

# STRONGER COMMUNITIES TOGETHER



Canadian Labour Congress

Congrès du travail du Canada



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## Stronger Communities Together

Municipal governments have a profound impact on the day-to-day lives of workers and their families and on the communities they work and live in. That's why Canada's unions are working hard to build strong, productive relationships between unions and local governments: we know that by working together we can build stronger and economically vibrant communities.

Our Stronger Communities Together campaign lays the groundwork for that mission by supporting candidates who share our values and objectives.

- We choose the communities where we know we can make a difference.
- We find, train and endorse candidates who share our values and objectives.
- We train campaign workers.
- We provide communications support to campaigns.
- We get out the vote.

Here's how we believe we can work together to build stronger communities.

### Infrastructure for stronger communities

Whether in a large urban city or a small or rural community, our local governments play a key role in building and maintaining the public

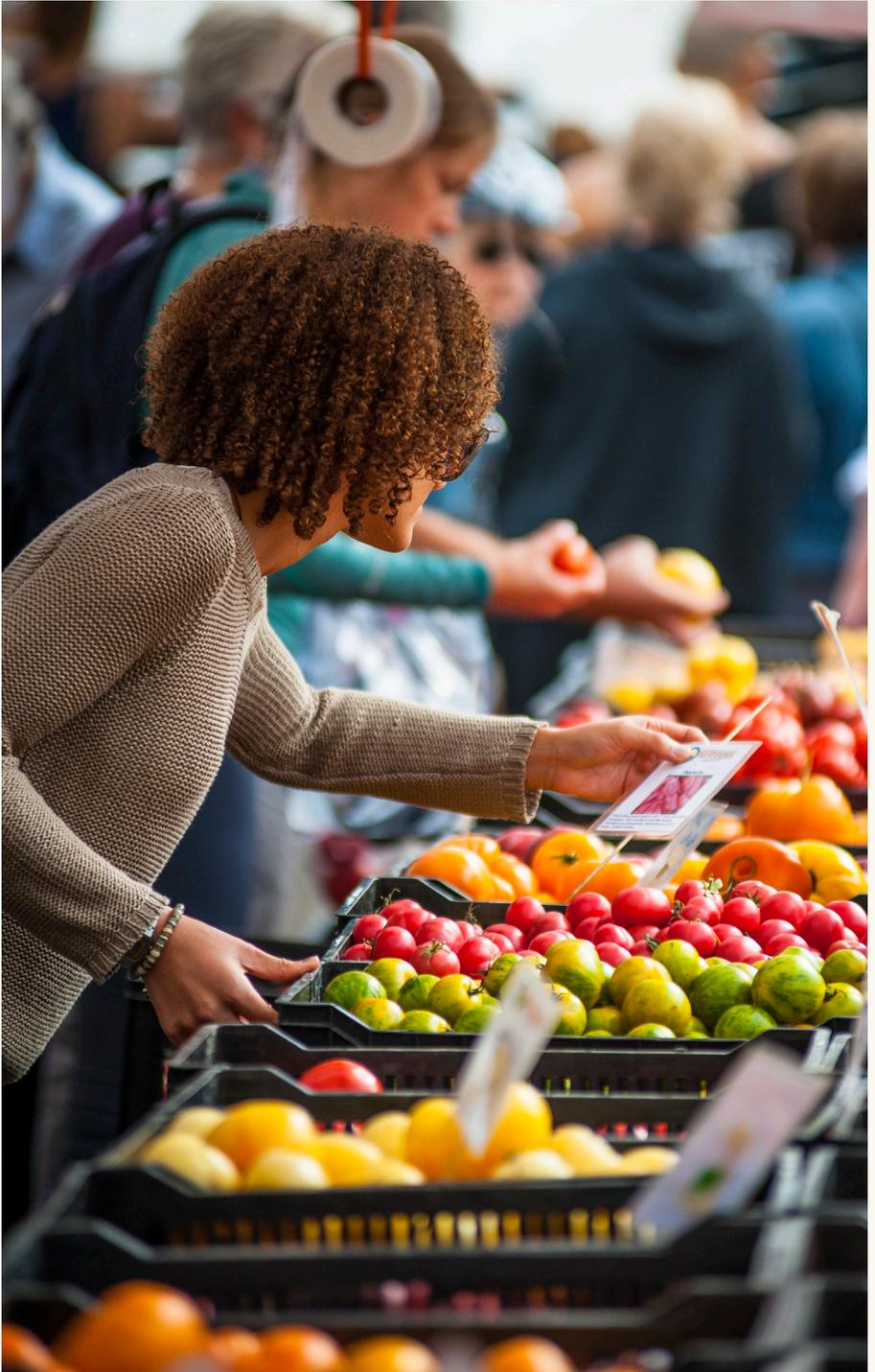
infrastructure that we depend on every day. But they need help.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities pegs today's municipal infrastructure deficit at \$123 billion—and that's just to repair what we already have. Another \$115 billion is needed to build new infrastructure to support a growing and aging population, and cope with other challenges like climate change.

