



# Good Jobs Summit Workshops

---

## Getting started in the labour market - workshop synopsis

Participants heard from a panel of experts that included:

[Gerald Hunt](#) – Director, Centre for Labour Management Relations

[Bilan Arte](#) – National Deputy Chairperson, Federation of Canadian Students

[Sarah Watts-Rynard](#) – Executive Director, Canadian Apprenticeship Forum

### Group discussions:

Participants approached this workshop from a variety of perspectives. Many had children in university or entering the workforce, some were students, and some were in the process of looking for work. There were also several teachers present.

Much emphasis was placed on the need for a national strategy, but it was also noted that provinces may push back against standardization. It was suggested that a national strategy could have provincial accountability, or that a national role in funding would not take away provincial control. Local strategies were as prominent as national strategies in the discussion (in terms of frequency of reference).

There was an appreciation that labour, government, and the private sector all have a role to play in developing skills relevant to the workplace, but the general feeling was that the private sector is not doing enough, and legislation could be devised that creates an incentive for the private sector to make investments in skills development. Many participants thought that paid internships and apprenticeships were a critical element of the private sector's needed commitment to skills development.

It was mentioned several times that there ought to be some sort of mechanism for communication between the labour market and educational institutions. This is particularly important for ensuring that technological shifts in particular fields are reflected in corresponding education systems, as well. But it was also stressed that educational institutions must retain their independence.

Links between high schools, trade schools, and institutions for post-secondary education (PSE) also need to be developed and fostered; information about jobs and services that are in demand and in need of resources needs to be made available to students in the future. Some examples given included: the creation of a more robust co-op system for students; exposing students to a variety of occupations at a younger age; creating a system that requires or



strongly encourages employers to hire and train apprentices to a certificate level; and the expansion of mentorship programs that challenge the disconnect between younger and older workers.

Another suggestion was to hold discussions and forums with high school students about jobs and education programs available in the future. Students should be provided with current and up-to-date information about job opportunities, rates of pay, how to manage their work/life balance, unionization, and more. It was stated that students should have a fuller understanding of the trades.

It was also suggested that educational organizations could expand skills training programs to provide a broader, more holistic approach to teaching life skills. For instance, participants suggested that students should not be “streamed” into “university” or “applied” pathways at such a young age; they should retain their options as long as possible.

Some thought that youth employment strategies should ensure that educational institutions are accountable for the employment outcomes of their graduates, and that government incentives should exist for each industry to hire students trained in the field.

There was broad consensus that the education system requires more funding in order to help relieve the burdensome debt that students carry with them as they seek to enter the employment market. It was agreed that the long-term sustainability of the system must nonetheless remain a priority.

It was also stressed that we ought to retain a broad understanding of the value of formal education, and appreciation for the fact that there are many equally valuable ways to be educated.

#### **Most important phrases and concepts:**

- Paid internships and apprenticeships
- Access to and funding for education
- Employer responsibility and incentives in creating jobs and training
- Stronger relationships between all levels and types of education and government in labour force development
- Need for national and local strategies
- Need to shift to more full-time jobs



## Green Jobs - workshop synopsis

Participants heard from a panel of experts that included:

David Lindsay – President and CEO, Forest Products Association of Canada

Keith Brooks – Blue Green Canada

Van Jones – Green jobs advocate and former advisor to US President Barack Obama

### Group discussions:

This was a well-represented workshop with Canadians from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, British Columbia, Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia in attendance. This group included industry workers from such industries as pulp and paper, forestry, mining, transit, and manufacturing, as well as a representative of the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition. There were also several teachers and a researcher present.

There was plenty of discussion around financial incentives for addressing negative trends and promoting a green economy. This means providing financial incentives (such as tax breaks for transit, retrofitting, using “green” energy, etc.) for environmentally-friendly practices, and make environmentally detrimental behaviour more expensive (such as taxing polluters). There was a general optimism that there are legislative solutions to be found, and therefore emphasis was placed on the responsibility for both federal and provincial governments to take the lead.

Along these lines, there was a sense of wariness across many of the groups about the effect of Free Trade Agreements on Canada’s ability to make these important governmental decisions. Concern was expressed that these agreements can at times make it difficult to pass progressive legislation. Many groups focused on the need for grassroots involvement in this change. Examples of this included community rooftop gardens, pay-as-you-save programs, and increased use of bikes. While some stressed national strategies, others claimed that changes to provincial policies are the most important changes to be made. It was also noted that rural solutions are not going to be the same as urban solutions in many cases. The solution for Toronto may not be the solution for Moose Jaw; more regionalized strategies are needed to address this distinction.

