SUMMIT
BACKGROUND PAPERS

INEQUALITY CALLS FOR SOLUTIONS

By: Armine Yalnizyan

There's a lot of people worrying about poverty these days, and for good reason.

After 10 years of economic boom, contract and temporary jobs are more readily found by job-seekers than permanent employment. Almost 4 in 10 jobs are impermanent and part-time forms of work, and temp jobs have grown the most rapidly in the past decade. Half of all workers in the service sector, which provides 76% of all Canadian jobs, work for less than $10 an hour. Wages are stubbornly stagnant for most workers.

With incomes stuck in neutral for most workers and the costs of living soaring, affordable housing is increasingly hard to find in big and small cities alike. The fact that housing is not optional means that almost three-quarters of a million people use foodbanks every month, half of them households with children. That's almost double the usage in 1989, and up 8% since 1997. Even more households just do without.

If this is the landscape after a decade of remarkable economy prosperity, what happens when the bad times hit?

Poverty has dropped over the last decade because unemployment is at a 33 year low. When the jobs are there, people take them. But poverty rates are high in historic terms. And poverty has not become more "equal opportunity" – visible minorities, newcomers, aboriginals, the disabled and single mothers continue to have the highest rates of poverty.

You don't need to be in one of these groups to feel the pinch of these troubled times. A growing number of Canadian households are struggling to meet the rising costs of the basics – shelter, food and transit - and still put aside a little for the big things in life, like a home, their children's education, or their retirement. Even before a recession has hit the real economy, the roller coaster of the financial markets threaten to vapourize whatever hard-fought savings you've made.

We are heading into an economic slowdown in sad shape. At the peak of the fall-out from the worst recession since the 1930s, in 1984, the average Canadian household held debts worth about 70 cents on every dollar of income. Then, as now, mortgage debt made up the lion's share of this story, at roughly 62% of all debt households carry. But today Canadian households owe $1.27 for every dollar they bring home. We've gone from being a nation of savers to a nation of nail-biters.

This could all be yesterday's bad dream if better jobs start popping up like mushrooms on the job market. Or if income supports for those without work – or enough work – addressed the realities of paying the bills today. Or if we had policies geared to guaranteeing ensuring all Canadians had access to affordable basics like housing, education, and health care.

But that won't happen until we face up to the effects of growing inequality that has emerged in our landscape over time. This trend effects more than just paycheques and pocketbooks. It colours our view of who is entitled to what, why it is "natural" for some to have and expect more, and for others to have not and not expect more.

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The spectacular job creation juggernaut of the last decade in Canada has not translated to widespread income gains because so many of the emerging new jobs are in the bottom half of the pay scale. Far fewer jobs are being created in the middle, and hardly any at the top. It's just that those who are in these jobs are making more, lots more.

It's now common knowledge that most of the economic gains of this period of expansion have gone to those at the top. The mathematics of tax cuts – at least the kind introduced over the past ten years – means that the lion's share of these hundreds of billions of dollars have also ended up in more affluent pockets. That has produced a pile of already quite comfortable people who now have lots more disposable cash.

The primary effect of this windfall in the household incomes of some is to drive up the costs of housing for all, as people with the means enter bidding wars to get into the house and neighbourhood of their dreams. The ripple effect of this competition for the best results in the ratcheting up of prices throughout the housing market.

Think nothing can be done? Lots *is* being done, in cities and provinces all over this country. Governments everywhere are concerned about how to tackle poverty in a systemic, comprehensive way. They see the writing on the wall, and are looking for doable, meaningful steps to take.

You could start by setting terms on what is an acceptable, liveable wage, instead of just a minimum wage. Tackling the growth of temp work, and enforcing employment standards would be another . Or perhaps ease up the costs of getting a leg up on the competition, by investing in education, from pre-schoolers to life-long learners. But any of that would require government intervention, something Canadian governments have been stepping back from in the past couple of decades. Until now.

The events of the past few months south of the border have brought home to roost the reality that governments are not always the problem, and markets aren't always the solution. Governments are the *only* players in the mix that are equipped with the tools to help society achieve balance and justice, not just economic growth. We need governments to act, in the interests of ordinary citizens, not just businesses. And there has never been a better time for governments to act.

Armine Yalnizyan is a senior economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

This is part of a series written for the Good Jobs for All Summit.

WHERE DO GOOD JOBS COME FROM

By: Jim Stanford

How does a region or country create more "good" jobs, in order to support higher overall standards of work, productivity, and incomes? Canada's record on this score is slipping. And this contributes to both our poor standing in international productivity and innovation rankings, and to growing inequality between rich and poor.

