

Published November 2023

# **Empowering Underrepresented Youth for a Sustainable Future: Recommendations for Canada's Sustainable Jobs Plan**

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## Executive Summary

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This policy report offers a comprehensive analysis of the Sustainable Jobs Plan, shedding light on critical policy issues identified through research findings. It places a particular emphasis on addressing the needs of underrepresented youth within the context of Canada's green workforce development.

The research underpinning this report was conducted through a series of in-depth focus group discussions. These discussions revealed that, while the Sustainable Jobs Plan represents a positive step forward, it currently lacks a comprehensive action plan to support underrepresented youth in facilitating a just transition. Furthermore, it has yet to catalyze meaningful shifts in the political landscape, particularly in provinces such as Alberta.

Without significant investments in sustainable job creation, the potential of the Sustainable Jobs Plan is unlikely to be realized. To turn the ideals articulated in this plan into tangible realities, there is an urgent need for significant financial commitments towards fostering the jobs of the future. This requires transformative new programs that go beyond rhetoric.

The research findings provide actionable insights to enhance this plan from a policy perspective. These insights advocate for the implementation of transformative programs explicitly linked to funding avenues that are capable of increasing green employment opportunities. The findings further demonstrate that there is a pressing need for long-term job creation and training programs tailored to underrepresented youth. These initiatives are essential steps towards bridging the current gaps and realizing the full potential of the Sustainable Jobs Plan.





## Background and Context

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The Sustainable Jobs Plan is an interim plan proposed by the Canadian federal government to address the challenge of transitioning to a clean-energy economy while safeguarding and advancing the workforce. Rooted in the promise made by the liberal government in 2019 to protect jobs during Canada's shift away from fossil fuels towards a net-zero emissions goal by 2050, this interim plan represents the first step in a series of five-year plans that will be released starting in 2025.

The development of the Sustainable Jobs Plan has been a collaborative effort, shaped by extensive consultations with various stakeholders, including provincial governments, Indigenous Peoples, unions, industry representatives, and more. The overarching objectives of the plan are to create new employment opportunities and to simultaneously reduce greenhouse gas emissions, foster energy efficiency, and drive innovation within the green economy.

The plan outlines ten key action areas to facilitate its implementation and address the challenges of this transition:

1. Establish the Sustainable Jobs Secretariat
2. Create a Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council
3. Develop economic strategies through the Regional Energy and Resource Tables
4. Introduce a sustainable jobs stream under the Union Training and Innovation Program
5. Advance funding for skills development towards sustainable jobs
6. Promote Indigenous-led solutions and a National Benefits-Sharing Framework
7. Improve labor market data collection, tracking and analysis
8. Motivate investors and draw in industry leadership to support workers
9. Collaborate and lead on the global stage
10. Establish legislation that ensures ongoing engagement and accountability



In June 2023, a significant step was taken towards the implementation of the Sustainable Jobs Plan with the introduction of Bill C-50, titled the Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act, by Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson in the House of Commons. This Act seeks to put into action some of the key measures outlined in the interim plan, solidifying the government's commitment to a sustainable and prosperous workforce aligned with the goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

The Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act encompasses several critical provisions that are integral to the successful execution of the Sustainable Jobs Plan. Notably, the Act proposes the creation of a Sustainable Jobs Council, outlines a framework for regulation and accountability by requiring the government to present a comprehensive Sustainable Jobs Action Plan every five years, starting from 2025, and envisions the establishment of a Sustainable Jobs Secretariat.

The plan and the subsequent call for codification has generated diverse reactions from the public. It has sparked a divided opinion on its effectiveness in efficiently tackling climate change and managing the transition of jobs (Klein, 2023). Alberta Premier Danielle Smith views the plan as a threat to the oil and gas industry in the province. On the other hand, environmentalists have expressed concerns that the plan leaves too much room for the fossil fuel industry to hinder progress. In a similar vein, key stakeholders such as underrepresented youth contend that while there is funding earmarked for youth, a comprehensive plan of action is needed to ensure the meaningful inclusion and long-term support of this group during a transition (Mertins-Kirkwood, 2023).



