

April 7, 2015

Dear Premier:

On behalf of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), we encourage all provincial and territorial premiers attending the climate summit in Québec City to take decisive action and show strong leadership addressing this crucial pan-Canadian and international issue.

With 630,000 members in communities all across Canada, CUPE represents a vast and diverse range of working people. Our members see the effects of climate change where they live and work. They want action taken at all levels of Canadian government to put Canada on the right path domestically and internationally.

Climate change is real and it's happening now. The headlines tell us 2014 was the hottest year on record. In fact, 2014 was the 38th consecutive year that global temperatures have been above the 20th century average. It is staggering to think that millions of Canadians have only ever experienced abnormal climatic conditions. Climatic science tells us that we all will very likely only experience abnormal climatic conditions for years to come.

Science shows that climate change is making storms, droughts, wild fires, floods and other impacts worse. Virtually everywhere you look across all provinces and territories climate change has exacerbated weather events. The floods in southern Alberta in June 2013 caused \$1.7 billion in damages. Monster snow storms have buried parts of Atlantic Canada this winter. Agricultural lands on the prairies have been swamped. Images from these events show us the dramatic impacts but for CUPE, it's also our members who tell us what climate change looks like when they are tasked with cleaning up after floods or working long hours to restore power knocked out by fierce storms.

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Across the globe, climate change impacts are abundant. Battered and flooded island states in the Pacific; disastrous droughts in California and the south-western United States; unprecedented heat in Australia; saltwater intrusion in Bangladesh destroying croplands; record-low ice cover in the Arctic and dozens if not hundreds of other previous once-in-a-lifetime events are increasingly common.

As dire as current conditions are, climate change will only intensify over the coming years. A 2014 TD Economics report estimated climate related disasters will cost Canadians on average \$5 billion annually by 2020, rising to \$21-43 billion by 2050.

While Canada's overall climate record is deplorable (for example, as a nation, Canada will not come close to meeting its 2009 Copenhagen Accord pledge), Canadian provinces and territories have made significant progress. Ontario has eliminated coal-fired electricity generation. Quebec is a leader on clean, public electricity and has been linked to the Western Climate Initiative since the start of 2008. And just about every province and territory has taken a variety of steps to cut greenhouse gas emissions, promote resource and energy conservation, spur clean and green tech, and other progressive endeavours.

But while emissions in some parts of the country are going down, others continue to climb, largely fostered by the federal government's push to make reckless resource extraction the fulcrum of the Canadian economy, despite it being a profoundly bad choice for the planet.

Therefore, it is vital that the void in federal leadership on climate change be filled by provincial and territorial leaders. CUPE calls on the premiers to:

- Exert pressure on the federal government to meet its obligations to act on climate change domestically by (among other steps):
 - Putting an effective price on carbon.
 - Ending oil and gas subsidies that bolster an already profitable industry while disadvantaging new renewable energy development.
 - Applying effective greenhouse gas emission standards on the oil and gas sector.
 - Fostering a national energy strategy that fast tracks, in particular, public renewable energy.
- Ensure the federal government meets its international obligations by:
 - Re-engaging in the United Nations climate change negotiations process in a meaningful and constructive manner. In particular, the federal government should support enshrining Just Transition language in any international climate change accord to ensure workers are dealt with fairly.

- Provide aid and relief to areas of the world ravaged by the impacts of climate change both currently and in the future.
- Work collaboratively and constructively with international partners to push toward a clean energy and sustainable work economy.
- Enhance existing provincial and territorial climate change action plans, legislation and regulations that lower greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy.

The climate crisis has prompted CUPE to act, adopting our first national environmental policy in 2013 that calls on CUPE to take a number of steps to green our members' work, while reducing our organization's carbon footprint. Additionally, CUPE works with coalition partners to push for the creation of meaningful work opportunities that directly lower greenhouse gas emissions and for jobs that will help Canadian communities adapt to climate change impacts.

All Canadian and international citizens deserve a stable climate and the economic comfort and security that it supports. As leaders of our provinces and territories, you have helped direct Canada onto a new sustainable path. But much more needs to be done. We encourage you to act to help lead Canada and ensure climate protection for all.

Yours truly,

PAUL MOIST
National President

CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer

cc: CUPE National Executive Board Members; D. Ivanochko; T. Greaves; G. Hewitt; B. Robb;
H. Yussuf, CLC President