

Proposed amendments to Bill C-50: The Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act

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Bill C-50, the Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act, aims to create sustainable jobs and advance a net-zero economy in Canada. While this legislation alone will not bring about an economy that is equitable and aligned with international climate goals, it proposes a useful governance and accountability framework to build on. However, gaps in the legislation reduce its potential impact and efficacy. The following proposed amendments to Bill C-50 seek to improve the bill's accountability, inclusivity, and integration with Canada's climate policies.

1. Advance Canada's climate commitments

Bill C-50 is both climate and labour legislation. Therefore, it should be explicitly oriented to advancing an economy and the creation of jobs that will help achieve Canada's emissions targets. We recommend that the Act:

- Explicitly state its aim to advance Canada's domestic and international climate commitments, including a reference to the Paris Agreement;
- Create clear links with the *Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act* (CNZEAA) to ensure that the Ministers, advisory bodies, and plans under Bill C-50 and CNZEAA work together and support each other's goals;
- Define "net-zero economy" to capture all the important features of a net-zero economy, such as alignment with achieving Canada's emissions targets and prioritizing emissions reductions over removals;
- Ensure there are sufficient parameters in the Act around the creation of "sustainable jobs" to mitigate the risk of creating jobs in sectors that are not compatible with Canada's pathway to a net-zero economy (for example, by inserting a definition of "sustainable jobs" or improving the guiding principles).

2. Effective guiding principles

The guiding principles set the direction of the activities undertaken by the Act. To ensure that the shift to a net-zero economy is fair for workers and communities, the principles must refer to key economic, environmental, and social aspects of the transition and they must inform the mechanisms in the legislation (Council, Secretariat, and Action Plan). We recommend that the Act:

- Expand the principles to ensure that policies and programs developed under the Act (1) advance Canada's climate commitments, (2) prioritize economic diversification in rural, remote, resourced-based, and transitioning communities, (3) address the economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts of the transition, and (4) respect the rights of Indigenous peoples;
- Expand the principles to ensure the Act's "sustainable jobs approach" supports all those who will be affected by - and wish to participate in - the transition to a net-zero economy;
- Require the Action Plan to describe how it advances the principles; and
- Explicitly require the Council and the Secretariat to carry out their responsibilities in alignment with the principles.

3. Support regional and sectoral transition planning

Since the practical work of the transition will occur at the local and regional levels, it is essential that sub-national governments and organizations can advance net-zero economic planning according to their own needs and ambition. The federal government can and should support bottom-up, regional planning by

working directly with local and regional partners. We recommend that the Act:

- Enable the responsible Minister to enter into “net-zero planning agreements” with Indigenous governments, municipalities, and industries that want to advance a net-zero economy and sustainable jobs in their own communities and sectors; and
- Mandate the Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council to advance regional economic development and diversification.

4. Accountability through responsibility and reporting

Accountability builds public trust and incentivizes ambitious action. This requires clear and transparent information about action plans and reporting on their implementation. The existing accountability mechanisms in the Bill must be improved. We recommend that the Act:

- Ensure that the Action Plan provides sufficient information about the measures it will implement, including milestones, responsible departments, implementation costs and timelines, as well as indicators for monitoring and tracking progress;
- Require the progress report to state how the Action Plan will be updated to achieve its milestones and advance the purposes of the Act; and
- Require a written response from the Minister detailing how the Council’s advice was implemented.

5. A more comprehensive and inclusive governance framework

The shift to a net-zero economy and the creation of sustainable jobs must include the participation of affected workers and communities. In particular, the Act should prioritize the participation of Indigenous peoples in decision-making, ownership, and employment in sustainable industries in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. We recommend that the Act:

- Expand the knowledge, expertise and experience required by members of the Council to include the following ones: support for worker transitions, Indigenous participation in the workforce, and addressing climate change;
- Expand the responsibilities of the Council to include providing advice on worker training, social support, and regional development;
- Explicitly name the groups with whom the Council will engage, in particular, Indigenous peoples and the Net-Zero Advisory Body established under CNZEAA; and
- Expand the role of the Secretariat and empower it to undertake data analysis, coordinate federal relationships with partners and the public, manage a coordinated approach to workforce development related to sustainable jobs, and implement UNDRIP across relevant policy initiatives in consultation and cooperation with rights holders.

Contact

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