## Statement of Problem

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The transition towards green jobs represents a profound and transformative process, impacting various segments of the population differently. BIPOC communities, rural areas, regions heavily reliant on the oil and gas sector, individuals without post-secondary education, younger and older workers, and newcomers are among those likely to face disproportionate consequences during this shift. Ensuring the Sustainable Jobs Plan promotes inclusivity and equal opportunities for all is of utmost importance, particularly for historically underrepresented groups in the workforce.

Although the plan acknowledges the need to integrate historically marginalized and equity-seeking communities into the green economy, it lacks specific details on how to achieve this objective. Thus, a focused and concerted policy effort is essential to ensure that the future lower-carbon economy is characterized by enhanced equity in the current economic landscape (Mertins-Kirkwood, 2023).

The plan emphasizes funding and placements for youth in green jobs, but a more comprehensive approach is required. This involves implementing affirmative action policies to promote diversity in the youth workforce, and fostering collaboration between government, educational institutions, and private sector organizations to develop targeted support initiatives.

A critical consideration is whether Bill-C50, the Sustainable Jobs Act, effectively targets the appropriate action areas. While it outlines the establishment of a Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council, a framework for accountability, and engagement mechanisms, a thorough assessment is necessary to ensure its effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes (Mertins-Kirkwood, 2023).

Moreover, the Sustainable Jobs Plan primarily focuses on clean technology and renewable energy sectors, neglecting other domains such as regenerative agriculture, policy and advocacy, education, grassroots work, and forest conservation. A comprehensive approach to sustainable job creation should encompass a broader range of sectors, ensuring holistic and robust employment opportunities for the workforce.



Key stakeholders, including underrepresented youth, argue that the plan falls short in expanding the social safety net. Key supports commonly associated with a just transition, such as income increases, workplace transition plans, job transfers, and pension bridging, are notably absent from the plan's specific provisions (Mertins-Kirkwood, 2023). While worker retraining is highlighted, it is primarily treated as a byproduct of general training, raising concerns about the level of support for workers in volatile industries or vulnerable regions (Mertins-Kirkwood, 2023). The plan's assertion that Canada already possesses a strong income-support system, including employment insurance, may not adequately address the targeted support requirements of affected workers (Mertins-Kirkwood, 2023). Thus, a more comprehensive and robust safety net is necessary to protect and assist workers during this transformative shift (Mertins-Kirkwood, 2023).

The Sustainable Jobs Plan sets a solid foundation for advancing workforce development in Canada's green economy. While it establishes essential institutions and priorities for future policies, challenges persist in the form of a weak commitment to transformative climate action and inadequate public funding for the transition (Mertins-Kirkwood, 2023). Further, a comprehensive plan of action is needed to ensure the meaningful inclusion and support of underrepresented youth during the transition process. As the plan represents a summary of existing government initiatives, it marks a crucial step in the right direction. Yet, further refinement is required to address the complexities and interdependencies inherent in achieving a just and sustainable workforce aligned with the net-zero emissions goal by 2050 (Klein, 2023).

As part of its mission to support underrepresented youth, the Green Career Centre aims to investigate how the Sustainable Jobs Plan addresses the needs of young underrepresented individuals who have historically been left out of decision-making processes and conversations about their collective future. To gain a comprehensive understanding of underrepresented youth's perspectives on green jobs and skills in Canada, the Green Career Centre organized and led a series of participatory and community-oriented focus groups. These engagements with underrepresented youth provided valuable input to inform the Sustainable Jobs Plan and comprehensive recommendations to ensure its effectiveness for underrepresented youth.



## Overview of the Research

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### Research Description

This research project aimed to provide a critical examination of the Sustainable Jobs Plan from the perspectives of underrepresented youth. These groups have historically faced significant barriers to accessing green jobs and broader sustainability sectors, which has contributed to economic and social inequalities. As such, the project focused on identifying the gaps and opportunities that exist in the green jobs sector, and on providing recommendations for improving the Sustainable Jobs Plan to better address the needs and perspectives of these groups.

The research also informed the development of the Green Skills Mapping Tool that will help job seekers identify the specific skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the sustainability sector.

### Research Objectives

- Evaluate the Sustainable Jobs Plan from a policy perspective and identify areas for improvement.
- Identify gaps in the Sustainable Jobs Plan that may impact underrepresented youth.
- Conduct research on the experiences and challenges faced by underrepresented youth in accessing green jobs in Canada.
- Investigate how the Sustainable Jobs Plan addresses the needs of underrepresented youth.
- Organize and lead participatory and community-oriented focus groups with underrepresented youth to understand their perspectives on green jobs and skills in Canada.
- Produce a policy report based on the findings of the research to inform policymakers on ways to address the gaps and barriers faced by underrepresented youth in the sustainability sector.



