



Principles and pathways toward a green and just recovery

1. Overarching principles

Greenpeace Canada has joined hundreds of other civil society groups representing millions of Canadians in endorsing the following principles¹ to guide pandemic recovery measures:

- Uphold Indigenous rights and work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples;
- Put people's health and wellbeing first, no exceptions;
- Strengthen the social safety net and provide relief directly to people;
- Prioritize the needs of workers and communities;
- Build resilience to prevent future crises; and
- Build solidarity and equity across communities, generations, and borders.

2. Essential measures to ensure a green and just recovery for all

The climate crisis - and environmental harms in general - not only disproportionately impact women, people of colour, and other marginalized groups, but also worsen existing inequalities. Effective climate action cannot be separated from the creation of a more just society. Policies to dismantle the systems upholding inequalities include:

- Instituting a **Universal Basic Income (UBI)**. The CERB could be adapted and turned into a UBI to provide a major stimulus to the economy and ensure all Canadians always have enough money to cover their basic needs. This would not be an excuse to weaken the overall social safety net - if paired with a wealth tax it could greatly reduce inequality, could improve health and wellbeing, and ensure no one is forced to go hungry or homeless again;
- Instituting a **wealth tax**² on Canada's wealthiest people and companies;
- Uphold the recommendations of **Black Lives Matter**³, such as moving funds away from the police and towards the health and wellness of our communities;
- Ensuring **status for all migrant workers**,⁴ including the provision of adequate health and social safety nets;
- Provide **national child care funding** and ensure that that women's care work is properly paid and that recovery measures appropriately prioritise women (especially women of colour) hardest hit by the pandemic and by climate change impacts.

3. Indigenous rights and reconciliation

Indigenous Peoples' rights and knowledge must be at the heart of all actions to recover from this pandemic. This includes:

¹ <https://justrecoveryforall.ca/>

² <https://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/story/38421/make-the-rich-pay-the-much-needed-wealth-tax-on-multimillionaires/>

³ <https://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/story/38896/3-anti-racist-policies-that-should-be-part-of-the-covid-19-economic-recovery/>

⁴ <https://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/story/39944/migrant-justice-is-climate-justice-greenpeace-canada-support-statusforall/>

- Fully implementing and adopting into domestic law the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, to which Canada is a state signatory, and in particular Article 32 (free, prior and informed consent) related to developments on traditional territories;
- Acting on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;
- Ensuring that all Indigenous communities have access to clean drinking water;
- Fully resourcing Indigenous community-led pandemic planning and emergency health response measures;⁵
- Provide transparent, publicly available data related to the impacts of Covid-19 on Indigenous communities;⁶ and
- Investing in Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives as an immediate and long term priority. Support Indigenous food producers and the application of essential Indigenous knowledge through Canada's food system.

4. Invest in green energy and liveable communities that enable low-carbon lifestyles

The federal government should invest in making our communities more liveable, equitable and low carbon as we recover from the current pandemic. Options include:

- **Affordable, low-carbon social housing**, especially for low income, racialized and Indigenous communities. Funding for green jobs, including deep retrofits of homes and buildings. Transition buildings from fossil gas heating to efficient electric heat pumps or other clean, renewable energy-based heating systems (e.g. geothermal, solar);
- Reduce air pollution and create more liveable cities by supporting the **expansion of cycling and walking infrastructure, as well as funding free, expanded and electrified public transit**;
- Hasten the **transition to 100% renewables** by investing in renewable energy production, energy efficiency, meeting new electricity demand with zero-carbon sources and construction of low-impact renewable energy projects. Investments in more renewable energy production, transmission, and storage infrastructure to rapidly replace polluting gas and coal-fired power plants. Special programs to reduce dependence on diesel generators in remote communities should also be adequately funded;
- Improve community health in cities and towns all across Canada by growing our **urban parks and forests** with native species, with a focus on communities most in need.⁷ This offers a myriad of benefits in addition to job creation, including: human health and well-being, climate change mitigation, biodiversity enhancement, soil regeneration, watershed protection, food security, recreation, social cohesion and equity; and
- **Prioritize and earmark** recovery spending for organizations and companies with a formal mandate to look out for more than just profit, such as co-ops, non-profits, community organizations, and public interest corporations.

