



C A N A D A

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Re: 2026–2030 Sustainable Jobs Action Plan

Submitted by Blue Green Canada on October 29, 2025

## Introduction

Blue Green Canada (BGC) works to unite and mobilize unions, environmentalists, and civil society organizations to challenge industries, governments, and employers to advance a sustainable and equitable society in the transition to a low carbon economy. We believe in a sustainable and equitable society that enables workers and communities to thrive in the transition to a low carbon economy.

The federal government is betting big on nation-building projects — housing, infrastructure, mining, and energy — all of which depend on a skilled workforce. BGC knows that we need a green industrial strategy that will ensure we can keep the jobs, cut the carbon and build our collective future. All of this depends on the government being ready to invest in Canada and our workers versus increasing subsidies to corporations.

The scale of this opportunity is enormous, and so are the risks if Canada continues to fail to prepare. The Sustainable Jobs Action Plan (SJAP) must ensure that workers are the foundation of this effort, not an afterthought. We need to ensure workers are ready and trained to work now, and to have the resources and systems to ensure a ready and trained workforce into the future.

The federal government's SJAP is a critical opportunity to ensure that climate policy does not simply look forward to the jobs of some random future but provides real, durable support for the workers and communities facing transition challenges now.

## Discussion Questions

*Q1. To advance opportunities for your region/sector and Canada more broadly, what should the 2026-2030 Sustainable Jobs Action Plan prioritize for the next five years? What foundational actions are needed for long-term success, including to ensure the sustainable jobs legislative principles are applied across government?*

## Green Industrial Strategy and Workforce Development

Canada cannot rely on the old export-oriented, resource-dependent economy models of the past. We need a national, **multi-year green industrial strategy**. Within this strategy, the SJAP should provide the worker focused framework that articulates and details that:

- It is paramount that the federal government protect Canadian jobs. Canada is already a world-leader in clean industry across several sectors. Canadian steel is the cleanest in

the world, but as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives recently pointed out, it could go further.<sup>1</sup>

- Resources and support for workers and workforce development should be done with consideration of what big builds are in the short, medium and long-term procurement and infrastructure build pipeline. Big builds and infrastructure plans should automatically factor in Buy Canada and Canadian workforce availability and needs.
  - Ensure Buy Clean and Buy Canadian policies are enacted and enforced. This includes developing timeline and investment maps as to when/what order these policies will be implemented.
  - Ensure all government infrastructure projects use Canadian steel, cement, and aluminium and lumber. It is estimated that over 2023-2024 the Federal Government spent over \$30 billion on infrastructure on its own assets and through provincial transfer payments. Ensuring these funds are spent on Canadian made and manufactured goods support Canadian industries and workers. Buying Canadian-made manufactured products has the additional advantage of helping Canada achieve its emissions targets. Canadian-made construction material including steel, concrete, aluminum and wood products typically has lower embodied carbon than imported materials.<sup>2</sup>
  - Ensure building and construction projects with any form of government funding are incentivized to use Canadian steel, cement, and aluminium and lumber and incentivize private sector development to do likewise. As the Pembina Institute (member group of BGC) notes: Project Labour Agreements are a model used in the United States that incentivize project proponents to offer good wages and benefits to their workforce and studies have shown these models do not meaningfully increase project costs.<sup>3</sup>
- As PM Carney stated when he was the UN Special Envoy on Climate Action and Finance:

*... what we have seen increasingly, spurred initially by the Sustainable Development Goals, accelerated by Paris, and then by social movements and governments, is societies putting tremendous value on achieving net zero. Companies, and those who invest in them and lend to them, and who are part of the solution, will be rewarded. Those who are lagging behind and are still part of the problem and will be punished.<sup>4</sup>*

- Undertake comprehensive mapping to develop plans to address the needs of an industry's adjacent sectors simultaneously.
- Invest in domestic manufacturing and clean technology supply chains, ensuring Canadian workers benefit from value-added jobs.