The problems in Canada's automotive sector are a high-profile example of a much larger problem. The average auto assembly worker produces $300,000 worth of value-added per year – several times the productivity of other jobs. Consequently, auto jobs pay higher incomes: $65,000 per year on average, enough to comfortably support a family. The exports, the supply chain linkages, and the technological intensity of auto jobs generate spin-off benefits that extend far into other sectors.

Now, however, this traditional pillar of our prosperity is in crisis. 35,000 auto jobs have disappeared since 2001. For a while, those lost auto jobs were seemingly "replaced" by other industries (although with Canada entering recession, total employment is now declining). But most of those offsetting jobs don't remotely match auto jobs in terms of productivity and income.

This highlights a very important, but poorly understood, distinction between two broad categories in our economy. What economists call "tradeable" industries are those which aim to penetrate export markets, selling to far-flung customers. Examples of tradeable industries include agriculture, resources, most manufacturing, tourism, and some specialized high-value services.

Non-tradeable" industries, on the other hand, are those that serve purely local customers. For physical or economic reasons, non-tradeable products cannot be transported and sold over long distances. Examples of non-tradeable output include most services, very bulky or perishable manufactures, and construction.

The relationship between these two broad sectors is much like the structure of a building. Every building needs a foundation: a lasting, solid base to cement the whole structure in place. On top of that base, the higher floors can be erected. Those upper floors may ultimately make up most of the building. But without the base, they would collapse, and there would be nothing.

This analogy describes well the strategic importance of tradeable, or "base" industries. Every region needs a set of tradeable goods and services to justify why production (and indeed human settlement) is feasible there, in the first place. Those base industries then support a multiplied number of jobs in non-tradeables. Most jobs in society are in non-tradeable sectors – but without successful base industries, most of those jobs would not exist.

This relationship is clearest in a remote, one-industry community – like a northern mining town. Without the mine, the town wouldn't exist. Only a minority of people in the town actually work in the mine, but the whole town depends on it. For a province or country, the relationship is more complex (because there are usually several different base industries working at once). But without a foundation in those higher-productivity, tradeable industries, the economy cannot prosper.

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This analysis suggests that we need a double-barreled strategy to improve the quality of jobs, reflecting the very different circumstances of tradeable and non-tradeable industries. Normally, retail, hospitality, and similar jobs automatically spring up to serve domestic demand. Therefore, a country doesn't need to worry about attracting or stimulating a larger number of jobs in those sectors. In non-tradeables, then, our focus should be improving the *quality* of jobs – through measures like higher minimum wages and unionization.

In tradeable industries, however, every country or region must work pro-actively to develop a healthy portfolio of base industries – ensuring a good foundation of high-productivity, high-wage jobs to support the rest of the economy. Many policy tools can be utilized in this effort, such as investment incentives, science and technology supports, trade interventions (like Buy Canadian policies), and improvements in human and physical infrastructure. The goal is not just to support particular high-productivity facilities or industries. It is to reinforce the foundation on which the whole economy rests.

Working to expand and strengthen a region's portfolio of high-value, tradeable industries, was commonly called "industrial policy." Today, however, since high-value services (like culture, tourism, and finance) can play a similarly beneficial role, a better term is "sector strategies." The goal is to stimulate high-value export-oriented industries, the spin-off benefits from which support incomes and jobs throughout the whole economy.

Taking pro-active efforts to nurture targeted, high-value sectors goes against the grain of the *laissez faire* ideology that's dominated economic policy in recent years – according to which government should just cut taxes and get out of the way. But international experience (in Europe, Asia, and even the U.S.), as well as Canada's own history, reinforce the core lesson: it's only when we deliberately target and support specific high-value tradeable sectors, that we can expand our share of high-productivity, high-wage jobs.

Without a return to more active sector strategies by our governments, therefore, our prosperity will continue to erode, and inequality will continue to grow. By default, Canada will fall back on the production and export of unprocessed natural resources as our primary base industry – reinforcing our status as a "hewer of wood and drawer of water."

A well-rounded good jobs strategy requires a renewed emphasis on pro-actively supporting investment and employment in high-value, innovative "base" industries. In Ontario, it makes sense to build on our past high-tech successes – like auto and aerospace. But there are many other tradeable sectors (like green energy technology, life sciences, culture, public transit equipment, finance, and others) where we could also nurture world-class, high-value, export-oriented industries.

It will never happen by itself, however. It will only happen if we make it happen.

Jim Stanford is economist with the Canadian Auto Workers, and the author of "Economics for Everyone" (Fernwood Books).

