



# Sustainable Jobs

2023





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# Canadian workers are facing the impacts of climate change right now, and the need to fight climate change has never been more urgent.

Canada's unions know that we need to work together to meet our climate ambitions and limit climate change to no more than 1.5 degrees. That means Canada's economy will change. Our economy must transition, and the transition must be just. It must protect workers, ensure these new jobs are good, and guarantee there are pathways into these new jobs for women, Indigenous peoples, racialized people and other equity-deserving groups.

The introduction of Bill C-50, the Sustainable Jobs Act is an important first step and Canada's unions are pleased that it reflects many of our priorities.

However, for the Sustainable Jobs Act to truly speak to the needs of working people, create good new jobs, protect workers and communities and limit climate change to no more than 1.5 degrees, the Sustainable Jobs Act must be improved, and Canada must take other important steps.

Canada's unions want parliamentarians to understand the improvements that must be made and the actions that must be taken for Canada to be a global leader in good, sustainable jobs and the fight against climate change.



# **Our recommendations**

**Keeping Canada's promises**

**Have workers at the table**

**Commit to creating new jobs, protecting good jobs, and making sure people can move from high-carbon to low-carbon jobs**

**Sustainable jobs must mean good jobs**

**Invest in training**

**Invest in communities**

**Invest in the future**

**Consulting and engaging affected stakeholders**

**Climate change is a health and safety issue**





# Keeping Canada's promises

Canada must create good work for workers, protect communities as we meet our global climate commitments and national Emissions Reductions Plans.

Having a plan is how Canada can create pathways for workers in high-emitting sectors to move to low-carbon, high-quality work. It can also ensure how new work in a low-carbon economy is good work, with strong protections, the right to unionize, and creates opportunities for equity.

Canada has signed binding agreements that commit the country to a Just Transition.

The 2021 Glasgow Climate Pact and the 2015 Paris Agreement, oblige Canada to implement a Just Transition.

The Paris Agreement commits Canada to:

**“Take into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs,”**

And the Glasgow pact further:

**“recognizes the need to ensure just transitions that promote sustainable development and eradication of poverty, and the creation of decent work and quality jobs, including through making financial flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emission and climate-resilient development, including through deployment and transfer of technology, and provision of support to developing country Parties;”**

The Just Transition referred to in these agreements is the Just Transition outlined by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO’s guidelines on Just Transition sets out a process to transition workers into low-carbon work based on the four pillars of decent work:

- Social (tripartite) dialogue;
- Social protection;
- Rights at work; and
- Employment.

The Sustainable Jobs Act creates a framework that, if properly implemented, sets Canada on a path to keeping their promise in the Paris Agreement.



# Have workers at the table





The purpose of Canada's Sustainable Jobs Act is, according to the text of the bill, "the creation of sustainable jobs and support for workers and communities," something which Canada's Unions support.

Among other things, the Act creates a Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council, whose explicit purpose is to be a forum for social dialogue, providing advice to the minister regarding sustainable jobs.

Canada's unions are calling for Canada's Sustainable Jobs Act to be amended to ensure that a minimum of one-third of the Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council, including the co-chair, is made up of representatives of Trade Unions.

Social dialogue has a well-established meaning. The ILO, a UN agency with a tripartite governing structure made up of governments, employer and workers, defines it as:

*Social dialogue is defined by the ILO to include all types of negotiation, consultation or simply the exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. It can exist as a tripartite process, with the government as an official party to the dialogue or it may consist of bipartite relations only between labour and management (or trade unions and employers' organizations). Workplace cooperation, collective bargaining at a company, sector or cross-industry levels, and tripartite consultation processes are common forms of social dialogue.<sup>1</sup>*

For the Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council to function as a forum for social dialogue, it must be focussed on work and workers. A Partnership Council without enough worker representation will mean it is not a forum for social dialogue and undermines the purpose of the bill.

We expect worker contributions to the Partnership Council to include practical knowledge and experience with how workforce transitions occur, experience with training and up-skilling, understanding of bargaining, a demonstrated commitment to climate ambition.

And politically, we know that workers put more faith in outcomes when their unions are involved.

