

Towards the Socially Just Society

Human beings have struggled for economic equality, and equality of freedom and respect, throughout their history. These struggles have extended the vote to the disenfranchised, increased incomes of the low paid, gained dignity for the despised, advanced education for all, and generally advanced fairness and greater equality on innumerable fronts. Despite Canada's loudly proclaimed commitments to human rights, social welfare and multiculturalism, however, these struggles have become harder in recent decades.

The Green Party under Dimitri is committed to advancing these struggles radically, towards a new culmination.

Rhetoric and Reality in Canada

Canada professes a deep commitment to advancing struggles for equity and equality. It thrives in immigration and is proudly multicultural. As a signatory to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, Canada proclaims that 'The human rights of all persons are universal and indivisible'. The 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects a range of groups against discrimination and jurisprudence has continually expanded its scope to include new groups under its non-discrimination provisions. Further, Canada is a signatory to numerous multilateral human rights conventions and declarations. One such, the 1995 UN Beijing Declaration, proclaims that 'women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.' Successive Canadian governments swathed their foreign policy with the mantle of human rights.

Notwithstanding these claims and international commitments, notwithstanding the political grandstanding of the current government with its avowedly 'feminist prime minister' and his 'gender-balanced cabinet,' in recent decades those suffering inequality, poverty and discrimination of various kinds have seen nothing but neoliberal inequity and the triumph of rhetoric over action.

Poverty has persisted and economic inequality has reached levels unprecedented in modern times. Diverse forms of social prejudice, disrespect and exclusion are intricately intertwined with poverty and economic inequality. On the one hand, their rise has deepened the discrimination faced by already marginalised groups in society. These groups include women, Indigenous people, racialized Canadians, 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual people and other gender and sexual minorities), the old, the young, migrants and mentally ill and differently abled people (We refer to all these groups as equity-seeking groups). On the other, though some members of these groups may be privileged in some or another way, equity-seeking groups are disproportionately represented among the poor, the homeless and those on the lower rungs of the economic ladder.

The neoliberal policies of recent decades lie at the root of the rise in inequality, the persistence of poverty and rising prejudice against, disrespect for and exclusion of equity-seeking groups. Privatization, regressive taxation, deregulation and cutbacks to social services, including health and education, have all directly increased poverty and inequality while enriching the already wealthy. When such policies increase the number of disadvantaged socio-economic positions in society, individuals from equity-seeking groups tend to populate them. Inequality and poverty become more entrenched and linked with discrimination, prejudice and exclusion. Other processes contribute to this linkage. Responsibility for compensating for the loss of social services falls disproportionately on equity seeking groups, disadvantaging them further. Rising inequality has also been driving house prices up, far beyond the reach of many Canadians and homelessness too affects equity-seeking groups disproportionately. Too much of this is regarded as acceptable in too many quarters. No wonder, despite these setbacks, far right movements are emerging as a backlash against equity seeking groups.

The response of successive governments on the economic front has been limited to poverty reduction programs. Not only do they ignore the larger issue of inequality, their success is limited because they do. On matters of prejudice, disrespect and exclusion, the official approach has been to treat them as ‘cultural’ problems unrelated to economic inequality and poverty inequalities. It calls only for better education of citizens, appeals to “tolerance,” or pursues ‘affirmative action’ through the appointment of a small number of selected members of equity seeking groups to high-profile positions. Such affirmative action cannot, on its own, address the underlying social, economic, and institutional causes of inequality and exclusion of whole sections of society. Members of equity seeking groups who do manage to get through the barriers to employment and advancement in various fields are often subjected to hostile work environments in which their credentials are questioned or dismissed. The problems of the larger equity seeking groups remain intact and even acquire new dimensions as members of the dominant groups often view them as recipients of special favours.

The resulting barriers and problems facing equity seeking groups are too numerous to list in their entirety. However, Appendix A lists some of the more important consequences of the lack of advance towards equity. The current pandemic, which has struck the low paid, the poor, the homeless, those least well served by social services and most likely to suffer the health consequences of poverty, low incomes and poor housing, is setting back even the meagre advances of recent decades. The pandemic’s more consequential lessons and consequences, which make advancing rapidly towards equality and equity even more urgent, are outlined in Appendix B.

