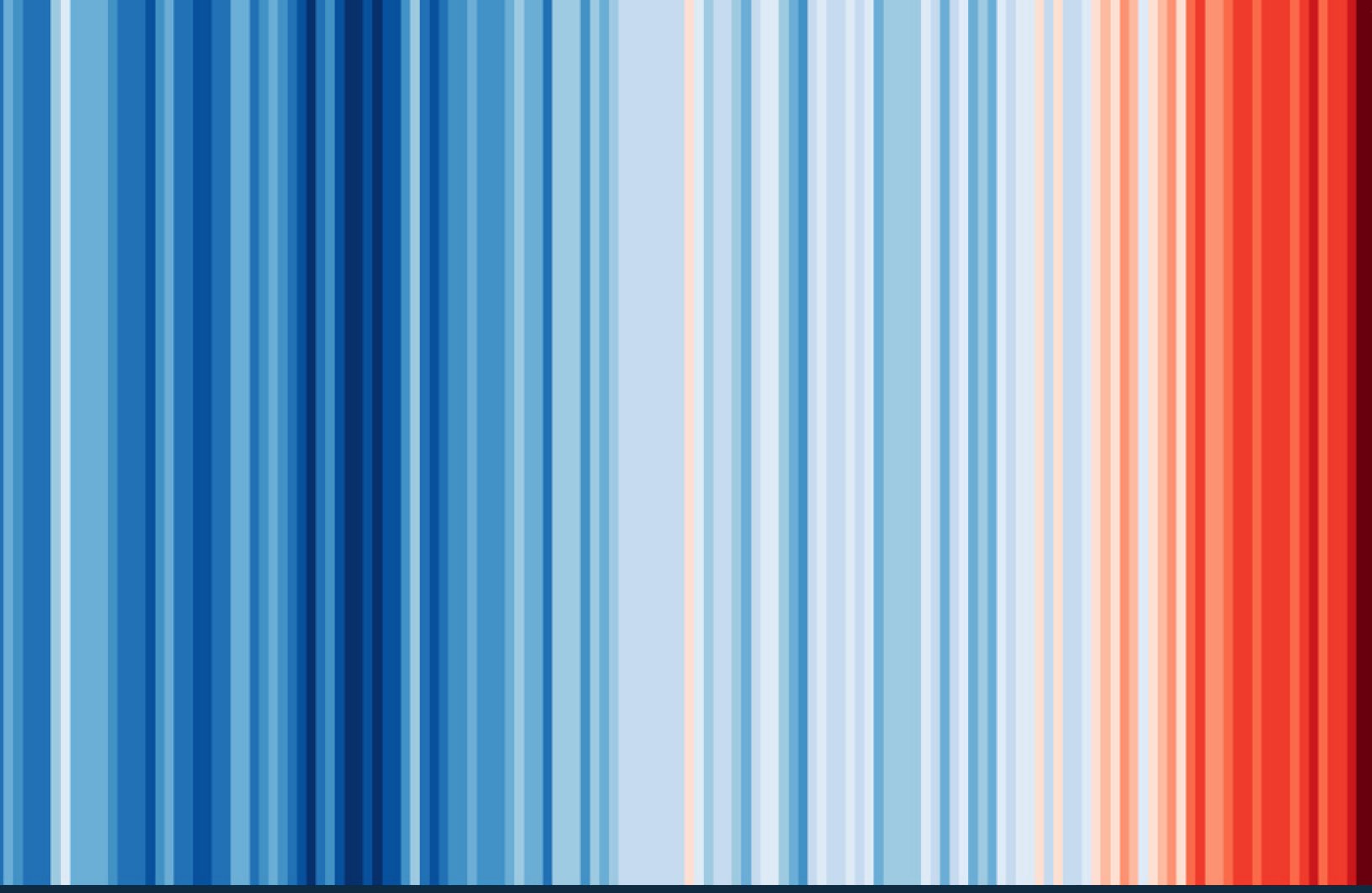

Union Power

BC's Clean Industrial Strategy for Workers, Communities and the Future

November 2026

BCFED

The heart of this study is the perspectives of the working people who shared their time and their experiences so generously with us through an earlier phase of this project. From the beginning, it was clear to us that any successful economic and climate policy must be grounded in those experiences and shaped by those voices.

We dedicate this report to the workers we spoke with, and to workers throughout BC who are navigating these uncertain times — and whose experience, expertise and solidarity hold the key to a prosperous, resilient future.

UNION POWER: BC's Clean Industrial Strategy for Workers, Communities and the Future

November 8, 2026

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ABOUT THE BC FEDERATION OF LABOUR

The BCFED is a federation of labour unions representing more than half a million workers from every sector and every region of British Columbia. We advocate for union and non-union workers alike, and we take inspiration from our slogan, "What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all."

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Foreword: Powering Sustainable Growth and Inclusive Prosperity

By Dr. Jim Stanford

Economist and Director, Centre for Future Work, Vancouver



It is an understatement to say that BC's economy is at a historic decision point.

U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs and other attacks on Canadian sovereignty have thrown many of the province's industries (including forestry, aluminum, and electronics manufacturing) into chaos. Ongoing geopolitical instability (most acutely from wars in the Persian Gulf and Ukraine) is spurring inflation, disrupting supply chains, and rattling investors. The Bank of Canada is lifting interest rates once again to fight inflation caused by surging oil prices; weary British Columbians fear another round of rising debt costs, economic slowdown, and job loss, coming painfully soon after the last such cycle in 2022-2024. Meanwhile, the consequences of worsening climate change are more visible and destructive each passing year — and BC is squarely on the front lines of that crisis, too.

Federal and provincial governments are grappling with these simultaneous challenges (sometimes called the 'polycrisis'). There is a passionate consensus among Canadians, including people in BC, that our country's sovereignty and economic independence must be energetically defended. Canadians overwhelmingly support standing up for Canada against Trump's threats. Despite the repercussions of a trade war we did not ask for, Canada's economy has avoided recession, and continues to move forward, albeit slowly and unevenly. Governments of all stripes now acknowledge that nurturing strategic value-added industries — a practice known as 'industrial strategy' — is a legitimate and essential part of the economic toolkit. There is a renewed willingness to play a more active role in shaping industrial development, reminiscent of the hands-on industrial planning of former Industry Minister C.D. Howe during and after the Second World War.

Indeed, throughout Canadian history, pro-active industrial strategies have been essential in stimulating domestic investment, technology, and development. BC is no exception to that rule. Active trade policy, public investment and Crown corporations, strategic government procurement, supports for technology and skills, and many other industrial policy tools were always central to the growth of so many of BC's key industries — including hydroelectricity, value-added forestry, shipbuilding, mining and processing, and digital technology and production industries. With the traditional rules of free trade tossed aside by Mr. Trump and other governments, the renaissance of active industrial strategy is assured. Economists around the world, including in once-skeptical agencies (like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) now embrace industrial strategy as necessary in stabilizing industries buffeted by global shocks, promoting socially responsible technological innovation, and accelerating the necessary transition to non-emitting energy sources. Canada is moving on several fronts (including defense industries, critical minerals, data sovereignty, and strategic manufacturing) to apply strong industrial policies to defend our key industries against global threats.

However, at the same time, the shocks emanating from the White House and elsewhere in the world also raise pressure for Canada to retreat rather than building the industries of the future. CEOs and politicians tell us that Canada and BC must commit to strict fiscal austerity, provide more

handouts to business (with no strings attached), and focus on "what we do best." Rather than building a truly capable and diverse industrial economy, that is code language for focusing on raw resource extraction and export. Our province needs to resist these calls to cut taxes, eliminate regulatory oversight, and privatize public assets. These arguments have been around for decades; but they're now being justified by the need to buttress BC's economy against global pressures.

This "rip and ship" vision would terribly underachieve our province's full potential. British Columbians want to add value to our resources, not export them in raw form (then destined to reimport high-tech products manufactured by others out of our own resources, sold back to us at much higher prices). Above all, we want to build an industrial economy at the forefront of the inevitable global transition towards a clean economy.

The future direction of BC's economy will be decided in the next few years. Will we respond to these unprecedented threats to our sovereignty by recommitting to made-in-Canada investment, value-added production, and new technology? Will we use our abundant natural and human resources to build an economy that is sovereign, inclusive, and sustainable? Or will we limit our ambitions to seeking new ways to ship raw resources — perhaps now to Asia, in addition to the U.S.? That would be a shallow victory indeed, leaving BC just as vulnerable to the whims of global superpowers and financial speculators as we are today.

In this context, the BC Federation of Labour's exciting new plan for a clean industrial strategy could not have come at a more important time. This paper is a comprehensive, impeccably researched, and convincing roadmap to build a BC economy that makes the most of all its resources. It has a clear-eyed focus on enhancing our capabilities and our resilience — not just digging resources and selling them to others faster than ever. The plan highlights six strategic sectors which will determine whether the provincial economy stays ahead of global change or falls behind. In every case, the proposed actions create quality, secure jobs, add value, and enhance sustainability. This plan would create 79,000 new jobs — several times more than are currently employed in direct fossil fuel industries.

The Federation's vision is informed by, and grounded in, first-hand experiences related by workers through a remarkable series of focus groups held across the province. Workers spoke of their lived experiences with intensifying climate change, often experienced at work as well as in their communities. And they spoke of their hopes that BC's economy could offer secure, well-paid, and lasting employment opportunities, in industries that deliver great value to society and respect environmental realities.

The plan comprehensively describes a vision of a prosperous, value-added, and sustainable provincial economy. This vision is both inspiring and achievable. But it won't happen by itself. And it won't happen if all important decisions about the future direction of our economy are outsourced to the private sector. Effective industrial strategy needs society-wide participation and shared authority. It must engage businesses, unions, governments at all levels, First Nations, education and training institutes, environmental stewards, and all other partners. The BC Federation of Labour has shown it is ready to be a constructive, powerful partner in making this vision a reality.

Let's now fight together to build the coalitions and the social consensus needed to win an economy that truly works for workers, communities, and the future.

Executive Summary

Union Power is a focused industrial strategy that puts workers at the centre of a prosperous, fairer economy and a sustainable, liveable climate. Developed through dozens of focus groups and interviews with more than 400 workers and labour leaders, it's based on three pillars:

- **Energy redistribution,** with an ambitious public build-out of renewable electricity generation and critical mineral mining;
- **Energy efficiency,** including retrofits, a forestry strategy, a public transit and transportation vision, and the circular economy; and
- **Wealth and power redistribution,** ensuring our economy benefits workers and communities, expanding opportunities for training and education, and delivering environmental justice.

Our strategy creates 79,000 new jobs and protects nearly 100,000 existing forestry jobs. We do it not by choosing jobs over the environment — our plan has BC reaching net zero by 2050 — but by integrating a clean-energy, net-zero future into our province's economy and our communities.

We put workers, their communities and their futures front and centre — the only real way to build an economy that works for everyone, and for the long term.

NET ZERO

Net zero means our economy only puts as much carbon into the atmosphere as nature and other measures can remove. A net-zero economy relies on zero-emission energy, such as hydroelectric power.

On the Front Lines of a Disrupted Economy and Damaged Climate

We spoke with hundreds of workers from across BC. And we heard remarkably consistent themes coming up repeatedly, with BC workers experiencing economic and climate anxiety as different aspects of the same uncertain, difficult time in their lives.

Working conditions: Heat, wildfire smoke and flooding affect workplace safety as well as worker income — from care workers caring for their patients while their own communities were being evacuated, to migrant workers who went unpaid during the flooding of the Fraser Valley.

Cost of living: Pressures on the cost of living — especially for necessities like housing and groceries — affect workers and their families across all regions, sectors and income levels. One impact: climate action becomes a lower priority as people need to focus on their immediate needs.

Identity and place: Resource and rural workers report taking great pride in their work; it's a core part of their identity. And with many communities relying heavily on a single industry, disruptions like mill closures can deal a huge economic and social blow.

Anxiety and young workers: Young workers as well as teachers describe widespread climate anxiety and a bleak outlook for the future, along with a sense of pressure to choose between a liveable climate and making a living.

Failing infrastructure: Many public buildings, roads and other infrastructure would be facing the challenges of age even in normal times. But the stresses of weather extremes and climate disruption threaten to erode them even more quickly. And for communities with only one road out of town, the prospect of flood or fire can be doubly threatening.

Waste, outsourcing and management: Workers see waste all around their workplaces; in the public sector, they tie it directly to outsourcing and privatization. And they report out-of-touch management and consultants who fail to trust the first-hand expertise workers have gained over years of experience.

AI and automation: Many workers report feeling growing pressure to adopt AI tools without adequate (or, often, any) training and to keep up with an ever-accelerating pace of work, as management demands increased productivity. They're skeptical of the environmental claims being made around automation, and concerned over the loss of entry-level jobs.

> Workers do not experience climate anxiety on one side and economic anxiety on the other. They experience them together, as overlapping and compounding features of a single difficult moment.

Urban/rural divide: Rural workers feel disregarded and disenfranchised, with decisions that profoundly affect their lives being made far away without consultation or consideration. Instead of shipping raw resources out of their community, they want local value-added industries keeping logs and jobs at home.

In the face of these challenges, BCFED's clean industrial strategy offers a way forward.








Renewable energy: about 24,000 construction jobs on average to 2050 to build the electricity system this report proposes, plus roughly 9,800 permanent jobs to operate it.

Critical mineral mining: an average of about 1,400 direct jobs in operations and about 1,460 during development at each of the 20 proposed critical mineral mines.

Energy efficiency and retrofits: about 3,100 jobs from the public retrofit spending the report recommends for homes, public buildings, commercial buildings and industry.

Forestry: nearly 100,000 jobs maintained, including almost 43,000 direct jobs, through the Working Forest and a Forestry Jobs Protection Act. The Mass Timber Action Plan the report supports adds about 4,400 job openings in total by 2035.

Public transit and transportation: an average of 40,500 jobs from the 10-year public transit plan, 16,800 in construction and 23,700 in operations.

Circular economy: roughly 1,300 jobs, direct and indirect, from the three main initiatives: a mill for the province's own scrap, a deconstruction standard and a province-wide organics requirement.

PILLAR I: ENERGY REDISTRIBUTION

Nearly all of BC's electricity (97%) comes from renewable sources. But zoom out, and electricity makes up less than one-fifth of the total energy BC uses; petroleum and natural gas account for two-thirds. To reach net zero, we'll need to shift our energy mix to emission-free electricity — with a big build-out of capacity.

Renewable Energy

Meeting BC's energy needs requires us to double electrical production by 2050. That's an ambitious goal, but we can meet it by building just over 35 GW (gigawatts) of capacity over the next two and a half decades.

That will include:



Wind (12 GW), with construction throughout BC



Solar (9 GW), including installations on roofs, over parking lots and beside buildings



Hydro (5 GW), including new major projects and a host of smaller ones



Marine (1 GW), drawing on tidal and wave energy



Geothermal (0.3 GW), including repurposing old spent gas fields and wells



Storage (8 GW), using batteries and pumped hydro to absorb electricity when wind and sun are plentiful

Generating that electricity is part of the picture, but we also need to get it to where we'll use it. That requires doubling our transmission capacity across BC, along with stronger transmission connections to Alberta and elsewhere, contributing to a resilient East-West national grid.

Our strategy commits BC Hydro to a fully net-zero grid by 2050, letting its remaining gas and biomass contracts expire without renewal.

Job Impact

- 24,000 workers employed every year on average through 2050 for construction; and
- 9,800 permanent operating jobs.

Responsible Critical Mineral Mining

Critical minerals are the building blocks of the clean economy, sometimes dubbed "the new oil." Demand for copper, lithium, cobalt, nickel and more is skyrocketing, and BC has some of the world's most important deposits.

Expanding the mining and refining of those deposits is a key part of our strategy, supplying both our province's needs and the global market. But our vision brings in a much-needed layer of accountability and responsible practice. That includes:

- Improved health and safety, with mining at last brought under the Workers Compensation Act, and employers paying full-time worker-elected safety reps;
- Agreements to ensure mining operations guarantee well-paid jobs, benefit the community and adhere to strict environmental safeguards;
- Mine-to-mill processing and recycling within BC;
- Stronger oversight to ensure companies meet their employment, environmental and community-benefit targets; and
- Union-led skills training in partnership with the United Steelworkers, to ensure we replenish a workforce that in many cases is heading toward retirement.

- A provincial partnership with the BC First Nations Energy and Mining Council to ensure benefits and opportunities are shared, including reforms to the Mineral Tenure Act

Job Impact

- 1,400 direct jobs in operations and 1,460 during development at each of the twenty proposed critical mineral mines.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

We're calling for as much of the new energy generation as possible to be publicly owned. That lets us take advantage of the government's lower borrowing costs, as well as ensuring that, once construction is complete, the people of BC have a new, valuable long-term asset. And it keeps those assets in BC hands at a time when energy sovereignty is especially important.

Our strategy replaces BC Hydro's calls for power with *calls for partnership,* with joint public and First Nations ownership. We're also calling for these projects to be delivered under *community benefit agreements or project labour agreements*, to maximize the benefits to local economies, the number of secure, well-paid jobs created and the training opportunities provided, including to groups traditionally under-represented in the trades.



Energy conservation is a central pillar of our plan. An Insulator recognized their fundamental role in this work: "Our job conserves energy. So that'd be good for us."

PILLAR II: ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Generating more electricity is only part of the picture. Using it more efficiently is critical. It's the one measure that cuts emissions without asking anything new of the land.

Retrofits

Retrofitting our buildings and infrastructure to make them more efficient will save a huge amount of electricity—200 petajoules a year (about one-fifth of the energy we use today) by 2050. That's energy we don't have to generate to meet BC's growing demand.

We'll do that with coordinated action on several fronts:

- A new public agency, Efficiency BC (proposed by MoveUP), will run retrofits through union contractors. The target: 65,000 homes a year, more than eight times the pace in 2024/25.
- Retrofitting BC's many public buildings like schools, hospitals and government offices will have a dramatic impact, while saving taxpayers on energy costs.
- Our strategy makes it mandatory to report emissions from commercial buildings, with limits after 2030 along with incentives for retrofitting.
- We'll bring in industry-specific targets for 2050 with five-year milestones, and introduce job retention, union consultation and domestic procurement conditions to the CleanBC Industry Fund.
- Our plan will include thermal networks in provincial energy planning.
- We'll lay crucial foundations for success with stable funding, protection for trades certification, re-regulating heat-pump installation and putting in place local content rules for equipment, stimulating local manufacturing.

Job Impact

- 3,100 jobs (from public spending).



Forestry

The crisis in the forestry sector has hit the workers and communities that rely on it hard. Yet it remains a major job producer for British Columbia. And it can play an important role in decarbonizing BC's emissions and improving energy efficiency — for example, in construction with mass timber.

Our strategy includes:

- A working forest approach, based on the model proposed by the United Steelworkers, that aligns conservation, restoration and reconciliation with jobs and economic security;
- An independent forestry Jobs Protection Commissioner, inspired by the success of a similar role created in 1991, with the power to broker binding job agreements and redirect fibre access to help enforce companies' employment and domestic processing commitments;
- A province-wide plan for fibre supply, including an inventory and wildfire salvage;
- A stronger commitment to mass timber and value-added production, and a firm link between public funding and public benefits — especially employment; and
- A permanent provincial Forestry Sector Council empowered to initiate policy to secure the long-term future of BC forestry.

Job Impact

- Nearly 100,000 jobs maintained, including almost 43,000 direct jobs, and the Mass Timber Action Plan adds about 4,400 job openings in total by 2035.

Public Transit and Transportation

Our *Connecting BC* plan, released in 2024 and updated for this strategy, sets out a vision for a modern province-wide public transit system, getting British Columbians where they need to go affordably and efficiently — and reducing both our carbon emissions and overall energy use. Better public transit was easily the top priority raised in our engagement with workers.

Our plan includes:

- A new province-wide inter-community express bus service;
- Tripling the number of buses in BC Transit local services over the next decade;
- Expanding HandyDART service province-wide with an upgraded electric fleet, and ending privatization;
- New regional rail connections along historic rail corridors in partnership with First Nations communities;
- New passenger ferry options between Vancouver, the Gulf Islands, Sunshine Coast and Vancouver Island;
- Accelerating TransLink's 10-year Access for Everyone plan for Metro Vancouver, to complete it in half that time;
- Expanding free transit to youth aged 13 to 18, to help develop the habit of using transit, and to people on social assistance who are not already included in the BC Bus Pass program; and
- A provincial shipbuilding strategy, including
  - buy-Canadian rules that include building BC Ferries' vessels here in BC;
  - an active government role in bringing shipyards and investors together to expand capacity;
  - a workforce development strategy to expand training and apprenticeships.

Job Impact

- An average of 40,500 jobs from the 10-year public transit plan, 16,800 in construction and 23,700 in operations.

Better public transit was easily the top priority raised in our engagement with workers.

Circular Economy

BC is a national leader when it comes to composting organic waste — everything else, not so much. Waste that ends up in the landfill represents not just the loss of material, but of the energy required to make it.

Our circular economy plan includes measures that will support hundreds of jobs while conserving energy and recovering valuable physical material:

- Battery recycling, with rules that tighten producer responsibility, bring electrical vehicle (EV) batteries under BC recycling rules and ensure safer workplaces, particularly where EV batteries are involved;
- "Urban mining" to divert more valuable materials (for instance, ferrous metals) for reuse;
- Rules on waste reduction and salvage for deconstruction rather than demolition of buildings and other structures;
- A scrap steel mill, creating about 490 direct jobs; and
- Tighter rules to keep organic waste out of landfills, with labour conditions attached to public funding of organics facilities, stronger successorship protection for unions in the sector and tougher health and safety rules and inspection.

Job Impact

- Roughly 1,300 jobs, direct and indirect.

PILLAR III: WEALTH AND POWER REDISTRIBUTION

Workers across BC made it clear to us they want action that responds to their economic uncertainty and climate fears at the same time. They know that they're the first to feel the impacts of both, and want to see bold initiatives that work for them and their communities. Our approach keeps the strategy worker-centered.

Who Pays, and Who Benefits

So often in the past, working people have borne nearly all of the cost of disruption. A key to our approach is making sure the costs and benefits of change are shared fairly as we fund public investments and manage revenues:

- An excess profits tax can help to raise revenues that would otherwise mostly flow out of the country into the coffers of multinational corporations;
- A wealth fund, along the lines of the Columbia Basin Trust or Norway's sovereign wealth fund, can help ensure benefits flow to communities and initiatives where they can do the most good;
- A stronger royalties system will secure BC's fair share of the value of resources being extracted from our province; and
- Tax reforms to shift more of the burden onto corporations and the wealthiest British Columbians, as well as rules to end the misclassification of employees as contractors, will help to close public funding gaps.

> "Environmentalism without class struggle is gardening." Brazilian trade union leader, Chico Mendes

Making Workers and Communities the Foundation

Ensuring economic policy benefits workers and communities first and foremost seems like a natural goal—yet the structure of our economy so often puts them near the end of the line.

Our strategy recognizes that workers are the engine of our economy, and it's only when workers and our communities succeed that our economy succeeds. And it addresses the well-founded skepticism workers feel over slogans like "just transition" with specific, tangible actions like:

- Tying public investments to public benefits, with Community Benefit Agreements and Project Labour Agreements that ensure training, local hiring and recruitment that opens opportunities for careers in the skilled trades to under-represented groups;
- Taking a regional approach that recognizes the distinct character, needs and strengths of BC's regions, and allows local communities to have a stronger voice in shaping their own futures;
- Supporting public ownership and worker-owned co-ops to keep profits and benefits here at home;
- Taking action on the hazards extreme weather poses in the workplace, ensuring workers' compensation policies reflect our changing climate;
- Ensuring workers' voices are part of the decision-making process from the beginning, and using sectoral bargaining to allow workers in small, scattered workplaces—such as solar and wind sites—to organize;
- Investing in the public services working families rely on, including the care economy; and
- Leaning in to value-added processing that diversifies economies in resource-dependent communities.

Training and Education

BC has some of the most skilled, experienced workers in the world. But we're still catching up with the demands of today, let alone the future. It's time for a dedicated clean economy workforce plan, built in partnership with labour.

Our strategy includes:

- A workforce development plan to ensure we can meet the demand for new clean energy jobs by 2050, with particular focus on northern BC and more funding for union training centres and public post-secondary institutions;
- Coordinated project planning to ensure continuous work for apprentices and a supply of skilled workers;
- Expanded skilled trades certification, with more enforcement and an approach to microcredentials that strengthens Red Seal certification instead of undermining it;
- Supporting occupational training for non-trades industrial work, such as in the mining sector;
- Greater value and respect for the skilled trades and industrial work, including earlier introduction into these areas as career options and treating Red Seal certification on par with a four-year degree;
- More work to remove barriers to careers in the skilled trades and industrial work for traditionally under-represented groups, drawing on the success of union strategies, CBAs and PLAs, and the BC Centre for Women in the Trades (which should receive stable, long-term funding);
- More pathways for young workers into the skilled trades and industrial work, including steps to address the shortage of tech-ed high school teachers and an expanded Youth Climate Corps with sustained federal and provincial funding; and
- Public education on the benefits of the clean economy and the consequences of inaction.

Climate Justice

For many years, BC's economy has excluded and marginalized large groups of the people and communities that call this place home. Our strategy changes that fundamentally, grounded in principles of Reconciliation, inclusion and equity, including:

- Recognizing how Indigenous and racialized communities have borne far more of the environmental consequences of industry in BC;
- An independent provincial environmental justice advisory body, along with tracking and reporting on race and environmental disparities;
- Measures to address ongoing injustices and disparities including culturally informed emergency response; protection from violence, particularly for Indigenous women and girls; an end to the three-month delay for MSP and more;
- Recognition of First Nations Title, Rights and Treaty Rights, upholding the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action; and
- Integrating disability perspectives into BC's economic and climate planning.

Workers are ready for bold leadership.

The strategy we set out in Union Power will deliver almost 80,000 jobs. It addresses not only BC's economic and climate agenda, but urgent issues around affordability, health care and community safety. And it puts BC on the road to greater self-sufficiency and energy security.

The targets and recommendations in this strategy may seem ambitious, but they're grounded in practical, real-world successes. And that very boldness is exactly what workers are seeking from their leaders.

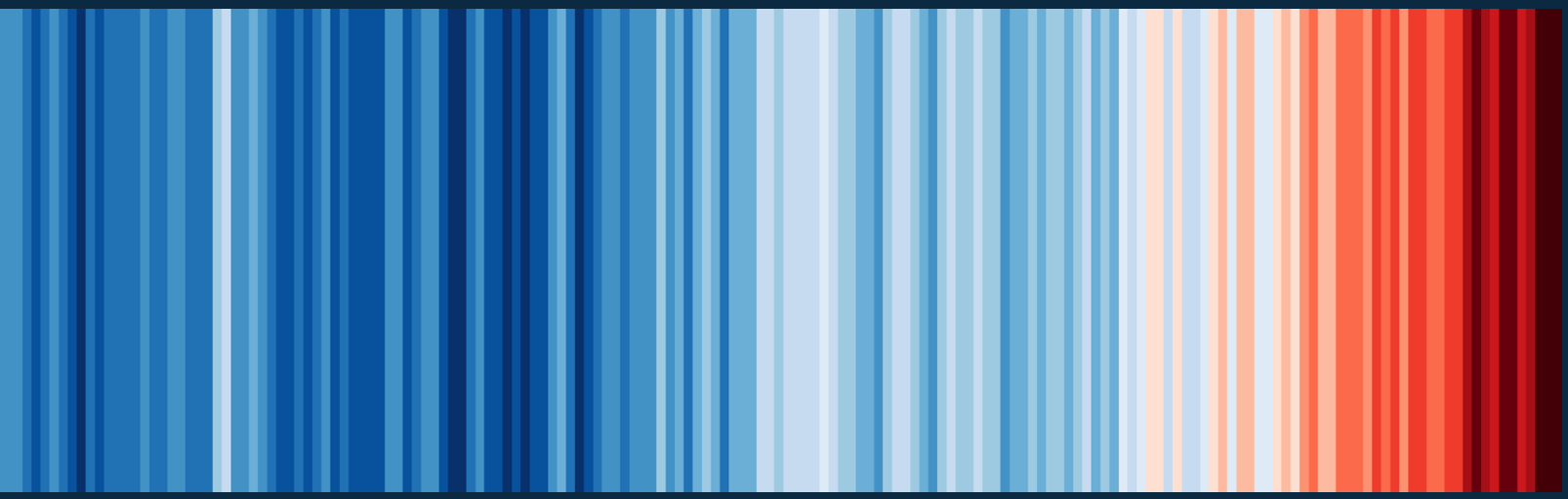
We know change has to come. What workers demand of leaders at every level, and in every part of BC society, is that workers and our communities play their rightful role in shaping that change—and that their well-being, now and into the future, be the measure of its success.



“There are no jobs on a dead planet.”

— Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation from 2010 to 2022 and President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions from 2000 to 2010

Introduction



What are the stripes?

No words. No numbers. No graphs. Just a series of vertical coloured bars, showing the progressive heating of our planet in a single, striking image. The climate stripes were created by Professor Ed Hawkins at the University of Reading in 2018. They show clearly and vividly how global average temperatures have risen over nearly two centuries.

Grounded in the frontline experience and expertise of workers, along with solid research and economic modelling, the BCFED developed this labour-led, worker-centred report that sets out policies, projects and plans to build an economy centred around working people. This ambitious initiative builds a strategy that doesn't just combine good jobs and climate action but integrates them into a whole.

Introduction



The labour movement in British Columbia has an exciting opportunity to play a significant role in addressing climate change. Some continue to frame the climate discussion in a way that pits workers against each other and aims to widen gaps and divisions among us. The false binary of environment versus jobs has slowed our progress but we are ready to build solutions for climate action and bring the collective strength of the labour movement to this challenge, collaborating with like-minded partners, Indigenous communities and local governments in this work. The BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) is committed to ensuring that workers' rights and wellbeing are maintained and strengthened as we make the necessary shift to a clean economy.

In the current moment, with our governments looking for province- and nation-building projects to ensure energy sovereignty and security, there is a huge opportunity to fulfil this vision through a strong, comprehensive clean industrial strategy for BC.[1] This report provides that vision, outlining bold measures in renewable energy production and distribution, retrofits, public transit expansion, responsible natural resources, circular economy measures, and more. As outlined through these initiatives, there is tremendous potential for boosting BC's economic growth through the clean economy.

This report is grounded in a worker-centred foundation. The policy recommendations described here build on focus groups and interviews held between May 2025 and January 2026 reaching over 400 workers and labour leaders across BC. The key insights gained through that listening tour are featured throughout the report and in the Impacts chapter. These recommendations are also grounded in the BCFED Convention, where hundreds of delegates debate the direction of the BC labour movement. At the 2024 Convention, delegates supported a resolution demanding that "governments implement industrial policies that achieve a transition to a cleaner economy, seizing the opportunities presented by the global clean economy."[2]

The clean industrial strategy proposed here meets the current needs of British Columbians by reducing costs for families, providing healthy, affordable housing, strengthening health care and protecting communities. Some British Columbians have become divided over whether to pursue climate action or other priorities, while the reality is that they are all interconnected. From floods to wildfires, from heat to air quality, workers are facing the impacts of extreme weather events on top of increasing inequality and cost-of-living challenges. Investments made today to meaningfully address climate change are a significant way of tackling the urgent challenges facing British Columbians and our communities, both now and for future generations.

The BCFED is committed to ensuring that workers' rights and wellbeing are maintained and strengthened as we make the necessary shift to a clean economy.

Now Is the Time to Take Bold Action

While the current geopolitical context may increase fear of change and further entrench the status quo, this is precisely the moment to recommit to climate action and take bold action in asserting BC's energy sovereignty and security through investing in clean energy and enhancing, not reducing, targets in emissions reductions, as well as renewable energy production.

Far from being risky, this is the most economically prudent direction BC can take.[3] We are already late to the game compared to leaders in Europe and Asia. Clean energy technology costs are going down, while efficiency is going up — "renewable energy has suddenly become the obvious, mainstream, cost-efficient choice around the world."[4] A United Nations report states that renewable energy has "irreversibly crossed a positive tipping point and entered a virtuous cycle of cost decline and widespread adoption."[5] Canada is also in a unique position as Trump's attacks on clean energy in the US are boosting Canada as a "preferred investment destination."[6] And recent polls find that support for prioritizing clean energy in BC is high.[7] Just over three-quarters of British Columbians support renewable energy projects in their community and this grows to 84 per cent when community benefits are tied to these projects.[8]

BC is well placed to take advantage of these trends, with natural advantages across the renewable energy spectrum of hydro, wind, solar, tidal and geothermal energy, and labour is ready to support that effort. The link between energy security and economic security is tangible — as this report shows, there are huge job opportunities and economic growth in the shift to renewable energy generation, transmission and storage in BC. Now is the time for bold action to tackle the twin crises of climate change and affordability for workers and communities throughout the province. We are at a crossroads moment — let's make the right choice.

Job Opportunities in the Clean Economy

This worker-centred clean industrial strategy is a jobs plan, a plan to position BC's economy for the future with workers at the centre. This section sets out two things: the jobs that already exist in the six sectors the report covers, and the jobs the strategy would add and protect.

> **"If we want climate policy to be popular and durable, it needs to do more than reduce emissions. It needs to materially deliver for working people — with good jobs, higher wages, and lower bills. It's both possible and necessary to do all of this at once." Maine AFL-CIO Vice President Grant Provost**

The Jobs That Exist Today

Table 1 profiles the British Columbia workforce in the six sectors covered by this report. Together these sectors employed about 331,600 people in 2025, with 268,000 being employees. The six sectors together account for about 11 per cent of the 2,946,200 people employed in British Columbia in 2025, a significant figure.[9] Energy efficiency and retrofits, which draws on the construction trades, accounts for most of that, at close to 8 per cent of provincial employment. Forestry is the next largest at 1.4 per cent.

We estimate that the original policy initiatives put forward in this study would lead to the creation of 79,000 new jobs in BC, a significant increase of about 25 per cent over current employment across the six target sectors.

Table 1. Employment in the sectors covered by this report, British Columbia, 2025[10]

Sector (ordered by chapter)	Total employed	Share of BC jobs (%)	Employees	Full-time (%)	Women+ (%)	Public sector (%)	Union members (%)	Covered, not members (%)
Renewable energy	22,130	0.8	19,520	95.1	19.9	43.0	39.3	0.8
Critical mineral mining	8,290	0.3	7,870	98.0	17.6	0.0	22.6	1.5
Energy efficiency and retrofits	225,440	7.7	173,180	91.2	13.7	1.2	20.0	0.8
Forestry	42,580	1.4	39,870	95.7	18.7	7.1	23.0	0.9
Public transit and transportation	27,710	0.9	23,790	87.0	21.2	16.2	40.3	2.1
Circular economy	5,490	0.2	3,820	75.5	41.1	3.5	12.8	0.8
Total, six sectors	**331,640**	**11.3**	**268,050**	**91.6**	**15.9**	**6.4**	**23.6**	**0.9**

It is also worth mentioning the many other climate jobs that unionized workers are already engaged in outside of these particular sectors. In particular, there are many examples of union workers as climate champions in emergency preparedness and response, supporting people and communities through events like the 2021 heat dome (619 deaths, many low-income and people with disabilities),[11] 2021 flooding in the Fraser Valley (massive infrastructure and agricultural damage),[12] 2023 wildfires in Kelowna and other areas (29,000 square kilometres burned, 48,000 evacuations and six wildland firefighter deaths),[13] the 2024 Arctic blast (multiple vehicle accidents, power outages and agricultural damage)[14] and 2026 wildfires (destruction or damage of over 500 structures).[15]

Clearly, wildland firefighters are on the frontlines of emergencies caused by wildfires throughout BC, and health care and social service workers are on the ground working with their patients and clients during these emergency situations. However, there are other jobs behind the scenes, such as IBEW members getting our power back on and CUPE library workers taking care of community members: "most people don't really associate the library with a safe place to go during those situations but we are typically designated cooling centres and heating centres for people." All of these workers are taking care of others in extreme weather events and deserve our deep gratitude.

The Jobs the Strategy Would Create

Each sector chapter estimates the employment created through our recommendations. We estimate that the original policy initiatives put forward in this study would lead to the creation of 79,000 new jobs in British Columbia, a significant increase of about 25 per cent over current employment across the six target sectors. That total includes about 44,000 jobs in infrastructure construction and building retrofits (lasting until 2050 for electricity build and retrofit projects, and for 10 years for transit construction). It also includes another 35,000 permanent operating and maintenance positions in electricity, transit and the circular economy.

In addition, this vision protects nearly 100,000 jobs in BC's forestry sector and supports planned initiatives in forestry and mining that are expected to add about 4,400 job openings in mass timber

and about 28,000 jobs in operations across all 20 proposed critical mineral mines.

- **Renewable energy:** about 24,000 construction jobs on average to 2050 to build the electricity system this report proposes, plus roughly 9,800 permanent jobs to operate it.
- **Critical mineral mining:** an average of about 1,400 direct jobs in operations and about 1,460 during development at each of the 20 proposed critical mineral mines.[16]
- **Energy efficiency and retrofits:** about 3,100 jobs from the public retrofit spending the chapter recommends for homes, public buildings, commercial buildings and industry.
- **Forestry:** nearly 100,000 jobs maintained, including almost 43,000 direct jobs, through the Working Forest and a Forestry Jobs Protection Act. The Mass Timber Action Plan the chapter supports adds about 4,400 job openings in total by 2035.
- **Public transit and transportation:** an average of 40,500 jobs from the 10-year public transit plan, 16,800 in construction and 23,700 in operations.
- **Circular economy:** roughly 1,300 jobs, direct and indirect, from the three main initiatives: a mill for the province's own scrap, a deconstruction standard and a province-wide organics requirement.

While this report does not provide a deep dive into job protection and creation in adaptation and repair, it is worth mentioning. Creating spillways and storm sewers, electricity system renewal, waterway re-naturalization, building up dikes, repairing infrastructure and water and wastewater systems, and many more measures provide significant job opportunities. Many of the BCFED affiliate unions already have members working in these areas. For instance, BCGEU members working in highway construction play an important role—they support evacuation by closing highways and then rebuild roads, bridges and other physical infrastructure destroyed during extreme weather events, like the 2021 atmospheric river in the Fraser Valley, one of the costliest natural disasters in BC history.

In addition, adaptation measures to protect communities from extreme weather impacts due to climate change not only save money for households, they also provide a return on investment for communities. Investing $4 billion per year on proactive, coordinated infrastructure adaptation initiatives could avoid reactive costs of up to $8.6 billion.[17]

This report lays out a future for workers in communities throughout BC. When this future is planned out and invested in by our governments as recommended through this proposal, no one will be left behind. As Chrissy Lynch, president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO states: "When the conversation moved from what needs to be shut down to what needs to be built up, it was a game changer. It made us think about opportunities instead of threats." The opportunities for workers and communities through this vision are significant and exciting.

Workers and Communities as the Foundation

This is a worker-centred clean industrial strategy that is aimed at leaving no worker or community behind. Later in the report, a section outlining what it takes to meaningfully ensure workers and communities are at the foundation of this approach covers the following areas:

- Tie public investments to public benefits: Labour standards and community benefits
- Apply a regional approach
- Support public ownership and worker co-operatives
- Address climate occupational health and safety issues
- Ensure labour and workers are at the table

- Support sectoral bargaining in the clean economy
- Invest in strong public services
- Apply value-added approaches and reverse outsourcing
- Buy BC: BC/Canada procurement
- Ensure a just transition

Climate occupational health and safety measures are critical to ensuring workers' safety is protected and enhanced in this time of intensifying extreme weather events. Workers and communities are already facing the impacts: from wildfire evacuations to heat stress, from floods to air quality, and more. Workplace safety is significantly compromised by these factors and occupational health and safety measures must be strengthened to meet the current reality. More details on specific issues and necessary measures are included later in the report.

Enhanced training and education is also a significant measure needed to realize this strategy. This includes enhancing industrial training, expanding skilled trades certification and protecting and enhancing full trade certification. This approach also addresses youth unemployment through strengthening youth pathways into the trades and other climate jobs, in part by addressing stigma and devaluation of trades and industrial work. A workforce development plan and defined and coordinated project planning is critical to ensure these projects are not impacted by unnecessary labour shortages.

Climate Action Addresses British Columbians' Priorities

Across polls, British Columbians consistently rank cost-of-living and health care as their top two concerns. Climate change is an affordability challenge and impacts health care so addressing climate change is key to addressing British Columbians' priorities.

Extreme weather is driving up home insurance, energy, and food costs for British Columbians. The home insurance consumer price index (CPI) for British Columbians increased by 37 per cent from 2020 to 2025.[18] Based on average home insurance rates for a detached home,[19] this is an increase of between $325 to $600 dollars per year for a household, exacerbating existing cost of living challenges. Insurance providers also manage risk by linking higher premiums to higher-risk areas, which hits British Columbians hard, given large areas associated with flooding and wildfires. Many properties are becoming uninsurable.

Energy costs are also increasing due to extreme weather — households are forced to spend more on cooling as temperatures soar during the summer and on heating as temperatures drop during the winter in those regions of BC not used to extreme cold. One estimate highlights that "British Columbians spent an additional $8–$14 million on electricity for cooling homes and offices during the heat dome" in June 2021.[20]

On top of these costs, there is also the loss of income due to workplace closures and evacuations associated with extreme weather events. In a poll commissioned by the BCFED in October 2025, over one in 10 (13 per cent)

Climate change is an affordability challenge and impacts health care so addressing climate change is key to addressing British Columbians' priorities.

respondents had missed work due to extreme weather in the past year, with that number increasing to 18 per cent for rural respondents and 17 per cent for those outside Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island. Over half were not paid while they were unable to work due to these weather events. This was reinforced in the BCFED's focus groups: "We don't get compensation if you cannot get to work because of the weather," said a second-year insulator apprentice in Metro Vancouver. Workers are bearing the brunt of extreme weather events due to climate change without adequate income protection.

The clean economy initiatives outlined in this report will reduce costs for families by providing affordable, reliable energy sources and reducing energy consumption, as well as strengthening wages through good, family-supporting jobs in the clean economy.

As well as reducing household costs, climate action reduces health care costs. The health impacts and costs of climate change have been well documented. The "2021 heat dome alone killed over 600 people in BC and injured thousands more, while wildfire smoke causes hundreds of millions in healthcare costs annually."[21] Extreme weather events also decrease community safety and increase fear and stress, contributing to more health care needs. Enhancing safety and strengthening health care in BC require bold climate action.