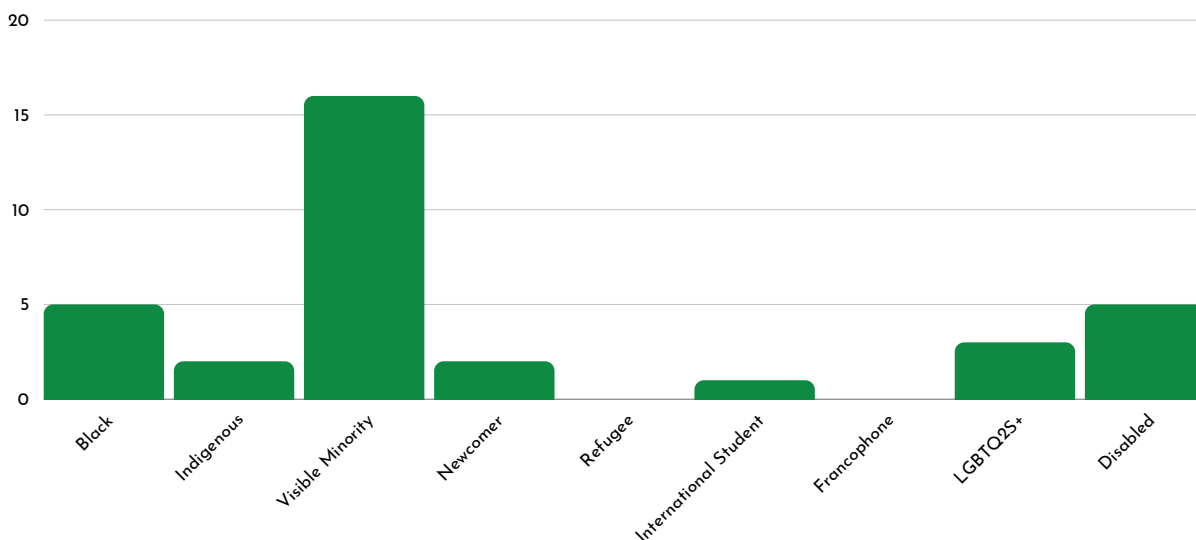
## Participant Eligibility Criteria

- To be between the ages of 18-30 (inclusive).
- To identify with one of the following underrepresented youth groups, as defined by the Green Career Centre (i.e. Black, Indigenous, visible minority, international student/visitor, francophone residing outside of Quebec, LGBTQ2S+, refugee, newcomer, or people with physical or mental health related disabilities).
- To be seeking employment in sustainability, currently working in the sustainability sector, or to have previously worked in the sustainability sector.
- To reside in what is currently known as Canada.

## Broad Research Methodology

- A critical policy analysis was conducted to evaluate the Sustainable Jobs Plan and identify areas for improvement. This involved a comprehensive review of the plan itself, as well as relevant literature on green jobs and skills in Canada.
- Four participatory focus groups were conducted with underrepresented youth to gather their insights on the Sustainable Jobs Plan. The aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that could enhance the plan's long-term effectiveness, as well as to identify its current shortcomings and gaps.
- The analysis of the Sustainable Jobs Plan along with the themes and patterns identified in the qualitative data was used to produce this policy report that summarizes the findings and provides recommendations for improving the Sustainable Jobs Plan.
- Note that some participants in the research requested to remain anonymous and are referred to as 'participants' as a result.

## Demographics of Participants





## Key Findings and Analysis

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The introduction of Canada's Sustainable Jobs Plan has sparked significant discussions among underrepresented youth, shedding light on the potential for a more sustainable and inclusive future. However, while the plan is viewed positively as a step in the right direction, concerns and gaps in its implementation, focus, and approach to fossil fuels have been highlighted through focus group discussions. This section will delve into these themes, offering an analysis of the issues raised by the underrepresented youth.

### Implementation Challenges

The primary concern regarding the Sustainable Jobs Plan brought up by the participants centres around the execution of long-term governmental initiatives, particularly those geared towards sustainability and environmental objectives.