The Green Party under Dimitri’s leadership recognises that well over half the population faces discriminatory and inequitable practices, including inequality, poverty, violence, exclusion, discrimination, exploitation and hate speech. After all, women constitute approximately 50.4 percent of Canada’s population; Indigenous people, 4.9 percent; visible minorities 22.3 percent; persons with disabilities 22 percent; and 2SLGBTQIA+ about 3 percent of Canada’s population. While there are overlaps among them, there are others not counted in the above.

The Green Party under Dimitri’s leadership also recognises that the struggles of Indigenous Peoples in Canada are special and unique. In addition to individual

rights, Indigenous peoples are the bearers of special and collective rights to the land and to sovereignty, entitlements they have been denied for centuries. These do not apply to the other equity seeking groups discussed here and this is why we deal with advancing the rights of Indigenous peoples in a separate document: 'Indigenous Land, Indigenous Sovereignty, Indigenous Rights.' The present document deals with all the other equity-seeking groups.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the repeated failings of neoliberal governments, people in Canada and across the world are taking matters into their own hands. Grassroot protest movements such as, Black Lives Matter, Me Too, Idle No More, Migrante, and Call It Femicide have erupted to demand the redress of inequity, inequality, discrimination, victimisation and marginalisation. These movements are changing the public discourse, and with it, public attitudes. The time is ripe for consistent, effective leadership towards equity.

The Reasons Why

Only a proper understanding of the reasons why inequalities have persisted can inform a comprehensive and effective way to resolve them:

1. Since the 1980s, a cross-party neoliberal policy consensus has ensured that successive governments have pursued policies that have increased economic inequality and kept an unconscionably high proportion of Canadians in poverty. Inevitably, equity-seeking groups suffer both inequality and poverty disproportionately. These policies include:
 - a. regressive tax policies that reward the rich and punish the poor;
 - b. cuts to social services education and health;
 - c. lax labour, social and environmental regulation; and
 - d. trade agreements that reinforce the above.
2. Efforts to reduce economic inequality and poverty have been limited, while empty multiculturalism confines the redress of inequality to rhetoric and symbolism. Resolving nothing, these efforts have instead served to stigmatise equity-seeking groups further as demanding and insatiable, increasing resentment against them.
3. In their meagre efforts to address inequalities, governments have adopted a piecemeal approach to each equity-seeking group that ignores their overlap, leading to many individuals falling between stools.
4. Canada is signatory to several major international Covenants and Conventions on rights, for example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism, the Convention on the rights of Migrant Workers and their families and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, it has no constitutional requirement to enact these into Canadian legislation and make them justiciable in Canadian law. Therefore, while successive governments have enacted various iniquitous trade agreements into Canadian legislation with alacrity, they have neglected to do this for the Covenants and Conventions that would result in greater equality and popular empowerment.
5. Despite the general anti-discrimination thrust of Canadian law, there are a number of loopholes in the existing law that make various forms of discrimination legal.

6. Equity seeking groups are underrepresented among the power holders of society – in elected office, in government, in corporations and in other powerful social institutions. For instance, according to CEDAW, the percentage of women in government in 2019 in Canada was 26.8 percent, placing Canada 69th out of 190 states.
7. As a Pew Research Center survey shows, although the proportion of Canadians who support the principle of equal rights is among the highest in the world, archaic attitudes that consider hierarchy and inequality normal persist in many sections of society. This is chiefly because the real histories, social roles and contributions of equity seeking groups remain unrecognised. Such attitudes are strengthened by the persistence of low incomes and poverty among these groups and often licence the violence that equity-seeking groups suffer disproportionately.

With the repeated failings of neoliberal governments, people across the world are taking matters into their own hands: Canadians is no exception. Grassroots protest movements such as, Black Lives Matter, Me Too, Idle No More, Migrante, and Call It Femicide (focusing on gender-related killings of women and girls in Canada) have erupted to demand the redress of inequity, inequality, discrimination, victimisation and marginalisation.

