

**Jasdeep Diogan**  
**Member, local 404**  
**Region 2**

Unions were first formed in the late 1800s to aid workers with work-related problems. They fought to secure safe and sanitary workplace conditions, appropriate hours of work and fair wages to name a few. Over time, how unions can support their members has evolved beyond work-related issues. BCGEU goes beyond its traditional role as a union through their work in other areas such as International solidarity, Women's rights, Anti-Bullying, LGBTIQA+ rights and Senior's care.

Another way BCGEU can support its members is by protecting the environment. Negotiating workers' rights may be a moot point when temperatures increase and our world is no longer safe to live in - let alone work. Unions have a duty to their members, and in the coming years, the environment must take a front seat as there are studies who claim we have a little as 12 years to take action to have a chance at saving our world.

The forest fires of the last two summers have been a rude awakening in B.C. Forest fires are not only a result of climate change, but the fires exacerbate the problem as they contribute to accelerating carbon emissions. We will experience forest fires year after year, if we do not take action to be prepared. Unions must fight for funds to support wildfire response and prevention as well as firefighters.

Green technologies will make one of the biggest impacts in reducing our carbon emissions. Unions can support the environment while also fulfilling their promise to their members. We are no longer fighting just for good jobs; we are fighting for good CLEAN jobs that support the environment as well as the members. Unions can promote jobs in industries that go hand in hand with green technologies (i.e. steel workers providing metal for the solar panel industry) as well as green power utilities. We can also promote unionization of manufacturing jobs in existing green technologies such as electric cars, solar panels and wind turbines.

Unions can also fight climate change by connecting with their members. One of the most pivotal ways to induce change is buy-in. If we don't believe we can make a change - the change will not happen. Unions must equip their members with the education, tools as well as a sense of purpose and instill in them a belief that they can make a difference. Providing educational classes on recycling and composting, cooking classes to promote a more plant-based diet, how to retrofit your home for energy and water efficiency and disaster management and emergency response training are some ways we can educate our members to live a greener lifestyle. Promoting, funding and expanding public transit use; supporting high density affordable housing to reduce employee commute and implementing community events such as planting trees and trash clean-up are ways unions can empower their members to make a difference in their community as well as support their environment and reduce their impact on climate change.