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Budget 2022: Equity and Justice in Canada's Green Recovery

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It has been a long and challenging two years. The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the cracks in our societal structures and in our communities. Canada is currently experiencing multiple crises in housing, affordability, health, and climate change. While many have pulled together to face these crises, social inequities also create conditions ripe for polarization and undermine democratic engagement. In this context, our federal government has a critical role to play. As we look towards post-pandemic recovery, it is essential that the Government of Canada delivers effective and equitable solutions to the challenges before us, safeguarding the rights and well-being of all people and all of creation.

Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) is a faith-based public policy organization that believes federal policy can and must serve the public good. Our research, policy analysis, education, and advocacy work are grounded in an understanding of the sacredness of creation and the dignity of all people. From this perspective, the central role of government is to promote the well-being of citizens and residents, and the flourishing of the Earth.

As we survey the Canadian landscape, we see an ever more critical need for well-funded responses to systemic inequities and structural barriers that divide society. For Canada to promote an inclusive economic recovery that leaves no one behind and fosters the flourishing of creation, the Budget 2022 must operationally reflect clear and ambitious commitments. Ultimately, the budget illustrates a government's priorities far more accurately than campaign promises, [throne speeches](#), or even [mandate letters](#).

At CPJ, we believe that Budget 2022 must take a holistic, all-of-government approach to addressing the crises we face. Central to this approach is the prioritization of Indigenous rights (including treaty rights), upholding human rights, and applying an equity and anti-oppression lens to all legislative, regulatory, and financial decision-making. In practice, this means a budget that incentivizes a transition to a fair, inclusive, and green economy, allocates appropriate resources for the successful resettlement of newcomers across the country, and prioritizes services and programs that close the gaps in socioeconomic and health outcomes for marginalized groups in Canada.

Such a budget would allow us to achieve three goals essential to a just society:

1. The advancement of concrete and sustained action to eradicate poverty and inequality in Canada.
2. The alignment of climate action with global climate science, Indigenous wisdom, and the scale of the climate emergency.
3. The attainment of a fulsome welcome and supportive policy environment that upholds the rights and dignity of refugees and immigrants in Canada.

Because each of these issues are vast and multifaceted, the scope of our recommendations is also far-reaching. Addressing poverty, for example, requires action and investment in the areas of housing, healthcare, education, and food security (among many others). Climate action, in turn, has implications for industrial development, reconciliation, and transportation policy, for example. Further, creating a positive policy environment for refugees and immigrants in Canada warrants profound legal, societal and economic commitments.

2022 Budget Recommendations

Physical Infrastructure

International human rights standards and criteria provide a framework from which we can address multiple crises, building resiliency and wellbeing for all people and for society as a whole. At the same time, they serve as useful metrics of progress and accountability.

For example, the right to housing means all people have the “right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity.” The [United Nations](#) has outlined a number of conditions that must be met before housing can be considered adequate. Namely, **availability of services, facilities & infrastructure; security of tenure; affordability**, such that the cost of adequate housing does not threaten or compromise your enjoyment of other human rights; **habitability; accessibility; location**; and **cultural adequacy**.

These criteria inform multiple recommendations for investments in physical infrastructure that will help the Government of Canada honour multiple human rights obligations. By intentionally incorporating these criteria with measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a green economy, our investments and efforts can work together effectively to build a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient society.

With this in mind, CPJ offers the following recommendations for investments in physical infrastructure:

1. Invest in the creation of new **deeply affordable and accessible social housing** supply, and the repair, renewal, and retrofit of existing social housing stock with the goal of eliminating [core housing need](#). Ensure **supportive housing supply** is allocated for people with mental, physical, developmental, and addictions health needs. Ensure a minimum of 33% of all housing investments reach households led by diverse women and gender diverse people as per GBA+ commitments under the National Housing Strategy.
2. Implement an **Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy** as envisioned by the CHRA Indigenous Caucus’ 2018 [For Indigenous. By Indigenous report](#).
3. Incorporate **minimum energy efficiency standards** into all building codes as well as all new housing and housing renovations being funded through the National Housing Strategy, with particular support for people in low-income and core housing need.
4. Operationalize a managed phase-out of oil and gas exploration, production, and distribution, investing instead in infrastructure and job training required for the **electrification of Canada’s energy grid**. Support people in transitioning to **renewable sources of energy**, including wind, solar, geothermal, and tidal by providing targeted financial assistance for those with low income, as well as those in remote rural and Northern communities.
5. **Cancel the Trans Mountain pipeline project (TMX)** as it does not have permission or consent from affected Indigenous Nations, has already cost taxpayers more than \$12.6 billion, and also directly conflicts with the federal government’s climate commitments and the Finance Minister’s mandate to ensure budgetary measures are consistent with Canada’s climate goals.
6. Invest in the necessary physical infrastructure to provide **sustainable access to safe drinking water** on all First Nations reserves immediately. Ensure the process and outcomes honour the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