Our Approach

The Green Party under Dimitri will approach the historic task of tackling the many-sided problem of redressing inequality, poverty and the rightful demands of equity-seeking groups with an approach based on the following fundamental principles:

1. Inequality, poverty, discrimination and exclusion are not just the problems of those who suffer them but for the whole of society. Material and social inequality do not only disadvantage certain people, they generate social problems and prevent societies from achieving their fullest potential. They increase social and health expenditures, undermine social cohesion, fail to harness the energies, talents and creativity of substantial parts of the population, promote and edify undeserving people and institutions, and misunderstand the true roots of their own successes and failures. More equal societies would begin to reverse these undesirable outcomes.
2. Equity-seeking groups overlap. An individual or group can experience multiple disadvantages: for instance, one can be 2SLGBTQIA+ and racialized, or poor, disabled and female. Policy makers must recognise that addressing the concerns of equity-seeking groups separately can end up creating new hierarchies. We need to end them altogether and prevent the gaps into which certain individuals fall. We need to note that women are not only the largest of the equity seeking groups, they are represented in nearly all the others and experience poverty, inequality, discrimination and exclusion more acutely than men in all of them. Finally, economic inequality and poverty are core elements of the system of discrimination and exclusion.

The best approach is, therefore, to design solutions not for each individual equity-seeking group but for each of the various fronts along which many or all of them suffer discrimination and exclusion. They are the following:

3. We must manage the economy such that it does not systematically generate inequality and poverty. As long as it creates disadvantaged socio-economic positions, it is inevitable that individuals from equity-seeking groups will populate them, making inequality and poverty more entrenched. An economy run for equality and inclusion with a strong safety net would create fewer of these positions in the first place. Moreover, the conventional distinction between material issues, such as pay or economic inequality and non-material issues such as sexism or racial or generational discrimination, has never been accurate. Countless studies show material inequality and other forms of discrimination are deeply interconnected. Eliminating poverty and reducing economic inequality are inseparable from ending discrimination for the whole range of equity seeking groups. This requires running the economy to expand opportunity, prevent gross inequality, and ensuring a strong and generous safety net, below which no one can fall and within which everyone can live a fulfilling, dignified and autonomous life.
4. Inequality and poverty cannot be addressed unless equity seeking groups are heard from and this cannot happen unless they represent themselves, and are adequately represented, in society's governance and other institutions. No Voice, no equality.
5. Social services, such as health, education, community, recreation services and the like, are core components of well-being. Along with income supports such as unemployment, welfare, disability, family and child benefits, and scholarships and pensions, they constitute a 'social wage'. They are as critical as incomes in creating a truly equal, cohesive and creative society. Social services that are provided on a universal, public, and generous basis, and are universally accessible without discrimination, are the core components of ending discrimination and exclusion across the range of equity-seeking groups.
6. To design policy to address inequality, poverty, discrimination and marginalisation, we need information and data. Statistics Canada and other data collection and processing agencies must have the capacity and resources to produce relevant data and construct viable measures to support evidence-based policies and monitoring the effectiveness of their implementation toward equity-seeking groups on all fronts. Existing gaps in the data must be addressed.
7. The legal system is critical in ensuring discrimination is made illegal and justiciable. The anti-discrimination provisions of the legal system should be strong and should
 - a. cover all equity seeking groups;
 - b. include no loopholes that permit discrimination;
 - c. incorporate Canada's international Treaty and Convention anti-discrimination and human rights commitments into Canadian law; provide effective and timely redress, including, where necessary, material redress; and
 - d. contain strong and effective sanctions against hate speech, including in non-traditional 'social' media.
8. No society where might is right can rectify problems of inequality, poverty, discrimination and exclusion. There should be a comprehensive strategy for ending violence and intimidation, from schoolyard bullying to police violence towards all equity-seeking groups, including education, appropriate penalties

and the re-education and rehabilitation of offenders. The strategy should recognise that domestic abuse is disproportionately inflicted on women and remains among the least acknowledged and redressed form of violence in society. Few forms of violence are ‘spontaneous’. They usually result from the tolerance of them by the agencies of state and by society.

9. Poverty, inequality, discrimination and marginalization cannot be addressed unless we stop subscribing to understandings and narratives that portray equity seeking groups as making little or no contribution to, and even a burden on, society. Knowledge must be expanded to include the histories, the contributions across all fields of endeavour, and the struggles of equity-seeking groups in Canada and the world throughout Canada’s education and cultural institutions and in the training of service providers.
10. It is critical to ensure that the recovery from the pandemic is not only strong but egalitarian, inclusive and non-discriminatory.

In light of these principles, the Green Party under Dimitri’s leadership will take the following steps to promote equality, end poverty and eliminate discrimination, exclusion and prejudice through a combination of energetic initiative on all matters falling under federal jurisdiction and leadership, partnership and incentivisation on all matters falling under provincial jurisdiction.

