

Dear Honourable Chrystia Freeland & Honourable Marc Garneau,

Canada is in a unique position to play a historic role in the fight against climate and biodiversity crises. In the face of the pandemic, we believe the concern for mitigating and preparing for these crises has grown. We understand that the federal government is under extreme pressure to respond to the pandemic and provide support to Canadians most impacted by this unprecedented situation. However, we would appeal to you to ensure that Canada's response plan takes a long-term vision for a better, more sustainable future that simultaneously addresses the current health crisis and the impending global environmental crises.

In our experience as the Climate Emergency Committee of Concordia University with affiliations and activities in many institutions, it is evident that at all levels of education in Quebec —students, committees, unions, educators, researchers and administrators— express deep concern over the impacts of climate change and the sixth mass extinction of species. The record-breaking climate crisis protests of September 2019 in Montreal, as well as over 4,500 other communities around the world, have shown that a substantial and ever-growing part of the population at home and abroad support significant government action concerning environmental issues.

Concordia University is among several universities across Canada that have committed to divest from fossil fuel industries. Institutions across Canada have made concerted efforts to do what is in their power to address these crises. The time has come for the Canadian federal government to fully support a rapid transition away from a fossil fuel economy. Canada has a climate plan that falls far short of what science says we need. We need to strengthen our international climate commitments, stop fossil fuel expansion, build a 100% renewable energy economy that respects Indigenous rights, and work for every person in Canada.

In the 2021 federal budget, we strongly support the government of Canada in its effort to initiate, expand and fortify the following commitments:

- Meet the national targets in the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 °C. Reduction in emissions observed during the COVID-19 pandemic is in the range needed to meet those targets<sup>1</sup>
- Promote the reduction of fossil fuel production in Canada. If we are to meet the 1.5 °C Paris agreement target, well over 85% of bitumen from the oil sands in Canada must remain in the ground<sup>2</sup>
- Transition oil sands workers to renewable energy professions, a 110 billion dollar investment to make sure no Canadian gets left behind in the energy transition<sup>3,4</sup>
- Transfer all federal subsidies from the fossil fuel sector to community-led renewable energy projects<sup>5</sup>

- Transfer technologies, research and other resources related to the environmental crises to countries of the global south
- Ensure federally budgeted organizations develop and implement plans to become carbon neutral organizations by the end of the decade (i.e. Canadian Union of Postal Workers Post's transition plan)<sup>6</sup>
- Evaluate the state of soil carbon in Canada and subsidize and maximize sustainable and regenerative agriculture practices
- Exceed protected areas targets set by Prime Minister Trudeau of saving 25% of land and 25% of marine habitats by 2025
- Expedite the electrification of transportation in Canada
- Expand public transportation, including high-speed rail, to create a land transportation network that will reduce the need for air travel
- Support the construction of greener buildings and retrofit old buildings to be efficient
- Support and research climate justice adaptation initiatives for Indigenous, Inuit and all other Canadian communities projected and currently affected by climate change and other environmental changes.

There have been multiple calls for Canada to treat the current situation as an opportunity to move away from its dependence on fossil fuels, to adopt more sustainable practices and to shift to a greener economy.<sup>7,8,9,10</sup> These include concrete suggestions from well-positioned experts on how to rise to this challenge to come out of the pandemic as a more sustainable and less unequal society. Please give these proposals the attention they deserve.

The Climate Emergency Committee  
Concordia University

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