



## **Federal Support For Youth Careers in Rural Canada, Natural Resources, Forestry and Conservation**

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2020 Budget

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## **Recommendations**

Recommendation 1: That the federal government continue its support of youth employment and a sustainable future for the next generation of Canadians through the ongoing support of youth employment programs, to include additional funding for initiatives that create educational, training and job opportunities in forestry, natural resources, and conservation career pathways.

Recommendation 2: That the government increase funding for programs that develop career pathways for youth from secondary to post-secondary, including Canadian universities, colleges and apprenticeship programs that educate, train or otherwise prepare participants for careers in sustainable green jobs, and consider measures for incentivizing youth to pursue these opportunities.

## **Introduction**

Project Learning Tree Canada (PLT Canada) is a non-profit organization that envisions a society that values and benefits from sustainably managed forests and the great outdoors. With an eye to the future of the environment and Canada's economy, PLT Canada is committed to using the outdoors to engage youth in learning about the world around them—in urban, suburban, rural, and Indigenous communities, and using trees and forests as windows on the world to inspire action. This is achieved by building knowledge and successful practices that help to encourage future forest and conservation leaders with a lifelong commitment to sustainable environmental practices for the benefit of all our communities.

PLT Canada's Green Jobs program has helped launch thousands of youth in careers in forestry and conservation — making a big difference in their lives, addressing employment needs and helping to support an environmentally sound future for Canadians.

In 2018, PLT Canada, along with the Government of Canada and partnering employers, embarked on a journey to place over 2,000 youth in green jobs across Canada by 2020 — we have already surpassed this goal and are raising our green jobs target to 2,500 positions—with particular emphasis on placing Indigenous youth and supporting Indigenous employers.

We have been able to support a wide range of jobs in forestry and conservation thanks to our strong networks across the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Canadian Parks Council. Together, we are working to instill a passion for the outdoors and provide youth with the knowledge, skills and experience to help them pursue rewarding careers in forestry and conservation.

Working with our forest network embedded in the diversity of organizations in the Sustainable Forestry Initiative network and the Canadian Parks Council network, PLT Canada is supporting jobs in ecosystem and wildlife management, forest management, Indigenous forest-based programs, recreation and interpretation, conservation and research, education, and jobs with provincial and territorial parks. PLT Canada achieved gender balance in its job placements and placed over 250 Indigenous youth in outdoor jobs.

**Recommendation 1: That the federal government continue its support of youth employment and a sustainable future for the next generation of Canadians through the ongoing support of youth employment programs, to include additional funding for initiatives that create educational, training and job opportunities in forestry, natural resources, and conservation career pathways.**

PLT Canada enthusiastically supports federal government investment to expand opportunities in the natural resource sector for Canada's youth and urges federal leaders to work with industry to accelerate the achievements realized to date. Besides opening up promising new career paths for young people, these initiatives help address job-creation and economic issues in rural communities, contribute to the renewal of the country's natural resource workforce, provide employers with motivated employees and deepen understanding of environmental practices and goals.

We believe that a career in the natural resource sector can provide opportunities, growth and fulfillment. These opportunities should be available to all youth – whether in rural, urban or Indigenous communities. Building a strong foundation for a future workforce will require long-term investment in creating links to natural resource job opportunities as well as skills training, education and in-the-field experience to expose more youth to the possibilities of a career in this sector.

Our experience has shown the strong potential for this approach. All of the employers we worked with said they recommend PLT Canada's Green Jobs funding to other employers. Of youth in the program, 90 per cent said they felt more knowledgeable about the environment. And 89 per cent of youth who took part said they would consider pursuing a career in forestry or conservation.

At a time of shifting economic and job prospects, cooperative efforts by employers, government and other stakeholders to open up more employment prospects in natural resources will pay dividends. For example, it is estimated that nearly 50,000 forest sector workers will retire in the coming years, creating a significant gap that will need to be filled by skilled, trained young professionals. And many of these well-paying, sustainable jobs will contribute to stronger communities and economies in rural areas.

Youth are more isolated from the natural resources that Canada's economy relies on and programs are needed to inspire youth to consider the natural resource sector as a viable career option. Looking ahead, it is clear that training leaders to understand the complexities and realities of resource development including environmental, economic and community relationships is critical to strengthening and maintaining a natural resource sector that has always been a mainstay of the Canadian economy. We want all youth to have great jobs whether they reside in rural communities or we are attracting more urban youth to excellent opportunities to support and sustain rural communities through work in the natural resource sector.

We urge the federal government to use Budget 2020 to reaffirm and increase support for youth employment initiatives, particularly for those that open up the possibility of jobs and future career pathways in a vibrant natural resource sector. Besides sustaining Canada's valuable natural heritage, the use of innovative production processes, upgraded environmental standards and technology is essential to protecting the environment while growing the economy in future.

Those involved in forestry have provided exemplary leadership in this area in recent years and, with government support, can continue to take advantage of their key role as custodian of our natural resources and as generator of rural economic growth to accomplish even more.

**Recommendation 2: That the government increase funding for programs that develop career pathways for youth from secondary to post-secondary, including Canadian universities, colleges and apprenticeship programs that educate, train or otherwise prepare participants for careers in sustainable green jobs, and consider measures for incentivizing youth to pursue these opportunities.**

It is widely recognized that education is the key to providing young people with the tools and knowledge needed to contribute over the long term to the development of a sustainable economy and environment.

At PLT Canada, we strive to encourage and inspire forest and conservation leaders by providing youth with the opportunities they need to experience and appreciate Canada's great outdoors in its many varieties and sites. Through professional development, engaging activities, training and networking opportunities, we are helping to expand our youth's horizons and make them aware of the potential for personal growth, jobs and career openings in the natural resources sector. We believe that building an informed society that supports and understands the many values we receive from the forest will lead to their continued sustainable management and use into the future.

PLT Canada appreciates the commitment by federal leaders to investing in youth and we encourage the federal government to build off these investments by supporting the development of high-quality environmental education programs and resources. This can best be achieved by integrating green career exploration within their schooling through teacher training, resources, and mentorship opportunities.

Besides enabling an understanding of sustainable economic and social activities, robust environmental education helps youth understand the complexities of the resource industries and offers an engaging platform for gaining and applying knowledge and skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

It encourages youth to look beyond the traditional view of forest sector work and instead realize that creating economic growth and sustainability in the years ahead in this sector will require innovation, cutting-edge research and science-based solutions.

As well, environmental education emphasizes skills essential for succeeding in tomorrow's world, such as investigating, defining problems, analysis, reasoning and solving problems.

Education also leads to future citizens who have a stronger foundation in sustainable resource development, and it fosters community interest in the benefits of responsible management of Canada's forests and natural resources.

A future workforce in natural resources will require considerable investment today to build citizens that are educated and informed on the complexities of relationships and knowledge that

are needed to make sustainable choices in natural resource management. This will create a future of successful resource industries in Canada, that are supported by the diversity of careers that make Canada's resource sector world-leading.

## **Conclusion**

PLT Canada is committed to working with federal leaders to see that youth can take advantage of expanded job opportunities and career pathways in Canada's outdoors. At the same time, we recommend moving forward quickly in a cooperative effort to provide a framework for the development of a future workforce equipped to help Canada meet its environmental goals while opening a better, more productive and sustainable future for this country's natural resource economy. We would be more than happy to contribute further to the 2020 Pre-Budget consultations by appearing before the House committee to answer any questions on this submission.