*"It kind of reminds me of the Canadian version of the Green New Deal that was talked about a few years ago.. I think a lot of it is good, but it's also, like it said, there's no guarantee that it's going to be realized, especially if there's a change of government. And I kind of find it frustrating when the government puts plans in place, but they only plan to do them years in the future. So to me it kind of seems like, oh, we're going to put out a plan, but there's no guarantee we're going to do it. And it's almost like an easy escape route if we did our part, but maybe we're not going to be in power anymore" (Participant 4, 2023).*

*"I do feel that having policies and plans and bills like this that support the development of sustainable jobs, doesn't really make an overall impact. If you look at it in combination with other existing policies, for example, there's still quite a lot of subsidization of the fossil fuel industry as well as just a lack of equivalent subsidizing or other forms of energy usage, I would say. I have a lot of jaded thoughts about making yet another committee to look at this thing. I do feel that there's already a lot of committees and councils out there that can pull resources instead of making another one" (Participant 2, 2023).*



The sentiments expressed by the participants are emblematic of a broader concern regarding government initiatives, namely those centered around sustainability and environmental policies. It reflects a common perspective that can be found in discussions about long-term policy planning and implementation.

There is often recognition of positive elements within these government plans. These positive aspects are typically related to addressing pressing issues such as climate change, sustainable job creation, renewable energy, and environmental conservation. This acknowledgment underscores a willingness to support forward-thinking policy-making and a commitment to addressing critical challenges.

However, a prevailing skepticism frequently arises regarding the actual realization of these plans. This skepticism is driven by concerns about the political dynamics surrounding such policies. There is a perception that the durability of government commitments is uncertain, especially when there are changes in political leadership. This concern highlights the importance of continuity and accountability in sustaining these initiatives over time.

Another recurring frustration revolves around the tendency of governments to formulate plans that are oriented toward the distant future. Many youth prefer to see immediate, concrete action to address urgent issues. Short-term, tangible results are often favored over long-term promises, which may not come to fruition or may change course due to evolving political priorities.

Further, the participants often reflected concerns about political accountability. That is, governments may use long-term plans as a means of signaling commitment without immediate consequences for failing to deliver on these commitments. This underscores the importance of mechanisms that ensure governments remain answerable for their promises and actions.

## Workforce Development for Underrepresented Youth

Participants proceeded to discuss the prevailing reliance on short-term government-funded internships as the predominant avenue for job opportunities within the workforce development landscape.

*"The main issue for me in this sector is that the only job opportunities I've gotten within it have been through these internship grant programmes that are funded by the government, but those often aren't long enough and also are usually for a month or 2-3 months" (Participant 3, 2023).*

The participants highlighted a pressing issue within Canada's workforce development landscape - the prevalence of short-term government-funded internships as the primary source of job opportunities. However, these internships, while valuable for skill development, pose two significant challenges.

First, their short-term nature, often lasting no longer than a few months, fails to provide individuals with a stable platform to gain meaningful experience or establish long-term employment prospects. Second, the frequent transitions between these short-term internships can disrupt career trajectories, leaving individuals in a perpetual state of uncertainty and limiting their ability to build a stable career path.

To address these challenges comprehensively and ensure that workforce development programs lead to stable employment opportunities, participants proposed the introduction of income support measures between internships. Income support measures would involve providing stipends or grants to individuals participating in workforce development programs. This financial support aims to bridge the income gap that often arises during periods of retraining or transitioning between short-term internships. It ensures that individuals can focus on their green skill acquisition without being burdened by financial stress.

Extending the duration of internships within the program is also crucial. Longer-duration internships allow individuals to gain deeper, more meaningful experience in their chosen field. This not only enhances their employability but also provides a more stable transition to full-time employment.

The consulted youth further recommend that the Sustainable Jobs Plan promote the Climate Emergency Unit's Youth Climate Corps (YCC) 2 year apprentice model. This model combines paid educational training in climate science and sustainability practices with hands-on experience in various climate action projects, such as reforestation and renewable energy initiatives (Klein, 2023). It is designed to empower participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute meaningfully to environmental efforts. Throughout the program, apprentices would have opportunities to specialize in specific areas, lead projects, and build a network with professionals and organizations in the field (Klein, 2023). Upon completion, they receive certifications recognizing their skills and contributions, potentially paving the way for future career opportunities in climate-related fields (Klein, 2023). The YCC model is not only a significant step towards addressing the climate crisis, but also a platform for nurturing new environmental leaders.

