

# Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology regarding Bill C-50, The Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act

## Pembina Institute comments and recommendations

**Submitted to:** Senate of Canada | June 11, 2024

**Regarding:** Bill C-50 the Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act

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## Testimony provided to the SOCI Committee

The Pembina Institute is a clean energy think tank that has spent the last four decades working to reduce the environmental impact of energy production and to advance clean energy solutions. A core tenet of our work is equity. We work to ensure that a clean economy maximizes social benefits to workers and communities.

At the Pembina Institute, we believe climate change represents one of the greatest challenges to current generations. Addressing climate change's effects and impacts requires a holistic approach. But too often workers are pitted against the environment as though we cannot have good jobs and a decarbonized world. This isn't the case. Decarbonization can result in decent jobs, and we plan to make that happen. That's why Pembina supports the passage of Bill C-50 without amendments

### Workers have been impacted by past transitions

I have personally had the privilege of hearing dozens of stories from workers in rural, northern, and resource-based communities who have seen the cycles of industry booms and busts erode the social fabric of the places they live. The experiences of transitions past and present are still felt viscerally in the memories of workers.

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## Changes are coming

Canada no longer has the luxury of taking a reactive approach to changes that we can reasonably predict. Global shifts to our energy systems are occurring at an accelerated pace. The demand for oil is expected to begin to decline at the end of this decade, and other trends such as automation are changing our domestic industries and employment landscape. These trends are largely out of our control and have greater impacts to our economy than domestic policy choices. Change is coming whether we like it or not, and it is the responsibility of the government to help Canada ready itself.

## We need to prepare

Economic and energy systems modelling show future scenarios that can help us prepare, and workers must be at the table to guide this process.

A study co-authored by the Pembina Institute and the Canadian Labour Congress showed that modest policy interventions in training, skills development, social security and targeted regional economic growth supports led to more positive outcomes for those most vulnerable to global transition impacts.

## C-50 is the first step to making progress

It is now up to the Government to prove to Canadians they will take the necessary policy actions and investments to help workers and communities prepare. The passage of Bill C-50, the Sustainable Jobs Act represents a critical milestone in doing so.

The creation of the Partnership Council will ensure that workers, Indigenous people, industry representatives and other experts are able to provide direct input into the policy making process. This is critical in ensuring workers have a voice and it will go a long way to reestablishing trust in our democracy.

Furthermore, the creation of 5-year Action Plans holds the Government to account in ensuring there are transparent and coordinated efforts to align climate plans with its plans for people and the economy.

Pembina and other environmental groups and labour organizations have worked over the past year with decision makers to make improvements to this legislation, and we are pleased with its current status.

The implementation of key policies and investments starts with Bill-C50 becoming law, and as such, the Pembina Institute urges the Senate to pass this legislation without delay.

There are opportunities to seize

Not only does the passage of Bill C-50 help us prepare for changes, dedicated effort to respond to the impacts of change can also help us capitalize on opportunities. Modelling undertaken for our Sustainable Jobs Blueprint report shows that there will be 2 million clean energy jobs in a 2050 net-zero future.

This is time sensitive, as Canada is competing with other global leaders for capital and talent. We have the potential to grow more jobs and more economic prosperity with the planning and coordination mechanisms that Bill -C-50 puts in motion.

We can realize more fairness/equity through transition

With diverse perspectives sought through a sound policy process, engagement with workers, Indigenous peoples, and equity deserving groups, and the right internal planning architecture, we can leverage the clean energy transition to create prosperity for all Canadians.

## Supplemental comments in response to questions from the Committee

How will Bill C-50 Support older workers? (Senator Omidvar)

Sustainable Jobs Action Plans mandated by Bill C-50 will include a include “*a summary of data that is available within the federal government*”. Having this data and labour market information available and accessible to unions, government, industry and other decision-makers can support enhanced workforce development planning that supports workers at all stages of their careers. Engagement with workers of all ages via the Government of Canada and Partnership Council will also be important qualitative inputs to ensure that the specific concerns and needs of older workers are included in future planning.

How will Bill C-50 support gender inequity in the energy sector? (Senator Omidvar)

Having women and gender diverse people, and other equity-deserving groups represented on the Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council is important to ensure a wide array of voices are reflected when providing independent advice to Government. Bill C-50 includes the following clause in regards to the composition of the Partnership Council:

***8 (2) When making a recommendation respecting the appointment of members, the Minister is to take into consideration (a) the importance of having members that reflect Canada’s diversity – including its regional diversity – and underrepresented groups.***

Underrepresented groups, as it pertains to energy and other net-zero affected industries, would include women, as women only make up 25% of these workers (also see below for the definition of “underrepresented” in the Preamble)

It is also critical that the Government of Canada and Partnership Council engage with equity-deserving groups to hear experiences and perspectives about how to advance sustainable jobs policy in a way that is more inclusive. Engagement can lead to ideas about how to strengthen workforce development policy by improving outreach and recruitment of diverse workers into clean economy sectors, and ensure workplaces are culturally and socially safe for everyone. Such ideas could be actions adopted by Government in future Sustainable Jobs Action Plans.

These sentiments are reflected in the guiding principles of the Bill:

*Preamble; (c) a sustainable jobs approach should be inclusive and address barriers to employment with an emphasis on encouraging the creation of employment opportunities for groups underrepresented in the labour market, including women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, Black and other racialized individuals, 2SLGBTQI+ and other equity-seeking groups.*

Has the Bill been improved to your satisfaction? (Senator Megie)

The Pembina Institute is pleased with the current state of the Bill and urges senators to pass the Bill without further delay or additional amendments.

As noted in a briefing note to parliamentarians co-signed by several of our ENGO colleagues, we believe Bill C50 to be built on robust foundations, thanks to a twelve-meeting-long study at the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources that involved 64 witnesses and resulted in a report and 19 recommendations on the topic of a fair and equitable energy transformation for Canada which informed this Bill’s contents. 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.