didn't have to try and organize one. I got involved with the safety committee at the sawmill, and ended up writing one of the first chainsaw safety courses. Because we didn't have that. It was right at that juxtaposition, in 1987 the mill was almost 30 years old. We're just starting to move

into that age of having well defined safety programs, involving union members in the safety programs, and that type of thing.

There is now, yes. This was prior to the major expansion that brought in the mechanizations and the computer control systems. It was the guys on the canters, the guys on the green chain and the stackers, and out on the saw decks. One of the things I noticed during my training when I came on board is I didn't have any training and I had to use a chain saws. You're given a chain saw, and if there was a log hung up on the deck, out you went with a pike pole and a chain saw. I thought, there's probably a better way of doing this. Certainly the safety committee at the plant supported me in that action.

Ultimately the employer said, okay, what can you offer? As a result of that, we came up with a chain saw safety course. We put some structure around it, and it's been pretty successful. I understand now, even years later, it's still one of the basic training techniques that the employees when they get hired are given safety training and chain saw training. We haven't had any chain saw accidents in 20 years.

It was empowering. For the first time I was able to work with fellow employees to help an employer understand that there might be a safer or better way of doing this. Because we had an established union, we also had an established relationship to start with. That helped. I started to understand, I believe that in strength there is numbers. Health and safety can be a way to achieve many other things than just a safe and healthful workplace.

So here I was, a newer employee at the sawmill, within months of being hired, somehow involved with union activists and working towards representation. I found my niche in

the health and safety group down at the sawmill. That being said, an opening came up at the pulp mill about two years later, and I transferred over to the pulp mill. No sooner had I arrived at the pulp mill than I was approached by Don Boucher, our local ... he was our health and safety on the task force of the joint safety committee at the time. He was just also newly involved with getting into the union part of it. But my mentor back then was a guy named Eric Rosendahl. I believe Eric has been active in health and safety, environmental activism, and vice president on our local union committee. He's been a mentor and a leader in my life in the organized labor movement. He approached me because I'd had a bit of a reputation for being involved in health and safety down at the sawmill. There was an opening on the joint safety committee. He was now going to be moving up to the vice president of our local, and he was looking for somebody to fill in his place on the joint safety committee. I seized the opportunity, and got involved with our joint safety committee. It was really interesting. We had some pretty committed local union activists with a vision about where we should be or where we could be. We didn't have an employer that really wanted to head what they were being told. They wanted us there, I'm not so sure it wasn't for window dressing, or to tick off that box in the corporate check box that they've got a joint safety committee with union influence on it.

That's right. And it was a part of the collective agreement that the union would have members appointed, and we'd be involved in such things as safety incident investigations, making recommendations to the mill around safety issues. It's something that our local union 855 has really committed to. In those early days, I started to first learn about the labor movement in Alberta. Some of the early courses that I took with the Alberta Federation of Labor, for example, were around health and safety. Involved to helping

write the health and safety activist's handbook, back with the AFL. That was quite a few years back. We were in a hotel room in Calgary working with Maurine Werlin, and Dave Werlin was involved back then. We put together what we felt was a basic toolkit for health and safety activists, how to advance your issues. Of course these were all things that we were applying on the floor in our local. How to do a work refusal. Educating our membership on how to do proper lockouts, and who's responsible for doing hazard assessments, and those types of things. Really good information I believe should've been coming from the company, and was. But was it focused on what a guy needed to do to do his job safely? When they start teaching us about snow mobile safety and how to properly dress a deer in our safety meetings, I don't think so. I think we need to focus more on workplace activities.

My first example in the pulp mill side as a joint safety committee member, we had hog fuel. It's residual wood debris, leftover bark, twigs, saw chips, and things that aren't used in the process. But in our facility we burn them to produce power, as a fuel to fire one of the large boilers. What comes out the end is a lot of sawdust. Every day the sawdust was blowing back into the working areas. The answer at that time was put on a dust mask and go in and clean it all up, shovel it onto the conveyor belt, and away you go. Within an hour, the way the place was designed, the sawdust was coming back. Instead of going outside onto the pad, it would blow back in the working areas. It would be in the air and floating around. This is in an area where there's fires and boilers. Some contended, and I believe them, that it was leading to an explosive atmosphere. There was really fine sawdust and films all over the plant right around the boiler. It was my job at that time to

go and do the cleanup around that conveyor belt and around the sawdust. I made some recommendations about how we could control the sawdust better, we could do this and we could do that. Ultimately it involved spending money, and the employer wasn't interested. We went through the joint safety committee route, bringing it forward for both parties to give consideration, making recommendations on what could be safer.

Ultimately it wasn't agreed to by the employer. What ended up happening is I did one of the first safety refusals, and put a lock on the conveyor, because it wasn't being addressed and I felt we were endangered. OH&S ended up coming in and work refusals happened.

That got us a lot of attention, and helped resolve the problem. Working the routes is effective up until it isn't. In that case, if you truly believe you have a health and safety issue, then it's decision time. That's the way our local has conducted themselves throughout my career at this employer. We'll work the routes of trying to find common solutions and common ground, we'll work the routes of trying to bring issues to the table that need to be addressed and resolved. But ultimately, as employers are wont to do, when they push back and say no, and we truly believe it's a health and safety issue, our membership is educated to that point where they know when to say, enough is enough.

Which brings us to one of the most interesting health and safety activist issues I've ever been involved in. I now had moved through the joint safety committee and was the newly elected vice president in our local. However, during our time on the joint safety committee, we were doing asbestos removal in the plant. I should quantify that.

Contractors had been hired to do asbestos removal in our plant. Our plant at the time was about 40 years old. It was built in the days when asbestos was a primary material for insulating for chemical protection of the plant and the steel. Our walls were made out of

the stuff as well. The asbestos concrete type material was what the buildings were made out of, and sprayed on insulation. Around that same time, the provincial government had instituted controls. They were starting to say, you have to remove asbestos from the buildings because people are dying from it. We had an engineer in charge of the project who didn't have a clue about asbestos. At the same time, we had employees who were very educated about asbestos, because they came from the insulators union. We had a young health and safety activist, he'd come on to the joint safety committee just after I left. He had a really good understanding of what was going on with asbestos in our plant, because he was an employee of one of the contractors that was hired to do the asbestos removal. He told us, you guys have no idea what's going on. At the same time, we'd had one of our fellow employees contract a type of cancer that we'd never heard about before. He was a very popular fellow, he'd been around the plant for about 22 years. He was one of our senior operators. He contracted cancer and was gone within eight months. We also at the same time had many other workers that were showing respiratory illnesses. Trouble breathing, coughing, that type of thing. We knew, and we started to educate ourselves about what is asbestos. What's the issue here? Then Dave came on, and he's very familiar with it, and he explained to us that these asbestos fibers that are floating around, we've got a dangerous situation here. So we started working the route. As the vice president for operations for our local, it was my responsibility to take it to that next level. So the joint safety committee guys brought the issue forward. The company – we're dealing with it. We've hired contractors, we're spending money, we're following the necessary procedures to get this done. We're taking care of business as we're supposed to. However, the information we were getting is they weren't. We had one of the health and safety officers

from the company giving us information about air monitoring data, for example. We had supervisors in the plant, who also worked in these contaminated atmospheres, who were feeding us information about the data they were getting, and not sharing with us. We were getting things like asbestos results of testing, where on one hand they'd tell us it was safe levels, and yet we were receiving material from informed sources – and one day I want to thank those people publicly – they were. . .