Getting to Net Zero

BC and Canada have aimed to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. The United Nations defines net zero as "cutting carbon emissions to a small amount of residual emissions that can be absorbed and durably stored by nature and other carbon dioxide removal measures, leaving zero in the atmosphere."[22] The Sustainable Jobs Blueprint from the Pembina Institute and the Canadian Labour Congress goes further in stating that a "net-zero economy continues to deliver goods and services, and a high quality of life, while powered by emissions-free energy."[23] Unfortunately, BC is not on track to achieve this target. The province's 2025 Climate Change Accountability Report admits "B.C.'s current policy landscape does not put us on track to meet our 2030 targets," and projects BC will only get halfway, reducing emissions by 20 per cent from the 2007 baseline rather than 40 per cent.

While BC's electricity is relatively clean with 97 per cent from renewable sources, BC's energy use is still dominated by fossil fuels. BC's energy mix includes refined petroleum products (34 per cent), natural gas (31 per cent), biofuels (18 per cent), and electricity (18 per cent).[24] The largest sector for energy demand was industrial at 48 per cent of total demand, followed by transportation at 27 per cent, residential at 14 per cent, and commercial at 11 per cent.[25]

This report lays out a bold but practical vision for getting BC to net zero by 2050. This includes massive electrification; retrofits across multiple sectors to improve efficiency, including focusing on schools and other public buildings; increasing active transportation and public transportation networks; reducing waste and promoting circular economy initiatives; responsible natural resource development; and more.

Based on the inspiring and comprehensive Global Justice Report released earlier in 2026, this proposal follows the recommended three pillars. "It is possible to reconcile planetary habitability and high well-being for all, but only if the transformation rests on three pillars simultaneously."[26] These are:

1. decarbonization of energy systems as we shift towards massive renewable energy generation;
2. a major shift toward efficiency through building retrofits, public transit expansion and circular economy initiatives; and
3. wealth and power redistribution as addressing inequality is "a necessary condition for shared prosperity on a finite planet."[27]

Workers Want Strong Leadership

Across the province, workers participating in our focus groups expressed positive sentiment for policies that address multiple issues: improving quality of life, improving job security, and offering actionable benefits on the climate. The desire for quick, decisive, and meaningful action was constant across all groups. Workers are open and hungry for big ideas.

> *"Pick a direction and let's go" said a hydro worker in the Interior.*

Workers are tired of being asked to lower expectations, tighten belts, accept less, and trust that the next round of incremental adjustments will do what the last round did not. The current moment presents an opening that workers themselves have noticed and are responding to. As one worker put it, made systems can be unmade.

The idea that there is significant distance between the scope of the challenges before us and the actual tools and policies on offer to address these problems was expressed across various groups (and regardless of expressed political distinctions). Observations like these speak to the need for tangible public policy directives and enforcements that folks can touch and feel. Across the board, workers are in favour of supporting things that are local, community focused and keep dollars and jobs in BC.

And many workers spoke of the need for strong leadership on challenging topics. This is an opportunity for the government to advocate for bold, popular, tangible policies for workers and communities throughout BC. The question is not whether workers are ready for transformative action, but whether our leaders are ready to lead it.

Impacts: Workers on the Frontlines of Economic and Climate Disruption



Between May 2025 and January 2026, the BCFED conducted 42 focus groups and a small number of one-on-one interviews with more than 400 frontline workers, union representatives and labour leaders from across the province.[28]

As you would expect, these workers do not share identical interests or identical experiences. A millwright in Prince George, a health care worker in Vancouver, a bus driver in Kelowna, and a construction apprentice on Vancouver Island all bring different concerns, different pressures and different relationships to questions of climate and economic change. But there is more solidarity than division.

What we learned from listening was that these pressures do not exist in separate categories for most people. Workers do not experience climate anxiety on one side and economic anxiety on the other. They experience them together, as overlapping and compounding features of a single difficult moment. What came through clearly was that most working people in our province feel uneasy about the future and unstable in this current moment. They are experiencing their community and their environment changing, both in their daily lives, and over the course of their families' lives.

We asked workers, "What impacts are you facing in your work and your community from the changing environment and economy?" What we heard grounds this clean industrial strategy.

Heat. Smoke. Flood. Landslide. Deluge. Unpredictable seasons. Missing snowpack. Alerts. Evacuations. Life disruptions. Stewardship responsibilities. Fear for friends, families, and colleagues. Workers in BC are already experiencing the negative impacts of climate change and are feeling insecure in relation to the changing economy and related environmental impacts.

The Changing Conditions of Work and Occupational Health and Safety Impacts

Most workers have a story about weather affecting their job. Workers described hazardous conditions of labour, outdated building infrastructure and the impacts of extreme weather on the physical ability to access work. Many described their workplaces as not equipped to deal with direct risks related to smoke, heat, fire, flood, cold exposure and rapidly changing climate conditions.

Prevalent throughout the conversations are the ways in which weather and climate shape worker health and safety and wellbeing both inside and outside of work. Many workers describe the psychological toll of the shifting climate on their overall mental health and the impacts on their family, friends, neighbours, and communities, and how this affects their sense of place and purpose in the workforce, and in life.

Access to emergency measures to address issues like heat stress, such as provision of clean drinking water, was stressed in outdoor settings and described as inadequate in many. "Once again, just companies being cheap. It's water. It's a human right," said a fourth-year insulator.

Workers do not experience climate anxiety on one side and economic anxiety on the other. They experience them together, as overlapping and compounding features of a single difficult moment.

Wildfire and smoke have had a magnifying impact on how members think about climate, job safety and general health security on and off the job site. Workers described harrowing, and often chaotic, evacuations from hospitals and long-term care facilities, as well as poor performing PPE in extreme weather. "They give us N95 masks, but after a while I feel tired, so I end up not wearing the mask," said an electrician in Kamloops, "I don't know what is happening to my health. Sometime down the road I may end up regretting that."

The Challenges of Care Work in Extreme Weather Events

Teachers, social service, health care and other care workers are uniquely impacted by these conditions. Working indoors, and responsible for the care of others, these workers face specific challenges when heat, smoke and atmospheric conditions disrupt the interior environment. "Many of our schools are not yet properly retrofitted for the weather," said a school teacher in Nelson. "The buildings are not fit for the heat. It's hard to learn. It's hard to teach. Everyone becomes more agitated."

A long-term care facility worker in Kelowna described working through multiple evacuations and the impact this had on both clients and employees. "Our facility has been evacuated twice. It was very traumatic for everybody involved," they said. An HSA member in Gibsons talked about how seniors are "extremely vulnerable" and described how associated power outages with extreme weather makes the ability to provide care more challenging and more dangerous for workers. A CUPE member working in social services spoke about the challenges of frontline workers getting clients out to activities every day, "affected by climate with hot weather and the extreme cold that comes in."

Throughout these stories, the importance of public services and the workers that provide them were central. Public service providers are on the frontlines of economic and climate disruption and dislocation, facing the impacts themselves while caring for others through these challenging times.

Climate Impacts Workers' Income and Benefits

Lost income is a challenge that many members face due to extreme weather, unpredictable seasons and climate change. During major weather events, workers described how buses do not arrive, workplaces become unsafe (often due to heat, ice and smoke), access to industry resources becomes limited and many roads are unsafe or unnavigable, meaning work is closed or travel to work is impossible or profoundly time consuming. For example, a researcher at UBC described how snow and extreme rain can cut-off major travel routes to the university; and a USW sawmill worker said, "they'd shut down the bush because of forest fires and there we were, getting pretty close to having no logs in the yard, which would have been a stop work for us if we didn't have the material to saw."

Because worker and wage protections are not universal, members experience financial impacts in different ways. "We don't get compensation if

you cannot get to work because of the weather," said a second-year insulator apprentice in Metro Vancouver. And a PSAC member said, "the impact of people having to get to work via long detours is troublesome. This can take a toll on your mental health or having to deplete your leave much quicker." Migrant farm workers were not paid during their evacuation to shelters in the Abbotsford flood and are not included in employment insurance for emergency situations despite paying into the system, leaving them with no access to food or clothing. Others still noted how extreme weather events are depleting workers' savings.

Fear and Insecurity: Cost of Living and Inequality

Cost-of-living is a primary concern for every worker who participated in the study. Even those earning $150,000+ with strong job security, meaningful union representation and robust employee benefits, expressed concern not only for their own ability to cope in the existing economy, but also deep worry for their children and for the future and upcoming generations of British Columbians. Across all industries, sectors and job types, workers spoke in emotionally charged terms about the financial challenges they are facing.

"This is the most I have ever made in my entire life," said an HSA member in Kelowna. "We're living paycheque to paycheque. My husband also works at the hospital. We have 4 kids. We're still struggling." A teacher described how they feel in the face of the climate crisis. "Our economy… is devouring our future. We are at a crossroads. I have two kids," they said, and then started to cry. "I'm 26. The amount of people that I know are in school who are in debt," said a USW member out of Sparwood. "The amount of people I know that cannot get a job, even in fast food. There is such low cost of labour. Now they cannot afford to live or work here."

Workers described affordability within the milieu of climate as an inequality and justice issue — those who make the least are most exposed to climate threats. A low-income, non-unionized outdoor worker said, "We're in a lower income area which is more impacted by climate because we don't have air conditioning, circulation, trees, etc. Downtown Eastside [of Vancouver] is especially affected by heatwaves."

Economic Insecurity Shifts Environmental Priorities

"Our economy is making it harder for people to do the right thing," said an IATSE 891 member in Metro Vancouver. A retired college educator stressed that "they can't afford to care, quite literally. They can't afford to care. They're concerned about putting food on the table and having a roof over their heads." A labour representative in the building trades put the dilemma in the following terms: "We agree climate change is real. We agree that it's something that needs to be dealt with, but not as something where we're sacrificing our economy or the jobs that our members are going to. We need to find a balance in this."

The ways in which affordability casts a shadow on the horizon of political possibility is impossible to understate — climate is moved down the list of priorities when cost of living is so high. For example, a fourth-year apprentice insulator said: "It's hard to navigate life with these wages." Even with a skilled-trade ticket soon to be in their pocket, the economic future is imagined as a place of permanent struggle. There is little room in these spaces to consider broader social possibilities like climate change. Without a connection to affordability, addressing climate change is seen as "high hopes" and low possibility, which can easily lead to cynicism, despair and hopelessness.

A Job Is More Than a Paycheque: Identity, Pride and Community

"People get a sense of meaning from their work," said a tech worker in Metro Vancouver. "It is part of identity and purpose." While workers didn't necessarily speak of it in these terms, the feeling conveyed through multiple conversations was that a job is much more than a paycheque. A job is agency, status, security, a future, identity, roots. A job is a sense of worth, purpose, meaning, pride. So, when we are proud of our job, or proud of a job well done, which almost all workers in our conversations described as an essential part of job satisfaction and overall well-being, we feel useful to our world. Pride is essential to feeling good about yourself, good about your community and good about your province.

Resource jobs, in particular, are rooted to place and community. A worker from Vancouver Island said, "My grandpa, my dad, everybody worked in mills around the lake. Those mills are all gone now. I used to know my neighbours, I know nobody anymore...Our school district has dropped 300 kids this year...In the next five years [it's] expected a thousand kids will move away because there's no blue-collar jobs."

This understanding is foundational for thinking about climate action and its potential impact on job security. "You have to be careful because some workers are tied to those industries that are not that eco-friendly," said an airport worker in Vancouver. "It's a very tough and conflicting question."

Climate Anxiety and Generational Responsibility

"Climate anxiety is huge. And as someone who also suffers climate anxiety, it is difficult to support [the students]. We don't have counsellors at our school. I am fearful some of them may think it is too late, and they are only 15," said a teacher.

"It seems like every summer we have a bad fire," said a medical lab tech in Kelowna. "You either choose going to work or saving your home. Where do you draw the line?" A PSAC member in the Interior lamented: "I could go skating outside when I was a kid." Where once weather served as a background to social life and banal small talk, now it is ever present. "It is like a rotating wheel of disaster," said an IBEW member in Kamloops. "What is going to happen this season?" A student worker in Prince George said there is no "turning off of the hyper vigilance."

Outside of work, members describe an inability to escape the constant signs of changing natural systems. Shifting weather, biodiversity changes and the ability to realize personal time in the summers is deeply felt by members. They describe phenomena like increased freeze/thaw fluctuations, early cherry blossom blooms, and altered animal migration patterns as indicators of ecosystem illness. These swings disrupt their own sense of place, being, and even community identity. "We've lost a lot of our fishing on the North coast. We used to be the halibut capital of the world. Now we are the city of rainbows," said an HEU member in Prince Rupert. For many

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Even members who are hesitant to use the term “climate change” have stories, experiences and desires for action related to extreme weather.

members, there is no time to fully relax and enjoy life outside of work because of the changing climate.

Climate anxiety was often expressed as significant concern for future generations. They imagine youth inheriting a world on a doomsday countdown with nothing meaningful being done about it. “My concern is just for the youth of today,” said an HSA community support worker in the Interior. “The anxiety, not even thinking there is a future to plan for.” An ECE student in Prince George said: “Everything is going downhill, and we are bringing people up in this world.”

Young Workers’ Mental Health and Hope

Mental health concern was expressed consistently across groups, with some significant expressions of acute mental health crisis related to the interconnectedness of things like job security, climate breakdown, isolation and cost of living. Youth in particular highlight this when they think about their place in the future economy, describing a bleak adulthood, one without a secure climate or a secure job. “I don’t think there has ever been a time that I have had to fight this hard just for a chance at a shitty job,” said a young worker on Vancouver Island.

Some young workers also expressed how their political perspectives on the environment have changed in the face of employment scarcity, feeling like they must choose between a liveable climate and a liveable life.

Divergent from these perspectives, some youth see this as a moment of possibility where mental health considerations (manifesting in the form of pro-worker, better standard of living and work policies) create space to reimagine systems with people and future generations at the centre.

Additionally, young trades workers with job security often expressed optimism related to their own work and future job security, but were concerned, and sometimes resigned, that climate commitments were being broken.

Workers Care About Nature, Their Communities and Quality of Life

Workers see and feel the changing environment. “In my community, our glacier has melted so much that we barely see it in the summers. The lake is so low you could almost walk across it to the other side. More water restrictions. We’ve seen the starfish die in the sun. So that’s what I’m seeing,” says a CUPE member. This invites senses of despair, fear and overwhelm. “I don’t see a great future. Things in the forest sector are very scary,” said a former logger turned heavy equipment operator on the coast. “If we don’t have forests, we don’t have anything. The season for fire is also the season for baby animals. The more the fire impacts them, then the more it impacts us.” “When I was first on the [fire] crews, we were fighting fires in the woods. Now we are defending communities,” said a veteran wildland firefighter in Kamloops.

Even members who are hesitant to use the term “climate change” have stories, experiences and desires for action related to extreme weather. For example, a worker might express how extreme weather is just part of the job (“I work outside, of course it gets hot”), but then discuss how their leisure activities, life outside of work and access to nature are drastically impacted by changing weather — fishing, snowmobiling, or summer vacation destroyed by smoke. The fruits of one’s labour, why you have a job in the first place, can no longer be enjoyed the way they used to.

Failing Community Infrastructure

Workers described a lack of control and a sense of desperation and exhaustion about the quickly shifting weather and climatic systems in British Columbia and overlapping economic concerns. Those working in more remote areas (though still culturally and economically tied to larger communities) commented how their locations are uniquely vulnerable and unprepared to deal with infrastructure disruption. This could be due to a lack of multiple road transport outlets (one road or bridge out of town) or over-dependence upon centralized structures and resources that limit their ability to respond to crisis.

Nearly everyone who participated believes we are profoundly unprepared for changing and extreme weather, and existing systems will probably fail when crisis hits. "There are all of these once-in-a-generation weather events affecting the area," said an ambulance service worker based out of Saanich. "It's going to be our turn at some point." Members described significant repair timelines and inefficient supply chains for disaster related necessities, as well as poorly managed evacuation routes and policy discrepancies. For example, public infrastructures (including public service buildings and schools) are made earthquake proof, but not climate proof.

Nearly everyone who participated believes we are profoundly unprepared for changing and extreme weather, and existing systems will probably fail when crisis hits.

Workplace Waste, Outsourcing and Privatization

Waste is one of the most tangible ways that workers experience environmental policy and environmental feeling at an individual level. How waste is dealt with in the workplace is often a go-to example from which workers build out their belief systems about climate change and environmental legislation. Similar to the experience of extreme weather, most workers had a readily available story of seeing excessive waste in their workplaces.

"The amount of waste is flabbergasting," said an HEU member from Chilliwack. "I don't know what to do about it." "I see it getting worse" another health worker from Vancouver Island said. "A little item wrapped in plastic in a really big box. Our systems are predicated upon cost, versus environment." A paramedic described excessive single-use plastic equipment that cannot be recycled, repurposed or reused. "I don't actually need a package around my package," they said.

Workers in the building trades also discussed waste and the need for meaningful improvements to job site recycling. "There is just an obscene amount of garbage as it gets into finishing stages," said a plumber working on Vancouver Island. "I don't need a plastic bag for one fitting. It's just plastic plastic plastic."

Participants described the issue of waste as the result of procurement processes that prioritize outsourced, single-use items. In the quest for greater efficiencies, workers said outsourcing and privatization have increased costs, expanded project timelines and added inefficiencies that undercut any costs, human resources and time saved. A BCGEU highway construction worker said: "it's never been cheaper to be privatized... [when] you start putting any of the longer-term costs in." Contract outsourcing has also led to the loss of "in-house" knowledge and capabilities.

Managerial Waste and Cynicism

Interviewees also discussed management as wasting time and valuable budget dollars in the search of projects to justify the existence of management. Managerial waste was described as having significant negative effects on workplace morale and faith in managerial solutions for workplace problems.

"Our system can be so much better if we didn't have 6 layers of management above us. That is where all of the waste is going," said an HSA member in Kelowna. "3.5 employees to a manager," an Island Health worker said.

Cynicism about decision makers was present in many groups, often appearing in the context of government and management being perceived as knowing about various problems but either refusing to act upon what they see or as being captured by other interests or excessive bureaucratic structures (red tape). For example, a government employee stated: "As long as the politicians are bought and paid for by that industry, nothing is going to change." In relation to sub-contracting, consultants were described as adding unnecessary time, delay and costs to projects.

A highway worker in the Okanagan described a common occurrence where there are "degree guys" walking around the jobsite trying to figure out things that local workers could easily solve using in-house expertise and on-the-ground experience. They added: "After the atmospheric river in Princeton we were tasked to look at the culverts. We spent 3 days. It took them [consultants] a year and half. They matched identical to what we identified, two rednecks."

This perceived lack of willingness to trust the common sense of local workers feeds a broader conception of a broken system and broken trust in government, and the social contract at-large. "The decision maker is always working from home where the AC is great," said a medical office assistant on Vancouver Island.

The Impacts of AI and Automation

The rapid integration of AI systems, automation and other technological changes have added an additional degree of economic insecurity within an already anxious moment. Workers describe a dizzying array of changes, concerns and climate implications related to AI adaptation. "There's such a focus of using AI to increase 'productivity'", said a member working for Vancouver Coastal Health. "If AI can help you complete a task two times faster, then we are expected to have the capacity to do double the tasks." In addition to increased workload, federal public service workers also describe feeling pushed to have a strong command of AI literacies without adequate instruction. They are "pushing" us to use AI "with no time to take training," said a PSAC member. Many members also expressed significant concerns about the negative ecological and energy ramifications of AI.

In specific sectors, such as mining and ports, automation is associated with "greenwashing," where corporations promote the reduced environmental impacts of these technologies. But that has not been workers' experiences — one mine worker said, "they go through way more tires than our 'bad' haul trucks ever did; three haul trucks in a row ripped open their fuel tanks. That's,... if they were full, four thousand litres of diesel that went on the ground." Robots and autonomous vehicles are scorned as only working in perfect conditions — on roads with no "potholes" and in weather with "no wind;" they are not seen to be adaptable to the real-life context of a mine or port: "it's not like a human."

The economic effects of AI and automation were described in nuanced ways. Some recognized that the introduction of AI and automation may mean losing lower-level jobs but increasing "educated jobs," which may come with higher pay. However, there was concern about the impact of this loss of the lower rung of the economy in the long-term.

Rural/Urban Distinctions and Disconnections

Rural, non-Lower Mainland, and noncapital region workers expressed dimensions of frustration that are qualitatively different than urban counterparts in unique and interesting ways. These views often intensified depending upon the degree to which the local economy is perceived as overtly dependent upon economic arrangements and conditions beyond their immediate control, usually a dominant extractive industry. This manifested in a sense of a lack of agency over the future of their surrounding industry(s), as well as a lack of input related to day-to-day operations and what are articulated as "common sense" policies that workers see as solutions, but that industry or government does not consider, either through perceived ignorance, neglect or a lack of power. "Instead of shipping our logs to somebody else [keep them here]," said a USW member in Eastern BC. "Why it is not happening is crazy...Is it corporations?"

Despite stereotypes, workers in resource and rural communities are very attuned to the issues of changing climate and changing economy and spoke meaningfully about how weather and climate impacts were changing work, home and leisure life — even if not expressed as "climate change." Dramatic weather changes, and the late arrival of winter and shifting snow patterns, were identified as posing significant challenges to working conditions and access to work, as well as community infrastructures and access to leisure, including fishing, snow sports and hunting.

Another common theme was a sense of disenfranchisement, both as rural people and as resource workers. These workers spoke of a lack of investment in trade, industry, long-term planning and climate resilience in their regions. An ECE educator in Prince George said: "The north is ignored most of the time. When the fire was threatening Whistler, oh my god it was all hands-on deck. But we have fires that are probably still burning."

Workers expressed desire and support for value-added shifts in industries to bring back jobs in troubled regions, provided these shifts offer secure employment and are not tied to strategies that eliminate jobs.

These themes paint a compelling picture for the need for a vision that meets people where they're at, which is what we did through the listening tour. And what workers told us they want is this: the working people of British Columbia want a future where they can breathe easily, raise their families on the lakes and in the forests, and earn a wage that respects their skills. They want their children and grandchildren to inherit that same life; one where they can afford their own homes, build careers that will sustain them, and live in the mountains, forests, and wild coastlines that make this province worth fighting for. They want respect and accountability from their leaders, and they want to be listened to. Most remember a time when paycheques were better, the snow was deeper and groceries were cheaper. They know a better way of life is possible. And while they might not all agree perfectly on how to get there, they almost all agree that the path we are on now must change.

From these impacts, workers highlighted concrete solutions including the following six priority areas. We offer this clean industrial strategy as the necessary change we need, offering hope and practical, tangible solutions to address the intersecting issues of economic and climate insecurity that workers are bearing the brunt of.

PILLAR I

Energy Redistribution



CHAPTER 1

Renewable Energy

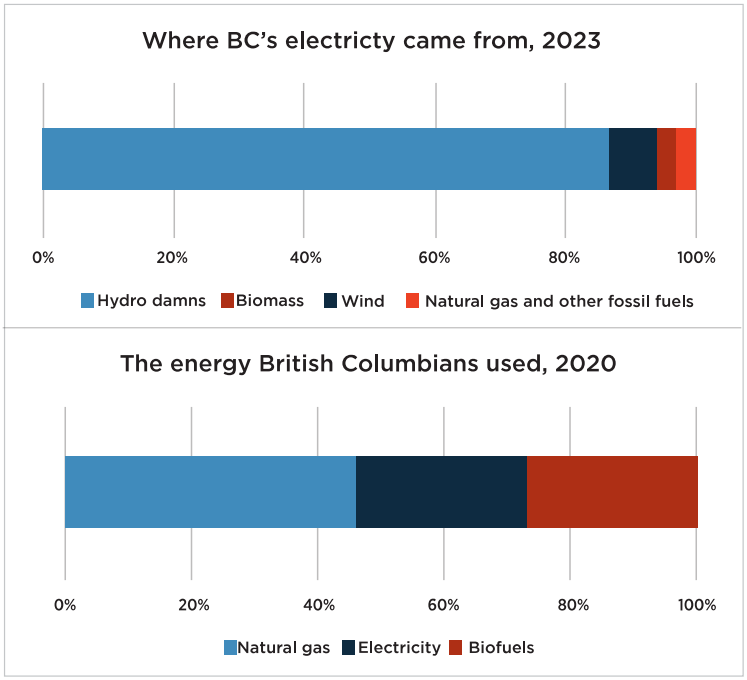
BC's Energy System: From Today to 2050

Today, British Columbia's electricity system is almost totally renewable. In 2023, 97 per cent of the province's electricity came from renewable sources: hydro dams supplied by far the largest share, with biomass, mostly wood waste from the forest industry, and wind making up the balance.[29] Most of that power comes from BC Hydro, with the rest from private utilities such as FortisBC and from independent producers, including First Nations and municipalities,[30] and it travels to customers over more than 18,000 kilometres of high-voltage lines on BC Hydro's system alone, plus the lines the other utilities own.[31]

The province's electricity needs are growing. As the province moves to net zero, homes and businesses will switch from burning fuel to running on electricity, and that demand will shift onto the grid. As of 2020, electricity supplied less than a fifth of the energy British Columbians used, while petroleum products and natural gas together supplied about two thirds of it.[32]

British Columbia will need to roughly double its electricity system by 2050 to meet growing electricity demand based on the province's own clean energy strategy,[34] and affirmed by research from the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University.[35] A bigger renewable electricity grid is what will enable households, businesses, and industry to reduce their emissions, by switching to electric vehicles, electric transit, heat pumps and similar equipment.[36] IBEW Canada has advocated for significant investment in energy infrastructure, including "expanding and upgrading all electrical generation sources, transmission grids, and distribution networks across the country."[37]

From public service to private sector, workers in the BCFED focus groups were keen to implement renewable energy solutions, both at the systemic and individual level. Building trades members highlight that they are already doing this work. A UA member said, "we already have it within our curriculums...We've talked geothermal, solar, heating, all these different things. It's already work that we're doing." An electrician talked about



Source: Canada Energy Regulator[33]

the climate-friendly future of electrification as a reason that youth are choosing the trade.

Growing BC's electricity system and upgrading the transmission grid, alongside ambitious building-retrofit programs, enhancements to public transit and other measures, offers a path to a fully net-zero economy by 2050. We build on BC Hydro's Powering Growth Plan to conserve, optimize and build.[38] Retrofits are assumed in the doubling, not additional to it. The Canadian Climate Institute finds that electricity demand grows on the path to net zero even with significant gains in efficiency, so the savings set out in the retrofit chapter are part of what holds this build to a doubling.[39]

A note on the numbers.

Electricity gets measured two different ways in this chapter. *Capacity*, measured in megawatts (MW), is how much electricity a plant can produce at any one moment. *Generation*, measured in gigawatt-hours (GWh), is how much it actually produces over a full year. BC Hydro explains capacity as a highway: capacity is the number of lanes, and demand is the number of cars on the road at a given time.

(bchydro.com/powersmart/residential/energy-explained.html)

For a sense of scale, BC Hydro says Site C will produce about 5,100 gigawatt-hours a year, enough to power the equivalent of about 450,000 homes. That is roughly 90 homes for every gigawatt-hour.

(bchydro.com/energy-in-bc/projects/site_c.html)

In the past, BC Hydro has set up new power plants cautiously in an effort to keep electricity costs from going up. The cost of building too little generation — the investment, jobs, production and tax revenue the province never sees — carries far less weight in decisions.[40] Reviewing its long-term supply plan in 2025, BC Hydro itself accepted that "the risks of under- and over-supply are asymmetric."[41] Build too much, and customers pay more than they need to for a while, until demand catches up and uses the surplus. Build too little and there could be an electricity shortage, impacting homes and businesses, as well as the province's climate targets and its economy being on the line.[42] The result of building too little is a backlog, with industrial customers waiting to plug in about 6.8 gigawatts of new demand, which is six times what the Site C dam can produce.[43]

Building more non-emitting generation faster can help protect BC's economic and energy security and sovereignty. Ensuring BC has greater control over our own electricity generation is especially important in light of recent hostility from the US and reduces our use of US electricity.[44]

British Columbia will need to roughly double its electricity system by 2050 to meet growing electricity demand based on the province's own clean energy strategy, and affirmed by research from the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University.

Integrated Energy Planning

Despite having an electricity system that is almost completely non-emitting, British Columbia is not on track to achieve net zero by 2050.

In November 2025, the government-appointed independent review panel for CleanBC, the province's climate plan, reported that British Columbia will fall well short of its 2030 climate target.[45] BC Hydro's own draft long-term supply plan fails to include what would be required to meet the province's legislated emissions targets.[46] This needs to change, with more integrated energy planning between all of BC's utilities and the BC government's emissions reduction goals.

There are various methods to achieve that goal, each with their own strengths and challenges. One option could be the BC Utilities Commission (BCUC) expanding its role to deliver joint utility planning through mandating joint integrated resource plans with BC Hydro and FortisBC. Another option could be a new energy systems planner or operator, such as Great Britain's National Energy System Operator.[47] This has the advantage of independence but would take more time and political heft to establish. Finally, the BC government itself could lead strategic and integrated energy planning, and then issue directives to BC Hydro, FortisBC and the BCUC. Any option should also support ongoing coordination and collaboration between all publicly owned energy companies in BC, including all of the municipal utilities, both district energy and electric (i.e., Nelson and New Westminster). We are open to any of these approaches, as long as the result is integrated energy planning that benefits workers, consumers and the climate.

Our Vision for BC's Electricity System

Public money is now flowing toward future electricity demand. BC Hydro's 10-year capital plan commits $36 billion between 2024-25 and 2033-34, and is expected to support 10,500 to 12,500 jobs on average annually.[48] This recent push to expand BC's electricity system is welcome. But this spending, now and in future, must increase renewable generation to reduce emissions in homes and businesses, and deliver real gains for workers, communities and the climate.

British Columbians express a clear preference for a renewable energy future. In a September 2025 survey by Re.Climate and Abacus Data, 70 per cent of BC respondents said they would be more proud of Canada as a renewable energy superpower than as an oil and gas superpower.[49]

This chapter puts forward a clean vision for BC's electricity system, outlining what needs to be built to double the province's electricity generation and capacity. Altogether, the projects described here make up about 35.3 GW of new capacity and some 69,300 GWh of new generation. The plan includes diverse sources of energy to balance different baseload considerations of each technology (when they generate electricity) and to protect against the changing climate, including increasing drought conditions throughout BC.[50]

Table 2: Net-Zero Energy Installed by 2050[51]

Capacity	
Type	**GW**
Wind	12
Solar	9
Hydro	5
Geothermal	0.3
Marine	1
Storage	8
Total	**35.3**

This chapter puts forward a clean vision for BC's electricity system, outlining what needs to be built to double the province's electricity generation and capacity.

To build this electricity system for the future, BC must drastically increase the rate of construction and utility work. Over the last 15 years, British Columbia added about 3,900 megawatts of generating capacity, or roughly 260 megawatts a year.[52] The plan set out in this chapter requires an average of 1,410 megawatts a year for the next 25 years, more than five times that pace. British Columbia's largest wind farm, Meikle Wind north of Tumbler Ridge, is about 185 megawatts.[53] In capacity terms, the plan calls for the equivalent of nearly eight Meikle Winds every year, for a quarter century. Researchers at the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University reach a similar conclusion, putting the requirement at over 1,000 megawatts of new capacity a year through the 2030s.[54] This increased rate of system build-out translates to thousands of jobs.

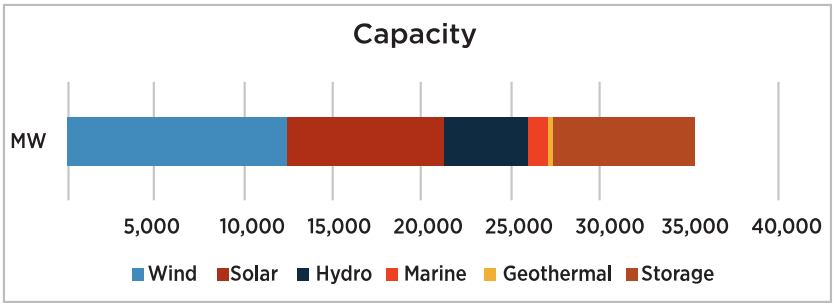


Table 3: Number of Jobs in Renewable Energy Build-out

Type	Construction jobs	Operation jobs
Hydro	2258	294
Wind	5470	4582
Solar	6202	1567
Geothermal	142	350
Marine	598	792
Storage	6876	1264
Transmission	2436	993
Total (approx.)	**24,000**	**10,000**

From Calls for Power to Calls for Partnership

A cornerstone of our vision for BC's electricity system is public ownership. To date, the province's electricity utility, BC Hydro, has not been building and owning new wind and solar generation itself. Starting in 2024, BC Hydro has put out two "Calls for Power" for new wind and solar generation from Independent Power Producers (IPPs). A Call for Power works like an auction. BC Hydro announces how much new electricity it wants to buy, private developers compete to supply it, and the winners sign 30-year contracts to build the projects, own them, and sell the power to BC Hydro.[55] Under this model, the public guarantees the buyer and pays the bills, but private companies own the projects and the profits.

Under private ownership, British Columbians get less for their money. The cost of building a wind or solar project is recovered through electricity bills no matter who builds it. When a private company builds it, those bills must also cover that company's profit for the full 30 years of the contract, and a private developer pays more to borrow than BC Hydro does, so the same project costs more. At the end of the 30 years, the public has paid for the project in full but does not own it.[56] This can also lead to stranded assets if the contract ends but the private company does not fulfil the necessary clean-up requirements for the project, leaving the public on the hook for those costs. Ultimately, private investment is not able to deliver the massive investments needed to drive

the necessary renewable energy expansion in our electricity generation network.[57] Public investment and ownership are essential.[58]

Researchers at Cornell University, working with Oregon's building trades unions, recommend public ownership as one route to lower energy costs, since a public builder has no profit to fund and borrows more cheaply. The state of New York went further and changed the law. Since 2023, the New York Power Authority has been authorized to develop, own and operate renewable electricity generation itself, and it now has multiple projects of several gigawatts underway. The Authority, which already supplies what it describes as the lowest-cost electricity in the state from its public hydro dams, is building that clean energy with public money rather than contracting for it.[59]

To prioritize public ownership, we put forward an alternative to Calls for Power — Calls for Partnership. Rather than inviting private developers to build assets and sell the output back, BC Hydro would invite First Nations, municipalities, regional districts and community energy co-operatives to develop projects in collaboration. BC Hydro would be the lead and provide its unique assets: capital at Crown borrowing rates, engineering and interconnection expertise, and a direct relationship with the Crown. The partner community would hold equity, as it does now. The asset would stay inside the public system instead of being leased back to it for 30 years. Where partnership is not possible, BC Hydro would maintain sole public ownership.

BC Hydro has affirmed that public ownership is possible. Asked by the BC Utilities Commission whether it had considered building generation itself, BC Hydro answered: "Yes, [and] there may be circumstances where BC Hydro ownership of new generation assets could provide value." It went further, explaining that its own projects "may benefit from access to lower cost capital" and this would give it "increased control over project timing, sequencing, and site selection." The single obstacle BC Hydro named was experience: it "has limited experience constructing and operating certain generation technologies, such as wind and solar." However, it said that risk could be mitigated "through the procurement of engineering, procurement and construction services" from firms experienced in those technologies.[64]

The province should make public ownership the default for new generation, treating independent power producers as the exception rather than the rule. This is a position we have already taken. In our CleanBC Review submission we called for public ownership to be a foundational community benefit of the energy transition, and for BC to put the public back into its existing systems and pursue public ownership of future clean energy generation.[65] In an earlier submission on the BC Regional Energy and Resource Table, we argued that public ownership and accountability strengthen environmental and worker protections and their enforcement.[66]

Quebec has already made the switch to public ownership for wind power. Until 2024, Hydro-Quebec bought almost all of its new wind power from private developers through competitive calls, exactly as BC Hydro does now. But its 2024 wind strategy changed that. On large projects, Hydro-Quebec now leads the development itself and holds an ownership stake in the finished project. In its own words, it "is redefining the model and confirming that it will play a strategic role in the sector from now on."[60] First Nations and municipalities take part as owners, earning "recurring autonomous streams of income," rather than simply hosting a project built by someone else.[61] In eastern Quebec, Hydro-Quebec has signed a partnership with the Mi'gmaq of Gespe'gewa'gi and the Alliance de l'énergie de l'Est to explore wind development on Mi'gmaq territory.[62] Competitive calls continue for smaller projects, but what changed is who leads the large ones.[63]

Where this is not possible, Calls for Power from BC Hydro should include community benefit agreements or project labour agreements to ensure unionized work, respect for collective bargaining, fair wages, training and apprenticeships, local and Indigenous hiring, and community benefits are requirements for project selection.

Public ownership under BC Hydro is also a matter of national security in relation to climate resilience. Private producers may have lower safety standards and are ill-equipped to respond in the event of a disaster. This has been an issue in the US, where a private utility company in California was accused of causing multiple wildfires through substandard equipment and maintenance and then filed for bankruptcy, prompting concerns about Californians' access to safe, reliable and affordable electricity.[67] Even public-owned, small utilities may struggle in disaster response as was the case in the face of recent wildfires. A fragmented utility system is a dangerous utility system. Public ownership under BC Hydro can provide a more coordinated and integrated approach to disaster preparedness and response.

Power Projects That Benefit Communities

Hydro generation has its own Community Benefit Agreement instrument, running through BC Hydro since 1962. Columbia Hydro Constructors, a BC Hydro subsidiary, supplies the workforce on generation projects named in its collective agreement with the Allied Hydro Council, a council of 20 unions. Contractors and subcontractors on those projects must hire through it. It was built for dam construction over half a century ago, and three dam upgrade projects are being built through it today.[68]

Beyond generation, future distribution and transmission projects could be named under the collective agreement with the Allied Hydro Council. Regardless of the model, community benefit agreements or project labour agreements should be included in all projects that contribute to the future of BC's electricity system.

In the sections that follow, we examine five key energy generation technologies in turn and their role in BC's electricity system by 2050: hydro, wind, solar, geothermal and marine (including wave and tidal). We then turn to the storage needed to make that generation firm, and to the province's transmission system and what expansion is necessary to carry double the electricity it delivers today. We then conclude with specific calls to build the skilled workforce the expansion requires and to commit BC Hydro to a fully net-zero grid by 2050.

Hydroelectric Power

Hydroelectricity plays a substantial role in BC's power system and our 2050 vision for it. By 2050, the province should add about 4,760 MW of hydroelectric capacity and some 16,600 GWh of annual generation, including the Site C Dam. Most of this is not speculative. These projects have largely already been announced by BC Hydro, are currently under construction, or sit in BC Hydro's own Resource Options Database. What is required of government is follow-through.

Large New Reservoir Projects

The province is considering two large new hydro projects, both of which would add significantly to BC's electricity supply. Site E, a large reservoir project downstream of Site C on the Peace River, would have a capacity of up to 750 MW and generate about 3,000 GWh a year — about 60 per cent of Site C's annual generation.[69] The Homathko proposal at Bute Inlet on BC's central coast would involve as many as four dams and three powerhouses, with a capacity of 500 to 900 MW and 3,000 to 4,500 GWh a year. A

neighbouring river system at Southgate is also under consideration, for a further 200 MW.[70] The main proponent of the Bute Inlet project is the Homalco First Nation.[71]

The province announced both projects in June 2026 as options to explore, and says no decisions have been made. Neither could proceed under current law: the Clean Energy Act prohibits dams at Site E and on the Homathko River. The province has said it will introduce amendments, not to lift those prohibitions outright but to permit technical review of whether the projects are viable.

We welcome the commitment from the province to continued public ownership on large hydro projects. Site E and the Homathko project, if they proceed, must be publicly owned and operated by BC Hydro.

New Run-of-River and Small Reservoir Projects

Beyond the major projects, our plan includes 20 smaller hydro projects spread across the province. The run-of-river plants among them draw power from a river's natural flow without a large reservoir; the remainder are small reservoir plants. Together they would add about 1,012 MW of capacity and 4,544 GWh of generation a year—close to what Site C produces. All 20 come from BC Hydro's own inventory of potential sites. The utility has identified, costed and assessed each one of them.[72] None has been discounted since[73] but BC Hydro has never taken one to contract. However, we call on BC Hydro to consider them.

Because they are small and geographically spread, they would spread construction, utility and operating work among many communities rather than concentrating it at a single site. Thirteen are located in BC Hydro's Lower Mainland region, which stretches from the Sunshine Coast up the Sea-to-Sky corridor to Lillooet and east into the Fraser Canyon. The other seven are spread across Vancouver Island and the adjacent coast, the North Coast, the Mica region on the upper Columbia and the East Kootenay. Nahatlatch River and Nimpkish River B are the two largest.

Modernization and Uprating of Existing Stations

BC Hydro has upgrades under way or planned at its existing dams that together add more than 1,100 MW to the system. These add capacity at peak times, like on a cold winter evening when demand spikes, rather than more electricity over the year. The amount of water flowing into the reservoirs does not change. It is also the cheapest capacity available: the dams, reservoirs and power lines already exist, and unlike wind and solar the extra power is there whenever it is needed.

The largest project underway is Revelstoke Unit 6, which will add a sixth generator to the existing Revelstoke dam and lift its capacity by 500 MW. Construction began in spring 2026, and the unit is due to be running by December 2032. It is expected to create more than 450 person-years of work (the equivalent of 450 people employed full time for a year) with about 180 workers on site at the 2029 peak. BC Hydro also expects roughly $60 million to be spent locally on goods and services.[74] The other project underway is at Bridge River 1 near Shalalth near Lillooet, where all four generators, in service for more than 70 years, are being replaced. The new units, ordered in March 2025, will add 37 MW.[75]

Two more sets of upgrades have been announced but are not yet complete. The first is at the G.M. Shrum station at the W.A.C. Bennett Dam on the Peace River. The second includes modernizing Revelstoke units 1 to 4 and Mica units 1 to 4 on the Columbia River, along with upgrades at six other stations spread from the Kootenays to the North Coast.[76]

To these projects we add one project of our own: the Alouette Redevelopment, at 21 MW and 61 GWh a year, which BC Hydro carries among its existing facility upgrade options but left out of the announced package.[77]

Table 4. Employment in New and Refurbished Hydroelectric Capacity

CUMULATIVE EXPANSION IN CAPACITY TO 2050: 4,760 MW[78]	
Construction Jobs	2,258
Operation Jobs	294

Wind Power

Wind is the largest single source of new generation in our 2050 vision, contributing about 12,400 MW and 36,500 GWh of annual generation.[79] Most of this capacity has not yet been built, although BC Hydro has procured nearly 2,700 MW since 2024 through its Calls for Power program.[80] Not one of those projects will be owned by BC Hydro, and none carry a formal Community Benefits Agreement,[81] although First Nations equity in these projects is a form of community benefit for these First Nations.