One broad priority identified in the session was education, citing the importance of starting early and educating younger students rather than attempting to introduce eco-friendly concepts at the post-secondary level alone. This starts with the basics: teaching kids healthy eating habits, about recycling, and promoting behaviour that is respectful both to themselves and to the earth. Scientific research, both environmental and demographic, was also raised as a critical element of an ongoing commitment to learning.



Green energy was raised many times throughout the workshop, but there were some conflicting views as to the best approach. Some felt that governments should focus their energy on only a single form of alternative energy, while others proposed a broad mandate. While there was support for training people for the green economy, some were wary that we ought not to prepare for an economy that does not yet exist. Others still stressed that funding must come before any meaningful economic conversions take place, and therefore training for a green economy would need to go hand-in-hand with increased funding commitments from the government to support the green economy. While opinions on oil and gas varied from increasing levies and removing subsidies, to leaving our oil and gas in the ground, there was broad consensus that the unobstructed exploitation of our fossil fuel resources is leading us in a dangerous direction and that we must be more responsible with our natural resources. A price for carbon seemed to be a generally accepted idea.

Some agreed that investments, such as major transit infrastructure changes, that aid in the development of a green economy should be the responsibility of government and that public-private partnerships should not be considered a fulfillment of this responsibility. Others felt the government's role should be to press businesses to be more environmentally progressive. One participant noted that any given government is a government elected by the people and voters must take some responsibility for the decisions of their elected representatives. Across nearly all groups, a general concern was expressed for the children that will inherit the ecological mess we leave for them if we don't do something to change our course.

#### **Most important phrases and concepts:**

- Concern for children's future
- Investment in energy efficiency and green energy technologies
- Progressive transit infrastructure projects
- Green jobs are the future
- Legal restrictions and tax or pricing on pollution
- Incentivise good practices
- Beware of trade agreements

## Innovative Models - workshop synopsis

Participants heard from a panel of experts that included:

Avvy Go – Clinic Director, Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic

Robert Laplante – Director General, Institut de recherche économie contemporaine (IREC)

Steve Shallhorn – Executive Director, Labour Education Centre (LEC)

### Group discussions:

The idea of a “youth job guarantee” elicited a variety of responses. Some felt it was a great idea, some felt that it ought to apply to all graduates regardless of their age. A number of groups remained skeptical as to whether such a plan could ever be implemented. Generally there was sympathy for the idea of providing students with valuable experience in addition to typical post-secondary education, but it was acknowledged that the responsibility needs to be shared. Discussions concerning the relationship between the job market and post-secondary education were split: some felt that post-secondary programs ought to be adjusted in accordance with the demands of the job market, thereby creating a supply and demand relationship between the two; on the other hand, some suggested that we need to do more to push new industries to create the sort of economy we want, as opposed to allowing market demand to dictate the kind of economy we have.

Participants argued that there also needs to be some appreciation for the challenges faced by minorities and marginalized populations, and that consideration needs to be given to finding employment for those that need it most. Community Benefit Agreements are one way of tying communities in need to job opportunities, and the proposal did receive support in the workshop groups. However, attention was paid more generally to strategies that can help create apprenticeship opportunities that advance the careers of young people and expose them to good employment and good work habits. For instance, if Community Benefit Agreements amount simply to work that lasts as long as the project lasts, then workers will just end up back on Employment Insurance. These projects, it was argued, need to leverage more long term employment prospects for the community as well.

There was strong support for local, value-added goods. The principle of buying Canadian-made goods and supporting Canadian businesses and institutions was a recurring theme, but beyond that there was an appreciation for more local businesses, goods and services. It was acknowledged that sustainable planning is required. There was openness to the idea of government policies that help ensure resources are processed at home and that value is added domestically to those products before they are brought to the global market.



Mentioned was made of a number of international examples that Canada could and should consider following. One suggestion was to experiment with public-private partnerships in the development of high level public policy, similar to those pursued by the South Korean government. Québec's *Plan Nord* was another example of northern resource development that some participants felt could serve as a model for the rest of Canada, as was Finland's model of youth employment.

There was an appetite for investment among many, and a conviction that we must begin to reinvest in innovation. There was also an appreciation that investment is an inherently risky venture, but that governments must shoulder some of this risk in order to invest in critical development projects and research that will help direct us in the future. This was specified to mean that balanced budgets should not come at the expense of necessary investments; on the business side of things, balanced budgets should not come at the expense of well-paying jobs. An effort needs to be made to find more creative ways to balance budgets rather than "unimaginative" approaches such as downsizing and removing redundancies.

