

August 4, 2020 - No. 52

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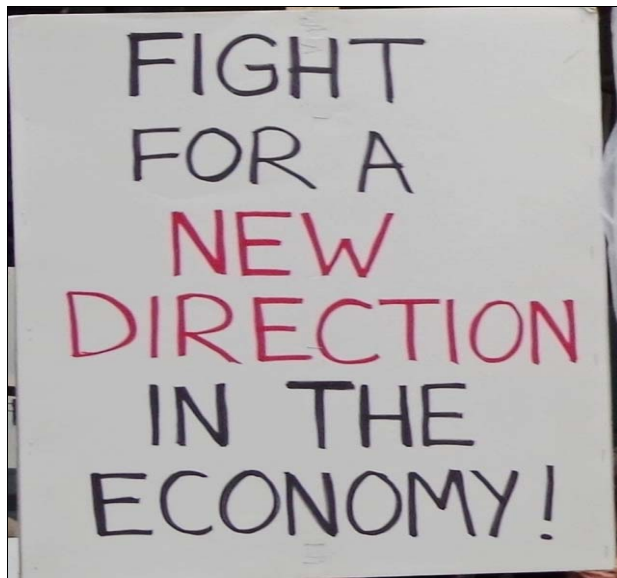
Discussion on a New Direction for the Economy

**The Demand for a New Pro-Social Direction for the
Economy and Country Begins to Take Hold**

The demand to stop paying the rich and increase investments in social programs is taking hold in Canada with various unions adding their voices to the discussion and making demands. The need to increase investments in social programs and set a new pro-social direction for the economy and for the working people to control the decisions which affect their lives is very great. *Workers' Forum* calls on all workers to add their voices by raising their own demands and claims on what belongs to them by right.

In a press release the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) comments on the Alternative Federal Budget Recovery Plan released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) on July 21.

PSAC joins with the CCPA in calling for "an investment-based approach" to recover from the current economic crisis. Crucial in the recovery, PSAC says, is to recognize that the crisis has "severely impacted women and Black, Indigenous and racialized families and workers." In warning against austerity measures, PSAC says a focus is needed on "action to ensure that in the next months and years we correct the deepening crisis that Canadians are facing."



Affordable Child Care

A key sector for public investment, PSAC says, is affordable child care, "which includes \$4.5 billion for early learning and child care." To accomplish this requires construction of an "accessible, affordable, quality, inclusive system of early learning and child care" where workers receive wages and benefits befitting educators.

Modernize Employment Insurance

PSAC insists that a radical improvement to the employment insurance (EI) system was "already necessary prior to the pandemic and has become critical." Changes to EI "would improve access by reducing qualifying hours, raise benefit rates and weeks and ensure that those with responsibilities to care for others have access to specific benefits."

Security for Post-Secondary Students and Workers

PSAC writes that investments must be made to make tuition free for post-secondary students and increased funding must be made available for retraining and research. PSAC says post-secondary education should be universal, accessible and come under public administration.

Keep Public Services Public

PSAC calls for an end to privatization. Through an expanded public service an effort must be made to bring privatization to an end. Workers must be guaranteed wages and benefits agreeable to themselves such as paid sick leave and must be equipped with whatever they need to do their jobs safely.

PSAC calls for expansion of "public services such as seniors' care, childcare, and affordable housing" and demands that "infrastructure projects remain in public hands." Public services should be provided all the resources and personnel they need to meet the needs of the people and "correct the gaps in policy and service delivery that have been highlighted by the pandemic."



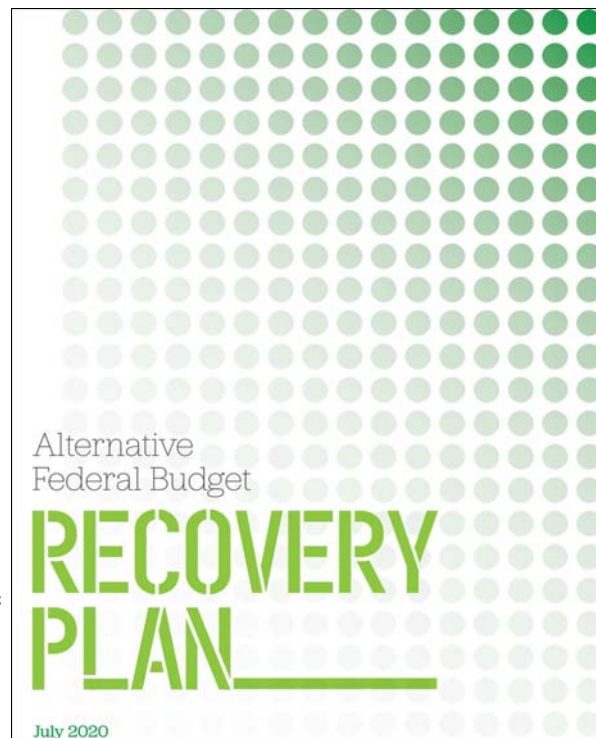
Recovery Plan Released by Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Discussion is growing regarding the necessity for a new direction for the economy to stop paying the rich and increase investments in social programs. With the release of its Recovery Plan the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) makes a contribution to the discussion.