Awarded, Contracted and Anticipated

BC Hydro's two Calls for Power, in 2024 and 2025, awarded contracts to 13 wind projects totalling 2,689 MW, each developed in partnership with a First Nation. That is roughly a fifth of the wind power our 2050 vision requires. They stretch throughout BC, from the Peace region in the northeast through the central Interior to the Thompson-Nicola and Okanagan, with one on Vancouver Island, to be situated in local communities, such as Campbell River, Merritt, Logan Lake, Kelowna, Prince George, Fraser Lake, Fort St. John, and Taylor.[82]

The province expects the 2025 projects to create roughly 1,500 jobs, with the first coming into service as early as 2032 and all of them by October 2033. The 2024 projects are due sooner, with the first of them expected online before the end of this decade.[83] Beyond the awarded projects from BC Hydro, FortisBC, the private utility that serves the Southern Interior, is buying up to 1,100 GWh a year by 2030, a procurement it has said will focus on wind projects that can connect directly to its system.[84]

Calls for Partnership

In addition to the wind and solar that is committed and anticipated, our vision sees BC Hydro undertaking roughly 12 more calls between now and 2050, one about every two years, together adding about 15,700 MW and some 35,900 GWh. This predictability in the future Calls is critical for the viability of the sector. We propose that BC Hydro would develop them jointly with the communities that host them. Sustained across more than two decades, these multiple projects would provide continuous construction, utility and operations employment in communities throughout the province.

Table 5. Employment in New Wind Power Generation

CUMULATIVE EXPANSION IN CAPACITY TO 2050: 12,384 MW	
Construction Jobs	5,470
Operation Jobs	4,582

Solar Power

Solar matters because unlike other electricity generation technologies, it does not necessarily need new land. Panels can go on roofs, over parking lots and on the ground beside the buildings they serve. This means solar can be added without competing for new sites, and usually without building new power lines to reach it. Solar also employs more people per megawatt than any other technology in this plan. Building a megawatt of solar takes about 15 person-years of direct construction work, roughly eight times more labour than what is required for a megawatt of wind. That gap will narrow as solar technology

Building a megawatt of solar takes about 15 person-years of direct construction work, roughly eight times more labour than what is required for a megawatt of wind.

matures and each megawatt takes less labour to install, and the employment figures in this chapter account for that decline.[85]

Solar for the Grid

Four utility-scale solar projects are in the works, each about 100 MW. One, near Logan Lake, already holds a contract with BC Hydro.[86] The other three are not yet contracted and are still working through environmental assessment. Each pairs solar with battery storage. Three of the four sit in the Interior, between Merritt and Clinton; the fourth is on Vancouver Island. Most are being developed in partnership with the local First Nation.[87]

Residential and General Service Customers

British Columbians can already generate their own power and sell the surplus back to the grid. BC Hydro pays 10 cents a kilowatt-hour for the power a customer sends back onto the grid. There is also a community rate, so several customers can share one installation and sell up to two megawatts of surplus at the same price.[88]

As of February 2024, about 8,800 customers were connected, with 79.6 MW of capacity, 99.5 per cent of it solar.[89] BC Hydro expects this to rise; its 2025 Integrated Resource Plan forecasts 774 GWh a year from customer solar with incentives at 33 per cent of customer costs by fiscal 2034,[90] and the market study behind that plan projects 1,897 GWh a year by 2043 across homes, businesses and institutions under its most ambitious policy scenario.[91] Our vision holds customer solar at that 2043 level through to 2050. That amount is roughly 2,044 MW of solar panels, just over 25 times what is connected today.

Public Buildings

British Columbia has thousands of school, hospital and municipal roofs and no program to put solar on them. Oregon has set a target of 635 MW on public buildings by 2040, most of it on public schools, and expects 13,000 direct jobs from it.[92]

The reason Oregon chose rooftops on public buildings is the same reason British Columbia should. Work on public buildings is public works, and small projects can be bundled into contracts large enough for union contractors to bid.[93] BC can and should also apply its community benefit vehicle, BC Infrastructure Benefits, to projects of this scale. The province should set a public buildings solar target of 1,000 MW, with half of it on school roofs.

Calls for Partnership

Most of the solar in this plan is not yet contracted. The province should have about 8,850 MW of solar installed by 2050. About 70 per cent of that would come through Calls for Partnership that are described in the wind section: 12 more calls between now and 2050, one every two years. BC Hydro would develop them jointly with the communities that host them.

Table 6. Employment in New Solar Power Generation

CUMULATIVE EXPANSION IN CAPACITY TO 2050: 8,852 MW	
Construction Jobs	6,202
Operation Jobs	1,567

Geothermal Power

British Columbia is prime territory for geothermal power. Its hottest prospects lie in three belts of young volcanic rock: Garibaldi in the southwest, Anahim in the Interior and Stikine in the northwest.[94] Cooler resources, such as hot springs and hot water trapped deep underground, lie in the Kootenays, the Okanagan, the Rocky Mountain Trench and the northeast gas fields.[95] Geothermal's great advantage is that it runs around the clock. Over a year it delivers roughly 90 per cent of its maximum output, against about a third for wind and a sixth for solar. That makes it a natural addition to those weather-dependent sources like solar and wind.

British Columbia produces no geothermal electricity today, although the groundwork has been under way for years. The most thorough assessment done to date screened 18 sites and took 10 forward for closer study.[96] Together those 10 sites add up to 310 MW net of the power the plants use themselves, which could generate about 2,445 GWh of electricity a year.[97] In a recent study on public perceptions on geothermal energy in Alberta and BC, results show that the public is cautiously optimistic with little opposition.[98]

Geothermal also offers a way to repurpose exhausted gas fields. For example, Tu Deh-Kah Geothermal at Clarke Lake, near Fort Nelson, is owned entirely by the Fort Nelson First Nation and built on a former gas field. It would start at 7 MW and could reach 15 MW, enough for about 10,000 homes. Two wells have been drilled and tested, and five or six more are to come.[99] A spent gas field is a good place to build geothermal because drilling is where the cost and risk are greatest.[100]

BC Hydro's plan for geothermal is a pilot. Its Fort Nelson resource plan commits only to "advancing a geothermal pilot project that builds on work already underway with the Tu-Deh-Kah geothermal project."[101] That is too small for a resource the province has already mapped. We recommend a Call for Partnership for geothermal, on the model of the calls for wind and solar, to build the nine remaining sites Geoscience BC assessed, totalling about 296 megawatts and roughly 2,340 gigawatt-hours a year.[102] Each should be developed jointly with the First Nation whose territory hosts it, as Clarke Lake already is.

Table 7. Employment in Geothermal Power

CUMULATIVE EXPANSION IN CAPACITY TO 2050: 296 MW	
Construction Jobs	142
Operation Jobs	350

Marine Energy

British Columbia's coastline has wave and tidal energy that is almost entirely untapped. Researchers at the University of Victoria have assessed that potential since the late 2000s. Their first effort, the West Coast Wave Initiative, gathered some of the first long-term wave resource data for the west coast of Vancouver Island.[103] Early applications have focused on replacing diesel generation in remote coastal communities rather than on grid-connected supply. The sector remains pre-commercial, but could provide a viable, grid-scale generation option over the next five to 10 years.[104]

For our vision, we set a fleet target rather than an inventory total: 789 MW of tidal and 263 MW of wave capacity by 2050, producing some 2,300 GWh a year. That target is benchmarked to the European Union's own 2050 ocean energy goal, scaled to the size of BC's electricity system.[105] It is a deliberately modest fraction of what the province has identified. British Columbia reports over 6,000 MW of wave and over 2,000 MW of tidal energy in development opportunities catalogued to date, so the resource is not the constraint.[106] This fleet would be procured through Calls for Partnership, so that each project is

owned jointly with the coastal and First Nations communities whose waters host it. As with geothermal, there is no incumbent workforce here.

Table 8. Employment in Marine Energy

CUMULATIVE EXPANSION IN CAPACITY TO 2050: 1,052 MW	
Construction Jobs	598
Operation Jobs	792

Storage

Storage is what turns variable wind and solar into firm, dependable power. Batteries and pumped hydro absorb electricity when wind and sun are plentiful and release it when demand peaks, shifting energy across hours, days and seasons.[107] For British Columbia, storage allows the province to lean on wind and solar without overbuilding generation to cover a few hours of winter peak.

By 2050, the system envisioned in this study would carry roughly 7,900 MW of storage. BC Hydro is preparing to deploy up to 400 MW of utility-scale batteries by around fiscal 2031, although it has not yet committed to that procurement.[108] A further 300 MW has been announced by the proponents of three solar projects. Our tally does not count it because of low data quality.[109] Our proposal includes 7,500 MW of pumped hydro across 10 sites, sourced from BC Hydro's Resource Options Database.[110]

What this storage vision amounts to is a construction program. The 7,500 MW of pumped hydro we propose is dam, tunnel and powerhouse work on a large scale, work that fits under the same trades that built the existing dams, and often at the same sites. Storage construction makes it the most obvious candidate in this chapter for a community benefits agreement, and the longest continuous block of heavy civil work in the plan.[111]

There are safety concerns with large-scale battery energy storage systems with fire being the biggest concern.[112] In January 2025, residents were forced to evacuate a community in California because of a large fire consuming a battery storage system[113] and a recent fire in Summerside, PEI, led to a voluntary evacuation notice and a shelter in place order for local residents with the fire taking two weeks to put out.[114] Important considerations include building these systems in an appropriate location, outdoors and at a distance from communities, with adequate health and safety protections in place, including access to firefighting resources nearby. It is also critical to have these battery storage systems installed by fully certified tradespeople to ensure a high level of safety and quality is built into the installation.

Table 9. Employment in Energy Storage

CUMULATIVE EXPANSION IN CAPACITY TO 2050: 7,900 MW	
Construction Jobs	6,876
Operation Jobs	1,264

Transmission

Electricity transmission is critical for an electricity system that meets higher future demand, and it must be built quickly. The Canadian Climate Institute argues that because wind and solar can be built considerably faster than transmission lines, transmission must be built in anticipation.[115]

Doubling the electricity BC generates means doubling what its grid can carry. Transmission is measured by how much power it can move from one part of the province to another, measured in megawatts across a corridor. Those corridors are sized to peak demand. BC Hydro's own forecast has peak demand rising from 11,100 MW today to 15,100 MW by 2050.[116] If demand instead doubles, as this plan proposes, we estimate the province will need roughly 8,100 MW of additional carrying capacity.

Between the projects already underway and those BC Hydro has studied but not started, there is enough carrying capacity to meet future needs.

Four projects are underway or announced and would add 2,930 MW: capacitors on the existing line from Prince George to Terrace, the new North Coast Transmission Line, and two rounds of upgrades on the corridor into Metro Vancouver.[117] More than half of that new capacity comes not from new lines but from equipment that lets existing lines carry more. In its planning, BC Hydro has also identified five further projects up to 6,030 MW, but they have not yet been announced or built: two direct current lines to move Peace region power to the northwest, two new lines into Metro Vancouver, and a replacement of the undersea cables to Vancouver Island.[118] Together the two lists come to about 8,960 MW, enough to carry the system this chapter describes.

We call on BC Hydro to pursue all of these projects, and to build them under community benefits agreements. These are public assets on corridors that cross dozens of communities and many First Nations territories, and should be built by a Crown corporation with public money.

BC already holds the instrument in the Community Benefits Agreement administered by BC Infrastructure Benefits. What is missing is the requirement that every kilometre built under this plan carry the same terms: union representation, apprenticeship ratios, and local and Indigenous hiring.

Interprovincial Transmission

British Columbia should also strengthen its transmission connections with Alberta. The federal government has committed to supporting this approach through an "East-West-North" connected grid across the country.[121] Alberta and BC have complementary generation mixes. BC's reservoirs store energy and can be released on demand, while Alberta has added wind and solar quickly alongside its gas plants. Because the two provinces sit in different time zones, their peaks do not fully coincide. The value of greater

CASE STUDY

Following engagement with IBEW Local 258, BC Hydro confirmed that utility construction work associated with the North Coast Transmission Line will be performed under union agreements. Contractors undertaking utility work on the project must either be signatory employers with IBEW Local 258 or operate under a Project Labour Agreement that provides strong labour standards and workforce protections.

As Kevin Duchak, Business Manager and Financial Secretary of IBEW Local 258, states: "The North Coast Transmission Line is a significant investment in BC's energy infrastructure and workforce. The project is expected to create thousands of jobs and provide substantial opportunities for skilled trades workers across the province. Members from all five IBEW local unions in BC will contribute their expertise to the construction and operation of this critical infrastructure, supported by industry-leading apprenticeship and training programs. By utilizing skilled union labour, supporting BC-based contractors, and working alongside Indigenous and local communities, this project will deliver long-term economic benefits while helping meet British Columbia's future energy needs."[119]

The project is expected to require up to 1,550 on-site trades workers at peak construction and generate approximately 6,488 full-time-equivalent person-years of employment between 2026 and 2032.[120] In addition to utility construction work, related activities are being undertaken in partnership with local First Nations, with opportunities for Indigenous participation and long-term economic involvement in the project.

transmission connectivity is not hypothetical. When an extreme cold snap in January 2024 caused Alberta's gas and wind generation to fail and forced the system operator to issue a grid alert, imports from BC Hydro and SaskPower helped avert widespread outages.[122]

Today the connection between BC and Alberta is small. BC can send nearly three times as much electricity to Washington State.[123] The federal government named restoration of the Alberta intertie a priority project in June 2026, which would add roughly 13 per cent more transmission capacity.[124] Alberta is separately examining a second line into northern British Columbia at more than $2 billion, though no capacity figure has been published.[125] Neither goes far enough. Research done by the David Suzuki Foundation finds that the corridor needs at least 3,500 MW of new capacity by 2050, more than 20 times what restoration alone would deliver and enough to make the link about four times its present size.[126] The province should pursue this more ambitious expansion.

A separate federal priority, the BC to Yukon Grid Connect, would run 800 kilometres of high-voltage direct current north to join Yukon's isolated grid to British Columbia's, supported by $40 million from Natural Resources Canada. That line would help end the Yukon's reliance on diesel and supply electricity to its critical minerals sector.[127]

These are important steps in building an East-West electrical grid, and there is huge public support for this to be a nation-building project. Seventy per cent of British Columbians support upgrading Canada's grid by connecting provinces and territories through new transmission lines.[128]

Table 10. Employment in Transmission Expansion

CUMULATIVE EXPANSION IN CAPACITY TO 2050: 5,830 MW	
Construction Jobs	2,436
Operation Jobs	993

Power for the People: Government Action for a Clean Electricity System

BC is entering an era of profound electricity system expansion, and we have the opportunity to build this system for the benefit of all people in the province. To build a system like this, the provincial government and BC Hydro must take action to increase the number of skilled workers, make concrete commitments to creating a net-zero grid, keep future generation projects publicly owned, and build infrastructure in a way that benefits communities.

To realize this vision of BC's electricity system, the province will need about 24,000 workers on average building it from now until 2050, across a variety of skills, and about 9,800 permanent workers to run it once it is built.

Predictable Workflow

To ensure these workers are available, calls for Partnership need to arrive predictably. British Columbia's recent record is the opposite. A trade cannot train to a project that does not exist and then work on one that appears overnight. Apprentices need continuous work across multiple projects to complete their hours, and construction employers and communities cannot do the multi-year work of preparing a project when they do not know whether there will be a call to prepare for. BC Hydro should publish a 10-year schedule of projects within the Calls for Partnership: the dates, the approximate size and the technology mix, fixed in advance. Predictable workflow on large projects and appropriate project sequencing is critical for labour to meet the demand.

A Solid Commitment to Net Zero

BC Hydro should commit to a fully net-zero electricity system by 2050, and it can reach that target by not renewing any of its remaining natural gas and biomass agreements. Its own 2021 Integrated Resource Plan, Clean Power 2040, charted exactly this path, letting those agreements expire as clean capacity replaced them.[129]

With higher electricity demand now anticipated by 2030, however, the province has since moved to extend two existing gas plants, Island Generation near Campbell River and McMahon Cogeneration near Taylor, about 400 MW in all, to bridge the gap.[130]

This short-term exception may be understandable, but it should not become a new pattern. The same restraint should apply to biomass: BC Hydro has moved to keep the Williams Lake biomass plant running and is weighing further biomass for firm winter capacity.[131] The province should meet that need instead through storage, demand response, and more rapid construction of renewable generation. To ensure transparency on these issues, BC Hydro should reinstate its reporting of the clean electricity standard in its annual report.[132]

Conclusion

British Columbia starts from a rare advantage: an electricity system that is already almost entirely non-emitting. The task is not to clean the grid but to double it, and the roughly 35,300 MW of new capacity and 69,300 GWh of new generation set out in this chapter describe what that doubling requires.

How it gets built matters as much as whether it gets built. Public ownership should be the default for new generation, with Calls for Partnership replacing Calls for Power so communities hold equity and the assets stay in the public system. The province's community benefit institutions should cover this work, backed by a clean economy workforce and workflow plan and a firm commitment to a net-zero grid by 2050. Built this way, the expansion is public infrastructure that pays a public return.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Double BC's renewable electricity capacity by 2050.**
- **Build renewable energy at five times the current rate with a confirmed 10-year project schedule.**
- **Double transmission in BC** and add 3500MW capacity to Alberta by 2050.
- **Shift from Calls for Power to Calls for Partnership** to ensure public ownership and community benefit agreements or project labour agreements are the foundation of renewable energy projects for the benefit of workers and communities.
- **Integrate energy planning between BC's utilities and in alignment with the BC government's emissions targets.**
- **Provide predictable, scheduled Calls for Partnership** to ensure projects are adequately planned for sector needs and workforce development.
- **Reinstate clean electricity standard reporting within BC Hydro's annual report.**

CHAPTER 2

Responsible Natural Resources: Critical Mineral Mining



Critical mineral mining is fundamental to the clean economy, providing the materials needed for the energy transition and climate goals while generating investment, good jobs and economic growth, with further benefits from processing and manufacturing here in BC. Support for responsible natural resource development, including critical mineral mining, was high in the BCFED focus groups as long as meaningful community benefits are tied to development and workers and labour are at the table in decision-making processes. These measures are critical to address the disenfranchisement felt by many workers in communities that rely on these industries.

As a recent Canadian Climate Institute report highlights, "[w]hile electrons might be the power source, critical minerals are the building blocks of the renewables that produce them, the wires that move them, and the technologies that use them. A typical EV requires six times the mineral inputs of a conventional vehicle, while an onshore wind plant requires nine times more mineral resources than a gas-fired power plant. When it comes to natural resources, critical minerals are the new oil."[133] For example: copper is one of the best metals for wiring a path for electricity; batteries use lithium, cobalt, nickel and magnets; indium and tellurium are used to make solar panels; and manganese, platinum, rare earth metals and magnets are needed for wind turbines.

Growth in initiatives to electrify, power, and decarbonize transportation, buildings, and industrial processes and manufacturing are expected to boost the demand for many critical minerals. For example, the International Energy Agency (IEA) projects, under its Stated Policies Scenario, that lithium demand grows fivefold to 2040, graphite and nickel demand double, cobalt and rare earths grow 50 to 60 per cent, and copper grows 30 per cent, with implied 2035 supply deficits of 30 per cent for copper and 40 per cent for lithium.[134] On a pathway to net-zero by 2050, the IEA estimates the energy sector's overall needs for critical minerals could increase six-fold by 2040.[135]

What is considered a critical mineral can change over time based on multiple factors. Canada currently lists 34 elements as critical minerals, up from 31 a couple of years ago. To be considered a critical mineral in Canada, a mineral must meet the following criteria: a threatened supply chain and reasonable chance of the element being extracted in Canada.[136] It must also meet one of these three criteria: "be essential to Canada's economic or national security; be required for the national transition to a sustainable low-carbon and digital economy; position Canada as a sustainable and strategic partner within global supply chains."[137] Definitions also differ between jurisdictions. The European Union lists coking coal as a critical raw material, and the United States added metallurgical coal to its critical minerals list in 2025. Canada does not currently include it. These distinctions are relevant to BC's metallurgical coal sector and its workers, whose production supports steel supply chains.

BC is a key mining jurisdiction, with 16 of Canada's critical minerals found here. The province is Canada's largest producer of copper and its only producer of molybdenum.[138] There are six critical

mineral mines operating in BC but BC's mining sector is poised for significant expansion, with 20 critical mineral mines or mine extensions proposed.[139] The Northwest region (the area often called the Golden Triangle) accounted for the largest projection. In 2024, the operating critical mineral mines were estimated to have generated almost $4 billion in revenues and to have created direct employment of 5,875 jobs in BC.[140] Including direct, indirect and induced impacts, these mines increased GDP by $3.5 billion and provided $560 million in provincial revenue.[141] The economic impact of developing and operating the proposed critical mineral mines would be significant.

Just as critical minerals support renewable energy, renewable energy must support this growth in critical mineral mining to ensure that the sector is more environmentally sound. We welcome the North Coast Transmission Line for providing clean electricity to mining projects in the North.

Government Commitments and Opportunities

Both the federal and provincial governments are committed to critical mineral mining, with both having a strategy to capture this opportunity.[142] The first series of projects referred to the federal Major Projects Office included the Red Chris Mine expansion (for copper and gold) in Northwest BC and the proposed Northwest Critical Conservation Corridor.[143] The latter is a so-called "transformative strategy" and was selected because it is a "world-class critical minerals reserve: The Golden Triangle is one of the world's richest reserves of minerals and metals, essential for the energy transition."[144]

One of the lessons of the current geopolitical moment is the danger of internationally concentrated supply chains. Countries such as Japan, South Korea, China and Germany are advanced in establishing refining capacity for critical minerals.[145] In particular, China dominates the supply chain with over 90 per cent of rare earth and graphite refining capacity and huge shares of other critical minerals.[146] There is an opportunity to strengthen the role of Canada and BC as significant partners in global and domestic supply chains to decrease our dependence on other countries and increase the economic impact of this sector. Canada and BC, with their strong environmental and labour standards, can play an important role in providing a safe and stable supply for clean energy transitions.

At the 2024 BCFED Convention, delegates passed a resolution from the United Steelworkers District 3 to:

- "promote BC as a global leader in the responsible development of minerals/resources that a low carbon future requires;...
- protect Canada from the dumping of minerals and goods produced in jurisdictions with poor environmental laws and few worker rights"[147]

We urge the provincial government to continue to support growth in BC's critical mineral mining industry to provide for the necessary electrification and to ensure ethical and environmentally sound mining practices.

However, while there is an urgency to move quickly to address increasing climate challenges, we caution the removal of regulatory and legislative accountability mechanisms that are in place to protect the environment. Already, these are not effective at holding corporations accountable and may need to be strengthened or rebalanced in relation to increasing industrial activity for electrification, critical mineral mining and other infrastructure development.

Both the federal and provincial governments are committed to critical mineral mining, with both having a strategy to capture this opportunity.

Health and Safety

Over the past year, the province has seen a series of tragic incidents, including fatalities at the Cariboo Gold Project, Barkerville, on January 22, 2026; at Taseko Mines' Gibraltar near Williams Lake on November 21, 2025; and at Elk Valley Resources at Sparwood on November 19, 2025.[148] These events are a stark reminder that serious risks remain embedded in mining operations. They underscore the urgency of strengthening worker-driven safety systems that can identify and address hazards before incidents occur.

USW proposes, as a first step, changing the Health, Safety and Reclamation Code to require full-time worker-elected employer-paid health and safety representatives in mining operations across BC. While the current code includes some requirements, in practice, worker health and safety representation is typically part-time, lacks formal authority such as stop-work powers, and is inconsistently resourced.[149] These structural limitations undermine workers' ability to proactively identify and mitigate hazards in high-risk, high-volume environments, where timely and informed intervention is often the difference between prevention and tragedy. The growth of the critical mineral mining sector depends on the health, safety, and dignity of the workers who make this growth possible. A modern mining sector must be defined by not only what it produces but also how it protects the people within it.

International experience demonstrates that these measures are both practical and effective. Jurisdictions, including South Africa and Spain, have implemented strong worker-elected safety representation systems with clear authority and protections, contributing to significant improvements in safety outcomes that support productive mining sectors.[150] British Columbia can design a made-in-BC model that reflects its unique regulatory environment while drawing on global best practices. Empowering workers through structured enforceable safety representation is a proven step towards worker safety, stronger workforce recruitment and a more credible and sustainable mining industry.

Empowering workers through structured enforceable safety representation is a proven step towards worker safety, stronger workforce recruitment and a more credible and sustainable mining industry.

Mining is the only sector in BC that has its own health and safety framework separate from the Workers Compensation Act (WCA) and Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, which regulates all other industries. Mining is subject to the Mines Act and the Health, Safety and Reclamation Code. Strong safety reforms under the WCA do not automatically transfer to the Mines Act and Code; instead, each change would need to be advocated for again in relation to mining. This reduces the safety of the mining sector. USW has long advocated for health and safety in mining to be brought under the WCA framework.

USW has also exposed a significant health and safety issue in relation to washroom access and dignity through its Make S#!t Better campaign.[151] In industrial workplaces, such as mining, there are problems with accessing washroom facilities (in particular in rural and remote areas where they may be a long distance from the worksite), lack of cleanliness, and privacy and safety concerns, which have an impact on worker health and well-being. Washroom facilities for women and gender diverse people, as well as people with disabilities, may be limited or completely absent. This is an issue that must be addressed through stronger regulations and proactive enforcement to hold employers accountable.

Labour Standards

Globally, BC mines have lower emissions and better environmental and safety standards. USW represents over 3,200 mine workers in BC with many of them working in critical mineral mining. Thanks to union advocacy over decades, BC's mines provide family-supporting jobs. Unions have also been negotiating to ensure more diversity in hiring, while improving access for under-represented workers.

Public support for existing and future mines and mine expansions must be tied to strong labour and environmental standards. Community benefit agreements or project labour agreements could be used as a mechanism to ensure the development and operation of mines contributes to the economic security of workers and local communities. Mining provides opportunities in rural and remote regions of BC so ensuring local training and employment opportunities is critical.

Within the environmental assessment (EA) process for major projects in BC, including mines, companies often make projections about the impact of the project on local employment and community benefits. "Anticipated economic benefits play a central role in justifying approval of mining projects in British Columbia. Mines' projected jobs, tax revenue, and community investments form the basis of their social licence to operate and are often used to justify environmental and social trade-offs."[152] However, these claims are never checked by the provincial government and UBC researchers have found that these forecasts are often overinflated in the EA process.[153] Government oversight and accountability should be strengthened in the EA process to ensure that companies are more accurately projecting economic benefits and meeting these projections.

Training and Education

The mining industry in BC supports over 65,000 workers in communities throughout BC.[154] However, as mentioned in the Training and Education chapter of this report, the industry has a labour issue at both ends of the age spectrum — the Mining Industry Human Resources Council (MiHR) reports that one in five mining workers was 55 years or older in 2023;[155] and youth perceptions of the sector are very low, with mining being the last career choice for students.[156] Two-thirds of Canadians under 35 would not consider working in mining, citing safety as a key factor.[157] These issues point to a looming labour shortage in critical mineral mining.

While both the federal and provincial governments have made recent, strong investments in skilled trades training, further investment is needed to meet the full range of training needs in mining. This includes Red Seal trades and other skilled occupations in mine operations, heavy equipment operation, production and processing. The province needs to invest in training, recruitment and retention across these occupations.

United Steelworkers (USW) proposes a union-led approach to industrial training in the mining sector, drawing on construction unions' experience in skilled trades training, to support both Red Seal trades and non-trades occupations, expand access to training, and improve completion, career progression and retention. Provincial support "could enable a feasibility analysis to evaluate training demand, delivery models, funding streams, and partnerships — particularly with Indigenous communities."[158] USW's representation across mining occupations, combined with its experience in health and safety training, positions it to inform programs grounded in the realities of mine operations. Workers across trades and non-trades occupations must help shape training that addresses skills gaps, improves safety and retention, and passes knowledge to the next generation.

Indigenous Rights

BC's competitive advantage in the mining sector lies in its stability, including relying on strong Indigenous partnerships and environmental stewardship. Mining unions are committed to both protecting the environment and strengthening reconciliation with First Nations. The provincial government should work directly with the BC First Nations Energy and Mining Council, working with the First Nations Leadership Council, in advancing the First Nations Critical Mineral Strategy. "The benefits generated from critical minerals within First Nation lands must be shared with First Nations communities to support their well-being and socio-economic sustainability."[159]

In 2023, there was a significant win for First Nations in relation to mining. The Gitxaała Nation and Ehattesaht First Nation had challenged BC's Mineral Tenure Act, the province's mineral claim regime, which allowed anyone to acquire mineral rights in First Nations territories online for a small fee without consent, consultation or even notification of the impacted First Nation.[160] In 2023, the BC Supreme Court ruled that this breached the constitutional right to consult First Nations. However, in May 2026, the Supreme Court of Canada accepted BC's application for appeal of the BC Supreme Court decision so this issue is still under consideration.

In general, BC has a strong framework for advancing reconciliation with First Nations. In 2019, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) was passed unanimously. At the time, this had broad support from industry, labour, environmental groups and First Nations. However, recently, DRIPA has been under attack and in danger of repeal by the provincial government.

The USW cautions against this action, highlighting that, here in BC, "certainty has successfully depended on the stability that reconciliation provides. By putting durable frameworks in place and working collaboratively to advance responsible development, we are able to build the certainty on which major projects depend. That is how we build prosperity that benefits every British Columbian. The United Steelworkers union is deeply concerned about calls to amend or repeal the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. While discussion, shared decision-making and negotiated agreements may take work, this work reduces the risk of costly conflict that can stall development and derail progress."[161]

An example of this in action is in relation to the Eskay Creek Revitalization Project, a mine in Talhtan territory that was proposing to restart operations. In January 2026, the Talhtan Nation and the BC government announced that they had both approved the project based on a consent-based decision-making agreement under DRIPA.[162] This avoided unnecessary and costly legal conflict. The project is expected to contribute $1.1 billion to BC's economy in tax revenue and create more than 700 jobs.

Rolling back the Indigenous rights framework in BC threatens economic certainty and jobs.

BC's competitive advantage in the mining sector lies in its stability, including relying on strong Indigenous partnerships and environmental stewardship.

Mine to Mill: Processing, Manufacturing and Recycling

There is a huge opening in "taking a mine to mill approach. The establishment of entire supply chains, such as in the electric vehicle and battery manufacturing sectors, is expected to create further demand and opportunity within Canada's critical minerals mining and processing sector."[163] BC could also play a role in manufacturing wind turbines and other renewable energy infrastructure as explored in the Renewable Energy chapter.

BC should build on existing operations such as Teck's Trail Smelter by attracting further investment in smelting, refining and processing, keeping more value from our mineral resources and creating lasting family-supporting union jobs here.

In relation to recycling, the IEA estimates that a successful scale-up of recycling could lower the need for new mining activity by 5 to 30 per cent by 2040, with the potential of recovering metals from end-of-life products and batteries.[164] See the Circular Economy chapter for more on this topic.

Part of the resolution from the United Steelworkers District 3, passed at the 2024 BCFED Convention, included the recommendations to:

- "press for government support to train workers and kickstart BC's critical mineral recycling industry;...and
- encourage governments to collaborate on a comprehensive supply chain strategy that creates union jobs using local products in domestic, value-added manufacturing."[165]

We urge the provincial government, in partnership with the federal government, to invest in expanding BC's mineral processing, refining, manufacturing and recycling capacity, with public support tied to good union jobs, strong labour and environmental standards ensuring a circular economy approach to critical minerals.

Mine Reclamation

At the end of a mine's lifecycle, there must be a strong, accountable process in place for reclamation and restoration. "British Columbia was one of the first provinces in Canada to enact mine reclamation legislation, and the first to extend this policy to exploration sites."[166] Since the 1960s, companies have been required to reclaim land disturbed by mining and associated activities. Before starting to work at a mine site, companies need to obtain a Mines Act permit approving their plan including a reclamation program. In addition, mining companies must give a reclamation security deposit to the provincial government to ensure their obligations are met, and it is only returned once the site has been reclaimed to an adequate level.[167]

However, many companies fail to follow through; some go bankrupt leaving taxpayers to cover the costs. There needs to be more accountability for these legal reclamation obligations. There are also multiple job opportunities in this work but the government needs to enforce higher labour standards to ensure the work provides for good, family-supporting, union jobs.[168]

The establishment of entire supply chains, such as in the electric vehicle and battery manufacturing sectors, is expected to create further demand and opportunity within Canada's critical minerals mining and processing sector.

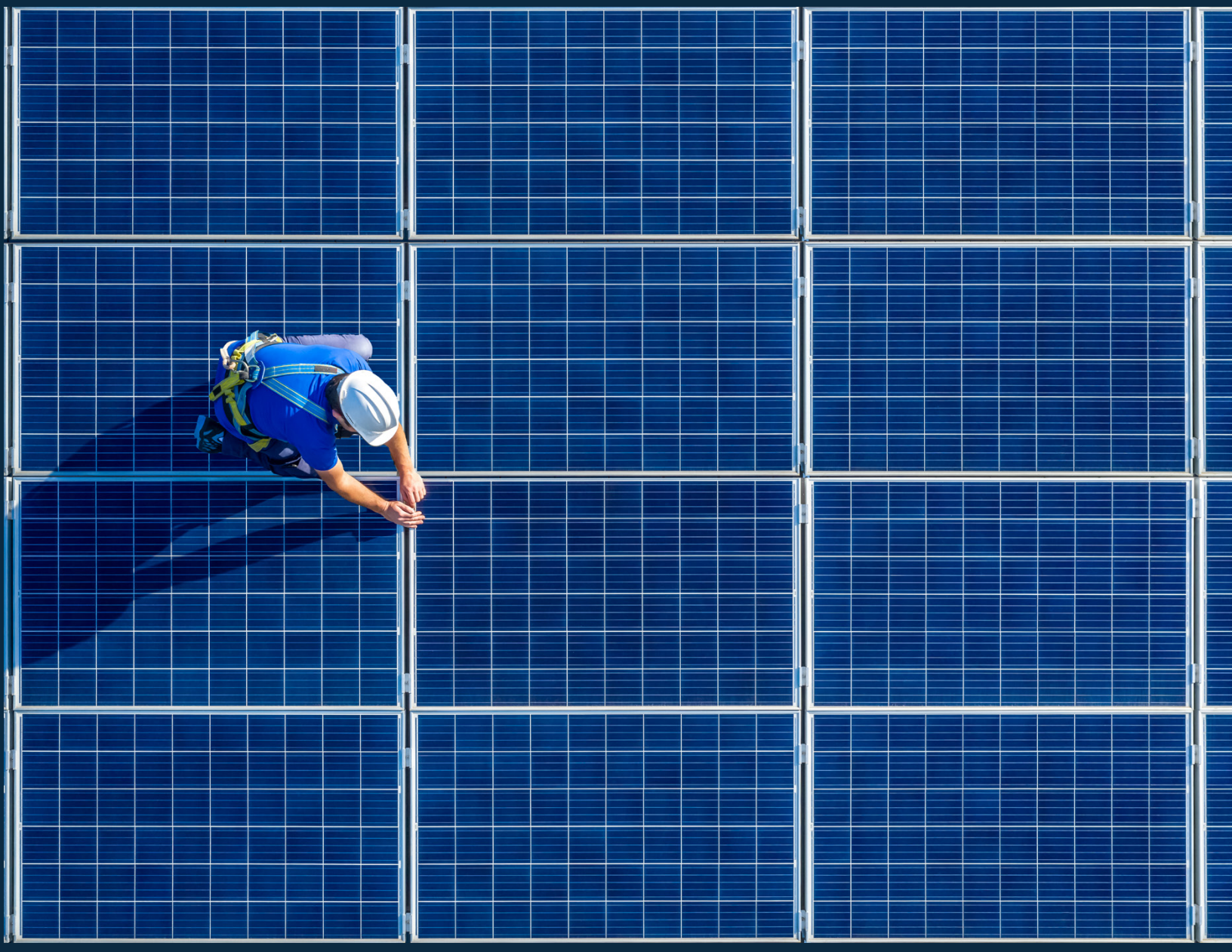
RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge the provincial government to:

- **Continue to support BC's critical mineral mining sector** as a foundation for growth in the clean economy, and ensure ethical and environmentally sound mining practices.
- **Require full-time, worker-elected, employer-paid health and safety representatives in mining operations across BC.**
- **Bring occupational health and safety prevention and enforcement in mining under WCB's jurisdiction through the Workers Compensation Act**, preserving and strengthening protections specific to mining.
- **Invest in training, recruitment and retention in the mining sector** through working with USW on a union-led approach to industrial training.
- **Support a mine to mill strategy (including processing and manufacturing), as well as recycling,** to ensure a circular economy approach to critical minerals.
- **Tie strong labour standards to public investments in the sector**, including community benefit agreements or project labour agreements.
- **Strengthen oversight and accountability in the environmental assessment** process to ensure that companies are more accurately projecting economic benefits and meeting these projections.
- **Reform the Mineral Tenure Act** to ensure staking and tenure processes do not continue to undermine Indigenous decision-making
- **Recommit to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act** as an Indigenous rights framework to work collaboratively for stability and economic growth in the sector.
- **Strengthen accountability for legal reclamation obligations, and enforce higher labour standards for these job opportunities.**

PILLAR II

Energy Efficiency



CHAPTER 3

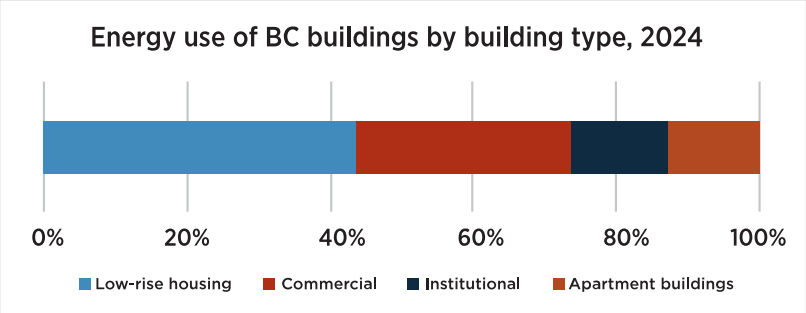
Retrofits

Getting to net zero takes more than building clean electricity. It also means using energy efficiently in new and existing buildings and industrial plants and processes. Demand for electricity will grow as heating and cooling systems and other building equipment are electrified. New power plants to meet this growing demand need to be built somewhere. More electricity means wind farms, solar arrays, geothermal plants, marine energy units, new turbines at existing dams and new power lines. Every one of those projects affects the land, the environment and the communities nearby. BC Hydro has already removed 10 possible wind projects in the Peace Region from the list of options it considers, because of tightened caribou habitat protection in the region.[169]

Making the buildings we already have work better through energy efficiency is the one way to reduce the impact of this electricity infrastructure and cut emissions that asks nothing new of the land. Efficiency does not remove the need for the build set out in the renewable energy chapter. The Canadian Climate Institute finds that electricity demand grows on the path to net zero even with significant gains in efficiency, so conservation is what holds that build to a doubling rather than more.[170] Energy conservation is a central pillar of our plan. An Insulator in the BCFED focus groups recognized their fundamental role in this work: "Our job conserves energy. So that'd be good for us."

The measures set out in this chapter would cut British Columbia's energy use by about 200 petajoules a year by 2050, roughly a fifth of all the energy the province uses today.[171] About three fifths of that comes from buildings, and the rest from industry. The province has already taken some steps toward this, but those steps are not enough. British Columbia has promised to cut emissions from buildings and communities by well over half by 2030, and progress to date is a small fraction of that. [172]The province's own accountability report says that "No sector is expected to achieve its sectoral target," and that "the current suite of climate policies does not put the Province on track to meet its 2030 targets."[173]

Retrofitting provides substantial economic growth. A Pembina report estimates that every dollar invested in retrofits provides a 2.3 dollar increase in GDP and generates between $2 and $5 in tax revenue for the government.[174] Making buildings energy efficient is also labour intensive, creating hundreds of jobs — an investment of $1 million translates into an average of 9.5 direct and indirect jobs.[175]



In this chapter, we look at several areas for energy savings and conclude with recommendations that cut across all of them, as well as for the workforce that will do this work and the manufacturing sector that should supply them. The areas of focus are green schools and other public buildings, homes and apartments, commercial buildings, industry, and thermal networks. The spending the chapter recommends across these sectors creates about 3,100 jobs.[176]

A note on the numbers.

Energy savings in this chapter are measured in two units. This reflects the two fuels upon which British Columbia's buildings operate.

Electricity is counted in *gigawatt-hours* (GWh), the same unit used in the renewable energy chapter, where one gigawatt-hour is roughly a year's electricity for 105 BC Hydro households.[177] Gas is counted in *gigajoules* (GJ), and in *petajoules* (PJ) where the quantities are large; one petajoule is a million gigajoules. The two convert at 3.6 gigajoules to the megawatt-hour.[178]

Carbon emissions are counted in *tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e)*. One tonne is what burning about 435 litres of gasoline produces, roughly a fifth of what the average Canadian car burns in a year.[179]

Energy conservation is a central pillar of our plan. An Insulator in the BCFED focus groups recognized their fundamental role in this work: "Our job conserves energy. So that'd be good for us."

Public Delivery — Efficiency BC: Better Homes, Better Buildings

A core pillar of this plan is public ownership and delivery.

In this chapter, we expand the vision for the public agency, Efficiency BC (see case study on next page), beyond just home retrofits to include retrofits across all buildings, including those owned by governments. All this work should be done under a Community Benefits Agreement. BC Infrastructure Benefits already applies that agreement to hospitals and college campuses, so the vehicle exists and does not need inventing.[180]

Green Schools and Other Public Buildings

British Columbia's governments own thousands of buildings, including schools, hospitals, college campuses, and government offices.[181] In addition, subsidiaries, such as BC Housing, have a huge stock of public buildings and tackling emissions reductions in these multi-unit residential buildings is critical to achieve the energy conservation needed. The province reduces emissions from these buildings through several programs. The Real Property Division, now part of the Ministry of Infrastructure, is responsible for cutting emissions in the buildings the province occupies itself.[182] Across the rest of the provincial public sector, the Carbon Neutral Capital Program funds emission-reduction projects at school districts, health authorities and post-secondary institutions.[183]

Both of these programs fall under the same government target: a 50 per cent cut in total public sector building emissions by 2030, against 2010 levels.[184] The province tracks the buildings it occupies itself against that target, reports them 45 per cent below 2010, and says it is on

CASE STUDY

MoveUP, the union representing administrative workers at BC Hydro and FortisBC, has proposed that British Columbia create a single public agency to run building retrofits, which it calls Efficiency BC: Better Homes, Better Buildings. BCFED has endorsed the proposal[671] and we recommend that the BC government establish this new agency or Crown Corporation to achieve the scale of retrofits needed in BC to reduce emissions to net zero by 2050. MoveUP would support its existing membership at BC Hydro and FortisBC in transitioning as needed to apply their skills to the work of this new agency. The initial focus would be on building efficiency, making it easier to keep a building heated or cooled through new doors and windows, better insulation, better air ventilation and filling air gaps. The return on investment for these changes is achieved in the short-term.