I Managing an Egalitarian Economy without Poverty

The Green Party under Dimitri’s Leadership has already committed, in ‘Just Green Wellbeing’, to a radical restructuring of Canada’s economy including

- *reorienting economic management towards full employment;*
- *redistributing work and its rewards;*
- *expanding employment in social services;*
- *taking measures, such as a steeply progressive tax system and capital controls to eliminate high concentrations of wealth and income;*
- *undertaking a national program of social housing;*
- *rebuilding public services; and*
- *undoing the damage to our health care and educating systems and relaunching them as more comprehensive, public universal and free services in which health care will include pharma care, long-term and elder care, mental health care, dental care and vision care while education will include childcare as well as post-secondary and adult education.*

To support the egalitarian thrust of the program and ensure that it serves equity-seeking groups appropriately, we also propose to take the following additional steps:

I.1 Enforce Equal pay for Work of Equal Value

Pay equity has traditionally concerned women and racialized Canadians but it needs to extend to all equity seeking groups. It is not about all groups being paid the same amount but remedying the undervaluation and underpayment of the work done by equity seeking groups.

Although “equal pay for work of equal value” has been enshrined in the Canadian Human Rights Act since 1977, advances on pay equity are slow. The burden to file

grievances is still on employees. Pay equity comes under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, not the legal system proper. The latter is backlogged, with some cases having taken decades to adjudicate. As a result, significant inequalities in earnings persist.

We will ensure that pay equity for all equity seeking groups is brought into the Canadian legal system proper, through the expansion of judicial capacity to handle the resulting litigation and by extending pay-gap reporting to all equity seeking groups, to tackle pay discrimination.

1.2 Enact Labour Law that Protects Against Discrimination

The workplace is one of the principal spaces where discrimination takes place and inequity is generated. Those discriminated against are materially worse off: they receive lower incomes and are denied careers open to others. Their quality of life is lowered: job satisfaction is diminished and they are forced to accept unfair power relations through hierarchies dominated by the more privileged. Likewise, stress is greater, leading to increased health risks.

Discrimination at work has a deleterious effect far beyond the workplace. It creates a disincentive to work, driving the victims back into socially-traditional silos, as when women feel obliged to stay at home, not because it is their choice but because they are offered no alternative, or when the poorly-paid find themselves unable to break out of ghettos or even find acceptable housing.

These effects combine to reinforce the stereotypes that characterise racist, sexist and ablest attitudes, which view people as 'unfit' for social roles that in fact have been denied them.

Canada's labour laws afford insufficient protection to those who fall victim to discrimination and compare unfavourably with those of other countries. Where its laws do provide formal protection, the difficulty of accessing the courts is a major obstacle to those on low incomes.

We will enact relevant legislation and ensure it protects against discrimination by

- Legislating a legally binding obligation on employers not to discriminate on grounds of race, gender, gender preference, sexual preference, age, disability or faith.
- Ensuring that the new law this covers encompasses not only pay, but all employment rights, including appointment, promotion, dismissal, sick leave, and holiday entitlement.
- Creating a legal right for employees to sue employers in breach of this obligation with penalties commensurate with the damage arising from the discrimination.
- Empowering trade unions to bring cases on behalf of employees who suffer from discrimination.
- Instigating a training system for management and union representatives to ensure that discrimination, and the procedures for avoiding it, are well understood and integrated into good practice.
- Enforcing and funding the system of tribunals and other bodies charged with hearing cases of discrimination, to ensure cases are dealt with

speedily and where possible amicably, but which provide genuine protection to those with insufficient means to obtain legal advice and representation.

- Requiring all employers with over 250 employees to obtain government certification on equality, equity and gender non-discrimination for all equity seeking groups or face further auditing and fines and eventually lower the threshold to workplaces with 50 employees, whilst providing the necessary additional support for small businesses.

I.3 Encourage Small Business Owners from Equity seeking Groups

Discrimination at work also affects small business and to rectify that, we

- commit the three proposed publicly owned banks (see Just Green Wellbeing) to address discrimination in access to finance, which many equity seeking groups face; and
- ensure that business owners from equity seeking groups have access to government contracts and spending.