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<sup>1</sup>CCPA, 'To become a clean energy superpower, Canada needs Green Steel and iron', [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/to-become-a-clean-energy-superpower-canada-needs-green-steel-and-iron/], October 2025

<sup>2</sup> For more information on using standards on embodied carbon in construction projects, please see "Lessons from the United States on "Buying Clean" and recommendations for Canada. Clean Energy Canada. 2022.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pembina.org/reports/sj-blueprint-part-1-english.pdf>, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/mark-carney-investing-net-zero-climate-solutions-creates-value-and-rewards>

- Invest in technology to further decarbonize our steel, cement, forestry and aluminum industries. These are the four industries whose productions are at the core of the construction and building that will be required for our nation building projects - including housing and transportation. **This is a matter of market competitiveness:** when other nations move ahead with decarbonization and take action to protect their domestic industries - such as the steel industry, we face the prospect that Canada's industries could be shut out of foreign markets for failing to meet environmental standards.
- Support workers in all sectors, not only fossil fuel industries - because decarbonization is reshaping workplaces from auto plants to hospitals. **This includes Canada's public service.** Given Canada's direction of nation building, the government must invest in itself. Our public service is our experts and who we need to support, monitor, research and carry out the long-term strategies Canada must develop to meet Net-Zero.
- The SJAP must have its activities and deliverables interwoven through a whole of government approach to social and economic planning - other G7 countries have done this through developing national (green) industrial strategies.

Our transition to Net-Zero will come about because we have to mitigate carbon-intensive emissions and because of the necessity to ensure other environmental protections, e.g., to protect biodiversity. There is a distinction between compensatory strategies that aim to mitigate the negative impacts of job loss and transformative strategies that aim to keep workers tied to their employers while helping their workplaces successfully adapt to the transition. Both types of strategies are needed to foster the growth of sustainable jobs.

*Q2. How do you or your organization currently access and use labour market data, including for future energy planning? What challenges do you face in doing so and what types of data are most valuable to your work or decision-making?*

BGC works with our member organization and partners to acquire labour market data as needed. We would refer you to this section in Unifor's submission.

BGC, through our engagement with industry, unions, environmental, and other civil society organizations, has heard repeatedly the necessity for robust data collection from labour market trends, to trade of critical minerals. If the government wants to be able to plan for the future of work and the future of our industries and the future of building our economies, it must be grounded in data, research and modelling. Economic and industrial transformation of the magnitude before us cannot be left to 'who yells the loudest' gets the best investment: data is the building blocks for planning, transparency and accountability. The data available will be another way that we can hold both government and industry accountable to their planning and development by providing a common language to define indicators and benchmarks.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.climateaction100.org/net-zero-company-benchmark/methodology/>

*Q3. What data and information should be a priority for the federal government to analyze or collect to better track existing and future gaps in low-carbon skills and occupations, and related training?*

### **Support for Workers Today, Not Just Tomorrow**

The transition to Net-Zero cannot ignore the workers and communities already experiencing disruption. Canada must:

- Use present-day worker data to guide decisions, not only projections of future labour demand.
- Provide immediate support to workers in fossil fuel, manufacturing, and supply chain industries where transitions are already underway.
- Tie federal investments to job quality standards, including fair wages, union rights, training opportunities, and job security.

Canada has already seen what happens when transitions are unmanaged: the cod fishery collapse left entire communities stranded, and the coal phase-out demonstrated the challenge of change without adequate foresight and follow through. The SJAP must learn from these lessons, follow recommendations from previous just transition consultations, and provide concrete bridges for workers — income support, retraining and/or early retirements, and guarantees of good union jobs in emerging industries.

*Q4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing federal skills training programs to fill specific existing and future skills gaps in critical sectors, including energy, natural resources, low-carbon and resilience-enabling sectors? What models or mechanisms do you consider to be the most effective solutions?*

BGC supports our member unions, United Steelworkers (USW) and Unifor, and the CLC identifies as the needs and priorities for federal skills training programs.

