

**EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT TO THE
TORONTO & YORK REGION
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 2007**



GREEN JOBS IN TORONTO'S FUTURE

In recent weeks, high-profile celebrities David Suzuki, Al Gore, Nicholas Stern and Amory Lovins have visited Toronto to speak about the urgency of acting on climate change. Their calls reinforce the desire of Mayor Miller to make Toronto one of the greenest cities in the world. While many agree on that goal, the challenge is to do so within a framework of social, economic and environmental justice.

In 1999 the Canadian Labour Congress adopted a ground-breaking position paper on the creation of Green Jobs. The goal was a transformation of the economy from the current model which is causing massive degradation of the earth's ecology, to a model which is sustainable for generations to come.

It calls for examining everything we do - the product or service a job provides; the materials and energy used; the waste and by-products; and how the way *in which the work is done* contributes to the dignity and well-being of the worker and the community.

Our optimism that sustainability could be a net job provider came from the experience of the construction trades, who advocated for the creation of the Better Buildings Partnership in 1993. They saw hundreds of skilled trades people put back to work through energy retrofits of major buildings, along with the reduction of CO₂ emissions and cost savings to building owners.

Seven years ago, CUPE brought forward a proposal on solid waste that would result in a diversion rate of 70% by building nine composting facilities. Because the idea came from a union, it was dismissed until the City went through the Adams Mine fiasco. Eventually a City task force decided on the green bin program, based largely on what CUPE had suggested from the start.

Greater Toronto's economy contains a wide spectrum of economic activity, including nearly half a million manufacturing jobs. A shift to a greener economy has the potential to create positive impact both public and private sectors. Municipalities, school boards and public institutions are major purchasers of goods & services, and can easily push market transformation by green Made in Canada policies.

Green economic development would harness innovation in a socially responsible manner, stimulating:

- New production/manufacturing processes
- New skills development
- New cluster development around green research initiatives with colleges and universities

A closed loop approach would include extended producer responsibility, protection of industrial lands, and local purchasing. We know there are big and early wins possible in energy efficiency, transportation, and waste reduction. Our task will be to examine every kind of work through a sustainability lens.

The elimination of 150,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs in Ontario over the last two years, and the relentless drive to outsource work to low-wage countries, speaks to a looming crisis for ordinary Torontonians. The response to the Labour Council's \$10 Minimum Wage campaign reflects the angry feeling that far too many are being left behind in this restructured world.

We need to seize the opportunity to be leaders in the transformation to a green economy. From engineering and design, to the skilled trades, to marketing, to new fields of alternative energy and industrial ecology tens of thousands of new jobs can be created. But a shift to sustainability must be accompanied by a real commitment to sharing the benefits of this new economy, and rewarding the work performed by every one of us in the 21st century.

The Executive Board recommends that Labour Council:

1. convene a Green Jobs Working Group of front-line experts from affiliates to develop a comprehensive strategy for green jobs in the Toronto region,
2. enter into partnership with the Toronto Environmental Alliance and a broad range of allies to achieve a true sustainability agenda for the regional economy, and
3. explore the possibility of creating a research and training network of colleges, universities, union training centres and other public institutions to play a critical role in the workforce transition to green jobs.