ADAPTING CANADIAN WORK AND WORKPLACES: CANADA IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE (ACW)

A Partnership Programme of the Social Science & Humanities Research Council of Canada
2014-2021

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www.adaptingcanadianwork.ca
ACW in a Nutshell

- **ACW**: research project based at York University, Canada (2014—2021), funded by Social Science & Humanities Research Council of Canada. $3.7 mill, matched by partner organisations.

- Follows *Work in a Warming World* (2009-2018): research; green training & education; adapt work to mitigate greenhouse gases.

- **ACW’s goal** to provide unions with information and training to grow labour leadership in reducing the causes of climate change.

- **25 partner organisations**, including CLC, ETUI

- **52 researchers, 7 countries**

- **Questions addressed**:
  - How can workplaces adapt work to mitigate greenhouse gases and what would assist this?
  - What can be learnt from other countries?
Research & Outreach

Research Projects (21 to date. All co-governed: unions, academics):

- Baseline reports: Auto, Forestry, Built Environment, Domestic Policy. Developing labour environment curriculum for local union activists
- Transforming Canada’s Transport Sector
- From Environmental Racism to Good Green Work
- Green Transitions in the EU and US
- Green Transitions in the Built Environment
- Energy Transitions
- Environmental Views of Quebec Unions
- The Bow Lake Wind Project & Inherent Jurisdiction by Batchewana First Nation
- Climate Training for Union Leaders
- Towards a Just Transition for Canadian Workers
- Job Projections New Brunswick Workers Believe in
Outreach

- Monthly digest of new laws, policies, position papers on work & climate change. Read in 83 countries
- **Climate Bargaining Data Base:** green collective bargaining clauses, widely internationally accessible. Profiled in UNFCCC paper for COP 22.
- **Green Training Data Base:** curriculum for training labour activists, negotiators, labour educators, union leaders
- **Trade Union Green Interventions Data Base** under development
Transition pathways to low carbon economy (Hampton 2015)

- **Market-based**: e.g. carbon-pricing, assumptions that skill shortages met by increased demand, labour as commodity, high control and specialisation, lengthy value chain

- **Ecological modernization**: e.g. retraining, assumptions of proactive investment, ‘just transition’, labour as restricted agent

- **Radical transformation**: integrated and regulated energy supply, labour power, broad occupational capacity, high qualifications, labour as active agent
Identify and examine action-oriented initiatives and map to form database

In Europe, focused on interviewing European most relevant organisations at sectoral level and mapping initiatives

34 detailed cases so far, mostly national, some European level

Most interesting cases in particular sectors (e.g. transport, metal), countries and some regions, few across Europe (e.g. ETF):

Mapping: content of initiative/climate policy (depth, breadth and worker agency); reasons for; impact (policy outcomes)
Green Transition in Built Environment Project

• **EU targets**: reduce energy use, increase renewable energy, reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 20% by 2020

• **Construction sector** = 40% EU CO₂ end-use emissions: → ’near zero emissions’ for new + retrofitted buildings through energy efficient envelopes & on-site renewables supported by:
  o New qualifications
  o Quality assurance schemes and ‘Green Deals’

• **Difficulties**:
  • Different pathways to low carbon economy
  • Disparities and extreme fragmentation in labour market
  • Different models VET
Problems with the construction labour process for energy inefficiency in buildings

- **Building envelope occupations** (e.g. insulation, materials) key to emissions reductions but many workers without formal qualifications
- **Construction industry factional professional silos, trades, and fragmented labour process**
- **Contractual divisions**: agency labour/ self-employed, labour-only subcontracting, long supply chains
  - reinforcing trade/ sectoral divisions
  - impeding integrated teamwork needed
What is needed for low energy construction?

- ‘Knowledge’ and ‘know how’ not generally in curriculum,
- **Transformation of VET** to overcome interfaces i.e. holistic, high standard, broad occupational profiles
- **Bridge professional-operative divide** and create permeability
- **Integrated teamworking** through regulating subcontract chain and direct employment
- **Involving and valuing labour**, including educationalists, employees, trade unions
An example of radical transformation: City Building (Glasgow) - 2017

- Direct labour force – 2,200 employed
- Large-scale training provision and workshops, including energy efficiency
- Manufacturing arm employing 270, 60% with disabilities
- Highly unionised: Unite, Unison, Community
- Social housing combining green technologies & traditional building
- Responsible for repair & maintenance all Glasgow City Council building stock
- Joint Trade Union Council, local authority + housing association (Wheatley)
Beyond Just Transition?

- Most interventions either market-led or ecological modernisation, reactive rather than proactive.

- **UN Paris Agreement** on Climate Change clause: “Taking into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities.”

- TUC Climate Change Policy (Congress 2017): Workplace Environment Representatives rights and Just Transition strategy.

- Some radical transformation. E.g. **Italian FILLEA-CGIL** construction union policy to ‘stop building for buildings’ sake’, for ‘new model based on environmental sustainability’, ‘reduction in the use of cement’, ‘halt conversion of further green areas into concrete’.

- **Need for wide-ranging, cross-sectoral strategy** e.g. Alberta retraining of tar-sands electricians to renewables/ energy-efficient reconstruction.