Give me a minute to compose myself. That came right out of left field. . . .

Two of the people that helped us back then are no longer with us.

That happens to me once in a while as well, and it's amazing what triggers it. Part of my current job at the plant is I educate guys about asbestos. We had some information coming in from some people who were employees of the company and weren't union members. But of course we all worked and lived together, and still do. They understood that what we were being told officially across the table wasn't necessarily what was going on in the plant. To give you an example, the engineer in charge of the asbestos removal projects was actually taking asbestos offsite and bringing it home to build a chicken cook on her property with. She just didn't get it, she really didn't. And yet this was the person in charge of overseeing the abeyment projects. Meantime, we had educated ourselves on asbestos, what it is, the dangers of it. We'd approached the company about our concerns. Through the joint safety committee, we had two union members that were assigned as a sub committee to go out and do an assessment of the mill. Which in and of itself is kind of a joke, because what training did these union guys have? Other than they read a lot, they talked to a lot of people, and of course we had Dave, who had worked for an insulating company for a few years. We went out and did an assessment. Not very

scientific, but we tried to do an assessment of the plant. Came back and said we believe there's over 600 samples of asbestos that's in poor condition in the plant. This was after five years of concentrated removal efforts by the experts in the field. And we'd been told that we were now asbestos free. There was no more asbestos left in this plant. I've still got the letter from the superintendent of the day that said, there's no need to be concerned here. We were pushing at joint safety, pushing at senior levels of management. And we were being pushed back, saying, the problem has been addressed, the money's been spent, everything's under control. So our guys went out and did this survey, came back with the data that said we had over 600 samples of poor condition of asbestos. The employer didn't believe us. So they hired a hygienist company to come in. We insisted on having one of our union members accompany the hygienist, because we were starting to believe the data we were getting wasn't necessarily all the data that should be shared with us. So they went out and did a joint sampling together, and came back with over 1000 samples of asbestos that needed immediate control. This got me back involved now as a union vice president. Meanwhile, you've got to understand, this wasn't happening in a vacuum. We sat down, myself, our health and safety activists, Don Boucher, who is now president of our local. We sat down and talked about the seriousness of this issue, what we were needing to do to put together a concentrated approach to dealing with the issue, with the full expectation that ultimately the company was going to tell us, sorry, they've met their responsibilities as far as provincial legislation is concerned. Ultimately that's what started to happen. So we had a couple of different things going on. We were educating ourselves about asbestos, we were talking to our membership and making sure they were well aware of the potential hazards, and we were building up a groundswell of support and

concern. While we were dealing with it face –on with the company at the joint safety committee level, and while our senior union executive members were meeting with the company's senior members. Ultimately it happened the way we thought it would. We were bringing these issues forward to the joint safety committee, that we didn't believe they were doing all that they should to meet their obligations. We believed we had an unsafe and unhealthy workplace. Meanwhile, we had another member pass away. One of the parts of educating ourselves on this strategy was trying to figure out how to process an occupational health and safety claim when it came to asbestos. In this particular case, when this member was sick, and he was sick for a number of years. He was a big fan of baseball. So when he was no longer able to work at the plant, because he couldn't breathe very well, he'd be seen bombing around town in a motorized wheelchair that the local had bought for him, with an orange flag and an oxygen tank on the back. He'd come down and watch our ballgames. He'd be really involved in the community. He was a pretty healthy large man, about 6'2", about 240 pounds when he contracted the disease. The local was working with him to try and get proper compensation for the disease. He was denied at every level you can imagine. We ultimately ended up hiring lawyers. We processed the claim and lost it. We couldn't say it was a work related disease. Steve Powers was his name, and he gave us authorization to use his name. He said, we've got to learn the lessons – use him as an example to talk about what could happen. So I actually teach a course based on our experience with Mr. Powers. Steve ... ended up losing part of his lung. So we took part of that lung and used it as evidence. We needed to find out if there was asbestos in here. There was. We thought, hey, now we've got the proof. We brought that forward to the WCB. We lost the case again. Couldn't prove, apparently, that

it was contracted in the mill. Although this was a laborer that worked with asbestos in that mill at that time. Eventually he ended up losing his entire lung. We got that piece of lung, we contracted a better doctor. We were involved with lawyers this time. We were learning. Each time we advanced the case, we were learning. This time we got really good lawyers. We got a professional out of Montreal to help advance the case. Lost again. Meanwhile, Mr. Powers' family was having to pay all kinds of expenses for medication: the wheelchair, the oxygen refills, these types of things. It was real difficult on them, real tough on them. But Steve fought the good ... [blank]

We advanced it and we lost again. But we knew we were onto it. There were some discussions at the plant level. Representatives of the company, we brought it to them and said, look, we know this guy is sick. We believe this guy died as a result of it. We know of at least two others we believe had contracted asbestos related diseases. One of the company's health and safety professionals actually told us -- it was a mistake on their part -- told us if we thought it was only going to be four or five, that we didn't have a clue what was going on. It slipped out, there it was. It started to crystallize our thinking. To date right now in our plant we have around 27 members that have early signs of asbestos related diseases. I also believe that we've probably had four or five pass away as a direct result of. So we're getting pretty serious about this issue now. Now we've got company people verifying our suspicions. We're being, I won't say rebuffed, but it's a two-step at the joint safety committee. We'll take that under advisement, we'll listen to what you have to say. Meanwhile we're trying to advance a WCB case on behalf of Mr. Powers.

Ultimately he passed away. That's a job I wouldn't wish on anyone. . . .

It's amazing how, revisiting this, it's not just a story. So Steve passed away. . . .

Give me a minute to compose myself again. . . .

And Don Boucher had to go knock on the widow's door. . . .

Not something I'd ever want to do. He wasn't just knocking on her door to offer our condolences, but he needed to ask for that lung. . . .

So this time though, we had it figured out. We'd gone and we'd lost three times on the same case, but each time we lost we learned. We kept records, and eliminated the possibilities, because they like to throw that stuff at you: well you could've got it working on your brakes on your car at home, you could've got it in the high school gymnasium when you were a kid. But we learned, and we steadily cross all these... every time we lost at the WCB, we learned. I became a qualified WCB advocate during this time, as we learned. Our local sent people away to learn how to represent our membership. We took the government's courses on WCB advocacy. We've got folks in our local that are just as qualified as any WCB advocate that they give to you. We felt we needed to learn. If you don't help yourself, no one else is going to. So we got that piece of what was left of that lung. Went to the funeral, helped to support his family. They were left penniless. All the savings that he might've had went towards keeping him comfortable. His wife had quit her job to stay home and look after him. His girls had gone through school, and everybody was doing their best to keep things together. The local was doing what we could to look after them as well. But we had lawyer bills coming in. Ultimately, we made a decision that we'd keep advancing this case. Steve's widow came to us and said, look, is there anything you can do? We believed there was, so we paid for the lawyers that she needed to advance the case on Steve's behalf. Ultimately, this time . . .

