

June 19, 2020

Catherine McKenna  
Minister of Infrastructure and Communities  
Government of Canada  
[indu@parl.gc.ca](mailto:indu@parl.gc.ca)

Dear Minister McKenna,

**Re: Recommendations for a Green Economy and Thriving Communities**

I write with an on-the-ground perspective from Waterloo Region, which comprises three cities and four rural townships. As an environmental non-profit working on the local response to climate change mitigation and adaptation, we see firsthand the impacts on our community and recognize what people need in order to take action. Here are our recommendations to create more resilient and sustainable communities while stimulating the economy.

1. **Build flood resilience on private property.** The federal government has provided strong funding support to municipalities for improving flood resilience through infrastructure projects. **What's needed?** Support for homeowners and businesses to do the same on their own property:
  - a. **Rain gardens, permeable paving, infiltration galleries:** we know from our own [pilot projects](#) that homeowners and businesses need coaching and supports to collectively reduce flood risk in their communities by implementing these best management practices to retain stormwater at the lot level. **The federal government can stimulate these actions through:**
    - i. **Funding for independent coaching, design and consultation** to guide property owners in landscaping their outdoor spaces to soak up rain and prevent flooding, of their own basements, and their neighbours';
    - ii. **Financial rebates or incentives** for materials and installations of stormwater management landscapes on private property;

**b. Urban forests:** the majority of the urban canopy in both urban and rural communities is on private property and outside the purview of municipalities. Property owners could use support in choosing the right trees for their property, that will thrive over the long term. Trees anchor the soil, reduce floods, and their shade helps cool urban spaces. **The federal government can stimulate these actions through:**

- i. **Funding for municipal tree planting programs on private property;**
- ii. **Extending existing tree planting initiatives to include urban centres.**

**2. Make homes more energy efficient.** The gap between the ambitious climate action targets that municipalities are rightly putting in place, and the work that needs to be done on buildings to close that gap, is huge. The opportunity in terms of economic stimulus and community energy security, is also huge.

**Retrofitting homes creates jobs:** in Reep's 20 years of encouraging home energy retrofits, approximately [\\$53 Million has been poured into the local economy](#) directly by participants following our recommendations in renovating for energy efficiency. **The federal government can stimulate homeowner action through:**

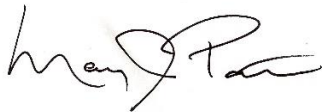
- a. **Increasing energy and carbon literacy:** initiate public education programs that help homeowners understand the role of low carbon electricity in heating our homes and water;
- b. **Free home energy evaluations:** based on NRCan's EnerGuide for Houses program. Homeowners need independent advice about their home and how to improve it.
- c. **Funding for energy and water retrofits of lower income households:** we must go beyond the scattered utility programs for low income households and reach more of the owners who are cash-poor and unable to implement home energy improvements. That is how we build a just economy that is prosperous for all.
- d. **PPE for home energy advisors:** service providers are adapting their service to COVID-19 conditions, but desperately in need of disposable N100 masks that allow them to both protect customers, and also protect the energy advisors when they are in an attic that may contain asbestos.
- e. **Incentives or rebates for heat pumps:** Moving homes from natural gas heating to electric heating will take a change in thinking (see increasing literacy above) and also financial incentives to prompt homeowners to make this change when their furnace needs to be replaced. Once a new natural gas furnace is in place, it's locked in for the 15-year life of the furnace. We have to break into that cycle and introduce electric heat pumps into the equation. Homeowners need a reason to make that change. An incentive provides a starting point.

- f. **Financial support for insulation and draftproofing:** heating with electricity will make more economic sense when we first reduce the heating load of the house. It is an expensive proposition for homeowners, who may have to vacate the home while work is being done – an added expense in addition to the cost of the work itself.
- g. **Contractor education and training:** Homeowners come to us now saying that contractors recommend against heat pumps, that they are not workable in our climate, or even that they've never heard of them. Contractors need support in transitioning from the natural gas appliances they're familiar with to new technologies that reduce carbon emissions.

It would be our pleasure to share what we've learned on the ground with federal staff as you shape COVID-19 recovery programs for Canada's economy. If you have any questions about our suggestions, please don't hesitate to call or email.

With many thanks for all that you are doing to steer Canada towards a prosperous, just future,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Jane Patterson', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mary Jane Patterson  
Executive Director  
519-635-2861, x229

Cc:

- Bardish Chagger, MPP for Waterloo, Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth
- Raj Saini, MPP for Kitchener Centre
- Bryan May, MPP for Cambridge
- Marwan Tabbara, MPP for Kitchener South - Hespeler
- Tim Louis, MPP for Kitchener Conestoga