The federal government can and should help. Canada is fiscally strong, with the lowest total government net debt-to-GDP ratio of all G7 countries. And compared to the rest of the world, it plays a relatively small role in funding infrastructure. That needs to change.

Investing in infrastructure will create good jobs and boost the economy today. Studies show that every \$1 billion invested in infrastructure creates 16,700 jobs and generates a return of \$1.64 billion in real GDP growth.

But investing in infrastructure isn't just about today. It's about leaving a lasting legacy that will improve the quality of life for generations to come. That's why we will support candidates who commit to working for long-term, predictable federal funding for both traditional and social municipal infrastructure, and to ethical procurement strategies that give back to local communities.



## Traditional infrastructure

We need to invest in our core infrastructure, such as public transit, roads, bridges, clean water, and wastewater facilities. This investment will improve our quality of life and our economy, helping municipalities deal with population growth, supporting the creation of good trades and public sector jobs.

## Social infrastructure



We also need investment in infrastructure that addresses our social needs. That means investing in child care centres, affordable housing, parks, libraries, rehabilitation and detox centres, and emergency shelters.

Canadians also want to live in cities that are safe and inclusive. In order to build inclusive cities, we will support candidates who commit to strong public services that ensure:

- Accessibility for people with disabilities

- Strategies for equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism and diversity
- Affordable housing and wrap-around community programs and services to prevent homelessness
- Programs to support immigrants and refugees, including declaring a sanctuary municipality designation and developing and implementing best practices around ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policies
- Preventive approaches to community safety and security

## Ethical procurement strategies

The single most effective economic development tool at a municipality’s disposal is its own procurement strategy.

Together, local governments in Canada spend about \$100 billion each year on goods and services. This purchasing power means municipalities can support innovative business practices, decent work, and high quality goods, services, and capital projects.

Municipalities across Canada are putting this opportunity into action. Sometimes called “sustainable procurement”, “social procurement policies”, or “ethical purchasing”, the frameworks and goals are similar. These strategies place value on more than just the lowest cost bids, explicitly including



environmental, social, and economic impacts in purchasing decisions.

Public purchasing policies can have broad benefits, such as reducing waste and energy consumption, developing economic capacity within marginalized populations, and supporting suppliers who have sustainable and ethical business practices.

Infrastructure investment works best when there are strong partnerships between government, business, unions, community groups, and workforce development agencies. These partners can work together to negotiate Community Benefit Agreements that ensure infrastructure projects meet objectives like:

- Creating good local jobs where infrastructure is built, especially for communities facing high unemployment, and equity-seeking groups facing systemic barriers in the labour market.
- Providing apprenticeship and training opportunities for local residents, and contributing to the expansion of local workforce development programs.
- Ensuring purchases are made at local businesses.
- Making sure developers contribute financially to affordable housing and environmental improvements.

More commonplace in the United States, Community Benefit Agreements are becoming the goal for many provinces and cities in Canada.