Workers' Forum is publishing Part I of highlights of the Alternative Federal Budget Recovery Plan released by the CCPA on July 21. All quotations are from the Plan.

CCPA writes, "Let's be clear: a pandemic was never a question of 'if' but a question of 'when.' Lessons from SARS in the early-2000s taught us that we should prepare. Public health officials warned, year in and year out, that we should prepare. Government austerity agendas -- fuelled by neo-liberal ideology that privileged the 'free market' over public health and community well-being -- left us unprepared, and expected women and families to pick up the slack.

"The same governments that ignored the warnings have pursued an expanding trade agenda that deliberately constrains our ability to intervene in the economy or the environment. Proponents of this agenda promised it would lead to 'jobs, jobs, jobs,' rising productivity, and sustainable economic growth. The actual results do not bear this out. In fact, the COVID-19 crisis has exposed Canada's disproportionate reliance on the export of raw and semi-processed resources, notably fossil fuels."



CCPA insists the "old normal" is unacceptable and cannot continue. It writes:

"This pandemic is forcing us into a new chapter of history. We will be judged by what we do next. And we will be judged by what we fail to do.

"COVID-19 exposed the impossibility of a healthy economy without a healthy society. The status quo is no longer an option. This is our chance to bend the curve of public policy toward justice, well-being, solidarity, equity, resilience, and sustainability. These are not just words. These are the conditions upon which we rebuild."

Housing

CCPA writes, "The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of housing as an underpinning factor for protecting people and public health" and voices support for "the right to housing in Canada."

History has proved that the right to housing cannot be affirmed and guaranteed when private construction and investment trust companies control Canada's housing development. The CCPA program does not explore any alternatives to housing development captured within pay the rich schemes.

Agriculture

CCPA writes, "COVID-19 has disrupted agriculture most visibly where serious outbreaks of the virus have caused mass illness or death. This was a major problem in large meatpacking plants, where conditions are close and there was not adequate protection for line workers, and on some farms that depend on temporary foreign workers. Far too many of these workers paid for their employer's neglect with their lives.... Their deaths, serious illness, and mistreatment highlight the exploitation at the centre of our 'normal' food system."

CCPA suggests the farm sector generally would benefit from supply management as it exists today with dairy, broiler chickens, turkeys, eggs, and hatching eggs. CCPA writes, "Since these sectors are distributed across Canada, have smaller processing facilities, do not rely on exports, and production levels are governed by the farmers themselves through quotas, impacts on individual farmers and the food system have been less severe than in beef and pork.

"Local and regional abattoirs serving smaller-scale farmers were already stretched and are now booked up many months ahead. The need for more local and regional capacity is clear, as livestock producers are facing severe delays or simply cannot get their animals butchered."



CCPA proposes to "shut down the Industry Strategy Table, the federal government's advisory panel for a corporate-led COVID-19 recovery, and disband the Agri-Food Table, the committee of agribusiness executives appointed by Finance Minister Bill Morneau to develop policy for intensifying extractive, export-oriented agriculture through digitization, deregulation, and automation."

CCPA proposes to "Reform the Temporary Foreign Worker Program to ensure workers are

guaranteed safe working and living conditions, as well as the ability to change employers and speak up without fear of deportation. The reforms will also ensure that they are granted permanent resident status on arrival."

CCPA also proposes to "ban lobbying by agribusinesses and their associations. Develop, revitalize, and support institutions for democratic control of the food system, such as supply management; single-desk marketing agencies; producer, consumer, worker, and multi-stakeholder co-operatives; land trusts; strategic reserves; public research institutions; and community food hubs, farmers' markets, and CSAs."

CCPA wants to "incentivize and support the development of domestic food production and processing, to provide Canadian residents with a balanced, seasonal diet, reducing our dependence on imports, retaining more food dollars within Canada, and limiting exposure to the volatility of foreign markets."

