



April 20th, 2020

A Green New Deal for Canada

To Whom it May Concern,

Canada is in the midst of a crisis unprecedented in our time – the Covid-19 Pandemic. But as a country we have historically faced similar calamities and **emerged as a stronger nation**, World Wars 1 and 2 and the Great Depression in the last century being the prominent examples.

But this crisis is different. Rather than arising from military aggression or economic collapse, it is caused by the emergence of an animal-borne virus that has now infected humans in every part of the globe. Further, it is causally connected to pre-existing crises that have been recognized for some time but despite being declared ‘emergencies’ have not been acted upon by governments.

Climate change has been declared an **emergency** in many jurisdictions because of increasing environmental problems related to pollution, sea level rise, flooding, forest fires, hurricanes and the realization by some that we are on a course to irreversible global warming which will, if left unchecked, lead to the annihilation of our species and many others. But government action has been slow everywhere, resulting in loss of habitat for wild animals, increased human movement into wilderness areas and thus to more interaction between humans and wild animals such as the bat-pangolin-human viral transmission of Covid-19 in China. It is therefore to be expected that pandemics such as Covid-19 will inevitably occur again and again unless effective policy changes are made now nationally and internationally. And as history has shown from such pandemics as the Plague and the Spanish flu, these can be expected to threaten the collapse of society and profound change in economic, political and social systems.

Socioeconomic inequality has been recognized as a growing issue in many countries for decades. More recently, the devastating health effects of inequality have been identified as ‘the diseases of despair’ which include increased deaths from suicide, drug addictions and overdoses and the effects of other substances such as alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy foodstuffs. These increased deaths and a lowered life expectancy have led to declarations of an **emergency** in some jurisdictions (e.g. B.C.). As well as increased **mortality**, inequality leads to **increased morbidity** as shown by a higher prevalence of stress, depression, violence, crime, despair (including ‘climate grief’), marginalization, and social isolation. Growing inequality encompasses persistent poverty and homelessness (affecting women, men, families and children as well as particular vulnerable populations: foremost First Nations, Metis and Inuit as well as immigrant and ‘LGBTQ2S’ populations. And among the well-off, there is an increased concentration of wealth by large corporations and rich individuals. These inequalities are widely seen as being unfair and, moreover, cause worse health and quality of life for **ALL strata** of society (rich and poor) because of social disconnectedness and disintegration.



Public Health Association of British Columbia

#210 – 1027 Pandora Avenue

Victoria, BC V8V 3P6

Phone: (250) 595-8422 / Fax: (250) 595-8622

staff@phabc.org

www.phabc.org

And a consequence of growing socioeconomic inequality and the lack of governmental action on the climatic, economic, social, and health crises outlined, is the **erosion of democracy**. The now extreme concentration of wealth (and therefore power) in Canada favours the implementation of policies that are most to the advantage of the already rich such as tax policies that favour wealthy individuals and corporations and environmental policies that permit the ongoing emission of greenhouse gases to the benefit of the fossil fuel industry.

So, we have the challenge as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic crises of making a **choice**:

- return to a system that is plagued with an emerging climate disaster, persistent inequalities and declining population health OR
- Strive to create a NEW green, sustainable economy and environment where there is more fairly shared prosperity, democratic participation, health and well-being for all Canadian citizens.

For those in favour of the second, progressive option, there are proposed ways of moving forward. In Canada, a process over the past couple of years led by the Pact for a Green New Deal has culminated in a Private Member's Bill M1 (MP Peter Julian): a Green New Deal for Canada, that addresses the issues outlined above: climate change, inequality and the erosion of democracy.

