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environmental
defence

Prepared by a collaborative group of environmental organizations, including Environmental Defence, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, and the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives with the valuable input of the Quebec Federation of Labour and Unifor.

What is a just transition?

As the world pivots from a net-zero economy, free from fossil fuels, the Canadian government must be ready to proactively support workers and communities to ensure they continue to have access to good, sustainable jobs. The term “just transition” was coined by labour unions in the 1960s to describe bringing workers to the table to engage in social dialogue and establish support systems for workers who had become unemployed due to environmental protection policies. It has since been further articulated in the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) [Guidelines for a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All](#).

Canada is a major producer and consumer of fossil fuels, our economy depends on high-carbon industries such as steel production, intensive agriculture and the automotive industry. In anticipation of a decline in fossil fuel production triggered by a shift in global demand and domestic climate action, workers in Canada's fossil fuel and other such carbon-intensive industries **must be included in the decisions and given opportunities to move to sectors with a bright future in a thriving clean economy**. The transition to a just, decarbonized economy goes far beyond the energy sector, although the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors will be important employers. The transition will require the transformation of industrial processes, the electrification of our economy, and a new low-carbon industrial and manufacturing strategy. A large share of workplaces across the country will have to change as we decarbonize our economy.

Those who have been marginalized or excluded from economic activity such as Indigenous peoples, women, racialized workers and people with disabilities, should be given opportunities to shape and actively participate in a just transition to a low-carbon society. As we support people in a decarbonized society, there is a necessity to reduce injustices and make up for historic inequities.

People who have lost or are at risk of losing their job due to environmental policies must be given opportunities to access jobs of the same or higher income, with benefits, safe working conditions, the right to unionize, and a provided a clear pathway into them. To ensure no one is left behind, governments must collaborate with workers, employers, provincial and Indigenous governments, communities, and other stakeholders on developing, funding and implementing **a just transition strategy**.

While the actual name of the legislation makes little difference to impacted workers and communities, it is important for Canada's just transition legislation to respect the principles and rights enshrined in the concept of "just transition".

Why does it matter for Canada?

- The federal government has committed to implementing a just transition and is currently drafting just transition legislation that is expected to be tabled in February/March 2023.
- Canada's climate targets of reducing emissions by 40-45 per cent by 2030 and reaching net-zero by 2050 signify a rapid transition off of fossil fuels that will require record investment in clean technology industries. The International Energy Agency finds that net-zero will require a [75 per cent reduction](#) in global production of oil by mid-century, and Canada has some of the most [carbon-intensive](#) oil in the world.
- Total national fossil fuel employment is close to [200,000 workers](#), with up to 830,000 more workers indirectly dependent on the industry.
- The extraction and processing of fossil fuels account for 5 per cent of all economic activity in Canada, though it is largely concentrated in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Compared to other fossil fuel-producing countries, Canada has a [high capacity](#) to carry out a just transition, in part due to its low overall dependence on fossil fuels as an economic driver

What has already taken place?

- Canada has made many international commitments to enact a just transition, including in the Paris Agreement (2015), the Powering Past Coal Alliance Declaration (2017), the Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration (2018), and the COP26 pact on Supporting the Conditions for a Just Transition Internationally (2021).
- Canada has also made domestic commitments and progress on just transition, including the commitment to phase out coal-fired electricity (2016), followed by the creation of the Task Force on Just Transition for Canadian Coal Power Workers and Communities (2018), and the commitment to create just transition legislation and a clean jobs training centre (2019).
- In 2021-2022, the government held consultations with stakeholders and civil society organizations to inform the just transition legislation. The legislation is expected to be tabled in February/March 2023.
- In April 2022, the Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development published [an audit on just transition](#) progress which found that “the federal government was not prepared to support a just transition to a low-carbon economy” and made recommendations on how to improve and advance the process.

Resources

Stories of transitions (case studies)

- Just Transition Centre <https://www.ituc-csi.org/just-transition-centre?lang=en>
- World Resources Institute. [Just Transition and equitable climate action resource centre](#) has transition case studies and stories from many sectors around the world.

Who to speak to:

Labour

- Canadian Labour Congress - media@clcctc.ca
- Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec (FTQ) - Patrick Rondeau (prondeau@ftq.qc.ca)

- JUST Transition Center - Leonard (Len) Austin (justtransitioncenter@gmail.com)
- Unifor - communications@unifor.org

Labour/ Environmental coalition

- Blue Green Canada - Jamie Kirkpatrick (jkirkpatrick@bluegreencanada.ca)
- Iron and Earth - (media@ironandearth.org)

Climate and Environment

- Alberta Environmental Network - Natalie Odd (nodd@aenweb.ca)
- Ecojustice - Matt Hulse (mhulse@ecojustice.ca)
- Équiterre - Émile Boisseau-Bouvier (eboisseaubouvier@equiterre.org)
FR available
- Environmental Defence - Alienor Rougeot (arougeot@environmentaldefence.ca)
FR available
- International Institute of Sustainable Development - Vanessa Corkal (vcorkal@iisd.ca), Laura Cameron (lcameron@iisd.ca)

Indigenous organizations

Please additionally reach out to individual First Nation, Metis and Inuit offices. The organizations below are Indigenous advocacy organizations, not Nations.

- Assembly of First Nations - <https://www.afn.ca/contact-us/>
- Indigenous Climate Action (<https://forms.monday.com/forms/ae7a2ed4e7b76c4d2ec6ab5be5dbc943?r=use1>)

Additional Resources:

CCPA. (2021). [Roadmap to a Canadian Just Transition: A pathway to a clean and inclusive economy](#)

- Proposes guiding principles and a framework for a federal just transition act

EDC. [Steady Path: How a transition to a fossil-free Canada is in reach for workers and their communities.](#)

- Summarizes a longer report by economist Jim Stanford, explaining why the clean economy transition is manageable and providing ten principles to make this transition fair and effective.

IEN. [Indigenous Principles of a Just Transition.](#)

ILO. [ILO Guidelines on just transition](#)

IISD. (2021). [Building momentum for a just transition in Canada: Perspectives from civil society](#)

- A summary of 48 civil society organizations' understandings, goals and strategies, and key opportunities in work on just transition in Canada

IISD. (2022). [Making good green jobs the law: How Canada can build on international best practice to advance just transition for all](#)

- Recommendations for federal just transition legislation based on best practices internationally.

Krawchenko and Gordon (2021). [How can we manage a just transition? A comparative review of policies to support a just transition from carbon intensive industries](#)

- Summarizes 25 national and 74 regional policies and approaches for managing just transitions in Canada and internationally.