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LET'S RAISE THE SOCIAL WAGE

By: D'Arcy Martin and Dominique Riviere

The people of Ontario need a raise… a raise in the social wage.

Free medical care, free education, public transit and other entitlements benefit us all, but are a matter of survival for people living in poverty. They constitute a *social wage*, a form of income that comes whether or not we receive the cash and benefits that accompany decent jobs. Raising the social wage means more than providing a "safety net" for people in poverty. It means ensuring that they have access to the mainstream of community life. Take the TTC's new "Transit City" initiative, for example. Although questions remain about fare levels and service disruptions, this service will curb the growing isolation of neighbourhoods just outside the downtown core, thereby sharing access to employment, education, health, social, and cultural services.

Across North America there have been campaigns for raising the minimum wage, and indeed for extending a living wage to all those who work. That's important in a GTA where a million people earn less than $30,000 a year, most of them racialized and most of them women. The Ontario government plans to raise the minimum wage to $10.25 by 2010, a worthwhile but insufficient step since it will still be nearly $1 per hour below the poverty line. We need to widen the conversation to include the income provided by universal public services to all those who live in our communities.

This matters in an economy where there is little sharing to be found. Research on the "Growing Gap" by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives shows that, in after-tax terms, the income gap is at a 30-year high. Moreover, Ryerson's Grace-Edward Galabuzi has shown that racialized communities are three times more likely to be poor than others because of the challenges they face in the job market. As we head into an economic recession, this polarization will worsen unless governments step up to strengthen universal public services, and other specific supports that are targeted to those in poverty, but which benefit our society as a whole. Such initiatives will require political nerve. While the provincial government has promised a plan on poverty by the end of this year, it will be under pressure to short-change it when the budget comes forward in early 2009.

Where is this pressure coming from? A steady drumbeat from conservative think tanks has maintained the message that all public deficits are bad, while all tax cuts that favour mostly the rich are good. Yet, has this neo-liberal spell been broken by the most recent display of greed and corruption in our financial elites? Are our governments getting their nerve back? If so, then they need to pay serious attention to raising and sustaining the social wage. They might remember that a rising tide will lift all boats, or follow Barack Obama's commitment to "share the wealth". This would be a victory of enlightened self-interest over narrow self-interest. It will require increased spending, but that alone won't be sufficient. From our research in urban schooling, and changing patterns of work, the following recommendations can be derived. Both will help those in poverty, but are not specifically targeted to them.

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Medicare

The recent series in the Star on aging has exposed the pattern of over-medication, under-staffing and institutional lethargy that so weaken the elderly. Importantly, the impacts are felt by all, although more harshly by those in poverty. Having public dental care and pharmaceutical care throughout the life course could be an investment in prevention of people's suffering in old age. The key here is that for-profit operations not take over the process. In a recent paper circulated by Canadian Doctors for Medicare, Dr. Gordon Guyatt from McMaster University points out that the key issue is not whether we should allow hospitals, and other institutions such as cancer clinics, to go private. Most already operate privately, whether run by community boards or religious orders. The issue is whether public funding will move from such not-for-profit to for-profit health care delivery. To widen the scope of the social wage in Canada around health would mean to have a public structure regulating the companies now making profits from dental equipment, from pharmaceuticals, from health insurance and so on, so that dentacare and pharmacare become entitlements rather than commodities.

Public schooling

Within Toronto and across the province, people are increasingly recognizing that public schools must become the hubs of their communities, and be provided with sufficient resources to perform that role. In 2006, the Toronto District School Board began its *Model Schools for Inner Cities* initiative, where select schools in some of the city's most underserved neighbourhoods received additional funding and resources to help support the academic and social success of students, their parents, and their families. These resources include parenting and family literacy centres, adult ESL/LINC programs, after school programs, hearing and vision screening for all residents, childcare for pre-schoolers, and community kitchens. Indeed, *People for Education's* 2008 report on Ontario's urban and suburban schools indicate that *all* schools should be "model schools", so that they address the widening income gap between white people and people of colour, increases in child poverty, and increased youth disengagement and disenfranchisement.

The end of the last speculative binge in real estate and financial stocks across North America is leaving citizens and governments to nurse a financial hangover of huge proportions. However, these two recommendations, along with others, can help Canada build on our existing programs to provide a model of thoughtful, equitable application of collective wealth, by raising the social wage.

D'Arcy Martin and Dominique Riviere are research officers at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

This is part of a series written for the Good Jobs Summit.

ENDING POVERTY:
The Role of Employment Equity

By: Grace Edward Galabuzi

Almost 20 years after the federal Parliament pledged to end child poverty by the year 2000, Canada still has one of the highest poverty rates in the industrialized world. An important part of the explanation for this sad reality is that, although the root causes of poverty in Canada are structural, they have not always been treated as such. Instead, poor people have been blamed for being poor, with poverty presented as a personal problem for which individuals should take moral responsibility.