I.4 Expand and Equalise Access to Housing

In the economy platform, ‘Just Green Wellbeing, and in accordance with ‘Housing First’ principles, the Green Party under Dimitri’s leadership, is already committed to:

- enacting Federal legislation granting every Canadian a fundamental right to decent housing financed through the Postal Savings Bank investment and, should it prove insufficient, funded through the Federal government;
- undertaking a national program for green and social housing, prioritizing Indigenous housing; and
- establishing a Postal Savings Bank, operated through an expanded network of Canada Post outlets, ... [to] ...invest in the expansion of social housing.

In addition, we commit to ensuring that equity-seeking groups are well served by housing. This will include providing accessible housing for persons with disabilities, ensuring all new housing construction is of universal design and providing first and second stage housing for those leaving abusive relationships.

I.5 Providing High-Quality, Affordable and Accessible Childcare for all

The participation of all equity-seeking groups in the workforce is a critical ingredient of social equality and inclusion, as well as of their autonomy. Without adequate childcare, parents of all equity seeking groups, women in particular, face uncertain employment and reduced lifetime earnings. Although about three-quarters of mothers with young children in Canada are in paid work, there are insufficient regulated childcare spaces. Lack of childcare facilities also afflicts parents on shift work who require part-time care.

While Québec has had low-fee, universal childcare since 1996, it suffers from insufficient spaces while most other Canadian provinces still depend to a large extent on private provision. In Ontario and British Columbia, parents pay about \$1,500 a

month for childcare, an impossible economic burden for many families. Though a limited number of public childcare spaces are affordable, too many parents must still pay three to four times the cost for private ones while others are forced to avail of cheaper options that are sub-standard.

Equally importantly, given that equity seeking groups, particularly women, constitute the bulk of the workforce in childcare, staff wages are usually low and benefits few.

‘Just Green Wellbeing’, the economy platform for the Green Party under Dimitri’s leadership commits to integrating childcare into the education system as a form of early childhood education which also recognises and rewards the work of caregivers as early childhood educators and organises their training accordingly. The resulting childcare system will be affordable, universal, staffed by highly skilled, well-paid early childhood carers and educators and accessible to all without discrimination.

I.6 Other Measures to Protect Parents and Carers

In addition, to prevent exclusion and discrimination on the grounds of reproductive responsibilities, the Green Party under Dimitri is already committed to a reduction and redistribution of work and its rewards, which should make all parents freer for childcare.

In addition, we commit to:

- *legislating rights to flexible work arrangements;*
- *compensating caregivers for unpaid care work;*
- *increase EI benefits for maternity and parental leave by raising the income replacement level, supplementing the benefit for low-wage earners, incentivizing men to take parental leaves, and making it easier for self-employed parents to qualify for benefits*
- *strengthening the protection of pregnant women from dismissal by employers*

II Providing Universal, Accessible and Generous social services

The Green Party under Dimitri’s Leadership is already committed in its economy platform, ‘Just Green Wellbeing,’ to work with provincial governments to:

Build a universal and free health care and education system covering all aspects of socially engaged and creative life from happy childhood to dignified old age.

This plan will repair decades of damage to our health care system and extend it in vital ways to make healthcare genuinely universal and free at the point of use. It must prioritize prevention and a social determinants of health approach, the importance of which the pandemic has tragically underscored. An effective, universal and comprehensive health care system is a critical part of any economy, reducing costs of the care itself as well as of lost production and productivity. An accessible and flourishing education system promotes skills, innovation,

preparedness for diverse life opportunities, resilience and adaptability in the face of change, and prepares the foundations to develop our full human potential.

Specific measures include:

Health Care

- *Establishing a pharmacare program;*
- *integrating elder care, mental health, dental and vision care into the public health system;*
- *extending high levels of health care to Indigenous and remote communities; and*
- *eliminating the scandal of low wages and poor working conditions among healthcare and elder care workers.*

Education

- *integrating childcare into the education system;*
- *reinstating public education funding in cooperation with provinces to eliminate extra fees and expenses and ensure a high standard of education across school systems;*
- *reinstating funding for post-secondary education, including, universities, colleges and vocational and skills training institutions; and*
- *providing free post-secondary education for all who qualify.*

Furthermore, on social services, the Green Party under Dimitri's Leadership is also committed in its ecology platform, 'The Ecological Emergency: An Eco-socialist Response,' to work with all levels of government to provide:

[an] integrated, emissions-free, socially just, convenient and affordable transport system within and between cities, domestically and internationally. Ecologically sound and affordable urban public transit in cities, combined with active transportation displacing the inefficient, wasteful and unsafe overuse of private transport will be critical.

