

2026–2030 Sustainable Jobs Action Plan

Summary of Pembina Institute's
comments and recommendations

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Canada's success in building a net-zero economy depends on its ability to grow industries that create high-quality, sustainable jobs while ensuring workers and communities benefit from the transition. In October 2025, Natural Resources Canada invited written feedback on the federal government's Sustainable Jobs Action Plan (SJAP) for 2026–2030. The plan offers a critical opportunity to move from planning to implementation — embedding sustainable jobs principles across government policy and investment decisions.

To achieve lasting economic and social benefits, **the SJAP should integrate both demand- and supply-side workforce measures**: accelerating industrial growth in clean energy sectors that create good jobs, while strengthening the education, training, and social systems that prepare and protect workers. The Pembina Institute recommends five mutually reinforcing priorities, presented below. For more details, see our complete [responses to the discussion questions](#) posed by the government.

1. Drive demand for sustainable jobs through clean industrial growth

The SJAP should advance sector-specific clean industrial strategies that drive the growth of industries aligned with a net-zero economy, such as renewable energy, clean manufacturing, critical minerals, low-carbon buildings, and electrified transportation systems.

Each strategy should be developed collaboratively with labour groups and other civil society organizations, Indigenous rights holders, and provinces and territories to ensure that industrial growth and workforce development proceed hand in hand.

Strategic federal investment tools — including the Strategic Innovation Fund, clean investment tax credits, and projects identified by the Major Projects Office — should be used to create good, stable jobs while increasing Canada's competitiveness and energy security.

To ensure that public investment translates into shared prosperity, the government should embed labour conditions in all federally supported projects, such as requirements for prevailing wages, apprenticeships, and workforce diversity. This would build on commitments set out in

the Building Canada Act (Bill C-5) and advance proven policy tools such as project labour agreements, which deliver high-quality, unionized employment without raising project costs.

2. Strengthen workforce development systems and training capacity

As industries modernize, workplaces and skills will need to evolve.

The Government of Canada should support employers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, to invest in on-the-job training and upskilling through targeted tax credits or grants. This would help maintain competitiveness, boost productivity, and ensure workers can adapt to technological and process changes, such as industrial electrification or equipment retrofits. To guide these efforts, Canada needs a more coordinated and forward-looking approach to labour market information.

The SJAP should prioritize improved data collection and forecasting, including regional and sectoral analyses that account for demographic trends, automation, and climate-related economic shifts. Enhanced data will enable better alignment between training capacity and industry demand.

Public investments should flow primarily to public and union-led training institutions, which have strong records of apprenticeship completion and job placement. Programs like the Sustainable Jobs Training Fund can be expanded and refined to prioritize funding for training targeted at growing clean industries and meeting labour market demand.

3. Promote inclusion, equity, and participation across the workforce

Building a clean economy that benefits all Canadians requires deliberate action to remove systemic barriers and expand opportunities for Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, newcomers, and other equity-deserving groups. One effective mechanism is the use of community benefits agreements, which are negotiated between developers and communities.

The federal government should require community benefits agreements for publicly funded infrastructure projects, following British Columbia's lead, and provide capacity funding for communities to engage in the process. Establishing a national model, similar to BC Infrastructure Benefits, would promote equitable hiring practices, fair wages, and safe, respectful workplaces.

To support women's participation in the skilled trades and clean energy sectors, the federal government should expand programs like the Women's Employment Readiness pilot, which provides an integrated package of pre-employment training, mentorship, and wraparound supports.

For youth, the government should deliver on its commitment to establish a youth climate corps — a nation-building program that provides paid, unionized work experience in climate action, infrastructure development, and community resilience. It should be designed to uphold decent work principles and ensure equitable access for Indigenous, rural, and other equity-deserving youth.

Finally, newcomers should be recognized as a vital part of Canada's clean economy workforce. Strengthening the Foreign Credential Recognition Program and aligning immigration pathways with labour market needs can accelerate entry into sustainable jobs, ensuring that their skills are recognized and rewarded.

4. Protect workers and communities through stronger social supports

Economic and technological change will create both opportunities and disruptions. Strengthened income and employment supports can enable a transition to a clean economy that enhances, not undermines, economic security in affected regions.

The SJAP should help workers and communities adapt to transition risks by modernizing Canada's social safety net and creating new pathways for economic stability. This includes targeted funding for workers and communities affected by layoffs due to trade volatility, automation, or sectoral decline — building on existing federal measures that aim to protect, grow, and transform Canada's strategic industries in response to the impacts from the U.S. tariffs. The government could leverage current programs by expanding the Canada Retraining and Opportunities Initiative and establishing a dedicated transition fund to help communities respond to economic shocks.

For older workers, an early retirement fund could provide flexible support when retraining is not realistic.

5. Establish mechanisms for social dialogue and policy alignment

Effective implementation of the SJAP will depend on cross-government coordination and structured social dialogue.

The SJAP should create and empower a sustainable jobs partnership council to guide implementation of the plan, monitor outcomes, and recommend course corrections based on evidence and multistakeholder engagement. The council should include representatives from labour groups and other civil society organizations, Indigenous governments, and industry.

Sector-specific workforce development strategies should also be established under the SJAP's framework — aligning industrial policies with training, labour market planning, and equity

goals. These plans should be jointly developed with the provinces and territories, Indigenous rights holders, and other key partners.

The Pembina Institute recognizes that the work we steward and those we serve span the lands of many Indigenous Peoples. We respectfully acknowledge that our organization is headquartered in the traditional territories of Treaty 7, comprising the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Piikani and Kainai Nations); the Stoney Nakoda Nations (Goodstoney, Chiniki and Bearspaw First Nations); and the Tsuut'ina Nation. These lands are also home to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government (Districts 5 and 6).

These acknowledgements are part of the start of a journey of several generations. We share them in the spirit of truth, justice and reconciliation, and to contribute to a more equitable and inclusive future for all.