

This submission responds to questions posed in NRCan’s [People-centred Just Transition: Discussion Paper](#) through the lens of the [Green Resilience Project](#), which was funded by Environment Canada.

The Green Resilience Project was a series of conversations that engaged over 900 people across Canada in 33 communities of varying sizes, demographics, and economic makeup. The project engaged local partners to organise and facilitate each conversation. Community partners were empowered to tailor their conversations to best reflect local contexts.

This project was managed and delivered by [Energy Mix Productions](#), [Basic Income Canada Network](#), [Coalition Canada Basic Income - Revenu de base](#), [Basic Income Canada Youth Network](#), national experts and local partners.

The [Final Report](#), [Community Summary Reports](#) (Volume B) prepared by community partners, and [Community Snapshots](#) (Volume C), which provide an overview of each community conversation, are available on the [Green Resilience Project](#) website.

Participants discussed the connections between climate change, income insecurity and community resilience and how these affect their individual and collective wellbeing. They talked about the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives and explored solutions that have the potential to build or strengthen community resilience, ensuring everyone has what they need to navigate a changing environment and economy as Canada moves toward net-zero emissions.

A wide range of viewpoints about the interactions between income security, climate change and community resilience were conveyed. Participants also expressed hope, fear, grief, and a clear sense of urgency to

implement transformative solutions that make life better for everyone.

Four main themes emerged:

1. People in Canada, especially those experiencing income insecurity or other forms of financial precarity, are increasingly exposed to climate impacts but are often unable to participate in proportionate climate solutions due to systemic barriers.
2. People want their communities to be resilient in the face of climate change and income insecurity. They are interested in solutions that make tangible improvements to their lives, including accessible and affordable locally grown food, energy efficient housing and public transportation as well as strengthened local economies, services, and infrastructure.
3. People are sceptical of their ability to take meaningful action on climate change and income insecurity because of their limited influence on structural and systemic issues. Many feel that individual actions are limited in their effectiveness and that governments are not taking sufficient action to address urgent crises of climate change, income insecurity, affordability, and inequality.
4. Communities are ready to take action but lack political and economic agency to effect the scale of change that is needed. Governments must respond to this challenge with transformative policies that address the root causes of climate change and income insecurity while empowering people and communities to take self-directed action.

Four recommendations were made to strengthen community resilience across Canada:

1. [Incorporate basic income into Canada’s plan for a just transition.](#)

A basic income guarantee creates the financial security people need to support themselves and their families. It strengthens community resilience by framing wellbeing as a collective responsibility rather than an individual one, ensuring that no one is left behind during rapid environmental and economic transition.

2. **Design income security and climate policy solutions to focus on improving individual and collective quality of life.**

People want to be part of transformative environmental and economic change but are limited by time, money, and structural barriers. Transformative policy solutions, like a basic income, must be designed to empower people and communities so that everyone can initiate self-directed action and participate more fully in collective, community-based action.

3. **Empower people and communities with the tools and resources they need to build or strengthen resilience.**

Community-level transformation must be led by communities, moving beyond models of cursory engagement or consultation. Community agency must be facilitated through appropriate and accessible policy, funding, and other forms of support. Given our history of colonialism and cultural genocide against Indigenous peoples, working toward decolonization and reconciliation for the harms inflicted by multiple institutional and individual actors is central to this work.

4. **Ensure that corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share.**

A just transition means we collectively share the responsibilities and costs of the shift to a low-carbon economy. If we are to address long-standing systemic crises like climate change, income insecurity, racial and gender inequality, and other forms of systemic oppression, we must undertake major federal tax reform.

Our Response to NRCan's People-Centred Just Recovery Discussion Paper

We applaud the government's recognition that the low- carbon transition will have varying impacts across the country and that the transition must be just, equitable and put people and communities first.

The Green Resilience Project identified the challenges people and communities face when trying to participate in climate solutions.

Transformative policies solutions, like basic income, must be in place to empower and support people and communities to take self-directed action and to participate more fully in community-based initiatives.

While NRCan's Discussion Paper recognizes that the government will need to support people through its income support systems, **it errs in its key assumption that Canada has a strong income support system. Therefore, the paper does not fully appreciate the connection between income insecurity and the capacity of individuals and communities to act on climate change.**

Canada has a suite of successful federal income transfer programs to build on. These targeted basic income-like programs have proven to reduce inequality; increase financial security, health, and well-being; and reduce both the incidence and depth of poverty in Canada.

