

Briefing Note

The Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act

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Purpose

To brief parliamentarians on the current status and significance of Bill C-50, the *Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act*, in advance of further legislative proceedings.

Summary

- Bill C-50 proposes a useful governance and accountability framework for the Government of Canada to support workers and communities as Canada transitions to a net-zero economy.
- Important improvements were made to Bill C-50 in the House of Commons, following a series of amendments proposed by ENGOs and labour organizations.
- The emphasis now should be on passing the legislation to ensure sustainable jobs dialogue and programs can be implemented without delay.
- A pre-study of the Bill could accelerate its passage through the Senate and increase the likelihood of receiving royal assent by June 2024.

Background

Bill C-50, *An Act respecting accountability, transparency and engagement to support the creation of sustainable jobs for workers and economic growth in a net-zero economy* was introduced in the House of Commons in June 2023. It promises to stand up a Partnership Council and Secretariat, and mandates the creation of 5-year Sustainable Jobs Action Plans to set the foundation, coordination mechanisms, and whole of government planning on the sustainable jobs file.

The Bill was delayed during its study in the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. Prominent environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOs) and labour leaders publicly called on the Government of Canada to undertake measures necessary to move the Bill through the House of Commons. The government did so by moving a motion to impose a deadline for the study.

Considerations

- Bill C-50 sets up a framework to link the federal government's climate efforts with its workforce and economic planning. It puts in place the governance structure needed to initiate a more purposeful, systematic, and future-focused approach to advancing a clean energy transition in a way that directly engages with labour and other key social groups, in line with [best practices from other jurisdictions around the world](#).
- The establishment of the Partnership Council is an important way to ensure the voices of labour and other experts are heard in policy-making. It will serve as a critical link with Canadians, especially those impacted by the ongoing energy transition.
- The Bill will formalize the Sustainable Jobs Secretariat - a key government coordination instrument and policy driver on sustainable jobs - with responsibilities to engage and collaborate with over 15 federal government departments.
- The Bill is built on robust foundations, thanks to a twelve-meeting-long study at the Standing Committee on Natural Resources that involved 64 witnesses and [resulted in a report and 19 recommendations](#). The Government of Canada also undertook [public engagement](#), summarized in the [10-step interim Sustainable Jobs Plan](#). This follows the Auditor General's [report and recommendations](#).
- ENGOs and labour have been following the development of Bill C-50 and successfully [advocated for amendments](#) that align Bill C-50 with Canada's legislated climate goals (*Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act*), improve transparency and accountability, and ensure labour, Indigenous and environmental groups are represented on the Partnership Council.
- Labour unions have made clear that workers are already being impacted by the energy transition and require immediate supports. The Partnership Council must have sufficient time to engage workers and provide input into the first legislated Sustainable Jobs Action Plan in 2025. This requires efficient consideration and passage of the Bill, with Royal Assent by June 2024.

Conclusion

ENGOs support passing Bill C-50 and advise against unnecessary process delays. We expect the Government of Canada to publish and start implementing an ambitious and comprehensive 2025 Sustainable Jobs Action Plan, but ensuring Bill C-50 becomes law is the first step. We encourage Senators to engage with expert witnesses to consider the possibility of undertaking a pre-study of the Bill to promote swift movement through the Senate.
