

# Rebuilding BC: A Portfolio of Possibilities

*Employ up to 30,000 young people as Recovery Rangers to help with BC's economic recovery*

*Secure BC's food supply by supporting farm employment and increasing land use*

*Create jobs and reduce carbon emissions through programs that support large scale retrofitting of buildings*

*Generate employment through construction of new affordable housing, including modular construction for the homeless, by an expanded and more effective non-profit sector*

GTEC Council for a  
Green New Economy

May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Revised July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020

## What People are Saying about Rebuilding BC

**“Rebuilding BC** is a treasure trove of inspirational and pragmatic solutions for building a better, fair, safe, clean future for all. I hope they will influence our future, and the ecosystems we need for a thriving future.”

**JOEL SOLOMON**

Founding Partner, Renewal Funds; Senior Advisor with RSF Social Finance

“The COVID-19 lockdown not only gave nature a chance to recover from the human onslaught, we had to slow down and think about what really matters. We must not try to go back to business-as-usual pre-COVID-19. We have to use the crisis as an opportunity to move to a real path of balance and sustainability. **Rebuilding BC** is just such a blueprint, a chance to get it right. We must not ignore it.”

**DAVID SUZUKI**

Grandfather

**“Rebuilding BC** contains a host of terrific ideas – policy recommendations well worth our government considering and implementing. These are the kinds of policy innovations, grounded in justice and the climate emergency, that we need right now.”

**SETH KLEIN**

Writer and Policy Analyst

**“Rebuilding BC: A Portfolio of Possibilities** is a comprehensive and compelling proposal for our Province. Packed with concrete actions to build back better with real gains in housing, jobs, thriving communities and businesses.”

**ELIZABETH SHEEHAN**

Co-founder and President, Climate Smart Businesses

“The **Rebuilding of B.C.: A Portfolio of Possibilities** sets out just the kind of creative, practical and achievable blue-print for focussed change that is needed here and now to address the converging crises of the COVID 19 Pandemic and climate change. It originates from highly knowledgeable people who are deeply versed in the best of policies and programs from around the world that are making a difference.”

**MICHAEL CLAGUE, C.M.**

President, Community Arts Council of Vancouver; Order of Canada

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May 27th, 2020

## Rebuilding BC: A Portfolio of Possibilities

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thank you for the leadership you have provided to the people of BC during the pandemic. We know that it has required endless hours of hard work and sleepless nights.

At this point we face a new challenge together: as well as developing health and safety protocols for a safe return to work, BC needs to develop an economic stimulus plan to get the economy going and restore consumer, business and investor confidence. We are pleased to offer this Portfolio of Possibilities to contribute to thinking about a successful economic recovery.

In preparing our Portfolio, the GTEC Council for a Green New Economy has been mindful that as many as 400,000 British Columbians may face unemployment during the recovery period, as well as the uncertainty the pandemic has brought to the economy and our way of life. At the same time, we are aware of the larger climate crisis of which the pandemic is a foretaste. Extensive data shows that compared to traditional stimulus measures, green projects such as improving energy efficiency can create more jobs, deliver higher short-term returns and generate increased long-term cost savings.

Our Portfolio is based on principles that combine rapid cost-effective stimulus measures with concern for the public good and responding to the climate crisis. These principles can be used as a scorecard for proposed stimulus initiatives.

#### **GTEC Council for a Green New Economy:**

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## Our Key Recommendations:

1. Establish a Resilient Recovery Action Team to guide recovery in a way that contributes to building a more just, resilient and sustainable economy.
2. Create 30,000 jobs for young people as five types of 'Recovery Ranger': 5,000 Retrofit Rangers, 5,000 Farm Rangers, 5,000 Restoration Rangers, 10,000 Urban Rangers and 5,000 Climate Rangers.
3. Invest in mass deep, neighbourhood-scale building retrofits.
4. Support non-profit societies to accelerate the construction of affordable housing.
5. Increase BC's food supply by removing the barriers that discourage young people from farming.
6. Encourage advanced cleantech green manufacturing.
7. Improve air quality by investing in pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and accelerating the electrification of transportation.
8. Work with forest-concerned stakeholders to increase the number of jobs generated per cubic metre of timber.

## Subject Matter Consultants :

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## Conclusion

Having established British Columbia as an international leader in managing the COVID-19 public health crisis, we now have the opportunity to establish the province as a leader in bringing about a recovery that enables BC to build a more just, resilient and sustainable economy.

We acknowledge that we live, work, and play on the unceded traditional and ancestral homelands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sel̓ilwítulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

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# REBUILDING BC: A PORTFOLIO OF POSSIBILITIES

## Introduction

The GTEC Council for a Green New Economy is a group of economists and others who share the public's concern about the future of BC's economy. The Council's work is supported by a circle of subject matter consultants and the Board of Directors of the Green Technology Education Centre (GTEC).

Our report offers a set of principles for use as a scorecard in evaluating proposals, and 24 proposals, organized by the Ministry responsible.

Many of the GTEC Council's proposals are aligned with recommendations from BC's Emerging Economy Task Force, including:

- Strengthen the ecosystem for innovation, commercialization and scale-up of companies.
- Capitalize on B.C.'s vertically integrated, clean power advantage.
- Take advantage of growing global demand for green economy products and services.
- Capitalize on opportunities presented by the circular economy.
- Address the risks and opportunities associated with climate and sustainability trends that will affect B.C.'s economy and communities.
- Ensure the British Columbia Government and its public sector organizations are leaders in sustainable operations.
- Support an integrated planning approach to future economic, environmental and social trends, with a focus on B.C.'s major economic hubs.
- Ensure the security of B.C.'s future food supply in the face of climate change impacts.
- Redefine how economic performance is measured in British Columbia.
- Establish data and metrics of the Indigenous economic impact to the broader B.C. economy and set growth targets for Indigenous economic inclusion.
- Leverage public sector strategic procurement to drive B.C.'s emerging economy.
- Use the leadership of the public sector to continuously assess and prepare for B.C.'s future economy. <sup>(See Footnote 1)</sup>

While acknowledging the essential work of the Economic Recovery Task Force, we recommend the formation of a separate and distinct **Resilient Recovery Action Team** to engage in a rapid consultation with businesses, workers, unions, environmental leaders, affordable housing leaders, youth leaders and others on how an economic recovery could happen in ways that will build a more just, resilient and sustainable British Columbia.

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<sup>1</sup> Emerging Economy Task Force Report: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/employment-business-and-economic-development/economic-development/emerging-economy-task-force/eetf-final\\_report-20200511-final.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/employment-business-and-economic-development/economic-development/emerging-economy-task-force/eetf-final_report-20200511-final.pdf)

An Ipsos survey of 14 countries found that 61% of Canadians want action on the climate emergency to be prioritised in a green economic recovery. <sup>(See Footnote 2)</sup> We suspect that the percentage may be even higher in British Columbia.

What kind of stimulus measures work best to restore a battered economy? In May 2020 five leading scholars from the Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment including Sir Nicholas Stern and Joseph Stiglitz considered whether COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages would accelerate or retard progress on climate change. <sup>(See Footnote 3)</sup> They surveyed 231 central bank officials, finance ministry officials and other economic experts from G20 countries on the relative performance of 25 major fiscal recovery archetypes, identifying five policies that score high on both economic multiplier and climate impact metrics:

- Investments in clean physical infrastructure
- Investments in building efficiency retrofit
- Investments in education and training
- Investments in natural capital investment (soils, farms, forests and oceans)
- Investments in clean R&D.

On May 26th 2020, doctors and medical professionals from around the globe called on world leaders to ensure a green recovery that takes account of air pollution and climate breakdown. More than 200 organisations representing 40 million health workers – about half the global medical workforce – signed an open letter to the G20 leaders and their chief medical advisers, pointing to the 7 million premature deaths to which air pollution contributes each year around the world. The signatories include the World Medical Association, the International Council of Nurses, the Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation, the World Organization of Family Doctors, the World Federation of Public Health Associations, and thousands of individual health professionals. <sup>(See Footnote 4)</sup>

Although much is still unknown, it is possible that we may be entering a prolonged multi-year depression, exacerbated by high pre-pandemic levels of private and corporate debt, rather than a six-month recession followed by a quick economic recovery. The merit of using targeted investments to finance solutions to the climate emergency and the affordable housing crisis as a means to recovery is that they pump money into the grassroots of the economy as wages and purchases, strengthening long-term aggregate demand. Such investments, sold as Climate Action Bonds or Affordable Housing Bonds, can also reduce future private and government costs, enabling a return on the investment.

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<sup>2</sup> Ipsos survey: <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/two-thirds-britons-believe-climate-change-serious-coronavirus-and-majority-want-climate-prioritised>

<sup>3</sup> Oxford Smith School: <https://www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/publications/wpapers/workingpaper20-02.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> World health leaders: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/26/world-health-leaders-urge-green-recovery-from-coronavirus-crisis>



## **Eight Principles for Economic Recovery**

We suggest the following principles to guide BC's COVID-19 recovery efforts and be used to score proposed stimulus initiatives:

1. Does it prioritize the public good and support efforts to build a more just, ecologically sustainable and resilient society by tackling urgent concerns such as the climate emergency, the biodiversity emergency and the affordable housing crisis?
2. Does it strengthen areas of supply chain vulnerability such as local food production and the manufacture of essential medical goods, while providing secure employment and pay for essential service workers?
3. Does it advance the need to develop sustainable business practices and products, and a circular economy with zero waste?
4. Does it create numerous training and job opportunities for those who are unemployed, particularly for young people who are looking at a very worrying future in a depressed economy?
5. Does it support BC's most vulnerable people, including seniors, members of First Nations, the homeless, the unemployed, migrant farm workers, single parents, and those who live below the poverty line?
6. Is it a practical, cost-effective way to achieve rapid results?
7. Does it engage human and community agency, and the public's desire to participate in a green recovery?
8. Does it require any benefiting business to commit to pay any taxes that have been avoided by means of an offshore bank or tax haven?

