

# PUBLIC WORKS:



## UNISON Scotland's programme to beat recession

**We all know already that high quality public services are central to the quality of life of Scotland's citizens.** Their importance increases in times of economic crisis. Not only are public services essential to those in need: they are the glue that holds our society together as a whole. Public services are the foundation of a fair society that combines economic strength with social cohesion.

Far from 'crowding out' business and entrepreneurship, the public sector actually supports business. The market has failed consistently to deliver the infrastructure required for successful economies. Public transport, roads, an educated and healthy population, a fair and binding legal system... all require public investment and direction.

Sadly, those in the private sector who have created the global financial and economic crisis that affects us all have wasted no time in taking public money to overcome their mistakes - while at the same time calling for tax cuts, cuts in public spending and increased privatisation of public services. We should not allow the same people who have created the crisis to run more of our public services.

UNISON Scotland is calling for renewed investment in public services - basically a programme of public works - in order to shorten the recession we now face, and protect Scotland from the worst effects of past mistakes. We need to learn the lessons of the previous recessions. We know from history that a programme of public works will be key to economic recovery.

**UNISON is campaigning for the government in Scotland to engage in a strategy led by the public sector to:**

- **Build for the future**
- **Deliver high quality services**
- **Provide well paid secure jobs**

## Public works: Building for the future

Spending on public works is essential to provide and secure jobs.

- Building roads, hospitals, health centres, schools, nurseries and affordable homes
- Increasing the availability of social housing, which is essential both to meet housing needs, and to support the building industry which faces the collapse of the house buying market
- Growing a green economy: housing/building insulation, improved heating for homes offices, improving derelict land for allotments, temporary public parks, energy production

## Public works: Delivering quality services

Delivering services like health (including at this time of increasing stress and anxiety our often-neglected mental health services), nurseries, education and child care, social housing, transport (public, of course), plus advice and assistance to access training and benefits - all of this is needed to support Scotland's people through the crisis.

- High quality support in local areas for job search and careers advice
- Placements in public and voluntary sectors to help build skills for unemployed
- Affordable childcare delivered by the public sector to make work pay for those in work and create extra jobs in this sector
- Voluntary sector delivery of public services funded at a level that allows for equivalent wages and terms and conditions for staff
- Minimum five year contracts for voluntary sector: this frees up voluntary staff to deliver services rather than fill in funding applications

## Public works: Providing well paid secure jobs

We need to ensure that Scotland is best placed with a highly trained workforce when the recession over. A problem often faced when emerging from earlier recessions has been not having enough skilled workers when needed.

We must:

- Invest in skills - apprenticeships are vital to ensure young people are in work and to support the economy with their skills
- Boost FE sector to help people who lose jobs to retrain
- Provide in-work training to ensure low paid workers can progress - union learning reps and time off for training are essential
- Introduce a living wage and protect terms and conditions of workers to ensure people can spend money
- Ensure the £4 billion local government spends on goods and services annually supports local small businesses through local procurement of goods
- Help with costs and quality of life through better access to flexible/reduced hours saves costs

## A better future - it's in our hands

We can't go back to "business as usual".

We need to start building a fairer and more sustainable economy based on good jobs, world class public services and a stronger, more cohesive society. To achieve that we need:

- fair taxation and a crackdown on tax avoidance - not cuts to public services
- decent pay and improved social provision for all so we can reduce the need for dangerous debt
- to re-regulate finance and re-direct our savings and pensions into useful and sustainable investments

This crisis has demonstrated what can happen when inequality, private greed and unregulated market forces get out of control. But it is up to us to show there is a better way. We need to challenge those calling for more cuts to pay and services. We must rebut the racist myths and false solutions peddled by the likes of the BNP.

It is time to reassert the public interest and the values of fairness, solidarity and democracy that public service workers put into practice every day.

We know that public works. We can make a better future, because it is in our hands.