So this time we won. She got her widow's pension. But here's where it gets interesting. We'd established the case. Now we had proof in an accepted claim at the WCB. Steve's widow, we'd taken care of her financially through establishing this. The local absorbed some lawyers costs, and that's just what you do. That's what you do when you look out for each other in the labor movement. Meanwhile, they still weren't addressing it in a satisfactory manner in the plant. We had information that we believed to be valid that if this was the first, we were fooling ourselves. We had what we believed was two and possibly three members that have passed away from asbestos exposure, asbestos poisoning. And we had an employer at this time that was playing a game that's pretty prevalent. And it's their right to play it, I don't begrudge them that. Actually that's not true, I do begrudge that. Because you don't just have to follow the basic letter of the law. You can do things if you truly believe there's an issue. We did, they didn't. So we worked it through the joint safety committee. The joint safety committee was saying, these are the things we need to do. For example, we need to shut this mill down and clean out the asbestos. We need to get rid of the asbestos that's in the operating areas as a starting point. We believe that our members are exposed to a deadly substance every day they go to work, every minute of every hour they're on shift. The employer believed and sent us letters that it's asbestos free. They've done their controls, they've met the legislation, they've done what they had to do. Meanwhile, as vice president of the local, I'm meeting with senior management and telling them, you guys have to understand that this is serious. This matters to this membership. Yes you have legislation, but we also ultimately have to do what's right to look after the workers, your employees, our members. We worked it through, and I'll recall this until the day I can't recall anything anymore. In the

meantime, behind the scenes we've been educating our membership, we've been doing what we have to do to get things ready. We've also told them, at a joint safety committee level, that we're pushing this issue as hard as we can. But ultimately I don't believe we're going to be successful if the membership is going to have to point us in the direction they want us to go. All the guys that worked with the two people that had passed away, and one or two of our crews who were pretty strong union activists, and militant about it... They truly believed they had to do it, because these were the guys working in the area, that were being exposed on a daily basis. I was keeping them up to speed on ultimately I don't think we're going to be successful. I think the employer has got the provincial government on their side and legislation on their side, and they're meeting their minimum standards. Our guys wanted us to push this issue to a conclusion. So it started to unfold. It turned into daily meetings. We're trying to convince the company there's issues, and bring the documentation forward to show that. The company is arguing back that they're meeting their responsibilities and they've got a plan and they're taking care of it. It came down to a timeframe issue. The timeframe issue was it was a July long weekend. Late on a Friday afternoon we got word from the employer that they felt they'd done all they were going to do, they would continue the program as it's in place right now. And that was their final answer. I went up to the control room and told the guys that unfortunately we've exhausted all our avenues, the employer feels that they're meeting their obligations, and will continue to operate as they have been. The guys said, thank you very much Glen, we need you to leave the room now. We have obligations as union representatives under the law that ultimately we have to work with the employer to help avert illegal job action. So when the guys asked me to leave the room, I went, okay. One day I'll be able to tell

that story too, but I'm not sure that the statute of limitations is run out on how these guys organize themselves to reach this point. I'll have to check on that one, because it's a great story to tell. But the guys asked me to leave the room because they needed to talk about stuff. They called me back in and said, Glen, we think we have unsafe working conditions in this plant. In good conscience, we can't go out there and work, because we don't know what's happening to us. My job was to go tell the employer. Meanwhile, none of the rest of the executive was anywhere to be found. Which was a good thing. I went and met with the employer and said that the workers on the operating floor are not going to be out operating their boiler, because they believe that they have an imminent danger health issue with asbestos. I'm here to tell you that they're no longer going to be out keeping an eye on the operating floor and their equipment. The employer said, you get back up there and tell them to get back to work. It's illegal job action, and they'll suffer severe repercussions. I scurried off back to the guys on the floor. Went up to the control room and told them, guys, I just talked with the employer, and it's my obligation and my legal duty to tell you that this could be considered an illegal action, and you need to continue to perform your work. As the union vice president, it's my obligation. They told me to get stuffed, and I loved them for it. Get out of here, Glen, we're not doing it. We've got a problem here and we're going to deal with it, we're going to do what we have to do. So I went back to the employer and said, they told me, and it wasn't that pleasant of language, but for viewers perspective, they told me... So I went back to the employer and told them that. And I said, and I'm not going to tell them to go back to work again, because I think they're right. This is up to you now. So up to the control room I went again. There was one guy who, if anybody in this whole thing helped make it work, it

was the person who ultimately had to make that decision that he couldn't operate the boiler. That's the thing in the union movement, in organized labor, it always comes down to the actions of an individual. We have strength in our collectivity and we have strength in our unity, but ultimately it's an individual decision. And it always will be. In this case, the individual who was running the control panel that evening made the decision. He cannot operate his boilers in a safe fashion if he doesn't have helpers on the floor, so he's going to have to start shutting it down. He's to be commended for that decision.

Everybody else rallied around him, but it was his machinery. If it's not running, the plant's not running. So he said he can't run it without helpers, and helpers can't be in the field because of health and safety concerns, so he's going to have to start shutting down his boiler. As a result, the mill is going to have to get scaled back. As you can imagine, the employer is right over the top. They came into that control room and started giving specific directions. Our guys said, no, if you want to run it, it's your machinery to run. But I've got to remind you that we've got operating tickets, because this is government certified workers now to run that type of equipment. If I don't have people keeping an eye on the equipment, then I have to put into a safe condition, because I've got obligations under the boilers act. Ultimately the employer took over shutting it down. This was hilarious. This worked for us like you wouldn't believe. I'm on the phone now with our lawyers. You've got to remember this was the July long weekend, and this was late on a Friday night. Right now I'm talking probably 10 o'clock at night now. Been bargaining through the day on the issue, got the ultimate rejection that evening around 5 o'clock just as the employer thought they'd be going home. Shift change, the guys came on, I gave them the answer from the employer. At that shift change the guys decided they could no

longer work safely in this atmosphere. Shift engineers and supervisors were flooding into the control room now. I'm on the phone trying to find lawyers, trying to find union executive members, trying to get somebody to advise. Ultimately I could've made the right phone call and everybody would've been there, but part of the strategy we had to be struggling to try and make this right. And that I can say now, because that's the way it unfolded. The employer started to get worried that we didn't know how to shut the place down safely. This worked really well for us when we got in front of the labor board. Ultimately they started giving direction on how to shut it down. Our guys had no problem shutting it down safely. They suited up and wore respirators and wore the gear that they needed to wear, and put the boilers into a safe operating condition under the direction of the employer. Randy never refused to operate. He said he needed to scale it back so it was safe until we got this resolved. So ultimately I'm in there telling the employer, we've got a work refusal going on here and you're going to have to deal with it. So of course we got the phone call from occupation health and safety. It could be an illegal work refusal. We said, come on out, check it out. We don't believe it is. You need to come out and send out your inspectors. Don't forget, we're three hours from the nearest inspector on a Friday night of a July long weekend. C'mon out, we need you here to help make this decision. So they were in contact with the company, and I'm on the phone with the company, and we're playing phone all around. Finally find our lawyers, she's on vacation in Jasper, only about 45 minutes from here. Amazing how that kind of stuff works out. Now we've got the labor board representatives on the phone, the lawyers on the phone, the company lawyers on the phone. And I'm sitting in an office outside the control room. One or two of my executive brethren are coming in to lend me moral support and help take notes and

stuff. We negotiate throughout the night on the phone. The company's making threats, we're feeding information, the labor board has some insight. They've got a mediator from the labor board on the phone with us now, and we're trying to resolve this so the guys can go back to work. It wasn't resolvable, because what we needed was the asbestos out of the plant. Right makes might, and that's the one thing they couldn't get around, was we had the evidence. We had the knowledge, because we'd been learning. We understood that this was just not right. So c'mon out. If we're wrong, we're wrong. We don't think we are. So ultimately how could they order us back to work? We had a work refusal here that had legs. About 3 o'clock in the morning the labor board ordered us to show up in the labor board offices 9 o'clock Saturday morning on a long weekend. Who's got the strength in this province? It's not the unions, until we stand up and exercise our collective strength. That's what was going on. The company has their jet fly in.