## **Barriers to Accessing Sustainable Jobs**

Understanding the formidable challenges faced by underrepresented youth when trying to access sustainable employment is imperative for crafting effective and inclusive policies. Key concerns raised include the pivotal role of education and certification in securing jobs, the need for specialized skills in the growing green job market, and the problematic aspects of unpaid internships and projects, emphasizing fair compensation and accessible educational opportunities as critical factors. Additionally, participants emphasized the necessity for improved networking opportunities and job access to create a supportive ecosystem for transitioning to sustainable careers.

*"We're going to need more specialization within the sustainability sector. And I think that's, from what I've seen researching about master's programs and even when I was researching from my undergrad, there's a lack of that sort of specific specialization within the sector for higher education specifically" (Participant 6, 2023).*

*"Oftentimes just to gain the experience to show your employer that you have the right amount of experience or the right qualifications to be able to do the job, you take up internships or projects, and a lot of times they're unpaid. So I feel like that is a challenge. And also when you want to take up courses to upskill, sometimes they're not very affordable for students" (Participant 3, 2023).*

*“As an immigrant myself, I don't think I had a solid network of people I knew here. Or sometimes it helps when your parents have some connections that you could network with or just if you're just born and brought up somewhere, I guess it's just easier to find those connections and find people. But as an immigrant, I feel like that's been one of my biggest challenges to start from scratch and to build my network from scratch” (Participant 9, 2023).*

### *Education Barriers*

One critical challenge revolves around education. Many underrepresented youth encounter difficulties accessing specialized educational programs that align with the ever-evolving demands of the sustainability sector. These programs, vital for equipping individuals with the necessary skills, are often scarce. Moreover, a pervasive issue is the lack of integration of sustainability principles and interdisciplinary perspectives into existing curricula. This educational gap leaves students ill-prepared to address the pressing environmental challenges of our time.

### *Experience Deficit*

A crucial pathway to securing sustainable employment often hinges on the acquisition of relevant experience through internships, training programs and unpaid projects. However, these opportunities, while valuable, can be exploitative and financially burdensome. For underrepresented youth, these challenges are exacerbated, as they may lack the resources necessary to support themselves during unpaid work. Consequently, an experience gap emerges, making it exceedingly difficult for these youth to enter sustainable career trajectories.

### *Networking Hurdles*

Building professional networks plays a pivotal role in job access, and this area presents unique challenges. Underrepresented youth often lack the connections and generational ties that are more common in the green industries. Networking events and mentorship programs, which could potentially bridge this gap, remain limited in scope. This scarcity of opportunities further restricts the ability of underrepresented youth to establish meaningful connections within the industry, hampering their career progression.

The participants also highlighted the challenge of locating suitable job openings and determining their eligibility for various programs. While a few participants mentioned their positive experiences with the federally funded Canada Summer Jobs program, a significant number remained unaware of the procedures for accessing these employment opportunities or securing funding.

### *Financial Barriers*

Pursuing sustainable careers can be financially challenging. In comparison to other professions, green sector jobs frequently offer lower wages. This disparity can deter talented individuals from considering careers in sustainability. Furthermore, the high cost of education, certifications, and skill development programs can be prohibitive. These expenses represent significant barriers for underrepresented youth who aspire to enter the green job market. Unfortunately, a lack of financial literacy programs compounds these difficulties, leaving individuals ill-equipped to manage their finances effectively while navigating challenges.

There exists a prevailing stigma surrounding green jobs, namely that they are not sufficiently remunerative. This misconception can dissuade underrepresented youth from considering careers in the green sector. As highlighted by a participant, "these sectors are often undervalued in comparison to their counterparts in other fields, and a recurring concern is how to achieve financial stability while working within the green sector " (Participant 7, 2023).

Moreover, the underfunding of green jobs further exacerbates this issue and highlights the privilege associated with pursuing a career in this field. To mitigate this disparity, it is imperative to expand funding opportunities for underrepresented youth in the sustainability sector. Many of these individuals lack the financial resources required to access education, training, and certifications that can unlock the doors to well-compensated, sustainable employment.

