

67<sup>th</sup> CSN  
Convention  
Montréal – 2023

# CONFEDERAL COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2020-2023 REPORT





POUVOIR



MAINTENANT



**5**

**The Committee  
members**

**6**

**Report**

—

**A Just Transition**

—

**Climate  
Conferences  
(COP26 and COP27)**

**7**

**Biodiversity  
Conference  
(COP15)**

—

**Réseau intersyndical  
sur le climat  
(Inter-Union Climate  
Network—RIC)**

—

**Subcommittee –  
Fossil Fuel Divestment**

**8**

**Forests –  
Alliance between FIM–  
CSN and  
Nature Québec  
—  
Mining Industry  
—  
Liquefied Natural  
Gas (LNG) and  
Pipeline Projects**

**9**

**Public  
Transportation  
—  
Environment  
Sector Workforce  
Committee –  
EnviroCompétences  
—  
Monitoring  
Regulations**





**THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS DURING  
THE LAST TERM OF OFFICE:**

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Political advisor to the CSN's  
Executive Committee

**As we write this report, we may well have reached the end of the COVID-19 virus transmission period. During this time, when many social and economic activities were temporarily brought to a halt, we became more aware of our collective impact on the environment. Between 2020 and 2021, there was an 8% decrease in global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and some animal species even began to reclaim their natural habitats. Unfortunately, it is clear that as we return to “normal” life, we are also returning to our old patterns of consumption.**

## REPORT

**During this past three-year term, the Confederal Committee has observed undeniable advances on climate and environmental issues, particularly with regard to their impacts on the working environment.**

**ALTHOUGH THEIR PRIMARY FOCUS REMAINS** the improvement of working conditions, unions are increasingly taking ownership of environmental issues and developing approaches based on their specific circumstances. However, workers must be made more aware of these efforts. Unions also need to bring pressure to bear on governments to make public policy on climate and the environment more inclusive, especially when it comes to working conditions, and to make sure these policies mitigate the negative impacts on workers and their communities. In addition, these changes will require the development of plan for an economic transition that is both just and green. For a truly just transition to take place, unions must play an active role in the decision-making process whenever the future of their industries is at stake.

**THE CONFEDERAL COMMITTEE** on the Environment and Sustainable Development (CCEDD) was established in June 2014. Previously, these topics had been discussed by the Environment Working Group. The Committee is composed of one representative from the Executive Committee (Yvan Duceppe, Treasurer); two officers from the federations (Louis Bégin, from FIM-CSN, and Sébastien Collard, from FP-CSN); a representative from the FNEEQ-CSN (Nicole Lefebvre); and three officers from the Laurentides, Abitibi-Témiscaminque-Nord-du-Québec, and Montréal métropolitain central councils (Chantal Maillé, Félix-Antoine Lafleur, and Dominique Daigneault, respectively). It also includes a political advisor to the Executive Committee (Nancy Poirier) and a union advisor from the Health, Safety, and Environment Department (HSE) (Isabelle Ménard).

**DURING THE 2021–23 TERM,** the committee focused on working toward a just transition, monitoring the COP15 and COP27 meetings, and creation of the Réseau intersyndical sur le climat (Inter-Union Climate Network, or RIC). We also worked on issues of forest management and the protection of woodland and mountain caribou habitats, climate change, fossil fuel divestment by pension plans, mineral management, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and the Réseau express métropolitain (REM). More generally, our work included monitoring and enforcement of environmental regulations at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels. A work plan was developed to establish a system for monitoring various issues and recommending guidelines to the CSN.

## A JUST TRANSITION

**During the past three years, the Confederal Committee has overseen a research project to identify the effects of climate change and establish a configuration for a just transition in workplaces with CSN-affiliated unions.**

**FOR THIS STUDY, WE WORKED TOGETHER** with an intern from UQAM. As part of the project, we are also working to identify environmental and just-transition measures that have been implemented in the workplace. The project is nearly complete, and will be used to support and develop our recommendations on how to incorporate just-transition best practices in the workplace. It will highlight initiatives that have been implemented by workers in both the public and private sectors, and will serve to inform our thinking on both the role of labour relations in environmental issues and what concrete demands to bring to the table when our collective agreements are up for renewal. Release of the final version of the report is expected in March 2023.

## CLIMATE CONFERENCES (COP26 AND COP27)

**The articles of the agreement reached at the Framework Convention on Climate Change, ratified and signed by the countries in attendance at the 1992 Earth Summit, have now been under negotiation for 27 years.**

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL** Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the CSN has been monitoring international climate negotiations since 2009. In 2021, Scotland hosted COP26 in Glasgow. Because of the pandemic, the Committee followed these negotiations from a distance. During this conference, Canada announced its goal of reducing GHG emissions by 40% and bringing them down to 2005 levels. At COP27 in 2022, hosted that year in Egypt, the CSN was represented by staff member Isabelle Ménard, who was involved in the climate negotiations and took part in ITUC's daily strategy meetings. Among other things, Isabelle summarized the previous day's talks to guide our next steps and our meetings with political parties, environmental groups, and Indigenous groups. The CSN followed most closely the discussions on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which provides for market mechanisms such as cap-and-trade and carbon offset programs. Attending this international conference enabled us to boost our influence and to network with partners we would not necessarily have had the opportunity to meet in Quebec.

**ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS** from COP27 is that wealthier countries acknowledged their responsibility for the impacts of climate change. In the agreement, this is conveyed by the term “loss and damage.” Concretely, the countries that emit the most greenhouse gases agreed to compensate certain other countries by way of a monetary fund. In addition, the final text produced by the negotiations provides for the development of a just transition plan, to be implemented by all signatory countries.

## BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE (COP15)

**Like COP26 and COP27, COP15 was a follow-up on a framework agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, signed by all the countries in attendance at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio.**

**THIS WAS THE FIFTEENTH ROUND** of international negotiations, in which the targets negotiated during the year must be agreed upon at a major conference. The CSN was represented by five delegates. The large delegation was made possible by the fact that the conference was held in Montreal, rather than China as originally planned. Despite the relocation, COP15 was chaired by China.

**THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THE CSN** has participated in a biodiversity COP. There were a total of eight delegates from other unions, forming a very small union contingent out of the 18,000 people in attendance at COP15. The target established at COP15 is to protect 30% of the planet’s surface<sup>1</sup>. Other priority issues included protecting threatened and endangered species by 2030, restoring natural habitats, reducing pollution, eliminating single-use plastics, and reducing pesticide use. The Kunming-Montreal Framework is ambitious. The countries in attendance adopted 23 targets to be achieved by 2030, despite the reluctance of some African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Namibia, and Uganda.

**WHEN WE ATTEND COPS**, the CCEDD receives a report on the negotiations and suggests directions. Our recommendations are established based on progress in the negotiations and our own discussions of the factors liable to affect workplaces and as to where the impacts of climate change and/or biodiversity loss are most likely to have implications for workers.

## RÉSEAU INTERSYNDICAL SUR LE CLIMAT (INTER-UNION CLIMATE NETWORK—RIC)

**THE COMMITTEE WAS AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE RIC.**

**THIS GROUP IS A FREE**, voluntary association of union organizations created to respond to the climate emergency and its impacts, which are already being felt in the workplace. The RIC brings unions together to discuss current issues that affect them. These discussions about how to fight climate change can help make RIC members more effective within their own organizations. The goals of the RIC are to develop union expertise on climate change issues, determine how workers and workplaces are affected, share knowledge, discuss union initiatives, and present webinars on current issues such as the just transition and digital sobriety. The RIC also holds brainstorming sessions on potential links between the fight against climate change and other social struggles, and publicizes unions’ environmental efforts. The Committee also took part in climate protests organized by the RIC and civil society partners.

## SUBCOMMITTEE — FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT

**The RIC set up a coordinating structure, which led to the creation of working subcommittees to consider fossil fuel divestment by pension plans on behalf of the RIC.**

**THE CSN IS ACTIVE ON THE SUBCOMMITTEE** on fossil fuel divestment, particularly as concerns the RREGOP. Sébastien Collard, founder of the “Sortons la caisse du carbone” (Breaking Out of the Carbon Box) coalition, represents the CSN on this subcommittee. The subcommittee’s role is to discuss the effects of fossil fuel divestment on the short- and medium-term yields of pension funds managed by the Caisse de dépôt et de placement du Québec (CDPQ). The goal is to ensure that we do not exceed the target set in the Paris Agreement, which is to limit the average global temperature increase to 1.5° Celsius.

<sup>1</sup> For the time being, 17% of lands and 8% of seas are protected in the whole world.



## FORESTS — ALLIANCE BETWEEN FIM—CSN AND NATURE QUÉBEC

**We are very concerned about the health of the forest and the protection of woodland and mountain caribou habitat in the context of climate change and other international issues.**

**THESE FACTORS MUST BE TAKEN** into consideration by the government and others who implement forest management policy in Quebec. The Fédération de l'industrie manufacturière (FIM—CSN) and the CSN believe that the current policy is depleting the forest and the short- and medium-term timber supply. It also compromises the protection and creation of jobs in rural areas, where economic diversification has often been slower. The Committee urges the government to implement an economic transition that is both green and just, to soften the impact on workers and their communities. Quebec's Ministry of Forests, Wildlife, and Parks (MFFP) has launched two important consultations: one on the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Forest Management, and one through the Independent Commission on Woodland and Mountain Caribou. The CSN and the FIM—CSN submitted briefs to each consultation. These briefs were extensively discussed and the proposed solutions were publicized in the affected regions. We believe the current forest management policy needs to be updated. A broader communications strategy and search for solutions has been put into place, leading to the formation, last spring, of an alliance between FIM—CSN and Nature Québec. At the time of writing, our alliance awaits a meeting with the Minister of the Environment and the Fight Against Climate Change, the Minister of Forests, Wildlife, and Parks, and the Minister of Natural Resources and Forests. At these meetings, we will present the ministers with short- and medium-term solutions that we believe could support a just, green economic transition.