In addition to these commitments, the Green Party under Dimitri's leadership commits to

- **Launching a program to get Boards of Health across the country to follow the Toronto Board of Health in acknowledging that anti-Black racism is a public health crisis and asking for policy support from local racialized communities and reprioritizing the focus on anti-Black racism.**
- **Following up the 1997 criminalization of Female Genital Mutilation with the prosecution of offenders by creating an official database for incidents, suspected incidents, creating procedures for protecting girls, including training teachers and social workers to identify at risk girls, create health and mental health supports for victims.**
- **Recognizing that fentanyl contamination is why deaths are more accurately described as poisonings rather than overdoses and ensuring that drug possession is decriminalized. Giving users access to a screened supply and the medical support they need to combat their addictions by increasing funding to**

community-based organizations to test drugs and make Naloxone kits widely available to treat overdoses.

- Supporting continuation of Gender confirming interventions and health care.
- Opposing cosmetic genital surgeries on sexually ambiguous children.
- Ensuring Federal health care transfers are conditional on health care workers, to have training in serving 2SLGBTQIA+, other equity-seeking groups effectively and with empathy.
- Hiring 2SLGBTQIA+ people and members of other equity-seeking groups, where possible, as health care providers.
- Establishing an effective complaints and redress process for harms that are caused in the health care system.

III Create Capacity for Evidence based Policy toward Equity Seeking Groups:

The Green Party under Dimitri will reverse the recent decline in Statistics Canada's capacity and resources and fund and direct it to

- compiling and processing data that covers all equity-seeking groups and monitors their advance towards equality;
- enabling evidence-based policy for all of them;
- instituting alternative indicators of human well-being in addition to GDP, including one that measures the quality of human life based on access to adequate incomes, housing, care, education and creative self-development;
- eliminating the use of inconsistent poverty measures, depending on whether it is comparing Canada to other countries, or Canadian cities, regions, and provinces, and adopting a single, consistent and just measure;
- ensuring that necessary data required to gain an accurate, up-to-date representation of the situation regarding violence against equity-seeking groups, including family violence and domestic-violence in Canada is collected by official agencies, not as at present by depending on NGOs or journalists; and
- gathering disaggregated, data that accounts for the overlaps between equity seeking groups at the federal, provincial and municipal level on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

VI Representation and Voice:

Inequality and poverty cannot be overcome without members of equity seeking groups being properly represented in the halls of power and the sites where critical decisions are made.

The Green Party Under Dimitri's leadership is committed to ensuring that this begins with the Green Party itself and by working with all parties to ensure greater representation of all equity seeking individuals in politics and governance. It is also committed to:

- Increasing the representation of equity-seeking groups at all levels of government

- Enforcing, through the Federal Contractors' Programme and new legislation covering all enterprises, public and private, increasing and monitoring the employment of equity-seeking groups at all levels.

V Strengthen the Anti-Discrimination Provisions of the Canadian Legal System

As detailed above, ensure that the anti-discrimination provisions of Canada's legal system are strong by ensuring that they

- cover all equity seeking groups, not just the four presently covered by the Federal Contractors Programme;
- eliminate legal loopholes that permit discrimination;
- incorporate Canada's international Treaty and Convention anti-discrimination and human rights provision into Canadian law;
- end racial profiling; and
- end the continuing criminalising of equity-seeking groups, particularly racialized people, charged with minor Cannabis infractions by removing cost and red-tape obstacles that stand in the way of so many people clearing their name.

VI Ending Violence

All equity seeking groups are a greater risk of violence – murder, domestic violence, sexual assault, harassment, and trafficking. Domestic violence remains the least acknowledged and addressed form of violence whose victims are overwhelmingly women.

Human trafficking and exploitation exist in every country in the world, and Canada is no exception. The Canadian Women's' Foundation has found that the overwhelming majority of human trafficking victims are women and girls and in Canada, over half of those trafficked are Indigenous.

