



**Oxfam Canada Submission to the Government of Canada's Consultation
on a People-Centred Just Transition**

September 30, 2021

Oxfam Canada welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Government of Canada on the issue of just transition. Oxfam Canada addresses just transition from an intersectional feminist perspective, recognizing that intersecting factors such as gender, age, ability, race, ethnicity, and geography affect individuals' access to and control over resources and opportunities. We are encouraged by the government's emphasis on a people-centred approach that put workers and communities at the centre of the public policy and decision-making processes on the energy transition. We urge the government to ensure it is inclusive in its approach, and supports the effective participation and leadership by women, 2SLGBTQ people, and youth in all their diversity as it determines the pathways for a just transition to a net-zero, climate-resilient economy.

A Path to a Just, Resilient Future

A focus on just transition serves as a reminder that climate change mitigation and adaptation should be understood not only in terms of the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions drastically or adapt to changing conditions, but also as an opportunity to achieve multiple social, health and economic goals, such as:

- Creating good, decent jobs and opportunities for economic security.
- Providing universal social protections to ensure no one is left behind.
- Ending poverty and addressing factors that contribute to inequalities and heightened vulnerability to climate-related risks.
- Improving the quality and affordability of housing by enhancing energy efficiency, especially in units serving low-income households.
- Addressing climate-related health impacts, particularly in low-income and marginalized communities, and supporting communities in meeting their care needs so as to strengthen people's resilience to climate change.

An inclusive approach to just transition is likely to result in a fairer distribution of benefits, particularly if initiatives are designed to address inequalities that limit participation of previously discriminated and marginalized groups in economic sectors or government programs.

COVID-19 & Climate Change: Heightened Vulnerabilities, Unequal Impacts

The social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many of the vulnerabilities that women and gender diverse people in Canada confront. From higher rates of job loss, increased care responsibilities, and challenges in terms of re-entry into the job market, women have experienced hardships throughout this crisis. Black, Indigenous, and racialized women, as well as 2SLGBTQ+ people, have been

particularly affected as intersecting factors of discrimination have limited their access to resources and opportunities.

Similar to challenges experienced through the pandemic, systemic inequalities that many women and gender diverse people confront ultimately mean that they have less access to resources and opportunities that could help them cope and adapt to climate-related risks and impacts. Yet while climate change impacts are not experienced equally, Canada's climate strategies should deliver equal opportunities for people to participate in, and benefit from, initiatives aimed at supporting a just transition. To do so, policies and programs must address systemic inequalities that continue to limit women's ability to access training and well-paid green jobs. A failure to do so may risk exacerbating existing inequalities. Further, Canada should broaden its consideration of sectors involved in a just transition to include care work and other essential services required to build a climate-resilient society in which people are able to respond and adapt to climate-related risks.

Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) and Rights-Based Approaches in Guiding the Just Transition

Since 2015, the Government of Canada has committed to implementing GBA+ across federal departments with the aim of ensuring that policies, programs and legislation are more inclusive and responsive to specific needs of diverse groups of people. In determining Canada's path towards a just transition, undertaking a robust GBA+ will be critical in developing policies, programs and initiatives that deliver benefits across society and work towards eliminating injustices and inequalities that may otherwise be replicated or intensified in efforts to address the transition to a green economy.

Canada's current climate plan, *A Healthy Environment and A Healthy Economy (HEHE)*, includes a preliminary GBA+. However, to what extent the HEHE and related just transition initiatives are effective in addressing issues of inequality and distribution of benefits will be highly dependent on how the GBA+ is used in the implementation phase, as the HEHE plan's lacks both targeted funding and initiatives to address gender inequalities in the context of climate change. In addition, GBA+ should be a participatory process in which diverse populations and groups are directly engaged in decision-making and program implementation. Bringing marginalized voices into policymaking spaces will ensure Canada's climate actions are more responsive and equitable.

Canada should uphold its human rights obligations during the just transition and incorporate explicit human rights provisions within the *Just Transition Act*. The energy transition should not only uphold human rights in the phase-out of high-carbon energy sources – like coal, oil and gas – but also in ramping up green industries and technologies, such as renewable power generation or mining for battery technology supply chains. Without strong human rights provisions to minimize adverse impacts, Canada risks replicating or exacerbating some of the inequalities and injustices that exist in our current energy economy. Specific provisions around women's rights, gender rights, Indigenous rights and labour rights are fundamental in the just transition.

Feedback on the Just Transition Principles and the Just Transition Advisory Body

1. **Ensure the meaningful participation of women, gender diverse people and other marginalized groups in developing and implementing just transition legislation, policies and initiatives.** Ensure governance structures, such as a Just Transition Advisory Body, include representatives from marginalized groups and people or organizations with expertise in intersectional gender-based analysis.
2. **Conduct stakeholder mappings to identify more broadly the populations and groups affected by the energy transition** beyond obvious target populations, such as current workers in the fossil fuel extraction sectors. Partner with women's rights organizations and other community groups representing

underrepresented, racialized or Indigenous populations to widen engagement and better distribute benefits of just transition initiatives.

3. **Expand the scope of just transition to include how the care needs of communities will continue to be met**, given that shifting labour markets in the energy sector could change people's need for and access to health care, elder care, child care and other care sectors. Provide financial support to ensure provinces, territories, municipalities and Indigenous governments maintain strong public services and decent jobs in the care sectors despite any reductions in government revenues due to the transition.
4. **Apply intersectional gender-based analysis (GBA+) and a rights-based approach in the development and implementation of just transition legislation, strategies and initiatives.** Include explicit human rights provisions and GBA+ requirements in all legislation governing federal action on just transition. Compile and use intersectional gender disaggregated data to inform policy decisions, and share this data publicly. Examine the economic, social, environmental, and health benefits and adverse impacts of just transition legislation or other policies and initiatives, and how these differ for women, gender-diverse people, low-income people and other marginalized groups in particular.
5. **Examine and dismantle structural barriers that prevent or constrain marginalized groups from participating in and benefitting from just transition initiatives.** Provide financial, technical, practical supports that could enable marginalized groups to engage in just transition initiatives and opportunities.