## **Support for Indigenous Communities**

The GTEC Council would like to voice its support for Indigenous Reconciliation and measures to include Indigenous communities in BC's economic recovery. In consultation with BC Indigenous leaders GTEC would like to encourage the BC government to operationalize its support for UNDRIP especially in relation to lands and resources issues.

## Recommendations by Ministry:

### Proposals for Cabinet

#### 1. Establish a Resilient Recovery Action Team

We recommend that the government:

- Establish a **Resilient Recovery Action Team** and charge it with developing a Resilient Recovery Plan, including stimulus measures such as those described below that create jobs and restore consumer, business and investor confidence while steering BC towards becoming a more just, sustainable, resilient society. Such an Action Team is critically needed. It will not duplicate the work being done by the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force, and it will build on work done by the Emerging Economy Task Force.

#### 2. Leverage ‘Doughnut Economy’ Thinking for Recovery Planning

The City of Amsterdam has chosen to use the British economist Kate Raworth’s model based on her best-selling book *Doughnut Economics: 7 Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist* to guide its recovery, moving her work from the realm of theory into practical reality. <sup>(See Footnote 5)</sup>

The adoption of such a model could guide BC to a future in which all British Columbians thrive within our natural habitat, while respecting the health of the planet and the wellbeing of people worldwide and strengthening the status of BC as a global leader and innovator.

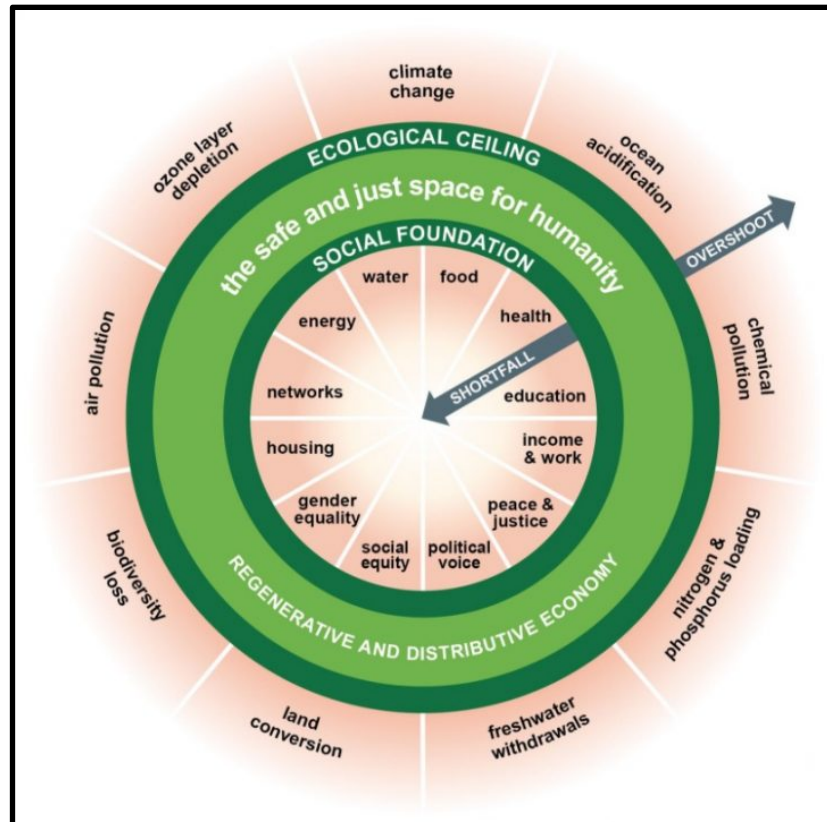
We recommend that the government:

- Use measures broader than GDP to guide genuine progress, as recommended by the Emerging Economy Task Force, enabling the government to lead BC towards greater social, economic and ecological well-being, as well as economic prosperity. <sup>(See Footnote 6)</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Amsterdam: <https://www.kateraworth.com/2020/04/08/amsterdam-city-doughnut/>

<sup>6</sup> Emerging Economy Task Force Report: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/employment-business-and-economic-development/economic-development/emerging-economy-task-force/eetf-final\\_report-20200511-final.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/employment-business-and-economic-development/economic-development/emerging-economy-task-force/eetf-final_report-20200511-final.pdf)



### 3. Impose Financial Support and Bail-out Conditions

Whenever government grants or loans are provided to business, we recommend that the following conditions be put in place, that:

1. Companies must have significant operations and employees in BC.
2. Companies must demonstrate that they have paid all relevant taxes. If they have used offshore accounts in tax havens to reduce or avoid paying taxes, an arrangement must be made to ensure that the avoided taxes are paid as a condition of receiving assistance.
3. Companies must demonstrate that they have active measurable plans to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.
4. Companies must not be involved in an active insolvency agreement.
5. Grants or loans should not be used for executive pay, bonuses, share-buyback schemes or shareholder dividends.
6. If large bail-outs are not repaid within a year, the government should have the right to take an equity-stake in the company, and to appoint members to the company board.
7. These conditions should be public, with proper oversight and annual reporting on how they are being met.

# Proposal for the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources

## 4. Complete 30,000 Home Retrofits a Year

BC's buildings generate 11% of BC's carbon pollution. In some cities such as Vancouver the percentage of emissions is much higher. At the current slow rate of retrofits we will not achieve the reduction of oil and gas heat needed to meet our CleanBC climate targets. To meet them for buildings, the Pembina Institute reports that *every year* between 2020 and 2050 BC will need to retrofit:

- 30,000 houses
- 17,000 apartments
- 3 million square feet of commercial space. (See Footnote 7)

Every dollar spent on energy-efficiency programs generates between \$4-\$8 of gross domestic product, and industry data suggests that every \$1 million invested supports 20 jobs (direct, indirect and induced). There are tens of thousands of jobs that could be created if BC were to adopt a determined approach to achieving mass deep zero-carbon retrofits, accelerating Efficiency BC's and BetterHomes BC's current initiatives.

We thank the Home Performance Stakeholders Council for their draft thoughts supporting some of these recommendations. (See Footnote 8) We recommend that the government:

### Retrofit Foundations

1. Form a Retrofit Partnership to generate rapid results, aiming at mass, deep neighbourhood-scale retrofits that reduce energy demand and eliminate all use of oil, gas and wood for heating and hot water by 2030 through the installation of air-source, ground-source or water-source heat pumps.
2. Legislate the phase-out of all oil furnaces by 2025 and all gas furnaces and heaters by 2030, followed by an annually-increasing Climate Danger Levy on their continued use.
3. Fund municipalities and non-profits such as Lighthouse to operate Green Buildings Hubs, creating a one-stop-shop staffed by trained advisors to offer all the information and guidance that building-owners need.
4. Engage municipalities, community associations, non-profits and building retrofit contractors in developing localized plans for mass deep retrofits, scaling up demand,

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<sup>7</sup> Pembina: <https://www.pembina.org/op-ed/retrofit-existing-buildings>

<sup>8</sup> Home Performance Stakeholders Council: [http://www.homeperformance.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Pre-Presentation\\_Content\\_HPSC\\_Financial\\_Stimulus\\_Options\\_4May2020.docx.pdf](http://www.homeperformance.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Pre-Presentation_Content_HPSC_Financial_Stimulus_Options_4May2020.docx.pdf)



increasing performance efficiency, and reducing costs through the aggregation of projects, logistics and financial support.

5. Work with Indigenous Services Canada:

- To allow PAYS financing for retrofits done by First Nations social enterprises.
- Accelerate the contribution of BC's First Nations Clean Energy Business Fund by providing Renewable Energy Capacity Building Grants to First Nations and removing barriers to the approval of community-based and social enterprise contracts and investments. Winnipeg has produced successful examples of First Nations social enterprises that BC can learn from, doing home retrofits and installing geothermal heating systems.

6. Increase the carbon tax by \$30 a year, coupled with continuing rebates and programs enabling people and businesses to make the transition to renewable energy. Modelling by Canada's Ecofiscal Commission shows that we need to increase the tax to \$210 per tonne by 2030 to meet our GHG reduction target.

### **Retrofit Training**

7. Establish a Mass Deep Retrofits Training Consortium led by the Home Performance Stakeholders Council, with representatives from industry, universities and colleges, and charge it to:

- Increase contractor training, accelerating the use of on-line training tools,
- Fast-track the development of a BC Retrofit Code, ensuring that it emphasises deep retrofits to zero carbon, not shallow retrofits that required continued use of oil and gas for heat;
- Grow a qualified workforce, including a wider demographic that includes youth, women, indigenous people and new Canadians.

8. Offer a Course Development Grant to the Consortium, seeking a rapid response for use in colleges and on-line training courses.

