April 6, 2023 |

Briefs

Submission to BC's government Clean Transportation Action Plan

A pdf of the complete submission can be found here(358 KB).

Introduction

The BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the BC government's Clean Transportation Action Plan, a commitment under the Clean BC Roadmap to 2030. The BCFED represents more than 500,000 members of our affiliated unions, from more than 1,100 locals, working in every aspect of the BC economy. The BCFED is recognized by the government as a significant advocate for workers in BC, and we are committed to ensuring that workers' rights are maintained and strengthened through the necessary economic transitions to a low carbon future.

As UN Secretary General, António Guterres, said at the launch of the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report: "Our world needs climate action on all fronts — everything, everywhere, all at once."[1] And, in the same week, US President Biden highlighted that: "Every single solitary initiative required to deal with the environment creates union jobs."[2]

So, the labour movement in British Columbia has an exciting and challenging opportunity to play a significant role in addressing climate change. We are ready to build solutions for climate action and

aim to bring the collective strength of the labour movement to this challenge.

Our work on climate justice and jobs is guided by three foundational principles, and we encourage you to bring these approaches to your work on clean transportation and other sectors as you plan for a net-zero emissions future:

- **Labour-led and worker-centred**: Taking a “nothing about us without us” approach, the experiences, stories and insights of workers should lead this work, in particular, those most impacted by climate change.

- **Equity:** The impacts of climate change are not fair. Indigenous, Black and racialized workers, women and gender-diverse workers, workers with accessibility barriers and other marginalized workers and their communities bear much of the weight of climate impacts: losing land, being displaced, facing health impacts and, at worst, dying. First Nations land and title is a primary factor here. These communities should be part of this work, and job creation must include these equity-deserving groups.

- **Evidence-based**: This work should be grounded in climate science and knowledge (including Indigenous and other culturally relevant knowledge) with support from academic and community-based researchers.

The importance of clean transportation

Transportation is an area that both faces critical challenges and has the potential for significant solutions. This sector is the largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, responsible for 42% of BC’s total GHG emissions in 2020, mostly from personal vehicles and trucks.[3] This pollution has been increasing in recent years, except in the peak COVID-19 pandemic years where those who could worked at home.

Clean and just transportation solutions have the potential to tackle *both* climate and inequality challenges, two fundamental crises of our time. For most households, owning a car is the second

biggest expense and is out of reach for many. The right to affordable, safe and accessible transportation must be a critical part of any action plan for clean transportation.

Finally, the *job opportunities* in clean transportation are huge – from building out service and infrastructure construction in better transit systems to providing critical minerals for electric vehicles. Many BCFED members work directly in transportation, many more use transportation to support their work, many work in industries that are poised to support clean transportation, and we all move around in and between our communities. We are a significant stakeholder in this ongoing dialogue, and we urge you to consider our recommendations and meaningfully engage with us as you move ahead with these plans.

Labour recommendations

In order to meet the current opportunity to submit recommendations for the BC government's Clean Transportation Action Plan, the BCFED held a roundtable with affiliates on March 28, 2023. We offer some initial policy recommendations stemming from that conversation below, and we will be able to provide more depth later in the year.

General

We are encouraged to build on existing provincial and federal initiatives on clean transportation, but we are concerned that the current investments, actions and promises are not at the scale necessary to meet BC's and Canada's targets within the proposed timelines. We know that meaningful change requires substantial funding and significant concrete action, not incremental tweaks to the status quo. This needs to include up-front capital funding, as well as ongoing operational funding. According to the International Energy Agency, the required investment for clean energy is only an increase of two percent of GDP on top of existing energy investments before re-stabilizing at current levels in 20 years, and these investments increase GDP and jobs over that timeframe.[4]

A crisis of this magnitude requires huge industrial and technological shifts but will fail without accompanying cultural and behavioural shifts, and these are connected – we need the significant

level of investment in the former to make the necessary changes in the latter. For instance, providing free transit for youth 18 and under will develop transit habits that will extend into adulthood, but these habits will be undercut by an inadequate system that does not meet people's transportation needs. While personal vehicles are currently necessary in many parts of the province due to distance, weather, work, etc., there is lots of potential to improve our provincial public transportation system to make the cultural and behavioural shift from personal, often individual, vehicles feasible and desirable. This requires building more infrastructure, re-purposing unused infrastructure such as existing rail lines, and providing more service within and between communities throughout BC, utilizing different forms of transportation.

