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Thank you. Thank you, Sean. Thank you everybody.

I know there was a mix-up on the agenda and I'm glad we're here.

I'd like to bring greetings as well from John Sweeney, President of the AFL-CIO.

I was with him, in fact, for breakfast this morning. We had a meeting in Berlin with the Chancellor of Germany to talk about the agenda of the G8. One of the issues we talked about was the agenda and the Kyoto Accord and how that's going to fit on the globalization agenda. But before getting into the part played by the Canadian Labor Congress Employment Action, I'd like to acquaint you with the context and the background.

Labor's Role in Environmental Protection and the Sustainable Society

From the beginning, our environmental work at the Canadian Labor Congress focused on employment and the work place, of course, the number and quality of jobs and, of course, the condition of work.

We held a national conference on jobs in the environment known as Green Job Creation in 1978. In fact, our environmental action began in earnest in the early 1990s under the direction and inspiration, and I can't emphasize this enough, of the late Dick Martin, a Steelworker, first as Executive Vice President, and then finally before his death the Secretary- Treasurer of the Canadian Labor Congress.

Two principals have guided the work of our Canadian Labor Congress. First, pollution that degrades the environment and poisons communities outside of the workplace is also the pollution that kills the workers inside it. Simple truths always bear repeating, so let me say this again. Pollution that degrades the environment and poisons the workers outside of the workplace is also the pollution that kills the workers inside it.

I remember the giant smelter I worked at in Trail. Nobody working inside the silver refinery, which happened to have this by-product called arsenic, lasted more than eight months after they retired. They developed cancer and they died. We did something about that and we did something about the environment but we did it in the workplace context. What this simple truth tells us is that there has to be a natural relationship between our work as unions on an occupational health level and our work as an environmental protection as well. This line of thought led to our national pollution prevention strategy, endorsed by the Canadian Labor Congress executive council in 1998, in which after a long struggle has now gained the respect and support of Canada's environmental movement as well. Within the wider environmental movement, our Congress is a national leader on population prevention and environmental strategy which protects workers, communities and the physical environment alike.

There was another consequence to our pollution strategy: that organizing for the environment has to evolve from workplace conditions, of course. The first step we took was to extend the work of our existing and legally mandated joint worker management health and safety committees. There is legislation in Canada for that and most provinces now for environmental protection issues.

The workplace has two committees, one for health and safety and the other for the environment, as does the Canadian Labor Congress nationally. We have the health and safety department. One of our staff is directed to health and safety but the other is directed exclusively to the environment. They work closely together on overlapping issues of joint concern, both at the level of the local union, the national and international union, and in joint action with our employers.

The second principle which guides our Canadian Labor Movement is that the interest of working families, the people we work for everyday in environmental activism, cannot succeed without our participation in and with the Canadian Environmental Movement.

From a position in which environmentalists were either indifferent and lots of times hostile to labor, our Congress has worked on coalitions diligently, alliances with environmental organizations and networks, in some cases as leading and active members.

Our environmental committee at the CLC was, I believe, the first of many diverse labor committees to invite outside representatives as full participants at its meetings. Our aim was to construct alliances and work on projects where there was general, if not always universal, agreement on issues. It was an amazing dynamic to watch it unfold. One of these areas was pollution prevention. Another, as we shall see, was action on climate change.

So what's been the result to date of all our work? One result has been to reduce, if not eliminate, that skepticism about labor on the part of environmentalists and on part of the environmental policymakers in our governments. In all alliances that claim to be effective there are tensions and disagreements, of course, but it works. The fact there are policy limits on the part of both labor and environmental organizations should not lead us to the false conclusion that no progress has been made nor that tensions within the labor movement or within the environmental movement should stop us from working together. They're just challenges and we're good negotiators, after all.

Above that, labor has, I believe, been instrumental in our country in shifting the focus of the Canadian Environment Movement from a predominately naturalist and ecological and physical environment to one with more of a focus on human health. This is because our conviction that occupational, environmental and community health are all different faces, if you will, of a single coin. There's also consideration that environmentalism is more effective when it points to the impact directly on human health and I would think that all of the polling lately that is bringing the environment, at least in Canada, to the top of the agenda is precisely for that reason.

