

66th CSN Convention
VIRTUAL | 2021

TOGETHER FOR EACH OTHER

CONFEDERAL COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

REPORT 2017-2020

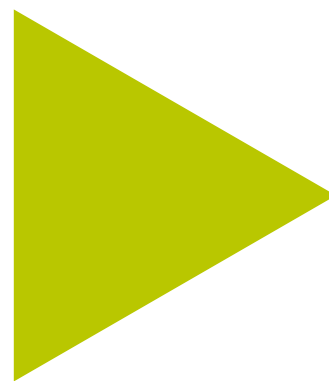
Around the world, people are mobilizing to demand governments implement concrete measures to address the environmental crisis we are facing.



NOTE REGARDING COVID-19

The confederal committee reports were produced in March 2020 for the convention that was to be held in May 2020. These reports include committee actions that were planned for the period between March and May 2020. Please note that said reports have not been modified and that the period from May 2020 to January 2021 will be covered in the next committee reports, which will be presented at the 67th CSN Convention.

In addition to the large climate marches in fall 2018 and spring 2019, we're seeing citizens make a number of efforts to move toward a true energy and ecological transition. The demands are simple: people are asking governments for action plans that will allow us to reach ambitious greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets, as well as accountability, all in the name of mitigating the effects of climate change.



The Environmental Charter

The Environmental Charter was created following a resolution adopted during the 65th CSN Convention, and is the result of work done by the Confederal Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development.

This charter was developed to guide the CSN's positions on the environment, sustainable development, just transition, and, more broadly, to act as a framework for weighing in on issues involving social development, employment, and bargaining. The Committee has also developed an action plan to align CSN representations with the Charter.

The Environmental Charter was adopted during a Confederal Council meeting in June 2018, and the final document was disseminated in March 2019. It's available online on the CSN website, and affiliated organizations may also request it in brochure form.

Just energy transition

During this mandate, the CSN has devoted particular attention to issues related to just energy transition.

The concept of a just transition was developed in the early 2000s by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). A few years later, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) also raised the issue. The idea refers specifically to the need for industry, businesses, and institutions to reduce their sources of greenhouse gas emissions. To support these actors in this process, governments must develop consistent policies and programs.

This transition is "just" in that it limits negative effects on workers, such as layoffs, and promotes positive effects, job creation, training, and skills upgrading.

In collaboration with 10 civil society organizations from different sectors, the CSN helped conduct a study aimed at documenting the impacts of the energy transition that will have taken place by 2030 for Québec companies and workers. The study found that due to their significant contribution to GHG emissions and to the high number of jobs associated with them, three sectors are likely to be more affected by the energy transition than others: transportation, construction, and energy.

The study also found that training was one of the biggest challenges we're facing, particularly in the current context of a skilled labour shortage.

It is therefore extremely important, in the coming years, to develop new training programs and improve existing programs to allow workers to adapt to new technology.

As a member of the Sommet pour une transition énergétique juste organizing committee, the CSN worked in collaboration with the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ), Fondation, the David Suzuki Foundation, the Fonds de solidarité FTQ, Greenpeace Canada, and the Institut du Nouveau Monde to put together this summit on just transition. On May 23 and 24, 2018, more than 300 people from various walks of life attended the summit, including employers, investors, civil society actors, labour organizations, environmental organizations, and the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Québec-Labrador. Members of the Confederal Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development and about twenty CSN union members also took part in the Sommet, which brought together those looking to commit to a planned just ecological transition to benefit all Quebecers.

The CSN also produced two videos about just transition. The animated video *La transition juste* presents issues related to just transition in general. *La transition juste en sylviculture, pas sortis du bois* ("not out of the woods yet, the just transition in forestry") shows the effects of climate change and the ecological and energy transition on forestry workers. The CSN is a member of the La Planète s'invite au travail collective, which also produced a video, *La transition juste, c'est quoi au juste?* ("just transition: just what exactly is it?").

Unions and affiliated organizations in action

In September 2018, António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), sounded the alarm, stating that the world has only two years to take action on climate change, after which point it will be too late: "If we do not change course by 2020, we risk [...] disastrous consequences for people and all the natural systems that sustain us." Since then, several groups have formed to organize citizen mobilization efforts.

This context of climate emergency led to the creation of "A Pact for the Transition," which has been signed by nearly 300,000 people who commit to taking concrete action to reduce their GHG emissions and are asking governments, in return, to take stronger action.