The introduction of a federally funded YCC also offers a promising solution to these financial barriers. As noted previously, this initiative aims to provide a structured platform where youth can gain hands-on experience in the sustainability sector while receiving fair compensation (Klein, 2023). By offering paid training and work opportunities, the YCC addresses the issue of low wages in the green sector, making these careers more financially viable for underrepresented youth.





## Empowering Youth for a Sustainable Future: Education, Employment, and a Comprehensive Action Plan

In the discourse surrounding the challenges faced by underrepresented youth in accessing green jobs, participants engaged in discussions that unearthed valuable insights and recommendations. These insights hold the potential to inform and enrich the Sustainable Jobs Plan, shedding light on areas that require attention and strategic intervention.

### *Educational Preparation*

Education emerged as a pivotal factor in shaping and preparing youth for careers in sustainability. Participants highlighted the importance of educational reforms that could pave the way for a more sustainable future. Laura, for instance, emphasized the necessity of mandatory sustainability courses spanning all disciplines. She posited, "even just a general course in high schools or even in university about climate change or the environment and on new green jobs would be useful. I mean, in reality, it is a future we're all facing" (Participant 4, 2023).

The current landscape of sustainability education was met with criticism. Participants noted that existing curriculums often appeared outdated, superficial, and repetitive. A sentiment echoed by Diego, who noted, "I find that as I progressed from second year into third and fourth-year level classes, the depth of content has not really changed all that much" (Diego, 2023). This observation highlighted a clear need for curricular updates that accurately reflect the ever-evolving and diverse nature of the sustainability field. Sanders further emphasized the urgency of introducing courses that explore the intricate intersections of climate change, environment, and various other fields including sociology, history, and economics (Sanders, 2023).

Moreover, youth expressed a desire for technical skills that would equip them for green jobs. These skills encompassed greenhouse gas accounting, data analysis, and scientific literacy, all of which were deemed essential for success in sustainability careers, notably for students specializing in social sciences.



In response to these concerns, participants advocated for greater specialization within the sustainability sector and the development of educational programs tailored to green jobs. Others articulated the need for programs at the university or college level that not only prepare students for the sustainability sector but also provide a clear vision of the specific skills students would acquire.

Furthermore, participants stressed the significance of experiential learning opportunities, both within and beyond academic settings. Navin suggested that allowing individuals to learn outside traditional academic structures could be beneficial, with funding potentially directed towards BIPOC non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to create programs fostering self-directed learning

### **Advancing a Comprehensive Youth Action Plan**

In the pursuit of a more robust and impactful Sustainable Jobs Plan, there arises a compelling need to integrate a comprehensive Youth Action Plan. This additional component emphasizes the importance of crafting a transformative agenda that not only acknowledges the urgency of the climate crisis but also underscores the integral role of youth in driving sustainable change.

The Climate Emergency Unit's proposal for a new federal Just Transition Transfer and a YCC serves as a poignant illustration of transformative programs that communicate the gravity of the situation. These initiatives are designed to recognize the imperative to address the climate crisis swiftly and comprehensively.

#### *Ensure Justice and Follow Indigenous Leadership in Sustainable Jobs*

To further strengthen the Sustainable Jobs Plan under a comprehensive action plan, it is essential to ensure justice for all, particularly by following Indigenous leadership. Indigenous communities often lead in sustainable practices and have a deep understanding of ecological balance, making their guidance crucial in shaping effective sustainability strategies.

As highlighted by the participants, this approach involves: ensuring "sustainable jobs" offer decent, unionized work. In other words, there is a need to advocate for and facilitate the creation of sustainable job opportunities that are not only environmentally conscious but also offer decent wages, benefits, and unionized work conditions. This approach ensures that the jobs created are fair, secure, and supportive of workers' rights, aligning with broader goals of social justice and equity.



