

August 28, 2020

Honourable Chrystia Freeland, MP
Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0A6

Via email: Chrystia.Freeland@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Freeland,

Re: Investing in a Green and Just Recovery for Canada

Congratulations on your new role as Canada's Minister of Finance and thank you for your leadership thus far in the Government of Canada's efforts to respond to the pandemic, to protect Canadians, and to manage the economic consequences of placing priority on public health and community safety.

We are very encouraged by the Prime Minister's statements on World Environment Day this year recognizing the need for a green economic recovery from the pandemic that addresses the related existential threats of climate change and loss of biodiversity. Likewise, we strongly support your own statements last week that Canada's pandemic recovery plan must be green, equitable, and inclusive. Further, we urge you to recognize that the short-term reduction in pollution that occurred during the pandemic shutdown was illusory. Pollution levels are rising again and the worldwide increase in disposable masks, gloves, etc., has made the global crisis of plastic pollution even worse.

As you now work on Canada's recovery plan we urge you to align stimulus investments and other recovery measures with environmental and justice priorities. Canada must become more resilient to the environmental and public health emergencies that are threats as serious as the pandemic - climate change, biodiversity loss, plastic pollution – and therein we must address growing inequality. Fortunately, the solutions to these crises are rapidly emerging and your policy choices right now are a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a sustainable, resilient, and equitable future.

Recovery from the pandemic must include investments, as leading economists have demonstrated, in stimulus programs that create more jobs and green infrastructure for long-term benefit and that avoid reinvestment in polluting industries like oil and plastics. As a member of the Green Budget Coalition (GBC), we have recently submitted a summary of [preliminary recommendations](#) to the pre-budget consultations held by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. The GBC's work this year, to be finalized next month, lays out multiple recommendations for restarting the Canadian economy in a manner that will create thousands of

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jobs via stimulus investments to boost clean transportation and retrofit buildings alongside many nature-based climate solutions and the creation and management of protected areas, including Indigenous protected areas and Guardians programs.

In summary, a green and just recovery for Canada means above all, investing in a society that places people's health and the well-being of natural ecosystems that sustain all species above corporate profits. That means that any investments made cannot set environmental progress back, undermine environmental justice, or be incompatible with Canada's environmental commitments.

A green recovery for Canada means investing in:

- A just transition to a sustainable low-carbon economy
- The protection and restoration of land, freshwater, and ocean ecosystems along with the wildlife that call these places home
- An end to the use of single-use plastics, and the growth of a circular economy
- The replacement of toxic chemicals used in agricultural, consumer goods and manufacturing with safer alternatives
- The development of accessible, affordable and healthy communities and transportation networks
- A future that prioritizes social and racial justice, economic equity, and well-being, built in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and the communities most exposed to environmental harm

We look forward to your continued leadership in making a green and just recovery a reality for Canada.

Yours truly,

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION



Theresa McClenaghan
Executive Director and Counsel

***About CELA:** The Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) is a non-profit, public interest organization and legal aid clinic established in 1970 to use existing laws to protect the environment and to advocate environmental law reforms. CELA works toward protecting public health and the environment by seeking justice for those harmed by pollution or poor decision-making and by changing policies to prevent problems in the first place. As a specialty clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario, our primary focus is on assisting low-income people and disadvantaged communities.*