

The Recovery Summit - How to Build Back Better

In Brief

■ ■ ■ The Deck is stacked

- Inequality has been growing for years and the current crisis is exacerbating underlying symptoms.

■ ■ ■ Raise our eyes

- We must look beyond our immediate environments to understand broader issues and how we are all interconnected.

■ ■ ■ Bail out Wall Street or Main Street?

- This is the opportunity to build back better to create a system that works for all.

■ ■ ■ Recovery must be people focused

- People must see themselves in change in order for it to be meaningful and lasting and in order to begin to repair the democratic crisis.

■ ■ ■ Focus should be on women, minorities, youth and marginalized populations

- Decades of efforts to build equality need to be protected in order to ensure both human rights as well as economic productivity are maintained.

■ ■ ■ Build back better, greener

- There is a great deal of political capital and public will for historic public investments which must be targeted toward decarbonizing economies.

Global public health

The novel coronavirus has caused a crisis unlike any other in modern history. In order to limit the worst of the human health crisis, economies around the world were forced to shut down and in so doing have created a global recession – the severity of which is yet to be known. This crisis is different than others, as it is first and foremost a deadly and ongoing health crisis. Governments have been clear that **there can be no effective economic recovery without first ensuring the health of their populations.**

Cultural humility

It was suggested that we **raise our eyes** in order to stop looking immediately around us and instead look further. With this must come a healthy dose of **cultural humility** as we have seen that with the nature of the global crises currently facing us it is not always the places with the most resources that do best. While the world's largest economy is being hit the hardest by COVID-19, many First Nations communities have been some of the most successful at protecting their communities through the cultural values and respect placed in their elders.

Similarly, we can learn from rural African communities who have a great deal of experience dealing with HIV/AIDS, polio, Ebola and other diseases both at the local and national levels. In



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this sense solutions do not always have to be what would be considered innovative or cutting edge, but often relying on traditional approaches and what has been most successful in the past can lead to results today.

Team effort

Positive societal change is always an alliance between grandchildren and their grandparents, and this is a gap the recovery must seek to bridge. We must focus our efforts on the immediacy of COVID-19 but keep our eyes up to the many other issues facing the global community to ensure **efforts to respond to one crisis does not lead to collateral damage from other ongoing crises that are being exacerbated.**

Whether the COVID-19 fire or the climate change frying pan, we are all in this together and **like a forest fire, if it is anywhere it will be everywhere.** Hence, once a vaccine is developed it will be imperative that the world work together to ensure it is safely and expeditiously delivered to all who need it regardless of nationality, race, gender or socio-economic background.

Shared Prosperity

Education

Often the tools needed to build back better are already at our fingertips. While many in the West are well positioned for distance learning or to work from home, for others this is not a reality. Education has become one of the biggest challenges stemming from the global pandemic as millions of children worldwide do not possess the technology necessary to engage in effective distance learning. However, tools do not necessarily have to be technologically advanced or expensive. Radio for example is something that is widely available even in many of the poorest communities and there is almost no limits as to how many students can listen to a broad cast at once. Innovative curriculums can be developed in order for **students to continue learning with the types of tools that are readily available to them already.**

While globalization has provided many benefits and created historic levels of wealth, it has also led to a dislocation that is creating tears in the fabric of society. By decreasing reliance on global supply chains for key products such as personal protective equipment (PPE) jobs can be created domestically that can bring meaningful work to communities and **re-engage citizens in both the economy and subsequently the political process.** Canada went from sourcing 0% of its PPE to over 40% of it domestically.

Equality help the bottom line

Promoting equality is not only the right thing to do but also makes business sense. Over the last 50 years **much of the productivity gains that were made were as a result of bring more women and people of colour into the workforce.** A continued emphasis on including as many people as possible will continue to lead to innovation and increases in productivity while ensuring the best and brightest are engaged at working together to develop solutions to society's increasingly complex problems.





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Social safety net

The pandemic has ushered in debates around various forms of a **universal basic income (UBI)**, as many countries have implemented some form of direct transfers to persons as a form of temporary relief. Some argue that it is a necessary mechanism to ensure no one is left behind during these times of increasing instability and precarious work. **Universal basic capital (UBC)** is another means of providing everyone a chunk of society's assets, as even more so than wealth, capital is being increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few and the fewer firms.

Others however, argue that such universal policies are unworkable or not useful as permanent solutions. Some contributors suggested that states should instead double down on the type of existing progressive approaches that have been proven to work while scaling these mechanisms up and out. There were suggestions that **child and family tax credits, baby bonds, a postal banking system, guaranteed high yield savings accounts and government retirement accounts** among others. It was suggested that tools should be used that are simple and have a direct impact on lives and should broadly take the shape of **targeted tax transfers, improved social services and targeted help for those in the gig economy and low wage earners.**

Inclusive societies

Childcare

Childcare is an age old issue that always comes to the forefront of debate during times of crisis, and somehow it is always kicked down the road or temporarily remedied with various band aid solutions but continues to disproportionately affect women and those least well off in society. **Investing in universal childcare is a necessity to build back better.**

Women

There has been great success with 'think global, act local' and other buy local types initiatives, **we should put similar energy into 'buy female' initiatives.** There are many organizations that exist such as the She Network and SheEO which should be supported in order to scale up and build on success. Business should set aside some profit in order to reinvest in women's initiatives.