7. Ensure that public planning and management bodies assume responsibility for creating and maintaining **non-profit and public childcare services**. Services must be equitably located and include low-income and high-needs communities and rural and less densely populated communities. Accountability measures must be resourced to ensure compliance.
8. Implement measures to curtail the impacts of **financialization of rental housing markets** by limiting the ability of large capital funds (including Real Estate Income Trusts – REITs) to purchase “distressed” rental housing assets.
9. In order to effectively accelerate the uptake of zero-emissions vehicles in Canada, significant investment in **charging infrastructure** is essential. Equally or even more important, however, is the decarbonization and expansion of accessible **public transit systems** across the country and investments in **active transportation infrastructure**, such as designing 15-minute cities in major urban hubs. Investing in free or low-cost accessible public and active transportation would increase uptake and improve equitable access for people with low incomes.
10. Invest in the reliable development, maintenance, and operation of **broadband infrastructure**, including in remote and northern regions. Access to reliable high-speed internet has become essential for accessing services and opportunities related to health, education, employment, and participation in civil society as well as many government consultations.
11. Renew and expand investment in the **Local Food Infrastructure Fund**¹ to support Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving groups that are focused on Indigenous food systems.
12. Support lower-emission, **climate-resilient farming** practices. Regenerative farming practices like integrated crop-livestock systems, rotational grazing, and cover-cropping all serve to reduce emissions, increase resilience, and contribute to food security.
13. Invest in **climate-resilient and community-focused infrastructure**, prioritizing Northern and coastal communities that are particularly vulnerable to climate impacts due to permafrost melt, rising sea levels, and extreme weather.
14. **End the use of provincial jails and other criminal incarceration facilities for immigration detention** and cancel all agreements and contracts between the federal and provincial governments that allow for it. **Replace detention with community-based case management for those with pending immigration proceedings**. Expand localized programs of community-based alternatives to detention that provide support rather than surveillance.

¹ <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/agricultural-programs-and-services/local-food-infrastructure-fund>

Social Infrastructure

Physical infrastructure must be paired with programs, services, and regulatory standards to create the conditions in which all people in Canada can realize their human rights and participate fully in a democratic society. This further requires understanding why we see persistent gaps in socioeconomic and health outcomes for certain groups in Canada, and developing targeted solutions that remedy the underlying systemic barriers that cause and perpetuate these inequities.

Income supports must be paired with publicly-funded, universally accessible programs and decent work standards to realize the rights of all people in Canada to an adequate standard of living that can withstand the shocks of public health crises, natural disasters, and economic recessions. Rights-based minimum standards for these income supports, public programs, and other policy decisions should be tied to federal funds, as well as minimum standards and regulatory controls for the private sector. This ensures that private industries do their part to protect the wellbeing of employees, consumers/clients, and their communities, and contribute to building a more equitable and sustainable society.

By employing these multiple approaches simultaneously, we will receive better value for our investments. Neither income supports, nor public programs, nor regulatory standards alone can address the multifaceted challenges facing us. Increasing income supports while doing nothing to regulate market prices or employment standards, for example, cannot effectively ensure affordable housing. Providing emergency relief to businesses without including conditions on how the money flows to workers and their communities will not create or secure decent employment opportunities.

Finally, without a multifaceted approach that addresses current gaps in eligibility, adequacy, or accessibility, millions of people will continue to fall through the cracks. We will end up continuing to spend vast amounts of money on emergency relief and downstreams costs of healthcare and carceral systems, and we will not have met our human rights obligations or moved the needle meaningfully on issues like climate change, racial reconciliation and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, or socioeconomic and health equity.

Income Supports

15. Invest in a universally-accessible, means-tested **basic income** program for people aged 18 to 64, gradually reduced as other income increases, to fill the existing gaps in eligibility and adequacy of existing social assistance programs and income supports. CPJ supports the recommendations of the [Basic Income Canada Network](#) for specific modeling and delivery mechanisms.
16. Fast-track the implementation of a **Canada Disability Benefit**, engaging in meaningful consultation with people with disabilities at all stages of the benefit's design, implementation, and ongoing evaluation.
17. Expand eligibility for the **Canada Child Benefit (CCB)** so that all children in Canada can receive this support. Repeal subsection "e" in the definition of an "eligible individual" under s.122.6 of the Income Tax Act to **remove immigration status from eligibility criteria** for the CCB. Expand the circle of people able to attest to residency and ensure that kinship, customary care, and families caring for children outside a formal care arrangement have access to the CCB.
18. Increase the amount of the CCB so that all families with incomes at or below the CFLIM-AT² can access CCB pandemic top-up amounts. Invest substantially in the base amount of the CCB to ensure that it supports an **interim target of 50% reduction of child poverty** by 2025 according to the CFLIM-AT.