Canada must ensure training and upskilling programs equip workers for real jobs today and tomorrow. This is an investment that must start now and must be approached as something that continues into perpetuity. The future does not have a date stamp on it, nor does the evolution of our industries and technologies. These programs must:

- Prepare workers for real jobs
- Be connected to existing projects not speculative possibilities
- Be designed and delivered in conjunction with unions, and
- Lead to good quality, unionized employment.

In a new report from the Centre for Civic Governance (a member of BGC), there is a projected volume of work for construction and building workers in all trades totaling between **6.3 million and 9.5 million job years between now and 2050**<sup>6</sup>. That represents an average of up to 350,000 ongoing jobs over this period, equivalent to a permanent step increase of 20-30% in total current construction employment in Canada. Meeting Canada's 2050 climate

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<sup>6</sup> <https://ccg.eco/research/jobs-for-today/>

commitments will require, on top of the above, tens of thousands more workers who are skill ready and trained in areas of operations and maintenance. To seize this opportunity, the Action Plan must scale up apprenticeships, training programs, and mid-career reskilling so young workers and displaced workers alike can find pathways into good, sustainable jobs.

*Q5. What priority actions should the federal government take to support workers to efficiently upskill their existing credentials, and support low-carbon industries to find skilled workers? How should the federal government collaborate with external partners to address low-carbon skills and training gaps?*

### **A Worker-Centred Just Transition**

Workers and their unions must be central decision-makers in Canada's transition. International best practice, including the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Guidelines on a Just Transition, confirms that effective transition planning requires strong social dialogue. We recommend that Canada:

- Require joint worker-employer low-carbon transition committees in every workplace, similar to health and safety committees, to ensure workplace-level input.
- Guarantee durable support for impacted workers and communities, modeled on the principles set out by Canada's Coal Transition Task Force (2018).
- Ensure that these programs are developed and co-produced through both unions and industry. These programs must identify the evolution of new trades and sub-trades that will evolve, using robust data and research indicators to model how technology and Net-Zero requirements evolve into perpetuity.

*Q6. What federal actions are most important in the near term to support diversifying the workforce in key sectors? What initiatives (by industry, government, or other organizations) are successfully supporting the inclusion, recruitment, retention, and leadership of Indigenous Peoples, Employment Equity groups, women, and youth in the low-carbon economy and workforce?*

### **Equity, Inclusion, and Indigenous Rights**

A Just Transition must be rooted in the ethical and moral pillars expressed in the ILO's *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*<sup>7</sup>.

The transition must be fair, inclusive, and reconciliatory. Canada should:

- Progress in the work of the Sustainable Jobs Act has been far too slow; ensure that all seats are filled on the Partnership Council, ensure that the Secretariat is fully stood up and funded - in each case these capacities would provide greater access by equity seeking groups in the development, participation and ability to hold government accountable.
- Honour commitments under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, by centering Indigenous peoples as rights-holders and partners in all transition planning.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/publications/guidelines-just-transition-towards-environmentally-sustainable-economies>

- Ensure equitable participation and benefit for women, newcomers, racialized workers, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQI+ workers through recruitment, training, and employment measures.
- Guarantee that the costs and benefits of transition are fairly distributed across regions and communities.
- Establish regionally driven and locally delivered transition plans, co-developed with unions, employers, Indigenous governments, provincial and/or local governments, and civil society.
- Develop benchmarking practices that inform how the intentional equitable participation and benefit for women, newcomers, racialized workers, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQI+ workers through recruitment, training, and employment measures are being met.
- Publish regular progress reports to Parliament on the use of funds, results achieved, and lessons learned.

To be ambitious, the SJAP must lay out a comprehensive strategy with the policies, programs, and investments needed to match the scale of nation-building and energy transition opportunities. To be informed by evidence, it must use real-time labour supply and demand data. To be backed by workers, it must secure funding and political will so communities can count on long-term support.

*Q7. Actions to foster the move to a net-zero economy and the creation of sustainable jobs exist across all levels of government and society. What actions can your organization contribute to support achieving the changes needed?*

BGC has worked over the last several years to build the working space - and policy consensus, among environmental and civil society organizations, trade unions, workers and worker oriented organisations and industry to understand the value and necessity of a green industrial strategy for Canada. BGC intends to continue our work in educating and engaging around industrial strategy - why it is the path to Net-Zero, how we can design the strategy - bringing industry, workers, economists and government together - to find, map out and build an economy that works for everyone.