I'm probably blathering on here.

It was the most amazing weekend, and it even gets a little bit better. The company has their corporate jet show up now. They've got their corporate people showing up from their human resources department in Vancouver. The corporate jet lands. They don't offer us a ride to the city. So it's myself and Don Boucher. We've got Don's Jimmy, and we're supposed to be at the labor board at 9 o'clock in the morning. It's now about 3 o'clock in the morning. We've been up all day, and it's about a three hour drive. So we zip home, put a toothbrush in a bag. Not sure if we're going to jail, not sure where we're going to end up come the next morning. So a toothbrush and kiss the wife and tell her, we're off to the city. If course she was fully supportive and understood what was going on as well. But what we needed was one of our joint safety committee guys. Unfortunately that was

the one thing we kind of missed. Our joint safety guys, one was out of town at a wedding, the other was out in a lake in northern Alberta fishing. The one guy we did find, who was our co-chair of the joint safety committee, don't forget it's a Friday night on a long weekend, and he's off shift. But we found him in the local tavern. We've got to go to the city, we've got this issue, we need your notes and background and everything you've got. We've gotta go. Okay, he says. We're driving into the city. We've got our lawyer on the phone now, because now we're trying to put together our case for the labor board. He's in the back snoring away. He's got one toothbrush in his pocket, and we're hoping he'll be sober enough by morning to do what we need to do. We're putting together a case. We'd been spending a lot of time with our lawyers preparing the evidence, preparing the case. The problem was, we hadn't thought about the lawyers offices were locked, the lawyer's in Jasper, the files are in somebody else's office, we're on our way to Edmonton. We'd been telling the company that we had all this evidence. For about a month now we'd been telling them that we had everything documented that we were alleging, and that we just needed somebody to look at it seriously. The last thing our lawyer did for us, and we'd been setting this up for about a month and a half, was she had a close friend who was assistant deputy minister at occupation health and safety at the time. She assured us just before we went out of cell phone range that she'd make sure this person was there the next day, that this person was up to speed and understood what was going on. We show up. We were preparing our case once we got back on the cell phone now, with the junior lawyer, the lawyer who wasn't all that familiar with the case. But we were talking to her about all the evidence that we needed to bring forward that we expected to show in front of the labor board. Couldn't find it. Part of the strategy though, was we arrived somewhat

bleary eyed, [blank]...just about 24 hours for myself, because I'd started day shift the day before. We arrived at the steps of the labor board. I'll never forget this. There's the company representatives, well refreshed. One guy's wearing a silver sharkskin three piece suit with a leather portfolio. Two of them are standing with big briefcases right beside him. Our lawyer pulls up in a station wagon and starts unloading these cardboard boxes of files. We go, oh hang on, can we help you? Absolutely. So we get a dolly from the labor board, run it down the steps, and we're taking stuff out of her station wagon. I'm watching the company representative, and you can just see on their face, that's the stuff they've been talking about, here it is. So we're lifting these boxes and taking them out of the station wagon and putting them on the dolly. We haul them up the steps, one step at a time. It's myself and Don Boucher and the lawyer walking beside us. We lift them up and go into our little room that they've got for us. We go, how wonderful, you found it. She says, no I didn't. There wasn't a thing in those boxes. One file about that thick, that was it. But the strategy now, they believed we had the evidence. If we get in front of the labor board, which is public, we get to make all this stuff public. That was the strategy. Ultimately it was a fun day. So we're in one room, the company representative in the other room, the mediators in between. At any point they could've ordered us into the labor board, and now you're in front of the tribunal, and make your case. We had to get the employer to absolutely believe that if we get in front of that tribunal, that's what we want. Because then all this becomes public. So it became a bit of gamesmanship. Our representative from the CET showed up. He knew what was going on, so he was ready for the phone call. Bill came in, and Wally had sobered up. John and I had our lawyer there, and we were working things out. We were in contact with the mill. It became a

negotiation. The negotiation was, you guys have to get the asbestos out of this plant. Their response was they thought they were meeting their minimum standard. So we started talking about OH&S officers that were coming in and doing lunches with the senior supervisors of the plant, not even coming in the doors of that plant. We started talking about reports that were being written that were false. We started talking about the things that were really going on and really ticking us off, which were the real issues that we were dealing with. We challenged the assistant deputy minister. She showed up and said, I've been in consultations. What's the issues here. I understand we said your department is killing our members, because you guys aren't doing your job. So allegations again. We went through most of the morning till about 1 o'clock that afternoon. They'd come in and talk about this, and we'd say this, and they'd go back and come back with this. Ultimately we get to the point where we didn't want to get in front of the labor board either, because we had nothing to make public. We needed them to clean the asbestos out of the plant, or at least commit to it. They paraded in the OH&S district supervisor. This is one thing that ADM did for us. She brought this person in and said, okay, do you have times and examples? Yes we do. They reassigned the occupational health and safety officer as part of that negotiation. They assigned six officers to fly out to Hinton to have a look and see if our allegations were true or not. So we're getting to the short strokes now. We've got government buying that we've got an issue, the employer understanding that there's certain things we need done. Finally now the labor board representative comes in and says, okay, if you guys agree to this, they'll do that, and we'll get this thing resolve. Yes. They left the room, I called the plant. Our shop steward that was on day shift wasn't there that day. My brother-in-law though was

working in middle console. I called him up and said, he wants to know how things are going. As you can imagine, they all know we're in front of the labor board, they're doing their work refusal, we've been in contact throughout the morning. I called them and said, I'm going to be making a phone call in about five minutes or so. I'm going to put you on the speaker phone. No matter what I say, I need you to tell me to kiss your ass. Really? Ya. Without the shop steward there, I knew this guy I could trust. Sure enough, the labor board comes in and the representatives from the company. The ADM is there, and the OH&S director for the region is there. They said, this is what we've got to offer. They laid it out. The inspector is going up, a reassignment of inspectors. We'll go up there and verify whether or not, etc. I said, okay, that's what we need here. But we also need immunity. No matter what happens out of this, this was in good faith. Here we go again. You call them and see if they'll go back to work. So I called back to the plant. I told them, this is the offer that's on the table. Are you guys willing to go back to work if we can make this happen? Calvin comes back with, did they give you immunity? I hadn't even talked to him about that. I go, no. He says, then they can kiss our ass, and slams the phone down, on the speaker phone. It was brilliant, absolutely brilliant. I said, well we've got to figure this one out, guys. They came back and said, okay, you've got immunity in writing, it's a health and safety work refusal. You did it because you believed you were in imminent danger. Now let's go figure it out. Only if those guys agree to go back to work. Pick up the phone and say, we got immunity guys. They said, okay then, do we got what we need to be safe here Glen? Ya, I think we do. We'll figure it out from here. The OH&S officers beat us back to Hinton. They all flew. We're back in Don's Jimmy now,

heading back to Hinton. I can't believe what we've just been through. We get back to the plant, and the OH&S officers were interviewing all the guys.