This mis-diagnosis has had a devastating effect on anti-poverty policy, undermining government and community efforts. Another fact, which has been often ignored, is that poverty is not a generic experience. It is not colour blind or gender blind. Different groups in Canada experience poverty differently, and some more profoundly than others.

Today, racialized people are two to three times more likely to live in poverty than other Canadians. And their experience of poverty accentuates how vulnerable they already are, as racialized people, to life experiences of marginalization, hopelessness, voicelessness, and stigmatization. According to the United Way of Toronto report *Poverty by Postal Code*, in Toronto they made up almost 60% of poor families in 2001. Between 1981 and 2000, while the poverty rate dropped by 28% for others, it jumped by 361% for members of racialized communities.

Income disparities arising from unequal access to labour markets have an adverse affect on a wide range of social indicators of well-being, including a person's health status, housing status, educational attainment, and political participation. Equal access to employment and the availability of good jobs and good workplace conditions are essential to ending poverty and securing the full citizenship of all members of society.

A 2007 Statistics Canada study concluded that for many racialized people who are also immigrants, their place of birth has the strongest overall impact on the social inequality they face. From community dialogues done by the Colour of Poverty Campaign, we know that many racialized people, born here or not, say their racial identity is key to their experience of inequality in many areas, including in finding employment.

It is widely understood that employment is a key element of successful immigrant settlement. Today, the education and skill levels of many immigrants are higher than ever. Education attainment among immigrants arriving over a 30-year period, beginning in 1970, show a steady improvement. But employment income is in decline relative to similarly skilled Canadian-born groups over the last 10 years.

This is because opportunities in the labour market are not evenly distributed. Individuals and groups are excluded, implicitly or explicitly, from job opportunities, key information networks, human resource investments, professional development through key assignments, team membership, or decision-making roles, because of their identities.

Statistics Canada reports that between 1980 and 2005, recent immigrants lost ground relative to their Canadian-born counterparts. The employment income of immigrant men dropped from 85 cents for each dollar received by Canadian-born men in 1980 to 63 cents in 2005. The corresponding numbers for recent immigrant women were 85 cents and 56 cents, respectively.

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Recent immigrant men holding a degree earned only 48 cents to the dollar their university educated Canadian-born counterparts earned, while the earning gap for non-university educated immigrants was 61 cents to every dollar earned by their Canadian-born counterparts. The more educated the immigrant is, the greater is his or her drop in income.

Racialized workers and new immigrants are disproportionately over-represented in precarious work, as a consequence of their vulnerability. This translates into lower incomes and lower occupational status, and a disproportionate exposure to poverty.

Increasingly, their unequal access to employment is being compounded by economic restructuring and demands for flexibility, which have made precarious employment the fastest growing form of work, whether it's contract, temporary, part-time, piece-meal, shift work or self-employment. This, combined with historical racism and discrimination in employment, makes racialized groups more vulnerable in the Canadian economy.

The loss of well-paid manufacturing jobs in unionized workplaces, and the overall decline in Canada's economic performance, contributed to this disturbing phenomenon. However, the earnings disparities between recent immigrants and Canadian-born workers increased not only during the two previous decades, but also between 2000 and 2005, when the economy was doing much better. When income disparities grow in the midst of an economic boom, we need to ask what other factors are contributing to this problem.

Diversity will not be achieved by accident, but by the systematic setting of targets and goals in each workplace: in other words, through employment equity.

Employment equity infuses transparency in the processes that govern our access to and mobility in Canada's workplaces. It promises a comprehensive review of the policies and practices that engender various forms and manifestations of discrimination in employment. And, last but not least, it creates a culture that promotes the expectation of equality in the policies, practices and employment environment in our workplaces and in the Canadian labour market as a whole. Employment equity aims to achieve equal outcomes, or fair distribution, of opportunities.

To make progress in building equitable workplaces, employers need a formal and comprehensive equity plan to help them identify and eliminate barriers to equity in employment, and they need to set equity achievement goals not unlike the performance goals businesses set for their operation. And this process must enjoy the support of senior management. Employers also need a common framework within which to undertake these initiatives. As the Colour of Poverty campaign has argued, the best way to level the playing field for employers and for workers is to implement employment equity legislation. It is an indispensable part of an anti-poverty strategy.

Grace-Edward Galabuzi is with the Colour of Poverty Network and teaches at Ryerson University.