9. Work with BC's colleges to train 5,000 people to become Retrofit Rangers, acquiring the skills needed to implement all components of a deep building retrofit. All Rangers would:

- Have nine months free college training with guaranteed personal income, followed by application to join a local retrofit business.
- Once trained, be encouraged to apply for jobs with building retrofit companies.
- Be invited to become members of Retrofit Rangers Democracy, electing delegates to a Retrofit Rangers Democracy Council for discussion of experiences, forwarding recommendations to a monthly joint meeting with participating businesses.
- All participating businesses would be invited to become members of a Retrofit Rangers Cooperative, electing delegates for a monthly meeting with the Recovery Rangers.

10. Work with the federal government to permit faster and easier licensing for immigrant engineers.

### **Retrofit Preparation**

11. Provide business development loans to help retrofit companies and contractors ramp up their activities.
12. Work with the federal government to complete BC's ongoing work to require every building listed for sale to carry an Energy Benchmarking Label to indicate its level of energy performance. <sup>(See Footnote 9)</sup>
13. Revise condo strata title legislation to make it easy for condo owners to invest in a retrofit.
14. Enact Tenants Renovation Security legislation to ensure that if tenants need to live elsewhere during a retrofit, their landlords will work with their municipal government to ensure that alternative rental arrangements are available, and to honour their post-retrofit tenancy at the same rent.
15. Work with the federal government to fast-track R&D in innovative retrofit products and demonstration projects, and the commercialization and certification of innovative technologies.

### **Retrofit Engagement**

16. Fund a province-wide home retrofit campaign to stimulate consumer demand.
17. Offer every homeowner and landlord a free or low-cost Energy Audit and follow-up visit.
18. Empower utilities and landlords to contract with Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) and social enterprises to do building retrofits, financed through energy savings, with estimates for future financial energy savings being protected by insurance.

### **Retrofit Financing**

19. Create a BC tax credit for zero-carbon retrofit investments.
20. Work with the federal government to accelerate the promised retrofit loans of \$40,000 or more, and to offer a federal tax credit for retrofit investments, similar to the provincial government's past LiveSmartBC initiative.
21. Cease funding rebates for 'low-hanging fruit' retrofits that do not eliminate the need for oil or gas heating, since most homeowners will be understandably reluctant to have to undertake a second retrofit.
22. Increase rebates and waive PST on retrofit components such as heat pumps, insulation, windows, air sealing and heat recovery ventilators.
23. Work with BC banks and credit unions to ensure that home retrofits can be easily financed through the use of a home equity line of credit.

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<sup>9</sup> Benchmarking; <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/energy/efficiency/buildings/energy-benchmarking/21424>

24. Work with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to establish a legal framework for 100% Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing, enabling retrofit loans to be repaid by a charge on property tax that runs with the property, not the owner.
25. Relax the mortgage test rules for zero-carbon homes with lower heating bills.
26. Work with the federal government to allow homeowners to invest up to \$25,000 of their RRSPs tax free in a zero-carbon retrofit, and to repay the investment through PAYS or PACE financing over 15 years.
27. On the premise that most mobile homes are not worth retrofitting, work with CMHC to create zero-interest loans to enable BC's mobile home owners to replace them with zero-net-energy modular homes.
28. Offer District Heat development grants and implementation loans to enable BC municipalities to develop renewable energy district heat systems for high density residential and commercial developments, as many European cities are doing.
29. Offer Industrial, Commercial and Institutional Building Retrofit Loans to assist such owners.

## **Proposals for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing**

### **5. Help Non-Profit Societies to Build Affordable and Sustainable Housing**

The construction of more affordable housing is an ideal COVID-19 recovery investment, since BC has a dire need for more affordable housing. We know, however, that there will be many demands on public dollars. The solutions offered below are focussed on the use of capital in the most impactful areas, leveraging the investment to deliver more affordable housing and to make that housing as energy efficient as possible.

The province's 30-Point Housing Plan calls for the delivery of 114,000 homes over 10 years. The National Housing Strategy seeks to move 530,000 families out of housing need, renovate 300,000 homes and build 125,000 new homes.

We also have a chronic problem of homelessness. The 2019 Vancouver homeless count found 2,200 people who were homeless, a number that has not changed since 2018 even though the City has created 600 temporary modular supported homes.

Our proposal is focused on accelerating the construction of new affordable, high efficiency homes that provide an exceptional living environment, are extremely high performing and cost substantially less to operate. Development of affordable housing that is focused on significantly decreasing GHG emissions will support the Province's target of all new buildings being net-zero energy ready by 2032.

The financial tools needed are capital grants, flexible low-cost lending facilities, and operating funding for support services associated with housing for multiple-barriered residents.

The delivery mechanisms are critical: we recommend ramping up support to build real estate, development and operational capacity in the non-profit sector, so that the sector can become more resilient and financially sustainable.

While the private sector is the best delivery vehicle for market rental and ownership housing, it is more cost-effective to build affordable housing in partnership with BC's non-profits, since they remove profit from the equation. In addition, non-profit community-focussed ownership ensures long-term affordability, as mortgages are paid down and rents increase only to cover costs.

We therefore recommend that the government:

1. Establish a Community Capacity Building Fund to enable BC's strong non-profit sector to expand its ability to use its existing assets to deliver more affordable and sustainable housing. These assets are already available and in community ownership, but are untapped due to lack of capacity. Non-profits will be accountable for the funding received, but the support must be geared to enable a non-profit to be more autonomous and to be able to build its organisational and financial strength and independence.
2. Expand existing provincial affordable housing development grants, such as the Community Housing Fund. These capital grants should however be focused at the deeper affordable end of the housing continuum, and not used to build moderate income housing that can be delivered by other financial means.
3. Do not sell publicly-owned land to the market, but lease it to non-profit housing developers to build affordable rental housing, since non-market land is a valuable community asset that needs protecting.
4. Offer non-profits and churches inexpensive very-long-term financing, enabling them to develop projects without having to sell their land to market developers. The province could provide the financing with appropriate governance and accountability procedures, by leveraging its access to low-cost borrowing, rather than having to provide capital grants.
5. Create a pool of low/no cost loan funds, enabling non-profit affordable housing projects to move from feasibility to construction, at which stage the above financing can be accessed to repay the bridge funds.
6. Work with BC's colleges to ramp up building trades training to meet the increased demand, including green building technical training.
7. Waive Property Transfer Tax on lands purchased by non-profits for affordable housing.
8. Ask the federal government (a) to expand its National Housing Strategy related programs, (b) to waive GST on completed affordable rental housing projects, and (c) to



overhaul the outdated charitable tax laws, enabling charities to develop and own below-market rental housing, which they are currently restricted from doing, preventing them from developing mixed-income projects.

9. Consult with the BCGEU to implement further proposals forwarded in their report *Building an Affordable BC* (2017).
10. Tackle homelessness. Provincially funded temporary modular housing projects in Vancouver and other municipalities have been highly effective. In Vancouver they quickly added 600 homes including funding for 24/7 support services. The Vancouver homeless count is still increasing, however, so there is still significant need. We recommend that the temporary modular housing program (including mental health supports) be scaled up dramatically. The larger strategy, however, must be to move people into safe long-term affordable housing, particularly for parents with children.

## Proposals for the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

### 6. Hire 30,000 Recovery Rangers

COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting Canada's youth, causing record levels of unemployment, reduced working hours and limited access to the labour market, and causing young people to fear for their future.

In April 2020 there were 276,000 unemployed people in BC (11.5%), compared to 121,000 (4.5%) in April 2019 (35,000 aged 15-24; 45,000 aged 24-44; 42,000 aged 44-64).

The age-group breakdown was not available at the time of writing, but available data suggests that in April 2020 there may have been:

- 89,000 unemployed people aged 15-24
- 115,000 unemployed people aged 24-44
- 107,000 unemployed people aged 44 to 64.

We commend our governments' quick actions to address people's financial needs, but we face the danger of an entire lost generation of young people. In 1933, when US President Franklin Roosevelt faced the same danger his government created the Civilian Conservation Corps, hiring young unemployed men to work on projects in forestry, soil conservation and recreation. By 1942, the 3.4 million participants in 'Roosevelt's Tree Army' had planted more than three billion trees, built hundreds of parks and wildlife refuges and completed thousands of miles of trails and roads. Since BC's population of 4.7 million today is 27 times less than America's population of 125 million in 1933, the equivalent initiative today would see 100,000 such jobs being created.

On May 18th 2020, Collin O'Mara, president and C.E.O. of the National Wildlife Federation, wrote in the New York Times that "Smart investments in natural solutions (in the US) could create millions of immediate jobs for the demographic groups and regions acutely affected by the downturn. One study found that restoration jobs support up to 33 jobs per \$1 million of investment, which can stimulate economic growth and employment in other industries. Those that would stand to benefit include outdoor recreation, agriculture, forestry and ranching, which have been hit hard by the pandemic." (See Footnote 10)

In addition to providing jobs, the Ranger opportunities would strengthen young people's mental health, giving them a way to contribute to society and a chance to work and learn in their areas of interest, fostering independence.