The agency would follow best practices from Europe, where many successful programs apply a three pillar approach: requirements, incentives and direct outreach. Regulatory requirements to make buildings energy efficient could be attached to the existing building Step Codes, which currently only apply to energy efficiency in new builds[672] but could be expanded to retrofits.

The agency would not employ the construction workforce, and private contractors would still do the work. As it scales up, there may be a role for BC Infrastructure Benefits to operate as the employer on large projects. MoveUP proposes that Efficiency BC administers $200 million a year in retrofit grants and financing options, with a further $100 million a year directed at addressing energy poverty (where low-income households struggle to pay for home energy use, such as heating and cooling, lighting and cooking). Strong labour standards would be applied to these grants requiring unionized labour to work on the projects. MoveUP also recommends that BC Hydro host it for its first two years before it becomes an independent public agency or Crown Corporation.

The agency provides the necessary shift from an "atomized" approach to a strategic one.[673] Today, families that want to retrofit their homes have to find the programs, work out which ones they qualify for, hire a contractor, apply to two or three funders separately and wait. The agency would put all of that behind one door: a trained energy advisor visits, works out what the building needs, plans the job, handles the paperwork, provides a list of trusted contractors that work with unionized labour, and inspects the result. Rather than waiting for people to come forward one at a time, the agency would work outward, either neighbourhood by neighbourhood, so that a street gets done together or in connection with community housing partners to work on multi-unit buildings. This direct outreach provides education on energy efficiency and energy savings to people who would not necessarily access it by themselves.

There would also be advantages from bulk purchasing. A homeowner purchasing one heat pump pays retail price. An agency working with contractors on the number of projects envisioned in this chapter would ensure a much higher level of purchasing power thus reducing direct costs. The agency would also play a role in addressing a recurring challenge, protecting homeowners from unnecessary price inflation from contractors through establishing reasonable costs for the retrofit equipment. MoveUP also pairs this purchasing power with a made-in-BC manufacturing sector, so the money builds an industry here rather than only moving product through it. Installations would be done by red-seal qualified tradespeople.[674]

track to meet its target.[185] But those buildings are just a small share of total public sector building emissions. Across the whole public sector, schools and hospitals included, buildings emitted 565,786 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2024, 13 per cent below 2010 levels.[186] When looking at the province's buildings as a whole, the public sector is not on track to meet its 50 per cent target.

The province lists the buildings its own ministries hold and reports emissions across the public sector, but there is no evidence of a register that brings together floor area, energy use and retrofit cost for the estate as a whole.[187] Further, Quebec gives its school service centres, cégeps and universities separate targets from hospitals and government offices, and sets them on energy intensity rather than only on emissions, requiring cuts in unit energy consumption against 2012-13 of 19 per cent to 20 per cent for the education sector and 15 per cent for the health network by 2029-30.[188] One number covering hospitals, schools and offices together is a target nobody can be held to. Efficiency BC should build a comprehensive register and publish it so progress can be tracked against new sector targets that should be set for energy, not just emissions.

There is an opportunity to use government public buildings (municipal, provincial and federal) throughout the province as sites of renewable energy generation and distribution to create good, union jobs and reduce costs through economies of scale increasing purchasing power. Workers seeing their buildings powered by renewable energy or the public visiting community centres and libraries running off district thermal energy networks are local initiatives that combine long-term vision with short-term practical application to inspire British Columbians about the sustainable future. While we do not go into detail here, there is also a role to play in governments electrifying their public fleets including ambulances, school buses, etc.

Net-Zero Schools

In the province, there are roughly 1,600 schools.[189] The provincial government has three programs in place for funding their maintenance. The School Enhancement Program funds repairs that extend a school's life, including roofs, walls, heating and ventilation. The Annual Facility Grant gives districts money to spend on maintenance as they see fit, which in practice often means heating, ventilation and roofing. The Building Envelope Program repairs the walls and roofs of schools built between 1985 and 2000 where moisture damage has been documented.[190] Together, the Annual Facility Grant and School Enhancement Program deliver roughly $220 million a year for school repairs.[191] A fourth stream is larger than all of these put together. The Seismic Mitigation Program has spent more than $1.9 billion since it began, and by May 2026 had completed seismic projects at 233 schools.[192]

However, there is no evidence that any of these programs carries an energy efficiency or emissions requirement. The program that does target efficiency directly is the Carbon Neutral Capital Program, which made as much as $26.8 million available to school districts in 2024/25.[193] In sum, the province is already paying to replace school boilers, roofs and ventilation systems, and to rebuild the schools most at risk in an earthquake. It is simply not asking that the replacement equipment be more efficient than what came out.

A school district ordering three heat pumps pays close to retail. An agency working with contractors ordering for 1,600 schools does not. Applying Efficiency BC allows buying in bulk. Small districts are worst served, because they are too small to employ an energy manager and too small to qualify for the utility funding that would pay for one. Rural hospitals face the same problem. Their health authority qualifies, but one energy manager covers a region the size of a country.[194] The agency should supply that expertise centrally.

Investing in net-zero schools is not just a technical solution; it is a practical, tangible solution that has the potential to give back to workers, students and communities through occupational health and safety protections, training opportunities, addressing youth climate anxiety and potentially providing a community emergency hub.

The BC Teachers' Federation has raised the alarm on extreme heat in schools for students and workers, and advocated "for structural changes to ensure schools are as safe as possible"[195] through retrofits providing cooling and wildfire level air filtration systems. Building retrofits, particularly passive retrofit measures like well-insulated and air-sealed building envelopes that help manage extreme weather events, are strong occupational health and safety measures for teachers, educational assistants, janitorial staff and other workers within school environments.

Retrofitting schools could be used as training sites for youth and apprentices. Programs such as Project Heavy Duty, which provides hands-on experience with heavy-duty equipment on real job sites in School District 60 including Fort St. John,[196] could be expanded to other school districts for this purpose. Another example is UA Piping Industry College's Try-a-Trade course, which it has provided to the Tsleil Waututh First Nation in North Vancouver. Through this program, participants worked on the electrical and plumbing systems of a local childcare facility. For youth within local communities, gaining experience with the trades in their own school would be both a source of practical knowledge and pride. This provides important local training opportunities to address youth unemployment and would include those currently under-represented in the trades.

Net-zero schools could become a site of hope in communities throughout BC. Imagine children walking to school and seeing their school roof covered with solar panels, and teachers incorporating that into the learning environment to improve climate literacy and reduce climate anxiety, which is seriously affecting youth mental health. In the BCFED focus groups, these solutions were seen as offering an antidote to youth climate anxiety and providing a positive future for youth. A teacher from Squamish said: "We need to be pushing for more systematic change, because we've all been doing individual actions for so long, and it's not having as much as an effect as what we need...We are getting a new school...and we ask for it...to be environmentally friendly...we can put supports on the top for solar panels...things need to be changed within our systems to make these priorities in our new builds...so our students can see that we are leading that change so that it encourages them to do the same."

The province has already started complementary work with the first net-zero, all-electric, new school in Metro Vancouver, École Snokomish Elementary in Surrey School District, supported by funding from CleanBC and expertise from BC Hydro.[197] It is projected to reduce emissions by almost 90 per cent over 15 years, avoiding just over 960 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.[198] This support for cleaner, more energy-efficient public infrastructure now needs to be expanded to existing schools.

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CASE STUDY

The International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers (Insulators) runs a Mechanical Insulation Energy Assessment program, which has been offering free energy audits on mechanical insulation (not including envelope and other considerations) for public buildings and industrial plants since 2010. The Insulators have completed more than 350 energy audits on schools, universities, hospitals and industrial facilities throughout Canada and the United States.

These audits are saving money and reducing emissions at a substantial level. All the projects combined have achieved an overall savings of over $18 million and over 70,000 tonnes of carbon since 2010. Further, these savings are realized in a very short timeframe. Mechanical insulation is less than 1 per cent of a building's construction costs but, if done wrong, can lead to an increase of 13–18 per cent in annual costs. Remediating mechanical insulation issues provides an immediate return on investment with costs matched by savings within the first one or two years.

There are also significant health and safety benefits for workers in these buildings. Improper insulation can lead to fires and increased risk of burns. Removal of asbestos and remediation of mold that can result from poor insulation causing major temperature differences benefit all workers in the building. Air quality is also improved through these measures.

With the support of federal funding through the Union Training and Innovation Program, the Insulators are now launching a Canadian training program to grow this work. They aim to train 1,800 journeypersons and apprentices in the foundations of energy assessment, as well as 50 energy assessors and 20 trainers, within the five-year project timeline.

The process involves a trained energy assessor from the Insulators carrying out the free mechanical insulation energy assessment on defined areas of the building and then providing the building manager with a report including thermal readings, energy calculations, thermographic images of equipment, estimated costs and savings, and work requirements. If the building manager proceeds with the recommended work, the assessor then works with the contractor, often a signatory Insulators employer, to ensure the work matches the recommendations. Finally, the energy assessor returns for a free quality control inspection.

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As a starting point for net-zero school retrofits, the provincial government should work with the BC Insulators to apply this program to all schools in the province. As well as achieving emissions reductions, this would provide immediate savings to taxpayers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Working from what British Columbia's health authorities and school districts have actually paid to cut emissions in their own buildings, we estimate that clearing the emissions from every provincial public sector building, including schools, comes to about $2.7 billion.[199] Spread between now and 2050, that cost is just over $112 million a year, less than the province already spends each year keeping schools in repair, and enough to support about 700 jobs. Efficiency BC, the public agency this chapter calls for, should deliver this program alongside its work retrofitting homes.

Specifically, we call on the province to do the following:

- **Fund the work of delivering net-zero schools (and other public buildings) at a minimum of $100 million a year, and run it through one agency, Efficiency BC.**
- **Work with the BC Insulators in applying their free Mechanical Insulation Energy Assessment program to schools (and other public buildings) throughout BC.**

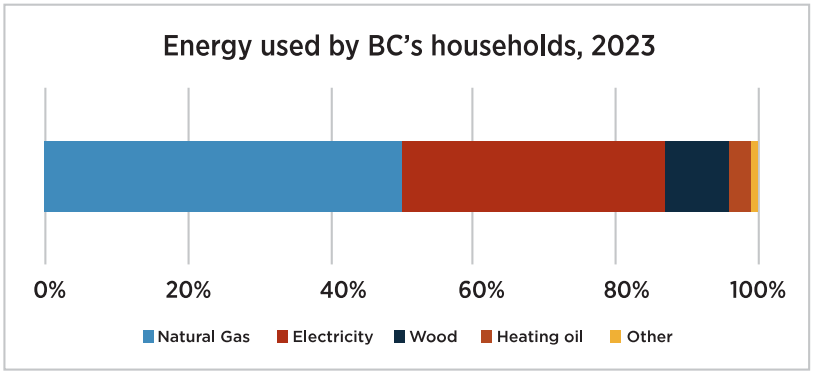
These recommendations are about more than reaching net zero. They are also about who does the work and who benefits from it. Retrofitting the public estate under a Community Benefits Agreement puts apprenticeships, local hire and union wages into every community that has a school or a hospital, which is many communities in the province.

Residential Retrofits

British Columbia's homes and apartments used 156.2 petajoules of energy in 2023, which is 15 per cent of all energy used in the province. Burning fuels to heat homes produced 4.0 megatonnes of carbon pollution, more than half of everything the province's buildings emit, based on Natural Resources Canada's accounting.[200]

British Columbia has promised to cut emissions from buildings and communities by more than half by 2030,[202] but it has never said how many homes have to be retrofitted to get there. Canada's national buildings strategy puts the pace needed at about 3 per cent of the building stock a year.[203] Applied to the total number of homes in BC, that is roughly 65,000 homes a year.[204] In 2024/25, the province and the two utilities provided funding for about 7,700 retrofits, significantly less than what is needed to match the national strategy.[205]

A substantial barrier to retrofitting homes at the rate needed is the fragmented system of rebates and programs that supports the work. There are more than 40 separate retrofit offers available in British Columbia today, grouped under 12 program names, delivered by 10 different organizations and funded principally from four sources: the provincial government, the federal government, BC Hydro ratepayers and FortisBC ratepayers. For instance, the federal government recently announced a $2 billion investment to deliver one million home retrofits across Canada, offering



Source: Natural Resources Canada[201]

A substantial barrier to retrofitting homes at the rate needed is the fragmented system of rebates and programs that supports the work. There are more than 40 separate retrofit offers available in BC today, grouped under 12 program names, delivered by 10 different organizations

heat pump rebates to households, primarily those below-median income.[206]

A household, a contractor or a housing provider has to work out which of those offers applies, on what income test and in what building type, and to which of the multiple organizations they can apply. As MoveUP explains, each of these programs is built around an applicant rather than around the energy saved or the jobs created. They do not require or build local manufacturing of the heat pumps, windows and doors they purchase. MoveUP compares the current system to being handed a jigsaw puzzle with all the right pieces and no picture on the lid.[207] Alternatively, Efficiency BC provides the clear picture, sending a trained energy advisor to assess the building, plan the work and manage it through to completion.[208]

This agency is also an equity measure. The current retrofit system tends to benefit the households that need the least help — wealthy households with enough time and resources to navigate the complicated system and to pay upfront and wait for reimbursement. We propose a solution that would reach the families that need support the most, providing upfront grants or low-cost financing options to cover the project costs. Starting with low-income households is where the evidence finds both the largest savings and the lowest cost for each unit of energy saved. "Reducing emissions loss means reducing energy bills, savings that can help alleviate energy poverty and improve housing affordability."[209] Many low-income households are living in older multi-unit residential buildings (MURBs), and these are a good starting point for retrofitting multiple homes at once for emissions reduction and savings at scale. However, it is important to ensure that retrofits do not come at the cost of displacement or rent increases for tenants.[210]

The BC government has made some steps in the right direction in addressing energy poverty. In 2025, the Better Homes Energy Savings Program was expanded from low and moderate-income renters and homeowners to include low-income apartment renters[211] and there are specific programs for Indigenous housing organizations[212] but much more can be done to reach households facing energy poverty.

A homeowner buying one heat pump pays retail cost. An agency working with contractors buying for 65,000 homes a year does not. MoveUP pairs that guaranteed purchasing power with a made-in-BC manufacturing sector, so the money supports and builds the industry here, and the installations are done by red-seal qualified tradespeople.[213] The development of this local manufacturing supply chain (in particular, focused on doors and windows) could be supported through an audit of the existing market to identify gaps and subsequent work with the BC government to develop incentives to expand a homegrown sector to the necessary scale.[214]

Efficiency BC should build on the existing retrofit ecosystem in BC, connecting with and learning from community partners, such as the BC Retrofit Accelerator network of partners, administered through the Zero Emissions Innovation Centre, with funding from various entities including the Government of Canada and now BC Hydro.[215] This would ensure that Efficiency BC amplifies the great work of many actors in this space already, developing a clear partnership structure to help co-deliver the work. This approach also draws

on the aggregation role that many of these partners, such as non-profit housing associations or housing co-operatives, can help play. As of July 2026, the BC Retrofit Accelerator now includes 66 communities throughout the province, and has almost 1,200 buildings registered and 63,000 homes enrolled in the program.[216] This is projected to achieve 51,000 tonnes of annual GHG reductions and $600 million induced economic impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Efficiency BC, the public agency this chapter calls for, is the vehicle to retrofitting 65,000 homes per year in the province.

- **Establish Efficiency BC, putting the whole job behind one door.**
- **Set a target for 65,000 homes retrofitted each year, and fund this with at least $200 million per year in retrofit grants, with a further $100 million a year directed at low-income households for the provision of additional support.** MoveUP proposes Efficiency BC administer funding that would start at this introductory level to determine how many retrofits are possible as the province builds towards this target. The province should commit the full $300 million a year for a fixed period of at least five years, so that contractors and trades can staff up against something they can rely on.
- **Work with community partners; pay for the work rather than reimbursing it; and buy in bulk, requiring local materials.**

If British Columbia keeps constructing buildings that will need fixing later, it is making the retrofit challenge harder with every new building, not to mention handing the homeowner a cost of thousands to retrofit in the future. New construction gives the province its clearest chance to prevent tomorrow's emissions rather than paying to fix the buildings later. BC Hydro expects the codes and standards already in place or near implementation to deliver 5,682 gigawatt-hours a year of electricity savings by 2050, which is roughly the same as the annual electricity usage of 600,000 British Columbia homes.[217]

Commercial Buildings

Beyond the buildings the province owns are the offices, shops, hotels, restaurants and warehouses where most British Columbians work. Setting aside the schools and hospitals of the previous section, commercial buildings used 83 petajoules of energy, equivalent to the total energy used by more than half the homes in the province.[218]

Two provincial government programs have supported retrofits in these buildings, and only one, BC Hydro's Power Smart program for business customers, is still running. It spent $24.2 million in 2024/25 and cut electricity use by 59 gigawatt-hours a year. That reduction equals less than one per cent of the electricity these buildings use.[219] The other program was under CleanBC, funded by the province and the federal government, which had two streams: Custom and Commercial Express. Custom covered large jobs, replacing gas heating with heat pumps, electric boilers and water heaters, where the emissions saved over the equipment's life came to at least 1,200 tonnes. Commercial Express did the same for smaller jobs, without the engineering study. Both have been paused by the provincial government, with no date and no reason given.[220]

Neither the province nor any city in British Columbia has a commercial building performance standard, and the one city that had one has stopped enforcing it. Vancouver's Annual Greenhouse Gas and Energy Limits By-law, enacted in July 2022, set emissions limits on the city's large business and retail buildings from January 1, 2026, priced at $350 a tonne above the limit.[221] On May 21, 2026, Council paused

enforcement. There are now no penalties for failing to report, and staff are reviewing the bylaw itself, with a report back to Council expected in the first half of 2027.[222] The province therefore has no standard on this stock and, since this year, no program paying for the work either.

In contrast, other jurisdictions are setting and enforcing emissions limits on commercial buildings. New York, Boston and Washington all cap what a commercial building may emit or consume. New York charges $268 a tonne over the limit, Washington charges up to $1.50 a square foot a year, and Boston's cap steps down every five years to zero in 2050.[223] While Vancouver set its threshold at 50,000 square feet, Washington reaches down to 20,000 square feet and New York to 25,000.[224]

Washington pairs its targets with $225 million in incentives, which provide funding for the physical work of bringing an existing building down to a lower level of energy use. In Washington, this has gone towards replacing chillers and chilled water systems, upgrading heating and ventilation, swapping pneumatic controls for digital ones, adding boiler controls and insulation, and replacing lighting with LEDs, at $2 a square foot or five cents for every thousand BTU saved beyond a minimum threshold, up to half the cost of the project.[225]

RECOMMENDATIONS

The province has two main ways it can promote retrofits in commercial buildings: regulation and financial supports. Today, the province is using neither of these tools. It should be using both of them together.

- **Require every commercial building above a specific floor area threshold to measure and publicly report its emissions; and set a limit on what those buildings may emit and charge for going over it.** Learn from other jurisdictions and apply similar standards. The first compliance deadline should be set for 2030, tightening on a published schedule to 2050.
- **Provide financial incentives alongside the standard.** Scaling Washington's incentives to the BC population, the province should commit $215 million in incentives,[226] available across the run-up to the standard's first compliance deadline rather than paid out in a single year. Doing so could create about 340 jobs in 2030.

Industry

Industry is the largest energy user in British Columbia outside the transportation sector, making up about a third of all energy used in the province in 2023.[227] Electricity makes up 21 per cent of industrial energy use, and much of this power is generated by companies themselves.[228] The rest of industry's energy is mostly wood waste and pulping liquor burned in pulp mills, and natural gas.[229] Including oil and gas production, industry released 24.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2023, 40 per cent of the provincial total, based on the province's carbon inventory.[230]

To curb emissions and energy use in this sector, the province runs the CleanBC Program for Industry, which has two parts. The first part is the Output-Based Pricing System; this carbon pricing system sets each large facility an emissions limit based on its output, charges the carbon price on anything above it, and tightens the standard by one per cent a year.[231] The weakness is in how the limit is set. Each facility is measured against the average emissions intensity of the product it makes, so roughly half the emissions of any industry sits at or below its own limit from the day the system starts. Work by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives estimated that the design exempted 65 per cent of industrial emissions from the carbon price, with higher rates, up to 95 per cent, for sectors such as cement and aluminum.[232]

The standard should tighten by at least two per cent a year — the standard the province itself proposed before settling on one per cent — and free allocation should shrink. A design that exempts 65 per cent of industrial emissions from the carbon price is not a standard so much as a discount.[233] Lastly, the pricing system's special treatment of liquefied natural gas (LNG) should end. That means removing the exemption that frees a new facility from paying for excess emissions for its first two years of operation, worth an estimated $462 million to LNG Canada alone, and the exemption for fugitive (leaked) emissions.[234] Further, companies should have to cut emissions at their own facilities rather than buy compliance with credits and offsets. There is significant support for large polluters paying their fair share — a poll from April 2026 found that over two thirds of British Columbians want governments to ensure that fossil fuel companies pay for climate costs.[235]

The second part of the CleanBC Program for Industry is the CleanBC Industry Fund, which has put more than $330 million into 184 industrial decarbonization projects since 2019, averaging about $1.8 million per project.[236] The CleanBC Industry Fund's projects are expected to cut more than 14.4 million tonnes of carbon over 10 years, an average of 1.44 million tonnes a year.[237] Projects include Cenovus Energy Inc. in Northeast BC switching out pneumatic pumps for solar electric pumps to eliminate methane emissions for a projected emissions reduction of almost 48,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent through 2034.[238]

Averaging results across funded projects shows that a dollar of provincial funding brings in two dollars from industry and partners.[239] The fund is financed from the carbon price industry pays, and it returns that money to the same sector.[240] The International Institute for Sustainable Development counted it as a fossil fuel subsidy within the fund's first year, on the grounds that large emitters including fossil fuel producers are eligible and that the money lowers their costs.[241] The province's own independent review of CleanBC recommends recycling all of the revenue from industrial carbon pricing into emissions reduction programs instead.[242]

On many of the bridges, hospitals and transit lines it builds, British Columbia already sets a target ratio of apprenticeship hours to journeyperson hours of 25 per cent, and hiring priority for Indigenous workers, for women and other under-represented groups, and for people living within 100 kilometres of the site.[243] Those terms should apply to the construction and installation work on industrial decarbonization projects supported with a grant above $1 million. Recipients should have to report the hours worked, broken down by trade, by apprenticeship status, by Indigenous and equity group self-identification and by where the worker lives, and the province should publish those results alongside the grant

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the province's second largest carbon emitter and consumer of energy, BC's industrial businesses must do more to reduce their use of electricity and fossil fuels. Households and other businesses should not be asked to carry the burden. Three things need to change:

- **Set a legislated industry-specific target for 2050.** The minister can set that target by order under the Climate Change Accountability Act, as the 2030 sectoral targets were set, and should do so with milestones every five years so progress can be measured before 2050 rather than after it.
- **Strengthen industrial carbon pricing and end exemptions for major emitters.**
- **Expand the CleanBC Industry Fund.** Attach job retention, union consultation, domestic-procurement and labour-standard conditions to fund support, ensuring public funding reduces emissions while maintaining good industrial jobs and production in BC.

Thermal Networks

A thermal network is shared infrastructure that moves heat between buildings and draws it from local sources, so that a neighbourhood needs less energy to stay warm.[244] Thermal networks matter for creating a net-zero future for British Columbia because they draw on sources of heat that no single building could reach economically on its own. These sources include wastewater, bodies of water, boreholes in the ground and waste heat from data centres.[245] Thermal energy also plays an important role in shifting away from other heating/cooling systems. This enables further electrification by reducing demand system wide, avoiding bottlenecks in the distribution system, and reducing the need to upgrade building electrical panels.

British Columbia already has much of the infrastructure thermal networks need, but most of it still runs on gas. Fifty-one district energy systems were operating in the province as of 2023, second only to Ontario, which has 63. British Columbia has also added more systems than any other province since 2000.[246] Metro Vancouver alone operates or is developing about 30 district energy systems, several drawing on sewer heat.[247] Some of these facilities are unionized, with the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) representing different units. North Vancouver shows what these systems can do. The school district's Educational Services Centre and Art Gallery has supplied geoexchange heat to the network since 2012, and the Shipyards Skate Plaza has traded waste heat from ice-making for the cooling that refrigerates its ice since 2019, enough to heat the equivalent of 43 homes.[248]

Some smaller projects, such as Surrey's Wills Creek townhouse complex, also include geothermal heating and cooling, and there is a long-term cost-savings to local residents — as a union training representative highlights, "if you did have a geothermal system, years down the road, you're going to be continually saving money."

More projects are in development in BC, including the Senakw development by the Squamish First Nation, which will heat over 6,000 homes, and an ocean heat-exchange project in Horseshoe Bay.[249] The issue is not whether British Columbia can build thermal networks, but whether the province will commit to using them as an energy resource in future planning.

There is no evidence that the province has estimated how much heat could be recovered from its sewers, waterways, data centres and industry. The only regional study, funded jointly by Metro Vancouver, BC Hydro and the Zero Emissions Innovation Centre, was awarded September 2025 and has not yet been published.[250] Toronto publishes a wastewater energy map, and Quebec publishes a waste heat map paired with provincial funding for feasibility studies.[251] Denmark has required municipalities to map their heat supply and designate zones since 1979, and the European Union's Energy Efficiency Directive, revised in 2023, requires member states to promote local heat plans in municipalities above 45,000 residents.[252] Twenty-four British Columbia municipalities meet that threshold.[253]

Scaling thermal networks will require a workforce British Columbia has not yet built, and public funding should help create it. BC Hydro will fund up to 100 per cent of the capital cost of a district energy project, but terms set no requirements for wages, apprenticeship ratios, union signatory status or local hiring.[254]

The United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada (UA) supports thermal energy networks (TENs) as it's already within the scope of their trade: as they say, "a pipe is a pipe is a pipe." For over 100 years in Vancouver, there have been steam lines under the city pumping heat into commercial buildings and local UA members are proud to have worked on all components of this system. UA leaders

highlight the potential in TENs for "plentiful and high-paying jobs for decades to come" for their members.[255]

BC has many plumbers, pipefitters, electricians and heavy equipment operators who could support this work, but it needs labour standards attached to every public dollar. UA leaders in New York state have been successful in creating legislative change that ties thermal energy construction to labour standards.[256] On the projects built through BCIB's CBA, British Columbia already sets a target apprenticeship ratio of 25 per cent and hiring priority for Indigenous workers, for women and other under-represented groups, and for people living within 100 kilometres of the site.[257] Those terms should apply to every public dollar that builds a thermal network.

RECOMMENDATIONS

British Columbia has the pipes, the customers and the heat. However, it has no plan for using them, no workforce to build at scale, and no condition on the public money it already spends. Three things need to change:

- **Identify every major recoverable heat source and publish its energy value, and require heat plans in every municipality of significant size.**
- **Treat thermal networks as an energy resource in provincial planning.** The province should direct BC Hydro to assess thermal networks in its next plan, and should add them to the prescribed undertakings under the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Regulation so utilities can recover the cost of building them.[258]

Foundations for a Retrofit Economy

The sections above set out which buildings need work and who should pay for it. Two things determine whether that work can be done. The first is a workforce large enough to do it. The second is a manufacturing sector to supply the equipment.

Building the Workforce

Altogether, to meet the retrofit targets we adopt for our vision of a net zero future for British Columbia, the province will need substantially more trades talent. The Pembina Institute estimates that a national renovation wave would support 26,300 jobs per year in British Columbia through to 2040.[259] The public spending recommended in this chapter would itself support about 3,100 jobs. Every employment figure in this chapter is the work that the recommended public spending buys.[260] Most of that work falls to a familiar set of trades: heating, refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics, plumbers, electricians, insulators, carpenters, and window and door installers, alongside the energy advisors who assess the buildings and the retrofit contractors who run the jobs.[261]

Seven electrical and mechanical trades are now compulsory, including refrigeration and air conditioning mechanic, both gasfitter classes and sheet metal worker.[262] Nine more have been identified for future designation, but the BC government has named only the crane operator trades among them, neither of which are retrofit trades.[263] The additional designated trades need to be certified immediately and a timeline is needed for future expansion of certified trades.

Training and education in retrofit skills should be built on top of full Red Seal trades, not as a competency-based or stand-alone micro-

credential course. These short-term courses do not provide the safety and quality needed in retrofit installation. The UA Piping Industry College already offers upskilling opportunities for their members in green and renewable technologies — GPro is a course that has been offered for almost a decade covering fundamentals of building green, green mechanical systems and green plumbing systems. BCIT's heat pump credential is also built the right way, because its installation course is open only to journeypersons and final-level apprentices in one of five trades.[264] That condition is what makes it upskilling rather than substitution, and it should be provincial policy rather than one institution's admissions rule.

Heat pump installation should be done by fully certified Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanics. Effective August 1, 2025, the Skilled Trades BC Regulation was amended to reduce the scope of work for Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanics by exempting the installation of residential heat pumps with a prime mover rating under 5 kilowatts and in a private dwelling from Skilled Trades Certification requirements.[265] This reduces safety and quality in heat pump installation and will lead to negative experiences for homeowners and less confidence in the industry.

To support continuing training opportunities, the provincial government needs to support existing apprenticeship sponsors. For example, UA Local 516 is the fourth-largest trades apprenticeship sponsor in British Columbia, and the Electrical Joint Training Committee holds more than 1,100 electrical apprentices and dispatches them to signatory contractors.[266] Funding also needs to be stable: contractors will not train, certify, and hire for a program that may disappear the following year. When the Canada Greener Homes Grant closed, roughly 600 practicing energy advisors left the profession, out of just over 1,900 nationally.[267]

To grow British Columbia's pool of skilled workers, the province should take the following steps:

- **Protect and enforce Skilled Trades Certification, and expand the list of certified trades.**
- **Require that any credential attached to publicly funded retrofit work sits on top of a full trade.** Short programs do not give workers the depth of knowledge and experience this work requires, and that has negative consequences for quality and safety.
- **Reverse the deregulation of heat pump installation.**
- **Offer stable project financing and support four-year apprenticeship sponsorships to ensure continuous work**. Commit the retrofit funding for a fixed period of at least five years.

Manufacturing

In 2021, the Pembina Institute costed a residential and commercial retrofit program for British Columbia at $2.8 billion a year of investment, averaged across 20 years to 2040. Pembina puts the public share of that spending at $1.6 billion a year.[268] Based on typical project costs, we estimate at least $1.1 billion of the $2.8 billion annual average is the equipment itself: heat pumps, windows, doors, insulation and ventilation.[269] That is a market large enough to build an industry on, and as much of it as possible should be supplied from within the province. At present much of what British Columbia installs is imported, and government attaches no requirement about where equipment bought with public money is made.[270]

A made-in-BC energy efficiency manufacturing sector is one of the six goals of MoveUP's proposal for a provincial building retrofit agency, which would audit the existing market, identify where local supply is missing, and work with government on incentives to expand production here.[271]

Government should now take the next step the proposal makes possible. The agency would purchase at provincial scale, and that purchasing is itself the demand signal. Attach local content conditions that maximize BC content and, where BC supply is unavailable, Canadian content — including Canadian-made steel, aluminum and other manufactured inputs — to what the agency buys and to what qualifies for rebate, so that public money builds manufacturing capacity in British Columbia rather than only moving product through it.

There is also a role to play for a new Centre for Excellence in energy efficient and electrification technologies. This could be run through Efficiency BC as part of the agency or through expanding an existing entity, such as Powertech Labs, a research and design laboratory owned by BC Hydro, which focuses on energy technologies.[272] Powertech Labs could be leveraged as a technology adoption and innovation champion in developing a manufacturing sector. There are fruitful examples from other jurisdictions — one is the unfortunately now-defunct Consortium for Building Energy Innovation (CBEI) in Philadelphia, US, which developed, tested and commercialized energy efficient building systems designs, technologies and practices.[273] To improve associated workforce development, including diversity in training and retention, this Centre of Excellence should work in partnership with labour unions, such as UA516, which runs the Refrigeration Training Institute.

Conclusion

British Columbia's electricity is already almost entirely non-emitting. Its buildings are not. Homes alone released 4.0 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2023, more than half of everything the province's buildings emit, based on Natural Resources Canada's accounting. Converting homes plus commercial and institutional buildings from combustion to electric heat would remove about 7.1 megatonnes a year. The task in this chapter is not to build new energy supply but to use less energy in the buildings and plants already standing.

The retrofits outlined here could save roughly 200 petajoules a year. In housing, the pace works out to about 65,000 homes a year, against the roughly 7,700 retrofits the province and the utilities funded in 2024/25. Work on that scale would support 26,300 jobs in British Columbia through to 2040.

How the work is delivered matters as much as whether it is delivered. Efficiency BC should run it as a single public agency, working street by street rather than applicant by applicant, buying at provincial scale and buying from a manufacturing sector in this province that is incentivized to grow alongside these retrofit targets. Every public dollar should carry the conditions the province already sets on many of the projects it builds itself through BCIB, which are apprenticeship ratios, local hire and hiring priority for workers under-represented in the trades. Standards should rise on a published schedule and the money should be committed for a fixed period, so contractors and trades can train against work they can count on. Built this way, retrofitting British Columbia's buildings cuts emissions, lowers energy bills, and builds a workforce and a manufacturing industry that remain in the province.

CHAPTER 4

Responsible Natural Resources: Forestry



Forestry is a vital part of an energy-efficient future. Support for responsible natural resource development, including forestry, was high in the BCFED focus groups as long as meaningful community benefits and value-added approaches are tied to the industry and workers and labour are at the table in decision-making processes. These measures are critical to address the disenfranchisement felt by many workers in communities that rely on forestry.

The forestry industry in BC is in a structural crisis, with multiple factors contributing to the decline in production over the last couple of decades: the provincial government's deregulation of the industry in the early 2000s; the lengthy softwood lumber dispute between Canada and the U.S.;[274] decades of short-term responses and inconsistent policy direction under successive BC governments; environmental disasters, such as destructive forest fire seasons and the pine beetle infestation; and broader global social, economic and technological changes, including the ups and downs in the U.S. housing construction industry.[275] These longstanding pressures are now being compounded by U.S. tariffs of 50 per cent on raw materials and value-added products.

The provincial annual harvest peaked at almost 90 million cubic meters in 1987, fluctuated around an average of 75 million cubic metres from 1988 to 2013, and has since fallen from a total of 71 million cubic metres in 2014 to approximately 30 million cubic metres in 2025.[276] This is despite the annual allowable cut (AAC) being set at 60 million cubic metres by the provincial government last year and 45 million cubic metres this year.[277] The AAC is the supply of timber that is projected to be available for harvesting each year, based on a number of considerations: the condition of the existing forest; the growth rate of the existing and harvested forest; how the forest is managed; and choices about the rate of harvest. The gap in AAC and actual harvest is caused by multiple factors, including permitting delays due to insufficient government resources to support the expanded approval steps introduced through DRIPA-aligned review requirements.[278]

The decline in forestry has had devastating consequences for workers and communities. Since 2001, direct forestry employment has fallen 45 per cent, from 79,000 jobs to under 44,000; and, since 2018, over 10,000 direct forestry jobs have been lost, with total employment losses, direct and indirect, approaching 19,000.[279] This has broad social and economic costs with losses of $2 billion per year in value-added GDP, $3.5 billion per year in exports, and over $1 billion annually in government revenues.[280]

The forestry industry in BC is in a structural crisis, with multiple factors contributing to the decline in production over the last couple of decades.

Major mill closures have hit all regions of BC, with 30 mills closing since 2014, from Crofton to Prince George, from Chilliwack to Merritt, from Port Alberni to Chetwynd.[281] These losses are not just direct jobs, they represent thousands of indirect jobs, and, more importantly, they are families, towns, and communities. When mills close, the economic ripple is immediate. Communities lose income, local businesses lose customers, municipal tax bases shrink, and the province loses revenue. Forestry is not marginal; it is essential to BC's economic and fiscal health.

These losses have a disproportionate impact on smaller rural, remote and First Nation communities. For instance, the mill in Fraser Lake closed in 2024 with a loss of 200 jobs. The population of Fraser Lake is 1000 so this represents 20 per cent of the town's population being laid off with obvious catastrophic economic impact.[282] This also affected the nearby First Nation communities of Stellako and Nadleh Whut'en.

Importantly, the decline in the forestry sector is not inevitable. As the government's own Provincial Forest Advisory Council, a diverse group of subject-matter experts jointly chosen by the BC government and BC Green caucus, under the Cooperation and Responsible Government Accord 2025, states: "this instability is driven by internal factors — rooted in policy, management structures, market failures, and decision-making frameworks — not solely by external pressures or trade barriers."[283] Currently, there are fragmented initiatives to support the industry but what is needed is a sector strategy.

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Forestry as a Vital Economic Sector

Despite all the changes and challenges the forestry sector has faced, forestry remains one of BC's largest revenue-generating sectors. The map of BC reveals forestry's lasting imprint: the industry helped shape the communities, transportation networks and regional economies that define the province today. Forestry continues to support nearly 100,000 total jobs generating $9.1 billion in wages, salaries and benefits.[284] One in five jobs are in forestry in northern regions and one in 10 jobs in the Kootenays; the sector is a key economic anchor in multiple forest-dependent communities.[285] Forestry also contributes $17.4 billion to provincial GDP and provides $6.6 billion to government revenue.[286] Forest products represent 24 per cent of BC's merchandise exports and are the province's number two export sector.[287] Forestry supports one in four manufacturing jobs in BC.[288] When harvest levels fall, government revenue falls with it. In tight fiscal times, that matters.

As the 2024 report, *A Better Future for BC Forestry*, highlights, jobs "in forest industries have a disproportionate importance in BC's economy, because forestry has long been an important source of decent, better-paid working-class employment. This is especially true in regional communities which do not have as diverse labour markets as major cities in the Lower Mainland and Victoria. Average annual incomes in forest jobs exceed the BC-wide average by as much as one-third…Including pension and benefits provided in most forest industry jobs (thanks to the bargaining progress of unions over decades), it is clear that forestry jobs are vital to broader community prosperity. Preserving remaining forest industry jobs must be a central goal of BC's economic strategy in the years ahead."[289]

Forestry has an important role to play in the clean economy. There is a growing bioeconomy in BC with forestry as the foundation, including the growth of production of renewable wood products and biomaterials.[290] "Wood and paper products, including in innovative and high-technology new forms (such as increasingly complex engineered wood products and building materials) will continue to play a vital role in the future economy."[291] Forestry was selected as one of the six key "opportunity areas" to contribute to BC achieving "a prosperous net-zero future" through a previous provincial-federal partnership, the Regional Energy and Resource Tables.[292]

Forestry can also contribute to wildfire management. The forest sector can invest in forest management activities and silviculture practices to prevent increasing and intensified wildfires in the first place, supporting our forests and communities to become more resilient.[293] Forestry workers have a vested interest in protecting our forests. The sector can also support clean-up after wildfires have decimated landscapes, making use of wildfire damaged timber.

A Working Forest

United Steelworkers (USW) represents over 14,000 members in Canada's forest industry, including over 9,000 in BC. The USW Wood Council proposes applying the model of a working forest as a solution to the crisis in the forestry sector. A working forest would be the pillar of a sector strategy based on a balanced land management system that aligns conservation, restoration and reconciliation with jobs and economic security for all.[294] A working forest is how we turn public resources into public benefit and provide the certainty needed to keep British Columbians employed in quality jobs, jobs that feed families, sustain communities and generate billions in government revenue to fund the public services that British Columbians rely on. A working forest is not a choice between environment, reconciliation and economy; it is how we align them.

A working forest would provide the stability that the sector needs by providing a clear economic land base, long-term fibre certainty based on a commitment to regional employment, and coordinated sector governance. This would ensure the clarity needed for capital to invest and mills to modernize.

Recently, the provincial government has committed to exploring the idea of, what they are calling, a Working Forest Landscape Model.[295] This would include three zones: the working-forest zone would prioritize the use of timber for commercial harvesting; the multiple-use zone would focus on restoring and enhancing biodiversity and the ecosystem for multiple uses; and the conservation and protection zone would protect habitat and conservation networks.[296] The latter zone supports the government's commitments to protect 30 per cent of BC's land base by 2030. Of key concern is how the government will plan all three zones across the broader public forest or divide only the land currently available for timber harvesting. If it is the latter, these restrictions would undermine fibre certainty and forestry jobs.

This model is a shift from a cutblock by cutblock approach to an area management approach, aimed at reducing delays.[297] The provincial government will be working directly with First Nations in their regions, as well as industry, local governments and other interested parties, in rolling out the implementation of this model. "The model builds on recent forestry modernization efforts and is intended to demonstrate how a coordinated landscape approach can improve predictability for industry, workers, First Nations and communities, while supporting healthy, functioning forest ecosystems."[298] The first test area has now been chosen near Campbell River because this area supports significant employment in the forestry sector and local economic activity, as well as unique biodiversity and old growth.[299]

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Resolution 2239 at the BCFED's Convention in 2022 urges the provincial government to make "a commitment ensuring a sustainable forest for future generations, while creating jobs for today."[300] Thus, we urge the government to move from exploration to implementation of this Working Forest Landscape Model with unions as a key partner. Government must clearly define and legislate a Working Forest, and designate and protect a defined land base for responsible, production forestry aligned with conservation and Indigenous rights. This would provide the predictability required for downstream value-added investment, job retention and community stability.

Entrench Job Protection: Jobs Protection Act and Commissioner

Currently, there are no conditions on jobs by industry even in cases of public bail-out. In 2003, the BC Liberal government changed the Forest Act to remove some protective mechanisms for local jobs and communities, such as the appurtenance provisions. These "required companies harvesting timber from public land to mill it near where they harvested it" so that local logs stayed in local communities.[301] Another mechanism, Pulpwood Agreements, "gave companies forest tenures on the condition they processed the wood at a specific mill."[302] Without enforcement of these agreements, companies abuse the tenure system and speculatively "hoard" raw timber or export unprocessed logs.[303] This is an exporting of jobs overseas and an undermining of local communities dependent on a local forestry industry. This deregulation removed provincial forest management, passing it over to corporate control where profit and "flexibility" are the highest order.[304]

The USW proposes ensuring job protection through establishing a Forestry Jobs Protection Act and creating an independent Jobs Protection Commissioner.[305] The Act would ensure that a working forest does what it promises: turns public resources into secure jobs and stable communities for generations. Public timber must support domestic processing and long-term regional employment in forest communities.

