

CAPE's Healthy Recovery Plan

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister Hadju, Minister Wilkinson and Minister Freeland;

There is much to be proud of in Canada's response to the coronavirus pandemic. Our public, our healthcare system, our public health system, and our governments have worked together to make courageous and challenging decisions that prioritize health, save lives, and keep people safe.

As you prepare to invest in a stimulus package to spur economic recovery from the pandemic, you again have the opportunity to prioritize the health and safety of everyone in Canada. You can create jobs and save lives by investing in a healthy recovery.

In May, organizations representing 40 million healthcare workers worldwide - two-thirds of the global workforce -- supported an open letter addressed to G20 leaders, calling on them to create a green and healthy recovery in order to support people through COVID-19 and its economic fallout, and to prevent further crises related to climate change and planetary decline. Hundreds of civil society organizations in Canada are calling for a just recovery that prioritizes people's health and well being without exception, and builds resilience to prevent future crises.

The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment have produced a report, which we endorse, that represents a Made-in-Canada set of recommendations based on this call to action.

This report includes 25 recommendations for upcoming federal fiscal stimulus spending, along with supporting regulatory measures, that protect human health through ridding Canada's economy of greenhouse gas emissions, in line with Canada's emissions reduction commitments. As you know, under the Paris Agreement, Canada committed to reducing its GHG emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. The Canadian government has also said we will achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

This report provides a path to meet those targets, through investments in renewable energy, sustainable transportation, sustainable homes and buildings, sustainable healthcare, and protecting and connecting to nature.

Modelling in the report prepared by Navius Research shows that if Canada meets its climate targets, air quality improvements alone will save an estimated 112,081 lives between 2030 and 2050. Actions taken to meet these targets would also improve and protect health through reductions in heat related illness, improved physical activity levels, mental health benefits, and avoidance of the most extreme climate health impacts.

Meeting our Paris Agreement targets is also the right thing to do for our economy. Navius Research modelling shows that by meeting our targets, Canadian clean jobs will increase from 210,000 full-time equivalent positions in 2020 to 1.5 million in 2050.

If we are going to protect health, we must take action on climate change. The World Health Organization tells us that climate change is the biggest health threat of the 21st century, and a recent UNICEF-Lancet-WHO Future Child Commission says that wealthy countries threaten every child's future through their contributions to climate change. This includes children in Canada who will face wildfires, flooding, heatwaves, and illnesses not frequently seen in Canada, like Lyme disease, as the planet warms. The Future Child Commission currently ranks Canada 170th out of 180 in terms of sustainability. By acting now, we can build back better to create a safe and healthy future for our children.

Indigenous Peoples have been leaders on adaptation, mitigation, and living reciprocally with the Earth for thousands of years. In what is currently known as Canada, they have seen, and will continue to see disproportionate negative impacts of climate change, despite contributing the least to climate change. At the same time, historical and ongoing legacies of land dispossession, colonization, and systemic racism have led to inequitable health and socio-economic outcomes felt by Indigenous Peoples. When considering 'recovery', these experiences and lived reality must be considered as a priority in order to foster equitable, positive, and self-determined health and wellness outcomes for Indigenous Peoples. A truly Healthy Recovery must include investments that create healthy communities, stimulate Indigenous-led economies, and protect land, waters, and ice, while simultaneously addressing the chronic underfunding of Indigenous health systems. Recovery plans and by extension climate policy, including energy policy, must respect, protect, and safeguard Indigenous rights, including those affirmed in the minimum standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated pre-existing challenges to Canadian health, healthcare systems, our economy, and our society. And yet, amidst the tragedy and disruption is the opportunity to create the world as we need it to be post-pandemic.

This is a critical moment to invest in the health of all people building a green and just future. We have the plan to decarbonize, save lives, and create jobs.

We need your political leadership to make this vision our reality.

Signed,

Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux

Alliance for Healthier Communities

Canadian Association of Nurses for the Environment

Canadian Federation of Medical Students

Canadian Medical Association

Canadian Physiotherapy Association

Canadian Public Health Association

Canadian Society for International Health

Collège québécois des médecins de famille (CQMF)

Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec (FIQ)

Fédération médicale étudiante du Québec (FMEQ)

Generation Squeeze

HealthCareCAN

IFMSA-Québec

Jeunes médecins pour la santé publique (JMPSP)

Ontario Public Health Association

La planète s'invite en santé

Young Physicians for Public Health (YPPH)