Given the urgent need for young people to take their place in BC's workforce, where they can develop their skills, earn a living and contribute to BC's progress as a society, we recommend that the government:

1. Establish an on-line **Youth Rangers Advisory Council** to work with the government to consider and polish the proposals below, seeking rapid results.
2. Create 30,000 government-paid jobs as **Recovery Rangers**:
  - 5,000 Retrofit Rangers
  - 5,000 Farm Rangers
  - 5,000 Restoration Rangers
  - 10,000 Urban Rangers
  - 5,000 Climate Rangers

The details are in the appropriate sections below. The Recovery Ranger jobs would all be:

- Created and managed by existing businesses and non-profit societies.
- Include positions for adult management, youth leaders and guidance counsellors.
- Include training and personal purpose guidance for the Rangers.
- Include representative democracy to ensure that the Rangers' voices are heard;
- Offer additional support for unemployed at-risk youth;
- Not at the expense of existing paid jobs;
- Administered through a single agency, ensuring proper coordination, oversight and evaluation.

The initiative would need to be overseen by a social enterprise, reporting to Cabinet. The social enterprise would need to be chosen for its ability to operate quickly and effectively, with a volunteer community board including representatives from each of the five realms of work.

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<sup>10</sup> New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/18/opinion/coronavirus-unemployment-youth.html>

The government would need to provide grants enabling qualifying non-profits to hire managers to train, mentor and manage the Rangers, and to cover reasonable costs. Any remaining vacancies would be earmarked for adults who have been unemployed for 6 months or longer.

3. Establish **Regional Youth Ranger Hubs** in partnership with social enterprises and non-profit organizations such as Vantage Point in Vancouver and Volunteer Victoria to address the difficulty young people report experiencing in accessing information about paid and voluntary positions. Paid staff in the Hubs would:
  - Receive online training to enable them to help young people explore their options
  - Work with young people on the phone or by Zoom to help them secure a suitable paid internship, Recovery Ranger position, or voluntary opportunity.
  - Work with employers to help them create internships and summer jobs.
  - Work with non-profits to help them create Recovery Ranger jobs, including mentorship and management.
  - Use social media to spread awareness of the new opportunities.
4. Fund a paid **Youth Internship Program** for this summer, offering skills development, mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities for youth, with preferential treatment for at-risk youth. We further recommend that the government:
  - Work with the federal government to dramatically expand Canada's summer student employment program, or rapidly develop a provincial equivalent.
  - Pay 100% of an Intern's wages for the first month, on condition that the employer provides 5 hours a week of one-on-one or small group mentoring.
  - Limit the number of summer jobs allowed per business or non-profit to ensure that they are not used to replace regular staff but as opportunities for youth to learn.
  - Set sector-specific goals to encourage work experience in a variety of fields.
5. Create jobs for 10,000 **Urban Rangers** to help non-profit organizations with urban, social care and arts projects.
  - Jobs could include social care, childcare, helping seniors, urban environmental work, community arts, helping people with disabilities, COVID-19 Community Mutual Aid.
  - Online training would be offered by each participating organization, followed by a commitment to continued on-site training, mentorship and management.
  - All Urban Rangers would be invited to become members of Urban Rangers Democracy, electing members to an Urban Rangers Democracy Council, for discussion of experiences, forwarding recommendations to a monthly joint meeting with participating organizations to share best practices and achieve the best results.

- All participating organizations would be invited to become members of an Urban Rangers Cooperative, electing delegates for a monthly meeting with the Urban Rangers.

## 7. Reduce Poverty and Vulnerability

The pandemic is showing us that the most vulnerable members of our community are at greater risk of contracting the virus due to poverty, financial stress and difficult living conditions. In addition to our proposals to build more affordable housing and to support youth, based on proposals from the BC Poverty Coalition we recommend that the government:

1. Raise BC's welfare and disability rates to 75% of the poverty line (Market Basket Measure) immediately, and to 100% within 2 years.
2. Continue to work on a culture shift within the Ministry such that people struggling with poverty are treated with respect and dignity, including eliminating clawbacks and arbitrary barriers that discourage, delay and deny people who are in need. (See Footnote 11)

We also recommend that the government:

1. Implement progressive taxation measures aimed at reducing excessive income disparity.
2. Consider the merits of Universal Basic Services as a less costly and more effective alternative to Universal Basic Income. Universal Basic Services places the emphasis on providing free or affordable childcare, adult social care, housing, transportation, and access to digital services, rather than individual cash payments. For a quick read, we recommend *The Case for Universal Basic Services*, by Anna Coote and Andrew Percy (Polity, 2020), (See Footnote 12) to be considered along *The Case for Universal Basic Income*, by Louise Haagh (Polity, 2019). (See Footnote 13)
3. Increase the provision of public and non-profit long-term seniors housing, removing the profit motive from middle and low-income seniors housing and services, thereby strengthening the level of care and wellbeing for BC's seniors, as recommended by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (See Footnote 14)
4. Ensure that people who work in long-term seniors' care homes are paid a livable wage, making it unnecessary for them to seek work in multiple homes.

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<sup>11</sup> BC Poverty Coalition Plan for BC: <http://bcpovertyreduction.ca/learn-more/plan-for-bc/>

<sup>12</sup> The Case for Universal Basic Services: <https://www.amazon.ca/Case-Universal-Basic-Services/dp/1509539832>

<sup>13</sup> The Case for Universal Basic Income: <https://www.amazon.ca/Case-Universal-Basic-Income/dp/1509522964>

<sup>14</sup> CCPA: Re-imagining Long-term Residential Care in the COVID-19 Crisis  
<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/re-imagining-long-term-residential-care-covid-19-crisis>



5. Establish a working group in conjunction with the Ministry of Child and Family Development with a mandate to make significant changes to the management of foster care in the province including programs:
  - Extending foster care for youth who are engaged in post-secondary education (degrees, diploma, apprenticeships etc.)
  - Providing funding for the oversight of volunteer mentoring programs to support children 'aging out' of foster care
  - Structuring and making available specialized support services to foster parents such as training programs and family counselling

In addition to the social and emotional benefits conferred by the above programs, cost savings to society such as a reduction in areas such as prison and homelessness can be expected.

## **8. Support Community Mutual Aid**

All around the world neighbours have been stepping up to help their neighbours, whether to provide childcare and baby-sitting for health-workers, food for hungry families, volunteer drivers and cooked meals for medical workers, virtual coffee-mornings, crisis counselling, shopping and prescription-delivery for people who are in self-isolation, emotional support for people living alone, or local distribution for farmers who see their crops or eggs going to waste.<sup>(See Footnote 15)</sup> History tells us that at times like this people reach out to help their fellow citizens. Such efforts need organization, however, especially if they are to be sustained. In the coming years we are likely going to need community support far beyond the ability of the welfare state or social services to provide.

We therefore propose that part of BC's stimulus package be devoted to developing a framework of facilitative support at the neighbourhood level. We recommend that the government:

1. Invite bids for non-profit organizations to establish a BC Community Mutual Support Alliance, as a province-wide initiative to support and develop mutual aid initiatives. We suggest that as well as voluntary community leaders, the Alliance include university research workers to track progress, learn from failures and successes and share best practices.
2. Establish a Community Mutual Support Fund, enabling clubs, churches, community associations, Neighbourhood Houses and non-profits to apply for Mutual Support Start-Up and Development Grants. Rather than attempting to define how support should be done, this will enable province-wide experimentation, leading to the sharing of best practices.

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<sup>15</sup> George Monbiot: The horror films got it wrong. This virus has turned us into caring neighbours  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/31/virus-neighbours-covid-19>

3. Support the development of Time Banks, which enable people to earn Time Dollars by sharing skills and services, enabling wealth to be shared and generated without need for cash. Time Banks are active in Britain and the USA. <sup>(See Footnote 16)</sup> In Britain, they responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by establishing a shared Time Bank platform called Communities Together. <sup>(See Footnote 17)</sup>
4. Working in conjunction with organizations such as the Community Arts Council of Vancouver and community-based organizations such as Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres establish a fund to support community based artistic expression including accessible performances and the beautification of public buildings by murals and sculpture.

## 9. Help People to Reduce Personal Debt

BC's average household debt is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in Canada, at \$155,500 per household. Consumer credit card interest rates range from 25-30%, and Payday loans, while being restricted to 23%, are still high. A \$5,000 unpaid debt paying interest at 25% doubles every 2.8 years, increasing to \$20,000 after five years. Such debt poses a huge obstacle to the recovery of consumer confidence, and risks pushing households into bankruptcy.

Canada's Credit Counselling Society provides advice that enables debtors to consolidate and refinance their debts through Repayment Programs, often at zero interest. The more people they can help, the more the problem of debt can be tackled. We therefore recommend that the government:

- Provide funding to enable the Credit Counselling Society to expand the reach of its services.
- Use the government's ability to borrow at very low rates to establish an enlarged pool of funds for household debt consolidation and repayment.