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ECONOMIC HARD TIMES CALLS FOR GOOD JOBS STRATEGY

By: Mary Gellatly and Sonia Singh

Premier Dalton McGuinty has warned Ontarians that the growing economic crisis means there is belt-tightening in store. But all too many Ontario workers in low-wage and precarious work have been tightening their belts for years. Working long hours at two or more low-wage jobs with no benefits or protection against violations of basic standards, Ontario workers have done their bit to adjust to a labour market that keeps them working in poverty. Many working families cannot tighten their belts any further.

Much attention has been paid lately to the failure of governments to effectively regulate financial markets which is fueling the job losses in manufacturing and economic slowdown here in Ontario. What has received less attention, however, is how deregulation of our labour laws are enabling employers to push more and more jobs beyond the reach of regulation into low wage substandard work. Central to rebuilding our economy is the establishment and enforcement of a basic floor of employment standards that will raise those who work out of poverty.

People like Norma, a Workers' Action Centre member, have spent years going from one lousy job to the next with little protection against unpaid wages and other violations. Norma earned little over minimum wage at her last job cleaning for a large grocery store chain. But because she was hired indirectly through a contractor she had to jump through hoops to fight for her wages. After weeks of trying, and with the support of the Workers' Action Centre, Norma finally won her pay. But she is still waiting for the Ministry of Labour to make a decision around another cleaning company that also owes her wages for cleaning a popular Toronto restaurant. Norma continues to look for other work – but finds that the only options open to her are more cleaning jobs, working indirectly through temp agencies or contractors for low and insecure wages.

Norma's story paints a picture of a reality where many in Ontario are working, yet still living in poverty. One in four Ontario workers earns $10 an hour or less. Over 650,000 Canadians work long hours but are still stuck in poverty. Nearly half of low-income children live with parents who work full time all year long yet they are unable to earn wages that can lift the family out of poverty. Between 1980 and 2000, the poverty rate for non-racialized populations fell by 28% in Toronto, but poverty among racialized families rose by 361%.

Norma's experience is also typical of all too many workers in an increasingly deregulated labour market with outdated and unenforced labour laws. Without effective regulation, employers have been able to create work that shifts the costs and responsibility for its workers on to temp agencies, small contractors and ultimately to workers who can least afford it. For example at the Workers' Action Centre we have worked with cleaners who are told to set up their own business in order to get paid, couriers and other delivery workers who must use their own car and gas for the company without compensation, agency workers who pay fees to get work, and telemarketers who pay for headphones. Workers are bearing more of their employers' cost of doing business.

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The current economic crisis is exacerbating the problem. Communities where manufacturing jobs have been lost report temp agencies popping up at an exponential rate. Permanent jobs with living wages and benefits are being replaced by temporary, low paid jobs with no benefits. In the past six years, Ontario's temporary agency industry grew from a $1.6 billion to a $4.6 billion industry according to Statistics Canada. In August, 90% of new jobs created were part-time. One in four jobs were self-employed which for all too many workers means selling your labour for low wages in work without any statutory benefits and job protection.

Just when we need it most as more people are being pushed out of work, our Employment Insurance program is unavailable to many workers who are unable to qualify for benefits. Only 27% of Toronto's unemployed workers were able to get Employment Insurance in 2004. With an accumulated surplus of more than $50 billion in the EI Account, the Harper government must increase access to benefits, raise the benefit rate and expand spending to pay for labour adjustment and training programs.

Outdated and unenforced labour standards, inaccessible labour adjustment programs and absence of a comprehensive good jobs strategy are pushing more and more workers like Norma into poverty because they face precarious jobs, unpaid wages and poverty wages. It is time for action.

The Ontario government is reviewing changes to the *Employment Standards Act* to protect temp agency workers. This important step must ensure that temp workers, caught in limbo between the agency and the company they work at, must be able to enforce their rights and be treated equally. Both companies must be held responsible when there are violations of the law. Changes to protect temp workers must be embedded in a strategy to update our basic labour standards to protect all workers so that employers don't just respond to the regulation of temp work by moving jobs to other, unforeseen and unregulated practices.

Improving employment standards is just one side of the coin. Workers need to be able to enforce their employment rights while they are on the job. With no protection in the workplace, workers such as Norma must absorb the lost earnings until they can find a new job or be fired. We must see a comprehensive plan to make sure all employers follow the law in all workplaces.

For workers like Norma, there are simply no more notches on the belt. Norma and Workers' Action Centre members will be going to the Good Jobs Summit on November 22, 2008, to share their experiences and ideas for action and be part of a historic call for Good Jobs for All.

