

Canadian Labour Congress

Prevent Cancer Campaign



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Congrès du travail du Canada

Canadian Labour Congress: Prevent Cancer Campaign

- *Because few governments in Canada have any regulations at all on the prevention of environmental cancer, the CLC has put the emphasis on labour-community campaigns to address immediate and local problems of carcinogens in the environment.*
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How can we change things for the better?

If we can generate a national network of cancer prevention campaigns, their success would be a major incentive for the re-regulation of carcinogens across Canada.

Environmental movement

The environmental movement is as important as labour in the campaigns for the prevention of environmental cancer.



The Scope of Prevent Cancer Campaigns

The scope of labour-community Prevent Cancer Campaigns is wide, so that campaigns could include:

- a) workplaces. Most campaigns will start in, and focus upon, workplaces because that is where workers work and where most carcinogens originate;*
 - b) carcinogens in the community. Again, most of these originate in workplaces;*
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Scope.....

- c) environmental pollutants and hazardous waste. For these, control measures to reduce public exposure are in order, but so far as prevention is concerned, we have to trace them back to the place of origin so that pollution can be reduced at the source. Again, the source is the workplace; and
- d) carcinogens in food and drinking water. With food, we have to stop carcinogens from getting into the food supply; with water, the tactic is the same in the form of use reduction and elimination of water contaminants. For the latter, workplaces are again the key, including farms.
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THE CAMPAIGN

The CLC Campaign has Four Parts:

- 1. Preventing Cancer in the Workplace*
 - 2. Preventing cancer in Community*
 - 3. Working with the community in coalitions*
 - 4. Making the most of the media*
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Part 1:

Preventing Cancer in your Workplace

*A Prevent Cancer Campaign in the Workplace has
Five Steps:*

Step 1

How to set up an investigative unit

Steps.....

Step 2

Identify What You Are Exposed To

-How to Identify what you are Working With

*-Mapping your Workplace for Potential
carcinogens*

*-Identifying materials that may be
hazardous*

Steps.....

Step 3

Researching Toxicity

How to Research Toxicity

-begin with WHMIS

-when WHMIS data is inadequate or incomplete

-when substances are not covered by WHMIS

*-where to get information on consumer products,
pesticides, radiation, wood dust, hazardous waste,
etc.*

Steps.....

Step 4:

Removing Carcinogens from the workplace

How To Remove Carcinogens from the Workplace

*-Elimination of Hazardous Substances or
Processes*

*-Substitution of Hazardous Substances in
Workplace Processes*

-Reducing Worker Exposure to Carcinogens

Steps.....

Step 5:

How To Plan For Change

How to go about the process of substitution

Step One – identify substances you wish to get rid of

Step Two – look for alternative substances

Step Three – explore the consequences of each alternative

Step Four – compare the alternatives

Step Five – decide

Step Six – implement

Step Seven – evaluation

Part 2:

Preventing Cancer in your Community

Step 1:

How to Link up with Community



Steps....

Step 2:

***How To Identify Carcinogens in the
Community***



Part 3:

*Working with The Community in
Coalitions*



Coalitions.....

Working in coalitions is not always easy. This is particularly true when Labour finds itself allied with environmentalists.

Much of the blame for this situation must fall squarely on the shoulders of the media who tend to report only on labour “unrest”.



Coalitions....

Few people who are not union members have any idea of the existence, let alone the scope and accomplishments, of union campaigns for public health, environmental sustainability, gender and racial equality or third-world development. On the other hand, some union members regard every environmentalist as a potential enemy. Education needs to be done on both sides.

Coalitions.....

Unions and community action groups have very different approaches to matters such as recruitment, group structure, group culture and group dynamics. Coalition members need to be consciously aware of these to avoid misunderstandings.



Part 4:

Making The Most of the Media



Terms for Carcinogenicity

The terms for carcinogenicity such as “human”, “animal”, known, probable and possible, suggest that some carcinogens are worse than others. From the point of view of a Prevent Cancer Campaign, they are all equally bad and they all have to go.

Terms.....

There is often a long list of “unclassifiable”. This means that there has been some doubt or argument about carcinogenicity. We should not use the “unclassifiable” list as the basis for substitution, except in rare cases of very temporary measures.

Terms.....

The same applies to “suspected” carcinogens: from the point of view of a Prevent Cancer Campaign, we treat all such substances as “known human carcinogens”. We do this because of the Precautionary Principle which says, among other things, that we always err on the side of precaution when, e.g., there is doubt about carcinogenicity to human beings.

JUST TRANSITION

The main elements of the CLC Policy on Just Transition for workers and communities are:

- *provision of alternative employment for workers displaced by the closing of unsustainable industries;*
 - *protection of income through Unemployment Insurance, CPP/QPP and income supplements;*
 - *support for communities to start new industries and increase public sector/services job creation;*
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Just Transition.....

- *preferential hiring for displaced workers;*
 - *education and retraining for displaced workers;*
 - *research and development for sustainable production; and*
 - *public investment funds for new sustainable industries and services.*
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Importance of Just Transition

Just Transition is important to Cancer Prevention for two main reasons.

First, the systematic banning of carcinogens, which the European Union is embarking upon, would have strong impacts on the livelihood of chemical workers and in the production-distribution-use cycle of the relevant chemicals.

Importance.....

Second, at the grass roots level, chemical workers will want to take part in Prevent Cancer Campaigns and need tangible assurances their livelihoods are protected and not sacrificed through the legitimate aim of protecting environmental health.

Conclusion

To prevent cancer we have to act collectively

- *through our workplaces, through our unions,*
 - through environmental groups,*
 - through coalitions among labour, environmentalists and social action groups*
- and -through our political system.*

Lifestyle – individual avoidance of carcinogens is important; but it is systematic change that produces the greatest results.
