

To the Sustainable Jobs Secretariat,

The Conservation Council of New Brunswick (CCNB) is a registered charity and environmental non-profit organization that has been advocating for a healthier, more sustainable province since 1969. Guided by our vision that the future of all life depends on balancing human activity with ecological limits, our mission is to create awareness of environmental challenges and advance solutions through research, education, and collaboration.

We thank the Government of Canada and the Sustainable Jobs Secretariat for the opportunity to provide input on the 2026–2030 Sustainable Jobs Action Plan. Below are our responses to the provided Discussion Questions.

Discussion Questions

1. 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?

The Sustainable Jobs Action Plan (SJAP) must drive the creation of resilient, inclusive, and community-centered economies that prioritize people and the planet. For New Brunswick and Atlantic Canada, this means embedding sustainability and equity in workforce development, energy transition, and regional economic planning.

Key Priorities

- Invest in Community-Based Climate Solutions: Support local energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives, particularly in rural, Indigenous, and coastal communities where sustainable jobs can drive long-term prosperity.
- Guarantee High-Quality Work: All government-supported clean energy and infrastructure projects must include labour standards ensuring fair wages, apprenticeship requirements, and union protections.
- Develop Regional Retrofit Strategies: Implement housing retrofit programs tailored to regional needs. In Atlantic Canada, this includes addressing the need for thousands of annual retrofits and tackling shortages in carpentry, electrical, HVAC, heat pump installation, and other trades.
- Build a Diverse Workforce: Ensure equity and inclusion training in all publicly funded projects, and expand wraparound supports (e.g., childcare, transportation, mentoring) for equity-deserving workers and apprentices.
- Expand Public Awareness and Career Transition Campaigns: Fund national and regional campaigns that highlight the full range of sustainable job opportunities—from electricians and heat pump installers to ecologists, urban planners, and digital energy analysts. These campaigns should feature storytelling from Indigenous, rural, and women leaders in sustainability fields. Public understanding of green jobs remains limited, and increased

visibility can help shift attitudes, attract a more diverse workforce, and inspire career transitions across sectors.

- Promote Green Jobs in the Circular Economy: Integrate circular economy principles—repair, reuse, deconstruction, and upcycling—into the SJAP as a core strategy for achieving a low-carbon economy. These approaches are especially important in rural and remote communities, where local repair and reuse industries can strengthen economic resilience. Circular economy jobs also align closely with Indigenous knowledge systems and traditional skills related to sustainability, resource stewardship, and cultural materials. The plan should emphasize that green jobs are not only about creating “new” roles but also transforming existing work into greener, more sustainable forms.
 - Establish a National Youth Climate Corps: Create meaningful, well-paid opportunities for young people to work in climate adaptation, energy efficiency, conservation, and disaster resilience. This program would build local capacity, foster environmental stewardship, and address youth unemployment across Canada.
2. 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? (e.g. geographic level, industries, occupations, demographic groups, other forms of disaggregated data)

CCNB would benefit from accessible and regionally relevant labour market data to inform climate and energy policy. However, data gaps persist, particularly regarding the Atlantic region’s low-carbon workforce and green job categories.

Challenges and Needs:

- Regional Gaps: Current data do not adequately capture Atlantic-specific dynamics, such as rural employment, migration, and energy poverty.
 - Green Job Classification: Canada needs standardized definitions and coding for “green jobs” across sectors to track progress toward a sustainable workforce.
 - Timeliness: Labour data must be forward-looking and responsive to rapid shifts in clean energy technologies and global markets.
3. 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?

The federal government should prioritize disaggregated, regional, and sectoral labour data that reflect the evolving clean economy. This includes:

- Establishing an overarching “green jobs” category within National Occupation Classifications (NOC).
- Collaborating with partners such as ECO Canada to assess workforce trends in clean energy, efficiency, and climate resilience.

- Collecting localized data on barriers and opportunities for equity-deserving groups, particularly Indigenous, newcomer, and rural workers.
4. 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?

Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing Federal Skills Training Programs

While programs like the Sustainable Jobs Training Fund and union-led training initiatives are valuable foundations, they must become more inclusive, regionally adapted, and responsive to equity and access barriers. Many existing programs do not adequately reflect the needs of smaller provinces or rural communities, nor do they provide sufficient supports for equity-deserving groups to enter and thrive in emerging green sectors.

Recommendations

- **Make Training Inclusive:** Only 5% of tradespeople in Canada are women. The Sustainable Jobs Action Plan (SJAP) should replicate and scale successful models like YWCA Halifax's *Shift Change*, which trains management and workers in inclusive workplace practices and gender equity.
 - **Expand Access:** Introduce mobile, community-based, and on-reserve training programs to overcome geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers. This is particularly important in Atlantic and northern regions where centralized training opportunities are limited.
 - **Fund Wraparound Supports:** Ensure all training programs include wraparound supports such as childcare, transportation, and meal stipends. These are essential for enabling full participation by underrepresented groups, including women, newcomers, and Indigenous trainees.
 - **Integrate "Green Skills" into Existing Trades:** Partner with community colleges, trade schools, and industry associations to develop green-skills certificate add-ons for existing apprenticeship and trade programs. Many sustainable jobs do not require entirely new occupations but rather the "topping up" of existing skillsets—for example, electricians gaining solar installation training, plumbers learning water efficiency technologies, or forestry workers adding ecosystem restoration skills. Embedding modular "green" components (e.g., energy efficiency, retrofitting, circular economy practices, and ecological restoration) into existing programs will accelerate the transition to a low-carbon workforce without overburdening institutions or workers.
5. 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?

