

To: **People-Centred Just Transition – Federal Government Consultation**  
Natural Resources Canada  
Government of Canada

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**Seniors for Climate Action Now ! (SCAN!)** is an organization of Ontario-based seniors that formed last year to demand action to address the climate emergency. We organized ourselves during the COVID-19 emergency with hope and determination to offer our contribution to respond to the urgency of the planet's broader environmental crisis. We are determined to act for ourselves, for today's youth and the generations to come to address this exigency and the challenges it presents.

Our experience and analysis tells us that we will not be able to address the climate emergency without concurrently addressing the needs of indigenous nations, workers, racialized peoples and their respective communities.

Our submission reflects our platform,  
[Seniors For Climate Action Now! \(SCAN!\) Platform September 2021<sup>1</sup>](#).

## **1/ People-Centred Just Transition – Federal Government Consultation**

### **Climate Emergency**

We share the climate emergency with everyone on the planet. The experience of extreme weather is a common occurrence across the globe and in Canada. The continued growth in the burning of fossil fuels, and the resultant rise in GHG emissions puts us on a path to disaster. Many scientific and international reports have sounded the alarm. Not to do what is required will lead to irreversible

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<sup>1</sup> Available on our web-site: <https://seniorsforclimateactionnow.org>

climate disruption and the undermining of all life on the planet. The only hope lies in a huge and rapid reduction in GHG emissions

This requires a staged and managed phase out of oil and gas supply.

The Canadian economy relies heavily on fossil fuels production and consumption. About 77% of our domestic end-use energy consumption is fossil fuels. This must change, and the change presents both threats and opportunities. The economic threats are to those whose livelihoods are tied to jobs in the fossil fuel sector and related fields and to those industries and sectors where energy consumption is a significant portion of the sector's economy. The opportunities will be in a green economic transition that guarantees those workers equivalent incomes and good jobs. We support a national commitment to good, well-paying jobs that should be extended to all workers affected in this green economic transition.

### **A Just Transition will require Climate Justice**

The climate crisis has already deepened social inequities and vulnerability for the poor and the homeless, racialized communities, Indigenous Peoples and working-class neighbourhoods. The transition to a low-carbon economy needs to be an opportunity to expand human and labour rights and improve conditions for justice and equality. Otherwise, the transition can lead to severe problems. For example,

- The reduced use and elimination of fossil fuels could result in thousands of workers being cast aside and hundreds of communities devastated.
- The drive to Zero emission vehicles could set up a scramble for scarce mineral resources, which would leave more people dispossessed or caught in forced labour.
- The shift to hydro electric power could mean more mega project reservoirs which destroy the land and violate the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Instead, the commitment to a Just Transition must be a commitment to social and climate justice.

Climate justice is where the climate crisis and basic rights meet---human rights, Indigenous Peoples' rights and labour rights.

SCAN! joins with those who are committed to climate justice. For us that means:

- Recognition that those least responsible for GHG emissions are those most affected by the climate emergency.
- Recognition that climate destruction can and will undermine the basic rights of many people.
- Financial and social support and safe harbour to be provided to those displaced by the climate emergency.
- Legislation that establishes human rights and labour rights that place race, gender and class at the centre of climate solutions.
- Developing a climate framework that reflects the voice and vision, the needs and the aspirations of those on the front lines of the climate emergency.
- Shifting public resources from Big Fossil to communities and those people who are building climate and sustainable economic solutions from the ground up.
- Resources to communities which are combating environmental racism.
- Full recognition of Indigenous Rights, including the right to their land back or, when this is not possible, the right to just compensation for their territories which have been confiscated or used without their free, prior and informed consent.

### **A Just Transition Requires a Just Transition in our relationship with Indigenous Peoples**

Indigenous Peoples are and will be disproportionately affected by the climate crisis. A continued fossil-fuel driven economy will also result in further negative consequences for Indigenous Peoples. The legacy of colonialism, both past and present, has shaped federal climate policies e.g.: giving free access for fossil fuel extraction and transportation on Indigenous lands. There is a continuity with the policies that led to the abduction, abuse and often death of Indigenous children in the residential school system. Canada's commitment to fossil fuel production is linked to, and dependent upon, the government's ongoing colonial relationship to Indigenous Peoples.

- We will need to change Canadian laws and practices that reinforce access to and control over Indigenous traditional territories by and for fossil fuel and extractive industries. Most of the natural resources which have

powered Canada's economic growth are located in or near Indigenous territory.

