



## Labour Organizations

This section is for individuals and organizations that support, deliver, or provide environmental and sustainability education to the labour community, including workers and labour organization representatives and leaders.

### Outcomes

#### Members of the labour community will:

1. Acquire a good understanding of environmental issues and ecological concepts, and become involved in sustainable practices in the workplace

#### Sample Indicators:

- Members of the labour community understand the relationship between health and safety and environmental issues, and the importance of their own role in environmental protection.
  - They are well informed about environmental initiatives undertaken by their companies (e.g., environmental policies, use and impact of pollution control technologies, ISO certification, and energy conservation).
  - They are actively involved in workplace programs that reduce the negative environmental impacts of their company's practices, processes, and products, and they work with employers in effecting continual improvement towards environmentally sound and sustainable practices.
  - They relate sustainable jobs to a sustainable environment, and environmental protection to human health and a healthy economy.
2. Apply acquired awareness and understanding to further learning and involvement in the area of environmental legislation, policy, and practice in the workplace (pertaining to air, water, and soil pollution; toxic materials; waste generation, diversion, and disposal; purchasing; spill handling, reporting, and cleanup)



**Sample Indicators:**

- Members of the labour community become involved in workplace environmental activities in their union and industry, and seek to gain accreditation through courses on workplace environmental issues and related legislation (e.g., ISO certification, waste auditing, workplace health and safety).
  - They help initiate, participate in, improve, and promote workplace environmental programs.
  - There is an increased demand for **environmental education** certificate courses—which are made accessible to all workers, including shift workers—that focus on workplace environmental issues and legislation.
  - The number of toxic chemicals and spills, and the amount of waste generated decrease, and the amount of waste diverted to recycling increases.
3. Extend their awareness of and involvement in environmental issues beyond the workplace

**Sample Indicators:**

- Interest in and commitment to environmentally sustainable practices in the workplace carry over to home and family activities.
- Members of the labour community become involved in local community organizations, issues, and projects (e.g., improvements in public transit, rehabilitation of natural areas, Earth Day activities).
- Members of the labour community communicate their views and concerns regarding environmental issues to governments and agencies (e.g., through letters and deputations).

**Needs**

**Members of the labour community need:**

- Recognition by educators, legislators, labour, business, and community leaders that education is the key to addressing environmental issues
- An **environmental education** background provided by a provincial education system that offers a comprehensive education in ecological concepts and environmental issues; includes an examination of values, as well as the common and conflicting interests of the economy and the environment; and is designed with a dynamic learning relationship across all levels
- Improved technological education at the secondary school level in terms of an environmental and sustainability focus
- Education and training in areas related to environmental issues, environmental legislation, health and safety, and environmental technology
- Support, in time and funding, so that workers can participate in environmental training, programs, and activities
- Training to participate in the implementation of environmental management systems such as ISO 14000



- Cross-disciplinary, technical education enriched with a broad social and ecological ethic
- Access to university-level courses that include environmental knowledge and skills tuned to the workplace, technology, and the economy
- Life-long learning opportunities; access to continuing and adult education courses; restored funding for adult education
- Better integration between universities and community and technical colleges
- Training in “green economics” and “green production” delivered by instructors with local knowledge and involvement
- Improved cooperation between formal education systems and workplace training organizations to educate about environmental issues and solutions for business and industry
- Inclusion in mainstream education programs of information on topics such as sustainable design, **industrial ecology**, solar, carbohydrate, green and zero waste economies

## Strategies

### *Programs, Projects, and Policies*

1. Conduct research to determine the needs of labour community members with respect to knowledge of environmental issues and ecological concepts, and to determine the most effective ways to provide for those needs.
2. Ensure that technical education and training programs include an understanding of ecological **sustainability** and the means to preserve a healthy natural environment.
3. Ensure that future members of the labour community—and all students—receive comprehensive **environmental education** within the formal education system that includes
  - a) the relation of the natural environment to society, the economy, and technology;
  - b) environmental legislation, environmental issues in the workplace, and Ontario’s Environmental Bill of Rights; and
  - c) sustainable design, technology, and processes, and green workplace practices.
4. Create partnerships and share expertise between industry and the formal education sector in areas of environmental learning that pertain to the workplace (industrial ecology, environmental solutions, design for disassembly, life-cycle analysis, closed-loop systems)
5. Create more opportunities for flexible certificate programs and courses at colleges and universities that focus on topics such as the green economy, green production models, environmental legislation and regulations, and environmental management systems.
6. Create and expand programs and facilities, such as the Workers Health and Safety Centre, the CAW Education Centre, and Great Lakes United, that can provide education opportunities for members of the labour community and their families.
7. Provide workplace-based, on-site information sessions, workshops, and courses about environmental



issues, health and safety issues, environmental legislation, workers' responsibilities, and workers' rights. These programs should be provided through the initiative and involvement of employers, workers, labour organization leadership, and government agencies.

### *Resources*

1. Create a central clearinghouse website for environmental learning information. Topics would include environmental issues, sustainable practices and technology, environmental rights and legislation, and databases such as the National Pollutant Release Inventory. Link this site to company and labour organization websites.
2. Provide sources of information about environmental issues, legislation, and responsibilities and participation that are easily accessible to all workplace employers and employees.
3. Provide a network of resource people at the local and provincial levels who can consult with or provide **environmental education** to both employers and workers.
4. Provide information about model programs and resources that improve the **environmental literacy** of employers and workers.

### *Support*

1. Recognize and fulfill the Canadian commitment to **Agenda 21** (Chapter 36: Environmental Education and Training) to increase and improve **environmental education** for all citizens.
2. Develop and promote education policy in Ontario that recognizes **environmental education** as a key element in addressing environmental and sustainability challenges, and provides curriculum to produce ecologically literate graduates.
3. Provide funding and time for workers and their representatives to learn about environmental issues; health and safety issues; environmental legislation and employee responsibilities; and environmental technology, programs, and practices that pertain to their workplace.
4. Provide funding and commitment to adult environmental and sustainability education to enable adults to continue learning without economic penalty.
5. Recognize, support, and encourage local worker involvement and commitment within inclusive programs as an alternative to top-down policy driven programs.
6. Recognize and present awards to workers, labour organizations, businesses, industries, and institutions for excellence in **environmental education**, practice, and achievement in the workplace and in the community.
7. Support and promote local initiatives, projects, and events that provide opportunities for employers and workers to participate in positive environmental action in the workplace and the community (e.g., Earth Day, waste and energy audits, adoption and rehabilitation of natural areas).

*Please see Appendix 1 for a list of useful websites.*