For example, the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) acts as a basic income for families with children.¹ The CCB also provides local economic stimulus as families spend the benefit on food, shelter and transportation to meet basic needs, as well as on education, recreation and health for their children.² The Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) keep poverty rates for seniors low.³ **However, what is missing is a federal basic income program for working aged adults (18-64).**

Employment Insurance (EI) is an integral component of Canada's income security system, but the pandemic revealed how inadequate and outdated our EI system is. Precarious work and the gig economy are growing, disproportionately affecting women, racialized persons, Indigenous people, immigrants, people with disabilities, and both older and younger workers.⁴ Employed Canadians make up the majority of those living in poverty (~54%).⁵ And despite the high level of post-secondary education, only 44% of millennials have found permanent full-time employment.⁶ In 2018, only 40% of workers qualified for EI when they needed it.⁷

People without a job, EI or other sources of income can apply for provincial income assistance, but rates are below ~50% of the poverty line in most provinces.⁸ The programs are costly to operate and require obligatory interface with administrators and caseworkers, who all too frequently fail to treat recipients with dignity.⁹ Moreover, this assistance fails to encourage labour market participation by clawing back benefits at a high rate (or entirely) on every dollar earned through employment. A well-designed basic income program would ensure it always pays to work an extra hour.¹⁰

A basic income guarantee is a federally funded income-tested cash payment sent regularly to individuals from the government. An effectively designed basic income would guarantee everyone an adequate income above the poverty line, regardless of employment status, and would work in tandem with employment and social services.

A basic income can both reduce the poverty rate and guard against unexpected shocks, acting as both an economic stabilizer and an insurance policy. A basic income can stimulate the local economy,¹¹ alleviate food insecurity,¹² and address many social determinants of health¹³ and gender-based equity issues.¹⁴ A basic income can

encourage education, innovation, and entrepreneurship;¹⁵ support farmers,¹⁶ artists¹⁷ and others with precarious or intermittent work; and reward unpaid, socially valuable labour, such as family and community care.

A universally available, income-tested basic income guarantee above the poverty line would promise we can all meet our basic needs when faced with the unexpected and would support people to stay in their communities as we transition to a more secure climate future.

A federally funded Guaranteed Basic Income works in concert with other federal income transfer programs, including CCB, OAS, GIS, CPP and EI. It is part of a broad social safety net of universally available supports and services. It replaces provincially funded income assistance programs, such as welfare. It leaves no one worse off because of receiving a basic income.

Indigenous autonomy and self-determination must be respected when determining if a basic income is delivered in their communities, the principles that should govern it, and how it is designed and implemented.

Principles of a People-centred Just Transition

The link between climate change and income security should be identified within the principles.

Policies and programs that *create decent, fair, and high-value work* is, of course, of key importance. However, *being inclusive by design, addressing barriers and creating opportunities must begin by addressing the fundamental barrier of income insecurity faced by marginalized people.*

The barriers to fully participating in climate solutions are created by low income and precarious work, which leaves people with little time, money, or agency to participate in climate

solutions. These barriers are particularly felt by young adults ages 18 to 30.

All impacts from climate change are local, and so community-based leadership is important in the development and implementation of policy solutions that impact their communities.

All stakeholders are relevant. No stakeholder should be excluded from participating in the development of a strong consensus on the goals and pathways to net zero.

Thank you for this opportunity to present the findings of the Green Resilience Project and to respond to NRCan's Discussion Paper on a People-Centred Just Transition.

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- ¹ Statistics Canada. (2019). [Canadian income survey, 2017](#). The child poverty rate in Canada decreased from ~15% to ~8% between 2012 and 2018, largely due to enhanced CCB benefits.
 - ² Jones et al. (2019). [Child cash benefits and family expenditures: Evidence from the National Child Benefit](#).
 - ³ Statistics Canada. (2020). [Canadian income survey, 2018](#). Poverty rates for seniors are (~3%) significantly lower than the overall poverty rate (~9%).
 - ⁴ Ontario Basic Income Network. (2020). [Rethinking work and income security in the 21st century: The case for basic income and work](#).
 - ⁵ Forget E. (2018). *Basic income for Canadians: The key to a healthier, happier, more secure life for all*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 28.
 - ⁶ Martin JC & Lewchuk W. (2018). [The Generation Effect: Millennials, employment precarity and the 21st century workplace](#). PEPSO.
 - ⁷ Statistics Canada. (2019). [Employment insurance coverage survey, 2018](#).
 - ⁸ Maytree. (2020). [Adequacy of welfare incomes across Canada](#).
 - ⁹ Forget E. (2020). *Basic income for Canadians*, pp.27-31.
 - ¹⁰ Forget E. (2020). *Basic income for Canadians*, p.99.
 - ¹¹ Jones LE, Milligan K, & Stabile M. (2019). [Child cash benefits and family expenditures: Evidence from the National Child Benefit](#). *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue Canadienne D'économique*, 52(4), 1433–1463.
 - ¹² Ontario Basic Income Network. (2020). [Addressing food insecurity through a basic income guarantee](#).
 - ¹³ Forget E. (2020). *Basic Income for Canadians: From the COVID-19 Emergency to Financial Security for All*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 2020, pp.43-46. The 5-year Manitoba experiment in the 1970s found an 8.5% reduction in hospital visits.
 - ¹⁴ Smith-Carrier T & Halpenny C. (2020). [Basic Income: Making the case for women and gender equity](#).
 - ¹⁵ Ferdosi M, McDowell T, Lewchuk W, & Ross S. (2020). [Southern Ontario Basic Income Experience](#).
 - ¹⁶ National Farmers Union. (2019). [Tackling the farm crisis and the climate crisis](#)
 - ¹⁷ Ontario Basic Income Network. (2020). [A public letter from the arts community for a basic income guarantee](#).