



Cutting convention carbon



We have all woken up to the harsh realities of climate change. We need to re-evaluate how we do things to cut back on greenhouse gas emissions. This includes how we conduct CUPE business at convention and day-to-day. In January 2003, CUPE endorsed a position paper supporting Canada's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

Below are some suggestions for lowering your carbon footprint at convention and traveling to and from convention.

At convention

- Reduce waste and recycle as much material as possible. Waste disposal emits methane, a potent greenhouse gas.
- Walk to the convention centre from your hotel rather than taking a taxi. Or take public transit. Toronto has an excellent transit system (buses, street cars, subway) that provides access to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.
- Minimize and conserve your electricity usage. Turn computers, cell phones, Blackberries and other electronic devices off when not in use.
- Unplug re-chargers for these devices when they are not in use. Re-chargers use "idle power" when plugged in, which means they drain, use and waste electricity simply by being plugged into an outlet.
- Turn off lights and appliances in your hotel room when not in use.
- Conserve heating and cooling energy in your hotel room by turning the heat down and the cooling off when you're not in your hotel room.

Getting there and getting home

- Toronto is accessible by many forms of transportation. It's a centrally located city reachable by bus, train and car from many other cities and municipalities.
- Car-pool with other delegates from your Local or city if you're within driving distance from Toronto. If you're driving, advertise via your Local's website and listservs that you could drive others to and from convention.
- Take the bus or train rather than fly if you're centrally located to Toronto (e.g., from Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, Hamilton, Windsor, London, Kitchener, Niagara, Kingston, Sudbury, North Bay, Sault Ste Marie, even Thunder Bay and Winnipeg). Rail service is often as fast from some of these centres as flying. Toronto's Union Train Station is mere blocks from the convention centre. Travel by train emits ten times less carbon dioxide as travel by airplane.
- If you must fly, purchase legitimate carbon offsets to compensate for emitting carbon into the atmosphere.

These are a few first steps for our union to take to lessen the climate-damaging impact of our work. While we value the opportunity to get together as a union, we must act responsibly and cut carbon where we can.