On the following two pages is a proposed policy platform to support a Green New Deal for Canada. Thank you for taking the time to consider the below. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or would be interested in the support of the Public Health Association of BC to enact the platform.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Gord Miller, PhD

Acting President

Public Health Association of BC

gdmiller@uvic.ca

Shannon Turner, BA, BSc, MSc, PhD(c)

Executive Director

Public Health Association of BC

execdir@phabc.org



Policy Platform for a Green New Deal for Canada

1. A Just Transition Plan for governments:
 - A. Develop a comprehensive fiscal/carbon/budgetary plan based on simulation economic modelling and projections (including goals, metrics and deadlines, covering all steps below, taking into account tax reforms, expected revenues, expenditures, etc. over next 30 years)
 - B. Prepare the Canadian workforce for the decline in fossil-fuel industries and the loss of millions of jobs to be replaced by **millions of new green jobs**. These will include jobs in public health, health care, mental health & addictions care, child care, early childhood education, primary, secondary and university education. Create new jobs developing a **new green infrastructure** for a green economy based on renewable energy with appropriate distribution and supply lines (smart grid) along with the associated construction trades and skills training capacities. Priority assistance should be given to populations and geographic areas most affected by this transition.
 - C. Assist the disabled, the working poor and those displaced by this transition as well as those affected by automation;
 - i. Increase the minimum wage to a **living wage**
 - ii. A guaranteed **livable income**
 - iii. Increase **disability assistance rates**
 - iv. A federal **job guarantee** with a family living wage & benefits,
 - v. Increase employee/corporate **power sharing** (co-management, cooperatives, share-holding, employee ownership, union membership, etc.)
 - vi. Make adequate **housing a right**: Rent controls
 - D. Reduce economic inequality and generate revenue for the new system
 - i. **Tax reform**:
 - i. More **progressive income tax**
 - ii. A **financial transaction (Tobin) tax**
 - iii. A **progressive inheritance tax**
 - iv. **Reduce tax loopholes** - capital gains exemptions, income splitting, stock buy backs
 - v. **Close offshore tax havens** – include in international trade agreements
 - vi. Consider a **wealth tax** (with a capital endowment) when tax havens closed
 - vii. Reform **corporate taxation** – increase the carbon tax, introduce pollution and ‘externalities’ taxes (sugar, soft drinks, tobacco, alcohol, etc.), taxes on fossil fuel companies recognizing their historic contributions to global warming, reform the tax incentives for power sharing with employees
 - viii. Reform the **royalties** system for fossil fuel extraction enterprises.
 - ii. **Stop fossil fuel subsidies** and apply savings to climate change policies or demogrants
 - E. **Free Education for all ages– Kindergarten to College/University**



F. Climate Change Action and Investments in green infrastructure:

- i. Install a 'smart power grid' across Canada
- ii. Install electricity power transmission cable across the country
- iii. Install solar and wind energy generation on all public buildings and provide incentives for residential buildings
- iv. Retrofit for energy efficiency all public buildings; provide financial incentives for all residences
- v. Provide further incentives for electric vehicle purchases
- vi. Convert all government fleets (note UK will ban all fossil fuel cars as of 2035).
- vii. EV charging stations in all buildings.
- viii. Adequate renewable energy storage in all buildings.
- ix. Increase infrastructure for active transit; cycling, hiking, walking paths
- x. Free public, electrified transit
- xi. Phase out petrochemical agriculture; transition to a more plant based diet
- xii. Encourage carbon capture technology augmented with tree planting
- xiii. Water, sewage, grey water systems upgrades

G. Strengthen democracy.

- a. Introduce a proportional representation electoral system
- b. Regulate corporate and individual financial contributions to election campaigns and individual politicians.

H. International cooperation – treaties to cover fiscal (e.g. fiscal dumping, tax/wealth havens) as well as trade exchanges.

2. Role of the private/academic sector:

- a. Reform corporate function to include more employee ownership/power sharing ; coops, co-management, profit-sharing, unionization – leading to better wages and benefits and thus greater income and wealth equity ('predistribution' rather than redistribution)
- b. Remove financial barriers to information sources such as university library digital information databases.

The Result: A sustainable climate and environment, reduced socioeconomic inequality (including reduced poverty, homelessness and oppression of indigenous and other vulnerable groups) and a more healthy, democratic society.