An independent Jobs Protection Commissioner would report to the government with the power to monitor employment levels across the sector.[306] The Commissioner would convene binding agreements between government, labour, communities and industry to attach clear job conditions to decisions involving fibre allocation, allowable cut and regulatory concessions. Workers must be central to a working forest initiative reform, not collateral damage. There is an historic precedent to this — in 1991, the BC NDP government established a Job Protection Commissioner to respond to economic instability and job loss. There is also a useful current model with BC's Container Trucking Commissioner, which has statutory authority to investigate industry and enforce compliance,[307] which has produced tangible results for truckers. Government cannot be passive when strategic industries are at risk.

The Jobs Protection Commissioner could have the powers to develop Jobs Protection Plans where employment is under threat.[308] Within these plans, the Commissioner would have the authority to recommend or trigger the reassignment, restriction or withdrawal of fibre access where a company closes a facility or fails to meet employment or domestic processing commitments. This would ensure that companies cannot close a processing facility while retaining access to public fibre simply to redirect or sell that fibre elsewhere, where doing so undermines regional employment and domestic processing. When appropriate, the Commissioner and its targeted programs and services could support a just transition for workers entering retirement or other occupations.

As a labour leader said during the BCFED focus groups and interviews, "environmental folks will talk about [the] precautionary principle…Like, until we know that this isn't going to damage the environment, we're not going to do it…Nobody says that about workers…Until we know that all these 1,200 people or 200 people are going to have jobs and not lose their houses…we're not going to let this happen."

There are a number of government measures aimed at supporting forestry jobs or providing transition opportunities. However, they are not integrated and do not provide the necessary support. Some, such as the Community Transition Service come too late, once a mill closure has already happened. Others are now closed, such as the Bridging to Retirement Program, which capped its support at $75,000.[309] More recently, there have been a couple of initiatives aimed at reducing the impacts of US tariffs — the Canada-BC Workforce Tariff Response[310] and a support package including increased funding for the BC Manufacturing Jobs Fund and the Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program.[311] These investments are welcome but they do not provide the overall strategic vision and regional labour market analysis required to fully support workers in the forestry industry.

Resolution 2239 at the BCFED's Convention in 2022 urges the BC Ministry of Forests to implement "a strategy that includes re-establishment of a social license that promotes greater domestic manufacturing, re-manufacturing and re-creating the Jobs Protection Commissioner."[312] The provincial government should initiate a Forestry Jobs Protection Act and Commissioner.

Province-wide Plan for Fibre Supply

While a working forest defines an area for timber production, this approach needs to be integrated within a province-wide plan for stable, sustainable, economic fibre supply.[313] This legislated plan should align the scientifically determined harvest with economic goals that sustain jobs, GDP & public revenue. It should advance province-wide LiDAR (mapping technology) deployment and modern forest inventory systems to establish an accurate, transparent fibre baseline, improve confidence in the annual allowable cut, support wildfire mitigation and streamline permitting. The Old Growth Strategic Review report acknowledges a lack of data as a barrier so this would address that need.[314]

A fibre supply plan would integrate regional realities into planning, recognizing distinct Interior and Coastal fibre conditions, local employment needs, wildfire risk profiles and restoration needs. A proactive sector strategy cannot be one size fits all. The plan would also maximize fibre utilization by strengthening waste recovery, integrating wildfire mitigation and salvage into supply planning, and linking fibre access to downstream domestic value-added investment and job commitments. This would build on the work of the government's Forest Enhancement Society of BC, which includes supporting "the use of fibre from damaged and low value forests."[315]

Mass Timber and Value-Add Manufacturing

The forestry industry needs to be supported in enhancing secondary, value-added manufacturing, as well as primary, timber production. The province projects that the mass timber sector alone could be worth $403 million by 2035.[316] It also notes the global engineered-wood market is expected to grow about 40 per cent from 2019 to 2027.[317] Value-added subsectors such as veneer, plywood and engineered wood grew GDP by about 18 per cent from 2018 to 2023.[318]

Currently, BC exports raw logs at the expense of value-added manufacturing and job opportunities. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives reported that BC exported nearly 26 million cubic meters of wood worth an estimated $3 billion over three years, framing this as foregone domestic processing employment.[319] Recently, the Union of BC Municipalities endorsed Nanaimo's resolution calling on the provincial and federal governments to ban the export of raw logs to encourage value-added manufacturing and support employment in BC's forestry industry.[320] However, within wood manufacturing, the evidence points to a shift toward higher-margin, less labour-intensive production: while value-added subsectors increased GDP, their workforce fell about 8 per cent.[321] Workers must be prioritized in the reconfiguration of the forest sector to centre value-added approaches.

Launched in April 2022 under the StrongerBC Economic Plan, the Mass Timber Action Plan is stewarded by the Office of Mass Timber Implementation, established in 2020. The plan sets out the potential for up to 10 new manufacturers and about 4,400 additional job openings by 2035.[322] However, it is unclear whether labour has been involved in the development of the Mass Timber Action Plan, so worker considerations are once again missing. So far, the manufacturing of mass timber is largely not a unionized sector, so previously unionized forestry workers may be transitioning into jobs with lower pay and less security.

The BC Manufacturing Jobs Fund (BCMJF) is a provincial capital-grant program supporting value-added industrial and manufacturing projects, with a pronounced focus on the forestry sector.[323] Previous premier David Eby announced the fund in Prince George in 2023, initially committing up to $90 million (later doubled to $180 million[324]) over three years in direct response to forestry distress, including Canfor's permanent closure of its Prince George pulp line.[325] The program funds capital projects that move firms toward higher-value, made-in-BC wood products, and it has supported increased production of mass timber, engineered wood, and bioproducts, including innovative uses of waste wood, residuals, and available fibre.[326]

It opened for applications in February 2023, with the first approved project (Massive Canada in Williams Lake) receiving as much as $10 million, explicitly linking the fund to mass timber and prefabricated housing[327]. By September 2026, the fund had partnered on more than 150 forestry-product projects and dedicated more than $153 million to the industry, up from $70 million across 50 projects reported in April 2024; this has created or protected more than 4800 jobs.[328] The BCMJF is the principal funding vehicle behind the province's stated shift from high-volume to high-value forestry and is referenced within the broader Look West economic strategy.[329] Recently, in light of increasing tariff pressure on the industry from the US, the provincial government has increased the BCMJF, providing an additional $30 million.[330]

However, there are no job conditions attached to this funding. Any public investment into support and market development of this sector must be tied to public benefits, including ensuring good, unionized labour in this emerging sector.

Forestry Sector Council

The USW proposes that these measures are integrated through establishing and empowering a permanent, province-wide forestry sector council to support ongoing, coordinated sector consultation to government as it develops and implements policy.[331] This policy must be long-term in scope and align fibre supply, domestic processing, value-added investment, workforce development and cross-ministry policy around the objectives of a sustainable, competitive working forest. The council would include provincial government, labour, First Nations, industry and regional public interest representation to ensure strategic alignment, measurable outcomes and long-term community and economic stability.

Workforce development would be supported by aligning training systems, apprenticeship pathways, and skills upgrading with sector needs. Cross-government accountability would be ensured by integrating policy across key ministries and reporting on outcomes.

While the Provincial Forestry Advisory Council was established in 2025 under the BC NDP and BC Greens under the cooperation agreement, the Forestry Sector Council would be more than an advisory body; it would be empowered to initiate cross-ministry policy and held to high levels of accountability.

As a first step, the USW Wood Council has joined a group of forest sector organizations calling for the establishment of an immediate "Forestry Crisis Action Group, led by the Premier's Office and bringing together senior government decision-makers and representatives from across the forest sector."[332] Its mandate would be to "get economically viable wood moving, reduce costs, remove regulatory barriers, stabilize fibre supply, protect operating businesses, and retain — not retrain — British Columbia's skilled forestry workforce."[333]

Conclusion

BC still has a highly skilled union workforce, strong environmental standards, global market access, mass timber and engineered wood opportunity, and world-class forest knowledge. The forest sector still contributes $17.4 billion to GDP and supports nearly 100,000 jobs. Opportunity exists, but it requires provincial leadership and a sector-specific strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The provincial government should:

- **Shift from fragmented, reactive initiatives to a proactive, sector-specific strategy** to support the growth of the forestry industry for local jobs and local communities.
- **Establish a working forest as the pillar of a sector strategy** based on a balanced land management system that aligns conservation, restoration and reconciliation with jobs and economic security for all.
- **Entrench job protection through establishing a Forestry Jobs Protection Act and creating an independent Jobs Protection Commissioner.**
- **Implement a legislated province-wide plan for stable, sustainable, economic fibre supply.**
- **Establish and empower a permanent, province-wide forestry sector council** to support ongoing, coordinated sector consultation to government as it develops and implements cross-ministry policy.
- **Support secondary, value-added manufacturing.** Public investment into market development of this sector must be tied to public benefits, including ensuring good, unionized labour in this emerging sector.

CHAPTER 5

Public Transit and Transportation



Connecting BC: A 10-Year Vision and Investment Plan for Public Transit Throughout BC

British Columbians deserve to be able to get to where they need to go quickly, conveniently and affordably, no matter where in the province they live. And meeting our climate goals demands modern, sustainable, zero-carbon transit — with great service that can offer a compelling alternative to personal cars.

But after years of neglect and privatization, today's transit system is plagued with overcrowding, delays and big gaps in service. Our current provincial government has made important transit investments. Now it's time for the next step: a new province-wide vision, uniting local and regional transit into an integrated whole.

Connecting BC is a 10-year public transit investment plan[334] for our province that will:

- Recognize First Nations title and rights
- Make transit affordable, accessible and inclusive
- Move BC toward sustainable, zero-carbon transit
- Eliminate privatization for better wages/benefits for workers and better services for users
- Make riding on transit a great experience
- Use new transit infrastructure and services to shape BC's growth
- Ensure the provincial leadership needed to get it right

The result? Stronger, more vibrant communities. Thousands of well-paying jobs and healthier local economies. This plan generates an average of 40,500 jobs from the 10-year public transit vision, 16,800 in construction and 23,700 in operations. Public transit investments also have many more positive social effects, including increased convenience, speed and comfort for transit users as well as societal benefits, such as improved road safety, reduced pollution, better public health, and land use and economic development opportunities. And a big step forward toward the goal of a clean BC.

Given the present high oil prices that make automobile travel even more expensive, the impressive affordability gains are worth highlighting. Avoiding one long driving trip by taking a bus or train can save hundreds of dollars in fuel and maintenance expenses. Going from a two to a one-car family can easily save over $5,000 every year.[335]

There was strong support for public transit from workers throughout BC in the BCFED focus groups and, in the "dotmocracy" activity, which offered an opportunity to vote for preferred policy options from a defined list, public transit was the number one priority. Because transit is often the most visible interaction workers have with government policy and planning, when these systems are inefficient or when they fail, they become symbols of political and public failure more broadly. Workers regard transit as a highly visible, highly tangible, and highly impactful way to address economic and climate challenges. As a student worker at UBC said, "I get quite frustrated that the connection between climate and transit is not taken seriously."

The Plan

1. Connect BC communities everywhere through a new province-wide express bus service. With Greyhound pulling out of BC in 2018, getting around BC by transit can range from impossible to wildly inconvenient, with multiple fares spanning different public and private operators. A provincewide public transit network will improve mobility for people in small towns, rural areas and remote First Nations communities — making it easier to get health care and other services, visit family or go on vacation. And stronger transit connections across BC would have a big impact on tourism.

2. Double the number of buses in BC Transit local services within five years and triple it within 10, for more frequent, reliable local transit services in communities throughout BC. With more regular, extensive services that people know they can rely on, ridership will grow over time as people shift their habits. Targeted, customized services including community shuttle services, on-demand rides, car sharing and bike sharing can supplement fixed routes for the "first/last mile" challenges. Fleet growth must translate to net new conventional buses, not buses moved from one community to another, and replacing a bus with a shuttle should require a peak-capacity review first. To determine the best places for fleet growth, BC Transit should monitor and publish vehicle capacity and peak-load data by route.

3. Expand HandyDART service province-wide with an upgraded electric fleet. Stop contracting with private companies for services and using taxis instead of buses. Instead, expanding HandyDART — including in small towns, rural and First Nations communities — will bring new minibuses and new public facilities and maintenance centres to communities across BC. TransLink and BC Transit must buy these new vehicles and provide the depots as public assets and there must be a firm, declining limit on using taxis and hired cars as the fleet grows.

4. Develop new regional rail connections along historic rail corridors, in partnership with First Nations communities along the rail lines. A major investment in regional rail will transform development and travel patterns, and facilitate better connections between regions. These investments include:

- Building on the proven success of the West Coast Express, expanding it from weekday commuter service to regular daily service, and extending the service area to Abbotsford
- Repurposing the historic Interurban corridor from Langley to Chilliwack via Abbotsford. Over time, this will reshape development patterns and transportation patterns regionwide, adding denser housing, shops, services and amenities around new transit hubs.
- Restoring rail service to Prince George via Squamish and Whistler, re-establishing a historical connection into the heart of BC's Interior and boosting Prince George as a transit hub.
- Restoring the Vancouver Island Rail Corridor for both passenger and freight services.

5. Add new passenger ferry options between Vancouver, the Gulf Islands, Sunshine Coast and Vancouver Island. Just as roads can't infinitely be expanded to accommodate more cars, BC's ferries have been hamstrung by seeing them almost exclusively as car transportation. New passenger ferries will dramatically increase capacity for BC Ferries at much lower cost, while providing a superior passenger experience.

6. Accelerate TransLink's 10-year Access for Everyone plan for Metro Vancouver. With more than half of BC's population, Metro Vancouver is a critical hub for economic activity, post-secondary education, research and development, tourism and culture in BC. Rolling out most investments in TransLink's plan over the next five years instead of 10 will help clear congestion and begin shifting housing and other development. And it will set

the stage for implementing next-level rapid transit options across the region, such as Burrard Inlet Rapid Transit, LRT in Surrey, and new routes along Hastings Street and 41st/49th Avenues in Vancouver.

7. Expand existing free transit programs to youth aged 13 to 18. This will help young British Columbians develop the habit of using transit, a crucial cultural change in shifting transportation patterns. Free transit programs should also expand to cover people on social assistance who are not already included in the BC Bus Pass program.

8. Integrate all these transit pieces into a seamless, coordinated and coherent transit experience — with one-ticket access and synchronized service and information infrastructure, so riders can make connections efficiently and reliably across systems and get the updates they need for their whole trip quickly and easily.

Inter-community Bus Service

It is worth a deeper dive into the primary recommendation because BCFED focus groups revealed strong cross-sector support for inter-community transit service. For many workers, publicly funded transit within and between regions is expressed as a 'common sense,' reasonable, and cross-partisan solution, one that many feel is ignored for no apparent reason. Workers across all sectors were very open to exploring how a climate justice and jobs-focused transit infrastructure policy could help overcome what they describe as barriers to full participation in BC's economy, public conversations, and action on climate change. It was felt that 'if we are disconnected in our politics, it is in part because we are physically disconnected as people.'

The 2025 agreement between the BC Green Caucus and the BC NDP Caucus called for "frequent, reliable, affordable regional transit on key interregional routes on Vancouver Island, along Highway 16, and along Highway 1, with a focus on Sea to Sky corridor transit in 2025."[336] Previous Minister of Transportation Mike Farnworth's 2025 mandate letter called for strengthening "key rural and intercity transportation services [including] working toward regular local transit along the Sea to Sky corridor."[337] The Conservative platform in the recent provincial election also committed funding for a pilot regional express bus on the same route, connecting West Vancouver to Pemberton.[338]

The recent spike in gasoline and diesel prices, and the economic uncertainty caused by President Trump's chaotic and hostile policies, makes the case for improved public transit between communities even stronger.

The BC Assembly of First Nations 2025 *BC First Nations Transportation Assessment Report and Action Plan* states that "transit remains largely inaccessible for many First Nations, with no province-wide well-structured network and limited inter-city services."[339] The newly-formed Public Transit Alliance of BC has also made inter-community bus service a top priority.[340]

Quiet, clean, electric highway coaches are now cost effective and provide a superior passenger experience.[341] A new province-wide public inter-community bus network would require hundreds of vehicles, and a large order could attract an electric bus manufacturer to BC. In contrast, electrifying the present patchwork of private operators would be costly and difficult.

A key governance challenge for inter-community bus service is that some shorter routes make sense as extensions of existing local transit systems, and longer routes would be far more successful as part of an integrated provincial highway coach network but this could be managed through provincial leadership.

Inter-community Bus Service for Wildfire and Flood Evacuation

As the planet overheats, climate disasters including wildfires and floods have become more extreme and frequent. Whole communities, particularly Indigenous communities, need to evacuate more and more often — frequently to communities far from home. The growing population of older seniors translates to more people with disabilities, many of whom are not able to drive long distances in challenging conditions such as thick wildfire smoke.

In September 2026, BC's Human Rights Commissioner released the report, *Through the Haze: A Human Rights Perspective on Wildfires in British Columbia*, which states that people with disabilities make up about a quarter of the people in BC and face systemic barriers to evacuation: "Evacuation processes in particular often fail to account for diverse accessibility needs, creating additional risks for individuals who require support to move safely or maintain continuity of care."[342] Commissioner Kasari Govender highlights that as "the threat of wildfire increases, these unequal impacts become more pronounced."[343]

It is well established that "fragmented evacuation logistics and reliance on informal community networks, exacerbate risks for marginalized groups."[344] BC's privatized and fragmented inter-community bus services mean that coordinated emergency evacuation that meets the needs of vulnerable populations, including older seniors, is extremely difficult.

A new public sector inter-community bus network could be designed to be part of the coordinated response vulnerable people need in long-distance evacuations. Insourcing local transit service province-wide, particularly HandyDART, would complement this — enhancing wildfire and flood evacuation capacity for those who need the most support.

Passenger Trains: Opportunity in BC Rail Privatization Failure

There was also a lot of support for connecting communities through existing rail connections throughout BC in the BCFED focus groups. BC workers love the idea of trains. BC needs to do nation building at the provincial scale. Inter-regional connection is a climate solution, an economic equity solution, and a political solution. "Why can't we have trains?" said an educator in Vanderhoof.

The collapse of the scandal-plagued BC Rail privatization provides an opportunity to unite the province behind one project that would benefit communities across BC and contribute to national economic security.

The main BC Rail route runs from near the SeaBus station in North Vancouver to Prince George. It was an often-profitable, publicly owned and operated, freight railway.[345] The passenger rail service required a modest subsidy, and was discontinued under BC Liberal Premier Gordon Campbell in 2002. In 2003, Campbell claimed that privatizing BC Rail would "provide lower rates, faster service, new transportation infrastructure, new jobs and new resources for economic development."[346]

However, the BC Rail privatization was fraught with controversy, including the allegation that "CN Rail's campaign donations to the BC Liberal Party played a role."[347] The BC Liberal government also helped CN Rail avoid as much as $600 million in federal taxes, over half of the $1 billion that CN paid. In 2010, two ministerial aides plead guilty to multiple criminal charges for leaking information about the privatization.

Campbell also promised "legally binding provisions to protect the public interest should specific sections of rail line be abandoned" including for future passenger train operations,[348] and the government retained a public right-of-way for passenger transport. In 2025, CN Rail announced that they planned to formally abandon

over 300 kilometers of track from Squamish to 100 Mile House.[349] Now the BC Rail Corridor Alliance, including municipal government and First Nations representatives, are working to bring back freight service and passenger rail with the backing of the Union of BC Municipalities.[350]

In July 2026, Mike Farnworth, previous BC Minister of Transportation and Transit stated that the "lands and rail infrastructure are owned by the BC Railway Company, a Crown corporation... it is an asset that could support future goods movement, strengthen supply chains, connect communities and create economic opportunities throughout the region."[351]

If the track can be brought back into public control all the way from North Vancouver to Prince George, this line could support vitally important freight rail service and passenger rail that is valued by a large proportion of the population of BC.

Having multiple rail routes into BC's interior is also crucial for Canada's economic security in this time of climate crisis. Increasing extreme weather events, including atmospheric rivers and wildfires, are making large landslides that disrupt transportation corridors more frequent.[352] The 2021 atmospheric river event disrupted freight and passenger travel for months, and we should be preparing for much worse. The BC rail corridor is the only Canadian rail connection from Metro Vancouver to the rest of Canada that does not go through the geologically unstable south Fraser Canyon and Thompson Canyon, which were further destabilized by climate related wildfires in recent years. Depending on freight rail routes through the US seems unwise given the present political situation.

If operated European-style, with passenger trains having priority over freight trains, this line could provide high-quality low-carbon transportation like similar lines in Sweden and other Nordic countries. The section between North Vancouver and Whistler would have the highest passenger volumes, but the whole route would be popular with BC residents and tourists alike. The fact that the Rocky Mountaineer, an expensive tourist train, ran on this route until CN cut off access in 2025 confirms that the scenery is world class.

Since BC Rail no longer has passenger trains, a logical public sector operator for the North Vancouver to Whistler/Pemberton segment is TransLink, which already operates the West Coast Express regional passenger rail service. Long distance trains to Prince George present more of a governance question and could be operated by Via Rail, a revitalized BC Rail, or a new public entity.

The BC Rail line is a unique economic development opportunity with appeal across the political spectrum. This one line could also re-create the public sector capacity to efficiently operate passenger trains on other lines. Operating a few passenger trains is far less efficient than a fleet of dozens or hundreds of trains — economies of scale are crucial in public transit.

Benefits of Insourcing

Contracting out public transit to multinational corporations has multiple negative effects, and insourcing (bringing operations into the public sector) has many benefits. The expansion of a BC-wide public transit system is thus an excellent opportunity to eliminate privatization. Large private operators focus almost exclusively on profits and share value, not on the public good. And many important aspects of public transit service cannot be easily incorporated into contracts or measured.

While Translink operates transit in Metro Vancouver, in most of the province, BC Transit operates the transit system and contracts out to private sector operators, often multinational corporations, where workers receive lower pay and few benefits. Contracting out has produced

multiple disruptive lockouts and strikes over the past few years, including the longest transit strike in BC history in the Cowichan Valley,[353] involving contracted out BC Transit operations.

HandyDART in Metro Vancouver is a key example of how privatization harms riders and society, as documented by the Save Our HandyDART campaign.[354] The latest example is denying HandyDART service to a Surrey senior with spinal muscular atrophy who requires a special wheelchair.[355] Because of changes in contractors (including by contract flipping), apparently neither TransLink nor the contractor had records regarding this wheelchair being assessed and approved by a previous contractor. Each time a new contractor takes over, important records are lost and "employee morale suffers along with efficiency, quality of service, and workplace health & safety."[356]

In the meantime, while HandyDART remains contracted out, union workers must continue to do HandyDART work and this should be specified in the current Metro Vancouver HandyDART Request for Proposals for the contract that will run from 2027 to 2032 with extension options. The contract should also include a defined, declining share of taxi use as a service quality issue because customer complaints are higher about taxi trips than HandyDART trips in TransLink's own customer data.

Insourcing also makes shifting to quiet, clean, electric buses and HandyDART vehicles easier. In particular, publicly owned operations and maintenance centres make electrification more practical and cost effective.[357] Contracting out also means exporting jobs to foreign head offices, often in the US or Europe, instead of keeping these jobs and taxes in BC. Insourcing is one of the most effective local job creation and economic development actions available, and this is becoming more widely recognized.

The UK is now insourcing many of the transit operations privatized in the 1980s, including passenger rail. The newly insourced Greater Thameslink Railway is aiming to improve service, and also to contribute to the common good by providing good meaningful jobs and training employees in "suicide prevention training and safeguarding programmes designed to help identify and support vulnerable people."[358] In September 2026, Transport for London announced the creation of a new public sector company to directly operate transit buses. "This is an opportunity to reimagine our bus network so that it provides better value for money, supports our climate goals, makes our roads safer, and overall just works better for passengers and drivers alike" said London mayor Sadiq Khan.[359]

The BC government's 2021 statement that insourcing health care results in "employees who feel secure and safe in their jobs [and] provide higher-quality care for people, and in turn employers can attract and retain staff at a higher and more consistent level" is transferable to public transit.[360] Attracting and retaining qualified workers is a challenge in public transit, like in health care. Insourcing creates better wages and working conditions, as well as better and more reliable transit service with fewer labour disruptions.

Procurement: Overhaul and Manufacturing Jobs

Public transit is one of the best job-creating investments governments can make.[361] Most of the work has to be done locally: including driving, and cleaning and maintaining vehicles and bus shelters. Construction work for public transit also tends to be skilled, detail oriented, and done largely by workers who live in BC.

An immediate way to create even more good jobs in multiple locations in BC is to increase the capacity for BC Transit and TransLink to do comprehensive mid-life overhauls to extend the life of the buses we purchase. BC Transit is desperately short of maintenance space, and building maintenance and overhaul facilities would provide immediate construction jobs as well as

long-term jobs for mechanics and other trades.[362] The skills workers gain through bus overhaul work is transferable to bus manufacturing, so making our buses last longer through overhauls creates the conditions for manufacturing in the future.

In a BCFED focus group, a bus driver said "The heat is way different than it used to be. We feel that. We have drivers who have almost lost their consciousness because of the heat." Air conditioning systems can be upgraded at mid-life to keep riders and workers comfortable and safe, if the overhaul facilities exist.

President Trump has torn up previous Canada—US trade agreements, creating an opening for buy Canadian and buy BC policies that create even more good local jobs, and both the federal and provincial governments have now made local procurement commitments. The BC government could seek out a private sector electric bus manufacturer to establish a plant in BC, and the European bus manufacturer, Solaris, is a likely prospect. The key thing that might attract a manufacturer to BC is a large initial order, and the fact that TransLink and BC Transit do procurement separately means that each bus order is smaller than it could be. Buy local policies and joint procurement could also be applied to other things that transit agencies and multiple levels of government purchase, including bus shelters.



"The heat is way different than it used to be. We feel that. We have drivers who have almost lost their consciousness because of the heat." — Bus driver in BCFED focus group

The Investment

This plan requires:

- $16.5 billion[363] over 10 years to improve the frequency, speed and reliability of existing transit and introduce new services to build a province-wide network, and
- An accelerated $6.8 billion in funding already promised by the BC government for transit projects in Metro Vancouver.

By comparison, the BC government spends more than $5 billion[364] per year on transportation capital spending (including roads and transit) alone. There is $10 billion in highway projects (spanning multiple years) on the BC Budget docket, plus about $650 million per year for other maintenance and operation of roads and bridges.

Non-transit spending — highways, bridges and tunnels — is fully funded by the BC government. As this plan's transit investment will relieve pressure on that infrastructure, a large portion of the plan could be funded by repurposing some of that budget.

Finally, our plan calls on the BC government to increase its annual subsidy to all transit services in BC from $400 million today to $1.6 billion at the end of the plan's 10-year scope.

There is also an opportunity to link public investment to public benefits through project labour agreements or community benefit agreements through BC Infrastructure Benefits on infrastructure construction. As noted by the BC Building Trades, "local infrastructure projects should provide a greater benefit to local communities than just the project on the blueprint. Through Project Labour Agreements (PLAs), these taxpayer-funded projects can secure work, skills training and fair wages to qualified local residents and groups who are traditionally underrepresented in the skilled trades sector, such as apprentices, Indigenous workers and women in trades."[366]

Table 11. Summary of Capital Costs

($million 2026 dollars)[366]

	10 yr total	2027/ 2028	2028/ 2029	2029/ 2030	2030/ 2031	2031/ 2032	2032/ 2033	2033/ 2034	2034/ 2035	2035/ 2036	2036/ 2037
Accelerated TransLink ten-year plan (BRT, UBC line, SFU gondola, Metro Vancouver HandyDART)	7275	1455	1455	1455	1455	1455					
Rapid transit expansion in Metro Vancouver	4280						856	856	856	856	856
Regional Rail											
West Coast Express	535		107	214	214						
Fraser Valley rail	1605			214	535	535	321				
BC Rail line to Prince George	1070			321	321	214	214				
Vancouver Island Rail	1605				214	321	321	321	321	107	
Passenger Ferries	1070				214	214	214	214	214		
BC Transit local/regional bus services (including HandyDART)	4280		214	214	428	428	428	642	642	642	642
Inter-regional/inter-city express bus	1605		214	214	321	321	107	107	107	107	107
Information infrastructure	428		107	107	107	107					
Total capital costs	**23752**	**1455**	**2097**	**2739**	**3809**	**3595**	**2461**	**2140**	**2140**	**1712**	**1605**
New funding (net of TransLink ten-year plan)	**16476**		**642**	**1284**	**2354**	**2140**	**2461**	**2140**	**2140**	**1712**	**1605**

**Adjusted for inflation to 2026 dollars using bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/.
Years updated to start from 2027/28 (from 2024/25)

Public Transit Funding

Public transit is a great investment that contributes to prosperity and social wellbeing. In contrast, the concentration of extreme wealth is undermining economic security and social cohesion. Taxing very rich individuals and corporations is the most promising way to fund the ambitious kinds of public transit investments outlined here. A new, sustainable funding model for public transit is desperately needed in BC.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives explains that "the tax system is an important tool that we have to raise revenue, but also to structure markets so that wealth (and power) cannot concentrate indefinitely.... People are calling on their governments to use the tax system to limit extreme wealth and power all around the world."[367] BC Policy Solutions asserts that "BC's current fiscal challenges stem from the fact that the province is collecting far less revenue than it did 25 years ago. BC's own-source revenues ... have plummeted from 19% of GDP to 15% of GDP

over the last quarter century. This represents $18.7 billion in foregone revenues annually."[368]

Making the provincial and federal tax system fairer is the most promising way to provide the funding needed for greatly improved public transit.[369] Unfortunately, the federal government has recently cut $5 billion from previously committed public transit funding.[370] However, the federal NDP is explicitly calling for a Green New Deal including an excess profits tax on fossil fuel corporations and dramatic improvements to public transit. [371]

Regional Transit Governance and Funding

In contrast to the federal and provincial governments, municipalities and regional districts have limited ability to make taxes fairer and raise more revenue. However, their role in governing and funding transit is crucial.

One potential revenue source is a land value capture tax — increasing property taxes on land near new transit lines. Movement, a Metro Vancouver transit advocacy group, held a competition in 2025 which identified a sales tax and a vehicle levy as the top two potential regional funding sources for transit,[372] although the Conservative Party ruled out a vehicle levy during the 2026 election.[373] All of these raise governance challenges, including the need for cooperation from the provincial government.

It is critical to review TransLink's, BC Transit's, and BC Ferries' governance structures to maximize responsive and efficient decision making, and support a fully integrated system across the province.

BC Transit is a provincial agency, with limited roles for local elected officials. The members of the Victoria Transit Commission are appointed by the provincial government, which does not always appoint the municipal councillors that municipalities nominate. In other areas, BC Transit staff work with regional districts and municipalities.

Metro Vancouver's transit agency, TransLink, is a creation of the provincial government, receives provincial funding, and has a legislated responsibility to consider all relevant provincial objectives including climate targets.[374] TransLink's governance is confusing. People may think that the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation oversees TransLink but it does not. It is the Board of Directors, which includes only two democratically elected mayors and up to nine other appointees, that primarily controls operations.[375]

The complexity of regional transit governance and funding is illustrated by the fact that the Regional District of Central Kootenay, City of Nelson, Regional District of Kootenay Boundary, Interior Health Authority, and BC Transit all fund the West Kootenay Transit System.[376] To operate direct buses between Victoria and Nanaimo would require the cooperation of at least two regional districts, the Victoria Transit Commission, and BC Transit.

The provincial government may have examined public transit governance and funding as part of the *Clean Transportation Action Plan* process. However, the Plan, which was expected by the end of 2023, has not yet been released.[377] In early 2026, the provincial government also requested input on TransLink governance from selected groups including the BCFED. The BCFED response asked "If the TransLink board isn't accountable to the public, transit workers, regional mayors, seniors and disability rights organizations, or the provincial government, who are they accountable to?" No response has yet been received.

The present governance structure for public transit in BC seems to be designed to create confusion, cynicism and political paralysis. Resolving this situation requires leadership from the provincial government to improve transparency, representation and accountability, and increase trust. There is a role for the BC government in reviewing TransLink's, BC Transit's, and BC Ferries' governance structures to maximize responsive and efficient decision making, and support a fully integrated system across the province.

Building a Cleaner, Brighter Future for BC Communities

Great jobs: The investments in this plan will have a major impact on jobs, creating:

- An average of 16,800 jobs in construction of public transit infrastructure projects, such as a new rapid transit bridge across Burrard Inlet, electric bus charging terminals, and multiple bus, rail and ferry terminals and stations
- An average of 23,700 jobs in operations, including drivers, supervisors, mechanics, maintenance crews, security and more.

This would include multiple skilled trades involved in the building out of this public transit vision: operating engineers, pile drivers, labourers, carpenters, cement masons, ironworkers, millwrights, electricians, plumbers, pipefitters and steamfitters, refrigeration workers, insulators, sheet metal workers, glaziers, tile-setters, wall and ceiling installers, and painters. This requires an additional investment in skilled trades training to ensure the numbers of skilled tradespeople needed as this plan rolls out. In terms of operations, new infrastructure supports jobs for drivers, supervisors, mechanics, maintenance and other operations.

Pathways into these jobs will be prioritized for those traditionally under-represented in the trades, including Indigenous and racialized workers, and women and gender diverse people. And because the plan will bring thousands of workers who are currently contracted out or working for private transportation companies back under the public umbrella, it will upgrade those jobs with higher wages and better benefits and working conditions.

For the job opportunities to come to fruition, no public transit agency or contractor in BC should use automated (self-driving) vehicles to replace buses operated by a driver. This means it should not acquire, test, operate or maintain automated vehicles (AV), or let its property (stops, garages, maintenance facilities) be used for AV programs. At a minimum, there should be: no AV operated without bargaining with the relevant union first; a trained operator with a conventional workstation in the driver's seat at all times; no remote operators; no loss of hours, pay, benefits or positions because of an AV program; new AV-related jobs in the bargaining unit with existing members first in line and employer-paid training; AV dispatch and maintenance done by bargaining unit members; and premium pay for AV work. In addition, operators should not be disciplined for incidents tied to the automated system or to a sudden handover of control. For HandyDART, this matters even more, because operators assist and secure passengers, not only drive.

Stronger, healthier communities: Those effects will ripple through the economy, raising GDP and employment. And there will be wide-ranging social, economic and environmental benefits. By making transit more available in more communities, this plan will help increase affordability. It will reduce travel times for all — including freight and private vehicles — while lowering health care costs and improving air quality.

Smarter growth: BC's expanded transit network will reshape development patterns, orienting them toward transit and increasing density. It will spur the transition of suburban areas into more complete communities and help revitalize town centres.

A cleaner province: These investments are central to dramatically reducing the one-third of BC's greenhouse gas emissions that come from transportation.

British Columbia can accomplish a full transformation of public transit and transportation province-wide within one decade. And with it will come greater access to education, health care and employment, stronger public sector jobs, lower carbon emissions and healthier British Columbians. Public appetite for dramatically improved public transit is strong, and there are many opportunities to break through the political gridlock and get transformative transit improvements rolling. Let's not keep BC riders waiting. It's time to invest in the transit British Columbians deserve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Connect BC communities everywhere through a new province-wide express bus service.**
- **Double the number of buses in BC Transit local services within five years and triple it within 10,** for more frequent, reliable local transit services in communities throughout BC.
- **Expand HandyDART service province-wide with an upgraded electric fleet.** Stop contracting with private companies for services and using taxis instead of buses.
- **Develop new regional rail connections along historic rail corridors, in partnership with First Nations communities along the rail lines.**
- **Add new passenger ferry options between Vancouver, the Gulf Islands, Sunshine Coast and Vancouver Island.**
- **Accelerate TransLink's 10-year Access for Everyone plan for Metro Vancouver.**
- **Expand existing free transit programs to youth aged 13 to 18.**
- **Integrate all these transit pieces into a seamless, coordinated and coherent transit experience.**
- **Eliminate privatization** to ensure better wages and working conditions, as well as better and more reliable transit service with fewer labour disruptions.
- **Implement buy local policies and joint procurement**, and immediately increase the capacity for BC Transit and TransLink to do comprehensive mid-life overhauls to extend the life of the buses we purchase.
- **Initiate a new, sustainable funding model** including increasing progressive tax options.
- **Review TransLink's, BC Transit's, and BC Ferries' governance structures** to maximize responsive and efficient decision making, and support a fully integrated system across the province.

BC Ship-Building Strategy

It was disappointing to see BC Ferries make the decision in June 2025 to buy the next four ships it needs to enhance the provincial fleet from a ship-building yard in China.[378] The BCFED supports the Build Them Here Shipbuilding Coalition of more than 15 unions in calling for a provincial ship-building strategy to ensure that future vessels are built in BC.[379]

BC has a strong shipbuilding industry with world-class shipbuilding skills and technical capability. What we're missing is a plan to keep the work at home. China, the United States, Norway and Finland all use government purchasing and other official policies to support their shipyards. BC should follow their lead in establishing a provincial shipbuilding strategy, and BC Ferries' commitment to electrification to protect the coastal environment should be built into it.

Until 2002, every ferry built for BC Ferries was made in BC. Building those ships here put paycheques in our communities and money in our schools and hospitals. In 2002, the provincial government directed BC Ferries to open ferry construction and refit contracts to international bidders. Since then, all new large BC Ferries vessels have been built outside Canada. Without steady work, shipyards had little reason to invest in the facilities and workers needed to keep building large ferries. We call on the BC government to change course: make building in Canada part of BC Ferries' mandate and start building the shipyard capacity needed to bring that work home.

This is a critical job creation opportunity. 40 per cent of Canada's shipbuilding jobs are in BC and 2,000 new BC shipbuilding jobs were created in the last decade. But, if the $1.7 billion average annual Canadian shipbuilding trade deficit (meaning we're buying more than we're selling) since 2017 was eliminated through local procurement, there would be an additional 5,000 well-paying ship-building jobs nationwide. And, if

work equal to BC Ferries' four-ship China contract were done in Canada, over 10,000 person-years of employment would be created. Other benefits include $1.5 billion added to Canada's GDP (85 per cent in BC) and $413 million additional revenue.

A stronger shipbuilding strategy includes building ferries here, changes to how BC Ferries buys ships to support Canadian shipbuilding, and training for the workers we need. "Shipbuilding countries around the world (including both China and the U.S.) routinely use a wide array of active industrial policies to support investment, innovation, production, and employment in their respective shipbuilding industries. Active industrial policy is a core and normal feature of global shipbuilding trade, shaping the competitiveness and success of all shipbuilding nations."[380] The federal government itself has had a National Shipbuilding Strategy since 2010, which includes the requirement that new ships need to be built in Canada.[381]

One of the claims that BC Ferries made in the decision to contract with a Chinese ship-building yard is that it needed to build the ferries overseas to meet the urgent needs of coastal communities to have new ferries in operation as soon as possible. However, delays had been caused by BC Ferries' poor planning and buying process; the procurement process was originally planned to start 10 years ago.[382] Also, foreign-built ferries cause longer delays for passengers when they need repairs. Often teams are brought in from overseas instead of having local workers fix the problem and foreign-built parts need to be ordered from overseas, adding time to the process.[383]

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building ferries in BC again requires action from BC Ferries, the provincial and federal governments, industry, workers and training providers. Here's how we can make it happen:

- **Buy Canadian:** BC Ferries must commit to building ships in Canada, maximizing domestic content and materials on ship builds, and remove criteria restricting our shipyards from bidding.
- **Get everyone to the table:** The provincial government must form a task force to develop a BC shipbuilding strategy that includes ferries, complementing the *National Shipbuilding Strategy*.
- **Expand capacity:** BC must take a leadership role in creating a consortium of shipyards and investors to expand shipbuilding capacity and bid on future BC Ferries contracts.
- **Develop the workforce:** The provincial government must develop a companion workforce strategy to expand training and apprenticeships in shipbuilding and mariner trades and occupations.
- **Set timelines:** BC Ferries must set a long-term ferry purchasing timeline, giving industry time to invest, scale capacity and plan bids, and training providers time to recruit and train workers.
- **Federal Support:** Ottawa must update the *Coasting Trade Act* to require Canadian ferry construction and ensure public investments, through the Canada Infrastructure Bank and other programs, require the use of Canadian materials and create jobs for Canadians.
- **Invest:** The provincial and federal governments must partner with industry to make the necessary investments to expand shipbuilding and domestic supply-chain capacity.

The ferries being built in China are not the last ferries BC Ferries will need. More ships will be needed as our population grows and older vessels need to be replaced. In September 2026, previous premier David Eby announced that BC's next generation of ferries will be built here, a significant win for the Build Them Here Coalition. During the provincial election, all major parties made commitments to insource more ferry construction in BC.[384] However, we still need a provincial ship-building strategy to ensure this commitment comes to fruition. If we want our ferries built here, governments need to start planning now.[385]

CHAPTER 6

Circular Economy



The vast majority of what Canada uses is made from new material. The Council of Canadian Academies estimated in 2021 that only 6.1 per cent of the material entering the Canadian economy came from recycled sources. The other 94 per cent was extracted or imported new. Growing BC's circular economy can help resolve this problem, creating thousands of jobs in the process.

The Council of Canadian Academies defines a circular economy as "a systemic approach to production and consumption for living within planetary boundaries that conserves material resources, reduces energy and water use, and generates less waste and pollution."[386] This contrasts with a linear economy, "a system where resources are extracted to make products that eventually end up as waste and are thrown away."[387] Circle Economy estimated in 2024 that just under 80,000 jobs in Montreal are circular, making up 7.6 per cent of employment there,[388] but we don't have comparable data for BC cities. Zero Waste BC has recommended that a provincial circular economy strategy measure this, as well as material flows and carbon footprints.[389]

The circular economy matters because it plays an important role for achieving a net-zero economy. Of global greenhouse gas emissions, 45 per cent comes from producing goods and managing land.[390] Making things from recovered material takes far less energy. For example, in North America, recycled aluminium takes 93 per cent less energy than new aluminium.[391] Steel made from scrap uses about 42 per cent of the energy of blast furnace steel.[392] It also emits 70 per cent less carbon.[393]

Waste was a dominant concern in the BCFED focus groups. Most workers had a readily available story of seeing excessive waste in their workplaces. "The amount of waste is flabbergasting," said an HEU member from Chilliwack. "I see it getting worse" another health worker from Vancouver Island said. "A little item wrapped in plastic in a really big box. Our systems are predicated upon cost, versus environment." A paramedic described excessive single-use plastic equipment that cannot be recycled, repurposed or reused. "I don't actually need a package around my package," they said. Workers in the building trades also discussed waste and the need for meaningful improvements to job site recycling. "There is just an obscene amount of garbage as it gets into finishing stages," said a plumber working on Vancouver Island. "I don't need a plastic bag for one fitting. It's just plastic plastic plastic."