Mary Gellatly and Sonia Singh are Community Organizers with the Workers' Action Centre

This is part of a series written for the Good Jobs Summit

GREEN JOBS ARE THE FUTURE

By: John Cartwright

A decade ago the world's leaders gathered in Rio de Janeiro to talk about the environmental crisis created by pollution, deforestation, and climate change. Their concerns led to the creation of the Kyoto protocol on the reduction of greenhouse gases - in which nations committed to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide flowing into the atmosphere. These measures were immediately opposed by the multinational oil cartels, and their massive funding of George Bush's election resulted in the United States attempt to sabotage the Kyoto process.

In Canada powerful corporate voices cried about possible job loss and economic costs in an effort to derail the signing of the accord. Their rhetoric about "job-killing" has a familiar ring - they use it to oppose every policy that restricts their ability to exploit man or nature. The labour movement, on the other hand, has started to advocate that we can have both jobs and a healthier environment. In 1999, the Canadian Labour Congress adopted a resolution to develop a strategy on "green jobs", and a special conference looked at what it would take to create truly sustainable communities and green jobs.

Sustainability is defined as practice which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Green jobs can include everything from restoring forests and wetlands to teaching children how to be environmentally responsible. Here in Toronto we have had two outstanding examples initiated by unions:

The construction trades in Toronto actively pursued work in retrofitting buildings as a way to provide jobs for their members during the bleak days of the 90's recession. Through the City's "Better Buildings Partnership, hundreds of jobs were created, while building owners saved 30-50% on utility and energy costs.. CO2 emissions were significantly reduced and air quality in offices often improved

CUPE 416 and the Toronto Environmental Alliance co-sponsored a proposal for recycling and composting that would have diverted 72% of Toronto's solid waste from landfills, and created 900 new jobs. It was ignored until the Adams Mine fiasco, when it finally became the basis for the Mayor's Task Force 2010 report.

Throughout Europe, the labour movement is involved in many such initiatives. In some cases their standards, such as chlorine-free bleaching for pulp and paper, have forced Canadian mills to upgrade. In Finland, the Hotel and Restaurant Workers have implemented an eco-audit at hotels, resorts, and campgrounds. The process resulted in changes to purchasing practices, energy and water consumption, waste management, and food preparation.

Perhaps the most inspiring example is the Blue-Green Alliance in the U.S., headed up by Steelworker Dave Foster. Its efforts helped create hundreds of new jobs in Pennsylvania by tying energy policy into local production of wind turbines. At their recent conference entitled “Good Jobs, Green Jobs” corporate executives and union leaders agreed that we all need to embrace the environmental imperatives of the new economy. They were brought to their feet by Van Jones, a community organizer from California whose vision of green jobs for inner-city youth showed clearly that equity must also be part of the answer.

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In fact, there are examples in enough areas to provide the basis for a comprehensive program of green redesign of every major facet of our economy. In the process, however, some jobs will be displaced. Labour has a strong position on "Just Transition", which calls for funding to provide adequate protection for workers and communities affected by environmental change. The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, which represents thousands of members in the energy sector, supports Kyoto as long as such just transition is included. It concludes that more jobs will be created in alternative energy production than will be lost in the "carbon economy".

Rebuilding our economy into a sustainable one can create jobs - in every sector. From resource extraction to public transit. From redesigning industrial processes that "close the loop" to different crops and food production. From water treatment to demand side management for electricity. The list goes on and on. It benefits the public sector, by making facilities and services more cost effective. That includes the use of "full cost accounting" to measure what is truly good or bad about a particular activity. It includes making our private sector industries more capable of surviving the future challenges as resources shrink and pollution is curtailed. And it will begin to unleash the tremendous economic potentials of environmental technologies.

Can we bring all of these ideas into a campaign that creates the momentum towards real alternatives? Decades ago social movements pushed the political agenda for change, and thousands of activists developed a "world view" that refused to accept the power structure as it stood. Construction workers marched for peace, autoworkers fought apartheid, and steelworkers stood up for women's rights - all because we saw these things as part of the struggle for true social justice.

A new "green" world view could help to inspire the same kind of passion and commitment that are required to challenge the current system. And it could give young activist something to struggle for - jobs and justice, interlinked with saving the ecology of our planet.

John Cartwright is the President of the 195,000 member Toronto & York Region Labour Council.

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IMMIGRATION AND LABOUR

By: Karl Flecker

He was a young man in 1947, an immigrant from Jamaica landing in Toronto in the dead of winter. "When I arrived, there were just 1,600 black people in Toronto. We had one black lawyer, no doctor, no dentist. Not even a garbage collector. You just couldn't get jobs" recalls Bromley Armstrong long time labour and civil rights activist.