## 10. Stabilize and Encourage Innovation in Not-for-Profit Sector

The not-for-profit sector is vital for the wellbeing of our province increasing the wellbeing and quality of life for all those in BC, particularly our most vulnerable citizens. It contributes \$6.4 billion to BC's GDP and provides over 86,000 paid job and over 146,711 volunteer positions. We support the recommendations of Vantage Point to establish a COVID stabilization fund for non-profits, also to increase digital access and infrastructure and better serve rural communities. <sup>(See Footnote 18)</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Time Banks USA: <https://timebanks.org> Time Banking UK: <https://www.timebanking.org>

<sup>17</sup> Communities Together: <https://together.madeopen.co.uk>

<sup>18</sup> Vantage Point: *BC's Not-for-Profit Sector: Society's Partner in Wellbeing*:  
[https://www.thevantagepoint.ca/sites/default/files/assets/docs/2020-06-29\\_vantage\\_point\\_-\\_bc\\_budget\\_2021\\_submission\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://www.thevantagepoint.ca/sites/default/files/assets/docs/2020-06-29_vantage_point_-_bc_budget_2021_submission_-_final.pdf)

# Proposal for the Ministry of Agriculture

## 11. Increase Local Food Production

BC's food chain is hugely dependent on imports, making it vulnerable to COVID-19 breakdown. On Vancouver Island, and in places like Powell River, Haida Gwaii, Prince Rupert and Kitimat, 95% of all food is imported by truck or ferry, and the reality of just-in-time food supply chain management means that these communities have only 2-3 days food supply on any given day.

Globally, COVID-19 is spreading rapidly, raising concerns about BC's future food supply-chain, such as the risk that the virus might spread among Mexican, Californian or Florida farmworkers, causing crops to be neither planted or harvested. Lacking seasonal immigrant workers, some Canadian and American farmers may also be unable to harvest this year's crops.

On May 14 2020, Food Secure Canada stated that "It is critical that decisions made now – when system change is finally understood as not only possible, but necessary – lay the foundations for resilient and equitable food futures, notably in the context of climate change and the ongoing collapse of biodiversity." (See Footnote 19)

In the Cowichan Valley Regional District, there are 17,700 hectares of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve, of which in 2010 only 10,840 hectares were in agricultural production, and only 2,120 hectares were set up for irrigation.

BC has 2.59 million hectares of farmland, of which the 2016 Census of Agriculture data shows that:

- 57% was pasture
- 13.5% was growing hay
- 7.5% was growing field crops (barley, wheat, etc.)
- 1% was growing fruits, berries and nuts
- 0.25% was growing vegetables (See Footnote 20)

The typical return for an acre of hay is \$600, and yet in Quebec, on the 7-acre market garden at La Ferme des Quatre Temps, a bio-intensive organic vegetable farmer is generating \$100,000 of crop value per acre per year with a profit margin of 40% after costs. (See Footnote 21) BC has the land, and it has young willing farmers. Clearly, many barriers are blocking their ability to grow much-needed food for a well-earned profit.

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<sup>19</sup> Food Secure Canada: <https://foodsecurecanada.org/2020-growing-resilience-equity>

<sup>20</sup> Census data: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/statistics/census/census-2016/aginbrief\\_2016\\_british\\_columbia.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/statistics/census/census-2016/aginbrief_2016_british_columbia.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> *Uncertain Harvest: The Future of Food on a Warming Planet*, by Ian Mosby, Sarah Rotz, and Evan D.G. Fraser. University of Regina Press, 2020.

We believe that BC could take immediate steps to increase local food production and secure our food supply chains. We recommend that the Ministry:

1. Conduct urgent scenario planning to explore the potential for global and North American food supply chain disruptions, and their implications for consumers, especially those who are vulnerable and who cannot afford to stockpile or pay higher prices for food.
2. Explore measures that might motivate the owners of vacant farmland to grow food, such as paying \$5,000 an acre for new farmland that is brought into food production, and raising the farmland tax relief incentive from \$2,500 to \$10,000 of farm income.
3. Offer zero-interest loans to help the owners of vacant farmland to acquire farming equipment and to invest in irrigation, no-till agriculture and ecologically-sensitive field drainage.
4. Write a Sustainable Food Procurement Policy, enabling BC public institutions to contract with local growers to provide more food, as the University of Victoria does so successfully.
5. Fund the development of Regional Growers' Cooperatives to assist farmers with mutual support, access to government, R&D, distribution, shared processing, marketing and transportation, business mentors, and seeds.
6. Expand BC's Agriculture Extension Services and Horticultural Training Programs, especially programs that emphasize bio-intensive, organic, agro-ecological and regenerative food production. These methods of farming have been shown to increase farmland income, jobs, resilience, biodiversity, pollinator health, soil vitality and soil carbon sequestration, while reducing the use of synthetic fertilizers. The use of natural gas in the production of chemical fertilizers adds fire to the climate crisis, while the increase of carbon in the soil to 4 parts per million, as supported by the UN's 4/1000 soil carbon initiative, <sup>(See Footnote 22)</sup> helps put the climate fire out.
7. Allow small local abattoirs to process meat to reduce COVID-infection risks. <sup>(See Footnote 23)</sup>
8. Establish a Farm Stabilization Fund to enable farms that are in financial difficulties due to COVID-19 to develop new marketing and supply outlets.
9. Create paid positions for 5,000 Farm Rangers to help on BC farms this summer and fall.
  - Fund local farming organizations to work with farmers to hire, train and (where needed) find accommodation for the Farm Rangers.

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<sup>22</sup> 4/1000: <https://www.4p1000.org>

<sup>23</sup> Rod Nickel: COVID-19 Outbreaks at Meat Plants Builds Demand for Mobile Butchers  
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-covid-19-outbreaks-at-meat-plants-builds-demand-for-mobile-butchers>

- Invite an organization representing farmers to develop a quick online training course, followed by a commitment by farmers to continued on-site training and mentorship.
  - Invite all Farm Rangers to become members of Farm Rangers Democracy, electing delegates to a Farm Rangers Democracy Council for discussion of experiences, forwarding recommendations to a monthly joint meeting with participating farmers.
  - Invite all participating farmers to become members of a Farm Rangers Cooperative, electing delegates for a monthly meeting with the Farm Rangers.
10. Begin Ministry of Agriculture planning for potential future supply management for critical food crops, providing guaranteed wholesale prices that would enable farmers to grow more food without fearing financial loss, just as Canada does for eggs, dairy and poultry. Prices could be adjusted upwards to meet shortages and downwards to suppress surpluses, ensuring a steady supply of food.
  11. Begin Ministry of Agriculture planning to work with community food advocates to assist people to find agricultural jobs, and to assist growers to move their sales and marketing on-line and sell through non-profit community food hubs such as Cowichan Green.
  12. Review the Agricultural Land Reserve rules to explore ways in which farm workers could live legally on the land where they work and potentially become co-owners of the farm.
  13. Review proposals that would allow the use of camping and clustered trailers or small homes on farmland, provided that occupancy is legally restricted to farm-workers and their families.
  14. Promote a province-wide Dig for Victory campaign, encouraging people to grow food in their front and back yards.
  15. Explore ways to encourage a reduction in the consumption of meat and dairy, as a necessary measure to tackle the climate crisis.
  16. Establish a BC Seeds Agency, with a mandate to ensure that BC's seed supply is not threatened by breakdowns outside Canada, and that BC farmers and gardeners will always have seeds to grow the food we need.
  17. Explore ways to incentivize farmers to grow crops for seed, without which farmers can't grow food.
  18. Begin Ministry of Agriculture planning to explore possible conflicts with the US-Canada-Mexico Agreement, and possible solutions. Free trade agreements make no allowance for a pandemic such as this, and accord no importance to the resilience of local and regional food supply chains. We cannot sacrifice human lives and the stability of our society on the altar of shareholder-value-maximizing free trade.

# Proposals for the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness

## 12. Encourage Advanced Green Manufacturing

It is well accepted that manufacturing provides more positive economic spin-offs than other sectors of an economy. Advanced Cleantech or Green Manufacturing embraces four factors enabling a level of innovation that would demonstrate leadership in BC:

- Automation
- 3-D printing
- Artificial Intelligence
- Circular economy initiatives

In *The Bio Revolution: Innovations transforming economies, societies, and our lives* (May 2020), the McKinsey Global Institute reported that advances in biological science could transform economies and societies and help tackle imperatives such as the climate crisis. A confluence of advances in biological science, computing, automation and artificial intelligence is fueling a wave of innovation that could have significant impact, from health and agriculture to consumer goods, energy and materials. <sup>(See Footnote 24)</sup>

The best manufacturing companies seek to balance the four factors so that they can be competitive in a tight global market while retaining as many local employees and suppliers as possible. How can such companies be attracted to start or set up operations in British Columbia? The traditional approach of providing free land, free money and tax write-offs has proven itself unsuccessful.

Private entrepreneurs are primarily concerned about the need for efficient cooperation with local and provincial governments around practical factors such as infrastructure, utilities, planning and regulations. If a concept and business plan is exemplary, equity and debt investments will make themselves available.

BC has no shortage of the four key factors. We already have the ingredients for an Advanced Cleantech Green Manufacturing sector. What has been missing is business people who are motivated by the concepts of sustainability and community who have realistic expectations around a return on investments. A generational change is now bringing these values front and centre.

If BC chooses to pivot to advanced green manufacturing there are hundreds of successful examples around the world that can guide the way forward, both urban and rural.

