

T.O. 'good jobs' conference draws 1,000 people

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A Toronto conference is wrestling with the notion of good jobs for everyone at a time when the current turmoil in the economy is making the ones that exist now ever-more insecure.

"We want to make sure the recovery includes everybody, and not just a select few," John Cartwright, president of the Toronto and District Labour Council, told ctvtoronto.ca on Saturday.

"What we're doing today is hearing some of the best thinking about some of the challenges to good jobs. And then we're crafting solutions for policies we want governments to undertake, policies we want CEOs and corporations to commit to, and policies of solidarity within the wide varieties of communities in Toronto so no one will be left behind in this ever-changing economy."

Those resolutions will be tabled when the Good Jobs Coalition summit, organized by a coalition of 35 groups, ends at 5 p.m. But a draft declaration on the summit's website makes the following points:

- Good jobs are full-time and stable
- They pay a living wage and related benefits
- They are safe
- Provide the opportunity for training and advancement
- Provide the ability to retire with dignity

The keynote speakers are Dave Foster of the Blue-Green Alliance in the United States, Deanna Ladd of the Workers Action Centre in Toronto and Maria Elena Durazo of Los Angeles:

- Ladd mainly works with Torontonians caught up in the temp work economy and spoke of the risks they face, such as constant insecurity and rip-offs
- Foster has helped put thousands back to work in rust-belt states working in green economy jobs such as building wind turbines
- Durazo is a labour leader in Los Angeles and a national co-chair of U.S. president-elect Barack Obama's campaign. She talked about the plight of immigrants

The conference drew 1,000 people.

"We had planned for 500 people," Cartwright said. "We cut off registrations at 950, and we had 50 people show up at the door that we couldn't turn away."

The economic turmoil may have heightened peoples' interest, but many communities have been suffering for some time, he said.

"They've been going through rough times long before the banks went through their meltdown," he said.

The "Three Cities" study, produced by the University of Toronto's Centre for Urban and Community Studies released in late December 2007, found that since 1970, the core neighbourhoods of Toronto have become progressively higher-income (relative to the GTA average) while the suburbs have become progressively more impoverished.

Middle-income neighbourhoods are disappearing, suggesting Toronto is becoming a city of haves and have-nots.