



Just the Facts:

Climate Change & the Need for Climate Justice

The Sask. government has relied upon non-renewable resources as the basis of our economy & this lack of diversification amounts to inaction on climate change.

Climate Change in the news.

- Climate Change is local: 2015-2017 wildfires in Sask. with the following repercussions:
 - Wildfires have significantly risen in Sask
 - The largest evacuation in the province's history occurred in 2015: over 13,000 people were forced to flee their homes in the La Ronge area
 - 1,700 wildfire evacuees from northeastern Saskatchewan in 2017
 - Smoke from the fire caused air quality issues in many parts of the province:
 - This led Environment Canada to issue special air quality and low visibility advisories for Sask., asking many to stay indoors and to keep car windows up
 - Level 2 air quality alerts were in place alongside an air quality health index at a very high risk of 10+
 - MD Ambulance especially cautioned asthma and respiratory persons, the elderly, and children
 - Sask. did not plan for the required resources needed to fight the growing severity of the wildfires:
 - 39% cut to the 2017 capital budget for wildfire management could make it harder to fight wildfires
 - The 2015-16 budget included a \$1 million cut to the Ministry of Environment Forest Fire Operations – this has not been restored
 - Forty (40) fire Tower Observers cut, and replaced with cameras
 - Figures showed the 2015-16 provincial wildfire budget provided \$56 million, about 45% less than the \$102 million budget in 2009-10
 - The military was called in to help due to a lack of resources
- Multiple national and international experts agree: extreme weather event like these, formerly rare, will happen more often in future – here are some examples from the Public Health Agency of Canada:
 - Experts predict that as climate change continues to increase temperatures, the fire season and the frequency and intensity of forest fires will increase
 - Higher temperatures cause: forests to be drier; fires to start more easily and make them harder to put out; summers to be more dangerous because of the combined effect of high temperatures and low humidity – particularly in dry Sask. ○ By the year 2040, compared to the late 1990s, forests fires will last on average 30 days longer; happen 25% more often; burn 46% larger forest areas.

The 2015 – 2017 fires are linked to human-caused climate change.

- The scientific evidence is overwhelming: human beings are affecting the climate
 - Climate change mainly caused by burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil, & natural gas which are utilized in power plants, furnaces, factories, engines...etc.
 - Burning produces CO₂ and other “greenhouse gases” (GHG)
 - Increased levels of GHG leads to global warming aka climate change

Just the Facts: Climate Justice



- Sask.'s wildfire severity is caused by climate change
 - Climate change is leading to higher temperatures and dry conditions - with Sask. dry conditions, higher temperatures, and big winds in combination with dry lightning, the probability of fires grows
 - Not too late to act: reducing GHGs now can greatly reduce climate change risks in the second half of 21st century

Climate change is a social justice issue.

- Climate change is a social justice issue because many millions of people, primarily in poor countries and the poor in rich countries, are likely to face displacement and ill-health as a result of climate change
 - Coastal communities are threatened by melting glaciers and rising sea levels
 - Extreme weather events (storms, floods, wildfires, heat waves, acute air pollution episodes) increase risk of injury, disease and death
 - Increased risk of food-, water-, and vector-borne diseases (Lyme disease, Hantavirus, West Nile are all climate-sensitive)
 - Crops and water supplies are severely impacted by climate change
 - Sask. First Nations communities were especially hard-hit by wildfires and floods
 - (Less able to prepare, insure, recover...etc.)
- Canada is one of world's largest GHG emitters, and Sask.'s GHG emissions per person (74T) are among the highest in the world
 - While many provinces have decreased their emissions, Saskatchewan emissions increased by 8% between 2005-2015 due to reliance on fossil fuel industries
 - Saskatchewan's 67.2 tons per person in emissions annually makes it Canada's worst emitter per capita
 - Sask.'s annual per capita greenhouse gas emissions are over 3 times the Canadian average and nearly 10 times higher than the world average
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Saskatchewan Government Lacks in Climate Action and in Diversifying our Economy.

- The only way to explain the above mentioned growing gap: a lack of sound environmental policy/environmental leadership by the Sask. government.
 - Although Sask. is one of the sunniest and windiest places in Canada, its electricity supply is highly reliant on fossil fuels
 - According to SaskPower, an overwhelming 44% of Sask.'s electricity comes from coal-fired power plants; SaskPower has noted that the province has no intention to phase-out its coal, unlike other provinces – including Alberta and Ontario – which have already done or are planning to do
 - 2013: After hearing from a wide range of experts and citizens' groups, the commissioners of the Sask. Citizens' Hearings on Climate Change concluded, "Saskatchewan's government has made no headway over the past decade in reducing total province-wide greenhouse gas emissions. There is no justification for such inaction, given the urgency of climate change and the fact that the Province has many policy levers at its disposal."
 - 2016: Pembina Institute conducts research and concludes: "Saskatchewan has...not moved forward on proactive methane regulations for its oil and gas sector. And

Just the Facts: Climate Justice



those are two very important sectors from an emissions profile perspective for that province.”

