

**Submitted to the Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of the 2021 Federal Budget**

House of Commons' Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)

August 7, 2020

**Submitted by: International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
(IBEW Canada)**



IBEW
CANADA

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

That Budget 2021 expand investments in Canada's electrical generation, transmission and distribution to transition to cleaner energy and better prepare us for future demands on our system.

Recommendation 2:

That Budget 2021 promote and fund the use of small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs) in order to build Canada's energy resiliency, reduce the dependency of diesel for power generation, reduce our overall GHG emissions, including on large natural resources projects like mining or oil and gas extraction.

Recommendation 3:

That Budget 2021 take further action to boost funding for critical infrastructure and fast-track the development of shovel-ready and shovel-worthy projects

Recommendation 4:

That Budget 2021 implement a Skilled Trades Workforce Mobility program into our tax system, to ensure travel and temporary relocation is more economically feasible for construction workers to travel to areas where work is occurring, and labour demand outstrips supply.

Recommendation 5:

That Budget 2021 provide additional funding to continue the Union Training Innovation Program (UTIP) to better equip training centers to meet new challenges and demands in the labour market, including innovative ways to deliver training in a post-COVID-19 world.

Recommendation 6:

That Budget 2021 incorporate community benefit agreements in infrastructure spending defined as additional physical, social, economic and environmental benefits for local communities that are leveraged by dollars already being spent on goods, services, major infrastructure projects.

Introduction

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) has been a proud part of the Canadian labour movement for over 120 years. Founded in 1891, we have built our union on our commitment to organize and represent workers; our membership and longevity is proof of that commitment. The IBEW represents over 775,000 workers and almost 70,000 of those workers are in Canada.

The IBEW has 81 local unions located across the country serving our almost 70,000 members who can be found working in every province and territory in the following industries; Manufacturing, Telecommunications, Voice Data Video, Utilities, Construction, Maintenance, Motor Shops, Sign Shops, CATV, Radio and Television, Sound and Alarm systems, Railroads, Shipyards, Pulp and Paper Mills, Mining, Tree Trimming, Health Care and Government.

For more information please visit www.ibewcanada.ca

Recommendation 1:

That Budget 2021 expand investments in Canada's electrical generation, transmission and distribution to transition to cleaner energy and better prepare us for future demands on our system.

As Canada strives to meet our targets in reducing our GHG emissions, we need to ensure that as Canadians, businesses, and governments at every level begin to shift towards a more electrified economy that we will have the critical electrical infrastructure already in place to meet those demands for today's consumption and future demands. We need to expand investments in smart grid technology and work with provinces and territories on connecting our grid East-West.

Budget 2021 must show bold and decisive action on Climate Change. The IBEW recommends that the federal government adopt a five-year plan setting out a bold strategy with clear targets, benchmarks and timetables for accomplishing a systematic shift in Canada's energy system, its transportation networks, and housing and building stock.

Expanded public investments in renewable energy production, green building construction, and public transportation offer major opportunities for the large-scale creation of good jobs and training opportunities for the next generation of skilled workers in the process. The IBEW supports the recommendation of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and their partner organizations in the [Green Economy Network](#), for investments of \$81 billion over 5 years to develop renewable energy, home and building retrofits, and low-emissions public transportation in urban centers.

The IBEW further recommends that the federal government establish a Crown corporation mandated to overhaul and transform Canada's energy industry in collaboration with provinces and territories and key industry stakeholders like the IBEW, to better meet our future demands on the grid and energy needs. It would identify renewable energy projects and ensure that existing and new manufacturing sources increase capacity to supply parts, equipment and new technology to meet Canada's clean energy needs.

Budget 2021 must significantly expand investments in Just Transition measures to assist workers, their families and their communities affected by climate change policy to access training and employment services, relocation, childcare and housing assistance to adjust to new jobs, and support for older workers to transition to retirement. The federal government, through the Minister of Natural Resources ¹ should review the final report tabled by the Task Force on Just Transition for Canadian Coal Power Workers and Communities and consult with the Task Force.

¹ <https://pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2019/12/13/minister-natural-resources-mandate-letter>

Recommendation 2:

That Budget 2021 promote and fund the use of small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs) in order to build Canada's energy resiliency, reduce the dependency of diesel for power generation, reduce our overall GHG emissions, including on large natural resources projects like mining or oil and gas extraction.

Budget 2021 should take Canada's energy resiliency to the next level right across the country, especially in the North, by promoting and supporting the development and use of small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs).

Not all Canadians have the luxury of clean reliable power, there are still many communities that still rely on diesel generators for electricity, which has lasting effects on those communities including quality of life, food security and access to clean drinking water. Budget 2021 needs to make the investment to connect Canada's rural and remote communities to the electrical grid with clean reliable power. This transformation should provide more than enough energy to power water treatment plants to be built and operated in these regions and be powered by clean electricity. It will allow businesses in these communities to have a stable and reliable source of electricity.

These modular and portable reactors, using modern technology, can provide clean, cost efficient energy anywhere in the world, and could be a significant answer to reducing GHGs. Further, SMRs could indeed be a primary energy source and act as replacements for coal fired generators.

