

Alternative Mandate Letter on Climate and Energy

Send this letter and call on the Minister of the Environment to boldly commit to a Green New Deal, national transit, safe and accessible green public housing, Indigenous rights, and a just transition for workers and communities.

November 19, 2019

TO: The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change

CC: Prime Minister Trudeau and your Member of Parliament

Congratulations on your appointment to cabinet during the 43rd government of Canada.

While no party received a majority of seats in this last election, Canadians from coast-to-coast-to-coast overwhelmingly voted for parties that promised action on the climate crisis, pharmacare, electoral reform, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

The Council of Canadians is a grassroots-based social justice organization that advocates for clean water, fair trade, climate justice, public health care, and a vibrant democracy. In this minority parliament, the government will need to listen to Canadians and work to implement our priorities. Our supporters have tasked us with holding the government accountable and pushing for change on issues that matter to them. We issue you this mandate letter on behalf of our supporters.

In the election, you promised swift climate action, and Canadians share this urgent priority. The opportunity to take real climate action must be embraced if we are to meet our global targets. Your ministry must take action in line with climate science and Indigenous knowledge by implementing a plan to reduce emissions by at least 50 per cent by 2030 and 100 per cent by 2050, with annual, enforced targets. This means going above and beyond Canada's Paris Agreement commitments.

The federal government should enact legislation to create a comprehensive plan for a just transition for workers and communities as the economy moves to a low-carbon future. The legislation should incorporate the recommendations of the Task Force on Just Transition for Canadian Coal Power Workers and Communities, and the innumerable other demands and recommendations for transition planning generated by communities and civil society. This legislation should be in place for any sector or community impacted by the transformation needed to reach Canada's climate goals.

A Green New Deal for all will ensure that the economic transformation needed to make this happen is carried out equitably, is rooted in climate justice, respects the rights of Indigenous peoples, and creates over a million jobs in the process.

The federal government has a critical role to play. In order to reflect progressive priorities, ministers responsible for responding to the climate crisis must implement a just transition for workers and communities through a Green New Deal that leaves no one behind, and take the following actions:

– Acknowledge that there cannot be climate justice without justice for Indigenous peoples. It must centre on Indigenous self-determination, implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples, and respect Free, Prior and Informed Consent, treaties, and Aboriginal Title to Indigenous territories.

– Build green public housing that's accessible, affordable and safe. Decarbonize existing public housing stock and create carbon neutral communities with new net zero emissions public housing developments on the scale required by the climate and housing crises.

– Implement a federal transit strategy that integrates and expands urban, rural and intercity public transit. Phase-out transit fares and shift to a system of electrified, accessible public transit, integrated with expanded cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.

– Strengthen our democracy to ensure our society, governments, employers and corporations are accountable to climate action. Democratize our politics to reign in corporate control and increase the public's role in decisions about public spending, public policy and publicly-stewarded natural resources. Expand public services, including water, health care, energy, and transportation.

– Enable, fund and promote worker-led solutions to ensure the necessary transition is just, equitable and leaves no worker behind.

– Make clear policy links between climate, scarcity, conflict and migration by ensuring safety and justice for all. Implement migrant justice, anti-racism and equity measures, including ending the so-called Safe Third Country Agreement. Fund community-led resources that serve women and LGBTQ2S communities. Ensure a gender lens is applied to climate adaptation plans. Provide access to services and jobs, and grant these to all residents, regardless of their immigration status, ensuring access without fear.

– Ensure land use and planning serve ambitious climate goals by decarbonizing infrastructure and urban sprawl, and centering Indigenous rights in land-use planning. Ensure food security for all, and decarbonize our food system. Prioritize ecological restoration and reforestation, while combating desertification.

– Pay for a Green New Deal and a just transition for workers with new revenue sources that address inequality. Ensure billionaires and corporations pay their fair share through a variety of measures, including taxing billionaire wealth at 90 per cent, cracking down on tax havens, raising corporate tax rates, and ending fossil fuel subsidies, as well as demilitarizing the economy.

In this minority government, Canadians make up the balance of power. The Council of Canadians is committed to a Green New Deal for all.

The federal government must rise to the challenge of the climate crisis, while protecting those most impacted by it. Fundamentally, you have a responsibility to implement a just transition through a Green New Deal rooted in Indigenous rights, equity, climate justice, and workers' rights.

You have been entrusted with tremendous responsibility. We hope we can count on you to deliver this important mandate.

I await your response.