

# Just Recovery Ontario – A Plan for an Equitable Recovery

## SUMMARY

**Governments have to commit to the following 5 steps to build a recovery that works for all**

- **Create adequate and accessible income supports**
- **Ensure decent work with fair pay, benefits & protections in safe workplaces**
- **Expand and preserve safe, adequate and affordable housing**
- **Invest in access to basic services like childcare, transportation, digital access and eldercare**
- **Establish tax policies that make sure people with the highest incomes pay their fair share**

The pandemic starkly showed just how badly our support systems work for people who face marginalization due to poverty, oppression and inequality. That marginalization resulted in bigger impacts from COVID-19 for many people, including people who are homeless, living on low incomes, women, newcomers, Black, Indigenous, people of colour, seniors, LGBTQ2SI+, people with disabilities, precarious and informal workers, migrant workers, sex workers, students, incarcerated and detained people and those who have or are experiencing violence.

It is time we fixed our safety net to guarantee quality living conditions for all communities. COVID-19 has proven that governments can act swiftly to change policies and create programs. We need to take action now.

## **Governments have to commit to the following 5 steps to achieve an equitable recovery**

### **Create adequate and accessible income supports**

A single person in financial need receives \$733 per month from Ontario Works or \$1,169 from the Ontario Disability Support Program, which keeps people in deep poverty. By setting the CERB at \$2,000 a month the Federal Government confirmed that amount is the minimum income needed to live on. The government also made the applications processes for CERB less onerous and intrusive, showing that we can have simple, accessible systems for income supports.

*Action - Improve income supports to a minimum of \$2,000 a month, and ensure they are genuinely accessible to everyone who needs them and supported by publicly-funded basic services.*

### **Ensure decent work with fair pay and benefits in safe workplaces with stronger employee protections**

All working people need to be paid livable wages in safe workplaces with appropriate benefits including paid sick days. They need real employee protections that support them when they are exposed to unsafe or unfair treatment. These protections need to apply to all workers, including informal workers, migrant workers and people without status.

*Action - The Ontario Government needs to establish a livable minimum wage of at least \$15 and ensure benefits and employment standards that keep people safe at work and empower them to stay home, with at least 10, legislated, employer funded sick days when they are ill.*

## **Expand and preserve safe, adequate and affordable housing**

Too many people are homeless, living in substandard housing, precariously housed, or paying unaffordable rents. They all faced far greater risks from COVID-19. In response to the pandemic, thousands of people were moved into housing, showing we can create affordable homes when we make it a priority. Now we need all levels of government to invest in keeping those new affordable homes, and in building more affordable housing. We also need to keep rents low on the affordable homes we have, by getting rid of vacancy decontrol in favour of real rent control.

*Action – All levels of government should retain newly created “temporary” affordable homes; expand investment in new affordable housing that people can afford on 30% of their incomes as well as, supportive housing and transitional housing; bring in real rent control and ensure an expansion of co-op and nonprofit housing to keep housing affordable.*

## **Invest in access to basic services like childcare, transportation, digital access and eldercare**

During the pandemic we saw critical systems like childcare, transportation, and eldercare collapse, showing how fragile and poorly supported those services are. We saw how significant the digital divide has been and how important digital access will be from now on. These services will depend on more stable funding from all levels of government to be genuinely reliable, accessible and affordable.

*Action - Provide stable funding and support from all levels of government for affordable, accessible, quality childcare, eldercare and transportation services. Create workable systems that improve universal access to digital devices and reliable internet services.*

## **Establish tax policies that make sure people pay their fair share**

Ensuring that we support people effectively requires investment. Despite calls for austerity, the pandemic has made it crystal clear that we can't afford not to invest. Poverty in Ontario costs us over \$27 billion per year. Organizations like the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Canadians for Tax Fairness and even the National Post have criticized gaps and loopholes in the tax system. The resulting income inequality has created record numbers of billionaires while many face deepening poverty. Closing loopholes and sweet deals on things like capital gains taxes, dividend taxes, and offshore tax havens would generate literally tens of billions in new revenue, over 90% of which would come from the top 10% of income earners. Fulfilling the government's promise to tax digital businesses like Facebook, Amazon and Zoom would add billions more.

*Action – it's time for a tax system that closes the loopholes and catches up to the 21st-century economy.*

### **QUOTES FROM FRONT LINES**

*"Impossible to self-isolate or physical distance at the shelter, and we have nowhere else to go. Where do you go if shelters are not safe?"*

*"Food is still too costly, and there is a lack of culturally appropriate and healthy food choices with prepared meal services and food banks. As a newcomer, I am unfamiliar with pasta."*

*"People with disabilities are being forgotten in these strategies and services."*

*"Living on ODSP, which is lower than CERB, is not sustainable. With the pandemic and extra costs, it is even more unlivable."*

*"Unable to reach my worker for (the) Covid-19 Benefit. Had to call more than once because money just doesn't go far enough on social assistance after all bills paid." -*

*"[CERB] kept me from living on the streets and I am able to self-isolate. It's nice to have running water to drink and shower. I am able to buy fruit, vegetables and a little meat."*