They did know. They truly believed we had done our best at a local level to resolve this concern. They also truly believed that if it didn't get resolved, they were in danger of dying. We educated our membership on what asbestos was, and what effects it has from a historical perspective. We educated our stewards. Our guys knew what asbestos was and the dangers it had, and the ramifications if it wasn't dealt with properly. This came to light when the OH&S crew showed up on there. They did an investigation. Without us there to influence in any way – we were still driving back from Edmonton. They're there on the ground in Hinton interviewing the members on the floor. What are your issues and concerns? Very basic questions. What's your personal experience? Where do you have areas of concern? The guys were brilliant. They were point out this, talking about the history, talking about the issues and concerns. They were talking work refusals. Two of the guys pulled out copies of their own work refusals from months earlier, and the responses they got from the company. They talked about their concerns, they were bringing them out in the field and saying, look at that, I think that's asbestos. Of course the OH&S people, who have some expertise in the matter, go, I think you're right. They're on the site for 2-1/2 days. The plant was up and running again. There was orders written to the effect that we had to come up with an asbestos management and abatement plan that addressed the joint concerns. We then assigned our 2 joint safety committee guys, Eric and Dave, back to the committee under the auspices of the provincial government this time, along with the senior executive representative of the company, to

write the plan. That plan has been in effect now since 1997. One of the first things they did was the company brought in over 100 abatement workers onsite. It lasted almost 6 months in a plant that was supposedly asbestos free. We had 2 full time union members assigned to the joint asbestos task force. This was all part of that agreement that we got coming out of that day in front of the labor board, was 2 full time members chosen by the union to oversee the asbestos removal job. They were put on full time, paid by the employer, but responsible to the union and the membership to keep an eye on what's going on. We wrote job scopes, we did inspections. We oversaw the contractors. And the other thing we did was we were very involved in writing all the protocols. We also hired a company to come in, paid for by the employer, to educate all the members formally. We got more qualified abatement removal guys, 2 day asbestos trained Alberta certification guys than the insulators union itself. We educated all of our membership to that degree and that level of what's going on. I've been responsible for doing education. We have a plan now where every employee – contractor, company employee, hourly employee – they have to do a minimum 4 hour asbestos awareness course. In that course, it's taught by the union guys, and we talk about the history of the plant. We talk about the history of asbestos, and we help them understand that this is serious business. We're currently going through year 8 where we've done incredible millions of dollars worth of asbestos removal in the plant, fully educated workforce. We get calls from the community – we think we have asbestos, do you have a guy who can come over and have a look at this? And we do. Ultimately, I believe it'll pay dividends in saved lives. There's nothing we can do for the folks that have been exposed. But every time you don't get exposed further to asbestos dust. Everybody that gets hired into our plant and doesn't get

exposed to asbestos dust is one more life saved. Incredible experience and ultimately a great lesson in health and safety, union activism, believing in each other, and doing what's right. When you decide to go that course, you'd better stay it. There's a lot of pressure at play that weekend. We were young, we didn't have a lot to lose. But we had a heck of a lot to gain.

That's true, you're right. I shouldn't say that so lightly. But I wonder, the stars were in alignment and the right people were in the right places, I believe, throughout our local. And our local had a commitment to each other, and it showed through. Would we do it today? Who knows.

Have other community groups used the expertise developed by the workers to deal with asbestos issues?

Yes, 2 schools, a rec center, a church, houses. We get phone calls, I won't say regularly anymore, but certainly it's not unusual to get a phone call about either they're concerned that they might have asbestos in their homes, or they're concerned that they might have contracted a disease. The other thing we learned through all of this is how to advocate on behalf of injured and sick workers, which is how we met Kevin Flaherty and learned a lot from him as well. But the ripple effect in the community was interesting to watch. It wasn't just about asbestos related issues, it was a whole concept that you didn't have to accept what was status quo. You've got to keep in mind that we're a mill and a mine town. Primarily 80% of our jobs are either employed at the mill or the mine, or a servicing employer relationship to one of those industry. What the community learned is that you can do things, you just don't have to accept status quo. That you can do things to protect your health and safety. It's had widespread effects. For example, when one of our

union members has a concern about environmental emissions from the mill, they listen. They believe that if we're serious and they're serious, we can get through this together. But the community also believes that we're looking out for their best interests as well. It's not all about just getting that last ton off the end of the machine. It's not all about getting that last 2 x 4 and every scrap. They also believe that the workers have the community's best interest in mind, because it's their sons and daughters and their mothers and fathers that are ultimately being looked after. That gives you a community spirit, that we've been benefiting from ever since, as a community. But that's a whole other story.

Ya, it really is. It was first off having an understanding of the magnitude of the issue we're dealing with. Sadly, what happened here in Hinton, and I believe the long term benefits of it, that message still isn't being heard across the country. My partner and I have gone throughout the western region talking to folks that work in similar areas as we do up here in our mill, to try and help educate them. The CEP has asked us to go and speak at safety conventions. And we've met with individual locals and health and safety activists. That being said, Canada is shameful when it comes to the fact, for example, that we still produce and export asbestos for consumption. We actually, on a worldwide level, we take on other countries that are trying to refuse to have asbestos in their countries, and sue them at the WTO. We spend in the area of \$10 million not too long ago because France decided they didn't want asbestos in their country anymore. That violated some rules that the WTO about what they had to import and what they didn't. Groups like the asbestos institute out of Quebec, who are the mouthpiece for the asbestos industry, and don't forget we have CEP members that work in that industry. That's an industry that

needs to be shut down. We need to have just transition and help those workers find other avenues of employment, and help those communities get healthy again. Because they're not. And yet the Canadian government position is, we'll mine it and we'll export it. All we're doing is exporting disease. Those lessons we've got a long way to go yet. Because what we've done to look after and further at a local and community level, those lessons aren't necessarily being learned yet on a federal or provincial level. That being said, we have made some progress. We've got a ban asbestos network Canada, which is an outreach from the asbestos network from Europe and United Kingdom, that is doing research and position papers and trying to educate. We've had some successful partnerships done at a national level. Issues like the Rotterdam convention, where shamefully Canada refused to label asbestos as a potential carcinogen. It causes cancer, but it's not listed as a carcinogen necessarily, at least Canada doesn't support that perspective of it. We've got so much further to go. But I do know here at home, folks in our community when we start talking about asbestos and the ramifications of it, they understand the issues. They understood what we were doing, and supported us.

