

Resolution 5: Equitable Phase-Out of Fossil Fuels

National Committee Name

National Advocacy Standing Committee

National Committee Chair

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Proposers of the Resolution

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Resolved Clauses

RESOLVED, That CFUW urge all levels of government and the corporate sector to phase out the extraction and combustion of fossil fuels in an equitable manner, to uphold Canada's obligations to the 2015 international Paris Agreement on climate change.

RESOLVED, That CFUW urge all levels of government to encourage a rapid transition away from the combustion of fossil fuels to carbon-free alternatives to enable the reduction and elimination of greenhouse gas emissions and environmental pollution.

RESOLVED, That CFUW urge all levels of government to educate Canadians about the environmental and health risks from the continuing extraction and combustion of fossil fuels and about viable alternatives.

RESOLVED, That CFUW urge all levels of government and private sectors to support a Just Transition process that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind.

Background

Alignment with existing CFUW Adopted Resolutions (CFUW, 2024)

This Resolution supports and furthers the following resolutions: *A Clean, Healthy & Sustainable Environment is a Human Right* – 2022; *Climate Emergency – Declarations and Action Plans* – 2020; *Sustainable Development Goals, also known as Global Goals* - 2016; *Reducing Climate Change Through the Use of Carbon Taxes* – 2015; *Climate Change: Mitigation, Adaptation and the Inclusion of Women* – 2012; *Alternate Resources and the Canadian Nuclear Industry* – 1997; *Greening the Automobile* – 1992; *Renewable Energy Conservation* – 1992.

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relevant to the proposed Resolution

Good health and well-being (SDG 3) Target 3.9; Affordable and clean energy (SDG 7) Targets 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3; Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) Target 8.4;

Industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9) Target 9.4; Sustainable cities and economies (SDG 11) Target 11.b; Climate action (SDG 13) Target 13.3 (education).

Why this resolution is needed

CFUW policies to date do not identify fossil fuels as the major cause of climate change, nor do they specifically urge the government to phase out fossil fuel extraction and consumption (United Nations, n.d.). The extraction and distribution of oil and gas are high-risk operations, with the possibility of uncontrollable explosions, accidental spills, or toxins. Canada has the 10th highest greenhouse gas emissions globally and the oil and gas sector is the biggest contributor to these emissions, followed by transportation (Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research, 2024).

2024 was the hottest year on record, reaching a global average temperature of 1.54 °C above the preindustrial average between January and September (World Meteorological Organization, 2024). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2021) warns that between 1.5 °C and 2 °C of warming will be catastrophic for ecological systems and human health.

The global stock takes accepted at the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2023) calls on all parties, including Canada, to “transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade”. Thus, we can meet our climate goals while ensuring that all of society thrives.

In a Special Address to the World Economic Forum (2024), the Secretary General of the United Nations stated that “the phase-out of fossil fuels is essential and inevitable.”

A Just Transition, as recognized in the 2015 Paris Agreement, requires clear timelines, tangible goals and government funding. A long-term collaborative effort among public and private sectors must “actively identify and implement opportunities to develop skills, secure decent work, sustainably develop their communities and enhance social protections” (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2022). The UN’s First Global Stocktake (2023) reinforces this, emphasizing that “just transitions can support more robust and equitable mitigation outcomes.”

In each Resolved clause of this resolution, “all levels of government” refers to federal, provincial, territorial, municipal and Indigenous governments. It is particularly important to include Indigenous peoples in decision making and follow-up action.

Resolved Clause #1

In this clause, the “corporate sector” includes industries, private companies, financial institutions and insurance providers.

The Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act became law in June 2021, making Canada’s commitment to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 mandatory, to comply with the 2015 Paris Agreement (United Nations, 2015). “Net zero is a target of having no

emissions of greenhouse gases, or a level of emissions that is balanced by taking the same amount out of the atmosphere” (Collins Dictionary, n.d.).

Environmental Defence (2024) reports that in 2023 alone, fossil fuel companies and their associates met with either Natural Resources Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, or Finance Canada, a total of 684 times. The fossil fuel sector proposes natural gas as a “bridge fuel” to renewable energy, but the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2022) points out the risk of methane leakage during its extraction and distribution.

Canada’s draft regulation to limit and reduce greenhouse gas pollution from oil and gas companies was announced in November 2024.

Resolved Clause #2

62% of Canada's electricity comes from hydroelectric sources and about 13% from nuclear power plants (Environment and Natural Resources, 2025). Solar and wind power are carbon free, cleaner and cheaper than fossil-fuel based power. Bioelectricity, supplemented with geothermal, tidal and wave power, can greatly reduce Canada’s CO₂ emissions (United Nations, n.d.).

In 2022, the oil and gas sector was responsible for 31% of Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 217 megatonnes of CO₂ equivalent (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2024).