**Most important phrases and concepts:**

- Everyone plays a role and needs to contribute
- Models must be green and sustainable
- Better/expanded training opportunities
- Recognition of challenges faced by minority groups, disabled persons, and older workers
- Support local companies and small businesses
- Government needs to forge ahead with new, smart investments



## Minimum and Living Wage - workshop synopsis

Participants heard from a panel of experts that included:

Anita Khanna – Coordinator, Social Reform and Ont. Campaign 2000 at Family Service Toronto

Dena Warman – Policy Development Officer, City of Toronto

Diane Dyson – Director, Research and Public Policy, WoodGreen Community Services

### Group discussions:

There was near-consensus that raising the minimum wage is a good start, and that living wages have been shown to reduce turnover and stimulate local economies. But, it was argued, if the cost of living continues to climb at the rate it is, we won't be able to sustain indefinite increases to the minimum wage over the long run. This was identified as a significant dilemma both domestically and internationally. One suggested solution to this is the indexing of the minimum wage in order to ensure that it goes up along with the cost of living or the rate of inflation. There was an appreciation for the fact that some significant costs can be shared with an increased measure of social assistance. For instance, a lack of national pharmaceutical coverage, insured dental care and affordable child care were three examples that emerged from discussions about the burdens and barriers that keep people out of the labour market and trap those in precarious situations.

It was acknowledged that these responsibilities can be shared both by government and employers, but there was some skepticism as to whether or not the private sector would willingly accept its portion of the burden. Government is therefore expected to legislate and enforce fair wages by some. One such example was minimum hours of work based on the demographic, with students guaranteed less hours comparatively than a mother of two. Positive, incentive-based ideas were also put forward. It was suggested more than once that raising awareness about employers and companies that fail to live up to basic employment standards can be an effective way of creating market conditions that pressure decision makers to change their practices. In addition to legislating and regulating fair wages, the government's responsibility was understood as leadership in a more fundamental sense. It was argued that government contractors and all the workers they employ should be afforded the sort of fair wages, employment standards and benefits that we hope for industry to match, and that all levels of government could adopt minimum or living wage standards that set an example for employers to follow.



In several groups a recurring theme was electoral reform and proportional representation. This was raised in conjunction with the suggestion that allies of this cause (businesses, labour groups, community groups, etc.) work together to pressure governments to enact some change. This sort of change requires new legislation, but also means investments in enforcement and an effective system of incentives. Temporary work agencies were used as an example of a key cog in our economic wheel that needs to either be regulated in order to ensure more fairness in the workplace, or closed entirely. Taken together there was a strong indication that participants saw government as a potentially strong leader in this area, but that the current political climate and structure are not where they need to be in order to achieve this level of change. It was stated explicitly that we need to change both our laws and our culture in order to foster solidarity and ensure that no one is left behind. Education was another common thread throughout the discussions. It was argued that people need to be educated about their rights and opportunities, such as retirement planning. Participants identified that myths abound regarding the effects of minimum and living wages, and can only be dispelled through broader efforts at education.

#### **Most important phrases and concepts:**

- Legislate
- Myth-busting
- Promote it to business
- Organize/mobilize allies
- Mandatory cooperation
- Benefits (pharmaceutical coverage, child care)
- Fair and predictable hours
- Indexed minimum wage



## Organizing for Change - workshop synopsis

Participants heard from a panel of experts that included:

Dave Clark – Barista, SPoT Coffee, and SEIU Local 2 member

Nora Loreto – Québec City-based freelance writer and author of *From Demonized to Organized, Building the New Union Movement*

### Group discussions:

There was a deep appreciation that came through in this workshop of the difficulties that are faced by the labour movement today. Employer pressure and intimidation from management remains a perennial problem in the workplace and it was repeatedly acknowledged that the legislative and regulatory framework around collective bargaining is weighted toward employers making it more difficult to organise effectively. It was recognized that there is a need to balance the scales and level the playing field through legislation, but that is not the only challenge facing the labour movement today.

The employment landscape has shifted, and people were careful to point out that the models of organization have to shift as well. “Majority unionism” established in relation to a single, large employer does little for a fractured workforce increasingly employed in part-time and precarious positions. The need for “minority unionism” is growing, and existing unions need to take the lead and find ways to incorporate employees that could not otherwise organise. In-fighting was cited several times as a barrier to reaching this end, and an emphasis was placed on collaboration among both unions and community groups. Some concrete ideas included: Organizing Resource Centres like the one that exists in Winnipeg; tax incentives for employing unionized employees; organizing or eliminating temporary employment agencies; sector wide bargaining agreements; and supporting new models such as that of the Baristas in Halifax in their fight to organize precarious workers. There appeared to be agreement that the 50% +1 standard for establishing union representation is not working in the context of precarious workers, but comments ranged from a call for card checks, to scrapping it entirely.