To a large degree, lessons learned during that asbestos issue. We were up against that monolithic bureaucracy of the provincial government. We were up against policies, we were up against legislation. The people that could change that were the elected representatives. Unfortunately, we believe that the elected representatives at that time were not representing the best interests of workers. So one night we're coming home from Alberta Federation of Labor. I love to tell this story. It's myself, 6 members of our executive, and there's provincial election going on. We're talking about, boy wouldn't it

be nice if. We're in the car, it's 3 o'clock in the morning. You know what conventions are like at the AFL. We're rah rah, we're ready, we're politicized, we're informed, and we're ready to go change the world. We're driving home, and late at night we're listening to the election results come in on the radio. We're sitting in the dark in the vehicle traveling down Hwy 16, coming home. We started talking about, what would it be like if? We started dreaming big dreams. Boy, there's something we can do here, but we've got to have a focus and an understanding. Where do we go from here, and what do we do? I truly believe it was that night in the car about political activism ultimately is the answer. The question is, and especially in this province, what are you going to do? So we put together a coalition about a year later. Actually, I'm sorry, it wasn't a provincial election, it was a municipal election. We were listening to results come in. We talked jokingly about, we've got enough influence and know enough people, we should run a slate for our municipal government, then we'd have some influence. But almost immediately there was a provincial election called, 1997. We'd been talking about political activism, we'd started to come up with some ideas. The next day when we got home from the car a few of us made some phone calls to each other and said, this actually kind of makes sense. There's an opportunity here, in 1997. This is at a time when right to work legislation was being bandied about in the province. This is at a time when ultimately workers rights were being threatened, as usual. We felt that this was a great opportunity for us to try it. So we discussed who would be what. Ultimately I was asked to run, or maybe mistakenly put my name forward to run, for provincial MLA. Our goal at that time was to have public debate about the issues that mattered to us. We had a pretty good understanding that ultimately winning this thing probably wasn't doable. We had a pretty popular MLA;

however, he was being challenged by the mayor of the local community who was going to run for the Tory's but didn't have a Tory candidate here for the last 2 elections. That's another story about the labor minister and how come he's not here anymore. But Brian Jones can tell you that story. We felt this was the opportune time to talk about right to work legislation and issues that matter to workers. We ran, I felt, a great campaign. We got our issues out there at every public forum, we were hammering about social issues. Single moms and daycare, fair wages and the right to work, and the right to be represented, and union stuff. I was younger then, a bit more idealistic maybe, but I like to think not. Maybe a little bit unrealistic more so than idealistic. We scared the begehbers out of them, we really did. We ran a great campaign. We were all over this riding, and they were talking about our issues. They were talking about what mattered to workers. And we got our butt kicked. But we made a lot of connections. But ultimately we made a political machine that worked. The ultimate goal, and this is something I think we need to start thinking about on a provincial and federal level, we didn't put all our resources into running for MLA or MP. We focus on making a difference on a provincial level and a federal level. I think we sometimes forget the biggest and most immediate impact we can have is in municipal governments. So we recovered and we learned, and we put together a heck of a machine for running elections, a heck of a campaign team. A couple of years later I ran for council. The idea here was, I felt that we could do some things at a local level that would have an impact on us. I was successful, and I was elected to council. Here's this known labor activist, left wing leaning, former candidate, oh boy. You know what though, they forget. The only way that labor gets anywhere is by building coalitions, by finding common ground, by finding win-win solutions. Unlike employers,

small business owners who ultimately get to make direct decisions that affect the, they win or lose. You've got to respect them for that. Labor and hourly workers don't get to do that. The only way we advance our issues and our agendas is by finding solutions that make sense to both parties. So the skills that I learned in the labor movement, many years of negotiations, many years of building coalitions, were skills that could be brought to a municipal council. What's in the best interests of the community, and how do we find those and resolve those? I think we surprised a lot of folks that we're actually a fairly reasonable group, and we have the best interest of the community in mind. People really bought into that. For example, one of the things we've been successful with here in my community, is we've brought in seniors lodges and long term care facilities. Increased our hospital. When other hospitals were being shut down, we were building capacity in ours, because they were becoming priorities of the local councils. As the local council starts to set priorities that have a somewhat different perspective that just what's in the best interests of, for example, the business community. But you'd better be darned sure you're representing the best interests of the business community, because how go they so go us. So it became really exciting that we were bringing a perspective to council, in our little community here, about how things could be done from a different perspective. I'm actually going somewhere here with this. If this idea about getting involved in municipal politics, in my own experience currently I am the mayor of Hinton. I've got on my council now, it's a wonderful council, I have 2 members of United Mine Workers of America. One is their vice president of their local. I've got a local union activist, member of the CEP. I've got a retired schoolteacher who's wife is an ATA representative. I've got a retired nurse, who's also a seniors rights activist in our community. And we have a

small business person who identifies with working people. I don't care what they say, small business people are facing the same issues with this provincial government as hourly workers. If you're not big business, you don't have the ear of government. So I've got a council that has a cohesive social conscience in our community. And the business community things we're one of the most progressive councils they've ever had. I've had long time business owners in our community come up and talk to us about how well they believe our council is doing. But it only makes sense, because we're finding ways to meet the needs of most of the people in our community. Ultimately, none of us stand to benefit personally. Can you imagine, our town has, we fundraised and installed a CT scan in our community hospital at a time when the coalmines were shutting down. We believed that economic diversity and economic development meant good health care would attract people to our communities. We built a community hall. When everybody was saying, you need to save your money and hunker down, we came up with a plan that we needed to spend money and show folks we weren't afraid of our future. The community bought into that vision. We built a brand new community center. We went to the community, when crystal methamphetamine came into our community. We went to the business community and said, we've got this problem developing, and it scares the heck out of us. We think we need to go public. We think we need to control this, or excuse me, publicize this issue. Because if we don't, it's going to hurt. So we put together a partnership with the local Chamber of Commerce to talk about, our town has a drug problem. Can you imagine? Business is usually like the atmosphere of we're a wonderful community where everything is apple pie and blue sky and no issues, no problems. Here we've got a coalition made up of local business leaders, ADAC leaders, our FCSS, employees of the

town of Hinton, and a council that's leading from the front saying, you know what, we've got a drug problem. What did we do with it? We got people together, we talked about it, and then we went on a union organizing drive. We went knocking on doors and asked people to sign up. We said, did you know these are the issues with meth? This is how to recognize it in your children, this is how to recognize it in your neighbor, this is how to recognize it in your neighborhood. These are the repercussions of it. Go on our website at hertherds.com and learn about it. We need to drag it out of the back alleys and the closets, and shine a big bright light on it and say, this isn't welcome in our community. But as a municipal government, you also get to attend provincial conventions. You can call up a minister and quite often get a response. You can get involved in provincial working groups with the credibility of having an entire community you're representing them. So they're starting to listen. Documentaries happened recently. Colleen Klein has been appointed as overseeing this special task force on methamphetamine and the impact on our communities. They started enacting legislation, and it's come right out of this small community of ours. It's stuff that we helped pen that's being debated on the floor of the legislature. Those are the things you can do if you get involved in municipal politics. Social issues, community issues, from a leadership perspective, representing your community. It's powerful stuff. I think we need to refocus. ... If we can lead our communities from the perspective that we've learned as organized labor, or folks with a social conscience, or small business people that understand, it's not all about big business in our community, and try do what we've learned to do, and represent our constituents, and do that in every town in the province, it won't really matter what provincial government is doing or what federal government is doing. It's what we're doing in the

back streets that matter to the folks that are our neighbors. That's kind of the philosophy that we've brought to council here in Hinton, and it's working. It truly is. This last week, for example, I was in a meeting with the infrastructure minister, hosting 4 other councils from this region to talk about issues that matter to us on a regional basis. Don't forget, strength in numbers and unity, we can't be defeated. So why not get the neighboring councils speaking on our agenda, us supporting them, them supporting us. Now we've got a region that's going to the government and saying, you got some issues out here, and these are those issues. You're forgetting that we need police funding paid for by the province, and it needs to be equitable and fair. We've got infrastructure issues that need to be dealt with. You're getting all the tax dollars, we need our fair share. Better yet, give us the economy to look after things ourselves, and then get out of the way and let us do what's best for our constituents. But now we're speaking as an entire region. Currently, and this is hilarious, I'm the chairperson of the Grand Alberta Economic Region, which is a coalition of 13 member municipalities, primarily the mayors and the reeves, the economic development officers, and their representatives from the business community. We're seen, and these aren't my words, but we're seen as one of the most progressive regional economic development alliances in the province. Because I believe we're working in the best interests of all, not just the individuals. The whole learning experience, for me, taking it from that perspective, I was asked, I don't want to sound like I'm all on about myself, but it's about the impact we can have. I was a keynote speaker at the local Chamber of Commerce awards gala. I talked about what we've achieved together and what we can be together. You probably could've taken the blueprint of what I was talking about and applied it to a health and safety speech that I gave 15 years ago.

