

## **CUPE BC Environment Committee**

### **Report to Convention – April 2017**

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With climate change presenting the most serious challenge to our world, we are looking to find solutions that unions can bring to their workplaces and their communities. From our work at convention, to sharing successful strategies to building a new green economy, we are working to encourage CUPE BC and our affiliates to become sustainable, zero emission workplaces.

#### **Green Stewards**

At our last convention, we introduced Green Stewards to help familiarize delegates with CUPE BC's overall environmental program. Our Green Stewards also helped inform delegates about the environmental features of the convention centre, to better ensure delegates are using and benefitting from the centre's environmental features.

This year, our Green Stewards are again out in force, this time we have expanded our assistance to ensure that all delegates have information on public transportation options to further reduce our conventions' carbon emissions.

It is our hope that future conventions will continue to work toward greener options, such as reducing the number of paper copies, further encouraging car-pooling, public transportation and other low emission options and finding new ways of reducing our carbon emissions.

#### **Green Jobs Conference**

Delegates from our committee attended the BC Federation of Labour's Green Jobs BC Conference in New Westminster. This conference highlighted the four pillars of the Green Jobs BC plan for repairing and protecting the environment while growing the economy. They were:

1. Investing in green infrastructure
2. Revitalizing the forestry sector
3. Building affordable housing
4. Creating \$10/day childcare

## **Creating a Green Economy**

While the environment is often pitted against the economy and jobs, the reality is that a green economy creates jobs. A green economy can be built by greening buildings, investing public transit, buying green and creating green industry and manufacturing.

Greening buildings means retrofitting buildings to use less energy and increase water efficiency. We can also ensure that new construction is properly designed and sited to ensure natural light and ventilation are optimized and maximize energy efficiency.

Public transportation uses 30-75% less carbon, depending on the mode, than travelling the same distance in a single occupant vehicle. But we need to ensure that public transit is planned according to smart growth principles. We need to build complete, compact communities that achieve density and livability in a way that supports a healthy economy and provides a better lifestyle.

Buying locally means that we support our communities, but also it has a huge impact on our carbon footprint, there is far less transportation required. It also helps us build resilience as we aren't dependent on long transportation chains that could be disrupted by severe weather events. We also can more easily ensure that local producers follow good labour practices and pay livable wages.

Supporting green industry can mean maintaining public/community ownership of utilities, investing in clean energy production and promoting the use of waste heat for district energy, such as in Revelstoke, where a mill's use of wood waste for power has allowed it to stay open.

## **Bargaining Green Language**

We would like you to consider bargaining green language into your contract. This allows you to take a leadership role in helping your employer meet global green targets and make the world a better place.

A great place to start is creating workplace environment committees, or adding the responsibility to health and safety committees. This way you can ensure that workers participate in how your workplace improves its environmental record.

You could also bargain “just transition” language to ensure that any workers whose jobs are eliminated due to greening a workplace are protected and new work found for them. You can find sample language for this and other great ideas at [cupe.ca/green-bargaining-cupe-locals](http://cupe.ca/green-bargaining-cupe-locals).

### **Conclusion**

Our future depends on what we do today. By investing in a green economy, we can create jobs and reduce greenhouse gases. This is essential to keeping the planet from getting too hot.

While we can reduce our energy consumption, reduce the amount of driving we do and reduce our carbon footprint, the true path to a sustainable future is in ensuring that our governments lead the way by taking bold steps to fight climate change. We can make a difference in the upcoming election and we hope that you will use that opportunity to vote for a sustainable future for British Columbia on May 9<sup>th</sup>.

### **Respectfully submitted:**

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