

Oilsands Workers Launch Campaign to Retrain Unemployed Electricians in Alberta as Solar Specialists

Calling on Alberta Government To Support Back-To-Work Program, Install Solar Panel Arrays on Public Buildings

For Immediate Release

March 21, 2016, Edmonton—Oilsands workers today are launching a campaign to put Albertans back to work in the renewable energy sector, and are calling on the Alberta government for support. Iron & Earth, a nonprofit association representing oilsands workers, launched its ‘Solar Skills’ campaign, which seeks to retrain 1,000 out-of-work electricians as solar specialists.

“Let’s get Albertans back to work,” said Iron & Earth founder and boilermaker Lliam Hildebrand. “Today we’re offering a plan to retrain workers and install solar panel arrays.”

Iron & Earth will facilitate registration for the 1,000 training candidates. Hildebrand said, “We’re asking the Alberta government for support so we can scale up the training, put more Albertans back to work and build a strong solar industry across this province.”

Over the past year, thousands of oilsands workers have been laid off. The on-the-job retraining proposed by the program can get many of them back to work in the new economy, especially as their skills are highly transferable.

“Iron and Earth members see opportunities in the renewable energy sectors that are not subject to the boom and bust cycles of the oil sands,” said Joe Bacsu, a third generation boilermaker. “We want to leave a healthy planet for our children, but we need jobs, otherwise they’ll be no food on the table tomorrow.”

The province plans to be powered by 30 per cent renewable energy sources by 2030, which means new opportunities in a range of renewable energy sources, including solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, and biofuels.

‘Solar Skills’ is the first of several planned skills retraining programs across Alberta by Iron & Earth.

“Next, we’re looking to find ways to put pipefitters, boilermakers, ironworkers, and other building trades in Alberta back to work in the geothermal, wind, biomass, and biofuel industries,” said Hildebrand.

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