The young immigrant got involved in the trade union movement fighting for human rights. Often the only racialized worker in a sea of white labour activists, Bromley fought to improve the situation for immigrants coming to Canada--new comers who were systematically excluded from jobs, accommodation and access to services such as being served in restaurants.

What has changed with Canada's immigration policy since Bromley and others arrived?

Canada has long been dependent upon immigrants to build the countries infrastructure; to work the fields and pick crops; to tend to the very young and very old. Initially, many settlers to this native land came from Europe -- Britain, Ireland, France, Italy or the Ukraine to name a few source countries. While others came from more colourful places China, India or the Caribbean.

No matter the home these immigrants left behind, they all laboured here to build a new life, a new community -- this country. Many endured exploitive working conditions like those who helped build the nations railroads, in addition to discriminatory policies like the Chinese head tax. Hundreds of other potential newcomers sat for months on a passenger boat in Vancouver's harbour in the early 1900's in an unsuccessful bid to begin a new life here. The government of the time, kept them out using discriminatory immigration policies. Depending on where you were from, was a colour coded struggle.

Bromley Armstrong and others like him, often supported by the labour movement fought against these injustices. These activists demanded government establish laws; like the provincial Fair Employment and Fair Accommodation Practices Acts designed to protect racialized individuals, no matter where they came from.

Their demands were followed with action.

These largely black activists conducted sit-ins in at restaurants, testing to see if owners would serve Canada's newest and colourful newcomers. Armstrong played a figurative role in these sit-ins, on one occasion calmly demanding service from a bigoted restaurant owner, who was angrily wielding a meat cleaver in his restaurant kitchen. Justice was eventually served.

In the 1950's though the numbers of racialized newcomers' was relatively small compared to settlers from Europe, their experiences were severe and their contributions for justice were considerable.

Immigrants are increasingly racialized.

Since the 70's immigrants coming to Canada increasingly originate from countries other than Europe. In 1986, 70% of newcomers hailed from Asia, Latin America, and the West Indies. Today, nearly 85% of immigrants are born in regions of the world other than Europe. Racialized immigrants are the primary source of Canada's population and workforce growth.

The question still remains: are immigrants getting served equally today?

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More than two decades of data show that since the 70's immigrants persistently earn less and are congregated in occupations that don't utilize their credentials and international experience fairly. Statistics Canada reveals that immigrants and particularly racialized immigrants have higher unemployment rates and are more likely to earn significantly less than their non-racialized counterparts, despite being more credentialed. Furthermore it takes at least 10 years for a racialized immigrant to attain wage parity.

As we near the point were immigrants will account for nearly all of Canada's population growth, their income levels are an important determinant for all Canadians. Failure by governments to aggressively address this persistent economic and social justice inequity will be far reaching. As the chief economist for the TD Financial group put it, "if we let immigrants fall behind, all of Canada will join them."

Despite this clarion call for change, the Conservative led minority government appears to be deaf to the need for racially just and transformative policies.

Under Harper, Canada is now embracing immigration policies that prefer temporary residents such as migrant workers who are both largely racialized and not coincidentally, afforded lesser rights and much reduced wages and highly exploitative working conditions. Since 2006, the number of migrant workers in Canada has increased by more than 122%, and in 2007, the number of temporary workers (201,057) rivalled permanent immigrants (236, 758). In some provinces migrant workers actually outnumber permanent immigrants.

At the same time, the Conservatives allocated nearly 85$ million dollars to enable employers faster access to migrant workers. Meanwhile there are still no meaningful wage and workplace protections for these vulnerable workers. Consider by comparison the Conservative's allocated a mere $6.4M towards the creation of Foreign Credential Referral Office. The FCRO is little more than a revolving door for permanent immigrants' desperate to have their international credentials recognized. It can do little more than refer immigrants to one or more of the already 400 existing professional regulatory bodies tasked to assess credentials

Evidently there is more interest in importing a temporary workforce rather than investing in a permanent one. In addition, for the near million largely colourful newcomers waiting for years in the queue for citizenship, the Federal government stealthy changed the rules of selection. In 2008, they gave the Immigration Minister unprecedented powers to fast track some categories of immigrants and discard others.

In the rush for more security and surveillance, workplaces are now routinely using racial profiling and discriminatory practices. For example, workers with dual citizenship are subjected to invasive security clearance investigations. For some, workers are prevented from doing their jobs, or climbing a career ladder simply based on where they were born.

The canvas of Canada is changing like never before. The painting includes an aging population. Canada has fewer and fewer children and an increased reliance on racialized immigrants to colour its population, workforce and economy.