## **Sustainability for stronger communities**

Climate change is a crisis we can't ignore. We will support candidates who commit to ensuring infrastructure investments that address climate change in ways that both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create good jobs.

## **Building a green economy**

Municipal governments are already at the forefront of building a green economy, but we can do more, including rethinking the way we construct buildings, manufacture products and generate energy. We must rethink the way we transport ourselves, move goods, fuel industries, and heat our homes and businesses, while ensuring there is affordable green energy for all. We must foster local sustainable economies, provide equitable job opportunities, and contribute our

fair share to efforts that reduce environmental and social harm.

## **Renewable energy development**

Canada has enormous potential for production of electricity from clean, renewable sources of energy.

Our coastal regions and some inland areas provide excellent opportunities for harnessing wind power through wind farms. Some of our communities rank among the best in the world for solar power production. Others are particularly well suited for large-scale geothermal energy generation.

Canada is also one of the best positioned countries for developing tidal power. Our remote rivers and lakes provide opportunities for the limited development of community-based, small-scale hydro projects, and we have the potential to produce selected biofuels.





Transitioning to clean, renewable energy production means committed, coordinated, and effective leadership from all levels of government.

### **Public transportation**

If we are serious about shifting to a green economy, we need to reduce our dependency on cars. That means investing in expanding public transit and intercity rail. To be effective, public transportation strategy must be accessible, affordable, and accountable.

Canada will soon be the only G7 country that doesn't have high-speed rail, even though we're one of the world's leading producers of high-speed trains, equipment, and technology. We must use our homegrown expertise

to our own benefit and develop high-speed rail in Canada.

Public transit is good for the environment, it allows people to participate in their communities, and it provides good jobs in unionized transit systems and in the local manufacturing of buses, trains, and streetcars.





## Public services for stronger communities

Investing in quality public services that are accountable, accessible and locally controlled makes economic sense and means a better quality of life for everyone. But as municipalities struggle to find the funding they need for maintaining and building new infrastructure, privatization can seem like an easy out. History has shown that Public – Private Partnerships (P3s), contracting out and privatization ends up costing much more. And when profits trump public interest, the services we rely on are compromised.

The federal Liberal government has taken some positive steps, announcing in its 2016 budget that it would eliminate a requirement,

put in place by the Harper Conservatives, that all federally funded infrastructure projects worth \$100 million or more go through a Public – Private Partnership screening. It has also announced that in order to improve accountability, it will transfer the responsibility for Public – Private Partnerships Canada Inc. to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities.

These are welcome steps. But the Canada Infrastructure Bank is still promoting private investment in municipal and public infrastructure. The federal government has already commissioned feasibility studies for privatizing airports and marine ports, threatening important economic engines for many Canadian municipalities and regions.

The Auditor General of Ontario recently found that Public – Private Partnerships increased the cost of infrastructure projects by \$8.2 billion. A recent study by the University of Calgary’s School of Public Policy found that P3s often mean more risk for municipalities and higher costs for taxpayers.

That’s why we will support candidates who commit to ending any reliance on P3s and to promoting the public ownership, funding, and delivery of the infrastructure and services their constituents rely on.

### **Good jobs for stronger communities**

Good jobs, fair wages, and safe working conditions build strong communities. But today, one in four workers are stuck in low-wage jobs, and one in three are stuck in part-time or temporary jobs or tenuous self-employment.

Municipal governments have an important role to play in defending and creating good jobs in their communities. Insisting on fair labour standards for workers who are directly or indirectly employed by municipal governments is one element of an effective local good jobs strategy.

Municipalities must support campaigns calling for an increase in minimum wages, and related

improvements to provincial employment standards.

Living wage and employer recognition programs across Canada often supplement minimum wage and employment standards campaigns. All municipalities must support the right to decent work and a living wage that means earning enough to meet basic needs.

The growing income gap and poverty are the root cause of many social problems communities confront on a daily basis. That’s why we will support candidates who commit to reversing this trend, and to raising the bar for good jobs in their communities.





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