Since then, a number of demonstrations have been organized, particularly the September 27, 2019 climate strike, which brought together hundreds of thousands of people across Québec. To support the mobilization of central councils and affiliated unions, the CSN adopted an ambitious action plan and invited its members to actively participate in the various marches. The CSN also supported the youth mobilization for Earth Day on April 22, 2019, in Québec City.

Alliances

In Québec, the majority of labour organizations are now working together on environmental issues. These alliances were created to prepare activities for September 27, 2019, then became solidified with the founding of the La Planète s'invite au travail collective. We will continue this partnership, which will allow us to make the union voice on environmental issues heard and promote the much needed just transition.

The collective has produced a video, a brochure, and a sticker.

The CSN also became a member of the Front commun pour la transition énergétique and supports the Road map to Achieve a Zero Net Emissions Québec (Québec ZéN project), which presents a vision of a carbon-neutral Québec.

The CSN also signed the Pact for a Green New Deal, joining a coalition of about sixty or so activists, as well as Indigenous and environmental groups from across Canada, who are calling on the Canadian government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by half by 2030.

Waste management

Sorting centres in Québec are in constant crisis due, in part, to a lack of investment and to China's decision to tighten its quality standards for imported recyclable materials.

During a Confederal Council meeting in March 2019, the CSN presented an overview of the sector and a set of solutions to resolve issues sustainably, particularly by expanding the deposit system and improving the health and safety conditions of those working in the sector.

This sector study allowed us to intervene, along with the Syndicat des employé-es de magasin et de bureau de la SAQ (SEMB-SAQ-CSN), during the parliamentary commission on local glass recovery and recycling.

The CSN will continue to monitor this issue closely, particularly when the plan for glass recovery and recycling is announced, which is expected to be in spring 2020.

The Québec Electrification and Climate Change Plan

The 2013–2020 *Climate Change Action Plan*, which has served as a guide for government action on climate change, is set to expire on December 31, 2020. It will be replaced by the *Electrification and Climate Change Plan* (ECCP) and will eventually be supported by *An Act mainly to ensure effective governance of the fight against climate change and to promote electrification*.

The CSN made representations during consultations on the plan by submitting a brief in 2019. We will continue to follow the development of these programs as well as the ensuing legislation with interest.

Natural gas

The Committee held two meetings to document issues related to the use of natural gas in the context of reaching GHG reduction targets.

The relevance of developing renewable natural gas (RNG) and liquefied natural gas was also discussed.

FOLLOW-UP ON THE

Écologiser les milieux de travail ("greening workplaces") project

The members of the Committee have read the report on the *Écologiser les milieux de travail* project, which focuses on supporting unions in identifying environmental issues and impacts related to their activities.

The Committee also helped produce several videos to raise awareness about projects by unions that had won the SPHERE contest, which was organized by the Conseil central du Cœur du Québec to honour union or partnership environmental projects.

Women and the environment

On January 31, 2018, the Committee, in partnership with the Coordination de la condition féminine, provided a training session on endocrine disruptors, which particularly affect women's health.

Fossil fuel divestment

During the Confederal Council meeting in June 2018, representatives adopted the Environmental Charter and added the following resolution:

It is essential to maintain and develop a program to replace fossil fuels with green energy and that pension funds (the CDPQ included) proceed with a gradual, organized, and consistent fossil fuel divestment within a five-year period [our translation].

We met with representatives from Fondation and Bâtirente, as well as the heads of public sector bargaining, to help us better target our objectives. These meetings also allowed us to identify ways that pension funds can move towards fossil fuel divestment in a gradual, organized, and consistent manner. Public sector unions will include this demand in their rounds of bargaining with the government. This issue is also being considered by the CSN employee retirement committee.

Outlook

Prepare an overview of the sectors affected by energy transitions by:

Identifying workplaces in different sectors.

Developing solutions to ensure a better transition, one that's just for both workers and communities.

Provide three targeted unions with the support needed to take part in efforts towards a just energy transition by:

Providing union support from the Union Adviser for the Service de la santé-sécurité et d'environnement (health, safety, and environment department).

Analyzing three different workplaces.

Proposing solutions to ensure that the transition is respectful of workers.

Raise union awareness and provide union training on environmental issues.

Mobilize and demand that the government establish an effective plan to reduce the use of fossil fuels while taking into account the various issues affecting workers.

Participate in the inter-union coalition La Planète s'invite au travail and in the Front commun pour une transition énergétique along with various social actors to identify the steps that need to be taken to address the climate crisis.

Make representations related to waste management, particularly on the matter of glass recovery and recycling.

Make representations related to the *Electrification and Climate Change Plan*.

Monitor energy and natural resource projects such as pipelines, in partnership with the relevant central councils and federations.



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