



## **FLOODS, FIRES AND 2 DEGREE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

Naomi Klein, known for documenting corporate manipulation of the economy that squeezes the last drop of profit from almost everything, wrote at the end of this past summer:

*"...with major cities submerged in water and others licked by flames — we Are living through Exhibit A of the extreme warming climate scientists have been warning us about."*

The effects of climate change know no boundaries. The smoke from Fort McMurray's historic 2016 fire not only affected residents of Alberta but was felt by those who live in the eastern American seaboard. This was made possible as a result of wind and climate patterns. Those who suffer the most from extreme weather disasters tend to be the most vulnerable and marginalized.

People may become despondent or discouraged about our collective ability to hold warming increase to a maximum of 2 degrees Celsius. Donald Trump's threats to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate change accord, and his denial of the climate change in the face of recent hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria are a challenge to all humankind.

### **We are called to take action.**

Steps to slow down, mitigate and adapt to climate change are happening at many levels. Labour Council's *Greenprint for Greater Toronto* outlines carbon reduction initiatives for workplaces, transportation, building and energy. At its May 2017 convention, the Canadian Labour Congress adopted *Green Jobs For a Fair Future*, committing to help Canada become a leader in shifting to a green economy. In July 2017 Toronto City Council unanimously approved *Transform TO*, Toronto's plan to achieve our commitments to reduce greenhouse gases by 80% before 2050. Ontario adopted June 2016 *Climate Change Action Plan*, and has commitment to spend up to \$8.3 billion in order to reduce GHGs by 15% by 2020.

We have seen some similar leadership to the south of us. Following Trump's announcement to withdrawal from the Paris Accord, New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo established a major climate and jobs initiative to invest \$1.5 billion to help create 40,000 clean energy jobs by 2020.

Action must be taken quickly and there is an opportunity for all of us to lead on addressing climate justice. The best initiatives will result in providing workers with the tools and information needed to put forward a just and effective transition in our workplaces and communities. With a collective voice, workers can be agents of change.

The Executive Board recommends that Labour Council:

1. Continue to call on all levels of government to take practical steps towards achieving our Paris commitments while ensuring a just transition for all
2. Together with affiliates to insist on the integration of Toronto's *TransformTO* strategy into all relevant policy and operational areas and call on York Region to establish a similar strategy

3. Develop a training program in conjunction with our affiliates to allow for them to bargain a Workplace Environment Representatives and Joint Workplace Environmental Committee that will identify and help implement greenhouse gas reduction initiatives
4. Establish a corps of activists through Labour Council's Climate Justice Network and York Labour Environmental Action Group to deepen our engagement in climate issues
5. Through Toronto Community Benefits Network, Good Jobs for All and Diverse Worker Networks continue to advocate that good green jobs are available to all of our communities
6. Call for expanded public services including transit to help reduce reliance on fossil fuels

October 2017

Cope343