Yet our immigration and labour integration policies are operating in starkly black and white tones. They are determined; it seems to keep some at the table from being equal.

Bromley fought his way to the table, but the fight for true equality has yet to be served.

Karl Flecker is the National Director of the Canadian Labour Congress Anti-racism and Human Rights Dept.

This is part of a series written for the Good Jobs Summit.

RICH CITY, POOR CITY

By: J David Hulchanski

"We heard as well about parents whose struggle to hold down two or three jobs leaves them with no time or energy to parent, of youth being humiliated by the obviousness of their poverty, of the impact of precarious and substandard housing on their ability to study and learn and engage with friends, and about the numerous other daily stresses of living on the margins of a prosperous society. " (*Review of the Roots of Youth Violence*, Vol. 1, p.31)

We learned last week that among the roots of youth violence is the lack of good jobs -- jobs that support a family, jobs that support an average lifestyle, jobs that support good quality housing. Though we already knew this, as a society we need to stop moving in the opposite direction.

It wasn't too long ago that our language did not include terms like "good jobs," "bad jobs," or "the working poor." How could you work and be poor?

Many people today are working more than fulltime and are poor. They have no choice but to live in the growing number of very poor neighbourhoods. Money buys choice. Many neighbourhoods are becoming poor in the sense that most of the residents are living in poverty, and poor in the sense that housing, public services, and transit access are all inferior relative to the rest of the city.

The growing polarization between rich and poor is happening in part because of the loss of average middle income jobs.

There used to be far fewer concentrations of disadvantage in Toronto. In the early 1970s about two-thirds of the City of Toronto's neighbourhoods (66%) were middle income – within 20% of the average individual income of the metropolitan area. By 2005, the middle income group of neighbourhoods had declined to less than one third (29%).

The trend is the same in the communities around the city's boundaries -- the 905 area. The number of middle income neighbourhoods declined by 25%, from 86% to 61%, during the same period. Now 20% of the neighbourhoods in the 905 area have very low average individual incomes, compared to none in 1970.

This income polarization – the decline of the middle group with growth in the two extreme poles – is not only a general trend among Toronto's population, but it is also on the basis of where we live.

The city of Toronto is now divided into increasingly distinct zones. One zone of tremendous wealth and prosperity, about 20% of the city, located mainly along the Yonge corridor and stretching east and west along Bloor and Danforth. Average household income is $170,000 in 2005, 82% of the population is white, only 4% are recent immigrants (arriving 2001 to 2006), and only2% are Black. Some of these neighbourhoods are more white and have fewer foreign born residents in 2005 than in 1995.

In contrast, there is a huge zone of concentrated disadvantage. It is still located in part in the traditional inner city neighbourhoods, but now is also in the inner suburbs, the car-oriented areas built during the 1960s and 1970s. This is 40% of the city, about 1.1 million people. Close to one-third of residents live in poverty (are below the low-income cut-off measure used by the federal government). Only 34% are white, 15% are recent immigrants, and 12% are Black.

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Federal and provincial economic policies, while seemingly abstract and high level, play themselves out on the ground in our neighbourhoods. Paying a growing segment of the population wages that do not support individuals, let along families, at a basic standard of living and a fundamental level of dignity, is not sustainable.

The now well documented rise in income inequality, income polarization, and ethno-cultural and skin colour segregation, are city-destroying trends. They are trends produced by commission and omission, by public and private sector decisions.

We need to use our regulatory power for the common good to focus on improving the labour market through measures like a living wage and providing people with a voice in working conditions via a fairer path to unionization. One sided policy making is not only generating greater disadvantage, it is destroying the city as a great place to live and work. Nothing is trickling down. The city is increasingly segregating itself as the social distance between rich and poor increases.

Immigrants are arriving in a very different economy than they did 30 and 40 years ago. A recent Statistics Canada study concludes, for example, "that the wage gap between newly hired employees and other employees has been widening over the past two decades," the "relative importance of temporary jobs has increased substantially among newly hired employees," and that compared with "the early 1980s, fewer male employees are now covered by a registered pension plan." In short, policies have allowed fewer jobs to pay a living wage with good benefits. This did not happen by accident.

It is not only possible but essential that we have an economy with good jobs with at least a minimum living wage for all. We need public policies that support the goals of a just and inclusive society, and we have to ensure that the use of political power benefits the common good. These are key goals of the Good Jobs Coalition and form the agenda for Saturday's Good Jobs Summit. They are essential to reversing the city destroying trends at work in Toronto today.

David Hulchanski is a University of Toronto professor and author of the report *The Three Cities within Toronto* (www.gtuo.ca).

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