The lack of a system like this is a significant safety issue, in particular, for Indigenous communities, and the call for adequate and affordable transportation for safety and cultural connection comes from many Indigenous groups and reports such as the Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations, [5] Native Women's Association of Canada Poverty Reduction Strategy[6] and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).[7]

The benefits from this level of public investment must be tied to benefits to communities in various ways. First, we must ensure that the climate jobs created are good, family-supporting, unionized jobs with wages, benefits and pensions that allow workers to thrive. The federal government is tying its clean energy tax credits to the provision of prevailing wages but could go much further to ensure that these are unionized jobs, especially because the majority of those in resource-intensive industries impacted by these transitions are already unionized. Equity-seeking groups should also be prioritized within this job creation and targeted training and education should be provided. To support them in the workplace, training to ensure inclusive workplaces is critical, and funding for groups such as the BC Centre for Women in the Trades (BCCWITT) doing this important work should be increased.

Public ownership is another community benefit that should be foundational. Our provincial transit system is a story of failed privatization that puts profits above workers, customers and communities, and our affiliates are on the front line of this erosion of workers' rights: last year, ATU Local 1722 took to the picket lines in protest in Kelowna; and, currently, CUPE Local 561 members are striking in the

Fraser Valley. In the oil and gas sector, the Government of Canada provided over $20 billion in financial support last year[8] while oil and gas companies recorded huge profits – globally, five oil and gas companies reported almost $200 billion profits last year.[9] We need to put the public back into our existing transportation systems and explore public ownership of other clean energy solutions. Given the provincial government's commitments to Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG), public ownership and accountability ensures increased environmental and worker protections (and enforcement).

This is an opportunity for the provincial government to reaffirm its legislated mandate to fulfill the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) and its commitment to free, prior and informed consent for all impacted Indigenous peoples with regard to any expansion of critical minerals mining and new energy infrastructure including, e.g., new hydropower. This could include Indigenous governance and partnership, and First Nations benefit and revenue sharing.

We urge the BC government to:

- Invest at least two percent of GDP in the transition to a net-zero future, including a significant portion targeted to clean transportation given that transportation is the largest source of GHG emissions;

- Build a unified, provincially-owned and operated public transportation system across BC, bridging communities and making transportation accessible for all (echoing the UBCIC 2020 recommendation[10]);

- Ensure that the jobs created through these transitions are good, family-supporting, unionized jobs with priority for impacted workers within resource-intensive industries and equity-seeking groups;

- Invest in targeted training and education pathways:

    - Ensure Indigenous peoples have access to quality high school education to support their ability to become tradespeople;
    - Standardize high school trades programs and elevate them to building trades entry requirements;
    - Create gap programming and subsequent instruction for entry into building trades unions that can assist those who don’t have access or passed up the opportunity at the time to transition into a trade; and
    - Ensure that all apprentices are meaningfully supported for the full duration of their trade, e.g., childcare, travel assistance, school support, etc.;

- Increase funding to BCCWITT and other labour training and education initiatives to build inclusive workplaces;

- Ensure benefits from public investments flow to communities and First Nations, through putting the public back into our existing transportation systems and exploring public and First Nations ownership in other clean transportation and energy solutions; and

- Reaffirm its legislated mandate to fulfill the DRIPA and its commitment to free, prior and informed consent for all impacted Indigenous peoples with regard to any expansion of critical minerals mining and new energy infrastructure.

Transit

We urge the BC government to:

- Roll back privatization within BC Transit and TransLink and put the public back into public transit;

- Develop a two-year implementation plan with the goal of shifting from the unsustainable fare revenue model to fare-free transit, starting with immediately extending the Get On Board

program providing free transit to children 12 and under to provide free transit for youth 13-18;

- Invest significantly in increased transit infrastructure and service to ensure that transit is as efficient or more efficient than driving, and ensure accessibility for people with disabilities, those with health and medical conditions, seniors, parents travelling with children and others facing increased mobility issues;

- Continue to invest in Active Transportation initiatives to combine transportation modes: bike, scooter, walk, transit (and car if necessary); and

- Provide additional funding for local and multi-regional infrastructure and land-use decisions because “the best transportation plan is a good land use plan.”[11]

Electric vehicles (EVs) and infrastructure

We urge the BC government to:

- Accelerate zero emission vehicles (ZEV) targets given the positive uptake, tighten ZEV stringency, and accelerate and fund medium-heavy duty vehicle (MHDV) ZEV targets to ensure that electrification within industry is not falling far behind personal use [echoing recommendations from the Climate Solutions Council (CSC)[12]];

- Fund and incentivize the use of electrical vehicles and equipment, e.g., electric generators, including applying targets to public sector and contracted work, e.g., in highway construction, to increase the uptake of MHDV ZEVs;

- Work with BC Hydro to implement its Electrification Plan and to ensure the province is well positioned to electrify BC’s communities, economies and industries, (which requires massive system upgrade and expansion), including options for Indigenous ownership and/or equity interests in BC Hydro infrastructure and Indigenous partnership in clean energy projects. This

must also include a shift away from the current two-tier electricity pricing to not deter electrification (based on CSC recommendations);

- Continue the expansion of charging stations throughout the province, owned by public utilities to ensure quality of power and access and built with unionized labour:
    - Mandate the inclusion of charging infrastructure in existing and new public sector, community and business assets, such as post offices,[13] community centres, libraries, shopping malls and grocery stores;
    - Provide charging stations for various personal and MHDV sizes; and
    - Ensure charging stations are accessible;

- Encourage and incentivize working at home where possible to meet the target of reducing vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) by 25% by 2030, relative to 2020;

- Significantly invest in BC's critical mineral mining industry to support the necessary electrification, ensuring ethical and environmentally sound mining practices;

- Ensure public investment drives a value-added approach and supports a circular economy, from mining for the required minerals to manufacturing ZEVs and batteries to recycling; and
    - Develop and invest in local recycling programs and second-life applications for heavy metals, i.e., cars, batteries, etc.; make recycling mandatory for critical raw materials, such as those present in circuit boards, magnets used in disc drives and electric vehicles, batteries for electric vehicles and fluorescent lamps.

Marine, rail and air

We urge the BC government to:

- Ensure Shore power[14] is available and utilized at every port and terminal;

- Invest in the electrification of marine terminals and explore other clean options for mobile equipment running 24/7; ensure electrification does not lead to job loss;

- Continue to develop, implement and enforce an anchorage strategy that reduces GHG emissions;

- Re-invest in rail systems throughout BC and to neighbouring US states, including intra- and inter-urban systems, as alternatives to driving and flying; explore alternative fuels through pilot projects; and

- Explore alternative fuels and/or electrification for short-haul air and ferry transportation.

Conclusion

We are excited about the job creation opportunities outlined above in the shifts to clean transportation in the multiple sectors we represent, and we commit to doing our best to meet related government targets where there is adequate public investment and action to support us and our affiliates. However, we do caution that wherever there may be job loss or displacement due to these transitions, workers must be front and centre in government engagement so that adequate supports and plans can be put in place for any impacted workers. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the development of the provincial government's Clean Transportation Action Plan. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

[1] https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2023/03/20/the-un-just-released-a-landmark-climate-change-report-heres-the-timeline-it-gives-us.html?rf

[2] https://mobile.twitter.com/SeamusORegan/status/1639369930779897856

[3] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/climate-change/data/provincial-inventory

[4] https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/ad0d4830-bd7e-47b6-838c-40d115733c13/NetZeroby2050-ARoadmapfortheGlobalEnergySector.pdf (p. 81)

[5] https://highwayoftears.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Highway-of-Tears-Symposium-Recommendations-Report-January-2013.pdf

[6] https://nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/Poverty-Reduction-Strategy-Revised-Aug23.pdf

[7] https://bcwidebus.files.wordpress.com/2020/12/ubcic_publictransitbcwide.pdf

[8] https://environmentaldefence.ca/2023/03/21/will-budget-2023-eliminate-fossil-fuel-subsidies/

[9] https://foe.scot/press-release/offshore-workers-demands-take-on-government-inaction-and-industry-profiteering/

[10] https://bcwidebus.files.wordpress.com/2020/12/ubcic_publictransitbcwide.pdf

[11] Max Gardiner, Sustainable Communities Initiative, roundtable presenter

[12] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/climate-change/advisory-council/bc_climate_solutions_council_2022_annual_report.pdf

[13] See CUPW campaign: https://www.deliveringcommunitypower.ca/

[14] https://www.portvancouver.com/environmental-protection-at-the-port-of-vancouver/climate-action-at-the-port-of-vancouver/shore-power/