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<sup>24</sup> McKinsey Report: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/pharmaceuticals-and-medical-products/our-insights/the-bio-revolution-innovations-transforming-economies-societies-and-our-lives>



We therefore recommend that the government:

1. Establish a Crown Corporation to kick-start an Advanced Green Manufacturing sector in BC, and help manufacturers to find the balance between risk and reward.
2. Explore the potential to form Innovation Districts, considering the successful Scandinavian models and work done by the Brookings Institute.
3. Work with corporate, university, environmental and non-profit experts to develop an industrial strategy that will support clean manufacturing, focused on critical supply-chain areas such as medical supplies and technologies and clean tech industries such as building retrofits and electrified transportation.
4. Support BC's research institutions to further develop their critical expertise.
5. Incentivize technology transfer agreements that keep home-grown innovations in the province, including key technology enablers such as embedded sensors, chain matrixes and technical circuitry.
6. Reduce the use of subsidies and incentives such as broad-based tax relief, R & D tax credits, free land and regulatory relief, since they have been shown not to work for the benefit of society as a whole.
7. Create a provincial Circular Economy Action Plan modeled on the European Union's Circular Economy Action Plan. <sup>(See Footnote 25)</sup>

### 13. Start a Green Investment Bank

In Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Spain and France, community and state-owned banks serve as much as 64% of the banking market. Germany's Sparkassen banks, with 15,600 branches, have a return on capital that is several times greater than Germany's private banking sector. Among other things, they have provided 72% of the financing for Germany's solar and wind installations. The German public bank Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau has been the main source of financing for building retrofits and energy efficiency loans to manufacturers.

The Rocky Mountain Institute reports that "Green investment banks are typically public or quasi-public entities, initially capitalized with public funds. Their goal is to leverage public funds to attract comparatively large amounts of private capital to invest in green infrastructure projects, thus creating jobs and building a resilient economy." The Connecticut Green Bank used \$270 million in public funds to attract \$1.67 billion of total investment in green projects, attracting \$5 private-sector dollars for every government dollar. <sup>(See Footnote 26)</sup>

We therefore recommend that the government:

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<sup>25</sup> EU Circular Economy Action Plan: <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/>

<sup>26</sup> RMI: <https://rmi.org/green-banks-for-economic-recovery-and-climate-mitigation/>

- Establish a Green Investment Bank Working Group to lay the legal and financial groundwork for a Green Investment Bank of BC, to be used to finance recovery investments that support BC's climate action targets and other goals.

## 14. Support Community Economic Recovery

In communities all around the world the varied methods of community economic development (CED) are being used to develop and support local economies.

- In Portland, Oregon, the bioregional group EcoTrust invested \$25 million to buy two old industrial buildings on Salmon Street, the first as a campus hub for innovation in bioregional food and farm systems, the second as an engine room connecting farmers to their markets by providing 170 food businesses with warehousing, cold storage and cargo-bike delivery into Portland's diverse food ecosystem.
- In Maine, Coastal Enterprises focuses on rural poverty and community economic revitalization. Since 1977 it has invested over a billion dollars and created 33,000 full time jobs, combining community organizing, action research, technical mentoring and financing.
- In Nova Scotia, provincial equity tax credits focused on community benefit have inspired people to invest \$100 million in 76 projects through the Community Economic Development Investment Fund, including substantial investments in food, renewable energy, and a diverse range of co-operative and social enterprises.
- In Quebec, Chantier de l'Economie Sociale supports 11,200 social economy enterprises that employ 220,000 people, generate \$48 billion a year and involve 90,000 people as voluntary board members.

Community economic development differs from the usual practice of using incentives to entice a company to relocate from Community A to Community B. It emphasizes the development of local entrepreneurial skills, the formation of new businesses, cooperatives and social enterprises, the establishment of community investment funds, the launch of community sharing programs, and other initiatives.

Communities across BC would benefit immensely from community economic development, but the skills required don't come easily: they need learning. The biggest obstacle is not willing leadership or available finance: it is the lack of capacity, knowledge and skill. To unleash the benefits of community economic development, we recommend that the government:

- Form a **Community Economic Development Task Force** to:
  1. Create on-line content enabling the formation of Community Economic Recovery Study Circles that members of communities all across BC could join, resulting in new local initiatives;

2. Increase the development of and enrollment in courses in Community Economic Development, such as that pioneered by SFU; <sup>(See Footnote 27)</sup>
3. Work with the province to enable the easier formation of community development financial institutions;
4. Work with the federal government to enable the use of RRSPs for socially responsible community investments;
5. Develop recommendations for a permanent CED start-up fund.

## 15. Encourage a Province-Wide Transition to Purpose-Driven Business

Businesses are the beating heart of BC's economy, and their owners and staff work hard to provide the goods and services people want. During COVID-19, a number of businesses have re-imagined their skills, factories and assets to be of help. We have witnessed many acts of generosity, such as restaurants delivering prepared food for no charge to people in need, despite facing an uncertain future. Canadian Business Responders lists 452 companies (and growing) that have found ways to pivot and offer creative help. <sup>(See Footnote 28)</sup>

Can we build on this momentum, enabling BC to become a leader in sustainable business practices that benefit BC communities? BC's United Way Social Purpose Institute suggests that:

“In an increasingly turbulent world, having a compelling north star that benefits society, stakeholders and business creates a pathway to business and societal success. Companies whose purpose is a core driver of strategy are more likely to realize successful innovation and consistent revenue growth than competitors.”

We recognize that right now, most BC businesses have no capacity to contemplate broader changes. At the same time, we must begin to engage business in the move towards a more sustainable economy and society. The climate and biodiversity emergencies have not gone away, and they threaten far greater distress and collapse unless we take rapid steps to address them.

In Sweden, the government has developed an ambitious corporate social responsibility policy knowing that it will strengthen competitiveness, create more jobs and grow more companies. They understand that Corporate Social Responsibility is an essential part of modern industrial policy. <sup>(See Footnote 29)</sup>

The realm of purpose-led business involves many considerations, including:

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<sup>27</sup> SFU CED: <https://www.sfu.ca/ced.html>

<sup>28</sup> Canadian Business Responders: <https://www.cbsr.ca/canadian-business-responders-list>

<sup>29</sup> Sweden's CSR Policy: [https://www.government.se/49930b/contentassets/cdd5ff45a8e04b72813999fb6aa19dd8/faktablad\\_hallbart\\_for\\_etagande\\_160520\\_eng\\_webb.pdf](https://www.government.se/49930b/contentassets/cdd5ff45a8e04b72813999fb6aa19dd8/faktablad_hallbart_for_etagande_160520_eng_webb.pdf)

- The adoption of Social Purpose charters in place of conventional charters in which the business states its larger purpose, including its intent to consider the interests of all stakeholders.
- The need to expand the concept of fiduciary duty to include the pursuit of social and ecological as well as financial purpose, as demonstrated by the world's 3,200 B Corporations, 70 of which are based in BC. (See Footnote 30)
- The use of integrated sustainability reporting.
- The opportunity for staff and workers to become employee shareholders.
- The representation of workers and unions on company boards, as in Germany and Scandinavia.
- The fuller engagement of women on company boards.

This is not a realm where BC needs to reinvent the wheel. Much work has already been done, such as by the Global Reporting Initiative (See Footnote 31) and the European Union on climate benchmarking. (See Footnote 32)

Two needs are important: to take things at a steady pace, enabling a gradual transition, and to provide proper transparency about a business's social and environmental impact, knowing that the decades of purely voluntary commitments have enabled most companies to ignore the need for change. The World Economic Forum has reported that 40% of Millennials polled by Deloitte in 2018 believe the goal of business should be to improve society. By 2020, millennials will make up 40% of all consumers and influence \$40 billion in annual sales. (See Footnote 33)

A PwC survey also found that 79% of business leaders surveyed believe that an organization's purpose is central to business success, yet 68% shared that purpose is not used as a guidepost in leadership decision making processes within their organization. (See Footnote 34)

We therefore recommend that the government:

1. State a strong commitment to the value of and need for a steady province-wide transition to Purpose-Driven business.
2. Fund organizations such as the United Way's Social Purpose Institute in Burnaby, the Board of Change in Vancouver and Synergy Enterprises in Victoria to help businesses

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<sup>30</sup> B Corporations: <https://bcorporation.net>

<sup>31</sup> Global Reporting Initiative: <https://www2.globalreporting.org>

<sup>32</sup> Climate benchmarking: <https://www.ipe.com/reports/climate-benchmarks-brown-to-green/10043511.article>

<sup>33</sup> WEF: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/why-businesses-must-be-driven-by-purpose-as-well-as-profits/> Deloitte: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/why-businesses-must-be-driven-by-purpose-as-well-as-profits/>

<sup>34</sup> PwC survey: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/caterinabulgarella/2018/09/21/purpose-driven-companies-evolve-faster-than-others/#393b31e855bc>

define an authentic social purpose as their reason for being, and embed it into everything they do. (See Footnote 35)

3. Establish a Purpose-Driven Business Task Force to develop a steady phased transition, drawing on best practices and leadership both within BC and globally.
4. Work with industry sustainability experts to develop sustainability reporting guidelines for the various sizes and categories of BC business, starting with climate reporting, to provide increased transparency to investors, workers and consumers. Review the prospects for mandatory reporting in the context of BC's leadership to address the climate crisis.
5. By 2025, require mandatory sustainability reporting covering all realms of Environment/Social/Governance (ESG), to track natural, social and human capital as well as financial capital.

## 16. Give Businesses a New Life After Bankruptcy

The desperate reality is that in spite of efforts by the federal and provincial governments, some companies may be forced to consider bankruptcy because of accumulated debt and the collapse in consumer demand. Such events are always distressing, both to the failing company and to its workers, customers, suppliers and investors.