A communication strategy designed to be effective in the contemporary world was identified as central to this shift. Use of social media was recommended, but more creative approaches to outreach that would allow organizers to get their message out into the community were called for. It was argued that this would have the dual effect of expanding awareness about the benefits of unions while also encouraging member engagement on a more accessible level. It was observed also that grassroots campaigns are conspicuously absent from many organizations. There was a call for closer ties to community groups and a need to engage in more one-on-one conversations about the state of organized labour. Increased grassroots



consultation and social media were complimentary recommendations that can both contribute to an inclusive model of organizing that attends to all of its members, in particular those who are traditionally marginalized.

**Most important phrases and concepts:**

- Combat employers pressure
- Collaboration between stakeholders
- Diversify union models and activities
- Better communication strategy
- Collaboration between unions
- Expand and enforce employment standards legislation
- Organize or cut temporary employment agencies
- Focus on inclusion (gender, immigrants, marginalized, disabled persons, racialized)
- Community organizing at grassroots
- Education regarding labour rights and unions

## **Precarious Work - workshop synopsis**

Participants heard from a panel of experts that included:

Michelynn Laflèche – Director of Research, Public Policy and Evaluation, United Way Toronto

Dr. Kendra Coulter – Professor, Centre for Labour Studies, Brock University

Alistair Woods – Chairperson, Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario

### **Group discussions:**

Particular models of organising were discussed in this workshop, with the Swedish model of sectoral bargaining being raised three times. The German model and the Worker's Organising Resource Centre were also raised again along with Employment Action Rights Network (EARN) in British Columbia.

There were a variety of voices echoing the sentiment that organising is increasingly difficult these days. The need for better education and increased awareness about labour issues and union practices was reiterated as an important priority. Better messaging, more outreach, and the need to remind people of the value of unions were all presented as approaches to achieving this end, as was the idea to educate young adults in schools about labour rights and the benefits of union membership.

The existence of unpaid internships was consistently identified throughout the workshop as an unfair model of exploitation. It was acknowledged that while internships can provide youth with valuable experience, too often students with co-op requirements, or unemployed graduates with no other options, are forced to take such positions, even when they are illegal in some provinces. It was observed that employment standards legislation is not always inadequate in and of itself, but is inadequately enforced, as was demonstrated in the enforcement blitz on unpaid internships in Ontario that resulted in the discovery of a large number of breaches. On a basic level, enforcement and education were two central themes that came up a great deal in this workshop, illustrating a dual approach to precarity in the workplace that does not require new legislation. On the part of labour, it was said that more needs to be done to communicate with and reach out to precarious workers, and to educate them about basic employment rights regarding pay, breaks, overtime and holiday pay, for example. The other side of the coin is to “crack down” on unproductive corporate behaviour and the exploitation of the workforce such as demotions after maternity leave and denial of mandated break periods. Particular attention was paid to marginalised workers and putting an end to racism, sexism, and discrimination of all kinds in the work place. Again, labour is seen as having an important role to play in promoting this objective.



Beyond education and enforcement, there were calls to reconsider our labour standards and try to develop a coherent set of legislations based more upon certain European models where wages are more equitable and sustainable, and value is placed on work-life balance. An example given was the German model, where labour plays a role in the creation of progressive legislation. It was noted that the Employment Standards Act makes it preferential in some ways for an employer to hire part-time rather than full-time employees. The government and the legislation it passes should not be contributing to this problem by incentivising part-time precarious work. Changes to the Labour Relations Act were encouraged in order to make it easier to organize. Temporary work agencies were again used as an example of unregulated entities that drive down the standard of employment rather than lifting it up.

Supporting local economies, upholding environmental standards and ensuring workplaces are free from all forms of discrimination were not neglected as issues connected to precarious work. The strength of local economies was noted to be an important counter-weight to an increasingly globalized economy that is competing in a race to the bottom.

#### **Most important phrases and concepts:**

- Equal pay for equal work
- Education about rights, legislations, policies
- More accountability from employers
- Appropriate compensation and benefits
- Make policies to end precarity
- Environmental standards
- Discrimination

## Rural and Regional Economies - workshop synopsis

Participants heard from a panel of experts that included:

Melissa Cook – PARO Centre for Women’s Enterprise

Joseph Leon – Co-President, AGS Automotive Systems and Tiercon Corp.

