



SUMMARY

Green Strings:

Principles and conditions for a green recovery from COVID-19 in Canada

Vanessa Corkal, Philip Gass, and Aaron Cosbey

We are at a historic turning point the likes of which none of us have ever seen or will likely see again. The global health crisis—terrible as it is—has forced us to pursue recovery on a scale that will transform our economy and society, with lasting impacts on our ability to confront another urgent crisis—climate change. We stand at a threshold of opportunity where we can align our efforts for post-pandemic reconstruction with the challenge of meeting Canada’s climate goals.

But this will only happen if it happens deliberately. That is, we must impose standards and conditions on bailouts, stimulus, and recovery spending to ensure that they are in sync with the ambitious climate change outcomes that Canadians need and expect.

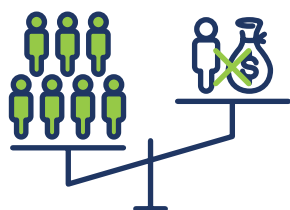
The arguments for such conditions are straightforward. Given the levels of spending involved, actively steering outcomes is the government’s right and duty. As well, green recovery measures are proven to create jobs and spur economic growth, which will contribute to the creation of a low-carbon economy where workers and communities can thrive. Finally, there is strong public support for ensuring a green recovery—a recent [Abacus Data survey](#) in Canada shows the majority of respondents agreed that the government’s COVID-19 response must not back away from climate change efforts. Indeed, recovery efforts *must* be green if we are to address the climate and biodiversity crises along with the linkages between planetary health and human health.

To ensure a green recovery, clear guidelines are needed. **The following seven “green strings” should be attached to COVID-19 recovery measures announced by Canada’s government.** “Green strings” are those key principles, criteria, and conditionalities that are critical to apply to our ongoing economic stimulus and recovery efforts.



1. Financial support to industry must include conditions for a zero-emission transition.

It is crucial that support aligns with the goal of net-zero GHG emissions by 2050, and thereby keeps us from getting locked into unsustainable paths.



2. Apply strict financial conditions to increase financial stability, secure jobs, and incentivize low-carbon transition.

This includes measures such as ensuring climate risk disclosure and prohibiting both buybacks and shareholder dividend payouts.



3. Ensure recovery is worker-focused and accelerates and enables a just transition.

With massive layoffs resulting from COVID-19, linking support to worker conditions must be a priority. We must also ensure a just transition for those who must transition from high-carbon sectors.



4. Support the evolution and creation of the sectors and infrastructure of tomorrow.

Government support should prioritize low-carbon sectors while striving for tangible social and economic benefits for communities.



5. Protect, follow, and strengthen environmental regulations and climate policy frameworks during recovery.

Canada must not backtrack on environmental commitments and needs to pursue policies that put us on the right track.



6. Ensure transparency and accountability.

Details of federal spending should be publicly available, and the conditionality of funds provided should be enforced.



7. Support must contribute to increased equity and well-being, leaving no one behind.

We must address the inequities in our society if we are to truly build back better.

Canada has an unprecedented opportunity to alter its course and move toward a low-carbon economy that benefits communities in long-lasting and meaningful ways. **This is the moment to move collectively at a global scale to build a better future.** We can and must use the current window to pivot to a sustainable and equitable economy through a decisive and principled approach. The stakes are high.

