

4 SUSTAINABLE JOBS FOR WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES



The effects of climate change, global market shifts, affordability challenges, and the energy transition have caused increasingly visible impacts on Canada's workforce and economy. Now that the Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act has become law, it is time for the government to follow through with actions – investments, programs, and policies – that support workers and communities to take on good green jobs. Canada has taken positive steps by implementing the Sustainable Jobs Training Fund; announcing consultations on the Youth Climate Corps program; and attaching labour conditions and minimum apprenticeship hours to new sustainable investment tax credits.

The scale of investment must match the scale of the challenge in order to adequately equip workers and communities with the tools they need to manage the transition. It is imperative that investments that advance sustainable job creation, nature-based solutions and clean economic growth are grounded in social dialogue with workers,

Photos: left, U.X. Indo; right, Anton Daniev

decarbonization objectives, reconciliation, and equity. Investments in Budget 2025 will be crucial for securing additional support from Canadians for climate and environmental action by highlighting clear benefits and job opportunities.

Total Recommended Investment:

At least \$6.5 billion over five years

The Green Budget Coalition recommends the following measures with the expectation that they would be refined through social dialogue with workers, employers, and direct government-to-government engagement with Indigenous communities.

Recommendations:

1. Youth Training and Empowerment: Budget 2024 announced consultations to develop a Youth Climate Corps that could provide paid training and apprenticeships for youth pursuing careers in climate and nature related sectors. Budget 2025 should provide a **5-year funding commitment, with at least \$1 billion in the first year**, to establish the Youth Climate Corps and train 10,000-30,000 young people per year.¹⁷ Investment in the program in subsequent years should increase as demand grows, scaling up the program and affirming that no qualified applicant would be turned away. Polling has found that the majority of adults support a Youth Climate Corps, and 15% of people under 35 (representing roughly 1.3 million people) would be interested in enrolling in two years of training through this program.¹⁸ Canada can take inspiration from the successful American Climate Corps, which has proposed investing USD \$8 billion over ten years to support 50,000 participants annually by 2031 in initiatives such as supporting public lands and waters, clean energy, urban areas, community resilience, food systems and capacity building. The program should ensure that the principles of decent work and inclusion are upheld, skills and experience gained lead to real career opportunities (e.g., jobs in the red seal trades), a living wage is provided, and opportunities are prioritized for Indigenous peoples, people of colour, people with disabilities, and others facing labour market barriers. Consultation on this program should include engagement of the Prime Minister's Youth Council, and other relevant youth councils. [ESDC, NRCan]

2. Indigenous clean energy pathfinding: Invest **\$500 million over five years** to support Indigenous communities in charting the path to clean energy, conservation, and low-carbon infrastructure. Current programs supporting Indigenous clean energy and emissions reductions projects (e.g., CIB Indigenous Equity Initiative, Strategic Partnership Initiative, Wah-ila-toos) may not offer sufficient support for holistic, community-led transition planning to determine which projects are most appropriate, assess the impacts and benefits of potential equity partnerships, and seize workforce opportunities. This funding could also support better internal government coordination across departments and programs, and improved outreach and communication between government and communities regarding available funds. There is a need to streamline information and application processes to improve access for communities and organizations. Specific funding allocations should be determined with direction from Indigenous groups. [NRCan, ISC]



Photo: TFDA

¹⁷ The number of jobs created through this investment depends on the design of the program, and whether participants' salaries and benefits are paid in full by the program or are shared with employers. Costs per position could be within the range of \$9,880, as in the case of the Apprenticeship Service Canada program, to \$62,400, if the program pays participants' full salaries at \$30/hour.

¹⁸ Abacus Data, "Canadian Public Support for a Youth Climate Corps." October 2023. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ffcaf2d2c7a8305e968097b/t/6553ee4beef3b21f2219167e/1699999307956/Full+poll+and+analysis+-+Youth+Climate+Corps+-+Oct+2023.pdf>

3. Regional Workforce Development: To prepare the workforce for sustainable jobs in a clean economy, we recommend that the federal government deliver a **\$1 billion fund over five years** to: 1) double the funding allocated for the Sustainable Jobs Training Fund and UTIP Sustainable Jobs Stream (\$200 million); 2) reinstate the funding to federal-provincial Labour Market Development Agreements (\$625 million); and, 3) develop a new 25% training credit to support employers in delivering on-the-job training for skills and technology required as part of the clean economy transition (\$125 million). This investment has the potential to equip an estimated 250,000 workers with the skills needed for sustainable jobs in climate and nature solutions, which will be increasingly in demand in the coming years.^{19, 20, 21} [ESDC, RDAs]

We recommend that these investments:

- Include conditions to ensure funded training and skills pathways are aligned with projected growth sectors in a clean economy, specific to each region;²²
- Be leveraged to equip workers with skills for clean economy projects identified through regional economic development initiatives such as the Regional Energy and Resource Tables, with labour conditions to ensure decent work standards;
- Include measures that promote inclusion of equity-seeking groups, pursuant to the principles outlined in the Sustainable Jobs Act;²³ and
- Allocate specific funding for Indigenous-specific jobs readiness, upskilling and training programs.

19 Pembina Institute, “A Sustainable Jobs Blueprint Part II: Putting workers and communities at the centre of Canada’s net-zero energy economy.” <https://www.pembina.org/pub/sustainable-jobs-blueprint-part-ii>

20 Eco Canada, “From Recession to Recovery: Environmental Workforce Needs, Trends and Challenges.” <https://eco.ca/new-reports/updated-environmental-labour-outlook-to-2025/>

21 LinkedIn Economic Graph, “Global Green Skills Report 2023.” <https://economicgraph.linkedin.com/research/global-green-skills-report>

22 For a list of anticipated growth industries on the path to net-zero, see SJ Blueprint Part 2

23 Government of Canada, “An Act respecting accountability, transparency and engagement to support the creation of sustainable jobs for workers and economic growth in a net-zero economy.” <https://www.parl.ca/legisinfo/en/bill/44-1/c-50>



Photo: Wocintech



Photo: Stock Snap

4. Continued data collection, analysis and modelling to inform sustainable jobs planning:

An investment of **\$10 million over five years** is needed for regional data analysis and modelling projections that support decision makers, employers, and individuals to understand future workforce and economic scenarios and make informed decisions through the shift to a clean economy. This investment would support a working group of experts to define and classify sustainable jobs and indicators and determine a methodology for assessing sectoral, regional, and occupational impacts from different energy outlooks and climate policy scenarios. This information would be used to assess transition vulnerability impacts, provide industry growth outlooks, identify potential labour market gaps, and inform sustainable jobs policy development. Data should be disaggregated along lines of gender, age, race, and other identities to inform policies and programs that address existing inequities. Working closely with the Sustainable Jobs Secretariat, the results of this analysis would be reflected in the Sustainable Jobs Action Plans and made accessible to different audiences as part of the requirement to summarize available data used in the plan’s development as per the Act. [NRCan, ESDC, StatCan]

See also Youth employment programs to build a more equitable and inclusive future for conservation, later in this document.

Contacts

Megan Gordon – megang@pembina.org
 Laura Cameron – lcameron@iisd.ca



Photo: Jay E.