### Group discussions:

A theme that emerged early and was raised consistently throughout the workshop was the importance of incorporating indigenous populations into any model of northern development, specifically the need to offer them greater opportunities and include them more in development activities. This means more self-determination and powers of self-governance than are currently afforded to these populations, and granting more respect to traditional knowledge.

Frustration was expressed in terms of the exposure of rural economies to boom and bust resource bubbles. Stability is highly sought after, but many participants were careful to note that although resources remain a critical source of revenue and the driving economic engine in rural regions of Canada, it is important not to “put all our eggs in one basket.” One way in which this is continuously done is through the exploitation of raw resources without any process of adding value. Not only was the importance of having a domestic value-added sector frequently emphasised throughout the workshop, it was also stressed that these industries should remain local as much as possible. Part of the reason for this is that a secondary sector can bolster any local economy and help it to diversify. Another virtue to keeping businesses local is that the money generated in rural communities can remain in rural communities rather than flowing away to major multinational corporations that make their money on the exploitation of raw resources. Several voices encouraged Canadians to buy local and buy Canadian.

This strong emphasis upon regional solutions to regional issues was contrasted by two responses that urged Canada to develop a national or industrial strategy for rural development and several calls for federal and provincial regulation.

While several comments recommended tax incentives be used to encourage businesses to modernize their infrastructure to remain competitive, and to reward regional winners. It was also observed that rural communities don’t need a tax “handout,” rather they need a level playing field. For some, this leveling required that investments be made to keep a competitive cost of production, which would mean government investment in rural infrastructure and rural community social programming like daycare and education. For others it was about local control over resources. Sustainability remained an underlying imperative.



**Most important phrases and concepts:**

- Green industry
- Value-add in resource region
- Co-operation
- Local Solutions
- Work together with Aboriginal peoples
- Use economic/tax incentives



## Unemployed at Both Ends - workshop synopsis

Participants heard from a panel of experts that included:

**Michael Walsh** – Organiser, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canadian Federation of Students

**Laurell Ritchie** – Co-chair, Employment Insurance Working Group, Good Jobs for All Coalition

### Group discussions:

There was a great deal of emphasis in this workshop, as with others, on incentives for businesses to mobilize pools of unused capital to more productive ends. The range of incentives suggested was rather broad. For businesses, recommendations included instituting subsidies for those willing to employ apprentices, tax breaks for those that keep jobs in the country, and creating a program to incentivise hiring from certain key age brackets (among youth and the 40-plus worker) that are often left out of the labour market. This follows from the feeling that ageism and discrimination remain significant issues within the workplace today, particularly with respect to hiring practices.

It was also suggested that more could be done by governments to protect people from market fluctuations and unemployment. Concrete suggestions included: a wage top-up; regulating (rather than incentivising) age ratios within the workplace; extending Employment Insurance for mass layoffs, or forcing employers to pay into a fund to compensate for mass layoffs; and creating a threshold for retrained workers in the workplace to ensure they are not passed over. There was also a call for more meaningful and impactful legislation to prevent exploitation and improve employment standards, such as legislation against unpaid internships.

It was acknowledged that in working towards compensating for the shortcomings of the labour market, we must be careful not to do so at the expense of other groups. Inclusiveness remained an important theme throughout this discussion, both in terms of involving traditionally marginalized populations, and in terms of sharing the cost. Participants expressed the sentiment that now is the time for investment, and acknowledged that there are a variety of means available for stakeholders to do so. It was said that individuals need to invest in communities by supporting local businesses, and businesses need to invest in skills upgrading, retraining and apprenticeships. Here too governments were encouraged to invest in education in order to foster future generations of success. As a strategy, several voices called for stronger ties between the education system and the market. It was said that greater collaboration between the corporate world and the institutions that train the workforce of tomorrow would help ensure that Canadians can fill existing labour demands and we will not need to rely on



foreign workers. It was suggested that making English language courses and other basic education courses fully accessible would also help new Canadians adjust quicker to their new country.

Finally, political awareness and political action were repeatedly identified as key areas where change could begin to take place, and at times it was suggested that political change was a precondition for any further progress. This was emphasised particularly as a strategy among youth as they are typically an under-represented political demographic. It was suggested that harnessing even a fraction of the frustration that exists among youth and directing it toward positive political ends could reinvigorate Canadian democracy. Another observer noted, however, that any good movement needs meaningful stakeholder consultation; a dialogue needs to be opened and maintained to help move the issue forward.

#### **Most important phrases and concepts:**

- Greater role played by federal and provincial governments
- Paid internships and expanded training opportunities
- Broad inclusion of all age groups
- Opportunities/incentives to keep youth in school
- Regulation to protect workers
- Connecting training programs to labour market demands
- Improve and extend Employment Insurance