In light of the above, the Green Party under Dimitri's leadership, in partnership with representatives of equity seeking groups, will

- *devise a nation-wide strategy against violence against all equity-seeking groups;*
- *made ending domestic violence a centrepiece of that strategy;*
- *ensure that violence committed by state agencies never goes unpunished;*
- *mount an educational campaign against violence and bullying;*
- *prioritise domestic abuse as a health issue, introducing 10 days paid leave for survivors of domestic abuse, and ensuring women's refugees receive vital long-term sustainable funding;*
- *ensure strict judicial consequences for traffickers; and*
- *fund social programs to support and assist all trafficked persons who are exiting and provide the means to create and sustain community programs that are trauma-informed and free of charge to victims.*

VII Promoting an Inclusive and Truthful Culture

Inequality and Poverty persist in Canada, as elsewhere, in good part because the dominant narratives falsely justify existing social hierarchies and deny the contributions of its real working people and its marginalised groups. No plan for overcoming inequality and poverty can work unless this is changed. Among the equity-seeking groups discussed here, racism against Black Canadians has been particularly persistent.

The Green Party of Canada under Dimitri's leadership is committed to establishing a National Commission for Curriculum and Cultural Reform, which will work with primary, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions and with cultural and arts institutions to promote a more accurate account of our society and our world. It will be staffed and run by members of equity seeking groups from across Canada. It will prioritise addressing anti-Black Racism on the models of the City of Toronto's Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, and the 2020 Black Health Alliance Black Experiences in Health Care report in consultation with the Parliamentary Black Caucus.

VII Pandemic Recovery

The pandemic has exposed myriad inequalities in our neoliberal economies. 'Just Green Wellbeing' is designed to tackle the fundamental tasks of the economic recovery, which will include a fundamental reorientation in green and socially just directions.

At the same time, we need special measures to ensure that the recovery includes equity-seeking groups and improves their position, not least because women, racialized Canadians and migrants have been in the frontlines of the battle to contain COVID-19, have been disproportionately exposed to it, and because other equity seeking groups have also been adversely affected by it.

Our identification of the special measures needed has been greatly aided by 'A Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for Canada' produced by the Young Women's Christian Association and the University of Toronto's Gender and the Economy group. Many of their recommendations are already part of, or rendered redundant by, our economy and workers' rights platforms, and Indigenous rights and other platforms.

In what follows, we adopt and adapt their remaining provisions to include as necessary, all relevant equity seeking groups.

The Green Party under Dimitri's leadership will

- *Gather disaggregated data on all equity seeking groups and their overlaps at the federal, provincial and municipal level on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic;*

- *Ensure gender analysis that is mindful of the overlaps between women and other equity seeking groups on all forthcoming pandemic policies not only for understanding differential impacts, but also for designing policies; and*
- *Develop a COVID-19 post-pandemic results framework dashboard and report annually on how the Government of Canada is advancing equity for all equity seeking groups.*

We agree with the report that ‘Care Work is Essential Work.’ Our economic platform, ‘Just Green Wellbeing,’ has already gone beyond its recommendation that Canada adopt ‘the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) benchmark of allocating at least 1% of country GDP to early learning and childcare.’ We are committed to include childcare into the universal, public and free education system and elder care into the universal, public and free healthcare system, in both cases ensuring that personnel of these services earn a liveable wage that also passes pay equity tests.

In addition, our workers’ rights platform, ‘Advancing Workers’ Rights in a Changing World of Work,’ commits us to ‘Provide all temporary migrant workers a pathway to permanent residency, legally ensure their right to bargain collectively through existing unions and by forming new unions.’

In addition, in line with the report, we commit to

- *Creating National Childcare and Elder care Secretariats to track financial allocations across the country and coordinate intergovernmental action, monitoring and evaluation.*
- *Ensuring the provision of personal protective equipment to all workers and conduct rigorous inspections on front line and essential workers’ working conditions.*
- *Expanding the collection of time use data to track time spent on all forms of unpaid work during the pandemic by all equity seeking groups, on an annual basis, on uniform terms for continuity over time.*
- *Legislating at least 14 paid sick days and paid family leave for all workers, so that everyone—particularly those in frontline jobs—can protect their health and that of the rest of the population.*
- *Paying for retraining and professional development across sectors for those who have experienced job loss through EI. For people who are not eligible for EI, create other pathways to financially support re-skilling and re-training, with greater incentives for workers in care-economy based sectors such as childcare and elder care.*
- *Lowering the uniform national eligibility requirement of Employment Insurance to 360 hours and increase the benefit rate from 55% to 85% of earnings for low-income earners.*
- *Legislating job protection for individuals with disabilities who are unable to fulfill job duties due to the risk of contracting COVID-19 as well as systemic barriers such as lack of access to accessible transportation.*
- *Offering targeted support to business owners from equity seeking groups in the form of emergency funding, as well as skills training and mentorship.*
- *Creating minimum set-asides in public procurement spending (e.g., 15%) towards businesses led by equity seeking individuals.*