However, circular economy work is not only recycling. The European Union counts 77 kinds of business in its official measure of circular employment. Eighteen of them are repair and maintenance. They include repairing machinery, vehicles, computers, household appliances, furniture, footwear and watches. Eleven are rental and leasing, from car hire to construction equipment. Six cover sewerage, waste collection, materials recovery and second-hand retail. [394]Repair is the largest single circular activity worldwide, accounting for 46 per cent of circular economy employment, or at least 65.2 million people.[395] Recycling matters, but it ranks ninth out of ten circular strategies in priority, below reuse and repair.[396]

In many ways, British Columbia is a Canadian leader in the circular economy. It has run the oldest legislated deposit-return recycling system in North America since 1970.[397] It diverted 37.2 per cent of its waste in 2024, against a national average of 23.8 per cent. Only Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia divert more.[398]

However, progress towards creating a circular economy in BC has stalled. In October 2021, the province committed to a circular economy strategy.[399] However, its zero waste and circular economy webpage still names no strategy.[400]

The province's circular economy strategy should be developed, and should cover secondary metals as well as packaging. It should also be written with the unions already in this work, and it should set wage, training and safety standards.

Unions have a critical role to play in the circular economy. A circular economy shifts work toward repair, reuse and remanufacturing, which are more labour intensive than extraction and manufacturing.[401] However, more work is not the same as better work. The European Environment Agency finds that, "in sectors such as waste management, electronics repair and textile reuse there are risks of low pay, limited protection and irregular hours, particularly for informal workers, migrants and women."[402] European public sector unions are more blunt. Workers in the waste sector face "precarious working conditions, low wages, weak collective bargaining."[403]

In this chapter, we look at four parts of the circular economy in turn, each with its own recommendations. The areas of focus are battery recycling and second life, recycling and urban mining, construction, demolition and deconstruction, and organics. The same three questions run through all four. Does the material stay in BC, or does the value in it leave? Does anyone count the work? And who sets the terms for the people who do it? Roughly 1,300 jobs, direct and indirect, are created from the three main initiatives: a mill for the province's own scrap, a deconstruction standard and a province-wide organics requirement.

Battery Recycling and Second Life

British Columbia already recycles batteries. KC Recycling was founded in 1977 and is based in Trail, where it recycles 40,000 tons of lead batteries a year with 75 employees,[404] represented by the United SteelWorkers union.[405] Lead is the one vehicle battery chemistry the province regulates. That chemistry has an established industry here and the province's only known unionized battery recycling workforce. Cirba Solutions runs a lithium battery recycling plant, also in Trail.[406] In Metro Vancouver, Moment Energy opened a battery repurposing plant in Surrey in June 2026 and says it will create more than 100 direct jobs by 2030[407] and Mangrove Lithium opened a lithium refinery in Delta in April 2026.[408]

In 2021, the province said it aimed to "implement the first EPR [Extended Producer Responsibility] program for electric vehicle batteries in Canada" by 2026.[409] An EPR program for batteries would make it a requirement that EV automakers ensure their batteries are recycled or reused, creating the foundation for a larger battery recycling sector in the province. However, in 2025, the province told CBC News that it will no longer be adding EV batteries to the program by 2026, citing consultation with industry and global changes in the EV market.[410]

Despite the slow progress, the province has shown the ability to regulate other batteries for recycling. For non-EV vehicle batteries, the Recycling Regulation has a lead-acid battery product category covering batteries weighing more than two kilograms.[411] An approved product stewardship program for lead-acid batteries has operated in British Columbia since 2011,[412] requiring producers to take back automotive lead-acid batteries. More recently, the province has expanded its Recycling Regulation to include 12-volt batteries that "can be connected or installed by the consumer."[413]

When a vehicle leaves the province, that work leaves with it. Dismantling, testing and grading happen wherever the battery pack ends up. The

Automotive Retailers Association analysed 2024 ICBC salvage auction outcomes and estimates that for every 100 electric vehicles bought by rebuilders and dealers, "only about 20 or so are actually rebuilt and put back on the road in B.C."[414]

Like in the EU, BC should extend the obligation for producers to recover lead-acid batteries to lithium ion traction batteries and other battery technologies, on a take-back basis rather than a collection target, and require producers to accept batteries from dismantlers, repurposers and vehicle treatment facilities.[415] Conditions set through a producer responsibility program should cover collection and transport on the same terms as processing,[416] and reach the worker regardless of which company employs them. Producers should report employment, wages and injuries in an annual report.

Battery recycling work, particularly for EVs, requires skilled labour due to the wide variety of battery designs.[417] Furthermore, recycling demand is expected to increase, with the potential for substantial jobs in this sector. British Columbia had 194,715 light-duty zero emission vehicles registered at the end of 2024, against about 5,000 in 2016.[418] However, there are currently no labour conditions associated with public investments incentivizing this sector, such as funding from the BC government for Moment Energy to repurpose EV batteries.[419] Public money for battery recycling and repurposing should carry enforceable labour, wage and notice conditions.

Battery recycling can be dangerous work. For example, a fire at the Toxco plant near Trail in 2009 burned for about 22 hours.[420] Cirba Solutions operates on that site today and does regular fire safety training.[421] The citations at battery recyclers in the United States include a lack of respirator fit testing,[422] hazard communication and emergency response planning.[423] There is also the danger of exposure to hazardous substances. In 2019, KC Recycling was fined almost $23,000 for repeated high-risk violations in the lack of implementation of an effective exposure control plan to keep workers' exposure to these substances as low as possible.[424]

In BC, Part 19 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation reaches battery work only in general terms. Its voltage thresholds do not distinguish direct current, and it names no battery and no arc flash.[425] Its provisions assume a power system that can be switched off. However, a battery cannot be switched off. Part 10 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation requires an energy isolating device that prevents the release of an energy source. It says nothing about energy stored in the equipment itself.[426]

The Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) should implement regulations covering the handling, storage, dismantling and emergency response this work involves, developed with the unions in the workplaces that already do it. Detailed training requirements should be included in the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and WCB should consider certification requirements for workers in battery recycling (similar to the approach in asbestos abatement).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Implement an Extended Producer Responsibility Program for EV batteries, including designating electric vehicle batteries under the Recycling Regulation.**
- **Attach labour standards and reporting to producer responsibility and to public investment.**
- **Include battery work (including advanced battery technologies, such as lithium-ion, nickel manganese cobalt, etc.) in BC's occupational health and safety regulations.**

Recycling and Urban Mining

The term "urban mining" was developed in Japan, coined by Michio Nanjo, a mineral processing engineer, in the 1980s.[427] Germany's federal environment agency describes urban mining as recovering secondary raw materials from long-lived products, buildings, infrastructure and deposits.[428] Urban mining is a wider concept than recycling, which begins when something is discarded. Urban mining treats the whole above-ground stock as a deposit, like a deposit of metals in the ground. It covers metal still in use and metal sitting idle in equipment nobody has thrown out. It also covers metal already buried in landfills and tailings.[429]

British Columbia collects a great deal of material, but processes very little of it. The province diverted 1,767,195 tonnes in 2024, of which metals accounted for 8.1 per cent. However, customs data shows that British Columbia exported 837,684 tonnes of ferrous scrap in 2025, representing roughly $770 million of scrap metal leaving the province that year.[430] The volume of ferrous scrap leaving the province could supply a mill of ordinary size.[431] A mill of that size is a substantial employer. Gerdau's Whitby mill in Ontario runs 949,000 tonnes of capacity with about 600 workers. Staffed at that rate, processing the scrap British Columbia now exports would support roughly 490 jobs directly and about 790 once the industries supplying the mill are counted.[432]

Today, the province does have some processing capacity. Teck's Trail smelter, mentioned previously in the batteries recycling section, has recycled lead batteries since 1982.[433] The province has one large-scale auto shredder, Richmond Steel Recycling, but it sells its ferrous material to Nucor's mill in Seattle.[434] A secondary aluminium remelt plant in Langley launched in August 2026.[435] We need to build this value-added sector.

Currently, the Recycling Regulation does not use the words end market, destination or export.[436] British Columbia's industry-run appliance stewardship agency states that it does not track processing pathways and does not know where the metal it collects is processed.[437] Other jurisdictions do it differently, for example, Oregon publishes the list of receiving facilities by name.[438] Knowing where the material goes is a precondition for keeping it in the province, helping to grow manufacturing in the region based on these materials.

CASE STUDY: Some sectors have launched their own initiatives. IATSE 891 member, Kelsey Evans, was working on a film set and saw the amount of waste generated by film productions. She decided to do something about it and, in 2010, launched Keep It Green Recycling, which runs recycling services and also hosts a Material Reuse Warehouse.[439] This space takes any reusable materials from film productions, from set materials to props to costumes, and redistributes them to schools, charities, community organizations and other productions at no cost.

Recycling is not a small employer, but British Columbia does not measure it. Waste management and remediation alone employed 7,748 people in the province in 2025.[440] Much of the work is unionized, and has been for decades. The new plants are the exception.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Require producers and processors to report where the material goes as a starting point to grow the recycling processing sector in BC.**

Construction, Demolition and Deconstruction

Demolition and deconstruction are different operations, and the distinction matters for our goal of a net zero economy. Vancouver's Green Demolition By-law defines deconstruction as "the systematic dismantling of a building, typically in the opposite order to which it was constructed."[441] In contrast, demolition is described as bulldozers and wrecking balls, "resulting in limited reusability."[442] Oregon's environment department found that deconstructing a house instead of demolishing it yields a net benefit of 7.6 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, and reuse of the wood "yields a benefit almost twice as large" as landfilling it.[443] Vancouver's Green Demolition By-law recognized that material that is "reused or salvaged, rather than recycled or disposed of" counts toward the bylaw's target "at a rate of five times its actual weight."[444] British Columbia's own Recycling Regulation prioritizes reuse above recycling.[445]

The scale of construction and demolition waste is substantial, making it a large part of BC's waste system. British Columbia demolished 31,238 dwelling units between 2018 and 2025, at nearly twice the national rate per person.[446] Metro Vancouver disposes of about 372,000 tonnes of construction and demolition waste a year. That is roughly one third of everything the region sends to disposal. Wood is 48 per cent of it by weight.[447]

British Columbia has no provincial requirement to salvage anything from a demolition. However, local governments have asked for this twice, in 2021 and 2022, through the Union of BC Municipalities.[448] There is no evidence that the province has taken any action so municipalities have written their own bylaws instead. Vancouver established its own bylaw in 2014, and Burnaby and Victoria established theirs in 2022.[449] Where Vancouver requires deconstruction, projects reported diverting an estimated 175,000 tonnes between 2019 and 2023 from the landfill.[450] Those numbers are contractor-reported, and no municipality publishes what it has enforced.

The province should write a rule setting how much material has to be salvaged when a building comes down, with different tiers of strictness. Local governments would choose which tier applies in its area, similar to how the BC Building Code works today. Builders would pay a deposit before demolition and get it back once they show they met the standard. This system would replace the various different targets that municipalities have today, which contractors and workers have to learn in each community.

Deconstruction is more work than demolition. Mechanical demolition of a 1,400 square foot house takes a crew of two or three. Deconstructing the same house takes six to eight.[451] Portland requires deconstruction of its older houses. Applying its rate to the 2,781 single-detached houses British Columbia demolishes each year would support about 130 jobs directly and roughly 160 once supplying industries are counted.[452] For steel buildings, Ironworkers Local 97 is already undertaking "demolition, revision, repair and dismantling" in the province,[453] and has been involved in the deconstruction of the old Patullo Bridge in Metro Vancouver.

Workplace safety in deconstruction is a real issue. Asbestos exposure is the leading cause of work-related death in the province. There were 1,112 accepted deaths between 2002 and 2021.[454] There is no indication of hands-on training for this work existing in Canada.

Deconstruction does not happen on its own and requires financial incentives to make it economically viable. The Victoria Residential Builders Association estimates demolition of a house at $10,000 to $12,000 and puts deconstruction at up to $30,000.[455] Salvaged framing can become furniture, finish work and resale instead. However, the Building Code requires framing lumber to carry a grade stamp, and it sets no procedure for regrading used material. Salvaged lumber that has lost its stamp

has no route back into a wall.[456] To date, that market for salvaged wood in BC has not been reliable enough to compensate for the higher deconstruction costs.

The same is true in some other jurisdictions. For example, Portland has required deconstruction since 2016 and a university evaluation prepared for the city a year later found that certified contractors faced "difficulties clearing salvaged material in downstream resale markets." Those markets are, in the evaluation's words, "a key offset to the higher labor cost that deconstruction entails."[457]

Washington presumes used lumber "in good condition and devoid of areas of decay" to be spruce-pine-fir stud grade at 2x6 and smaller, and hem-fir No. 2 above that.[458] BC could adopt a similar rule to promote reuse of lumber and make it more financially viable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Set a provincial deconstruction standard, and provide a refundable deposit for construction companies deconstructing buildings.**
- **Adopt Washington's rule on salvaged lumber, and set the default grade conservatively.**

Organics and the Biological Cycle

British Columbia diverted 586,322 tonnes of organic material in 2024,[459] which is a third of everything the province diverted from landfill.[460] However, Metro Vancouver's 2024 composition study found compostable organics to be 22 per cent of the garbage entering the region's public waste system.[461] The Regional District of Nanaimo's audit put them at just under 25 per cent in 2022.[462]

The province captures under half of its organic waste, but it still does better than most of Canada, at approximately 100 kilograms per person in 2024 against a national average of 75.[463] Nova Scotia leads at 157 kilograms.[464] It has banned compostable organic material from landfill and incineration since June 1, 1997, and includes business waste, not just residential.[465] In contrast, British Columbia has no province-wide requirement. Instead, the rule is left to regional districts.[466] Four of the province's 27 regional districts have a disposal ban, along with the municipalities of Squamish, Whistler and Terrace.[467] The province already has the power to impose a disposal ban, and no new legislation is needed.[468] A prohibition would build organics processing capacity across the province, and the jobs that go with it. A project in Kamloops is a good example of the type of facility needed — a partnership between Grasslands Organics and the Tk̓emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation, Stswékstem Engineered Waste Management Facility was launched in 2024 and diverts 8,000 tonnes of food waste from the landfill every year.[469]

CleanBC promises to keep 95 per cent of residential food and yard waste out of landfill by 2030.[470] Nothing equivalent covers business. The Regional District of Nanaimo has required commercial, institutional and multi-family properties to separate organics since January 2025.[471] Massachusetts required it of large businesses in 2014. Direct employment in its commercial organics sector grew from 493 in 2016 to 751 in 2024, and total employment including supplying industries from about 1,100 to nearly 1,700.[472] Scaled to British Columbia's population, a comparable requirement here would support about 200 jobs directly and roughly 380 once supplying industries are counted.[473]

Waste management and remediation employed 7,748 people in British Columbia in 2025.[474] Collection accounts for 47 per cent of those jobs and treatment and disposal for a further 20 per cent.[475] Collection splits between municipal crews and national contractors, and unionized

teams can be found in both. The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) represents many of these municipal workers across the province, as well as IBEW Local 213, which has a unit within the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako responsible for waste management and recycling. Unfortunately, contract flipping is a significant issue in municipalities across the province and, when a waste collection contract is retendered, British Columbia's successorship protection does not follow the work.[476] The province's successorship rules cover building cleaning, security, bus transportation, food services and non-clinical health services, but waste collection could be added to that list by regulation. A union's bargaining rights and collective agreement would then carry over to the new contractor whenever a retendered contract keeps substantially similar work going.[477]

Some of the facilities that were built with public money are run by private operators. The province's grant programs set no wage, training or safety conditions[478] — this should change. The province does already attach conditions to some of the public projects it builds itself through the Community Benefit Agreement administered by BC Infrastructure Benefits.[479] And the federal government only allows companies to claim the full rate on its clean economy tax credits if it pays prevailing wages and makes reasonable efforts to have registered apprentices work at least a tenth of the hours worked by Red Seal tradespeople.[480]

Work in organic collection and processing can pose serious safety issues. WCB's premium rates treat the risk to composting workers as comparable to the risk to collection workers.[481] Both rates sit well above the provincial average.[482] Three workers died (Ut Van Tran, Chi Wai (Jimmy) Chan, and Han Duc Pham) and two others suffered severe brain injuries at a Langley mushroom composting operation in 2008 while clearing a blocked pipe in a pump shed.[483] WCB found the pump shed had never been identified as a confined space.[484] Unlike in Alberta, BC does not require certification for composting facility operators.[485] Nothing requires an operator to take the one course offered here.[486] Last year, WCB did a public consultation on requirements related to toxic process gases and we recommend that the Board move forward with its proposed amendments to strengthen the requirements in the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OSHR).

WCB targets industries with a high risk of serious workplace injury and a significant contribution to the provincial serious injury and time-loss claims rates. This sector's serious injury rate is 2.9 times the provincial average. WCB should do outreach to both workers and employers, develop resources, and do inspections and enforcement to make the industry safer for workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Prohibit the disposal of organic material across the province, and extend the requirement to businesses and institutions.**
- **Attach labour conditions to public money for organics facilities.**
- **Extend successorship protection to waste management and recycling.**
- **Strengthen the OHS Regulation in relation to this sector and make this sector a WCB inspection priority.**

Conclusion

British Columbia is already better at organics processing than most of the country, diverting 37 per cent of its waste in 2024 against a national average of 24 per cent. It has also run the oldest legislated deposit-return recycling system in North America since 1970. Yet only six per cent of the material entering the Canadian economy comes from recycled sources, and much of what British Columbia collects is processed somewhere else. The province exported 837,684 tonnes of ferrous scrap in 2025, roughly $770 million of secondary metal, into a market where 11 of Canada's 15 electric arc furnaces are sized to run on less than that. Electric vehicles leave the province with their batteries and the dismantling work goes with them. Wood is 48 per cent of the construction and demolition waste Metro Vancouver buries. The province committed to a circular economy strategy in 2021 and has not yet published one.

How this work is organized matters just as much as whether it happens at all. Repair, reuse and remanufacturing are more labour intensive than extraction, so a circular economy adds jobs whether or not anyone designs it to. Whether they are good jobs is a separate question, and nothing in the province's current approach answers it. British Columbia does not measure employment in recycling. The three measures this chapter is able to cost, a mill for the province's own scrap, a deconstruction standard and a province-wide organics requirement, would together support roughly 1,300 jobs, direct and indirect.

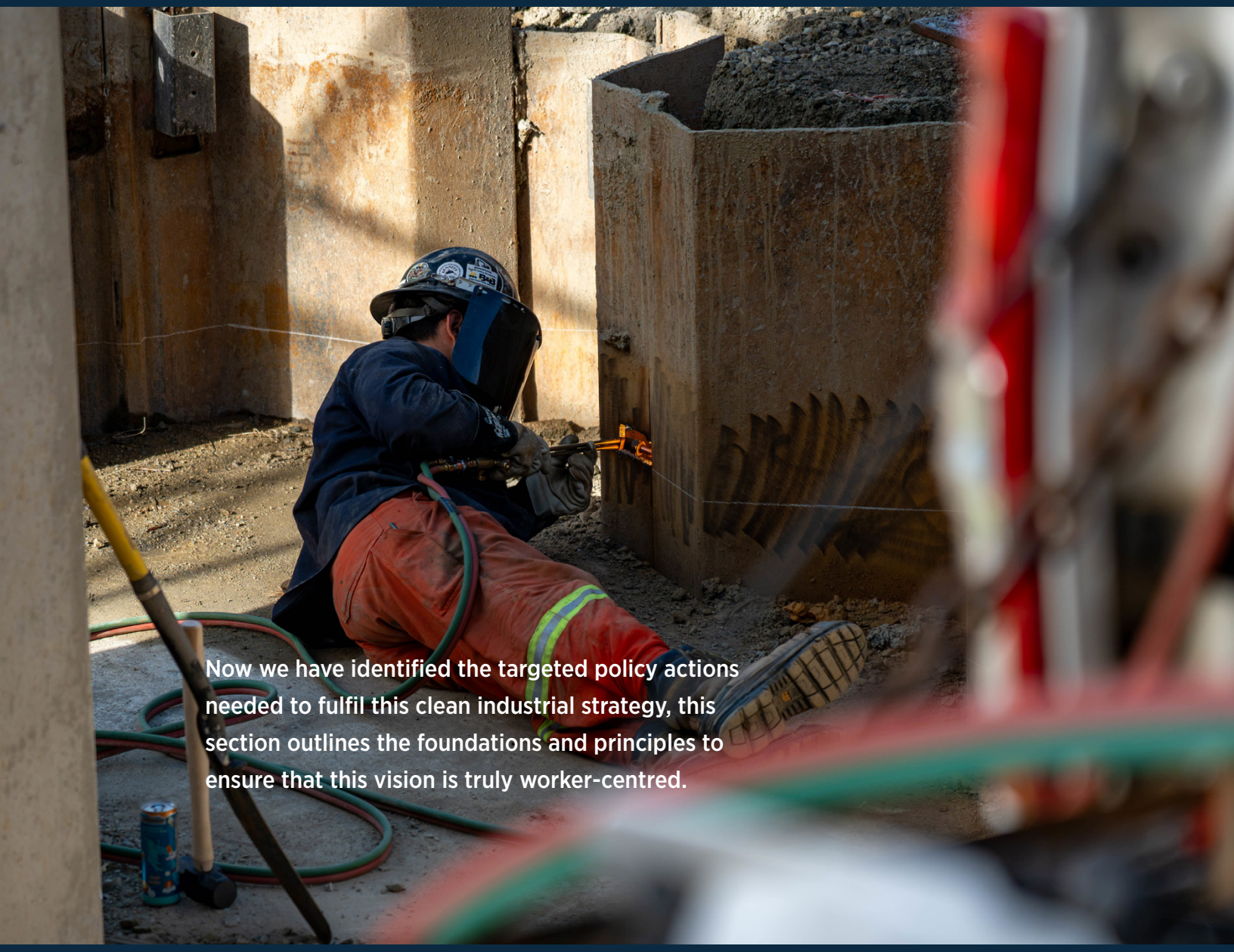
However, the provincial government's grant programs for organics facilities set no wage, training or safety conditions. WorkSafeBC has written no standard for lithium ion battery work, requires no certification of composting operators, and does not count this sector among its inspection priorities. Successorship protection does not follow a waste collection contract when it changes hands. Every one of those is a decision the province can take differently, by regulation, without new legislation. Built this way, keeping the material in British Columbia keeps the work here, on terms workers had a hand in setting.



"A worker-centred clean industrial strategy must be just, fair and not leave any workers or communities behind."

PILLAR III

Wealth and Power Redistribution



Now we have identified the targeted policy actions needed to fulfil this clean industrial strategy, this section outlines the foundations and principles to ensure that this vision is truly worker-centred.

CHAPTER 7

Climate Change Is a Class Issue



"Not just because the one-per-cent produce most carbon dioxide — though they do. Or because those at the bottom feel the effects first — though that's true. Or because elites use their crisis as an excuse to squeeze the rest — when won't they? Or because countries that pollute the least will suffer the worst — when don't they? But because the system that exploits the planet to destruction is the same that depends on class exploitation: the system that sees everything in terms of profit — which is what capitalism is. While the changes needed to bring our world back from the precipice are the same that would end this class exploitation: an economy of the people by the people and for the people — which is what socialism should be. And what can make this happen if not the combined power of the working class."[487]



"Environmentalism without class struggle is gardening." — Brazilian trade union leader, Chico Mendes

The workers we spoke with through the focus groups were not asking for a separate climate policy alongside their economic concerns. They were asking for action that responds to economic concerns and addresses climate change at the same time. The two cannot be separated, and workers do not want them to be.

At the broadest level, there is a sense that capitalism is failing to deliver on quality of life and that serious updates and overhauls are needed to the system. While some expressed "capitalism" as the problem (and its elimination the solution), the majority identified attributes and applications of markets, corporations, governments and industries as problematic and in need of change and overhaul. Renewed community ownership models, co-operatives, Indigenous partnerships, union-led solutions and worker-led social movements were all identified as positive measures that could have a meaningful impact on the day-to-day lives of workers in the province.

The path forward runs through economic security rather than environmental virtue. It runs through concrete, visible projects that workers can see, touch, and find themselves in. It runs through proposals that connect the work of climate action directly to the daily pressures workers are most preoccupied with: affordability, housing, job security, public services, and the basic question of whether their children will be able to build a life in this province. It runs through a politics that takes seriously the material conditions of working people and treats environmental policy as an extension of economic justice rather than a separate or competing priority. Workers from

diverse unions are open to meaningful climate policies provided the outcomes of such policies are visible, equitable, and representative of the unique social and geographic characteristics of BC's economy.

Paying Their Fair Share

The oil and gas industry is reaping massive profits from the current war in the Persian Gulf, and the Canadian petroleum industry is sharing in this windfall despite the cost of production in Canada not being affected by the war.[488] While Canadian consumers have been hit with a massive $3 billion in extra costs at the gas station in just three months between April and June 2026, the petroleum industry has raked in profits reaching $21.5 billion.[489] If this continues at the same rate over the year, the annual after-tax profits for the industry is estimated to reach an all-time high of $86 billion.[490] However, these revenues are not translating into jobs; in fact, the oil and gas sector is experiencing a shrinking workforce.[491] Unfortunately, higher costs for consumers will not be limited to gas. Rising transportation costs will increase food prices, which is especially painful for Canadians already struggling with affordability challenges.

In light of these dramatic profits caused by war and instability in another part of the world, and rising costs for consumers, many Canadians are calling for windfall or excess profit taxes at home. British Columbians are strongly in favour of an excess profits tax, with 63 per cent expressing their support.[492] This is a way to capture excess profits for the public good. Otherwise, these profits flow out of the country to shareholders of foreign multinational companies, primarily US-based, and disproportionately benefit the wealthiest 1 per cent of individuals.[493] Canada already has a precedent for this, having implemented an excess profits tax during World War Two to avoid the massive profiteering that had happened during World War One.[494]

While ensuring big polluters pay their fair share, an excess profits tax could also raise much needed revenue to continue the buildout of a clean economy, providing energy sovereignty at a time when we most need it. At the 2024 BCFED Convention, delegates supported a resolution to "call on all levels of government to introduce an excess profit tax on corporations and use the revenues to invest in affordability measures such as, but not limited to, public transit, clean energy retrofits, and supports for low-income families."[495]

One way to ensure this revenue is put to good use is to establish a true Sovereign Wealth Fund for the public good. This was seen as a community benefits model by our focus group participants. Many members brought up the Norwegian sovereign wealth fund (SWF) as a strong example. The Norwegian SWF has a larger return than any other SWF in the world, with assets estimated at US$1.8 trillion in 2025.[496] After discovering significant oil and gas reserves off the coast of Norway in the 1960s, the government implemented high taxes and strong regulatory controls on this sector and created Norwegian's SWF, the Petroleum Fund (now the Government Pension Fund Global), to ensure the oil revenues benefit current and future generations.[497] The fund applies ethical investing principles, focusing on sustainability and responsibility, and environmental, social and governance factors. The significant returns support the comprehensive welfare system in Norway, providing free health care and education, generously subsidized childcare, and more.[498]

At a more local level, workers in the BCFED's focus groups brought up the Columbia Basin Trust as a good example of revenue sharing for community benefit. The Columbia Basin Trust was created in 1995 after local representatives, including First Nations in the region, came together and negotiated with the provincial government for a fair share of the benefits from the Columbia River Treaty to be allocated to the

region.[499] This has created a legacy focused on the social, economic and environmental well-being of the region through investments and grants based on community needs. Investments include co-ownership of four hydropower facilities in the Basin, supporting clean energy while strengthening local benefits and providing a sustainable future for the region.[500]

Similar models should be applied in Canada and BC to ensure public resources benefit the public good and local communities.

Raise Revenue to Support Enhanced Climate Action

The loss of $3 billion from the elimination of the provincial consumer carbon tax presents provincial climate action with a major revenue issue. Compounding this, 2024/25 revenues under the industry carbon tax system introduced in 2024 (the so-called output-based pricing system) were "about $500 million lower than they would have been under the old system."[501]

The BC government's proposed gas royalties scheme is to be introduced next year but there are concerns that the new regime will favour industry over the public.[502] While the initial proposal had the government receiving a 50 per cent share of the profits, the return now seems to have dropped to between 11 and 14 per cent.[503] Fifteen years ago, companies paid almost twice as much in royalties while producing half the gas.[504] We need to collect a fair share of revenue from our publicly owned resource.

Rather than close these funding gaps by cutting the scope and implementation of climate action, the government should initiate several other revenue-raising options. That can start with ensuring that big polluters are paying their fair share (see above) and transitioning "fossil fuel subsidies to the clean tech and clean energy sectors" (as the previous government promised in January 2024),[505] then considering broader government possibilities, among them:[506]

- a one per cent increase to the corporate income tax rate and a two per cent increase to the top two personal income tax brackets;[507]
- addressing the misclassification of employees as independent contractors, which is costing the government hundreds of millions of dollars in lost revenue;[508]
- and making strategic investments with multiplier effects that raise GDP and revenue and contribute to the clean economy, such as in childcare, health care, worker-owned co-operatives, buy-local policies and public procurement reform,[509] public transit, and public post-secondary institutions and union-led trades training.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Ensure big polluters are paying their fair share by introducing an excess profits tax.**
- **Explore and implement provincial and regional options for meaningful community benefits and investments,** similar to the Norwegian Sovereign Wealth Fund and the Columbia Basin Trust.
- **Ensure that British Columbians are getting a fair share of revenue from public resources through a strong royalty system.**
- **Implement other revenue-raising measures through progressive taxation and ending misclassification of employees.**

CHAPTER 8

Workers and Communities as the Foundation

Tie Public Investments to Public Benefits: Labour Standards and Community Benefits

A community benefits agreement sets the terms of employment on a construction project paid for with public money. So that, when the public pays for a project, the project leaves the community with more than the thing that gets built.[510] The jobs are union jobs at standard industry wages, a share of them go to apprentices learning a trade, and hiring is aimed at people the construction industry has long left out: Indigenous workers, women and workers of colour. A recent study found that using union labour is more cost effective than open shop labour, reducing costs by an average of 7 per cent, while increasing productivity by 17 per cent.[511]

British Columbia's version runs through a Crown corporation, BC Infrastructure Benefits (BCIB). In 2024-25, BCIB employed 2,945 workers across 11 projects. Of those, 716 were apprentices and trainees, making up nearly a quarter of the workforce. They worked 17 per cent of all hours, and almost a third of them advanced a level. 12 per cent of the workforce was Indigenous, double the industry average of about 6 per cent, and 7 per cent were women. 96 per cent lived in British Columbia, and 86 per cent resided within 100 kilometres of the project they were building.[512]

The key difference is that BCIB, not the contractor, is the employer. Companies still win the work and run their own crews, but their workers come from BCIB. Everyone doing the same job earns the same wages, benefits and pension, whichever company they are sent to and wherever in the province they work.[513] Hiring priority goes to Indigenous workers, women and others underrepresented in the trades, and to people living within 100 kilometres of the site. For every four hours a journeyperson works, an apprentice is to work one, and apprentices and trainees together are to log a tenth of all hours.[514]

Another important difference is that BCIB provides mandatory training through the Respectful Onsite Initiative, which covers reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion, and climate awareness. The courses "increase connection and productivity while reducing discrimination, bullying, and harassment. Participants listen to the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada. They practice recognizing and addressing various issues on the jobsite. They learn about overdose prevention and rehabilitation supports. They discuss the role the industry will play in climate adaptation."[515]

The common objection is that the agreement shuts out non-union companies. It does not. Close to 60 per cent of the contracts go to companies not otherwise unionized, and the Ministry of Finance has found no difference in how many firms bid on these projects compared with other public work. Administration only costs about 1.6 per cent of payroll, plus 1.8 per cent for the community and Indigenous reconciliation services the province requires.[516]

Other jurisdictions have taken a leadership role in applying strong labour standards to renewable

energy projects, covering construction, operations and manufacturing. In 2021, New York State legislation tied prevailing wage and project labour agreements to construction of renewable energy projects, as well as supporting unionization on the operation and maintenance of these projects.[517] In addition, the legislation included American procurement requirements on steel and iron and provisions to incentivize the manufacturing sector through buying of state renewable energy equipment and supplies.[518] United Steelworkers has called for and won similar procurement requirements on major projects in Canada.

We must ensure that the climate jobs created are good, family-supporting, unionized jobs with wages, benefits and pensions that allow workers to thrive; and pathways into these jobs must be clear and supported (through the workforce development plan proposed below). The federal government is tying its clean energy tax credits to the provision of prevailing wages, and the BC government should do this and more, ensuring publicly-funded projects are contingent on strong labour standards, including union representation and employment equity. This is especially important because the majority of those in resource-intensive industries who may be affected by these transitions are already unionized.

Where possible, the projects outlined in this report should be added to the BCIB network so that the Community Benefits Agreement is applied to ensure strong labour standards and community benefits are built into every project.

We must ensure that the climate jobs created are good, family-supporting, unionized jobs with wages, benefits and pensions that allow workers to thrive

Apply a Regional Approach

There should be a regional approach applied to the clean economy projects outlined in this vision to ensure that regions and communities throughout BC equitably benefit from these initiatives. A regional approach also recognizes that the nature of industrialization is different across the province and that climate change impacts different areas of the province in distinct ways. For instance, a recent federally-funded study with updated climate projections for North-East BC found that the region is expected to have increased warming in all seasons and increased rainfall year round, heightening the risk of flooding.[519]

Community coalitions and municipal and regional decision-makers are leading the way and ready and eager to support and strengthen the province's climate action initiatives.[520] However, in the BCFED's focus groups, workers in more rural and remote communities felt that government and industry take without giving back. One way to reverse this could be through regional and local collaborations to inform the design and implementation of climate action initiatives.

Publicly-funded regional coalitions should reflect the mandate and constituency of the federal Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council, providing "independent, expert advice" on sustainable jobs development to the BC government and consisting of "a broad cross section of expertise, knowledge and lived experience, with positions earmarked for Indigenous, labour and industry representatives."[521] Increased and sustained funding could be funnelled through the Local Government Climate Action Program, which is among BC's most effective climate investments.[522]

Support Public Ownership and Worker Co-operatives

Public ownership is another community benefit that should be foundational. In the oil and gas sector, the Government of Canada provided almost $30 billion in financial support in 2024, while oil and gas companies recorded huge profits,[523] and that trend continues. In BC, the recent calls for power are targeting independent, private power producers for public investment. We need to put the public back into our existing systems and explore public ownership of future clean energy solutions.

As the cost of renewable energy goes down while the US shifts back to higher cost coal,[524] there may be an opportunity for BC to sell lower-cost electricity to US customers and the return on investment should provide government revenue, not private profit. For the provincial government's commitments to Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) goals, public ownership and accountability ensures increased environmental and worker protections (and enforcement).

There is also an opportunity to support worker co-operatives in the clean economy. A worker co-operative is a company that is run directly by the people working there without answering to a traditional boss or external investors. Participants in the BCFED focus groups spoke positively about proworker solutions that could help realign deregulated industries: community-run forests and overhauling the forestry licence process; smaller-scale, worker-run co-operative enterprises; and government takeover of failing businesses in resource industries. Some workers shared the belief that many industries are operating only for short-term interests as opposed to long-term community wellbeing. Worker-led solutions were seen as an antidote.

Address Climate Occupational Health and Safety Issues

Workers and communities are facing the impacts of climate change head-on: workplace closures, wildfire evacuations, floods, cold stress on construction sites, heat stress in schools and more.

For instance, workplace safety is significantly compromised by extreme heat and it is affecting the health and safety of outdoor workers and an increasing share of indoor workers, such as those in food service.[525] Working when hot is not just challenging and uncomfortable, it can have serious health consequences, including death. In the BCFED focus groups, a mine worker in the Kootenays said: "this is the first year I've heard of two people having heat stroke and that came with...such a rapid change, we went from 15 degree days to 40 degree days over the course of less than a week." The impacts of heat land disproportionately on the most precarious workers, such as migrant workers,[526] workers with disabilities, low-wage[527] and other marginalized workers. Some workplaces are introducing wearable devices and other monitoring measures but these cannot replace training, guidance and regulations for thermal stress.

Migrant farmworkers, in particular, are often not consistently provided with the protections they need, like cool, clean water, a place to cool off and additional rest breaks. These shortcomings are not only impacting migrant workers during work hours, but also because of substandard worker housing and transportation. Over the years, community groups have had to try to fill these gaps, bringing resources and support through a network developed through advocacy for these workers. This must change.

Workers are also increasingly being exposed to poor air quality from wildfires. There are multiple short- and long-term health effects associated with wildfire smoke. Exposure to wildfire smoke is made worse by the heat and humidity, and the

smoke can be a safety hazard to workers due to reduced visibility.

The disproportionate impact of fire and smoke on rural, remote and First Nation communities cannot be understated. An IBEW member in the BCFED's focus groups highlighted the increased intensity of his members' jobs in these conditions, "I get a lot more calls from members who are in very unsafe situations, who are not getting paid properly, who are not getting the right equipment to do the job, who are dealing with things like bears and wolves...that are trying to evacuate fires as well." Many of these regions experience weeks, even months, shrouded in dense grey clouds of smoke. No worker in these places can entirely escape impacts. "I worked at Starbucks [during the fire] and we had to close," said a student in Kelowna. "It has a suffocating effect. The effect of heat is destroying interior communities."

In weather-related disasters, care economy workers are disproportionately impacted and disproportionately burdened: paramedics, early childhood educators, care-aides, teachers, health care workers, social service workers, transit drivers and others. others. Captured through the focus groups, their stories of being on the front lines of evacuations, floods, wildfires, smoke and heat domes are sobering.

CleanBC's Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy should embed robust legislative and policy measures, including working with the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB), to ensure climate occupational health and safety issues are meaningfully addressed. As a first step, the Employment Standards Act should be updated to provide "five days of paid leave for workers who are unable to safely travel between work and home during natural and environmental disasters."[528]

It is heartening to see that the WCB added climate initiatives to its 2025/26 workplan for changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR). The WCB is committed to reviewing the safety rules related to heat stress, cold stress and solar radiation, but this work needs to start immediately and be informed by affected workers and labour unions. As part of this, workers should have meaningful input into the materials, fit and design of the uniforms they are required to wear, which are too often ill-fitting and inappropriate for the conditions they work in. WCB opened a public consultation on this issue in September 2026. OHS protections need to be updated and strengthened to meet the current moment.

For more than a decade, WCB's assessment rates for employers have been frozen. Given the significant pressures that climate change places on workplace safety, WCB needs to stop subsidizing low employer assessment rates and invest in injury prevention and better supports for injured workers. This includes more frontline prevention officers to ensure employers are following the law, outreach and education, developing resources, and research. For injured workers, it means better compensation, timely and appropriate care. This is how we ensure our workplaces are more resilient.

There is also a need to strengthen the role of workers in occupational health and safety (OHS) so that health and safety representatives and Joint OHS committees can be more effective. This means having more power to stop work when it is unsafe, increased education and paid time for worker OHS representatives, more resources and support for representatives and committees, and a commitment to enforcement of these requirements. This is part of making OHS systems more effective and more resilient to intensifying risks related to climate.

As outlined in the Critical Mineral Mining section, the health and safety framework for the mining sector is under the Mines Act and the Health, Safety and Reclamation Code. It is the only sector that is excluded from the Workers' Compensation Act (WCA) and this needs to change. The existing code has significant gaps compared to the OHSR, and there are few resources in the Ministry of Mining and Critical Minerals to ensure proper monitoring and enforcement. The expansion of

mining must not be at the cost of workers' health and safety. Mining should be brought under the protection of the WCA to enhance the health and safety provisions.

Ensure Labour and Workers Are at the Table

Participants in the BCFED focus groups desire more worker representation in the design and implementation of policies that directly impact their industries and their conditions of employment. In fact, in the "dotmocracy" activity, which allowed participants to vote on a defined list of policy options, having workers and unions at the table was voted as the second priority (after public transit). They want their union leaders and government leaders to utilize the current cultural and nation building moment as an opportunity to think big about worker well-being and the future prosperity of the province.

Workers should not be consulted after policies are designed; they should be present when policies are designed. The labour movement, government and employers must build durable mechanisms — at the workplace, sectoral, regional and provincial levels — that give workers and their unions meaningful authority over the decisions shaping climate transition, economic restructuring and the future of work in British Columbia.

Communication is vital here — workers and their labour representatives feel like they are in the dark right now, which increases fear, uncertainty and pushback. In some cases, climate action is being promoted by employers at the expense of workers who are losing their jobs through this "greenwashing." Instead, workers and labour need to be at the table with decision-makers developing and planning these shifts in the economy and communicating the opportunities and impacts to workers and communities. As the IEA highlights, the "transition to net zero is for and about people" and a shift of the necessary scale and speed "cannot be achieved without sustained support and participation from citizens."[529] The importance of this "social dialogue" is promoted in the International Labour Organization's *Just Transition Guidelines* and the Canadian Labour Congress/Pembina Institute *Sustainable Jobs Blueprint*. The BCFED's focus groups provided a grounding in worker engagement that must continue throughout the development of this approach.

Support Sectoral Bargaining in the Clean Economy

Currently, the labour code for the private sector is oriented towards what's called enterprise bargaining.[530] A single union represents a bargaining unit, which is made up of people in a single workplace who work for the same employer. People who hold the same position but work for different employers are barred from belonging to the same bargaining unit and being covered by the same collective agreement. This model works well in a factory or a mine, where one employer oversees a large number of workers in a single work site. So this has worked in traditional resource-based industries and can continue to apply in large worksites or projects, such as critical mineral mines and transmission line installation.

However, this approach does not work well for disconnected, small worksites, such as those found in some renewable energy projects, like small solar and wind projects. These sectors have low union density and, without union protection, these jobs are precarious, under-paid and rife with safety issues. There is little data on job quality and working conditions within the clean energy sector. One report from New York on the solar industry finds that many workers in this sector are paid by

piece rate (by solar panel installed), experience wage theft, and do not have access to benefits; they also often work for multiple employers.[531]

In this context, an approach such as sectoral bargaining would increase unionization, which would lead to enhancements in wages, benefits and health and safety provisions. Instead of a single union representing a bargaining unit composed of workers in a single workplace under a single employer, sectoral models include a whole sector. Full sectoral bargaining represents the most centralized and concentrated level of negotiation: a single agreement covers all workplaces within a geographically defined sector. Workers across multiple, fragmented renewable energy sites with multiple employers could organize through sectoral bargaining.

