



# MAXIMIZING CANADA'S TALENT ADVANTAGE

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Brief to the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology on Bill C-50, An Act respecting accountability, transparency and engagement to support the creation of sustainable jobs for workers and economic growth in a net-zero economy.

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## **Introduction**

Canada can be a leader in the clean economy of the future. To fulfill that promise, targeted investments must be made in Canadian workers. That's the only way that Canadian companies will have access to the skills they need to maximize their productivity and compete to win in the world.

Providing more Canadian workers with access to upskilling programs will create greater opportunity for employees and better support industry as the global economy evolves.

Without meaningful investment in our workers, Canada's businesses will struggle to achieve their full potential and our transition to a sustainable future will be slowed.

## **Sustainable Jobs**

The Government of Canada's commitment to Net-Zero by 2050 will bring a major shift in industry priorities and demands. This energy transition is already driving investments in clean energy and technology. Canada's workforce needs to keep pace.

When a company can't find the skilled workers it needs – or when a worker with years of experience doesn't qualify for a new job because they lack a certain skill – then both company and worker fall short of their potential. This creates a double drag on the economy, costing billions in unrealized economic value and suffocating Canada's ability to innovate.

As the government turns its attention to sustainable jobs, it is vital that labour-market changes and shortages be understood and addressed in real time. Canada needs a resilient workforce that can adapt to a constantly changing environment and prioritizes lifelong learning.

Investing in upskilling is the best way to ensure there is sufficient workforce capacity, equipped with the latest clean technology skills, to meet the needs of industry. The Just Transition, bridging workers from one job to another in the low-carbon economy, must include upskilling. And it must reflect the genuine needs and priorities of industry to ensure workers have the best opportunity to succeed as Canada's economy modernizes.

Upskilling is adaptable and responsive. As technology advances and industry demands evolve, upskilling programs can respond quickly, building out programming and having workers with transferable skills ready to fill vacancies within a short period of time.

In this way, upskilling stands poised to provide training for sustainable jobs and ensure that industry needs are being met.



## **Recommendations:**

- Ensure sustainable jobs programs are rooted in the validated needs of employers and key stakeholders, who should take an active role in defining learning outcomes.
- Support workers by funding upskilling programs that will allow them to use transferable skills and rapidly transition from one job to another within the green industry.
- Support workers with non-Canadian experience to upskill into sustainable jobs with Canadian employers.
- Focus investments on equity-deserving groups to bring more diversity of backgrounds and knowledge into clean technology.
- Include Palette Skills, as part of the Upskilling for Industry Initiative, in the Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council.
- Work to create a National Workforce Innovation Strategy to ensure Canada can capitalize on its talent advantage.

## **About Palette Skills**

Palette Skills connects fast-growing Canadian companies with the talent they need to grow, compete, and succeed. A national nonprofit, Palette Skills partners with employers, national business associations, leading academic institutions, and other nonprofits to develop and deploy rapid upskilling programs.

Our model delivers rapid, high-value training that empowers job seekers to fill vital positions in cutting-edge industries. With our network of partners, Palette Skills plays a role in creating a more globally competitive and inclusive economy.

Palette Skills pilots and evaluates new approaches to upskilling and workforce development, creating an ecosystem of continuous improvement and innovation that is necessary for Canada to reach net-zero.

We meet Canada's upskilling needs through a one-window solution:

- Canadians can access skills assessments that align with our programs, positioning them for new and better job opportunities.
- Delivery partners contribute to creating a national, viable upskilling ecosystem that meets the ongoing needs of industry.
- Employers hire and benefit from this upskilled talent, which improves their ability to compete and win in the marketplace.



## **Upskill Canada**

In 2023, Palette Skills was selected by Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada (ISED) as the lead partner for their Upskilling for Industry Initiative. The result of this funding partnership was Upskill Canada.

The Upskilling for Industry Initiative was created to ensure Canada's workforce could adapt to industry needs, and employers could fill high-demand positions.

Through this initiative, Palette Skills is set to upskill 15,500 individuals and place a minimum of 75% in jobs with Canadian companies over a three-year term.

Our aim is to connect small- and medium-sized businesses in high-growth industries with untapped talent pools, including racialized individuals, newcomers, immigrants, and older workers.