A transition to employee ownership enables a business to keep operating. As an example of what's possible, in Chicago in 2008 Republic Windows and Doors, which specialized in energy-efficient vinyl windows, declared bankruptcy and laid off its entire factory workforce. In response, a group of former employees got together, calling in help from the United Electrical Workers Union and the Center for Workplace Democracy, which was dedicated to supporting worker control. With tremendous support from the community, they raised the investment needed for the workers to buy the factory and form the New Era Windows Cooperative. The transition requires skill and financing to happen successfully, however, and the California-based Democracy at Work Institute has published *Becoming Employee-Owned: A Small Business Toolkit for Transitioning to Employee Ownership* to share these skills. (See Footnote 36)

We therefore recommend that the government:

1. Fund an agency or non-profit to learn from experience elsewhere and support businesses facing bankruptcy either to avoid bankruptcy or to negotiate and transfer ownership of their business assets to some or all of the employees, or to an interested community organization that may want to save a local store or restaurant.
2. Establish financing enabling the gradual purchase of assets by the new employee-owners.

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<sup>35</sup> Social Purpose Institute: [www.socialpurpose.ca](http://www.socialpurpose.ca)

<sup>36</sup> *Becoming Employee-Owned: A Small Business Toolkit for Transitioning to Employee Ownership*  
<https://resources.uwcc.wisc.edu/Business%20Conversion/Becoming%20Employee%20Owned%20Toolkit.pdf>

## 17. Use Public Procurement to Achieve Social Goals

The use of government purchasing offers an opportunity to bend the curve of social and economic behavior towards greater community economic strength, social justice and climate resilience. These types of conditions are also known as Community Benefit Clauses. We recommend that the Ministry:

1. Establish a Sustainable Procurement Duty for all government purchases, as the government of Scotland has done, <sup>(See Footnote 37)</sup> to make the best use of public money, helping BC to achieve its guiding purpose and strategic objectives. Under such a duty, before being granted a contract, all contracting authorities would be required to consider:
  - How it can improve the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the area in which it operates,
  - How it can reduce its greenhouse gas emissions,
  - How it can hire people who experience barriers to employment.
2. Offer tax credits to companies that create new jobs that pay a livable wage and last for a minimum of two years.
3. Use tax incentives to reward a company that reinvests an agreed share of its profits in workforce development, R&D, or to fulfil environmental goals.

## Proposals for the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

### 18. Reduce COVID-19 Infection Risks by Improving Air Quality

A recent Harvard University study found that air pollution is linked to higher COVID-19 death rates. <sup>(See Footnote 38)</sup> Other studies have found that high levels of pollution are making the pandemic even more deadly. <sup>(See Footnote 39)</sup> Even in normal times, it is understood that air pollution weakens hearts and lungs, contributing to higher death rates. New research suggests that air pollution particles may carry COVID-19 further afield, increasing the risk of transmission. The cost of air pollution has suddenly become much higher.

The Lancet's *Countdown 2019* report drives home the danger: "Air pollution—principally driven by fossil fuels and exacerbated by climate change—damages the heart, lungs and every other

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<sup>37</sup> Scotland's Sustainable Procurement Duty: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/public-sector-procurement/sustainable-procurement-duty/>

<sup>38</sup> Harvard: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/biostatistics/2020/04/linking-air-pollution-to-higher-coronavirus-death-rates/>

<sup>39</sup> Studies: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/04/is-air-pollution-making-the-coronavirus-pandemic-even-more-deadly>



vital organ. The effects accumulate over time and into adulthood, with global deaths attributable to ambient fine particulate matter remaining at 2.9 million in 2016 and total global air pollution deaths reaching 7 million.” (See Footnote 40)

Narrow sidewalks make it hard for pedestrians to follow social distancing. If people seek the security of their vehicles to provide better COVID-19 protection this will increase air pollution and traffic congestion. In response, Mexico City, Bogotá, Barcelona, London, Birmingham (UK) and other cities are introducing schemes ranging from car-free days to the temporary reclassification of streets as recreation areas. New York is opening up 100 miles of streets to pedestrians and cyclists. (See Footnote 41) Milan is transforming 35 kilometres of road into pedestrian and cycling space over the summer. Paris is spending €300m on a new cycle network.

The long-term way to eliminate air pollution is for all motorized transportation to go electric. In 2019, 10% of new vehicles purchased in BC were electric, causing a comparable reduction in air pollution and GHG emissions. Industry data suggests that by 2025 a new EV with a range of 400 km could cost the same as a conventional vehicle, primarily due to the falling price of batteries. The efficacy of vehicle electrification can be further enhanced by supporting the adoption of car sharing.

We recommend that the Ministry work with the Ministries of Transportation and Infrastructure and Energy Mines and Petroleum Resources to strengthen CleanBC’s goals and to:

1. Increase investment in pedestrian and bike-friendly infrastructure, in partnership with municipalities and with cycling and pedestrian advocacy non-profits.
2. Advance the Zero Emissions Vehicle Mandate from 2040 to 2030, ending the sale and insurance of new gasoline and diesel light duty vehicles in 2031. Phase-out the purchase of smaller conventional trucks by 2030, as recommended by the economist Mark Jaccard, and of all conventional trucks by 2035, supported by low-interest electric truck loans.
3. Continue the Clean Energy Vehicle rebates, phasing them out as EV prices fall.
4. Provide EV fleet purchasing incentives to community-based organizations that provide round trip car sharing. Research suggests that round trip car sharing is more effective than one-way systems in removing privately owned vehicles from the transportation system. Incentives should be keyed to the organization’s long-term commitment to operate as a BC based organization.
5. Offer further EV incentives such as free parking and ferry rides.
6. Coordinate with municipalities in the strategic investment and installation of sufficient Level 2 and Level 3 EV charging stations to match EV ridership.

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<sup>40</sup> The Lancet: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)32596-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32596-6/fulltext)

<sup>41</sup> New York streets: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8319747/NYC-opens-12-miles-roadways-pedestrians-Blasio-aims-make-100-miles-car-free.html>

7. Require School Districts to phase out conventional school buses by 2025, supported by low-interest electric school bus loans.
8. In partnership with BC Transit and Translink, increase investment in transit infrastructure, and phase out the use of conventional buses by 2025, supported by low-interest electric bus loans.

## **19. Support Climate Smart and Circular Economy Business Training**

In April 2020 Vancouver-based Climate Smart joined Clean50 leaders in calling on governments to make sustainability a key consideration for building back better, and to elevate the role that small and medium-sized enterprises play in generating jobs and reducing GHG emissions, as part of a long-term clean economy reset. <sup>(See Footnote 42)</sup>

ClimateSmart has a track record of working successfully with companies to reduce their emissions, while also reducing business costs. We therefore recommend that the government:

1. Work with ClimateSmart to develop a program of grants and low-interest loans to help more companies save money by reducing their emissions, and to finance more workshops to train Climate Smart Business Advisors.
2. Work with BC Circular Economy champions to establish a similar business training program.

As the Globe Foundation writes: “The shift to a circular economy is not only about managing waste - it presents a new economic paradigm for rethinking how we design, use, and reuse our resources with an estimated economic output potential of USD \$4.5 trillion per year by 2030. According to the World Economic Forum, circular business models provide a competitive edge because they create more value from each unit of resource than the traditional linear ‘take-make-dispose’ model. This can result in business, investment, and job creation opportunities that are long term and more resilient to commodity shocks and economic and supply chain disruptions.”

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<sup>42</sup> Climate Smart: <https://climatesmartbusiness.com>

## 20. Support Community Climate Action

The climate and ecological emergencies have, alas, not gone away to make room for the pandemic, so urgent action is still needed at every level. Since personal guidance is needed by households seeking to reduce their emissions, we recommend that the government:

1. Commission an organization to work with climate action groups to create a quick online Household Climate Action Training Course.
2. Create 5,000 paid positions as Climate Rangers in communities across BC that submit proposals to engage residents in initiatives to reduce their household emissions to zero by 2030.
  - Following training, Climate Rangers would invite neighbours to start COVID-compliant kitchen table conversation circles to discuss the climate and biodiversity crises, and to make the transition to climate and ecologically friendly living.
  - All Climate Rangers would receive ongoing mentoring and training.
  - Each Climate Ranger would aim to help 1,000 people make the transition to 100% renewable energy and a climate and ecologically friendly lifestyle by 2030, generating a scale of effort appropriate to the urgency, similar to that during World War II.
  - All Climate Rangers would be invited to become members of Climate Rangers Democracy, electing members to a Climate Rangers Democracy Council for discussion of experiences, forwarding recommendations to a monthly joint meeting with participating organizations.
  - All participating non-profits would be invited to become members of a Climate Rangers Cooperative, electing delegates for a monthly meeting with the Climate Rangers
3. Invite bids for the creation, launch and operation of COVID-compliant Climate Solutions Roadshows to be produced in partnership with the Climate Rangers and be supported by willing local and regional governments, to show in multiple simultaneous venues across BC starting in 2021.

## 21. Support Ecological Restoration

We face a global ecological emergency as well as a climate emergency. Earth is in the midst of what scientists have labelled as the sixth mass extinction event, with up to a million species being threatened with extinction, many within decades. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services reported in May 2019 that Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history, and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world.

