



Ecology
Action
Centre

Recommendations for Building Nova Scotia's Green Workforce

Ecology Action Centre

INTRODUCTION

Energy efficiency is crucial for Nova Scotia to meet its 2030 Net-Zero targets. After analyzing critical labor shortages, the need for greater cultural awareness in skilled trades, and gaps in residential and commercial energy standards, we developed 24 policy recommendations. These aim to address workforce challenges, promote inclusion, and enhance industry-government collaboration, positioning Nova Scotia as a leader in energy efficiency.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. WORKFORCE TRANSITION

With **over 35%** of the retrofitting workforce aged **55+**, shortages in carpentry, HVAC, and electrical trades could drive up housing costs and energy poverty. To address this, we recommend:

- 1 WORKFORCE TRANSITION & MENTORSHIP:** Create mentorship programs for retiring tradespeople to support new professionals, prioritizing BIPOC groups.
- 2 FAST-TRACK APPRENTICESHIP GRANTS:** Offer grants to businesses for hiring and training apprentices to counter labor shortages.
- 3 SKILLED TRADES IMMIGRATION PATHWAYS:** Simplify credential validation and provide local work experience for newcomers, including those over 30.
- 4 RURAL & ON-RESERVE TRAINING:** Deliver mobile HVAC and retrofitting training in rural and Mi'kmaw communities, supporting Indigenous-led initiatives like [Trade Winds](#) to Success and [Green Schools Nova Scotia](#).

2. INCLUSION

Systemic exclusion, harassment, and inadequate accommodations hinder equity in skilled trades. In a [2024 YWCA Halifax study](#), 90% of women and gender-diverse tradespeople reported harassment. Key recommendations:

- 1 INCREASE REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP:** Expand mentorship and equity programs, partnering with groups like [PREP Academy](#) to support Black professionals.
- 2 ADVOCATE FOR ACCESSIBILITY:** Use inclusive job postings and ensure accessible facilities and protective gear through initiatives like [CWB's Women of Steel](#).
- 3 ADDRESS WORKPLACE HARASSMENT:** Mandate workshops and inclusivity training, leveraging programs like YWCA's Shift Change to foster a safer work environment.

3. EQUITY

Historical inequities and generational trauma create barriers for African Nova Scotians, Indigenous Peoples, Women, Newcomers, 2SLGBTQIA+, and persons with disabilities, especially in rural areas. To promote equity, we recommend:

- 1 EXPAND WRAPAROUND SUPPORT:** Provide food, housing, and education assistance to improve exam pass rates and workplace diversity. Increase funding for [Iron & Earth](#), [Energy Trailblazer Program](#), and [Building UP](#).
- 2 INCREASE CULTURAL SENSITIVITY:** Foster cultural awareness through partnerships like [YWCA's Shift Change](#) to build pride and inclusion.
- 3 SUPPORT DIVERSE CAREER PATHS:** Encourage racialized youth to explore careers beyond STEM. Strengthen programs like [Business is Jammin'](#) to broaden opportunities.

4. ADOPTION

Nova Scotia's commitment to **Tier 3 energy codes by 2029** is a step forward, but stronger measures are needed for **2050 Net-Zero**. Developers hesitate due to high upfront costs, and inconsistent funding (e.g., the **2024 Canada Greener Homes Grant pause**) weakens trust in incentives. To accelerate adoption:

- 1 STREAMLINE INCENTIVES & PUBLIC-PRIVATE COMMUNICATION:** Build stable programs resilient to policy shifts. Improve government-industry dialogue to align Net-Zero targets with housing demand.
- 2 EFFICIENCY UPGRADES (RETROFITS & NEW BUILDS):** Mandate efficiency standards in major renovations and new builds to fast-track **Tier 5 compliance**, reducing long-term costs and disruptions.

5. EDUCATION & EXPANSION

Low pass rates in trades, particularly among marginalized groups, stem from financial barriers, exam anxiety, and unclear career pathways. To improve education access, we recommend:

- 1 EXPAND MICRO-CREDENTIALS:** Offer affordable, flexible training in specialized areas like heat pump installation.
- 2 INCREASE WRAPAROUND SUPPORT:** Provide childcare, housing, and transportation assistance, following [Mainland Nova Scotia Building Trades'](#) model.
- 3 ENHANCE CAREER AWARENESS:** Expand outreach in rural and marginalized communities, leveraging [YWCA Halifax's Shift Change](#).
- COMBAT TRADES STIGMA:** Highlight success stories through public campaigns emphasizing financial and sustainability benefits.
- PARTNER WITH MI'KMAW COMMUNITIES:** Strengthen programs like [Green Schools](#) to deliver local energy-efficiency training in First Nation schools.

6. COLLABORATION

Weak public-private coordination and misaligned policies create challenges in meeting Net-Zero goals. Construction firms resist **8–9%** cost increases for net-zero buildings, while the government prioritizes **2050 compliance**. To improve collaboration:

- 1 ESTABLISH A PROVINCIAL GREEN WORKFORCE COUNCIL:** Align workforce strategies by fostering industry-government partnerships, following models like [Building to Zero Exchange \(BTZx\)](#).
- 2 INTEGRATE INDUSTRY-LED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT:** Require trade schools to co-develop training with industry, accelerating the adoption of micro-credentials for emerging skills.
- 3 EXPAND PUBLIC-PRIVATE FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS:** Match government investments with industry contributions to sustain upskilling programs, supporting initiatives like [YWCA's Shift Change](#), and [Women of Steel by CWB](#).

7. AWARENESS

Many homeowners **could save up to \$2,200 annually** with heat pumps, yet awareness remains low. Developers often prioritize affordability over sustainability, and complex permitting processes slow energy-efficiency adoption. To boost awareness:

- 1 PROMOTE GREEN LITERACY:** Educate homeowners and property managers on efficiency benefits, while simplifying permitting processes.
 - 2 HIGHLIGHT CONSTRUCTION'S ROLE IN NET-ZERO:** Launch campaigns showcasing how sustainable building practices support climate goals.
 - 3 STANDARDIZE TRADES & UPDATE CURRICULA:** Align training with national standards to prevent worker migration and upskill tradespeople in efficiency-focused areas.
- EXPAND & STREAMLINE INCENTIVES:** Strengthen retrofit and construction incentives, modeling programs after BC, Quebec, PEI, and New Brunswick, while making them resilient to political changes.



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