Finally, Canada can become a world leader in SMR technology by creating opportunities for Canadian companies to research, design and manufacture these units in Canada, using Canada's highly skilled workforce.

Recommendation 3:

That Budget 2021 take further action to boost funding for critical infrastructure and fast-track the development of shovel-ready and shovel-worthy projects

Canada's construction industry represents over 14% of the country's GDP, which translates to nearly \$300 billion in the construction sector. Almost 1 in every 13 Canadians work directly in Canada's construction sector. IBEW members play a vital role along with other affiliates in Canada's Building Trades Unions who go to work to build and maintain critical Canadian infrastructure.

Investments made to meet Canada's infrastructure needs creates good paying jobs in local communities, it provides training and apprenticeship opportunities, builds a strong and resilient Canada that will attract private investment and businesses to towns, cities and major centers across the country.

IBEW members build and maintain critical infrastructure that provides for the health and safety of all Canadians, supplies and distributes our natural resources, and ensures that supply chains continue to provide essential services. Critical infrastructure includes the hospitals, schools, hydro dams, nuclear power plants, mines, pipelines, offshore oil rigs and platforms, transmission and communication lines, rail and traffic signals, our marine industry that all help keep Canadians moving. It includes green infrastructure, solar and wind farms and other initiatives that reduce our carbon footprint.

Budget 2021 needs to take bold action to build a safer, stronger and more resilient country through the further infrastructure investments. Large scale projects employ the greatest number of tradespeople from a variety of fields, providing an avenue for workers within the trades to utilize and further develop their skills, while mentoring and training the next generation of skilled trades. As our country emerges from this current crisis, investment in critical infrastructure projects will put many Canadians to work and build a more resilient post COVID-19 country.

Recommendation 4:

That Budget 2021 implement a Skilled Trades Workforce Mobility program into our tax system, to ensure travel and temporary relocation is more economically feasible for construction workers to travel to areas where work is occurring, and labour demand outstrips supply.

Budget 2021 needs to address the labour mobility issue facing Canada's skilled trades workers and major infrastructure projects that rely on a mobile workforce to complete these projects.

A Skilled Trades Workforce Mobility (STWM) program would address regional skill shortages, get Canadians back to work and reduce some contractors from relying on the broken Temporary Foreign Worker program that is often abused in the construction industry. It would increase job opportunities for skilled trades workers to temporarily relocate to where jobs exist without creating financial hardships to those workers and their families. It would also increase contractor and employer confidence in bidding on projects because of greater certainty in labour supply. Once a project is completed, construction workers have no job to go to unless another project is underway.

A STWM program would allow apprentices to receive critical on-the-job training to complete their apprenticeship and become certified. It would also provide the government financial support by increasing longer-term revenue through income tax and reducing dependency on social programs such as EI. This program will benefit all construction workers and would be made available to workers who do not have their accommodations and travel paid for by an employer, a condition usually laid out in current collective agreements and/or project labour agreements. The IBEW urges the federal government to implement a STWM program for Canada's Skilled Trades Workers.

Recommendation 5:

That Budget 2021 provide additional funding to continue the Union Training Innovation Program (UTIP) to better equip training centres to meet new challenges and demands in the labour market, including innovative ways to deliver training in a post-COVID-19 world.

Announced in Budget 2016, UTIP supports the Government of Canada's commitment to strengthen union-based apprenticeship training, innovation and enhanced partnerships. The program provides funding through two streams:

- The Investments in Training Equipment Stream
- The Innovation in Apprenticeship Stream

The IBEW urges the Federal Government through Budget 2021 to extend the UTIP program for an additional five years, with funding of \$25 million per year. Training Red Seal apprentices post COVID-19 has drastically changed how training centers will deliver curriculum. Extending this program will allow union training centers to quickly adapt and continue to deliver the best training in the construction and skilled trades industry.

Recommendation 6:

That Budget 2021 incorporate community benefit agreements in infrastructure spending defined as additional physical, social, economic and environmental benefits for local communities that are leveraged by dollars already being spent on goods, services, major infrastructure and land development projects.

Canada needs to embody progressive practices in the engagement of local communities, marginalized groups, and those impacted by infrastructure projects. The federal government needs to leverage public procurement in construction to create the biggest social benefit. Infrastructure projects and investment must be viewed as more than transactional. We recognize that, when local communities have a role in the planning and building of a project, they are more invested in it and more likely to realize its positive “nation building” benefits. The IBEW supports community benefit agreements (CBAs) and urge for their inclusion on infrastructure projects.

CBAs often contain provisions that enable apprenticeships, guarantee prevailing wages, establish grounds for workforce development initiatives, provide funding and economic support for impacted communities, and set forth goals for minority, women, and local job hiring; leaving a legacy of experience, skills training and employability. Examples of jurisdictions utilizing CBAs in public procurement include Ontario and British Columbia, as well as several cities including the city of Toronto.

If the federal government is to be a majority or sole investor in infrastructure projects, insisting on CBAs as a way of achieving the government's goals and ensuring that the projects are built on time and on budget with the most highly trained and skilled workforce is preferable.

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