Carbon Capture and Storage projects, promoted by the fossil fuel industry, are energy intensive and expensive, and can also generate emissions (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2023). The use of electric vehicles greatly reduces greenhouse gas emissions, provided the electricity is generated from renewable sources. Energy-efficiency measures taken by the shipping and aviation sectors lessen the accumulation of CO₂ in the atmosphere while emissions-free transportation is being developed. Emissions from fossil-fuel combustion in cement and concrete production will decrease by means of new techniques and ingredients. Buildings can be constructed with eco-friendly materials and retrofitted using more efficient heating and cooling equipment.

Strengthening power grids is essential. To replace the quick-start and system-balancing attributes of gas fired plants, Ontario’s Electricity System Operator intends to deploy small-scale Battery Energy Storage Systems (Ontario Federation of Agriculture, 2024). These will be an important component of our energy supply in future, guaranteeing a smooth and continuous flow of electricity when renewable power fluctuates.

Resolved Clause #3

In this clause “Canadians” include the leaders and employees of private companies, financial institutions and insurance providers as well as individuals from all parts of our diverse society.

It is time for a vigorous public education campaign on the impact of fossil fuels on the environment, our health and our future. Years of monitoring the changes in seas, forests and lakes, ice conditions in the North, and the health of people living near fossil fuel extraction sites, reinforce the need for this (Council of Canadians, 2023).

Phase-out strategies require public engagement to ensure their acceptability and adoption. To overcome barriers to success, Canadians of all ages need clear information about the consequences of using fossil fuels, and about alternative options.

Article 12 of the 2015 Paris Agreement calls for signatories to “enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information” (UNFCCC, 2015). The volume of data, misinformation and gaps in accessible information make it hard for Canadians to grasp the nature of the crisis and what they can do about it. Transparency in decision making, public awareness and access to the results of trusted research are critical for action on fossil fuels.

In June 2022 the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) sent an open letter to government ministers complaining that “Fossil Fuel Advertising is Fuelling a Public Health Crisis” — saying that fossil fuel companies put lives at risk by not disclosing the health and environmental dangers associated with their products (CAPE, 2024).

Resolved Clause #4

The fossil fuel sector has a major impact on our economy. In 2023, it was estimated that oil and gas extraction comprised over 3% of Canada’s total GDP and provided about 900,000 jobs, when direct, indirect and induced jobs were considered (Canada’s Oil and Natural Gas Producers, 2023). However, Clean Energy Canada (2023) predicts that by 2050, the clean energy transition could create 2.7 million new jobs. Electricity generation and delivery will offer lifelong opportunities for engineers, scientists, people in high-skilled construction and maintenance trades, technicians, planners, managers, trainers, labour relations specialists, HR and IT personnel and payroll specialists. Small-scale, community-based energy generation initiatives will lower costs and provide local employment.

The United Nations Committee for Development Policy (2023) states that “A just transition, broadly defined as ensuring that no one is left behind or pushed behind in the transition to low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economies and societies, can enable more ambitious climate action and provide an impetus to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.”

Canada’s *Sustainable Jobs Act* (Bill C-50) became law in 2024. Decision-makers must take advice from the *Sustainable Jobs Partnership*, outlining steps taken by the government to facilitate the Just Transition, including investments in research and the measurement of progress. From December 2025 onwards, the Act mandates annual reports summarizing implementation of the *Sustainable Jobs Action Plan*.

Implementation

Recognizing the increasing global demand for energy, and the urgent need to decarbonize the current energy system, CFUW clubs can ask governments to:

- Deliver on the commitments of the Paris Agreement and the Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act.
- Invest in innovation and research and, through a comprehensive, sustained, public education program, share the results of monitoring pollution from fossil fuel infrastructure and its impacts on human and environmental health.
- Urge financial institutions to divest from fossil fuel production and infrastructure stocks, investing instead in renewable energy projects and efficient, sustainable infrastructure such as public transportation systems, so that citizens become less dependent on personal (especially single-occupancy) vehicles.
- Engage with foreign governments to discourage fossil-fuel generation worldwide.
- Follow COP29 commitments to ensure that the money flowing to threatened nations is spent on cleaning up pollution caused by fossil fuels.
- Support lawsuits against fossil fuel companies, holding them accountable for the polluting effects of fossil fuel extraction, despite the knowledge that they compromise human, plant and animal life.
- Urge public and private sectors to facilitate and expedite the transition to renewable energy systems, offering retraining and new employment opportunities, especially for people previously employed in the oil and gas sector.
- Collect taxes from polluters in order to support Just Transition plans.

CFUW members and clubs can educate themselves on the harmful effects of fossil fuels on the environment and personal health, sharing their discoveries with others.

CFUW members can write letters and op-eds, countering the spread of disinformation about fossil fuels.

CFUW members can approach private companies, financial institutions and insurance providers as well as with government representatives, asking pertinent questions about their policies concerning fossil fuel consumption, fossil fuel products and their attitudes to cleaner, renewable alternatives.

CFUW clubs can support local action to reduce the use of fossil fuels and advocate for small-scale, community-based, electricity generation and storage initiatives.

Ahead of municipal, provincial and federal elections, CFUW clubs can recommend questions for candidates concerning their views on a future free of fossil-fuel emissions.

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