None of these things could have been achieved though without what has been called as labor and environmental activism, the grass root efforts which have built up the environmental work effort of our affiliates in the public and both private sectors.

Our first involvement with action in the climate change began in 1991 with the preparations in Canada that led to the UN Climate Change Convention of 1993. Working with the environmental movement, together we put forward the argument that it was no use framing an international policy unless we had a firm domestic climate program to give substance to those international proposals. In other words, it was our position that we should be ready to practice what we preach actually. You know what? We were right!

The fact that Canada today, in the middle of 2007, regrettably and ashamedly has no national program to implement the Kyoto protocol is an embarrassment to Canadian people and a mark of how bankrupt our Canadian national policy on that agenda is. No plan to implement a protocol we signed, a legal treaty we signed based on the 1990 levels of greenhouse gas emissions, which is geared to the first commitment period of 2008 to 2012.

The sad state of affairs is not for want of trying, though. On the part of labor and environmentalists and Canada's Democratic Party, we did all we could. We even had a government that signed that treaty but they got replaced by a government that doesn't want to respect that treaty.

We've been active in influencing government policy over energy, industrial emissions of greenhouse gases, transport, consumer standards and building design. We were instrumental in getting Canada to adopt that Kyoto protocol in its first stages. We've emphasized the green job creation potential of action in climate change. Now this stands in stark contrast to that doom and gloom scenario advanced by corporate business, dire predictions of massive job loss from the same sector of society which rejoices whenever a firm makes draconian cuts in the size of its work force.

We were with them in Germany the other day and they were talking about how great globalization is and how terrible it will be if we adopt these "terrible, hard, impossible Kyoto standards" on them.

You know, it was funny that when our minister of the environment in Canada announced our Government's move away from the Kyoto protocol. He said that if they would have followed the Kyoto protocol, they would have lost or sacrificed 250,000 jobs in Canada. Well, today we're pressing our government in rallies and forums in Canada for the loss of 250,000 jobs in our country due to globalization and they call that "normal adjustment." You've got to accept normal reasonable adjustment in these periods. So when we come back to them and ask them about their doubletalk, they say that's different. They always say it's different when it applies to them, do you notice?

And another thing I noticed and I pointed out yesterday to the chancellor: I haven't seen one major social or environmental initiative ever supported by the business community, ever, on anything, whether it's land claims, the environment, clean communities, rapid transit. They don't support it because it might cost them some money and some work.

But in stark contrast to that foot dragging and circling the wagons by corporate Canada, our movement has made realistic proposals with regard to just transition for workers during environmental change. And that's the nub of what we've done so well. We can assure our members that when we do advance arguments for any sort of change, where our programs will change the nature or the structure, or even change their jobs, that that strategy has to come before the effective change, so that workers can embrace and understand that their economics will be taken care of as well. Our version of that program based in part on the experience of the Canadian Steelworkers, my union, puts the focus on the provision of alternative employment, not just compensation, but social support, re-training and job placement. It worked very well in the transition in our steel industry and it can work very well in the environment.

Under the pressure from our new democratic party, just transition is featured prominently in the new bill, the climate bill, before our national parliament. That debate will come before our government's new position on Kyoto. But there will be a need for just transition. We know that. We know what that change will mean when effective climate action results in radical social and economic change. We have to work for this and also be prepared for its

impact on employment and on the workplace, because if we don't our credibility as representatives of those workers will fall apart and they won't embrace change, they'll resist change. We need to secure labor support in those selective sectors where climate action will result in significant and identifiable impacts both on the level of employment, as I said, and income.

Not to keep you too long, because I know you already wanted to leave. In closing I want to thank you, once again, for the opportunity to come here today. Climate change is an issue that we must all confront, starting now, starting about two decades ago but we're kind of slow on the uptake, all of us. We've got some tough decisions to make in the coming months and the years about the way we use energy and how we use energy and where that energy comes from. By including working people and engaging our members in that decision-making process, we'll eliminate a very big excuse for business and government to not act, and we'll also make sure that our members accept and embrace something that they as citizens will embrace very clearly. But as workers, if the impact upon them is negative, it will be part of the resistance, not the solution.

Thank you for inviting me. I know you've had a good conference, so enjoy the rest of your day.