We will leverage our history, skill and experience of convening and policy synthesis. Of particular note is our ongoing work on Buy Clean - encompassing clean manufacturing and procurement. We have worked with think tanks and industry, through which we have produced seminal research and policy recommendations that should be seen as the touchstone for a national Green Industrial Strategy. We have the recognition in both the broader labour and environmental movements to be able to bring together an array of stakeholders. We are able to do this with unique authority owing to the fact that BGC has the two largest industrial unions among our members.

It is no secret that governments and the general population often only identify climate change as an issue that only ENGOs care about. With whom we are as BGC we show that unions have, can, will and want to take public leadership on things such as clean manufacturing, greening the

steel industry, coal transition (back in the day). Why does this contribute to moving to a Net-Zero economy? Blue Green shows through our work - and the synthesis of the work of our member groups and allies: we (Canada) absolutely can have good, green, sustainable jobs and also have a durable economy that can grow, change and flourish BECAUSE we are decarbonizing and doing business differently.

All the above empowers BGC to be able to engage directly with individual workers - in a way very few other entities have been able to, consistently. We see our ongoing role of bridge builders of policy and implementation. We talk with workers and communities to learn and hear from them about their realities, as workers, living through climate change. We do not just write about what workers should do or expect - we respect them and their communities as agents of knowledge and experience. We work with them directly to learn from them - to document their ideas for transition in their workplaces, sector, industries, and communities. It's more than just 'letting' them have their say - we empower and convene space, so those experiences have space to be articulated and used in a full range of policy and legislative development.

*Q8. Does this discussion paper target the right themes and areas requiring change? Do you have anything else to add that has not been covered above or in previous engagements?*

BGC unites workers, environmental, and civil society organizations to tackle today's environmental challenges, while advocating for quality jobs and fostering a clean, thriving, and equitable economy. We aim for an economy that flourishes during the transition to zero emissions, protecting workers and communities from the financial and social consequences of climate change. Our member groups are clear on:

We can create and keep good jobs across the country, protecting workers and the environment, by developing safer alternatives to dangerous, high-emitting, or toxic products. We know that the nature of work is changing. Workers and their communities need governments and employers to make long-term plans to ensure we have clean air, clean water, and a safe environment for us and our children. We do not have to choose between good jobs and a healthy environment; it is a false dichotomy.

- **KEEP THE JOBS:** To tackle climate change and transition to a low-carbon economy, we need to maintain good-paying union jobs across Canada. By maintaining and creating well-compensated union jobs, we can foster economic stability and social equity during the transition. Unions play a vital role in protecting workers' rights, negotiating fair wages and benefits, and promoting safe working conditions. These protections are especially important as industries shift their work towards renewable energy sources and sustainable practices.

Change is guaranteed; justice is not. We cannot continue exploitive economic transitions that leave people out. We need permanent and comprehensive collaboration between labour, employers, and governments to build a clean economy that is sustainable and meets people's needs.

- **CUT THE CARBON:** Without immediate and deep emissions reductions across all sectors, limiting global warming to 2.0°C is beyond reach. Investment into the greening of our core nation building industries like steel, forestry, aluminum and cement is how Canada can connect the dots of good union jobs (now and in the future), developing world class industries.
- **BUILD THE FUTURE:** Decarbonization efforts must be developed and planned with workers, included as equal participants, and not consulted after the fact. We need green industrial policies developed that are part of an intentional Green Industrial Strategy for Canada.

### **Conclusion**

Canada's nation-building ambitions are bold, but they will fail without investing in the workers who can deliver them. The SJAP is a chance to avoid repeating past mistakes, prepare our workforce for the clean economy, and ensure prosperity is shared by all regions and communities.

BGC and our allies look forward to working with the Government of Canada to make this vision a reality.

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