

March 12, 2021

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: Canada's COVID Recovery Budget - Investing in a Green and Just Recovery

We remain heartened and encouraged by recent commitments made in the federal Throne Speech, the Fall Economic Statement, and the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, all of which speak to achieving a pandemic recovery plan that must be green, equitable, and inclusive.

As you now turn to the federal budget, we urge you to make good on these commitments with detailed and specific investments that will truly enable Canada to “build back better” from the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought existing social inequities into sharp relief with disadvantaged, racialized, and vulnerable communities disproportionately impacted by the virus and its economic and social consequences. These same communities are likewise disproportionately impacted by pollution, climate change, and resource extraction.

Fortunately, the solutions to these crises are rapidly emerging and your investment choices right now are a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a sustainable, resilient, and equitable future.

As an immediate first step, we recommend investment in an Office of Environmental Health Equity to assess these impacts and to champion the integration of environmental health equity across the federal government.

We further urge you to align stimulus investments and other recovery measures with environmental and justice priorities. This 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.

Any investments made cannot set back environmental progress, undermine environmental justice, or be incompatible with Canada's environmental commitments.

A green recovery for Canada means investing in:

- Ending fossil fuels subsidies and shifting spending to a Green and Just Recovery
- Protecting 25% of land and ocean by 2025 and supporting Indigenous-led conservation
- Expanding and leveraging nature-based climate solutions

The situation is urgent. The federal government needs to deliver on its promise of building a Canada that is equitable, green, healthy, and innovative. These promises require sufficient funds invested in the right initiatives, with clear deadlines and accountability. We look forward to your continued leadership in making a green and just recovery a reality for Canada.

Yours truly,

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theresa McClenaghan', written in a cursive style.

Theresa McClenaghan
Executive Director and Senior 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.*