With this emphasis on local production, control and sales the CCPA demands Canada "withdraw from trade agreements and negotiate international solidarity agreements that impel a virtuous circle that enhances justice, equity, diversity, and resilience among trading partners.... Re-establish and expand the Canadian Wheat Board ... and return to single-desk marketing; reinstating domestic market share taken via trade deals from Canada's supply-managed sectors. [...] Orient agricultural policy toward stability, resilience, self-reliance, and democratic governance by reducing integration with the U.S. economy and its regulatory framework."

Arts and Culture

CCPA writes, "Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey suggests 192,300 workers in the information, culture, and recreation industries lost their jobs between February and May 2020; employment declined from 778,700 to 586,400 -- a 24.7 per cent drop. As of May 27, 2020, an independent survey of 800 of Canada's 726,000 culture workers confirmed the cancellation or potential loss of 28,000 jobs, representing over \$20 million in lost income.... COVID-19 has blatantly exposed the long-standing, well-documented precariousness of the cultural sector. As Canada transitions from crisis to recovery, many arts sector workers will remain in untenable circumstances due to the anticipated extended delays in reopening arts and cultural venues."

CCPA "proposes income relief measures to support cultural workers through mid- and long-term transitions into new and unknown realities [and] to develop responsive programs for unique, local, community, and social re-stabilization needs that are supported federally and delivered locally."

Child Care

CCPA emphasizes, "Never has child care been more vulnerable -- and more essential. It has taken a public health crisis for the essential role of early learning and child care to be widely recognized, and for the fragility of Canada's provision to be laid bare. Early learning and child care in Canada was fragile before the pandemic hit because it is market-based, fragmented, and under-funded. Most licensed programs primarily rely on parent fee revenue.

"The predominantly female workforce earns low wages and any raise in compensation translates into higher parent fees, as do any other quality improvements. As a result, recruitment and retention of qualified early childhood educators is a perpetual serious concern."

CCPA points out, "A recent survey of licensed child care centres in Canada confirms that 70 per cent laid off all or part of their workforce during the emergency response phase of the pandemic, and more than one-third of the centres across Canada are uncertain about reopening. The early learning

and child care sector could lose thousands of educators who will not return to low-wage work when other employment opportunities open up again."



CCPA demands, "The construction of an accessible, affordable, quality, inclusive system of early learning and child care, with fairly compensated early childhood educators at its heart is now essential if Canada is to forge a resilient and just future, and also become the best possible place for children."

It writes, "Before parents of young children can return to work, they need access to affordable child care programs that meet their diverse needs. This is particularly true for mothers, who have suffered disproportionately through the pandemic. As one economist states: 'There can be no recovery without a she-covery; and there can be no

she-covery without childcare.' (Armine Yalnizyan) The evidence providing the rationale for, and value of, a universal child care system has been well established over the last few decades and is now the norm in many countries. While even countries with established universal child care systems continue to struggle to remedy inequality of access for less advantaged populations, the evidence still shows that a universal system is the best approach to advancing equity in child care. Given that the pandemic has disproportionately impacted families facing various and often inter-related systemic barriers, building a universal system in Canada is all the more urgent -- one that would make early learning and child care 'accessible and affordable for all families and inclusive of children regardless of ability, economic, cultural or linguistic circumstances, where they live in Canada or whether their parents are in or out of the workforce, studying or working non-standard hours.'

"Federal leadership, including bold, accelerated federal spending, is needed to expedite Canada's move from the market-based provision of early learning and care to a publicly managed and fully publicly funded system."

CCPA calls for the implementation of an updated Affordable Child Care for ALL starting with, "\$2.5 billion for early learning and child care in new federal transfers to the provinces/territories and Indigenous communities to support the safe and full recovery of regulated child care as part of the re-opening of the economy.

"In the second phase, the plan proposes federal spending of \$2 billion on early learning and child care in 2021-22. This base would be increased each year after by \$2 billion (that is, \$4 billion in 2022-23, \$6 billion in 2023-24, etc.). The federal funds would be used to move Canada toward a fully publicly funded system, in partnership with the provinces, territories, and Indigenous governments."



