



**Written Submission for the House of
Commons Standing
Committee on Industry, Science and
Technology
Study on the Canadian Response to the
COVID-19
Pandemic**

Submitted

By: Climate Action London

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Members of The Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology

Dear Members:

Climate Action London is an emerging coalition in London, Ontario that believes in addressing root causes to crisis in a collaborative approach and we urge the Federal Government that as you take steps to ensure a long-term recovery from COVID-19, it is imperative that you consider the interrelated crises of wealth inequality, racism, and climate change. At the same time it is imperative that you consider the historical pathways and systematic biases that have led us to this social and environmental imbalance.

It may at times seem overwhelming when being asked to address the COVID-19 response, climate change, wealth inequality, racism, economic recovery and job creation all at the same time. It may be natural to initially think about postponing addressing some of these issues since we as humans have a finite pool of worry or perhaps defer based on the federal government having a finite pool of resources. However, as noted these issues are interrelated and can be addressed together by a thoughtful COVID-19 recovery.

Energy Efficiency Retrofits

- Supporting a multi-faceted program of Energy Efficiency Retrofits and establishing related Energy Efficiency guidelines and building codes can have multiple positive impacts. Using already piloted programs or based on previously successfully programs an Energy Efficiency Retrofit program can create immediate jobs for skilled workers and those just entering the workforce.
- As we work towards 2050 net zero emissions it is important to keep in mind that the vast majority of the buildings that we will live and work in 2050 already exist today. Deep retrofits take the entire building into consideration and are much more cost effective than completing a series of minor retrofits. We support calls for Federal and Provincial governments co-financing deep retrofits of public and commercial buildings with a focus on schools, hospitals and social housing. There will be long-term benefits in lower emissions, reducing energy costs and providing improved housing for the more vulnerable in our society.
- The Federal government initializing a deep retrofit sub-industry at scale combined with existing programs such as Natural Resources LEEP will drive innovation for Made in Canada products and services that will lead to a competitive edge in the export market.
- Additionally, governments should coordinate and finance retrofit programs targeting both commercial and residential properties. Residential programs could be structured to allow households that would otherwise not have the financial means to start an energy retrofit, to add value to their properties, reduce their future energy costs and reduce GHG emissions. Reducing future energy costs allows those households to be more resilient to future economic shocks and raise their standard of living.



Transportation – Electrification and Active Transportation

- Leading the way in the electrification of transportation will not only reduce GHG emissions it can also spur Made in Canada solutions for recharging networks, electric buses and other zero-emission vehicles. This needs to be paired with retraining for auto workers so Canada can be poised to capture some of the dramatic growth in zero-emission vehicle manufacturing.
- Not all households can afford a zero-emission car nor it is financially or environmental sustainability to establish this as a goal. The electrification of public transit needs to be paired with a significant investment in active transportation (bicycles and walking). Continued reliance on auto transportation makes our communities less resilient.
- Continue with the carbon tax. It is one of many tools and is based on a polluters pay principle. In the absence of a 'polluters pay' mechanism, the costs are borne mostly by the poor & disadvantaged. Avoid the narratives that "Canada isn't as bad as..." or "we are export dependent so we can't have these environmental or social measures as additional costs". These narratives only slow true innovation, perpetuate inequalities and use a crisis to disguise keeping business as usual.
- Stop oil & gas subsidies. By positioning itself as a leader in a decarbonized global market, Canada can further its economic strength. Significant global capital has already moved away from carbon intensive sectors. We must move Canada toward economic strength rather than fight upstream toward yesterday's economy. Diversifying the Canadian economy away from resource extraction and toward clean technology and renewable energy will insulate workers against future shocks and disruptions.

Strengthen Local Supply Chains

- Strengthen local supply chains and build national and community level resiliency. Resiliency is enhanced by diversity. Finding a better balance between local supply chains and Globalization should not be considered a retreat from multilateralism. It is a step to supporting small business, more diverse employment opportunities and reducing GHG emissions associated with a global transportation network. A more resilient community is more able to address future health crisis or shocks.

Living Wage & Social and Green Procurement

- We commend programs such as Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) that were designed to put money directly into the hands of workers and we also commend the government for showing flexibility in continuing to evolve such programs. It became evident that what initially was considered as a basic benefit to support households during the short-term economic shock actually became a disincentive to many essential workers to actually work. Income equality has a more wide ranging impact than previously thought. Increasing the allowable income limit to continue to receive the CERB may be a temporary solution to provide an incentive to work and provide greater income to those financially struggling. However, this does not address the underlying root



- problem of inequality. The federal government should establish a national Living Wage framework and require companies providing goods or services to the federal government to be participating in a Living Wage campaign. Employees are raised out of poverty, have greater health outcomes and have increased opportunities for education and skill development. Employers benefit from decreased absenteeism, less employee turnover and greater productivity. The community at large benefits from greater consumer spending, less health costs and increased resiliency to future crises.
- The federal government should establish and implement Social and green procurement policies. Early adoption of these procurement policies will create local jobs and establish Canada at the forefront of an expanding market. We urge you to work with the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities to make many of the funding for infrastructure projects to be conditional on employing marginalized groups and creating apprenticeships. Fund projects that create equitable public transportation alternatives (bus, train, bicycle, walking)
 - Another way of increasing resiliency is by having an adaptable skilled workforce. Governments should provide funding for training that includes;
 - Increasing digital literacy in all types of employment
 - Make training accessible to gig workers and small business that may not have the resources to create in-house programs
 - Encouraging participation in different types of jobs increasing future adaptability
 - Focus on jobs that a projected to exist after further automation

Circular Economy

- DO NOT temporarily or permanently relax Environmental Protection rules. Continue to use and strengthen the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. As we continue to respond to the COVID-19 health crisis and prepare to rebuild, people and organizations all across Canada want our governments to know that we cannot go back to the way things were. Temporarily removing Environmental Protections only serve to those wishing a return to industries and biases that created the imbalance we now find ourselves.
- The federal government should move forward with initiatives that create a Circular economy. In particular we urge it to continue forward with ban on single use plastics and also to establish producer responsibility legislation similar to those being adopted in the European Union. It will not be confusing for Canadians to have a ban on single use plastics while having a temporary exemption for Personal Protection Equipment related to the Health Crisis. In fact, following through on promises and continuing to prioritize the health of individuals and the environment will be help re-enforce trust in the federal government.
- Zero plastic waste economy could help Canada save \$500m of annual costs, create 42,000 direct and indirect jobs and prevent 1.82 MT of CO2 equivalent GHG emissions (Canada-wide action plan on zero plastic waste – Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment).



The policy decisions that you make should reflect Just Recovery principles (<https://justrecoveryforall.ca/#principles>) as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. As seen with the COVID-19 crisis, abrupt unplanned changes are devastating to businesses and generally to the well-being of individuals. However, we have witnessed inaction in the face of the ongoing crises of colonialism, human rights abuses, social inequity, ecological degradation, and climate change. A slow steady incremental approach has been squandered with these issues. All levels of government need to transition workers and industry in a more orderly way **today** toward a more equitable, prosperous, environmentally sustainable economy. Most Canadians are expecting and wanting broad transformation of society.

Respectfully,

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