It's just a matter of context, but the message is the same. That's working together, incredible wonderful things can happen.

It really is. One of my interests was back with Winston Gereluk in labor history, and learned a lot from him. I attended courses put on by the AFL about how we evolved. What happened to labor, and how we became what we are today, and how much further we have to go. You have to look backwards to understand where you are moving forward. But absolutely right, it's things like the United Farmers, and what they were doing to help each other. You eventually end up having impact on a provincial level. It's folks like seniors getting together because there's not good enough care or funding available in seniors homes. Provincial government understands that, they need to respond to it. But the folks who can make a difference are the seniors when they organize and have a common voice. So what we're doing in our municipality, if they're doing it in other municipalities, I believe will truly get back to the grass root, and that's our friends and neighbors. That's going to be good for the province. Don't forget, labor also understands that ultimately the employer has to be successful, or none of us are working. Any trade union that's ultimate goal is to shut down their employer, they're not a trade union I want representing me. They understand there's a different way of doing things in a responsible manner, but we still have to produce and have a successful company that employs us, or we all lose. Same idea with government. I believe that we can do things differently from a different perspective and be ultimately more successful. But everybody does what they can on their own level. The key is your friends and neighbors. That's the beauty about municipal politics and municipal government. I'm sure as an MLA, if

somebody doesn't like what you're doing, you'll receive a letter, you might have some friends who'll have coffee with you, and you'll hear about it in a week or 2 or whenever it becomes public. Municipal politics in this province, everything is open and accountable. The public is allowed to attend any meeting that there's a quorum of council, other than a very narrowly defined scope. We are open and accountable local government. The reason I know that, because when I get up in the morning and go on my back deck to have a coffee, and my neighbor doesn't like a decision we made the day before, I hear about it. I go to the shopping mall with my wife and I'm walking down the shopping mall and somebody's bound to say, Glen, what the, and why? Or conversely, way to go, we like what you're doing. You get a very immediate cause and effect in municipal politics. That's what you need – long term vision, short term goals – to get there ultimately and understand what it is you're trying to do. And what it is we're trying to do, I believe, is ultimately have a society that we can all coexist and is in the best interests of society, not individual members of that society. How we get there I don't know, but it's sure going to be fun trying to figure it out.

... from our sister communities. We're doing stuff in Africa right now that's unbelievably exciting. And this is about building coalitions. We were talking about building coalitions because in numbers there's strength, and reaching out and finding those coalitions. In my experience, and certainly as an elected representative of both the union and now our community, finding coalitions and finding those people that don't always share your thoughts -- quite often the best ones are the ones that disagree with your thoughts -- you can understand through debate what's best for the whole. Building coalitions is so

important. That labor cliché, one voice is one voice, but together we're united and united there's strength. In action, it's so true. In our community, for example, we've got a healthcare, community health foundation. Our health foundation had a mixture of business types and business leaders, and social activists, and a few doctors and people from the community who, by working together, started to realize that there's strength there. The business community are really good at running business. They know how to put together business plans, for example. They know how to be aware of the bottom line. They know how to incorporate and limit your insurance liability, and things like that. The social activists are generally very passionate about something, either something that's been a person experience, a mother or father who experienced something, a brother or sister that's done something. Usually that passion is of some personal nature. Then you've got folks who have a perspective from outside and watching. You get the people that are passionate together with the people that are pragmatic, and you can come out of that with a pretty powerful coalition. Doing things like that in our community has become a norm. For example, our council meets with the public on a regular basis. Not just on our council meetings, but we actually put together our strategies and plans, we go out and ask for involvement through advisory committees. Then we bring our ideas to the public and bring them through the same thing you would do almost at the AFL. You have a convention, you have workshops. We're having workshops with our citizens to say, this is what we think we should be doing, what do you think? We get that input. It's very immediate, it's very direct, and it helps to establish where we're going and what we're doing. Then we put together the coalitions, a counselor that has a large interest in a particular area. For example, counsel Mike Joduin, a member of the CEP, he lived in a

destitute neighborhood with a lot of drug issues. He's now the councilor that's taking a leadership action on our Hinton Drug Action Committee and our Community Crime Prevention Association. He's got a passion, he's got knowledge, and he's connected. He's a counselor in our community. Our small business person is our Economic Development Committee's representative. The coalition is being built with the community, with each other, and with our neighboring communities. Our community has a regional perspective. We believe that what's good for them ultimately is good for us. If Edson gets a Walmart, that's wonderful, that means people aren't going all the way to Edmonton, it benefits our constituents as well. If the coalmine gets fired back up, ultimately that's good for all of us in the entire region. Those are the types of things that if you have a regional perspective and a respect for the coalitions, can be extremely powerful. The labor movement is probably better than anybody at doing those coalitions. If that nurse that's straining her back working in a dangerous situation in a high risk neighborhood going back and forth to her place of employment has an issue, more than likely not going to get it resolved by yourself. But if you've got other folks that are joining her and talking to the issue and taking different perspectives on that issue. Community crime prevention people want to get involved now because we need to clean up our streets and make them safer. Health advocates want to get involved because we need that hospital to be bigger and brighter and cleaner, and have more nurses. That's something that's an individual issue that was only going to get resolve through the coalition. That's something that organized labor understands, because that's what we do. Whether it's traveling down to the IATSE strike in Calgary a few years ago, and getting together with labor activists across the province to help deal with an issue of a person that's behind a camera that's concerned about the

film media he's working with is extremely dangerous. Now they're taking away their wages, the danger issues of it, and putting them up in that booth by themselves. I can identify with that even though I don't have a clue what the guy up there is doing when I'm watching the movie and eating my popcorn. But the fact that he's asked for help and the fact that we believe he needs it, because it makes sense to us and we understand that it could be us asking next time, let's get together and figure out how we can make this work.