CCPA insists, "Agreements with each province and territory would ensure that the federal funds are

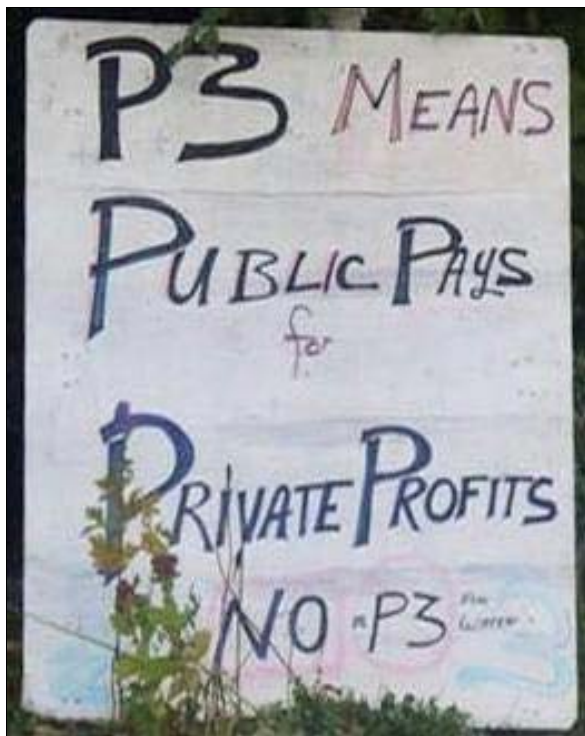
used for: A safe restart of child care programs; Restoration and expansion of the number of licensed child care spaces that existed prior to the pandemic; Increases in wages and other compensation for those who work in early learning and child care to ensure the return and retention of staff to the sector; Stabilization of parent fees, and reductions to the extent possible; and Interim full-day child care programs for school age children 12 years of age and younger until schools are re-opened."

CCPA writes, "Research shows investments in early learning and child care pay for themselves by enabling women to enter the paid labour market. Socialization opportunities are also essential for children's well-being, especially since many have been isolated due to the necessary COVID-19 shutdown."

Cities and Infrastructure

CCPA says, "The crisis is further exposing the weakness of public-private partnerships (P3s). When big shocks happen, projects are disrupted and revenues disappear. When deals go bad, ultimately, governments are on the hook. Private investors get the profit while public coffers cover the risk."

With regards to cities, CCPA proposes to "ease the municipal budget crunch through an immediate transfer of \$15 billion to cities. This amount will cover unforeseen COVID-19 related expenses and revenue shortfalls. It will also provide stabilization funds for health, child care, and social services. Public safety and equity should guide decision-making about municipal services, not an artificial scarcity of resources."



CCPA wants to "divert all new Canada Infrastructure Bank projects away from P3s and toward projects that are entirely publicly financed, owned, operated, and maintained."

It should be noted that CCPA does not include publicly built projects as a crucial aspect of a new direction even though construction constitutes the largest investment of public funds for infrastructure.

CCPA wants to "negotiate new funding agreements with provinces, territories, municipalities, and Indigenous communities to expand public ownership and facilitate infrastructure projects based on a set of national priorities, including a national public transit strategy, decarbonization, care economy investments, and universal access to broadband. These agreements will be designed to achieve a broad range of policy objectives, such as poverty

reduction, equity, and community economic development."

CCPA suggests projects should include: "Universal access to affordable broadband internet. Critical social infrastructure projects in neglected but critically important service areas that have been overlooked because of the communities they serve or the demographics of their workers. This includes investments in child care, long-term care, recreational facilities, cultural infrastructure, homelessness, harm reduction, and other social support services that disproportionately impact women, members of the trans and non-binary community, Indigenous and racialized communities, people with disabilities, and immigrants."

Public investment should include:

"- Expanding public transit projects like rapid transit priority lanes that reduce commuter times, and get people out of cars and onto public transit.

"- Expanding alternative transportation infrastructure, such as bike lanes, trails, sidewalks, and car-free zones to promote cycling, walkability, and healthier lifestyles.

"- Expanding clean electricity and zero-emission infrastructure projects, including the production and transmission of energy as well as within the transportation system.

"- Expanding adaptation and resilience initiatives to prepare infrastructure for higher frequency and more extreme weather events.

"- Resource efficiency projects that extend the life of products, expand re-use and recycling capacity, and divert waste from landfills and incineration.

"- District energy projects that expand centralized production of thermal energy for heating and hot water.

"- High-speed rail expansion to create more efficient intercity travel within the Windsor-Toronto-Quebec City corridor, Calgary-Edmonton, Vancouver-Portland, and other regions.

"- Limiting urban sprawl and encouraging brownfield rehabilitation, encouraging the cleanup and reuse of existing urban land -- projects that create more compact dense cities that are less reliant on car-ownership for mobility."

The CCPA plan "recognizes the dysfunctional nature of municipal funding arrangements and addresses the problem in the short-, medium-, and long-term by increasing federal funding for physical and social infrastructure in order to improve and expand vitally necessary public services. These investments will foster community well-being, public ownership, inclusive economic initiatives, and city resilience."

(To be continued.)



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