Currently, BC's Labour Code does not support sectoral bargaining but it should be amended to allow this form of bargaining. The Canadian Labour Congress and Pembina Institute's *Sustainable Jobs Blueprint Part 2* also calls for this measure. "Piloting a sectoral agreement in a new, low-carbon, multi-site, multi-employer sector, like solar, would set a level playing field for employers, ensure fair wages and benefits and high safety standards across regions, and increase the job quality standards across the industry."[532]

Invest in Strong Public Services

Strong public services are a necessary foundation for this clean industrial strategy. Increased, stable investments must be made into the provincial public services that British Columbians rely on. Although this report does not go into detail on this topic, the care economy, including public health care, education, childcare and seniors care, will be a huge part of the clean economy.

"The care economy is already clean and sustainable when compared to employment that relies on energy-intensive and extractive sectors…In terms of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) alone, the care industry is 30-per-cent less polluting than the construction sector. The education industry is even more green: 62% less polluting than construction. On average, jobs in manufacturing produce 26 times more GHGs than jobs in health care. (Jobs in fossil fuels produce 1,500 times more GHGs than those in health care.)"[533] Care work is green work. The care economy is also a sector focused on caring and well-being not producing and consuming.

In addition, care work is more labour intensive than the energy intensive sectors so an investment in the care economy can create many more jobs. Part of strengthening our public services is addressing devaluation of these sectors through increasing wages and enhancing working conditions. This is also an equity measure as women and racialized workers are over-represented in care work.

Measures to support public services often get mischaracterized as costs or burdens on provincial budgets. However, childcare and health care have been shown to be economic engines. Childcare investments have stimulated major economic benefits in job creation, earnings, GDP growth and government revenues.[534] Health care "ranks as one of the most important industries in Canada: it creates jobs, generates income, supports widespread economic spillovers, and is one of Canada's leading sources of innovation and new technology."[535]

The provincial government must invest in strong public services as part of supporting the clean economy.

Care work is green work. The care economy is also a sector focused on caring and well-being not producing and consuming.

Apply Value-Added Approaches and Reverse Outsourcing

Canada has long been described through the old adage, "hewers of wood, drawers of water," which describes an economy dependent on resource extraction. Some say that "Canada is the world's most advanced underdeveloped country."[536] There is huge potential for a shift in this approach to more value-added processing and manufacturing of and with our natural resources.

Interior BC highways are dotted with long-ago abandoned ghost towns. In almost all cases, these were resource extraction towns. For workers in current resource towns, these "ghosts" are not in the past, they are very much present in the mind. Abandoned towns serve as a physical and social reminder of what is at stake. There is no amount of logic, argumentation or smart rhetoric that can change the elements of this very basic equation for workers in these communities: if the mill dies, we die. Workers in these communities desire bold and innovative policies that offer predictable and plausible ways out of this dependence, as well as competent management, especially in forestry, that sets long-term goals, brings value-added processes and emphasizes community focused profits and benefit agreements.

Throughout this strategy, opportunities for value-added approaches are offered and should be supported by the provincial government.

Outsourcing is often the first thing that workers in the BCFED focus groups discussed when they talked about environmental waste. Many participants describe the recent "past" (before outsourcing) as a time when individual work items like technical instruments, replacement parts, food and fabric supplies did not come prepackaged inside individual plastic containers, boxes within boxes or plastic-wrapped-in-plastic arrangements. Workers in health care especially express being overwhelmed and frustrated at the sheer mountains of trash that leave their workplaces each day — a factory sized system of waste production that did not exist prior to outsourcing. Bringing services like laundry, food preparation, security and housekeeping back in-house at hospitals, schools and other public institutions are common sense policies and priorities that workers can easily get behind and overwhelmingly support.

Buy BC: BC/Canada Procurement

Last year, the federal government made commitments to apply local procurement policies in planned infrastructure projects to ensure the use of Canadian steel and other home-grown products.[537] USW had called for this measure for years and welcomed the announcement, highlighting that mandating "Canadian steel in public projects isn't just good for jobs — it's good for the environment and for supply chain resilience."[538] The provincial government should follow suit with buy BC and Canadian commitments. The previous provincial government had previously applied procurement restrictions on public agencies buying goods and services, excluding US suppliers.

However, the provincial government can go further than promoting local suppliers to ensuring strong working conditions, learning from other jurisdictions. In September 2026, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a Public Procurement Act,[539] based on a demand from 106 labour unions from 29 countries in 2021 that "every public contract must go to companies that pay decent wages and provide good working conditions negotiated in collective agreements with trade unions."[540]

The Australian government has already introduced the Workplace Relations Legislation Amendment earlier this year, which states unambiguously that the state "may discriminate in favour of employers whose workforces are covered by a collective

agreement," providing the legal certainty many argue is needed.[541] Scotland provides another good example, with a public contract process that includes criteria for real living wages and effective workers' voice, mandatory conditions since 2023.[542] This could be strengthened by explicitly promoting collective bargaining as the most effective way for workers to have a voice in their own workplace.

If governments are serious about net zero, then procurement has to evolve from "Who can build it cheapest?" to "Who can deliver the best value, lowest life-cycle cost, and greatest worker and public benefit?" Because you cannot procure yesterday's way and expect tomorrow's performance. The provincial government must put its money to good use, only awarding public contracts for any of the initiatives outlined in this report to companies that are providing decent work, paying prevailing wages, providing good working conditions, and using unionized labour.

Ensure a Just Transition

When there are impacts on workers from the transition to a clean economy, there must be measures in place to ensure a Just Transition for these impacted workers. If climate policy does not foreground people, it will fail. One of the insights we learned from the BCFED's focus groups is that we need to take care when talking about people's jobs or sector because a job is tied to identity, pride and community. When a person's job is devalued, they feel devalued. A worker who feels devalued by a policy will not align with that policy. It's that simple.

The concept of a Just Transition is credited to the labour movement in North America. In the 1970s, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union advocated for a fund to support workers impacted by job loss due to the environmental consequences of their sector.[543] From there, the term gained recognition internationally. The definition now used by the International Labour Organization (ILO) is that a "just transition promotes environmentally sustainable economies in a way that is inclusive, by creating decent work opportunities, reducing inequality and by leaving no one behind."[544]

The ILO adopted Guidelines for a Just Transition over 10 years ago in 2015,[545] with the aim of ensuring "that a just transition to a sustainable future takes place which properly addresses the imperatives of decent work…It is time now to move from the general proposition of the compatibility of sustainable development and employment to the concrete mechanics of making it happen."[546] The ILO then reaffirmed this commitment in a Just Transition resolution at the International Labour Conference in 2023.[547] The term was also included in the Paris Agreement, adopted at the UN Climate Change conference in 2015, and is legally binding on Canada since Canada ratified the treaty in 2016.

In Canada, there have also been commitments to a just transition. In 2017, the federal government joined the Alberta government in committing to ensuring a just transition for coal power workers in the phase out of coal.[548] Due to labour advocacy, the federal government implemented a task force with a majority of labour participants to develop a national framework for this just transition process. This involved direct engagement with coal power workers and communities during 2018, and resulted in two reports coming out in 2019: the What We Heard report and the final recommendations.[549] While this was an important initiative, the first time a state recognized the importance of managing a sector transition, the

We need to ensure that the energy transition happens "*with* workers, not *to* workers," said a government services worker on the coast. That is at the heart of a just transition.

measures implemented did not live up to the recommendations and were criticized for being reactive (focused on retirement, retraining and relocation) rather than addressing structural challenges within resource-based communities.[550] We can learn from these experiences.

The federal government also committed to a Just Transition Act in 2019 and this was reiterated in the mandate letters for the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Natural Resources in 2021.[551] However, the Just Transition Act became the Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act, which was tabled in 2023 and passed in 2024,[552] five years after the initial commitment. The aim of this legislation is "to facilitate and promote economic growth, the creation of sustainable jobs and support for workers and communities in Canada in the shift to a net-zero economy."[553] This is intended to complement the Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, which does not include considerations of the impacts on industry sectors and workers in achieving emissions reduction targets.

Within the legislation, a sustainable job is defined as "any job that is compatible with Canada's pathway to achieving a net-zero-emissions and climate-resilient future and that reflects the concept of decent work, namely work — including a job in which the worker is represented by a trade union that has entered into a collective agreement — that can support the worker and their family over time and that includes elements such as fair income, job security, social protection and social dialogue."[554] This definition was strengthened due to labour advocacy, now including the specific mention of unions as a means of achieving "decent work." The legislation establishes a Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council, which includes labour participation and labour as a co-chair of the advisory committee.[555]

The Canadian Labour Congress and the Pembina Institute worked together to develop a Sustainable Jobs Blueprint with recommendations for a sustainable jobs plan for Canada.[556] These include the critical measures of:[557]

- Investing in skills and training capacity
- Providing income security and programs that help workers find new jobs or retire early, including improving Employment Insurance
- Making key amendments to labour codes to support unions and worker organizing
- Engaging with workers directly about their future through awareness and dialogue campaigns
- Investing in regions to build resilience in a net-zero economy
- Developing net-zero industrial policy that creates conditions for thriving industries, including establishing provincial sectoral working groups.
- Establishing an excess profit mechanism for emissions-intensive industries.

However, workers themselves are either skeptical of a just transition or have no awareness of the concept. A BCFED poll from early 2026 found that only one in 10 British Columbians had heard of the term and few could describe it. This was backed up in the focus groups where participants had little knowledge of what 'just transition' meant. Those who have heard the term are often suspicious, highlighting that it has been used to describe little more than "resume training and a bus ticket." They seemed to have more faith in the idea of a *sustainable* job with its promise for *sustainable* communities.

While the federal government has launched a Sustainable Jobs Action Plan, it is lacking many of the key elements defined here. In the response from the Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council, the Council finds the action plan lacking in vision and invites "further detail on how the government plans to support the creation and protection of sustainable jobs across Canada, how workers and their communities will be supported as the economy continues to change, and what substantive role the Council will play in advancing this work going forward. For this effort to succeed, the Council and Canadian stakeholders must have an active and ongoing role in both

implementation of the plan and in ensuring that workers' concerns are fully addressed."[558]

While workers are mistrustful, a just transition or a sustainable jobs plan, if done well, with all the measures described in this section — most importantly, workers and unions at the table — is necessary to ensure that the transition to a clean economy benefits all workers. It is critical that the challenges are not solely borne by the energy and natural resource workers and their communities that have provided for this province for generations. The benefits of a clean economy must be distributed among all workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Ensure publicly-funded projects are contingent on strong labour standards and community benefits**, including union representation and employment equity.
- **Expand the use of Project Labour Agreements/Community Benefit Agreements on publicly funded renewable infrastructure projects**, through BC Infrastructure Benefits, to improve access to apprenticeships and family supporting jobs for local residents, and to increase the hiring of Indigenous peoples, women and gender diverse people, and racialized workers as apprentices and journeypersons.
- **Apply a regional approach to clean economy projects** to ensure that regions and communities throughout BC equitably benefit from these initiatives.
- **Support public ownership and worker co-operatives.**
- **Update and strengthen Occupational Health and Safety protections** to meet the current reality of extreme weather events, including immediate improvements to the heat stress regulation.
- **Update the Employment Standards Act to provide five days of paid leave** for workers who are unable to access their workplace during natural and environmental disasters.
- **Bring occupational health and safety prevention and enforcement in mining under WCB's jurisdiction through the Workers Compensation Act**, preserving and strengthening protections specific to mining.
- **Ensure more labour and worker representation** in the design and implementation of policies that directly impact affected industries and conditions of employment.
- **Amend BC's Labour Code to support sectoral bargaining** to increase union protection in clean economy sectors.
- **Invest in strong public services** as a necessary foundation for this clean industrial strategy.
- **Apply value-added approaches** to ensure maximum benefits from our natural resources and **reverse outsourcing** to keep jobs and benefits within local communities.
- **Apply local procurement policies** in planned infrastructure projects to ensure the use of Canadian steel and other BC/Canada home-grown products.
- **Ensure a Just Transition** with meaningful, practical measures when there are impacts on workers from the transition to a clean economy.

CHAPTER 9

Training and Education



The projects outlined in this vision will create thousands of jobs in mitigating climate change. And, from wildfire response and flood recovery to infrastructure repair, environmental remediation, and community resilience work, union members are already doing much of the work required to adapt to climate change.

However, labour shortages today are creating a workforce shortfall that risks delaying major infrastructure and clean energy projects in BC. Training systems are not keeping pace with labour market demand, particularly in rural and northern communities, and the labour market plan promised under the 2018 CleanBC climate strategy was never delivered. The labour movement has long argued that climate action must go hand in hand with workforce development, fair wages, safe working conditions, and clear pathways into stable, unionized employment.

To address labour shortages, the province's Look West industrial strategy commits to doubling trades training investment to $241 million over the next three years.[559] This will add 5,000 new seats across training institutions throughout BC, with new spaces opening up in regions such as Metro Vancouver, Vancouver Island and the Okanagan. This builds on the existing landscape of nearly 50,000 registered apprenticeships, the highest number ever in BC, including 11,000 youth apprentices and more than 16,000 new apprentice registrations last year.[560] The province also hosts TradeUpBC for Red Seal professionals to access upskilling opportunities (professional development courses layered on top of full trades certifications). This is a good start but we need to continue to increase the budget of SkilledTradesBC to improve per-seat funding for public post-secondary and union trades training programs.

Federally, the government announced Team Canada Strong in the Spring 2026 Economic Update, a "$6 billion nationwide effort to recruit, train, and hire 80,000 to 100,000 new Red Seal trades workers in the next five years."[561] Not only did the Update include multiple measures of support for apprentices and tradespeople, it also demonstrated newfound respect for the skilled trades: "[s]killed workers … have been the cornerstone of the Canadian economy, leading the way in building homes, roads, and bridges throughout our history, and we will once again need their support to build Canada's economic strength."[562]

The federal package is aimed at improving apprenticeship completion rates, which was just under 20 per cent across Canada in 2024.[563] It includes incentives, such as $400 per week while apprentices are attending in-class technical training, for a total of $16,000 for each apprentice on top of Employment Insurance support.[564] In addition, the federal government is offering a $5,000 completion bonus for apprentices achieving certification in a Red Seal trade. A recent federal announcement adds an investment of $430 million, focused on expanding training capacity through funding for infrastructure expansion, training equipment and innovative training approaches.[565]

The federal government is also directly funding training for upskilling required for the clean economy through the Sustainable Jobs stream of the Union Training and Innovation Program under the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy and through the Sustainable Jobs Training

Fund.[566] This includes funding for the Western Joint Electrical Training Society in Delta to train construction electrician apprentices and journeypersons in green skills and knowledge.[567]

These are good measures from both levels of government demonstrating newfound respect for the skilled trades.

Enhancing Industrial Training

Further investment is needed to meet the full range of industrial training needs, supporting both Red Seal trades and other skilled occupations in mine operations, heavy equipment operation, production and processing. Critical mineral mining is a growing industry at the foundation of the clean economy, and the mining industry in BC supports over 65,000 workers in communities throughout BC.[568] However, the industry has a labour issue at both ends of the age spectrum — the Mining Industry Human Resources Council (MiHR) reports that one in five mining workers was 55 years or older in 2023;[569] and youth perceptions of the sector are very low, with mining being the last career choice for students.[570] Two-thirds of Canadians under 35 would not consider working in mining, citing safety as a key factor.[571] These issues point to a looming labour shortage in critical mineral mining.

The province needs to invest in training, recruitment and retention across mining occupations, including apprenticeships, trades qualifications and training pathways for workers in non-trades roles. The Pembina Institute finds that sector-specific approaches to workforce development are necessary to meet the challenges facing different sectors in unique ways, and that these approaches are uncommon in BC.[572] One good start in a sector-based approach is the provincial government's EV Maintenance Training Program that provides Red Seal automotive technicians, primarily represented by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW), with the skills needed to work on electric vehicles.[573]

United Steelworkers (USW) proposes a union-led approach to industrial training, drawing on construction unions' experience in relation to skilled trades training, to expand access and support completion, career progression and retention across both Red Seal trades and non-trade occupations. Provincial support "could enable a feasibility analysis to evaluate training demand, delivery models, funding streams, and partnerships — particularly with Indigenous communities."[574] This would build on USW's representation across mining occupations and its experience in worker training and health and safety. Current members can help identify skills gaps, safety priorities and barriers to retention, while experienced workers can help shape and deliver training and mentor the next generation.

Workforce Development Plan Needed

While recent commitments and funding from both levels of government are a good step, to close the workforce gap, the province needs a dedicated clean economy workforce development plan, built with labour as a partner rather than as an afterthought. This is critical to the success of BC's clean industrial strategy. The Pembina Institute recommends the integration of "job-creating industrial strategies with workforce development plans to support training, recruitment and career progression."[575]

The lack of a workforce development plan is a significant gap, both for the message it sends to workers and the economic needs we will soon have to meet. Clean Energy Canada projects that, in 2050, there "are set to be 400,800 jobs in BC's clean energy sector, up from 83,100 in 2025."[576]

The BC government's Clean Energy Strategy highlights that "[p]owering our future with clean energy is one of the job-creation opportunities for our generation."[577] While the potential future is bright, this level of industrial transition must be accompanied by a labour readiness plan — so that workers share the economic gains instead of bearing the weight of disruption, and to ensure BC has the trained workforce we will need to make this shift. A recent study of workforce development programs in BC, Alberta and Ontario found that more "publicly supported region- and sector-specific workforce development initiatives are needed as the existing suite of government programs does not always connect workers to jobs that advance strategic economic and environmental objectives."[578]

The plan must identify the jobs the clean economy will create, the workers at risk of displacement, and the skills and education pathways that connect them. The plan should draw on the province's 2020 Industry Strategy for Workforce Readiness for the Clean Economy (never released), the International Labour Organization's Just Transition Guidelines, and the Canadian Labour Congress and Pembina Institute Sustainable Jobs Blueprint.[579] The province should coordinate the plan across energy, climate and economic policy, and make consistent use of community benefits agreements and/or project labour agreements, and strategic procurement to attach local hiring, training and equity conditions to the projects it funds.

A workforce development plan should include a specific mandate for the protection and creation of decent work, and the well-being of workers and communities should be a metric for tracking progress on climate action, requiring data on clean energy job quality. Indicators could include net new sustainable jobs (and retention and compensation), workforce retraining and support, collective agreement coverage and employment equity.[580]

Immediate steps include implementing the committed $150 million over three years for SkilledTradesBC, expanding skilled trades certification rather than substituting short-term micro-credentials for it, directing additional funding to union training centres, and opening apprenticeship growth to women, Indigenous and racialized workers, and others underrepresented in the trades.

BC consists of a vast geography with significant regional differences in relation to climate, resources and communities. Thus, it is critical that the clean economy workforce development plan includes a regional approach,[581] in particular, recognizing the distinct context of Northern BC,[582] where workers and communities are most heavily connected to the fossil fuel industry. The Pembina Institute recommends that the provincial government "strengthen northern training capacity through targeted investments in post-secondary institutions, expand flexible and community-based training delivery models, increase work-integrated learning opportunities for secondary students, and foster stronger collaboration among governments, Indigenous peoples, employers, organized labour and training providers."[583]

Coordinated Project Planning Needed

A big part of workforce development is project certainty and sequencing to ensure that workers are available for projects as needed, not spread thin between competing projects or unable to meet the demand. Historically, this planning has not happened nationally or provincially. For training needs, projects requiring skilled trades need to be confirmed and planned with adequate lead time. Apprentices need continuous work across multiple projects to develop their skills and complete the required hours. Communities need time to prepare for a multi-year project in their region. Training institutions, both public-

post-secondary and union training centres, need adequate time and funding to meet the demand. Predictable workflow and project sequencing is critical.

At the national level, the Canadian Building Trades Union is proposing the implementation of a Labour Supply Coordinating Committee, which would plan workforce requirements for major projects.[584] This would involve defining precisely which trades will be needed, how many, and when and where these workers will be deployed during the project.

As CBTU highlights, the "unprecedented construction era launched by the federal government cannot succeed unless apprentices and qualified trades workers are on site, on time, and in sufficient numbers. That requires more than simply training more workers, it requires knowing where they will be needed, when they will be needed, and coordinating the country's labour supply accordingly. If we get it right, Canada will emerge from this era as a more prosperous, more sovereign, fairer, and greener nation, to the lasting benefit of generations to come."[585]

With over one-third of the federally backed projects happening in BC, and with its own roster of projects, the provincial government should consider a similar mechanism to ensure the project certainty required for the clean economy projects planned throughout BC. Project planning also needs to incorporate a regional approach. Government needs to intentionally plan projects as this is a critical opportunity to bring benefits to rural, remote and First Nation communities that are suffering due to industry closures. Considerations should include what industry will be developed and where it will be located for the most worker and community benefits. Planning must also address the long-term workforce needed to operate and maintain new facilities, including training and career pathways for existing industrial workers and displaced workers.

Expanding Skilled Trades Certification

Skilled trades provide British Columbians with good, family-supporting jobs and careers, and skilled tradespeople ensure quality and safety on any project they are working on, from the Langley SkyTrain extension to the North Coast Transmission Line. Strong apprenticeship programs are the foundation of strong skilled tradespeople with careers that offer high wages, health benefits, pensions and job security.

The previous provincial government dismantled BC's skilled trades system, deregulated skilled trades programs and reduced funding for skills training by 20 per cent.[586] This resulted in reduced safety and quality on jobsites and decreased pay and job security for workers. However, thanks to the advocacy of the BCFED and its affiliates, the current BC government is turning the system around, recommitting to skilled trades certification through 2022 legislation and subsequent policies and programs. Skilled trades certification, also known as compulsory trades, requires anyone working in a designated trade to be either a registered apprentice or a certified journeyperson holding a Red Seal. Seven initial trades were certified, three automotive trade certifications are to come, and two crane operator trade certifications have been announced this year; four more trades are yet to be announced in the plan to reach 20 over the next few years.

This commitment from the provincial government must continue to support the successful implementation and full funding of skilled trades certification and its expansion to more trades. Certification is essential to building a steady pipeline of skilled workers, while ensuring those workers are paid fairly for the careers they are pursuing. It also holds contractors accountable for providing training and journeyperson mentorship to young workers. Without it, some contractors will continue to hire the cheapest available labour and offer no training at all. The additional trades

need to be certified immediately and a timeline is needed for future designation of certified trades.

However, announcing certification is only the first step. It must be followed by real implementation and enforcement. At this point in time, compulsory trades require people to be registered as an apprentice, but not required to attend technical training. This seems to defeat the purpose of compulsory trades. Without enforcing mandatory training, employers will always look for the easy way out and not properly invest in training their employees.

The provincial government is currently undertaking a data-sharing initiative to track uncertified workers and monitor their progress toward certification. Data collection is an important start, but the BC Building Trades urges that enforcement follow quickly. Unscrupulous contractors will not comply with the new rules until penalties are issued. In the four years since the announcement, not a single penalty has been issued.

We join the BC Building Trades in recommending a stronger role for the Workers' Compensation Board, more on-site inspections and that Certification Advisors at SkilledTrades BC should have trade experience. Beyond giving Certification Advisors the authority to conduct job site inspections, there is a role for WorkSafeBC in implementation. WorkSafeBC officers already inspect worksites every day, so coordination between SkilledTrades BC and WorkSafeBC would allow job sites to be reviewed for both certification compliance and apprentice-to-journeyperson ratios.

To truly understand what is happening on site, and if certification is being done correctly, Advisors must show up on site. If an Advisor knows where an apprentice works and has their contact information, it would be a simple process to show up on a jobsite for a quick inspection. Also, there should be two certification advisors per trade and they should have a relevant Red Seal ticket. In order to understand what is happening on site, and the full scope of the trade, Certification Advisors must be well versed in the trade itself. These measures would support the expansion of skilled trades certification.

Protecting and Enhancing Full Trade Certification

Part of dismantling the skilled trades system involved undermining full trades training through introducing modularized training, decreasing the length of training programs, and focusing on a competency-based approach. According to the BC Building Trades, completion rates in Red Seal skilled trades fell dramatically in BC, from 84 per cent to 65 per cent over a 10-year period, a higher reduction than the national average.[587] This experiment also had damaging consequences for safety, resulting in the injury rate for tradespeople in BC increasing to four times Ontario's rate.

While the BC government has provided the largest investment ever in skilled trades training, it continues to support some competency-based options, often called micro-credential courses. For instance, post-secondary institutions are offering a heat pump installer micro-credential, which can undermine Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanics skilled trades training and reduce safety and quality of these installations. These short-term courses are adequate for upskilling existing Red Seal tradespeople but they cannot replace the comprehensive spectrum and duration of full skilled trades training. BC Institute of Technology's heat pump microcredential is offered in the right way, with its installation course being open to final-level apprentices and journeypersons in one of five trades.[588] That makes it upskilling not undermining, and this approach should be extended to other institutions through provincial policy.

The same is true of solar panel installation, which is also often offered as a short, standalone, course or micro-credential. With new technologies being implemented, such as solar panels on the roofs of schools, these multi-source environments require more training not less. A fully qualified electrician is needed to ensure adequate safety and appropriate quality on these projects, not someone who has taken a six week course applying a "plug and play" approach to solar and other infrastructure. It cannot be overstated that standalone microcredentials undermine the safety and quality of skilled trades work.

"What the province is doing is creating pathways where they're basically providing an opportunity for a micro-credential within a given trade, carving out a section of it to try to make people fast-track…And it's in the name of green and climate change…, but what they're doing in that process is undercutting the value of a Red Seal…and creating animosity amongst the people that they're trying to get on board," said a skilled trades instructor in the BCFED's focus groups.

Workers in relevant trades expressed significant distaste for the micro-credential trend and see it as an increasing threat to job security, wages, and the overall reputation of their industries. Micro-credential initiatives, like those intended to meet rapid demand for heat pump installation spurred on by generous government grants for consumers and homeowners, are perceived by focus group participants as an attack on good union jobs, the value of their professions, and the perceived quality of their trade.

In relation to the retrofitting proposal outlined in this report, heat pump installation is critical and should be done by fully certified Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanics. Unfortunately, the provincial government amended the Skilled Trades BC Regulation in 2025 to reduce the scope of work for Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanics by exempting the installation of residential heat pumps in a private dwelling and with a prime mover rating under 5 kilowatts from the requirements for Skilled Trades Certification.[589] This reduces safety and quality in heat pump installation and will lead to negative experiences for homeowners and less confidence in the industry. This deregulation needs to be reversed.

To support continuing training opportunities in full trades certification, the provincial government needs to support existing apprenticeship sponsors. Union training schools are among the largest sponsors of apprentices in British Columbia. Over the past 20 years, BC Building Trades unions set aside between 35 cents and $1.50 from every construction hour worked for training, contributing more than $30 million and sponsoring over 6,000 apprentices while public funding stood still.[590] For example, the Electrical Joint Training Committee supports more than 1,100 electrical apprentices and UA Local 516 is the fourth-largest trades apprenticeship sponsor in British Columbia.[591]

Funding also needs to be stable for union training centres and public post-secondary institutions, and grants should be available to students in both sectors. Provincial micro-credential funding flows to public post-secondary institutions, and TradeUpBC, the province's upskilling portal for tradespeople, draws its courses from them. Neither reaches union training centres.[592] The StrongerBC future skills grant is only available to those studying at public post-secondary institutions.[593]

Public post-secondary institutions are facing a financial crunch exacerbated by years of provincial under-funding and recent declining international student enrolment. The latest review of the public post-secondary sector should initiate more funding for this sector to enable it to play a critical role in meeting provincial goals in major project growth and the associated workforce development.

Addressing Stigma and Devaluation of Trades and Industrial Work

In the BCFED's focus groups, workers in the building trades specifically described how their professions are not equally regarded in relation to urban, "professional," white collar careers, despite the opportunities, satisfaction, utility and life benefits the skilled trades provide. "We do a disservice by not introducing people to the trades earlier on," said an LNG worker on the coast. "There is a lot of stereotypes and stigma attached to being a tradesperson." A mine worker in South Eastern BC offered: "We still need people to run chain saws..., we need mechanics, we need plumbers, we need...the physical labour jobs but they're groomed so early in high school that that's not the way to go."

This idea about the denigrated cultural value of trades work was expressed in various ways. "Not everybody was built for university," said a resource worker in the East Kootenays. An educator described the need for "parity of esteem" for the trades, where a Red Seal trade is treated on par with a four-year university degree. This proposition was described as having various positive downstream impacts, for example, skill trades workers transitioning out of their industries could enter teacher education programs without having to start from scratch.

Increasing Equity in Trades and Industrial Work

It is critical to increase participation of traditionally under-represented groups in the trades. Unions have introduced various equity strategies for women, Indigenous workers, and workers with learning disabilities, including pre-apprenticeship training, cohort-based programs, cultural awareness, mentorship and other supports. And the results show — for instance, IBEW Local 993 has 20 per cent women apprentices and 13 per cent Indigenous apprentices, and the Electrical Joint Training Committee graduated its first fully Indigenous cohort in partnership with the Indigenous community group, ACCESS. Gap programs, or pre-apprenticeship programs, are critical for ensuring mature learners, First Nations and Indigenous students and others meet entry requirements and are set up for success.

Project Labour Agreements (PLAs) or Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs), as described in the previous chapter, are also important as these agreements include increased equity representation on the jobsite. They also include local training opportunities, with projects throughout the province, supporting apprentices remaining in their communities. This is a particular strength of the BC Infrastructure Benefits CBA model.

The BC Centre for Women in the Trades (BCCWITT), housed within the BCFED, focuses on increasing inclusion in the trades. As well as providing direct support and mentorship to under-represented groups, reaching hundreds of women and other equity groups since their launch in 2019, BCCWITT provides training to shift workplace culture to reduce discrimination and harassment on the job. In 2025, BCCWITT launched Show Up for Safer Workplaces, an innovative training program focused on tackling toxic workplace culture and addressing psychological safety, mental health and substance use issues. BCCWITT needs stable funding from the provincial government for their programs and services.

Strengthening Youth Pathways into Trades

SkilledTradesBC and the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care support and fund some good youth trades programs in BC, providing pathways into apprenticeships from high school. There are high school programs in Discover the Trades, Explore the Trades, Train in Trades and Work in Trades, including a trades sampler and trades education in specific trades.[594] "Students can receive credits towards their high school diploma and at least one level of technical training by attending trades training classes at local high schools, post-secondary institutions, or SkilledTradesBC-certified training facilities."[595]

The BC Building Trades (BCBT) also supports youth in entering the trades. Launched in 2024, the College of the BC Building Trades started a Trade Ambassador Program.[596] A cohort of young trades workers, under the age of 35, visit Grade 10 students in high schools to share their experiences with working in the trades. "What makes this program so powerful is that it's young people talking to young people about their experiences," said Layne Clark, BCBT organizer of the program.[597]

While these are good measures, there are challenges with the provincial programs that are impacting youth access to these initiatives. Provincial funding in recent years has dried up causing many high school programs to close. Those that continue, such as the Try-a-Trade program run by UA Piping Industry College and other partners, are currently relying on federal funding through the Union Training and Innovation Program.[598] More provincial funding is needed to continue these critical programs.

These programs are also often dependent on the school district having enough technology education (tech-ed) teachers. In the BCFED's interviews, a skilled trades teacher in the Metro Vancouver secondary school system described an upcoming attrition cliff of trades educators in the system. "We need more trades teachers," they said. "We are facing a huge shortage of high school shop teachers. They want to have more skilled trades people, but they are cutting back on the funding to teach these kids."

However, there are challenges in recruiting trades teachers. Red Seal tradespeople take a significant pay cut from working in the trades to teaching the trades. There is also the issue of time and loss of pay during completion of teaching education. In BC, becoming a tech-ed teacher involves spending two years at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) obtaining a tech-ed teaching diploma, then one year at the University of British Columbia in a general teaching education program.[599]

Andy Strothotte, president of the British Columbia Technology Education Teachers Association, associated with the BC Teachers' Federation, recommends "salary equality" and reinstatement of the faster, two-year, education program that used to be in place for those with trades experience transitioning into teaching.[600]

Supporting Youth Climate Corps

Beyond high school, Youth Climate Corps is a good model for providing entry points for youth into the clean economy. At the 2024 BCFED Convention, a resolution passed to lobby the provincial and federal governments "to invest in an expanded Youth Climate Corps providing unionized jobs and training to young adults to support important work on climate adaptation and mitigation projects in their own communities."[601]

By providing living-wage, hands-on work experience in climate resilience, environmental restoration, and community-based projects, Youth Climate Corps BC (YCCBC) creates an

early-entry pathway for young people into the kinds of careers that will define BC's low-carbon future. These are the same sectors where unions are working to raise standards, build skills, and ensure that public investment translates into long-term, high-quality employment rather than precarious work. YCCBC builds foundational skills that align with union apprenticeship systems and helps ensure that the transition to a low-carbon economy does not leave workers or young people behind.

In fact, YCCBC has completed a successful cohort with the BC Insulators Union supporting a group of diverse youth in a pre-apprenticeship program to prepare them for a career in mechanical insulation, which is essential to energy efficiency.[602] YCCBC provided living wages and practical support for participants while the Insulators provided the training program. The program was oversubscribed and most of the group continued beyond the program on the pathway to Red Seal certification.

As the province advances its climate, industrial, and workforce strategies, continued and expanded investment in Youth Climate Corps BC would allow more communities to participate, more young people to gain meaningful employment, and more climate projects to be delivered at the local level.

The provincial government should ensure sustained and increased funding for this program in future budgets, as well as matching the recent federal investment to build a national, public Youth Climate Corps. The campaign concept is for the federal government to provide a two-year public program that would deliver a good, green job with a living wage to anyone under 35 who applies. Further consideration is needed to explore how Youth Climate Corps at the national and provincial level can connect with union training systems, public-sector workforce planning, and community benefit frameworks as this program grows, providing pathways into apprenticeships and other structured occupational training without substituting short courses for full trades qualifications.

Offering Climate and Economic Literacy

Participants in the BCFED focus groups identified public education as a meaningful way to address concerns about climate change and the economy. Those looking to see action on climate change discussed the need for more education about the economic benefit of "green" policies as well as more education about the economic risks of doing nothing about the climate crisis and the environment (for example stranded assets, the improved economic performance of renewables and the tentative long-term forecast for carbon-intensive fuels).

"Education is the biggest part, from high school to higher education," said a health care worker in the south Okanagan. "We lack in that. People… they don't understand about clean energy and how it is going to help in the future." Others described the need for education within the context of contested media environments, industry public relations, and the changing energy needs of the world. "The energy transition is taking root a lot faster than people acknowledge" said a retired forestry worker in the Interior. "Globally, EV's are skyrocketing. They are taking over. There is a lot of misinformation out there."

Some members also highlighted the importance of economic literacy in connection to climate literacy. "When it comes to education, I would say, yes, inform people about the environment, but tie it to socialism as well. And at least tie it to what it is that capitalism has done to us, especially over the last 40 years," said a retired educator in Metro Vancouver.

Conclusion

There is an incredible opportunity to bring this clean industrial strategy to life but it will not happen without the workers to meet the demand needed. There are thousands of jobs available through this proposal but pathways into them need to be strengthened, either for transitioning workers or youth leaving high school. These well-paid, family-supporting, union jobs could provide an antidote to youth unemployment or household affordability challenges throughout BC if workforce development is done well with coordinated planning and stable funding.

Recommendations

To grow British Columbia's pool of skilled workers, the province should take the following steps:

- **Continue stable funding in skilled trades training and education.**
- **Invest in training, recruitment and retention in the critical mineral mining sector** through USW's proposal for a union-led approach.
- **Create a workforce development plan for BC's clean industrial strategy, and provide coordinated project planning** and sequencing to ensure labour demand can be met; apply a regional approach to both.
- **Protect and enforce Skilled Trades Certification, and expand the list of certified trades.**
- **Ensure that training for work within a skilled trade supports full trades qualifications**, with micro-credentials used for supplementary training rather than as substitutes**.**
- **Support structured occupational training for non-trades industrial roles.**
- **Reverse the deregulation of heat pump installation.**
- **Offer stable project financing and support four-year apprenticeship sponsorships** to ensure continuous work.
- **Increase funding to union training centres**, and open provincial training grants to the workers who use them; **increase funding to post-secondary institutions** to support BC's major project growth.
- **Address stigma and devaluation of trades and industrial work.**
- **Increase equity in the trades and industrial work** through supporting gap programming to elevate learners to building trades entry requirements, as well as hiring priority for Indigenous peoples, women, racialized workers and other underrepresented workers; ensure that apprentices and students are meaningfully supported for the full duration of their training through childcare, travel assistance, school support, etc.
- **Support the work of the BC Centre for Women in the Trades**, providing increased, stable, long-term funding for their programs and services.
- **Increase funding for youth pathways into clean economy work, including supporting Youth Climate Corps** at the provincial and national level.
- **Increase the number of tech-ed teachers** by implementing salary equality between tradespeople and trades teachers and reinstating the faster, two-year, education program that used to be in place for those with trades experience transitioning into teaching.
- **Offer climate and economic literacy in public education**.

CHAPTER 10

Climate Justice



A worker-centred clean industrial strategy must be just, fair and not leave any workers or communities behind. To avoid repeating the harms of the past, we need to face our history and ongoing injustices head-on, accept them, learn from them as we move forward, and commit to doing better in the work we are undertaking here. This section of the report acknowledges our province and our labour movement's discriminatory past and the unequal impact of climate change on Indigenous, black and racialized communities that continues to be felt today. A clean industrial strategy must address these issues and build good environments for all. Reconciliation is an act of solidarity and part of the only real pathway to a legacy of stability, prosperity and justice in our province.

Members in the BCFED focus groups identified First Nations partnerships and leadership as important guideposts in planning for future economies, especially in the natural resource and energy sectors. Many workers described the need to look to First Nations teachings, stewardship and examples in relation to caring for non-human species and managing human impacts on the province's unique ecosystems.

A worker-centred clean industrial strategy must be just, fair and not leave any workers or communities behind.

Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism

Our clean industrial strategy is a plan aimed at addressing environmental racism and achieving environmental justice. The term "environmental racism" was first used by the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice in 1987. The report confirmed what residents knew: toxic waste was being intentionally dumped in Black neighbourhoods in the United States.[603] The release of this report coincided with community knowledge, legal cases, and grassroots mobilizations, and helped to create the field of environmental justice.

The Provincial Anti-Racism Action Plan, released earlier this year, included Environmental Racism as a pillar. This acknowledges that "environmental risks and climate impacts affect communities differently by race, income and housing conditions" and that there are gaps in the data needed to address these issues.[604] The pillar calls for sharing of existing environmental data across public bodies as a starting point.

Environmental justice must be rooted in challenging these connections between race and environmental harms, and protecting racialized communities' rights to healthy, prosperous environments and lives. The Canadian government now recognizes environmental justice as the promotion of "fair and meaningful inclusion in environmental decision-making and equitable distribution of benefits and burdens."[605] They

accept the widely recognized four principles of environmental justice:

- Procedural justice: including affected people in decision-making
- Recognitional justice: incorporating lived experience of affected people
- Distributive justice: the equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens
- Restorative justice: acknowledging and righting historic harms

Indigenous and racialized communities across the world have lived and understood the connection between race and environmental harms for centuries. For communities experiencing environmental racism, the climate crisis intensifies these inequalities. Indigenous and racialized communities face greater exposure to hazards, greater susceptibility to hazards, and limited ability to adjust and respond.[606] This combination of conditions determines a person's or a community's "climate vulnerability," which is influenced by both the natural environment and our political system.

Indigenous and First Nations members in the BCFED focus groups talked about the need to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing into land management and climate mitigation, and how ongoing Indigenous experiences with colonization offer important examples and insights for thinking about current relationships with industry and the federal state of Canada. "The government is doing to the rest of Canada what they did to us," said a First Nations worker from the southern Interior region, referring to short-term extractive agendas impacting things like affordability, housing and future opportunities.

The impacts of the climate crisis are inseparable from the lives of Indigenous peoples and racialized communities, and amplify the physical, emotional and spiritual harms of racism.[607] Climate policy often fails to address that climate change impacts are not experienced equally, and that our environmental exposures stem from societal injustices, not solely our geographies.

Environmentally Racist History and Progress

Indigenous peoples have lived on what is now called British Columbia since time immemorial. Historically, they thrived due to reciprocal relationships with the environment being fundamental to their governance models and traditions.[608] These relationships were disrupted and damaged by colonization which brought with it racist policies, and acts of genocide of Indigenous peoples, like the residential school system. British Columbia's history also includes the enslavement and abuse of Black people, and acts of systemic discrimination against Asian migrants such as forced internment, denial of entry based on race, and immigration bans.

The physical infrastructure that was essential to creating the province of British Columbia, like railways and sawmills, was built through enslaved and exploited racialized labour.[609] The state, employers, and the labour movement collaborated to create discriminatory working conditions, particularly against Indigenous, Black and Asian workers.

Today, many unions in the energy and resource industries are strongly committed to reconciliation and addressing historical harms through developing relationships with First Nations and providing targeted programs for Indigenous workers. But unions have not always played a positive role in supporting Indigenous workers. Many Indigenous peoples in British Columbia have been working for a wage since the late 19th century and were essential to the initial economic development of British Columbia.[610] They particularly worked in resource-based fields such as logging, mining, fishing, and farming. Despite this, many Indigenous wage workers were pushed out by non-Indigenous workers due to racist stereotypes.

In relation to racialized workers, many labour unions in the early 20th century campaigned violently against Asian workers, based on the

Today, many unions in the energy and resource industries are strongly committed to reconciliation and addressing historical harms through developing relationships with First Nations and providing targeted programs for Indigenous workers.

belief that employers would hire Asian workers at a lower wage, which harmed the job market of white workers. In 1907, labour unions, politicians, and community members formed the Asiatic Exclusion League, and looted businesses and attacked residents across Vancouver's Chinatown and Japantown.[611]

However, the BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) voted down the Asian exclusion clause and permitted the membership of racialized workers in 1918. The BCFED then formed a short-lived organization called the One Big Union with a founding principle of inclusion: "This body recognizes no aliens but the capitalist."[612] In the 1940s, the International Woodworkers of America (IWA) invested in organizing drives with the South Asian community in the lumber industry, boosting their numbers to thousands in just under a decade. Darshan Singh Sangha was a South Asian organizer with IWA who was instrumental in organizing these workers, stating that IWA "took a consistent stand, that equality should be extended to all the sections and this racial discrimination is something which is anti-working class."[613]

From there, it took several decades to include workers of all races significantly. Indigenous and racialized workers are still under-represented in unions, which results in lower bargaining power, wages, job quality, and benefits.[614] To address this, many unions are working on Indigenous reconciliation and anti-racism initiatives with targeted programs for impacted workers, as well as education and training for all members. This is important in the expansion of resource industries and the development of renewable energy infrastructure within this clean industrial strategy.