⁵ <https://www.change.org/p/prime-minister-trudeau-more-resources-for-covid-19-for-indigenous-communities-urgently-needed>

⁶ <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2020/05/12/colonialism-of-the-curve-indigenous-communities-and-bad-covid-data/>

⁷ Access to shade is often unequal, e.g. https://twitter.com/faisal_moola/status/792068861310930946

5. Natural life support systems

The natural world provides life-support systems for all Canadians. We need to invest in the health of our planet as we would for our own health. We urge your government to make unprecedented investments in “nature jobs” that will restore and protect Canada’s degraded natural infrastructure. This means:

- **Achieving nature protection targets.** Natural ecosystems are strongholds of biodiversity and massive stores of carbon.⁸ Securing their effective protection is therefore key. Recent reports and studies have emphasised such “nature-based solutions” as a key fiscal recovery policy option that offer both high economic multipliers and positive climate impact.⁹ This call for much swifter progress on your government’s commitment to protect 30% of Canada’s lands, oceans and freshwaters by 2030.¹⁰ Now is the time to create new, green jobs at an ambitious scale and achieve this urgent task. Protection, it should be noted, is not about excluding people from low-impact, sustainable use¹¹ and must be centered on Indigenous rights and knowledge¹²;
- **Restoring Canada’s degraded natural ecosystems** can help mitigate global heating by enhancing nature’s ability to sequester and store carbon, as well as turn the tide on species extinction by recovering large tracts of habitat appropriate for wildlife at risk. Green jobs in ecosystem restoration can also provide a host of other benefits, including water filtration, flood control, pest management, reducing soil erosion and enhancing food security. Restoring forests, peatlands, seagrass beds and coastal wetlands, as well as enhancing soil carbon uptake in grazing and croplands, are important priorities for restoration.¹³ Examples of shovel-ready restoration projects include:

The federal government can support pandemic recovery and long term resilience by directly employing and funding the employment of people to carry out these nature based solutions. This could include the creation of a federal program to hire people to restore natural habitats, establish and upgrade conservation areas, and carry out data collection and monitoring.

6. Growing a resilient food system

The pandemic has exposed shortcomings in Canada’s food system and supply chains that demand attention and action. By investing in a resilient food system, your government can help communities get through the current crisis by creating immediate economic opportunities and

⁸ Dinerstein et al (2019) A Global Deal For Nature: Guiding principles, milestones, and targets. Science Advances 5, eaaw2869. <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aaw2869>

⁹ See e.g. “Will COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages accelerate or retard progress on climate change?” Cameron Hepburn, Brian O’Callaghan, Nicholas Stern, Joseph Stiglitz, Dimitri Zenghelis, *Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, University of Oxford, London School of Economics and Political Science, Columbia University, University of Cambridge*. AND <https://www.campaignfornature.org/protecting-30-of-the-planet-for-nature-economic-analysis>

¹⁰ <https://pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2019/12/13/minister-environment-and-climate-change-mandate-letter>

¹¹ “A focus on biodiversity and Indigenous rights delivers greater mitigation ambition than only focusing on carbon alone”, <https://www.climateandambitionrightsalliance.org/report>

¹² Article 8(j) of the *United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity*, to which Canada is also a signatory, recognizes the importance of Indigenous knowledge, a system of thinking and original science of the land in its own right.

¹³ For an overview see: Roe, S., Streck, C., Obersteiner, M., Frank, S., Griscom, B., Drouet, L., Fricko, O., Gusti, M., Harris, N., Hasegawa, T., Hausfather, Z., Havlík, P., House, J., Nabuurs, G.-J., Popp, A., Sánchez, M.J.S., Sanderman, J., Smith, P., Stehfest, E., Lawrence, D., 2019. Contribution of the land sector to a 1.5 °C world. *Nat. Clim. Chang.* 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-019-0591-9>

green jobs while improving long term food security, promoting public health and racial equity,¹⁴ addressing climate change and enhancing biodiversity. Policies that will get us there include:

- **Investing in regenerative agriculture.** Shifting food production from industrial to regenerative agriculture has enormous potential for job creation, as well as significant co-benefits such as enhanced food security, climate mitigation and resilience, and biodiversity enhancement. A redesigned farming system could result in significant emission reductions and provide large-scale carbon sinks. Regenerative farming is also known as “agroecology”, ecological or biological farming and includes farms operating with the certification of organic. It is characterised by a diversification of crops, plants and animals and practices that mimic natural systems to access nutrients and water;
- **Not subsidizing industrial livestock.** Industrial livestock production, in particular, demands an enormous amount of resources and is responsible for widespread pollution of air, land, and water. It’s also a significant contributor to climate change, which is driving declining crop yields, unpredictable planting seasons, increases in agricultural pests and diseases, and worsening land degradation. There should be no subsidies, policies or investment that support industrial livestock.
- **Funding municipalities** across Canada pursuing local food resilience initiatives, in particular growing (e.g. urban agriculture, community gardens, permaculture, food forests, public education) and accessing (e.g. farmers’ markets) locally produced food.
- **Funding programs**, such as a national healthy school food program¹⁵, to support a more healthy, climate-friendly and plant-centered diet as recommended by Canada's Food Guide.¹⁶ The greenhouse gas footprint of meat products is approximately 10–100 times greater than plant-based foods.¹⁷ Shifting to more plant-based foods is therefore one of the quickest and simplest ways to reduce emissions. But all Canadians need to be able to afford these nutritious foods, not just a few.
- **Guaranteeing food security** and access to a range of healthy and culturally appropriate produce for all, including those most vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19, Indigenous peoples, low-income households, the elderly, and frontline health and care workers. Support small and medium farmers to help meet this urgent need.

7. Ending waste and building a circular economy

Right now, our economy is based on a “take-make-waste” model: companies take natural resources, make things to sell for profit, and then the public deal with the waste. For example, a staggering 58% of food produced in Canada is lost or wasted,¹⁸ while wasted food creates 56

¹⁴ Black households are 3.56 times more likely to be food insecure than white households

https://foodshare.net/custom/uploads/2019/11/PROOF_factsheet_press_FINAL.6.pdf

¹⁵ <https://foodsecurecanada.org/resources-news/news-media/we-want-national-healthy-school-food-program>

¹⁶ Canada's Food Guide: [Healthy eating recommendations](#).

¹⁷ Clark, M. & Tilman, D. 2017. Comparative analysis of environmental impacts of agricultural production systems, *Environmental Research Letters* 12. Poore, J. & Nemecek, T. 2018. Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers. *Science*, 360: 987.

¹⁸ Second Harvest, [The Avoidable Crisis of Food Waste, the Roadmap](#)

million tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions.¹⁹ Food in landfills also creates methane, a greenhouse gas trapping 28 times more heat than carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.²⁰

In contrast, a **circular economy** focuses on the responsible use of natural resources, repairing and reusing existing goods and materials, and ending disposable consumption - nothing goes to landfill. We can create good jobs for today and move us toward a circular and zero waste economy by investing in developing, implementing, and scaling up reuse, refill and package-free delivery models for food and other goods. Here are some ideas how:

- Create innovation funds for reuse and refill business models, repair and remanufacturing, and regenerative systems which restore and revitalize their own inputs;
- Invest in development and scaling-up of reuse/return and other zero waste infrastructure that prioritizes the top of the zero waste hierarchy, such as reducing material consumption and redesigning systems to eliminate waste;
- Incentivize community-driven zero waste programs, practices and initiatives;
- Invest in localized product delivery systems and supply chains;
- End food waste by supporting small and medium farmers getting good food directly to people's plates by reducing sale restrictions and supporting farmers' markets; and
- Require the grocery sector to report on, and massively reduce, its food waste across the supply chain and remove barriers to donations of good food.

8. Supporting communities in transition

Empower traditionally resource-dependant communities to make an equitable transition to more diversified, sustainable and job generating opportunities. For example:

- Support workers and communities currently **dependent on oil and gas** through the transition to 100% renewable energy. The work of the Just Transition Task Force for Canadian Coal Power Workers and Communities²¹ can serve as a starting point;
- Invest in the research and development of **alternatives to the logging industry** such as non-timber forest economies. In addition to a low environmental impact, these sectors are also generally more labour intensive and less capital intensive than traditional extractive industries, making them a good fit for small communities;
- Provide marketing support and start-up funds for entrepreneurs in these sectors and target funding towards non industrial initiatives that help diversify local economies;

Recovery funds invested in a **just and equitable transition to regenerative farming** should include:

- Grant funding for integrating trees into farmland (agroforestry);
- Grant funding for the processing of regenerative organic and plant based foods, and by constructing diversified and value-added processing facilities directly;
- Investments in R&D, training and advisory services for regenerative organic farming; and
- Financing the construction of organic compost and seed facilities.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Saunio, M., et al. [The growing role of methane in Anthropogenic Climate Change](#), *Environmental Research Letters* (December 2016).

²¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/climate-change/task-force-just-transition/final-report.html>