Building these roadmaps will require the ministry and department responsible for skills development and labour markets to be fully engaged. Canada's Unions are calling for amendments to the sections of the Sustainable Jobs Act that outline the contents of the Sustainable Jobs Action Plan and the responsibilities of the Sustainable Jobs Secretariat to recommend and deliver services.

1. [https://www.ilo.org/actemp/areas-of-work/WCMS\\_731146/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/actemp/areas-of-work/WCMS_731146/lang--en/index.htm)

**Commit to  
creating new  
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jobs**



Canada's unions welcome the commitment to "the creation of sustainable jobs and support for workers and communities in Canada in the shift to a net-zero economy" included in the Purpose clause of Canada's Sustainable Jobs Act.

However, this only speaks to part of the concerns facing workers.

Workers welcome the creation of new jobs. However, the least disruptive option for them, their families, and for communities across Canada is to make the jobs they have into sustainable jobs. Supporting the decarbonization of existing work will keep workers' salaries intact, their benefits intact, their collective agreement intact, and keeping their income and industry in their community. Practically speaking this may require the training or upskilling of workers to change how they do their job while requiring employers to maintain workforces and collective agreements.

For those workers whose work is changing so fundamentally that their industry or job may no longer exist, they need to know they will have the tools, education, and supports they need to get the new jobs that this legislation seeks to support.

That is why Canada's Unions are calling for an amendment to the purpose clause of Canada's Sustainable Jobs Act that additional purposes are:

**"To promote opportunities for high-quality work in high-valued added, low-carbon industries, preserve existing good jobs through supports for decarbonizing Canada's economy, and create pathways for workers into sustainable jobs."**

This ensures that governments must address the concerns of today's workers who are increasingly concerned about what fighting climate change means for them.

Encouragingly we have seen important steps in this direction. Commitments in Budget 2023 to Union Training Centres speak to creating pathways, and attaching labour conditions to Investment Tax Credits, existing jobs can be protected and decarbonized.





# Sustainable jobs must mean good jobs



Canada's Sustainable Jobs Act calls for the creation of sustainable jobs without a definition of what these jobs would be.

Canada's Unions are calling for an amendment to the Sustainable Jobs Act to define Sustainable Jobs in a way that is similar to the definition Canada has already proposed in the Interim Sustainable Jobs Plan, as an evergreen definition, and define a Sustainable Job as:

**“ Any decent, well-paying, high-quality job that is compatible with Canada’s net-zero economy and a climate resilient future, that can support workers and their families over time, and include such elements as fair income, job security, a collective agreement, social protection, and social dialogue.”**

# Invest in training



Training will be essential to transitioning workers from high-carbon to low-carbon jobs and fulfilling the objectives of a Sustainable Jobs Act whose purpose is updated according to the needs of Canada’s workers. This will range from training in new technologies or equipment which decarbonizes an existing industry, to training that allows workers to move into a job in a new industry, to training that brings new workers into low-carbon work. Canada’s unions believe the legislation must set guardrails in place that will ensure training meets a series of targets, or “strings attached,” in order to serve the workers being trained:

- Training should take advantage of Union Training Centre’s record of success;
- Be delivered through not-for-profit providers, to ensure training dollars benefit workers and are not siphoned off to shareholders;
- Workers must receive recognized accreditation from accredited institutions (Union Training Centres are accredited) which employ experienced and qualified instructors;
- Include specific targets for equity and inclusion that are tied to success measurables listed below; and
- There must be clear measurables attached to funding including successful job placement and completion rates.

As in other recommendations, Canada’s unions believe that a table made up of workers, employers and government, in consultation with affected stakeholders is the most effective way to negotiate these “strings.”

We note further that skills and labour shortages are creating significant economic losses<sup>2</sup> which could reasonably be expected to be exacerbated by industrial change which is not backed up with sufficient, high-quality training.

Union Training Centres are well-positioned to ensure that workers receive the appropriate, quality training that will align with job opportunities at the other end.

These training centres are not-for-profit, jointly trusted with a record of ensuring that both unionized and non-unionized workers are trained to the highest industry standards. Their programs are accredited in every province (with the exception of Quebec), and training is delivered by qualified, experienced instructors.

