

## More Jobs Per Green Buck

If the Nova Scotian government seeks to bring balance to the budget, it must let the funds flow to green infrastructure.

The Coast – March 18, 2010 by [Chris Benjamin](#)

**I**n October I went to a presentation by a senior economist from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in British Columbia. He came equipped with a hard drive's worth of percentages and demographic comparisons. Two of his stats have stayed with me all these months.

One: Mining, oil and gas extraction, transportation and manufacturing account for about four-fifths of industrial emissions and less than one-fifth of jobs. (So, what again is the justification for the assault on the earth by those industries?)

Two: Statistics Canada says that 98.6 percent of Canada's increase in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 to 2002 was due to exports. Apparently we make stuff in this country. We just don't hold onto it. And what we consume is made elsewhere.

Such is the nature of our globalized economy---the one that collapsed last year. Now our provincial and federal leader scramble to put it back together, just like new.

The feds just released a crap budget. A bunch of eco-money got shuffled around between departments, and good programs fell through the cracks. Incentives for renewable energy producers were slain, so we'll see a lot of money and talent in that industry head to the States, where the incentives still exist.

Our provincial government is asking us to tell it how to cut spending, increase revenue and invest in growth. It predicts a \$1.4 billion deficit by 2013 if we don't do these things, and says, "Doing nothing is not an option." The province's "Getting Back to Balance" discussion guide doesn't give much prompting on what it means by investing in growth. Maybe that's a good thing.

Andrea Harden-Donahue has a few good ideas. She's an energy campaigner with the Council of Canadians, and co-author of a new report, "Green, Decent and Public." She thinks Nova Scotia needs a "green-collar" job strategy that invests in green infrastructure and "buy local" initiatives. "The average renewable energy investment creates four times as many jobs as the same investment in the fossil fuel economy," she says.

That's partly because renewable energy projects require workers to install brand new infrastructure, and the expertise to design and plan it. By tying investments with local content laws, the jobs and economic growth stay local. The Canadian Labour Congress has been asking for "Buy Canadian" procurement requirements for more than a decade, and Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters have also requested such a policy.

In her report, Harden–Donahue writes, "As many as 18,000 jobs are created for every \$1 billion of investment in energy conservation and renewable energy systems."

The phenomenon of more jobs per buck by going green goes beyond energy. Robert Pollin and James Heintz, a couple of high–ranking economics profs at the University of Massachusetts, figured out that 3.7 jobs are created for every \$1 million spent on oil and gas. For the same investment in public transit and freight rail, you get 15.9 jobs. And for building retrofits: 11.9 jobs.

Nova Scotia already has a tentative agreement to turn an old railcar plant into a wind turbine manufacturing facility in Pictou County, creating hundreds of green jobs. But there is much more that could be done.

A provincial retrofit program, designed to bring every building up to the highest energy efficiency standards, could create thousands of long–term jobs. Such a program would pay for itself within a decade because of the money saved on energy consumption.

Germany started a similar program in 2001, and has employed 140,000 people retrofitting 342,000 apartments with better insulation, more efficient heating technologies and photovoltaic or solar thermal systems. Because of all those jobs, Germany has saved about four billion euros in unemployment benefits.

Harden–Donahue urges the feds to spend \$10 billion over each of the next two years, creating 200,000 new jobs for electricians, carpenters, equipment operators, roofers, building inspectors and sheet metal workers. "The housing stock is older in Nova Scotia," she says. "There are lots of opportunities to increase efficiency using local labour and local producers, reducing dependence on imported oil."

While her report focuses mostly on energy, Harden–Donahue says significant investments are needed in organic local food, better public transportation systems, urban forestation and eco–tourism. "The US has made 14 times the investment per capita in green infrastructure as Canada," she says. "Canada is really failing to capture the opportunity to green our economy."

[<http://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/more-jobs-per-green-buck/Content?oid=1567904> ]

**Article bBased on NSEN's Green Jobs Event and Round Table in early March 2010.**