

ENVIR ACTION

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CUPE's Environmental
Newsletter

CUPE and coalition partners rally around green jobs



CUPE had a strong presence at the first Green Economy Network (GEN) strategy session, held Nov. 27 - 28, 2013 in Toronto. Participants, including CUPE's National Environment Committee and others, took part in discussions about promoting GEN's green jobs ideas through community-level campaigning. GEN is a coalition of partners pushing for a greener economy with more good green jobs in renewable energy, green building practices, and public transit/high speed rail.

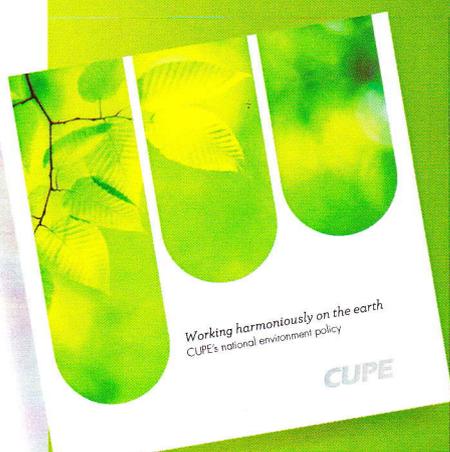
The event brought together the Council of Canadians, the Polaris Institute, the Climate Action Network, KAIROS, along with other unions such as PSAC, Unifor and CUPW. Participants looked at how creating more green jobs can cut greenhouse gases that cause climate change and help make our communities more liveable and sustainable.

"Trade unionists and environmentalists can and must work together to transform our society," said Carolyn Unsworth, co-chair of CUPE's National environment committee. "The current system is leading us to a bleak future but there is time and there are answers to change our course. GEN can help make this happen and I encourage all CUPE members to look at ways to make their workplaces, jobs and communities greener."

GEN members looked at ways to work together in green jobs campaigns. Workshops to identify the tremendous opportunities for progress on a local level to build a greener economy were also part of the meeting.

It is clear that governments at all levels must lead and provide public investments to ensure that the public sector is front and centre in the new green economy. Now more than ever, diverse allies are demanding an end to old, carbon-intensive work practices, and are pulling together to make a new green economy. But this future will only happen with support and input of both labour and the environmentalists. This is what the Green Economy Network is about.

Learn more about GEN here:
<http://www.greeneconomy.net.ca>



Order your copies of CUPE's new national environmental policy

CUPE now has its first environmental policy entitled Working Harmoniously on the Earth. The policy was developed following the adoption of a resolution at 2011 National Convention. The climate crisis is the impetus for the new policy that calls on CUPE to be a leader on climate change and other environmental issues.

The new print version of the policy also has a handy five-point list of steps CUPE members can take to act on the policy. A shorter, fact-sheet version of the policy has also been published. To order copies of either the full policy and/or the summary fact sheets, please contact mfirth@cupe.ca.

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Environmental issues front and centre at Quebec City Convention



Green Stewards at Convention

CUPE ran a green stewards program for the first time at 2013 National Convention in Quebec City. Green Stewards worked to encourage convention delegates and guests to lower their environmental impact while at convention. For example, stewards urged delegates and guests to walk rather than take taxis, to conserve energy, recycle and compost properly, drink only municipal tap water and take advantage of the convention centre's environmental features, such as water-conserving washroom taps. Stewards also introduced delegates and guests to CUPE's new environmental policy. The program was a big success and helped raise environmental consciousness at CUPE's largest national event.

Kitchen-table discussion

A kitchen-table discussion on environmental issues was part of the expanded environmental program at 2013 National convention. For the first time, delegates got together to discuss the environment, with a particular focus on how to implement CUPE's new national environment policy.

Resolutions: No time for fracking around!

Two resolutions with environmental implications were adopted at convention. The first – resolution 127 – called on CUPE to continue to be a leader on working collaboratively with environmental, social justice and Aboriginal groups to address the climate crisis. The second resolution called for CUPE to support groups – particularly Aboriginal groups – that oppose shale gas fracking, due to its negative environmental and health impacts.

A carbon neutral National Convention

In Quebec City, CUPE held a carbon neutral national convention for the second time. 2011 convention in Vancouver was the first carbon neutral CUPE event of any scale. 2013 convention was also carbon neutral thanks to CUPE partnering with CarbonZero, an environmental offsetting company. Emissions from convention were quantified from all delegate, staff and guest travel, electricity consumption during the event, convention waste, paper use and exhibitors in the CUPE Village. Post-convention, CUPE will fully offset all of the carbon generated by convention at a price of \$20 per tonne.

CUPE continued to lower other environmental impacts of convention by, for example, cutting back on conference kit materials, making paper documents on convention floor optional (which greatly reduced the amount of paper used), only providing municipal tap water on the convention floor, encouraging delegates to walk while in Quebec City and having the vast majority of national staff travel to and from Quebec City by train, which is much less energy-intensive than flying.

Environment committee report on video

CUPE's National Environment Committee report was adopted by convention and can be viewed here:

cupe50.ca/national-environment-committee-report/

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE! cupe.ca/environment

Enviro Action is CUPE national's environmental newsletter.

For more information: enviro@cupe.ca