● 2. <https://cme-mec.ca/blog/canada-leaving-almost-13-billion-on-the-table-due-to-labour-and-skills-shortages-in-manufacturing/>





# Invest in communities



Workers are the backbone of their communities. We need to see investments in energy, infrastructure and services that will keep communities safe from the impacts of climate change, and with jobs that keep them vibrant places that people call home.

On one hand, we need to see investments in climate adaptation. This means hard infrastructure like floodways, roads, bridges, buildings, energy and communication grids that can withstand more extreme weather, built by trained union workers.

It also means investing in future industries that will keep these communities growing, for example, building on the idea of the Inflation Reduction Act's Energy Community Bonus which incentivizes investments in communities historically focussed on fossil fuels, ensuring that those communities, with their skilled workforces can benefit from investments in new industries.

Maintaining the vibrancy and stability of communities will also require investments in the care economy in these regions and communities, ensuring they remain places where residents can raise a family through to aging in place with dignity. It means ensuring that communities have educators, PSWs, nurses, allied health professionals, with strong incomes, benefits and the protection of a union.



# Invest in the future

Through training and investments, Canada can unleash and equip our highly skilled workforce so Canada can build an economy that's sustainable for the next 20, 50, 100 years and beyond.

If Canada and Canadian workers are ready to lead, our economy cannot be focussed on the same priorities as it was even 5 years ago.

We cannot find our economy making VHS tapes if the world demands streaming.

As countries across the globe race to curtail emissions and market forces change demands for energy and commodities, Canada must not lag behind. The stark truth is that if we don't keep pace, it's workers and their families who will bear the brunt. The time has come for governments at every level to invest strategically in what our economy and climate needs. Every dollar must support good, well-paying jobs with the protection of a union.

The good news is that we have a skilled workforce, raw materials, a supply chain and geography that allows us to lead on things ranging from green steel to ZEVs to clean electricity.

By collaborating with workers, unions, and businesses, governments have the potential to drive innovation, decarbonize good jobs so they are sustainable for the long-term, and create new, low-carbon job opportunities that ensure workers can support their families.



# Consulting and engaging affected stakeholders



In addition to tripartite social dialogue, we call for multi-stakeholder bodies to build consensus for laws, regulations and programs that both meet our just transition and climate objectives.

The Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council, Regional Energy and Resource Tables and other bodies engage in broad and meaningful consultation with groups from across civil society. A particularly effective way to do this could be in concert with the Net-Zero Advisory Body.

# Climate change is a health and safety issue



According to experts 2023 will be the worst forest fire year on record<sup>3</sup>, the BC Coroner's office estimates that 619 people died in the 2021 heat dome,<sup>4</sup> extreme-weather related flooding in Nova Scotia led to the deaths and hundreds of millions of dollars in damages.<sup>5, 6</sup>

More extreme heat and more extreme weather is creating hazards for workers across Canada. Thermal stress can affect workers working outdoors as well as workers working indoors where there is inadequate cooling and hotter workplaces can lead to other hazards like slips or dropped tools from sweat, fogged PPE, dizziness, or hotter tools and equipment. Wildfire smoke can affect workers whether they are nearby to fires or hundreds of kilometers away both indoors and outdoors. Flooding can create a myriad of hazards in a workplace. Action on climate change must include up-to-date Occupational Health and Safety regulations and enforcement that address hazards that stem from climate change.

Canada must invest immediately in climate adaptation to ensure buildings and workplaces are safe working temperatures with clean air to breathe, flood mitigation, forest management, and infrastructure like road, bridges, electrical grids etc., that can meet demands in a changing climate among others. The jobs created in adaptation must be good jobs, with the benefits and protection of a union card, and the training needed.

- 3. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-wildfire-season-worst-ever-more-to-come-1.6934284>
- 4. <https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/blogs/science-health/surviving-heat-impacts-2021-western-heat-dome-canada>
- 5. <https://globalnews.ca/news/9917184/nova-scotia-floods-170m-insured-damages/>
- 6. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/nova-scotia-flood-natalie-harnish-nicholas-holland-colton-sisco-1.6920371>