Youth

Youth must be a cornerstone on which the recovery is built in order to ensure their energies and activism are put toward positive community development rather than becoming a lost generation. One concrete initiative can be for governments to setup eco-internships that can see youth contribute toward environmental sustainability while learning important lessons they can bring back to their communities. This will engender a sense of meaning in them and enable them to see their own work reflected in successful ecological protection. We must therefore, **embolden and weaponize our younger generations to instill ongoing positive change.**

Broadband

Access to broadband remains limited not only across much of the Global South, but also for millions of people living in rural areas across much of the western world. This is the type of infrastructure investment that is necessary in order to **ensure everyone has equal access to the types of digital information and services that are increasingly going online,** and which will likely continue to for years to come.





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Unlike new highway projects and bridges it is also not an infrastructure investment that will result in massive increases in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions unlike many of the “shovel ready” projects that had money poured into them following the 2008 financial crisis. It was these shovel ready projects that led to global GHGs returning to pre-crisis levels almost overnight following the recession – a pattern we cannot afford to repeat.

Sustainability

Stimulus packages must pledge to ‘do no harm.’ An example of this is that 30% of the EU budget will be targeted at climate solutions whereas 100% of it pledges to ‘do no harm.’ This means that while not all policies and investments will necessarily be green initiatives, they must at least seek to not further the climate crisis facing us. This means there can be **no new subsidies or bailouts for oil and gas and other heavily polluting industries**. We must similarly not invest in energy production that continues to pollute and environmental regulations cannot be lowered in the name of preserving industries.

Concrete measurable policies

Many of the most successful and popular environmental policies are those which are most concrete and which people can feel and see themselves in. In Canada the government promise to **plant 2 billion trees** was one of the most well received while contributing greatly to achieving climate goals. Other successful initiatives have been the **banning of single use plastics**, as people hear about reduced pollution findings its way to our oceans and equating their reusable bag or drinking without a straw to them having made a tangible difference. It is these concrete, simple, and measurable efforts that can have some of the most success while building further political capital for future action.

Investing in **retrofitting existing homes and buildings** can create thousands of jobs in many countries in the short term, while lowering bills and GHGs in the longer term. It is also the kind of investment that will be visible daily to people as they will have lower energy bills, and newer nicer looking homes that will keep them more comfortable and feeling more connected to their governments and the democratic process. The importance of making every recovery dollar do triple duty – jobs, confidence and social benefit, was highlighted.

Energy tax credits can be issued to low income families in order to again provide relief to those who need it most who will also see this public investment reflected in their monthly bills and their savings will be able to be re-directed elsewhere into the economy.

Local level action

All these specific policy solutions should be shored up through global and national support, but many of **the most effective solutions will be developed and implemented at the local level**. Local governments are on the front lines dealing with many of the issues that affect people’s lives most directly and it is the level of government that people often see most clearly reflected in the democratic process.

While listening is not a silver bullet and will not always make cooperation easier, without it we will be incapable of developing more inclusive solutions.



Democratic Institutions

Our current international instruments are unfit for purpose and **institutions and regulations need to be re-written, re-shaped and re-imagined**. COVID-19 has demonstrated more than ever the need for a global health organization and similarly demonstrated the need to properly fund both it, and related multilateral organizations. We cannot expect results whether it be regarding global health issues or climate change without effective action based on adequate targeted investments to deliver meaningful results.

Multilateralism

Multilateral institutions need to be reimagined in order to deal with the current globalized world in which we live and must be more malleable and open than in the past. In cases where certain countries are unwilling to hop on board there should be space for states, municipalities and sub-national entities to join in order to maximize resources and efforts toward important common goals. These goals must also be aimed at attaining both immediate results as well as long-term goals.

It was argued that one of the reasons for ongoing failure is that we remain prisoners of national borders, which is subsequently as far as strong and effective governance reaches. The issues we are facing in the twenty first century are increasingly global and as a result we need to be in the field of transnational politics and approach issues from this perspective while shoring up institutions at this level. Therefore, multilateralism is needed more than ever – **not just a return to the multilateralism we had, but a regeneration and reimagination of it**.

Information

Social media is proliferating for a number of reasons but part of it is that traditional quality journalism is expensive and as a result increasingly people are turning to new, cheaper, and more instant platforms. To counter these shifts traditional media outlets need to be made more competitive through either various forms of subsidies, investments or through the development of new forms of taxation geared toward social media companies. These new forms of media have exploded on the scene over the past decade and far outstripped legislation and new approaches are needed for both taxation and regulation of these companies and the almost limitless data they have on every one of us. There needs to be stringent oversight as well – **Facebook must not be the decision maker and also the last place of appeal**.

Rather than being seen as all negative these new platforms should also be harnessed in order to provide accurate information to the public as well as provide new ways of democratic participation. Democracy goes well beyond the ballot box and new tools are needed to **create a who new way of civic engagement and even new ways of creating civic democracy**.

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