² Census Family Low Income Measure - After Tax

19. 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. Lack of identification, SIN, immigration or citizenship status, a Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) account, or a fixed address should not bar anyone from accessing federal financial benefits, including anyone engaged in precarious, casual or home-based work. Create mechanisms for income support **eligibility determination and benefit distribution for marginalized people outside the tax system** through these trusted local organizations.
20. Immediately implement a **CERB repayment amnesty** for everyone living at or below the CFLIM-AT and cease treating it as earned income. Immediately reinstate the **Canada Recovery Benefit** at the full amount of \$500 weekly until Employment Insurance is reformed, and/or a basic income program is implemented.
21. To adequately meet the historic immigration levels proposed by IRCC for 2022, including the resettlement of immigrants and refugees in Rural and Northern Communities, the Government **must allocate appropriate resources to ensure that sufficient services and programs for migrants and refugees are available in existing and new host communities.**

Healthcare

22. Pay full **compensation to the First Nations children, parents, and grandparents** who were harmed by discriminatory funding for child welfare services on reserve and lack of adherence to **Jordan's Principle**. Implement [The Spirit Bear Plan](#) to end inequities across public services.
23. Implement a national, single-payer **pharmacare** program as recommended in the 2019 Final Report of the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare, [A Prescription for Canada: Achieving Pharmacare for All](#).
24. Enhance the Canadian medicare program to include **dentistry, vision, and physical rehabilitation** services.
25. Invest in the development of a **national strategy for mental health**, consistent with *Canada Health Act* principles through a social determinants of health lens. Expand funding for **community-based mental health and wellness programs** accessible to youth, with funding reserved to provide culturally responsive supports for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, and marginalized youth. Deliver on the promise of a new **Canada Mental Health Transfer**, ensuring that this money is spent on its intended purpose, in a way that closes gaps in health outcomes for marginalized groups.
26. Expand eligibility for public healthcare to all Canadian residents regardless of immigration status. Respect the **right to health of migrants and refugees**, including the provision of essential medicine, prevention, and treatment. Unbind access to provincial health insurance from employment requirements for temporary workers.
27. Permanently amend the Canada Labour Code to ensure workers have access to ten permanent **paid sick days** with an additional fourteen days available during public health emergencies.

Childcare

28. Honour and fund the **Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework**.
29. Work with provinces and territories to implement **operational funding of childcare programs** based on set (daily) fees on a sliding ability-to-pay scale, from \$0 to a maximum of \$10, replacing full user fees and individual parent fee subsidies.
30. Work with provincial/territorial partners to ensure that operational funding of childcare services factor in **decent, fair compensation for staff**, in addition to affordable parent fees and other operational costs.

Healthy School Food

31. Allocate personnel and resources to work with provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous partners and stakeholders to develop a **National School Food Policy** and to work toward a **national school nutritious meal program**.

Jobs and Employment

32. Invest in the development of a **National Decarbonization and Industrial Development Strategy** in consultation with the provinces and territories, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, and others currently marginalized from the existing economy. This strategy must be consistent with the principles of just transition, emphasize greenhouse gas emissions reductions through a managed phase-out of oil and gas exploration, production, and distribution and lead to good, secure, green jobs.
33. Invest in a **Just Transition Benefit** to support workers in fossil fuel communities as they transition to cleaner industries. Pair this with a **Strategic Training Fund** 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.
34. Encourage the **social and economic integration of refugees and immigrants** by addressing the systemic barriers they face in having foreign credentials and education recognized in Canada. As a starting point, streamline the **recognition of foreign credentials** for doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, granting full licenses to those who were granted temporary licenses to work during the pandemic.
35. Advance **employment and pay equity** for marginalized groups in Canada³ by investing in the implementation of an effective legislative framework to ensure fair and equitable labour market outcomes for all.
36. **Eliminate immigration-related barriers to employment** by investing in increased personnel and resources. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has an approximate backlog of 1.8 million applications, including 519,030 permanent residency applications and 848,598 temporary residency applications. Excessive processing times create significant disruptions that limit people's ability to seek employment and/or professional training, including for thousands of Canadian residents.