We therefore recommend that the government:

1. Establish a BC Ecological Restoration Council, and invite BC's acknowledged ecological and watershed management experts to develop plans and goals to restore Nature's resilience on land and in water throughout BC.
2. Establish an Ecological Restoration Fund enabling local organizations to prepare ecological and watershed restoration maps, develop plans for how critical areas can be restored, and create jobs for Restoration Rangers.
3. Create paid positions for 5,000 Restoration Rangers, similar to the BC Conservation Corps that was active ten years ago, with paid jobs helping local ecological non-profit organizations and provincial and regional parks agencies with ecological restoration projects.
4. Fund an organization representing ecological restoration groups to develop online training for the Restoration Rangers, followed by a commitment to continued on-site training and mentorship.
  - Such jobs could include non-commercial ecologically appropriate tree-planting, parks improvements, revegetating private and public conservation lands, riparian planting, invasive species removal, and forest, river, creek, wetlands and coastal ecosystems restoration, and to work protect BC communities and coasts against flooding and heatwaves using natural systems such as wetlands and conservation areas.
  - All rangers would be invited to become members of Restoration Rangers Democracy, electing members to a Restoration Rangers Democracy Council, for discussion of experiences, forwarding recommendations to a monthly joint meeting with participating organizations.
  - All participating organizations would be invited to become members of a Restoration Rangers Cooperative, electing delegates for a monthly meeting with the Restoration Rangers.
5. Establish a goal to protect and restore 30% of BC's land ecosystems by 2030, 50% by 2050, and to establish Marine Protected Areas to protect and restore 30% of BC's marine waters by 2030, 50% by 2050, in keeping with the UN's Biodiversity Goals. <sup>(See Footnote 43)</sup>
6. Work with ecologists and watershed management specialists to develop science-based protection targets for each of BC's different ecosystem types.
7. Establish an Endangered Habitat Acquisition Fund to purchase and protect endangered ecosystems on private land.
8. Offer conservation financing for First Nations sustainable economic development, linked to the establishment of Indigenous Protected Areas.

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<sup>43</sup> UN Biodiversity Goals: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>

9. Offer grants and tax rebates to private landowners to offset the current high cost of working with a Community Land Trust and land surveyors to place a Conservation Covenant on ecologically valuable land.

## Proposals for the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development

### 22. Increase Jobs in Forestry and Value-Added Wood Products

BC's old-growth forest ecosystems have some of the highest carbon storage per hectare in the world, with some of the biggest and oldest trees. A recent independent report shows that only a fraction of BC's productive old-growth forests with big trees remain intact and the majority of these remaining stands have no legal protection. <sup>(See Footnote 44)</sup> To preserve ecosystems, critical habitat, carbon storage and economic opportunities for Indigenous people and forest communities, we need a new approach to forestry that will revitalize our rural communities. We therefore recommend that the government:

1. Form a working group to engage BC's most innovative environmental, community, indigenous and business thinkers to re-imagine and plan how we could move forward with solutions that benefit local communities and the environment.
2. Set a goal with an ambitious timeline to increase the number of jobs per cubic metre cut to match that of other forestry provinces and neighbouring states, while phasing out the logging of old growth forests, endangered habitats and high carbon value forests.
3. Maintain or increase the number of jobs in the forest sector by improving forestry practices and increasing value-added manufacturing while reducing the Annual Allowable Cut to meet employment and environmental goals.
4. Impose an immediate moratorium on logging in endangered old-growth forest ecosystems, and seek new standards and regulation for sustainable logging on the Private Managed Forest Lands.

We also support the Sierra Club's recommendations that the government: <sup>(See Footnote 45)</sup>

1. Protect and restore endangered old-growth forest ecosystems through forestry law reform, modernized land use plans and new Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs);
2. Restore government capacity for monitoring and research, investment in restoration of intact forests and reforestation; and

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<sup>44</sup> *Sierra Club B.C.'s Old-Growth Forest: A Last Stand for Biodiversity*: <https://sierraclub.bc.ca/laststand/>

<sup>45</sup> *Sierra Club Press Release January 31, 2020*: <https://sierraclub.bc.ca/media-release-clearcutcarbon/>

3. Support communities and companies that want to improve forest management and value-added wood products, creating more jobs and causing less ecological damage per cubic metre of wood. Forests can be harvested selectively in a manner that reduces carbon losses to a minimum and retains more carbon in the forest.

## Additional Proposals

### 23. Support Families and Increase Local Tourism

In 2018, BC's tourism industry generated \$20.5 billion in revenues, and its 19,300 businesses employed 161,500 people, paying \$6 billion in wages and salaries. <sup>(See Footnote 46)</sup>

In response to the crisis in its tourism industry, New Zealand is considering creating more public holidays, and encouraging businesses to consider adopting a 4-day working week. <sup>(See Footnote 47)</sup>

By so doing they hope to give people more time to spend on local tourism, while reducing urban traffic and air pollution. A 2019 British study found that 64% of leaders of businesses with a four-day working week saw an increase in staff productivity, while 77% of workers linked it to a better quality of life. <sup>(See Footnote 48)</sup>

In 2018, researchers who analysed data from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis and Bureau of Labour Statistics found that households with longer work hours have significantly larger carbon footprints. <sup>(See Footnote 49)</sup>

During the shutdown, many people have reported that they loved having more time with their families. A shift to a staggered four-day working week with nine or ten-hour days would give families more leisure time and increase spending in the tourism sector. We therefore recommend that the government:

1. Ask every government ministry and public institution to review the possibility of phasing in a 4-day working week.
2. Hold discussions with teachers and school administrators to explore the possibilities for 4-day school-week, and for parents to pull their children out of school for holiday purposes.
3. Consider the use of tax incentives to persuade employers to adopt a 4-day working week.

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<sup>46</sup> 2018 tourism: [https://www.destinationbc.ca/content/uploads/2020/03/2018-Value-of-Tourism\\_Feb-2020\\_Final.pdf](https://www.destinationbc.ca/content/uploads/2020/03/2018-Value-of-Tourism_Feb-2020_Final.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> New Zealand 4-day-week: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/20/jacinda-ardern-flags-four-day-working-week-as-way-to-rebuild-new-zealand-after-covid-19>

<sup>48</sup> Four-day week study: <https://hbr.org/2019/08/will-the-4-day-workweek-take-hold-in-europe>

<sup>49</sup> New Zealand CEO: The daily head count in the office drops by approximately 20% and the number of cars on the road drops by at least a fifth. It's a win-win-win scenario for employees, employers and the environment.



## 24. Support Worker Participation

During the COVID-19 crisis British Columbians have come to deeply value the front-line workers who have cared for them and who have maintained essential services from food stores to garbage collection.

The millions of British Columbians who go to work each morning are all essential workers, and yet the majority are excluded from decision-making in their places of work. In Germany and Scandinavia Works Councils and other forms of union-employer collaboration have made widely recognized contributions to economic growth and stability.

On May 16th 2020, 4,000 researchers from 650 universities around the world led by three women issued an urgent call to heed the lessons of the COVID-19 crisis and rewrite the rules of our economic systems to create a more democratic and sustainable society, respecting planetary boundaries and making life sustainable for all:

*Working humans are so much more than ‘resources.’ Caring for the sick; delivering food, medication, and other essentials; clearing away our waste; stocking the shelves and running the registers in our grocery stores – the people who have kept life going through the COVID-19 pandemic, especially women and minorities, are living proof that work cannot be reduced to a mere commodity. Human health and the care of the most vulnerable cannot be governed by market forces alone.*

We therefore recommend that the government:

- Establish a **Worker Participation Task Force** to explore and develop their proposals.

## 25. Buy Local, Buy BC

When consumer confidence is weak and businesses are struggling, Buy Local and Buy BC programs can help restore consumer demand and economic vitality. In addition to existing campaigns such as the Ministry of Agriculture’s Buy BC and other Buy Local initiatives, the use of alternative currencies and coupon incentives can reinvigorate local businesses.

During the Great Depression, when credit dried up, two Swiss businessmen realized that Swiss businesses owned an enormous store of material assets that could form the basis for trust in a new currency. They created the WIR economic circle, which was granted a bank license in 1936, enabling it to grow from 16 members in 1934 to 62,000 members in 2018, with three billion Swiss francs in assets and annual interest-free loans worth 6.5 billion francs. When Switzerland’s economy booms, the WIR is quiet; when confidence sags, businesses turn to the WIR. It is a self-regulating Keynesian system that keeps business rolling in difficult times, such as we face today. <sup>(See Footnote 50)</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> WIR: <https://www.wir.ch>, WIR Bank Report <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyQSNUH345Y>

We recommend that the government invite cooperative bids from non-profits to establish a community-based Buy BC Development Initiative, whose members would:

- a. Work with businesses to learn about and develop parallel currencies and similar initiatives
- b. Provide information sessions showcasing best practices from around the world on how parallel currencies have transformed communities
- c. Invite leaders from WIR and Sardex to address BC business leaders by Zoom, to spread awareness of this innovation.
- d. Develop and launch a parallel currency in a region of BC on a pilot basis.

## Conclusion

Our thanks for your consideration of these ideas. Members of the GTEC Council for a Green New Economy are willing to assist in work to assure a more sustainable, resilient province for future generations.

Sincerely,

GTEC Council Members:

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