

# Real Solutions to the Climate Crisis

Real solutions to climate change invite a radical rethinking of the present economic system that is based on limitless growth and puts profit ahead of people and the planet. We need to question economies that offer huge bailouts to banks and businesses at great expense to taxpayers, but fail to invest great amounts in renewable energy and sustainable solutions. This same economic framework prioritizes large and expensive mega-projects both nationally and internationally that will do little to address climate change, ahead of small-scale community-based solutions that are less disruptive to people's lives and to ecosystems. We can work together to create happy, healthy and sustainable communities!



## Keep it in the ground!

Agreeing to a moratorium on all new exploration for fossil fuel resources is a logical first step in the shift off of fossil fuel dependency. We need a just transition to sustainable jobs and renewable energy sources. Continued expansion of oil and gas development is incompatible with a reduction in emissions. In Canada, we must continue to oppose the ongoing expansion of the tar sands (calling for a tar sands-free future) and the pursuit of oil and gas development in the Arctic. The climate crisis demands it - the tar sands are already causing serious social and ecological damage, as will development in the Arctic.

## Polluter Pays Principle

Global North countries must take responsibility for their historical emissions under the "polluter pays principle" established in the Kyoto Protocol. While the Canadian government insists that progress in climate change talks will not happen until the larger developing countries, such as China and Brazil, agree to specific reduction targets, the fact is that this demand goes against what Canada signed onto in the Kyoto Protocol. It also fails to recognize that Canada has not yet lived up to its own minimum targets under the Protocol. To suggest that Global South countries now have to restrict their development after industrialized countries have used up most of the atmospheric space in pursuit of their own advancement is both hypocritical and unjust.

Global North countries have acquired an ecological debt that they owe to Global South countries. Repayment of this debt is a condition of a just and fair international climate treaty. It requires Global North countries to commit to deep domestic GHG emission cuts. This means introducing new regulatory policies, consumption taxes and industry penalties that make polluters pay, while supporting actions that will help to transition people off fossil fuel dependency such as conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, public transit and sustainable agriculture. Repayment of climate debt also means that Global North countries assume the cost of technology transfer to ensure the sustainable development of Global South countries, adaptation costs, and accept responsibility for a just approach to mass migrations that will happen as a result of climate change.

One way that Global North countries can create a fund for their climate debt is the introduction of a Robin Hood Tax, better known as a Financial Transaction Tax (FTT). An FTT rate ranging from 0.01% to 0.1% could raise between US\$286 billion to US\$917 billion a year and could be directed towards a climate fund and other important social goals. Climate financing needs to be controlled and managed in accordance with democratic and equitable principles, include participatory planning, and not be reliant on carbon markets. You can sign your support for the Robin Hood Tax at: <http://www.kairosCanada.org/en/ecojustice/climate-change/robinhoodtax/>

## Buy less, Buy local

Consumerism, especially in the Global North and among elites in the Global South, is one of the main drivers of climate change. Reducing consumption is the first condition for mitigating climate change. More government resources are needed to encourage conservation and product longevity rather than consumption. Individuals, groups and organizations can also choose and promote a “buy less” ethic, looking to reuse and recycle before buying new “things.”

Buying local, sustainable and fair trade are the real “green” choices that challenge the inequitable global trade model. It helps reduce the greenhouse gasses (GHGs) involved in transporting goods, and helps to promote viable and sustainable industries and economies. Take, for example, supporting local, small-scale sustainable, organic farming. Industrial food processing and the logistics to transport food products thousands of kilometres to reach consumers, as well as the production of GHGs from intensive industrial livestock, are major causes of the climate crisis. Government resources should also support buying less and buying local. Municipal governments can do their part by prioritizing locally sourced products or local content rules for city contracts and challenge unsustainable free trade agreements. Find sample municipal-level resolutions at: [www.canadians.org](http://www.canadians.org).

The transition town (or transition initiative) movement is a community-led response to the pressures of climate change and fossil fuel depletion. The aim is to educate, raise awareness and take action by equipping communities to make the transition to sustainable living, building local ecological resilience, energy independence and building strong local economies.

## Green jobs

Expanding energy efficiency, public and community-owned renewable energy and public transit will help reduce emissions and generate new jobs. As many as 18,000 jobs are created for every \$1 billion of investment in energy conservation and renewable energy systems. The average renewable energy investment creates four times as many jobs as the same investment in the fossil fuel economy. Improvements in energy efficiency are some of the most effective methods dollar-for-dollar to reduce GHG emissions, and generate local job opportunities. The initial investment cost in retrofitting (or construction of new high performance buildings) is quickly recouped as savings on energy bills surpass the cost of investment. Our municipal, provincial and federal governments need to invest in these areas and commit to action plans with clear targets. Check out the recommendations for municipal, provincial and federal governments in the Council of Canadians and Canadian Labour Congress’ report, *Green Decent and Public* at: <http://canadians.org/energy/documents/climatejustice/green-decent-public.pdf>

## Climate Justice after Cochabamba: global movement acting for real solutions

In April 2010, Bolivian President Evo Morales held a conference in Cochabamba, Bolivia in response to the failed results of the 2009 UN Climate negotiations in Copenhagen. Close to 35,000 people, including people from social movements, Indigenous communities, NGOs and world governments attended. There were 17 working groups and numerous conference workshops and side events all aimed at coming up with just and viable solutions to climate change. For the first time in an international assembly, ordinary citizens from the Global South and social movements collaborated to find a way through this global crisis. The conclusions of the working groups were included in a “People’s Agreement,” which has been submitted to the United Nations under the UNFCCC by the Bolivian government. The Agreement calls for deep domestic emission reductions (without carbon offsets or emission trading) in Global North countries and significant climate financing that is independent of carbon markets and democratically controlled. Other key international actions moving forward as a result of the conference include a draft Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth, an International Climate and Environmental Justice Tribunal, and a global referendum on climate change. Find out more at: <http://pwccc.wordpress.com/>