



Youth Proposals for the 2021 Federal Budget

Submission presented by ENvironnement JEUnesse to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance in advance of the 2021 Budget

July 27, 2020

List of recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the principles of intergenerational equity, combatting the climate crisis, the preservation of biodiversity and the active participation of youth inform the development of 2021 federal budget measures.

Recommendation 2: That Canada evaluate the impact of each budget measure on intergenerational equity, biodiversity and social inequality to mitigate the negative impacts.

Recommendation 3: That Canada strengthen its laws to combat tax evasion and tax avoidance and reinvest these amounts in environmental and social measures.

Recommendation 4: That Canada create real spaces for consultation and collaboration between decision-makers and youth, where decision-makers are accountable with respect to the demands and recommendations of youth (ENvironnement JEUnesse, 2020a).

Recommendation 5: That Canada be more transparent and require that industries be more transparent about and take greater responsibility for the environmental damage they cause (ENvironnement JEUnesse, 2020a).

Recommendation 6: That Canada set more ambitious climate targets that are consistent with climate science and the 1.5°C warming threshold of the Paris Agreement, and also ensure that each budget measure conforms to these climate targets.

Recommendation 7: That Canada immediately eliminate direct and indirect subsidies for fossil fuels and other sectors producing high GHG emissions, such as transportation and construction.

Recommendation 8: That Canada invest significant amounts in the fight against climate change, including for training workers and for the transition.

Recommendation 9: That Canada work on building a society of eco-citizens and a just recovery based on the six principles of the movement for a just recovery.

About ENvironnement JEUnesse

Please visit the web site: enjeu.qc.ca

Team

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1. Background

While “the [House of Commons Standing] Committee [on Finance] is interested in receiving written submissions and oral testimony on measures the federal government could take to restart the Canadian economy, as it recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic,” Canada must not lose sight of its long-term objectives (Government of Canada, 2020). Indeed, the current economic crisis must not make us lose sight of the Paris Agreement targets for fighting the climate crisis or the objectives of the Global Ocean Alliance, which seeks to protect 30% of oceans by 2030.

We remind you that the Canadian government played an important role in convincing the international community that a more ambitious target than 2°C was both necessary and achievable by proposing the warming threshold of 1.5°C for the Paris Agreement. On its website, the Canadian government recognizes that climate change could have far-reaching and unpredictable environmental, social and economic consequences (Environment and Natural Resources Canada, 2020).

The fight against climate change is a collective project that brings youth together in many ways. ENvironnement JEUnesse—an organization dedicated to educating youth about environmental issues, providing training through educational projects and encouraging them to take action in their community—finds it deplorable that the Government of Canada has not met any of its climate targets and has not done everything it can to make the required changes.

ENvironnement JEUnesse has therefore chosen to submit a brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance in advance of the 2021 federal budget for several reasons: first, to serve as the voice of youth committed to the environment; second, to remind the committee of the intergenerational perspective that should guide any government action, including the preparation of the 2021 federal budget; and third, to raise broader concerns about the environment, society and politics, which are inextricably linked.

2. Environmental and social justice

The climate crisis together with the social crisis that we are currently experiencing are the result of various forms of oppression: the overexploitation of ecosystems, the violation of human rights, the failure to uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and so forth. Moreover, the impacts of the climate crisis have exacerbated social inequality. For example, we know that in underprivileged communities there is less greening, a more limited supply of local and organic food, and fewer types of and less frequent active and public transportation, and so forth.

With respect to intergenerational equity, at the very least, those who will be disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis must be heard. Tackling climate issues and preserving biodiversity requires the strengthening of democratic institutions to ensure better power sharing and decision-making *by and for* citizens, including youth and Indigenous communities.

“Youth must be heard when decisions are being made that have a direct impact on our future.” – Amélie Beaulé, 17, Mont-Royal

See recommendations 1 to 3.

ENvironnement JEUnesse supports the solution proposed by Oxfam-Québec for ending tax evasion by inviting “all governments to agree on new international tax rules.” (Oxfam-Québec, 2019)

“Bold laws must be passed requiring greater transparency about the wealth of businesses. Then the real value of what they own could be taxed instead of the value of what they are not hiding in tax havens. This would provide more money to fight climate change.” – Amélie Beaulé, 17, Mount Royal

See recommendation 4.

In concrete terms, the spaces for consultation and collaboration must be adequately funded to facilitate the participation of youth, in particular those from marginalized groups such as women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and so forth. The following are some conditions that will ensure success:

- The mechanism must provide for rigorous transparency and accountability.
- Access to information must be facilitated through a variety of formats, and documentation must be complete.
- Time and effort spent on consultation must be compensated or remunerated with a view to accessibility.
- The mechanism must be open and accessible; it cannot be overly academic or advanced.
- There must be adequate and varied forms of participation (workshops, community meetings, exchanges, etc.).
- The process and its stages must be clear. Sufficient time must be provided and how the views of youth will be used or considered in decision-making must be clearly set out.
- The process must be assessed and feedback provided.

See recommendation 5.

3. Climate crisis

Considering that Canada was responsible for more than 1.5% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2016, it is vital that the Government of Canada adopt GHG reduction targets that are more ambitious and consistent with climate science and the 1.5°C warming threshold of the Paris Agreement (Government of Canada, 2020b). It must also ensure that it takes every action required and spends what is necessary to meet the targets and thus ensure intergenerational equity.

See recommendations 6 and 7.

The COVID-19 crisis has clearly demonstrated that it is in fact possible to quickly mobilize significant funds. The fight against the climate crisis should generate the same energy and will on the part of the Government of Canada.

See recommendation 8.

The social and economic impacts of the climate crisis will exceed those of COVID-19. If the government was able to marshal \$231 billion just for direct measures implemented as part of the COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, at the very least the same amount must be invested every year in international mitigation, adaptation and support for losses and damages linked to the impact of the climate crisis (Government of Canada, 2020c). Furthermore, the creation of green jobs and related training should be one of the priorities of the 2021 federal budget. It is vital that workers and unions contribute to establishing a clear picture of the realities of various workplaces in order to make the best and most informed decisions possible.

4. For a just recovery

The just and equitable transition in the long term is inevitable; we cannot go back to the way things were after the COVID-19 pandemic. In the shorter term, Canada should help build a society that focuses first on people, mutual assistance and protecting ecosystems. In that regard, hundreds of organizations and Indigenous groups have endorsed the six principles for a just recovery:

1. Put people's health and wellbeing first. No exceptions.
2. Strengthen the social safety net and provide relief directly to people.
3. Prioritize the needs of workers and communities.
4. Build resilience to prevent future crises.
5. Build solidarity and equity across communities, generations and borders.

6. Uphold indigenous rights and work in partnership with indigenous peoples. (Movement for a Just Recovery, 2020)

“Today, Canada can position itself as a leader that is ready to face the challenges of tomorrow based on innovation in this 2021 budget. We have the power to make a difference, to act with courage, ambition and solidarity for an equitable, sustainable and green recovery.” – Oswaldo Paz, 14, Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes

See recommendation 9.

5. References

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