## MINING INDUSTRY

**For years, the Committee has supported the “Pour que le Québec ait meilleure mine!” coalition's demands on mineral management.**

**DURING THE LAST THREE-YEAR TERM**, the Quebec government released its Plan for the Development of Critical and Strategic Minerals 2020–2025 (with regard to cobalt, nickel, graphite, copper, and lithium, all essential to the production of electric batteries). As the transportation sector is responsible for 44% of Quebec's GHG emissions, the Legault government is aiming to have 1.5 million light electric vehicles (30% of the current number of cars ) on the road by 2030, in order to reach its GHG reduction targets. This will require increased mineral extraction. Consequently, Quebec is seeing an explosion of mining claims, which give mining companies the right to extract our minerals and could have major environmental and socioeconomic impacts in many areas. Claims are regulated by the Mining Act, which dates back to 1889 and encourages the “click and claim” method for staking claims without any preestablished criteria. The Confederal Committee supports a recommendation to impose a moratorium on new claims and exclude certain areas from mining activity. Two Committee members are part of the coalition. The CCEDD is also interested in the issue of digital pollution, which is leading to the use of ever-increasing quantities of minerals.

## LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS (LNG) AND PIPELINE PROJECTS

**The Confederal Committee also examined GNL Québec's Énergie Saguenay project, which called for construction of a 750-km pipeline between Ontario and the city of Saguenay, as well as a liquefied natural-gas pipeline and an export terminal in the Saguenay region.**

Natural shale gas from Alberta is a major contributor to GHG emissions, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has said its use should be gradually phased out. In light of this controversy, the withdrawal of the main investor, and a lack of public support, the project has been completely abandoned.



## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

**The Confederal Committee continues to monitor the REM de l'Est project on the Island of Montreal.**

**COMMITTEE MEMBER DOMINIQUE DAIGNEAULT**, who is also president of the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain, is supporting the Collectif en environnement Mercier-Est, a citizens' collective that is calling for a moratorium on the project pending a serious study of the impact of the elevated tracks. They also point to problems with the project's governance and are demanding to be consulted on the choice of route. Finally, the group is calling for CDPQ Infra (Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec) to accept the recommendations of the Bureau d'audience publique sur l'environnement (Environmental Review Agency, or BAPE). The Confederal Committee will continue to monitor developments. We have also followed development of the Quebec City tramway and the proposed "third link."

**THE CONFEDERAL COMMITTEE INTENDS** to continue these discussions and analyses during its next term.

## ENVIRONMENT SECTOR WORKFORCE COMMITTEE — ENVIROCOMPÉTENCES

**The Confederal Committee is following the work of the EnviroCompétences committee with interest.**

**THIS SECTORAL WORKFORCE COMMITTEE** spearheaded an initial, broad discussion of the effects of the green transition<sup>2</sup> on the workforce and the labour market, bringing together a group of 24 experts, including Isabelle Ménard, union advisor with the CSN's Health, Safety and Environment Service. Following the consultation, a symposium on forecasting labour needs, the role of stakeholders, and workforce training was held in October 2021. EnviroCompétences commissioned the Institut de la statistique de Québec to evaluate the impact on the workforce of the Quebec government's Plan for a Green Economy. A steering committee was also established, chaired by the Commission des partenaires du marché de travail, which produced a number of reports that have been discussed by the CCEDD. This issue is likely to become increasingly important in labour relations and the environment.

## MONITORING REGULATIONS

**Many industries are affected by municipal, provincial, and federal environmental regulations.**

**IT IS THEREFORE IMPORTANT** to monitor regulations in order to preserve jobs and protect the environment and public health.

**THE CONFEDERAL COMMITTEE** is currently monitoring the development of federal regulations, currently being drafted, for a just, inclusive transition. Natural Resources Canada has launched a consultation on how to improve the law, and the CSN has submitted a brief. The Confederal Committee also continues to monitor waste-management regulations, the plan to lower air-quality standards for nickel emissions, climate change issues, and the federal Species at Risk Public Registry.

**IN CONCLUSION**, we can state that over the past three years, the Confederal Environmental and Sustainable Development Committee has taken every opportunity to promote the Confederation's positions and ideas at every level of government and in the public sphere.

**AS WE STATE AT THE BEGINNING** of this report, there is no denying that environmental issues are of the utmost importance in 2023. We believe it is imperative that the CSN engage in broad reflection on the issues related to the just transition and the impact of climate change on all of our workplaces.

**AFTER THE 67<sup>TH</sup> CONVENTION**, and in light of the recommendations that will be discussed there, the Confederal Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development will continue its analysis and reflection on all relevant matters as they arise. We will consider the particular issues that impact workplaces and job protection, while also remaining broadly focused on the preservation of the planet. The environment is our concern, and everyone's concern!

2 ENVIROCOMPÉTENCES. Rapport exploratoire sur la transition verte, les changements climatiques et leurs impacts sur l'emploi et la formation de la main-d'œuvre, 2021, 67 pages.









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