- The province has been emphasizing short-term economic gain over longer-term environmental, public health & economic issues
- Sask.'s government claims to be committed to a health care system that puts patients & families first, & that delivers good value, yet the government is not recognizing that climate change has significant and expensive health impacts
- When discussing its performance on environmental and climate change issues, the Saskatchewan government focused on SaskPower's involvement in carbon capture and storage (CCS). However, there have been many issues:
 - The project has been stained by rising costs, construction delays, malfunctions and breached contracts - an internal SaskPower briefing note revealed there are "serious design issues" and "fundamental flaws" with the project, adding to the facility running at only 40% capacity
 - This project, built by private company SNC-Lavalin at a cost of \$1.5 billion, has so far only "managed to capture less than half of the 90 per cent of the carbon dioxide its promoters said it would contain from the power station's emissions."
- The Saskatchewan government also relies on a target of 50% renewable energy by 2030, however:
 - In the SaskPower press release, words like 'target' and 'objective' indicate that this is a goal, not a commitment
 - The Wall government also promised in 2007 to reduce GHG emissions in Sask. By 32% by 2020; in 2009, the Wall government then promised to reduce GHG by just 20% by 2020 – it's clear these targets won't be met – instead, our GHG emissions continue to grow
- The 2015 Paris Climate Change Conference demonstrated Saskatchewan's lack of climate action
 - Countries from around the world met in Paris to tackle climate change and to commit action – all parties agreed to a 1.5 degrees Celsius warming target
 - While several premiers and the prime minister pledged to reduce greenhouse gases and halt global warming, Wall focused on the economy
 - Carbon pricing is continuing to become a popular and effective means to reduce emissions and fund investments for renewable energies, yet Wall is against it
- Not acting on climate change has economic costs too:
 - 2015: the Sask. Government cited the "unprecedented number of forest fires and the largest evacuation in Saskatchewan's history" as a key reason the province was pushed into deficit that year
 - A TD Bank report estimated climate change will cost the Canadian economy \$5 billion/year by 2020, rising to \$21-43 billion by 2050
 - Reliance on oil and the dropping oil prices are causing mass layoffs:
 - Statistics Canada has reported that oil-producing regions have seen significant jobs loss. Alberta lost 52,800 jobs in 2015, the largest loss of any province and Sask. came second, with a loss of 6,800 jobs.

Just the Facts: Climate Justice



Climate Change is a Labour Issue.

- Unions are involved in fighting climate change due to the climate change connection to our movement's goals around social and economic justice
 - Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) issued its "One Million Climate Jobs" project in Paris with a call for a just transition (ensure retraining, relocating and strong social safety net for workers impacted during shift to renewable energies)
 - Jobs, Justice and Climate: in 2015, over 10,000 people marched together in Toronto for Jobs, Justice and the Climate – it was the most diverse climate mobilization ever to take place in Canada including Indigenous communities, Canada's largest unions, students, social justice organizations and grassroots activists. The message: the people of Canada are ready for a new economy that works for people and the planet
 - SEIU-West President, Barbara Cape spoke at a Climate Justice March where close to 400 people marched for climate action in Sask.
- Union members & and public have been told that policies to stop climate change will cost jobs, especially in oil, gas, construction industries – **HOWEVER:**
 - The green economy produces 6 to 8 times as many jobs in efficiency/solar/wind as in oil/gas - and we're already seeing this start to happen
 - As of December 2014, employment in the Canadian clean energy sector was up 37% to 23,700 people - that compares with 22,340 directly employed in the oil sands - with recent layoffs, that number is much lower
 - The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives completed a study which found that a five-billion-dollar pipeline resulted in mostly short-term construction jobs, while permanent jobs are few due to the capital intensive nature of these industries – and we're seeing this in action today
- Labour needs a Just Transition, and therefore **MUST** get involved in climate action:
 - The CLC and unions across Canada are calling for the inevitable shift to a green economy to include good, sustainable jobs
- We must ensure retraining and a strong social safety net for all workers – with a large shift towards the green economy, it's necessary
- There is plenty of money for a just transition if we choose the right policy tools

GHG Reduction & Just Transition policies Sask government should be pursuing aggressively.

- Plan to phase out use of coal power and replace with renewables
- Stop focusing solely upon the promotion of oil sands development and bitumen pipelines (extracting crude oil from tar sands emits 3-4 times as much GHG as conventional oil extraction)
- Begin active promotion of solar and wind energy
- Encourage retrofitting buildings for greater energy efficiency
- Protect grasslands and pastures as they can play an important role in preventing climate change (since 2012 the Sask. governments has privatized huge areas of Sask. grasslands)
To invest in renewable energies, the Sask. government should:
 - End fossil fuel subsidies; increase resource royalties; increase income taxes on corporations/wealthy people; and create progressive carbon taxes.



What Can I Do??

Get involved!

- Share this information with family, friends and coworkers, and use it to start conversations about the issues.
- Ask questions of the candidates and other political party representatives who contact you about the issues raised in this “Just the Facts” sheet.
- Become involved with the party or candidate whose positions on these issues best serve the needs of you and your community.
- Write a letter to the editor to your local paper to share information on issues affecting your community.
- Use social media to share facts about issues that matter during the election.
- For more information about becoming more actively involved, visit www.purplevotes.ca.

Selected Sources

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<https://www.ec.gc.ca/indicateurs-indicators/default.asp?lang=en&n=18F3BB9C-1>
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Saskatchewan.
<http://behindthenumbers.ca/2015/08/11/saskatchewan-climate-change-crucible/>
- Sask Power website. <http://www.saskpower.com/our-power-future/our-electricity/>
- Statistics Canada website. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/dailyquotidien/151029/dq151029beng.htm>
- CLC Green Economy Plan website.
<http://greeneconomynet.ca/wpcontent/uploads/sites/43/2014/11/CLC-GEN-CAN-Forum-Backgrounder-Paris-2015-1203-EN-1.pdf>

For further information about this topic, including details about the sources of the information on this fact sheet, please contact Catherine Gendron, Project Coordinator, SEIU-West, at Catherine.Gendron@seiuwest.ca.