³ See Colour of Poverty, Colour of Change's fact sheet on employment equity at https://colourofpoverty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EN_Employment-Equity-1-Pager.pdf

Equitable & Sustainable Wealth Distribution

37. **End all subsidies to the fossil fuel industry** by 2023 (as promised). Invest the savings (\$6.5 billion over three years) in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and skills development for workers currently employed in the oil and gas sector as well as those traditionally excluded from secure, good jobs.
38. 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.
39. Pursue **public ownership of Canada's renewable energy sector** (not equity in oil and gas), drawing from current and former fossil fuel workers for workforce development.
40. Increase the top federal **marginal income tax rate** on incomes over \$750,000 from 33% to 37%, generating about \$1 billion annually, according to [Canadians for Tax Fairness](#).
41. Increase funding to the CRA for investigation, audits, enforcement, and prosecution of offshore, corporate, and high-income **tax evasion**, and apply larger fines for individuals and corporations that promote and facilitate international tax evasion schemes.
42. Increase **development aid to Global South** countries to match the OECD official target of 0.7% of Canada's GDP in order to improve governance, development, and capacity to provide health care and social services for their citizens.
43. Provide 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 our fair share contribution of at least \$4 billion USD per year.

Government Capacity & Accountability

Prime Minister Trudeau's mandate letters to Cabinet recognize the need for a whole-of-government approach to tackle many of today's pressing issues. CPJ believes that all members of government, civil society, and private industry have a role to play in creating a more just and sustainable society that promotes the flourishing of all people and all of creation. A well-functioning, engaged democratic society requires mutual trust and accountability. In her Speech from the Throne, Governor General Mary Simon encouraged Members of Parliament to "be equal to the profound trust bestowed on [them] by Canadians." The following recommendations are offered to build capacity and accountability within government and the public service:

44. Invest in **required ongoing training and professional development** for all elected officials, Senators, government staff, and public service managerial staff in intersectional, anti-oppressive GBA+ analysis; the impact and historic and contemporary contexts of systemic oppression in Canada (including colonialism, racism, white supremacy, cis-heteropatriarchy, ableism, and xenophobia); and human rights obligations, including Indigenous rights and Treaty rights, specifically.
45. Provide adequate, sustainable funding to develop best practices and minimum criteria for **meaningful and respectful consultation with people with lived experience of systemic oppression** and others disproportionately impacted by specific policy decisions. Consultations with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples must be consistent with the articles of the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**, including the principle of **free and prior informed consent**.
46. Invest in training and staffing to support a mandated **data collection strategy** that collects data **disaggregated** by Indigenous identity, race, gender, immigration status, (dis)ability, and

2SLGBTQIA+ identity, among other sociodemographic identities in a way that is **culturally sensitive** (including hiring and resourcing people from marginalized communities to do this work in-community). Training should also be provided to build greater capacity in applying **intersectional, anti-oppressive analyses** using both qualitative and quantitative data.

47. Invest in training and resources to ensure that the collection and use of data is consistent with **First Nations [OCAP principles](#) of ownership, control, access, and possession** to support decision-making processes, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation in the service of closing gaps in socioeconomic and health outcomes and furthering the work of reconciliation.
48. Support the development of the **Action Plan to achieve the objectives of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, national Indigenous organizations and modern treaty partners, as required by *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.
49. Invest in training and resources to ensure the ways in which we collect, synthesize and assess data relevant to **climate measures** reflect the reality that climate change is complicated, detailed, and crosses every discipline: physical sciences, energy systems, economics, social sciences, political science. Data collection and analysis must also reflect the fact that climate change impacts people and communities differently and requires intersectional analysis.
50. Invest in the creation and implementation of an **Anti-Racism Act for Canada** that provides a legislative foundation for the Anti-Racism Secretariat and a National Action Plan Against Racism that is well-funded, results-oriented, and produces long-term, sustainable change that addresses all forms of racism.
51. Entrench the **right to an adequate standard of living** within the Poverty Reduction Act and provide sustainable investments for mechanisms to realize these rights, such as an all-party appointed advisory council and a **federal advocate** who can investigate major systemic issues (similar to the Federal Housing Advocate).
52. Allocate the appropriate resources and staff to **urgently address the significant backlog of immigration applications**, in order to reduce the excessive processing times and barriers that immigrants and refugee claimants are facing.
53. Establish an independent body responsible for **overseeing and investigating the Canadian Border Services Agency** (CBSA), with which immigration detainees can lodge complaints in the event of allegations of abuse, neglect, or other human rights concerns, to hold the government accountable.

CPJ appreciates the opportunity to share our recommendations and would welcome opportunities to discuss our research and policy work in greater detail.

With thanks for your consideration,

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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.

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- Campaign 2000
- Colour of Poverty, Colour of Change
- First Nations Child and Family Caring Society
- Canadians for Tax Fairness
- For the Love of Creation
- Basic Income Canada Network
- National Right to Housing Network
- Human Rights Watch
- Amnesty International
- Coalition for Healthy School Food (Food Secure Canada)

We stand in solidarity with these and other organizations calling for a more just and sustainable future for all.

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