

Budget 2021:
A Just Recovery for People & the Planet

Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance
February 2021

Summary of Recommendations

Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) shares the following recommendations for the 2021 federal budget:

1. Continue to support people throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure corporate responsibility for COVID-19 relief funds.
2. Improve equity and outcomes for individuals and communities facing systemic oppression (including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples; racialized people; refugees and other immigrants; women; 2SLGBTQQA+ people; and people living with disabilities).
3. Invest in local organizations and community-led initiatives to improve equity and health outcomes, build capacity, and ensure that programs and services reach all who need them.
4. Invest in complementary, universally-accessible public services to offset the rising costs of living and increasing social and economic inequity. Pair these systems and services with a universally-accessible basic income guarantee.
5. Recognize the essential nature of immigration in addressing labour shortages, rebuilding the economy and assisting in paying off our national debt. Invest in policies and programs that honour the rights of immigrants, migrant workers, refugees, and all newcomers to Canada.
6. Encourage the social and economic integration of racialized communities by addressing the systemic barriers they face in having foreign credentials and education recognized in Canada.
7. Reduce application processing times, barriers, and backlogs. Additional financial and personnel resources should be allocated to processing centers to tackle the delays and barriers.
8. Eliminate Canadian citizenship fees.
9. Invest in a just transition to a fair, inclusive, green economy that creates good secure jobs, and promotes the well-being of everyone in Canada.
10. End all subsidies to the fossil fuel industry.
11. Strengthen the federal carbon pricing backstop.
12. Commit equal support for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures in the Global South through international climate financing mechanisms

About Citizens for Public Justice

Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) is a national organization of members inspired by faith to act for justice in Canadian public policy. CPJ is supported by a broad, ecumenical membership across Canada and overseen by a national board of directors.

CPJ co-leads the [Dignity for All](#) campaign and [For the Love of Creation](#), a faith-based climate justice initiative. We are members of Climate Action Network Canada, the Canadian Council of Refugees, and the Canadian Council of Churches. We are regular contributors to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' *Alternative Federal Budget*. Our policy staff also sit on the steering committees of Campaign 2000, the Canadian Poverty Institute, the Green Economy Network, and the Overseas Protection and Resettlement Working Group.

Guiding Principles

CPJ seeks to work in solidarity with people and communities disproportionately impacted by the policies for which we advocate. Our evidence-based recommendations are aligned with the **Principles of a Just Recovery**,¹ endorsed by over 500 organizations in Canada. These principles must serve as minimum criteria for all policies, investments, and programs.

1. Put people's health and well-being 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.

At this current moment in history, the final principle articulated above is key. Canada must honour the rights of Indigenous peoples by **implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**, including, but not limited to, the **right of free, prior and informed consent**. All processes related to Indigenous Peoples must be developed through robust and inclusive dialogue with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities themselves.

Also key is the **application an intersectional, anti-oppressive, decolonial, gender-based analysis (GBA+)** to the development, implementation, and evaluations of all policy and budgetary decisions.

Canadian public policy and the federal budget must be consistent with a liveable planet. This requires doubling down efforts to **achieve the temperature goals established in the Paris Agreement and accelerated action to net-zero emissions**.

We must also **ensure that the burden of decarbonization does not fall on those already facing disproportionate precarity and poverty**. Similarly, our domestic policies should not exacerbate challenges faced by populations in the Global South. When they do, we must offer displaced peoples refuge and full integration in Canada.

¹ Available in full at <https://justrecoveryforall.ca/> or <https://relancejuste.ca/>.

Policy Recommendations

Social Supports to Address Poverty and Inequality

COVID-19 has exposed and intensified existing inequality in Canada. Chronic, generational poverty that disproportionately affects certain communities marks a clear distinction between “falling on hard times” and systemic inequity. The people hardest hit by this pandemic require an economy and social safety net that support the rights, well-being, and equal participation of all people.

We urge you to:

- 1) Continue to support people throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure corporate responsibility for COVID-19 relief funds.
 - a) Extend COVID-19 income supports until year-end or the official end of the pandemic:
 - Increase the number of Canada Recovery Benefit and Recovery Caregiving Benefit weeks
 - Increase the number of Employment Insurance benefit weeks for all claimants.
 - Increase, as promised, the number of EI Sickness/Quarantine benefit weeks.
 - Extend all benefit coverages to all migrants.
 - b) Implement repayment amnesty to all people who received the Canada Emergency Response Benefit whose incomes are below or near the Low Income Measure and to all youth transitioning out of care.
 - c) Expand the pandemic top-up to the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) to all families with children under 18. Remove CCB access barriers for families with precarious immigration status and customary care, kinship, and families caring for children outside of formal care arrangements.
 - d) Implement a significant corporate tax on any and all profits above 7.5 per cent generated by corporations while receiving the COVID-19 wage subsidy.
 - e) Prohibit corporate stock buybacks, executive bonuses, and shareholder dividend payouts for at least one year for corporations receiving COVID-19 relief funding.
- 2) Improve equity and outcomes for individuals and communities facing systemic oppression (including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples; racialized people; refugees and other immigrants; women; 2SLGBTQIA+ people; and people living with disabilities).
 - a) Budget for, and develop, a regular practice of using disaggregated data and the input of people with lived experience of poverty and structural oppression to inform policy design, implementation, and monitoring, and to participate in decision-making processes regarding federal investments.
 - b) Invest in the co-creation and monitoring of culturally relevant indicators of well-being and economic opportunity among communities experiencing systemic oppression through the collection of disaggregated data and ongoing consultation.

- c) Prioritize investments in policies and programs that demonstrably improve well-being and reduce poverty and inequity among communities experiencing systemic oppression. Reallocate funding from those that exacerbate poverty and inequity.
- 3) Invest in local organizations and community-led initiatives to improve equity and health outcomes, build capacity, and ensure that programs and services reach all who need them, including those outside the tax system. Create mechanisms for income support eligibility determination and benefit distribution for marginalized people outside the tax system through these trusted local organizations.
 - 4) Invest in complementary, universally-accessible public services to offset the rising costs of living and increasing social and economic inequity.
 - a) Adopt a public single-payer pharmacare system that is universal, comprehensive, and accessible.
 - b) Ensure access to childcare, recognizing its essential nature as part of economic recovery. Continue to develop national standards and investments for public, subsidized childcare across the country.
 - c) Eliminate core housing need by investing in social housing repairs and the development of new housing stock, including supportive housing.
 - 5) Pair these systems and services with a universally-accessible basic income guarantee for people 18 to 64 years of age, gradually reduced as other income increases² to ensure all people living in Canada can meet their needs and live with the dignity of autonomy.

A Fulsome Welcome for Refugees and Newcomers

We urge the federal government to honour its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals through both domestic and foreign policy decisions and investments.

- 6) Recognize the essential nature of immigration in addressing labour shortages, rebuilding the economy and assisting in paying off our national debt.
 - a) Respect the right to health of migrants and refugees, including the provision of essential medicine, prevention, and treatment, regardless of status.
 - b) Extend public health insurance to all people living in Canada, regardless of immigration status, especially during the pandemic.
- 7) Encourage the social and economic integration of racialized communities by addressing the systemic barriers they face in having foreign credentials and education recognized in Canada.
 - a) Streamline the recognition of foreign credentials for doctors and nurses, granting full licenses to those granted temporary license to work during the pandemic.

² For full details, including proposed costing and financing, please see https://www.basicincomecanada.org/policy_options

- b) Invest in improvements to wages and working conditions of long-term care workers, many of whom are racialized people.
- 8) Reduce application processing times, barriers, and backlogs. Additional financial and personnel resources should be allocated to processing centers to tackle the delays and barriers.
 - 9) Eliminate Canadian citizenship fees.

Just Recovery and Climate Resilience

Addressing the climate emergency requires a massive transition. Budget 2021 can and must simultaneously address the climate emergency, support workers and communities, and move us towards a net-zero carbon economy, building resiliency and well-being in Canada and globally.

- 10) Commit to reducing Canadian GHG emissions by 60 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, while investing in a just transition (\$1 billion over 10 years) to a fair, inclusive, green economy that creates good secure jobs, and promotes the well-being of everyone in Canada.
 - a) Develop a National Decarbonization Strategy (\$150 million over three years) that emphasizes quality jobs and GHG emissions reductions in consultation with the provinces and territories, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and others currently marginalized from the existing economy.
 - b) Include a Strategic Training Fund (\$450 million over three years) to support workforce diversification by funding post-secondary training programs for populations historically marginalized from low-carbon growth industries like energy efficiency, technology, health care, and renewable energy.
 - c) Provide a Just Transition Transfer (\$300 million over three years) to provinces and territories to support workers and communities most directly impacted by the move away from fossil fuels.
- 11) End all subsidies to the fossil fuel industry (saving \$6.5 billion over three years) and invest in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and skills development for workers currently employed in the oil and gas sector.
- 12) Strengthen the federal carbon pricing backstop by eliminating the preferences for large emitters and converting the cap and trade mechanism into a transparent carbon tax with border adjustments.
- 13) Commit equal support for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures in the Global South through international climate financing mechanisms, with additional funding for loss and damage, scaling up to a fair share contribution of at least \$4 billion USD per year.

We thank you for your consideration and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations in greater detail.

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