- Indigenous Peoples' rights and relations with their traditional territories and waters are seen as a threat to fossil fuel and resource extraction-based development. At the same time, the extraction and production of fossil fuels that generate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have polluted the land and water and the air, destroyed the livelihoods and undermined the health of Indigenous Peoples.
- Indigenous Peoples have been excluded from federal government decision making tables on climate policy.
- Indigenous Peoples should be full participants in the development of federal, provincial, territorial and municipal climate policies, and climate plans implemented should have the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples.
- Canada needs a new climate plan that centres the voices, wisdom, needs, stewardship and leadership of Indigenous communities, nations, and peoples and recognizes the free, prior and informed consent in nation-to-nation negotiations – a precondition to establishing respectful relationships between First Nations, Metis and Inuit and Canadian governments.

A Just Transition will need to recognize that meaningful reconciliation requires:

- Action on the 94 calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)
- Full justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- Full and effective implementation of UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments.

SCAN! also stands with Indigenous Peoples in their calls for recognition of treaty rights and agreements. We support their 'land back' demands to re-establish authority and sovereignty over their traditional land and territories. And we support their efforts at preserving language and traditions and ensuring food sovereignty, housing and clean air and water.

## **What workers will need in a Just Transition**

SCAN! supports workers and their unions in demanding income and job guarantees.

- 1/ When workers are affected, they will need, at a minimum, an income guarantee and access to an equivalent job.
  
- 2/ When communities are affected, they will need substantive income, job and economic supports. Resources for Indigenous workers and communities controlled by Indigenous People will need to be provided.
  
- 3/ Legislation that will enshrine basic rights, including labour and human rights.
  
- 4/ Employment policies with rights that will address the concerns of equity seeking groups. Too often, equity seeking groups such as women, racialized and immigrant workers are the last hired and the first to be laid off. A Just Transition requires equal rights for all

## **A Just Transition will require an Economic Transformation**

As fossil fuel production is scaled back, the economy will have to change dramatically. The transition to a low carbon economy will involve expanding renewable energy. Enormous job opportunities exist in both the end of the “old” economy and the creation of the “new.” As oil and gas production is phased out workers will need to decommission abandoned wells and be involved in a massive remedial effort to restore destroyed land and water systems. The transition to a low carbon economy requires changing what and how we produce as well as addressing how ‘wastes’ are safely incorporated into natural systems, reused or recycled. The shift to renewables will see the creation of hundreds of thousands of jobs in a range of related activities from installing and generating renewable capacity, to distribution and energy storage systems to deep energy retrofits in residential, commercial and institutional buildings.

Reduced energy use will impose hardships unless it is accompanied by a social and economic transition to shift us to a new economy that values health, housing, food security, education, care, support and culture, over the current economy that encourages the unrestrained consumption of carbon intensive goods. This shift will require a commitment to 'a Caring Economy'. We will need to significantly increase social investment to build and sustain the caring and care-taking economy.

### **The Caring Economy**

This pandemic period has made it abundantly clear that what really matters in our communities is how we care for one another, the conditions under which care providers work and the importance of community solidarity. People from all walks of life have also suggested that the consumption of things is less important than the quality of life. As part of a broader economic transition, the metrics we use to measure the economy need to shift from narrow constructs of GDP growth, productivity and efficiency to broader measures of health and social well being.

The caring economy will be built on gender and racial equality, social well-being, and environmental sustainability. Strengthening the caring aspects of the economy requires:

- Substantial investments in social and physical infrastructure
- Expansion of public services to support people and their communities.
- Developing new initiatives in childcare, healthcare and social care
- Providing affordable housing, public transit and post secondary education.
- Adopting a care-taking approach to the natural environment

### **2/ Just Transition Advisory Body**

This consultation has also requested input on how Advisory bodies should assist the federal government in developing a Just Transition.

- A Just Transition plan for Canada must be developed in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples, on a nation to nation basis and with their free, prior and informed consent.

- A Just Transition plan for communities, especially for those communities with extensive fossil fuel production or with related industries or significant energy use as part of their industry must involve the participation of those affected.
- A Just Transition plan needs to involve the participation of those affected. SCAN! supports the establishment of new accountability structures in the design and delivery of the plan.
- A Just Transition plan that will lead an economic transformation fuelled by a shift to clean, renewable energy has to start with clear, meaningful and ambitious commitments to those whose jobs and livelihoods will be disrupted by the shift off fossil fuels. A comprehensive approach will be required that focuses on workers and communities in fossil fuel dependent locations but also those whose jobs are indirectly supported by the production, distribution, processing and use of fossil fuel products.
- A Just Transition plan needs to support a broad and inclusive transition that places race, gender and class at the centre of climate solutions and engages with racialized community and women's organizations representatives to ensure equitable solutions are developed.
- SCAN! supports a Just Transition plan that will reflect the voice and vision, the needs and the aspirations of those on the front lines of the climate emergency.