



LABOUR & CLIMATE CHANGE Statement January 7th, 2016

The road did not end in Paris, but goes through it

In December 2015 three dozen delegates from Canada's labour movement attended the United Nations summit on climate change (COP21) in Paris. Unions came from across the globe to push for ambitious climate targets, Just Transition programs, and adaptation and mitigation funding for poorer nations. Canadian politicians supported these goals – a welcome departure from the official stance taken over past decade.

JUST TRANSITION refers to policies that support workers in carbon-intensive industries when their jobs are being changed or eliminated. It includes voice in decision-making, retraining, income bridging and unemployment benefits, and community investment for good green jobs.

The final statement, a historic document, identifies the urgency of climate change and calls on every nation on Earth to take clear steps to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) thus limiting global temperature increase to 1.5degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Wealthy countries pledged to raise \$100B annually to assist developing countries in transforming their future. However "Just Transition" language is only written into the preamble, as a number of countries blocked it's inclusion within the main text.

The International Trade Union Congress asserted that the road was never to Paris, but through Paris – therefore it is crucial that we lead a Just Transition as humanity faces its largest and most rapid industrial transformation in history. Climate justice is making sure no-one is left behind in what is now a race against time.

What will it take to realise COP21 goals in greater Toronto, across Ontario and Canada? There are effective initiatives that could help meet the goal of reducing our carbon footprint as Canada's largest urban centre. These include:

- Massive expansion of the Better Buildings Program to perform energy audits on all large buildings, to secure financing for retrofits and connect qualified contractors with clients. The same concept can apply to homes using the City's recently adopted residential program. Tower renewal could clad over a thousand apartment buildings, and with provincial and federal support we could tackle the \$2.6B backlog of repairs on TCHC buildings.
- Evolve and expedite implementation of the Ontario Building Code to require stronger environmental standards than those scheduled for 2017. Develop and implement carbon neutral design, architecture and development in all new and infill communities.

- Increase green energy generation by supporting home and building owners, with financial support for solar, wind or geothermal installation. Toronto Hydro and municipal utilities should be key players in this vital undertaking, as should a publicly owned Hydro One.
- Move forward with expanded investment in public transit. The federal government needs to develop a true National Transit Strategy and the province needs to restore traditional levels of support for operating costs. Municipal property taxes should not shoulder the burden of transit expansion. Transit should always remain publicly owned and operated.
- Promote urban design that incorporates tree canopies, water conservation and storm-water control, walking and cycling infrastructure and local food production.

These ideas have been around for a long time, but there is new urgency in making them part of each decision formed in our lives. These strategic investments can be funded from the price on carbon being applied by Ontario in the coming months. For the labour movement, an essential ingredient for success is equity – ensuring that newcomer and racialized communities share in the career opportunities in a green economy. We have already modelled that approach with Community Benefits for the Eglinton Crosstown project, but much more can and needs to be done.

In addition, unions will want to examine the whole question of work practices. In the U.K., unions negotiated a role for Environmental Representatives in thousands of workplaces. These individuals help perform energy audits, promote recycling and waste reduction, suggesting ways to green work processes. From hospitals to schools, factories to grocery stores – there are untapped opportunities to drive a green agenda at work.

Canadians came back from Paris with a renewed sense of optimism; feeling empowered to create a better world. It is up to each of us to take stock of what we can do, together, to make this happen. Let's walk the talk, and lead a Just Transition to a new relationship with Earth, one that sustains us all.

The Executive recommends that Labour Council:

- Continue to fight for programs for green jobs and equity in every sector of the economy
- Work with environmental, social justice, community and youth activists - and political leaders from all levels of government - to win measures that dramatically reduce GHG emissions
- Publish and promote a “Greenprint for Greater Toronto” as part of Labour’s contribution in the fight against climate change