Ongoing Injustices

Climate change disproportionately affects Indigenous peoples, significantly impacting food systems, migration patterns, resource accessibility, sacred sites, ways of learning, knowledge sharing, and more.[615] This is a specific threat to Indigenous peoples' constitutionally protected rights to sovereign and cultural lifestyles.

Between 2000 and 2024, Indigenous reserves accounted for 36 of 37 of the areas where wildfires burned more than half of the total land area.[616] Despite being only 5 per cent of the population, First Nations communities make up 42 per cent of wildfire evacuations.[617] This is worsened by colonial restrictions on Indigenous land stewardship practices in relation to fire, which were only recently decriminalized. In 1874, BC was the first jurisdiction in Canada to ban cultural burning, a controlled burn that reduces wildfire intensity and frequency.[618] It was only in 2024 that the provincial government amended wildfire regulations to include support for cultural burns.

Environmental disasters in remote and Northern communities, where significant numbers of Indigenous peoples live, cause infrastructure instability and communities are isolated from emergency response. These response delays are exacerbated by government deprioritization.[619] Evacuations from remote communities and reserves often cause displacement over long distances, disrupting families, housing, land relations, health, and cultural services.

Industrialization projects with resource extraction are disproportionately situated on or near

First Nations lands. [620]The proponents of these projects have often failed to acquire free, prior and informed consent from the Nations, while causing negative environmental and health impacts to the people and surrounding areas and not passing along economic benefits. In particular, infrastructure projects near remote communities have been shown to pose extreme risks to Indigenous women and girls.[621] The projects cause a large inflow of workers, primarily young non-Indigenous men, into temporary workforce housing often placed near Indigenous communities and evidence demonstrates that their arrival leads to increased sexual violence against Indigenous women.[622] This violence is part of the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Industrialization in the province has always been intertwined with violence against Indigenous peoples, particularly women, and lands, and the approach to clean industrialization must not continue in this direction. Climate change politics in British Columbia regularly ignore how colonialism is tied to the climate crisis, pursuing economic growth without considering Indigenous rights. This has led to the underrepresentation and exclusion of First Nations from provincial and federal climate mitigation, adaptation, and action. For Indigenous peoples, the energy transition is inseparable from decolonization and this needs to be reflected in a clean industrial strategy.

Access to clean, fresh water has long been an issue for Indigenous and rural communities,[623] and this issue is increasing with climate change. BCFED focus group participants expressed concern about the future existence of water-supplies in their region. “My top concern is water shortage. Northeast BC is in a stage 5 drought and has been for several years now,” said a Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) member in Dawson Creek. “There is minimal backup water that will soon be depleted. Then what?” Enhanced water management is a critical climate justice issue.

Racialized communities across the world also face disproportionate climate impacts. In British Columbia, racialized communities, particularly in urban areas, are more likely to be in high-pollution and industrial areas. These areas have increased air and water pollution and fewer green spaces, which intensifies heatwaves.[624] Additionally, racialized people are more likely to live in housing with inadequate heating and cooling, have higher rates of energy poverty, and have fewer resources to recover from environmental hazards.

Sixty per cent of recent immigrants, Indigenous workers, and racialized women work in non-standard jobs. More than 55 per cent of recent immigrants have low-pay, insecure, and unprotected jobs.[625] Many workers in the BCFED focus groups see the disproportionate and class-related impacts of climate change as a direct result of insufficient wages and housing insecurity. “People who have less resources are less able to cope. The system is breaking down,” said an educational assistant on the Sunshine Coast. Care-aides and paramedics tell of scenarios in which people in heat related distress do not have their air conditioning turned on because of the costs.

Many migrants have limited political power due to restricted working conditions (often tied to a single employer), lack of access to public services like health care and employment insurance, and intersecting barriers of race, gender, and language, which drastically impact environmental disaster response. In particular, migrant agricultural workers face intersecting climate and housing crises.[626] They often live in housing exposed to extreme temperatures and have limited tenant protections and housing inspections to address it.

In the August 2026 Okanagan wildfire response, migrant workers without BC Services Cards faced significant difficulties in accessing resources.[627] BC Services Cards are tied to the Medical Services Plan, which includes up to a three-month delay for new residents and is not accessible to short-term migrants. Migrant workers evacuated from farms in Peachland and Summerland were told

they could stay in a West Kelowna emergency centre for only two nights and three days. Outside Penticton, migrants struggled to access Emergency Support Services resources like food, clothing, and funds available to other non-migrant workers and residents.

BC's decades-old heat exposure regulations lack clarity in implementation, do not address climate change-induced realities, and are poorly enforced. However, various existing labour protections worldwide could be expanded upon in BC's clean energy industrialization. In 2021, Sebastián Francisco Pérez, a 38-year-old Guatemalan migrant tree farmer, died in Oregon from heat exposure. After unions across the state and the country campaigned on the preventability of his death, the state governments of Washington and Oregon issued emergency heat protection rules.[628] In recent years, both Spain and France enacted legislation which increases outdoor workers' protections and limits or halts outdoor work in high temperatures, which amplified campaigns for similar EU-wide legislation.[629] In BC, the Workers' Compensation Board has committed to updating the heat stress regulations in their upcoming work plan so there is an opportunity to make changes to address this significant issue.

Existing Change and Opportunity

Indigenous land stewardship is both a racial justice solution and a climate solution. While accounting for just over 6 per cent of the global population, Indigenous Peoples are custodians of more than a third of the world's most important biodiversity areas, 42 per cent of which is ecologically healthy.[630]

Clean energy projects across Canada have extensive Indigenous leadership, growing both Canada's sustainable economic growth and First Nations' social, political, and economic strength.[631] In 2025, clean energy generation with Indigenous co-ownership or interest across Canada totalled 20,848 MW in installed capacity, with an additional 6,120 MW under construction. In BC, recent calls for power for renewable energy projects have required a minimum of 25 per cent of equity ownership for First Nations but the most recent four wind energy projects selected have 51 per cent equity ownership.[632] Considerations over public ownership through partnerships with First Nations on these projects should be included in the future — see the renewable energy chapter for more discussion.

Many essential resources for the energy transition, such as land, critical minerals, and energy sources, are located on First Nations territory. Collaborative governance of these resources must sustain Indigenous sovereignty, as the resources are also connected to culture and identity.[633] Indigenous and non-Indigenous mineral experts believe that a transition which does not perpetuate colonial harms must ensure First Nations have capital for project investment, capacity to shape resource development, governance and decision-making power, and thorough consent procedures.

The BC Federation of Labour is on a journey of reconciliation that includes a Protocol on Cooperation and Communication between the BCFED and the First Nations Leadership Council, first signed in 2008 and updated in 2018 and this year, as well as a Reconciliation Plan Framework launched in 2023.[634] Implementation of the Protocol Agreement is guided by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action, which serve as foundations to this work.

BCFED focus group participants discussed the importance of foregrounding Indigenous experiences and listening with "open ears and shut mouths" about the environment, the economy, and climate change. Allies spoke about the importance of Indigenous stewardship, saying "ignorance got us into this, education will get us out." Another said: "First Nations are engaging us and we have to follow their lead." An important feature of these perspectives is the emphasis on "real" as opposed to "token" engagement with

First Nations partners. For workers, this means much more in the way of material commitments to communities alongside generational commitments to the environmental systems that are impacted by economic productivity.

This moment of clean industrialization potential positions BC to invest in policy development and capacity building to lead a worker-centred clean energy strategy in relationship with Indigenous communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To progress reconciliation efforts:

- **Recognize and respect the Title, Rights and Treaty Rights of First Nations.**
- **Uphold the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action.**

To prevent further concentration of industrial environmental harms in overburdened communities:

- **Establish an independent provincial environmental justice advisory body.**
- **Publish transparent provincial race-environmental health data and track and act on disparities.**
- **Allocate funds to create clean energy jobs in historically overburdened and underserved communities.**

To reduce climate inequities amongst Indigenous and racialized communities:

- **Recognize Indigenous stewardship as a climate solution and partner with First Nations to support Indigenous-protected and conserved areas.**
- **Remove regulatory and administrative barriers to Indigenous land stewardship practices.**
- **Implement culturally-informed emergency response procedures for remote, Northern, and reserve communities.**
- **Update and strictly enforce heat exposure regulations.**
- **Eliminate the three-month wait for health care coverage and create permanent resident pathways for migrant workers.**

Disability and Climate Justice

As we try to understand and support diverse realities in relation to climate justice, it is imperative that perspectives concerning disability and climate change are profiled. This section offers an overview of these considerations and provides an important foundation to a clean industrial strategy based on environmental justice and leaving no one behind.

Those with disabilities are more vulnerable to the consequences of climate change and experience mortality rates "up to four times higher than people without disabilities" in natural disasters due to a lack of inclusive planning, information systems, and disaster services, as well as a disruption to accessible and necessary health care.[635] People with disability (PWD), already a marginalized population in Canada, are on the front lines of the climate crisis[636] and it is critical their experiences are shared. The unique perspectives of those living with disability are important to climate justice work and should not continue to be treated as an afterthought to inclusive and innovative solutions facing the world.

How Climate Change Impacts and Increases Disability

At international, national, and provincial levels, it has been identified that "changes in the natural environment can have disproportionate impacts on persons with disability."[637] A notable example of devastating climate change impacts was during the July 2021 heatwave where cities in BC, Washington and Oregon were unprepared.[638] As a consequence of the heat dome in BC, "619 people died, including a disproportionate number of disabled, older, low-income, and socially isolated individuals."[639]

Researchers from the University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine acknowledge that the "impact of climate change on people with disabilities is wide-ranging. Mobility challenges, for instance, can limit their ability to evacuate during a wildfire or flood, or access cooling centres during a heat wave. Sensory impairments, such as vision and hearing loss, can hinder their access to emergency alert information. And pre-existing health conditions, such as diabetes and respiratory diseases, can make people with disabilities even more vulnerable to the effects of extreme heat and poor air — exacerbated by the fact that they are less likely to have air conditioning in their homes."[640]

Further, since climate change and associated weather events "can have a significant impact on mental well-being and health directly or indirectly, predominantly on individuals with pre-existing vulnerabilities or populations residing in environmentally sensitive regions,"[641] disability induced by — not simply affected by — ecological changes must be acknowledged.

Disability, Climate Change and Food Insecurity

An extension of considerations related to climate change is food insecurity for PWD who may already be facing poverty-related food access issues.[642] A study on Household Food Insecurity (HFI) and disability revealed that study participants "with disabilities have 2.5 times higher odds of HFI than those without disabilities, even after accounting for various sociodemographic factors such as age, sex, marital status, household education, region of residence, and income."[643] Given that Indigenous Peoples live with higher rates of disability than non-Indigenous populations[644] as well as high rates of poverty,[645] it is critical that the intersection between disability, climate change, and food insecurity be given more consideration in the context of climate justice.

In BC, when climate change compromises food sources, Indigenous Peoples relying on traditional foods and harvesting practices may experience a reduction in the quality, diversity, and volume of their diet, which impacts their general health.[646] "[T]he traditional diet of coastal [Indigenous Peoples] has already been declining as a result of social and environmental changes and has led to the inadequate intakes of important nutrients. … incorporating Indigenous knowledge … [is] needed to address the nutritional burden facing [Indigenous] diets."[647]

Local food sources in BC, including community kitchens and gardens, farmer's markets and farm to school programs, strategize to "[bring] individual and community members [together] to respond to the unavoidable changes taking place in their communities … to adapt to climate change at an individual and collective level."[648] Food insecurity must be considered alongside disability and climate justice.

Intersectionality, Human Rights, and Climate Justice

Disability and climate justice are inherently intersectional, overlapping and interacting to create different forms of discrimination and disadvantage. Further, human rights issues (like race, gender, etc.) along with the historic and ongoing harms of ableism[649] and colonialism intertwine for a compounded and magnified effect on disability and climate justice.

For example, in considering inclusive wildfire disaster communication and evacuation, "disability-related needs often intersect with other vulnerabilities. For instance, communication barriers can similarly affect Deaf individuals and those with limited English proficiency. Systemic failures can add to risks for groups like Indigenous communities, who may face cultural and linguistic barriers that exacerbate existing accessibility gaps."[650] These intersections show how the challenges of inaccessibility are widespread. PWD who are Indigenous, women, children, from a racial minority, and/or may experience poverty, can encounter exacerbated discrimination due to intersecting identities.

Ableism and colonialism are connected when it comes to climate justice since "the accumulation of wealth in colonial, capitalist systems relies on the positioning of some bodies and some landscapes as less valuable than others, as expendable in the ongoing pursuit of economic growth."[651] As a result, those living with disability "are often not included in conversations about climate and environmental justice, which are typically led by nondisabled individuals who create systems that are inaccessible. They have no social or spatial awareness of what it's like to live with a disability, which…is very problematic. They end up creating something that complies with federal policy but they're not creating it for a livable experience, and that doesn't work."[652]

It is important to advance a disability human rights approach to climate justice since "a disability human rights approach views disabled persons as disproportionately experiencing environmental threats and unnatural disasters due to their exclusion from state laws, policies, and services available to their non-disabled peers."[653] Including disability and human rights within climate justice efforts creates an opportunity to redress impacts of ableism and colonialism within climate justice. Further, amplifying the role of intersectionality within disability and climate justice will "empower the voices of people with disabilities through an anti-ableist and anti-discriminatory approach"[654] to advance this important work.

Including Disability Is Invaluable to Climate Justice

Those living with disability are key to diversity and inclusion in environmentalism.[655] As a population group that faces, confronts, and routinely overcomes barriers through strategic adaptation and self-advocacy, BC and Canada have an opportunity to learn from PWD in the wake of unprecedented environmental change to effectively adapt and respond to climate crises. "As wildfires become more frequent and severe due to climate change and expanding development in high-risk areas, there is an urgent need to reimagine emergency management through a lens of equity and inclusivity … a shift toward participatory planning, proactive funding, and a hybrid governance model that together ensure accessibility is considered at every stage."[656]

"Despite contributing minimally to climate change, people with disabilities bear a disproportionate burden of its adverse consequences."[657] Although Canada is a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change — the Paris Agreement and honours disability rights with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the work being done by Environment and Climate Change Canada and BC's Ministry of Emergency Management and

Climate Readiness must increase the inclusion of PWD. BC and Canada have an invaluable opportunity to become leaders for a more inclusive approach to disability and climate justice to leave no one behind.[658]

Further, by engaging physicians to work with patients to learn how climate change is impacting their lives, adequate resources can be offered that may "substantially increase awareness of climate change as a driver of health amongst the general population."[659]

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Apply equity and inclusivity to emergency management to ensure that accessibility is considered at every stage.**
- **Include people with disabilities in climate planning for mitigation and adaptation measures.**
- **Address food insecurity in relation to climate change.**

Conclusion



Three recent reports underline the urgency of this initiative. First, a report from the United Nations Environment Programme, *Limiting Overshoot: Navigating exceedance of 1.5°C and pathways towards return*, stresses the inevitability of the world exceeding global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius, the goal identified in the Paris Agreement from 2016.[660]

Closer to home, the second edition of *Canada's Changing Climate Report* from the federal government highlights that increasing temperatures will continue due to greenhouse gas emissions from human activities, projecting an average temperature increase of 1 degree Celsius in the short-term and 5 degrees Celsius in the longer-term[661] if we continue with current climate policies, with projections of an increased temperature of 10 degrees Celsius in the North.[662] Canada has already warmed nearly twice as fast as the global average over the last 50 years and the Canadian Arctic has warmed three times as fast.[663] Warming will contribute to an exacerbation of extreme weather events: increased rainfall, extreme heat, longer fire seasons, severe droughts, and more.

Finally, recent analysis from 440 Megatonnes finds that Canada is 20 years behind reaching its emissions targets.[664] Far from reaching net zero in 2050, Canada will be lucky to hit its 2030 target in 2050.

However, all three reports emphasize that these outcomes are not inevitable and are the result of weak climate policies. As the Canadian Climate Institute (CCI) highlights, "what comes after 2040 is still a choice: this report describes physics, not fate."[665] And 440 Megatonnes emphasizes that "Canada can bend its emissions trajectory once again, and it can do so while pursuing other important goals related to sovereignty and economic diversification."[666] Accelerating renewable energy and reducing demand are crucial, as outlined in this report.

"These measures can also deliver substantial co-benefits. Cleaner air, improved public health, lower energy costs, enhanced energy security and greater equity all come with mitigation… Transitioning away from fossil fuels is thus a key investment in resilience and public welfare."[667] "The gap between these two futures is enormous, and the difference will be measured in lives lost, homes destroyed, and communities and livelihoods damaged beyond recognition. In dollar figures, [CCI's] research estimates the cost to Canada's economy at hundreds of billions of dollars a year by 2100."

These commitments and investments will provide almost 80,000 job opportunities in these emerging and growing sectors and address British Columbians' intersecting priorities: cost of living, health care and safer communities. This is the economic future that BC needs and workers want.

This worker-centred clean industrial strategy provides a bold vision in the face of these reports, offering a clear and hopeful pathway to a sustainable future for workers and communities that reduces emissions to keep temperatures within livable limits and reduce extreme weather events and their devastating consequences. Commitments and investments in renewable energy generation and transmission, energy efficient retrofits, responsible natural resources such as forestry and critical mineral mining, public transit expansion and circular economy generation will take us in this direction. At the same time, they will provide almost 80,000 job opportunities in these emerging and growing sectors and address British Columbians' intersecting priorities: cost of living, health care and safer communities. This is the economic future that BC needs and workers want.

BC is already lagging behind other countries leading the way in making these moves. In the face of volatile global energy markets, the United Nations highlights that oil and gas can expose countries to geopolitical risk and price spikes while renewables provide domestic, stable power.[668] Thus, renewable energy holds the potential for energy sovereignty. As the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says, the "fastest path to energy security, economic security, and national security is clear: speed up a just transition away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy."[669] At the 2022 BCFED Convention, delegates passed a resolution for a "controlled reduction in the production of fossil fuels in a swift transition to a renewable energy economy."[670]

However, this cannot happen without workers and communities as the foundation. Principles to ensure this leaves no worker or community behind include strong labour standards and community benefits, a regional approach recognizing the diversity of BC communities, public ownership and worker co-operatives, enhanced climate occupational health and safety measures, sectoral bargaining, strong public services, value-added approaches, and BC/Canada procurement incentives. In addition, unions and workers must be at the table in planning for this future. Change is hard and many workers may have concerns about how this will affect their livelihoods, families and communities. Thus, a just transition must centre impacted workers. Working people have insights and ideas that will be invaluable as we build a new economy. Heeding workers' voices isn't just a political necessity; it's how BC makes the most of the wealth of economic and community knowledge we've amassed, and which can't be found anywhere else.

We urge the provincial government to increase its investments in the clean economy and recommit to reaching net zero emissions by 2050 using this proposal as the roadmap. Workers in British Columbia are ready for strong leadership that meets the moment. They are not only prepared but eager to rally behind a visionary economic and climate plan that genuinely reflects their needs, aspirations and experiences. As one worker said, "pick a direction and let's go."

Appendix A. Methodology

This appendix describes how quantitative estimates in this report were produced: the summary employment table in the introduction, the 2050 electricity build-out and the transmission requirement in the renewable energy chapter, and the employment estimates in the renewable energy, retrofit and circular economy chapters. The transit, critical minerals, forestry and BC Hydro capital plan employment figures are taken from the published sources cited in those chapters and were not recalculated. The Excel workbook outlining these calculations is available upon request.

A.1 The summary employment table

Source

The table of employment in the sectors covered by this report was built from the 2025 monthly files of Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) public use microdata file (PUMF).[1] To create the table, results from each of the twelve, monthly files for 2025 were averaged, which corrects for seasonality.

Industry detail

The LFS PUMFs contain data broken down into 21 industry categories, which are broader than the sectors in this report. The construction group, for example, contains both the building trades that do retrofit work and the utility construction that builds electricity infrastructure. Each sector in the table was therefore built from the relevant LFS group and scaled to the sector's sub-industries using the share of payroll employment those sub-industries held within the same group in 2025. These shares were calculated from Statistics Canada's Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH) for 2025 in British Columbia.2

The sectors were defined as follows.

- Renewable energy is the utilities group (NAICS 22) scaled to electric power generation, transmission and distribution (NAICS 2211), a share of 0.794, plus the construction group (NAICS 23) scaled to utility system construction (NAICS 2371). The electric power share uses the Canada series because the British Columbia series is not published.

1 Statistics Canada, "Labour Force Survey: Public Use Microdata File," catalogue no. 71M0001X, 2025 monthly files, Government of Canada, accessed October 15, 2026.

2 Statistics Canada, "Employment by Industry, Monthly, Unadjusted for Seasonality," Table 14-10-0201-01, Government of Canada, September 24, 2026.

- Critical mineral mining is the mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction group (NAICS 21) scaled to metal ore mining (NAICS 2122). Support activities for mining are excluded.
- Energy efficiency and retrofits is the construction group (NAICS 23) scaled to residential and non-residential building construction and specialty trade contractors (NAICS 2361, 2362 and 238).
- Forestry is the forestry and logging and support activities group (NAICS 113 and 1153) in full, plus the durable manufacturing group (NAICS 321, 327 and 331 to 337) scaled to wood product manufacturing (NAICS 321).
- Public transit and transportation is the transportation and warehousing group (NAICS 48 and 49) scaled to urban transit systems, interurban and rural bus transportation (NAICS 4851 and 4852), and water transportation (NAICS 4831 and 4832), plus the durable manufacturing group (NAICS 321, 327 and 331 to 337) scaled to ship and boat building (NAICS 3366).
- Circular economy is the business, building and other support services group (NAICS 55 and 56) scaled to waste management and remediation services (NAICS 562).

A.2 The 2050 electricity build-out

The renewable energy chapter seeks to double BC's generation and capacity in 2020 by 2050. The data used for the 2020 baseline comes from the Canada Energy Regulator's provincial energy profile, which reports annual generation and capacity by source.[3] The generation baseline is the mean of 2019, 2020 and 2021 generation, adopted to smooth the annual variation in hydro output. The capacity baseline is 2020.

Project inventory

The build-out is an inventory of named projects and resources, each taken from a published source, together with the marine target and the wind and solar rows described below. The sources by class are as follows.

- Committed wind and solar are the projects awarded electricity purchase agreements in BC Hydro's 2024 and 2025 Calls for Power, at the capacities announced.[4]
- Committed hydro and geothermal are Site C, the Revelstoke Unit 6 addition, the GM Shrum Units 1 to 5 upgrade and the Bridge River 1 generator replacement, from BC Hydro's capital plan and 2025 Integrated Resource Plan, and the Tu Deh-Kah geothermal project.[5]
- Hydro not yet committed comprises Site E and Homathko from BC Hydro's Powering Growth plan, 20 run-of-river and small reservoir sites from the Canadian Open-source Database for Energy Research

3 Canada Energy Regulator, "Renewable Energy in Canada: British Columbia," figures 1 and 2, Government of Canada, March 25, 2026.

4 Energy and Climate Solutions, "BC Hydro Expands Clean-Energy Supply with New Solar Project," news release, Government of British Columbia, December 20, 2024; Energy and Climate Solutions, "Strong Response to 2025 Call for Power, Delivering Clean, Affordable Energy," news release, Government of British Columbia, May 13, 2026.

5 BC Hydro and Power Authority, *2025 Integrated Resource Plan Application* (BCUC, 2025); BC Hydro, "Powering Growth Plan," accessed October 27, 2026.

and Systems-Modelling (CODERS), and existing-station upgrades recorded in CODERS and in Table 2-21 of the Integrated Resource Plan.[6]

- Wind and solar not yet committed comprise the FortisBC Southern Interior Call for Power, three solar and storage projects, and the customer rooftop solar potential estimated in the Dunsky market potential report filed with the BC Utilities Commission.[7]
- Geothermal is the Geoscience BC site list.[8]
- Storage is made up of 10 pumped hydro sites from the CODERS pumped storage table and the utility-scale batteries in BC Hydro's Powering Growth plan.[9]

Where a source publishes a range, the midpoint is used. Existing-station upgrades and storage are carried at their capacity with no annual generation, since an upgrade adds no water to an existing station and storage shifts energy rather than generating it. Natural gas generation is assumed to be retired by 2035.

The marine target

The tidal and wave capacity put forward in the chapter is not drawn from an inventory. It is an estimate of feasible marine construction, informed by 2050 targets set by the European Union in its Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy.[10] That target was scaled by British Columbia's generation relative to the European Union's, using baseline generation capacity calculated from Canada Energy Regulator data, described above, against Eurostat net generation for 2023. The result was split 75 per cent tidal and 25 per cent wave, based on the split established by Fanning, Jones and Munday (2014).[11]

Wind and solar

After accounting for all the named projects and the marine targets, the outstanding generation needed to reach the 2050 target is satisfied through future biennial Calls for Partnership. This amount is split 75 per cent wind and 25 per cent solar by energy, following BC Hydro's own portfolio modelling in the 2025 Integrated Resource Plan.[12]

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6 BC Hydro, "Powering Growth Plan"; R. M. Hendriks et al., "Canadian Open-Source Database for Energy Research and Systems-Modelling (CODERS)," in Energy Modelling Hub, 2023, hydro_greenfield and hydro_renewal tables; BC Hydro and Power Authority, *2025 Integrated Resource Plan Application*, table 2-21, 2-78.

7 FortisBC, "Call for Power," accessed November 2, 2026; BC Hydro, "Net Metering Evidentiary Update (Application Update)," Exhibit B-8, BCUC, March 20, 2025, appendix B-1, Dunsky Energy + Climate Advisors, Behind-the-Meter Solar PV and Storage Market Potential Assessment, figure 2-10.

8 Kerr Wood Leidal Associates and GeothermEx, *An Assessment of the Economic Viability of Selected Geothermal Resources in British Columbia*, Geoscience BC Report 2015-11, revised final report (Geoscience BC, March 31, 2016), table E1-1.

9 Hendriks et al., "Canadian Open-Source Database for Energy Research and Systems-Modelling (CODERS)," hydro_pumped_storage table; BC Hydro, "Powering Growth Plan."

10 European Commission, "Marine Renewable Energy," Oceans and Fisheries, accessed November 2, 2026.

11 Tim Fanning, Calvin Jones, and Max Munday, "The Regional Employment Returns from Wave and Tidal Energy: A Welsh Analysis," *Energy* 76 (2014): 958 to 966.

12 BC Hydro and Power Authority, *2025 Integrated Resource Plan Application*, appendix B, section 3.3, 19.

Capacity factors

Where a source publishes capacity but not generation, or generation but not capacity, numbers were converted using a capacity factor. Committed wind uses the factor implied by BC Hydro's published output for the Call for Power awards. Uncommitted wind uses the weighted average of British Columbia's ten operating wind farms recorded in CODERS. Solar uses the National Renewable Energy Laboratory "PVWatts" estimate for southern British Columbia latitudes.[13] Geothermal uses the 90 per cent plant availability adopted in the Geoscience BC assessment that supplies the site list.[14] Tidal and wave use the load factors in the International Renewable Energy Agency ocean energy technology briefs.[15]

A.3 The transmission requirement

The renewable energy chapter estimates how much new transfer capability is needed to service a doubling of peak demand and compares it with what BC Hydro has announced. The method has four steps.

First, we summed the transfer capability BC Hydro has announced, comprising the Prince George to Terrace capacitor project, the North Coast Transmission Line, and the first and second steps of the Interior to South Coast reinforcement, as reported in the 2025 Integrated Resource Plan and BC Hydro's Service Plan.[16] Second, we divided that sum by BC Hydro's forecast growth in peak demand from fiscal 2025 to fiscal 2050 under its Reference Load scenario, from Figure B-2 of the Integrated Resource Plan, to obtain the megawatts of transfer capability BC Hydro is adding per megawatt of peak growth it expects.[17] Third, we applied that ratio to the peak growth implied by a doubling of the fiscal 2025 peak. Finally, we subtracted the announced capability to obtain the shortfall. The method assumes that transfer capability scales in proportion to peak demand. It does not model where new load or new generation will sit on the network.

A.4 Employment estimates

Every employment estimate in this report counts direct and indirect employment. Construction employment is measured in job-years, one person employed full time for one year. Operating employment is reported as ongoing jobs once an asset is in service. The estimates draw on three sources of multipliers and coefficients: Statistics Canada's input-output multipliers, the Pembina Institute's electricity employment factors, and coefficients from other published studies.

13 National Renewable Energy Laboratory, "PVWatts Calculator," accessed November 2, 2026.

14 Kerr Wood Leidal Associates and GeothermEx, *An Assessment of the Economic Viability of Selected Geothermal Resources in British Columbia*, section 5, volumetric assessment, plant capacity factor of 0.90.

15 IRENA, *Tidal Energy Technology Brief* (International Renewable Energy Agency, June 2014); IRENA, *Wave Energy Technology Brief* (International Renewable Energy Agency, June 2014), table 1.

16 BC Hydro and Power Authority, *2025 Integrated Resource Plan Application*, table 2-22, 2-79; BC Hydro and Power Authority, *2025/26 to 2027/28 Service Plan* (March 2025), 33.

17 BC Hydro and Power Authority, *2025 Integrated Resource Plan Application*, 2-27 and appendix B, figure B-2.

Statistics Canada input-output multipliers

The Statistics Canada's input-output multipliers used for this study are for British Columbia and are at the detail level for reference year 2022.[18] Each per-dollar multiplier was converted to 2026 dollars using the Building Construction Price Index for Vancouver, non-residential buildings, division composite.[19]

In the renewable energy chapter, the Type I multipliers for electric power engineering construction (BS23C300) and for electric power generation, transmission and distribution (BS221100) were applied to coefficients from other studies that count direct employment only, to add indirect employment. Transmission operating jobs were estimated by taking annual operating cost as 2 per cent of capital, the low end of the range the World Bank reports for transmission projects, and multiplying by the direct and indirect multiplier for electric power generation, transmission and distribution.[20]

In the retrofit chapter, employment impacts are based on proposed public spending. The direct and indirect multiplier for repair construction (BS23D000) was applied to public buildings, residential and commercial retrofits, and the direct and indirect multiplier for other engineering construction (BS23C500) was applied to industry.

In the circular economy chapter, direct jobs were estimated first from physical quantities, such as tonnes of scrap exported or houses demolished, using labour ratios from other jurisdictions that are described under coefficients from other published studies. Statistics Canada Type I multipliers were then applied to add indirect jobs. The Type I multiplier for non-ferrous metal except aluminum (BS331400) was applied to recycling and urban mining, the Type I multiplier for repair construction (BS23D000) was applied to deconstruction, and the Type I multiplier for waste management and remediation services (BS562000) was applied to organics.

Pembina Institute electricity employment factors

The Pembina Institute has published employment factors for British Columbia electricity generation that count direct and indirect employment.[21] For large hydro, run-of-river, wind and solar, the factors are per megawatt, with construction in job-years per megawatt and operation in jobs per megawatt. For BC Hydro station upgrades and transmission lines, the factors are per million dollars of capital spending in 2013 dollars, and were converted to 2026 dollars by dividing by the ratio of the 2026 Building Construction Price Index to the 2013 index.

The solar factors are reduced by a decline factor from Rutovitz, Dominish and Downes (2015), which reflects falling labour requirements per megawatt as installation practice matures.[22] Existing-station

18 Statistics Canada, "Input-Output Multipliers, Provincial and Territorial, Detail Level," Table 36-10-0595-01, Government of Canada, November 19, 2025.

19 Statistics Canada, "Building Construction Price Indexes, by Type of Building and Division," Table 18-10-0289-01, Government of Canada, October 29, 2026.

20 World Bank and ESMAP, *Understanding the Cost of Transmission Infrastructure: Insights from World Bank Group-Financed Transmission Projects*, technical report (World Bank, April 2026), 2 and 27.

21 Maximilian Kniewasser, *British Columbia Clean Energy Jobs Map: Methodology Backgrounder* (Pembina Institute, April 27, 2015), tables 1 and 2.

22 Jay Rutovitz, Elsa Dominish, and Jenni Downes, *Calculating Global Energy Sector Jobs: 2015 Methodology Update* (Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney, August 2015), table 9, 18.

upgrades and transmission use Pembina's per-dollar factors and therefore require an expenditure base. For upgrades, the capital cost per megawatt added was taken from the published costs of the Revelstoke Unit 6 and Bridge River 1 projects and applied to the full upgrade class.[23] No operating jobs were counted for upgrades, since we assume that adding a generator inside an existing powerhouse adds no material operating staff. For transmission, published capital costs were used for the North Coast Transmission Line and the Prince George to Terrace capacitors.[24] For the other lines, Table 2-22 of the Integrated Resource Plan gives a cost per kilowatt-year rather than a capital cost, and that was converted to capital using the ratio between the two observed on the North Coast Transmission Line.

Coefficients from other published studies

In the renewable energy chapter, four technology classes have no Pembina factor. The geothermal coefficients are from Jobs for Today (2025).[25] The marine coefficients are from Rutovitz, Dominish and Downes (2015), using the construction and installation component only and excluding the manufacturing component, with the same study's decline factor for ocean energy applied.[26] The battery construction coefficient is from the Institute for Sustainable Futures (2020), with a decline factor applied, and no operating coefficient was adopted.[27] Pumped hydro uses the Pembina large hydro factor for construction and an operating coefficient drawn from National Renewable Energy Laboratory and BiGGAR Economics.[28] Where a source counts direct employment only, the coefficient was multiplied by the relevant Statistics Canada Type I multiplier.

In the circular economy chapter, direct employment estimates for the three initiatives were calculated from several data sources. For recycling and urban mining, the calculation starts with British Columbia's ferrous scrap exports in 2025, reported in the Canadian International Merchandise Trade database.[29] These exports were converted to crude steel using an electric arc furnace yield, then multiplied by the number of employees per tonne of capacity at the Gerdau Whitby mill in Ontario. This employment ratio uses the employee count reported by United Steelworkers Canada and the rated capacity listed in the Association for Iron and Steel Technology directory of electric arc furnaces.[30]

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23 BC Hydro, "Revelstoke Unit 6," news release, March 1, 2017; BC Hydro and Power Authority, *2025/26 to 2027/28 Service Plan*, 34.

24 Government of British Columbia, "Major Projects in B.C. Delivered Faster," September 18, 2026; BC Hydro and Power Authority, *2025/26 to 2027/28 Service Plan*, 33.

25 Tyee Bridge and Jim Stanford, *Jobs for Today: Canada's Build Trades & Net-Zero Transition* (Centre for Civic Governance, September 2025), table 2, 30, and 28 for the 1,500-hour job-year.

26 Rutovitz, Dominish, and Downes, *Calculating Global Energy Sector Jobs*, table 1, 5, and table 9, 18.

27 Jay Rutovitz, Chris Briggs, Elsa Dominish, and Kriti Nagrath, *Renewable Energy Employment in Australia: Methodology* (Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney, June 2020), table 19, 27.

28 Jennifer Daw et al., *U.S. Hydropower Workforce: Challenges and Opportunities*, NREL/TP-7A40-83817 (National Renewable Energy Laboratory, October 2022), figure 2, 6; BiGGAR Economics, *The Economic Impact of Pumped Storage Hydro* (Scottish Renewables, May 2023). The 0.09 jobs per megawatt figure is the authors' division of the on-site or direct operating employment each source reports by the pumped storage capacity it covers.

29 Statistics Canada, "Canadian International Merchandise Trade Web Application," Government of Canada, April 5, 2023, domestic exports 2025, HS 7204, British Columbia.

30 John Catto, "Standing Up for Steel at Gerdau in Whitby, ON," United Steelworkers, November 4, 2020; Association for Iron and Steel Technology, "North American Electric Arc Furnaces," in *2021 AIST Directory: Iron and Steel Plants* (2021).

For deconstruction, the calculation starts with the annual average number of single-detached dwellings demolished in British Columbia from 2018 to 2025, based on building permit data.[31] This average was multiplied by the share of residential demolitions that became deconstructions in Portland, Oregon, and by the additional labour hours required for deconstruction compared with demolition, as reported by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. The resulting labour hours were then divided by hours per job.[32]

For organics, the calculation uses the growth in direct employment attributed to the Massachusetts commercial organics waste ban between 2016 and 2024, as estimated for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. This growth was scaled by the ratio of British Columbia's population to that of Massachusetts.[33]

Component	Direct jobs	Indirect and induced jobs	Total
Renewable energy, construction	10,300	13,700	24,000
Renewable energy, operations	5,200	4,600	9,800
Retrofits	2,400	600	3,100
Public transit, construction	9,100	7,700	16,800
Public transit, operations	12,000	11,700	23,700
Circular economy	800	500	1,300
Total	**39,900**	**38,800**	**78,800**

Transit figures are from Connecting BC and include induced employment. The other components count direct and indirect employment only.

A.5 Limitations

In addition to the limitations already mentioned, the input-output multipliers describe the structure of the British Columbia economy in 2022 and are applied to activity that runs to 2050. Furthermore, several coefficients are borrowed from other jurisdictions, including Massachusetts, Oregon and Ontario, and reflect labour markets other than British Columbia's. Therefore, job creation claimed in the study should be understood as an approximation. The summary employment table allocates broad survey industries to sectors using payroll shares, and its percentage columns describe the broad industry rather than the sector.

31 Statistics Canada, "Building Permits, by Type of Structure and Type of Work," Table 34-10-0292-01, Government of Canada, June 11, 2025.

32 Andey Nunes, Jordan Palmeri, and Simon Love, *Deconstruction vs. Demolition: An Evaluation of Carbon and Energy Impacts from Deconstructed Homes in the City of Portland* (Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, March 2019), table 8, 17, and page 31 for the 100 houses deconstructed and 344 demolition permits a year. Labour hours are the worker-days in table 8 converted at eight hours a day.

33 ICF, *Massachusetts Commercial Organics Waste Ban Economic Impact Analysis* (Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, June 2025), table 1, 3; Statistics Canada, "Population Estimates, Quarterly," Table 17-10-0009-01, Government of Canada, September 23, 2026; US Census Bureau, "Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for the United States, Regions, States, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2024," NST-EST2024-POP, December 2024.

Endnotes

1 Some of this introduction is drawn from the BC Federation of Labour, "CleanBC Review," brief, August 7, 2025.

2 BC Federation of Labour, *Summary of Proceedings BC Federation of Labour 61st Convention: A Future Worth Fighting For, November 25-29, 2024.*

3 This recent report outlines the huge investment potential. New Economy Canada, "Strong Signals in the Noise," July 2025.

4 Bill McKibben, "4.6 Billion Years On, the Sun is Having a Moment," *The New Yorker,* July 9, 2025.

5 United Nations, *Seizing the moment of opportunity: Supercharging the New Energy Era of Renewables, Efficiency and Electrification* (2025).

6 Darius Snieckus, "Trump attack on US clean energy progress boosting Canada as a 'preferred investment destination'," *Canada's National Observer*, July 11, 2025.

7 See Liaison Strategies, *Canadian Climate & Energy Survey* (Climate Action Network, 2026); Clean Energy Canada, "Poll: British Columbians overwhelmingly want government to build new renewable projects over natural gas," October 2026.

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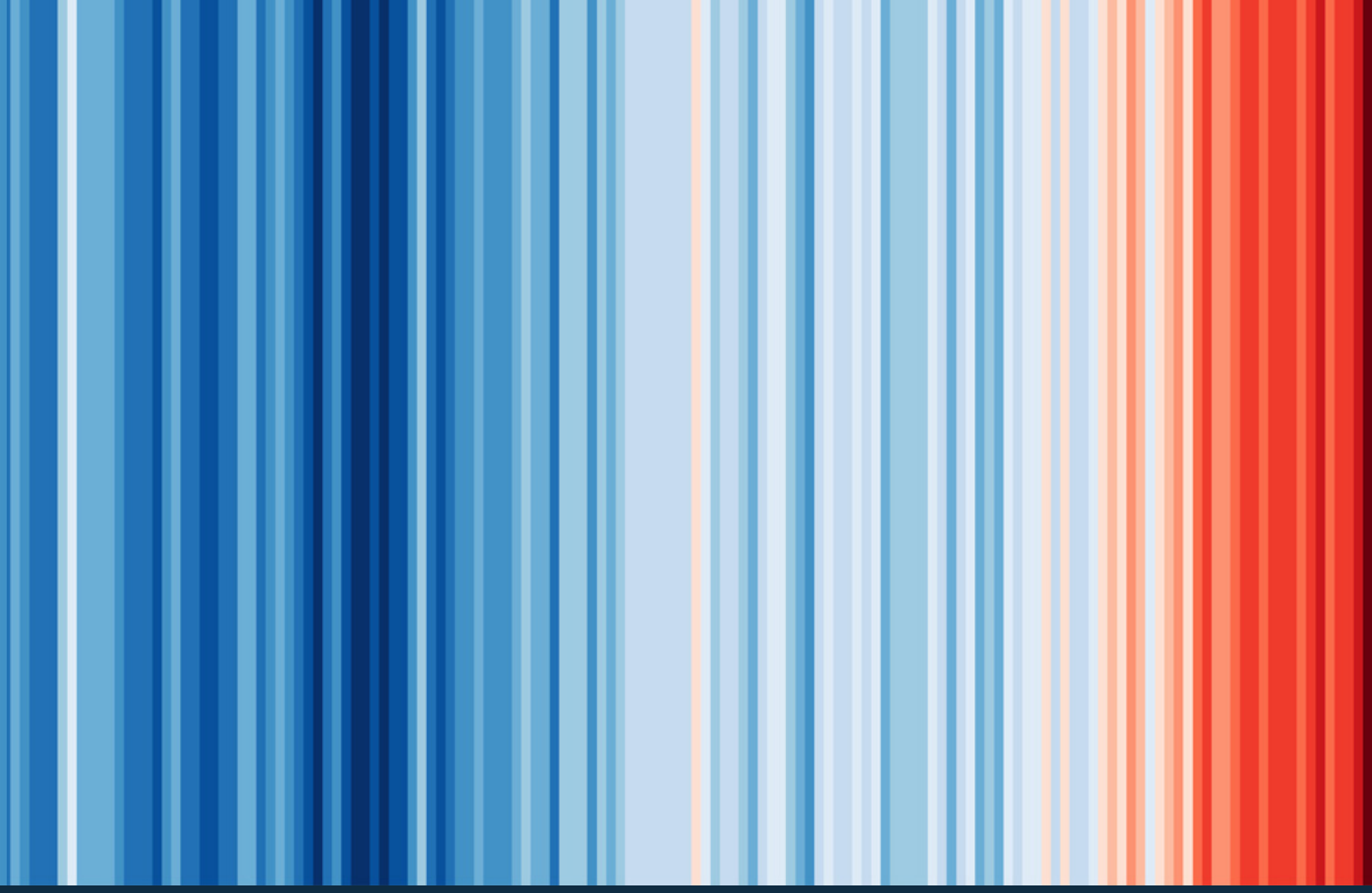

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