Anybody that's been involved in the bargaining process understands that ultimately you've got that big stick. The big stick is withdrawing your services to the employer, or the employer closing the door and not paying you anymore. It doesn't benefit either one of us. People that have been involved in the negotiating process and truly understand it, it's about finding common ground, even where none might exist. It's about working towards understanding what matters to you, helping you understand what matters to me, and somewhere in there we can find something that ultimately we can both benefit from. If you can't do that, you can't be successful. Those skills, I believe, when they're exercised in different avenues other than just the negotiating table, that benefits the community as a whole. I'll give you an example, something we're really excited about here in Hinton. We recently struck a partnership with a community in Tanzania. Tabora, Tanzania. We've been asked to go there and help them understand how to involve their citizens in the political process. How to get women involved in politic. How to consult with their community and with their citizens. And to be fair, also how to figure out how to tax people better. What's a mud hut worth, and how do you work with that, and how do

you plan your community and organize development. It's something that the federal government initiated, but the Town of Hinton is involved in. This is our 3rd such partnership. The ability to take what we've learned in our society here in Canada and export that knowledge directly to people that are just trying to figure it out, man we're having a potential for worldwide impact here. Along with that, we're bringing doctors that are interested in dealing with the AIDS epidemic. We're bringing teachers to talk to them about, we're not going to go there and tell them what we did. The idea is we're going there to help them learn from us to teach their people. So rather than us being the ones lecturing, we're sending down a group of people that are going to teach them how to teach. We're going to send down strong women to lead by example. They're the right women, they're skilled in municipal planning, they're skilled in corporate services. But while they're teaching those folks about municipal planning and corporate services, they're leading by example. So when they talk to us about these areas that they need to learn to get better at, that's exciting stuff. And we built a coalition. It started out as the Town of Hinton in Alberta. We now have 5 other member municipalities from around our region: Drayton Valley, Jasper, Prince Albert. They're all going to the same country and they're all teaching and working on different aspects, the idea being, when we leave they're going to teach each other over there in Tanzania. So this community will teach this community what they've learned from Drayton Valley, that community will teach that community what they learned from Hinton. We're going to leave behind, it's so much greater working as a coalition. None of us are going to do it by themselves. Ultimately they get to spread what they learn around. That's something that we can have some impact right here at a local level, because we decided to get involved. It's powerful stuff.

I touched briefly earlier about the coalmines in our area shutting down a number of years ago when I first got elected to council. And how our council of the day decided we weren't a community in decline, no matter that we were losing lots of friends and neighbors. We decided to invest in our future by building in our community and showing our confidence in some of the things we did, the CT scan. Ultimately our community center, hiring new police, and these types of things. Right now it's been an entire 180 degree turn. When I got elected to mayor, I jokingly would tell folks that my job in this term as mayor is not unlike that of a rodeo cowboy. Get in the saddle, hang on for the full 8 seconds, and hope you make it through the ride. Cuz that's really what's going on here. The pressures we're facing now are pressures of growth. We've got a diversified economy. The lumber is hitting on all cylinders. Softwood lumber tariffs has had a heck of an impact on our community. That being said, our local sawmillers have found a way around that, and they're hitting production records right now, and finding different markets and specialized markets. It's going extremely well. The coal mines are opening back up. They've rehired all the employees they had and more. Anybody that wanted to come back to work was given that opportunity. They're all back, new equipment's flowing in, they're back in production. The oil and gas has come to our community. Unlike most of Alberta, we've never had oil and gas in our area in any major way. We're just starting to learn what that means. It's new learnings for our business community. We are growing exponentially. We're a microcosm of what's happening in Ft. McMurray. One of the challenges we have, not unlike Ft. McMurray, we're landlocked. We're a community that's in the middle of an FMA and crown land. So as we need to grow, it's

not just a matter of going to the neighboring farmer and making an offer for a quarter section so we can build a new subdivision. It's the process of having to go through SRD. Going through municipal affairs, human resources & development, infrastructure, transportation, all these government bureaucracies, so that we can get a quarter section to put a new industrial park on. In our community right now we have 97% occupancy rating in our apartment buildings. The ones that are empty are more than likely somebody's waiting to move in and they're doing some maintenance, or they've already rented it but they haven't moved to town yet. We've got at this time about 14 houses for sale on the market. Probably about 17 or 20 realtors trying to sell 13 or 14 houses. The price of a house has gone up by 40 to 60%. I hear stories every day. A new employer comes into town, they need to bring in 6 guys, I'll buy your house from you for \$300,000 because it's got 6 bedrooms. Puts his people in there, doesn't even blink. Meanwhile of course the challenges are, we have a lot of service industry workers in our community, that have to work at the retail outlets, service stations, tourism, who aren't making that 6 figure salary which is pretty common. How do they afford to live in the \$800 a month apartment that used to be \$400 a month? How do they afford to buy a home if they can't afford the quarter million dollar houses that are the norm in our community. So it brings different challenges with it, absolutely. Again, our council is wrestling with such things as, not just affordable housing, but available housing. The other thing that we've got going on here is the land that we have in our community is privately held. Previous councils have had a philosophy that the private market will respond to need. Private market is all the development is done through private enterprise. Unfortunately, private enterprise hasn't responded to the need in a manner that's helping to meet that need. We need to stimulate

that economy, and we need to stimulate development. That's a challenge that's very similar to Ft. McMurray. We're contemplating putting an open camp in the middle of our town just to keep the workers here. I have a town of close to 11,000 – official census figures are 9,500. We're recounting, because I'm pretty sure we're up over 11,000 now. We're going to be the newest city in Alberta come next year. We've got between 4 and 7,000 people in camps less than 5 km north of Hinton, working in the oil patch. Being policed by Hinton tax payer funded RCMP. Provincial government hasn't increased the amount of police they've got out there. We understand come freeze-up there'll be 9,000 folks living in camp. We've got people calling every day, we need a house. We've got nobody to build them. If you do have somebody that's swinging a hammer and building a house, they're getting hired by that oil company gas contractor at a price that can't be matched, and off they go. So it's a challenge of growth. It's a challenge I'd rather have than the challenge we faced a couple years ago, no question. But it just brings different solutions to the table. What I'm happy to say is I think when we bring that perspective that I've learned in the labor movement to that table, there's a lot of different ways to skin a cat. For example, currently we have a crew to build a house, 6 people, probably takes 3 months. Stick built custom built home, which has been the norm in our community for many years. But if you were take those 6 workers and say, we just want you building foundations, and we're going to bring modular homes in from wherever modular homes are built, they could have 18 houses placed on those foundations ready to go in that same 3 month period. We can talk about putting together affordable housing coalitions. We can match that entrepreneur that wants to make a buck with federal funding, because we've got access to it as a municipality. So a 50 cent dollar for affordable housing, we can

match with that developer that needs to bring some lots to market, cuz we get to zone what's in that market. It's not just going to be single family residential. We need multifamily, we need high density, along with that \$350,000 home on the ridge overlooking the river. Because we can zone it to meet the best interests of the community. That's the kind of influence we can have. Then you match the dots together and say, okay let's go. That's the kinds of things we can do to help meet some of these issues, and that's some of the things that we are doing. We can match that agency that helps to find the 5% down that a family needs to put their first down payment on their first home, because they both work at that a\$12 an hour job while they've got a child in school, and one in daycare that they can barely afford as well. But we can help match that person with a developer that's going to make his buck on that investment in that build, and put it together with a coalition that's going to help all of this work to meet the best interests of our community. That's exciting stuff as well. It's just philosophical more than anything else, and a willingness to be rebuffed. Don't be afraid of being told no. We've heard that many times in the labor movement.

I think we need to change the focus in organized labor from provincial and federal politics to municipal politics. Because that's where you can have an immediate impact, where you can truly help your friends and neighbors .If we refocus back in on municipal level politics, from there we will ultimately have influence at a provincial level, and at a federal level. It's a long term strategy, but it's a strategy that makes a lot of sense, because it's working for us. I think it can work everywhere else that we have workers that think that they can make a difference. You can, because I'm seeing it every day.

[end]