Priority Actions to Support Low-Carbon Upskilling and Workforce Development

To prepare workers for Canada's low-carbon economy, the federal government should take coordinated, equity-focused actions that align education, training, and employment across all regions and career stages.

Key Recommendations

- **Align Training with Net-Zero Goals:** Link all education and certification programs to Canada's net-zero building code, climate adaptation priorities, and emerging clean energy sectors such as renewables, retrofits, and storage. This ensures training investments are consistent with long-term decarbonization objectives.
 - **Expand Microcredentials:** Develop and fund short, stackable microcredential programs in areas such as energy efficiency, climate science, and renewable energy systems. These programs allow workers to upskill quickly and affordably while remaining in the workforce.
 - **Develop Regional "Green Workforce Pathways" Programs:** Establish regionally tailored pathways that connect high school, college, and university students with apprenticeships, co-ops, and microcredential programs in renewable energy, conservation, and clean technology. This creates a clear continuum from early education and career awareness to hands-on training and employment in low-carbon industries.
 - **Increase Intergovernmental and Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Convene regular forums between federal and provincial governments, trades associations, Indigenous organizations, labour unions, and post-secondary institutions to coordinate workforce development strategies, identify emerging skills gaps, and align funding priorities.
6. 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?

Diversifying the Workforce in the Low-Carbon Economy

- Equity and reconciliation must be core principles of the Sustainable Jobs framework. Federal action should prioritize inclusion, awareness, and access to meaningful, well-paid employment for Indigenous Peoples, Employment Equity groups, women, youth, and newcomers.

Recommendations

- **Support Indigenous-Led Programs:** Expand successful initiatives like NB Power's *First Nations Energy Efficiency Program* and Efficiency Nova Scotia's *Mi'kmaw Home Energy Efficiency Program (MHEEP)* nationwide. These programs not only advance energy efficiency but also provide pathways for Indigenous employment, leadership, and community-based economic development.

- Enhance Wage Subsidy and Internship Programs: Continue and expand federal wage subsidy programs delivered through partners such as ECO Canada, the Clean Foundation, and Student Energy, which help employers hire and train young and equity-deserving workers in the low-carbon sector. Many businesses remain unaware these programs exist, so the federal government should fund public awareness and outreach campaigns to increase participation and uptake. In New Brunswick, The Gaia Project's Green Experts program (<https://thegaiaproject.ca/en/green-experts/>) is already doing effective work connecting students and employers in the green economy; sustained and expanded funding for such initiatives is essential.
 - Ensure Safe and Inclusive Workplaces: Fund mandatory diversity, equity, and inclusion training for management and workers across clean energy, construction, and natural resource industries. Safe, respectful workplaces are key to improving retention and leadership opportunities for women, Indigenous workers, and other underrepresented groups.
 - Invest in Women and Newcomers: Strengthen wraparound supports—such as childcare, transportation, and mentorship—and replicate proven inclusion models across Canada to ensure equitable participation in the growing low-carbon workforce.
7. 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?

The Conservation Council of New Brunswick advances a just transition through:

- Research and Policy Leadership: Producing evidence-based reports and recommendations that link energy, climate, and community well-being.
 - Community Programs: Supporting renewable energy, energy efficiency, and land restoration projects that create sustainable, local employment.
 - Partnerships: Collaborating with Indigenous communities, trades organizations, and local governments to build capacity and promote equity in green job creation.
 - Training and employment: Training youth and providing employment related to green economy policies and practices.
8. 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?

Additional Themes and Areas for Strengthening

The discussion paper covers many critical themes, but implementation must be regionally tailored and expanded to include key missing elements. The Sustainable Jobs Action Plan (SJAP) is an opportunity to:

- Embed Reconciliation and Equity Across the Clean Economy: Ensure reconciliation and equity are woven through every policy, funding stream, and program within the clean economy. This includes prioritizing Indigenous leadership, equity-deserving groups, and community-driven approaches in all aspects of workforce planning and implementation.
- Strengthen Rural and Small-Community Participation: Support rural, coastal, and small communities to fully participate in the transition by investing in local training hubs, community energy projects, and regionally adapted workforce development programs.
- Introduce Early Education and Green Career Awareness: Launch early education initiatives that normalize green careers as viable, respected, and rewarding options. Collaborate with provincial education departments to integrate environmental literacy, climate science, and sustainability-focused career pathways into K–12 curricula. Encourage partnerships between schools, local businesses, and environmental organizations to deliver hands-on experiences—such as renewable energy projects, habitat restoration days, and green career fairs. These initiatives help dismantle cultural and gender barriers in trades and environmental work, ensuring the next generation sees climate-related jobs as mainstream and desirable.
- Strengthen Educator and Counsellor Training: Provide professional development for teachers and career counsellors to equip them with up-to-date knowledge of emerging green sectors, sustainability skills, and low-carbon job trends. Educators play a pivotal role in shaping youth career choices, but most are not yet trained to guide students toward opportunities in the green economy.
- Commit to Evaluation and Measurement: Establish a federal framework to track how early education, training, and transition programs increase diversity and participation in the green economy—disaggregated by gender, age, region, and Indigenous identity. Consistent monitoring and reporting will ensure accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement in achieving an equitable transition.
- Recognize Climate Action as Nation-Building: Position climate action not only as an environmental necessity but as a nation-building opportunity to create meaningful, future-focused employment for all Canadians while fostering resilience, inclusion, and long-term prosperity.

Sincerely,

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