## Recommendations

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Drawing from the research findings and the valuable insights garnered through focus-group discussions, it is imperative that the Government of Canada takes concrete steps to refine and bolster its Sustainable Jobs Plan. These recommendations are informed by the collective goal of reducing employment barriers for underrepresented youth and steering Canada towards a sustainable future. To this end, the following policy recommendations are put forth:

### **1. Fund a National Youth Climate Corps**

It is essential to fund the proposed national Youth Climate Corps. This initiative would be instrumental in providing young people, particularly those from underrepresented and marginalized communities, with meaningful opportunities to engage in climate action and sustainability efforts. The YCC would offer hands-on experience in various environmental projects, ranging from reforestation and conservation efforts to community-based sustainability initiatives (Klein, 2023). This program would not only serve as a vital platform for youth to contribute to environmental stewardship but also provide them with valuable skills, experience, and potential pathways to long-term employment in the green sector. Funding a national Youth Climate Corps would be a significant step towards empowering the next generation of environmental leaders and ensuring that youth voices and efforts are central in the transition to a sustainable and just future.

### **2. Year-Round Funding for Youth Employment Programs.**

While the current proposal includes support for programs such as the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy and Canada Summer Jobs, it is apparent that underrepresented youth face difficulties securing employment beyond the summer months. To address this, it is recommended that year-round funding options for youth employment programs be established. This would provide continuous support for underrepresented young individuals, including recent graduates, and accommodate their work-study schedules more effectively.



### **3. Diversify Sustainable Job Opportunities**

The Sustainable Jobs Plan should extend its focus beyond renewable energy and clean technology, recognizing that environmental job opportunities span a multitude of sectors. While these areas are vital, it is essential to acknowledge that advocacy, agriculture, production occupations, and other sectors also play pivotal roles in achieving sustainability goals. Therefore, funding programs should encompass a broader spectrum of sectors, including grassroots advocacy, environmental education, environmental policy analysis, sustainability impact assessment, Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), ecological economics, alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), grant writing and the circular economy. A diverse workforce is integral to decarbonizing the economy and achieving comprehensive sustainability. For example, programs such as the Science and Technology Internship Program (STIP) from Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) should prioritize the other fields mentioned above.

### **4. Mentorship Programs and Green Career Pathways**

Mentorship programs have been proven to benefit youth by increasing educational aspirations, raising career awareness, and enhancing self-esteem. In the context of green jobs, representation is paramount as it fosters a sense of belonging and empowerment for young individuals entering the sustainable job sphere. It is recommended that more mentorship programs be established for underrepresented youth, funded through the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy Program outlined in the Sustainable Jobs Plan.

### **5. Prioritize Worker, Indigenous, and Climate-Impacted Community Voices in the Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council**

The formation of the Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council under the Sustainable Jobs Plan, which is tasked with advising ministers on the Sustainable Jobs Plan, presents a critical opportunity to genuinely integrate the voices and perspectives that are most affected by these policies. Therefore, it is recommended that the council's composition be re-evaluated to prioritize the voices of workers, Indigenous peoples, and communities directly impacted by climate change. These groups offer invaluable insights into the real-world implications of sustainability policies and can provide guidance on how to make these policies more effective and equitable. By ensuring their representation and influence within the council, the Sustainable Jobs Plan will be more aligned with the needs and aspirations of those it aims to serve, leading to more grounded and impactful decisions.



## Conclusion

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In conclusion, this report encapsulates the sentiments and concerns expressed by underrepresented youth regarding Canada's Sustainable Jobs Plan, emphasizing the imperative for a more action-oriented approach. While underrepresented youth recognize the critical importance of the plan, their outlook is tempered with skepticism about its effective execution.

Beyond aspirations, underrepresented youth seek a more substantial commitment to green workforce development programs. They call for enhanced opportunities to acquire skills and advance their careers, recognizing that the future of work must be aligned with sustainability goals. The plan must evolve to meet this demand, ensuring that the workforce of tomorrow is well-equipped for green employment.

Moreover, as evidenced by this study, educational and financial obstacles continue to hinder the aspirations of underrepresented youth to contribute to a greener world. These challenges must be addressed, with the plan prioritizing comprehensive solutions that make education and training accessible while alleviating the financial burdens associated with skill development.

In the face of a climate emergency, underrepresented youth advocate for programs that are intertwined with funding for climate infrastructure projects and training initiatives. It is vital to remember that youth represent the vanguard of the future workforce, and Canada's Sustainable Jobs Plan serves as a foundational step toward a sustainable future and the ambitious goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. However, this study reminds us that future iterations of the plan must be responsive to the concerns articulated by these future leaders. This entails addressing issues related to implementation, preparedness, and inclusivity, ensuring that the plan evolves into a blueprint for a more sustainable Canada.



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