- *Directing funding to businesses in equity-seeking group -majority sectors, as they tend to be hard-hit.*
- *Increasing awareness of co-operative business models and create tools to support businesses that want to convert to this model, including empowering the Business Development Bank of Canada to support co-operative conversions.*
- *Addressing the digital divide in Canada with meaningful subsidies and commit to realizing 100% national broadband access, especially in rural, remote and Northern communities.*
- *Establishing an Equity Advisory Council that provides guidance to the government on pandemic policies.*
- *Ensuring representation for equity-seeking groups and from members of groups formed by their overlap (such as women with disabilities or black 2SLGBTQIA+ people) on Recovery Task Forces for every order of government.*
- *Investing in organizations that advance equity seeking group rights in Canada through investments in core multi-year funding.*

APPENDIX A: Some Consequences of Persisting Poverty, Inequality, Discrimination and Marginalization

Poverty and Insecurity

Canada's Official Poverty Dashboard, February 2020, reveals the current situation:

- *4.6% of Canadians were living in deep income poverty in 2018.*
- *12.7% of Canadian households experienced housing need in 2016.*
- *11.2% of Canadians 12 years and older reported not receiving healthcare when they felt they needed it in 2014.*
- *8.7% of households were food insecure in 2017/2018.*
- *12.3% of Canadians had less than half the median after-tax income in 2018.*
- *20.8% of after-tax income went to Canadians in the bottom 40% of the income distribution in 2018.*
- *9.5% of Canadian youth (aged 15-24) were not in employment, education or training in 2019.*
- *In 2018, 13.8% of 15-year-olds had low literacy skills; 16.3% had low numeracy skills.*
- *In 2019, the median hourly wage for women was \$22.00, compared with \$26.00 for men.*
- *The poverty gap ration - for Canadians living below the poverty line, the ratio measures the difference between their family income and the poverty line, expressed as a percentage of the poverty line. In 2018, the average gap was 36.8%.*
- *In 2012, only a fraction over half (51.2%) of Canadians were asset resilient, meaning that they had enough savings to maintain well-being for 3 months.*
- *Between 2016/17 (4.1%) of Canadians entered low income and approximately 1.1 million (27.9%) low-income Canadians, left a low-income situation.*

Inequality

According to the Institute for Public Policy Research (2019), income inequality has risen steadily in Canada and remains at historic highs. Between 1985 and 2008, the Gini coefficient for Canada rose from 0.293 to 0.324. Whereas the bottom and top fifths of the population had average incomes of 13,000 and 62,000 in 1979, they were 16,900 and 87,800 respectively in 2011.

Correspondingly, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, in 2016 the top 1% of Canadians owned 25.6 percent of all wealth, the top 10% owned 56.4% while the bottom 40 percent owned only 1.2% of all wealth in Canada.

Homelessness

Housing is a Human Right. Homelessness includes hidden homelessness which, according to the Canadian Observatory of Homelessness, is a form of provisional accommodation that includes “people living temporarily with others but without guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent

housing.” Both are strongly correlated with poverty, drug addiction, health and mental health issues, as well as violence and other social problems, all of which affect equity seeking groups disproportionately.

According to Statistics Canada’s 2014 General Social Survey on Canadian’s Safety (Victimization):

- *An estimated 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness each year.*
- *2.3 million Canadians (nearly 1 in 10 Canadians) experienced hidden homelessness at one point in their lives.*
- *35,000 Canadians experience homelessness and 50,000+ Canadians experience hidden homelessness, such as couch surfing, sleeping in a car, or other precarious housing on any given night.*
- *20% of the homeless population are young people aged 16-24.*
- *According to The State of Women’s Housing Need & Homelessness in Canada 2016, women make up 27.3% of the overall homeless population. The National Shelter Study from 2005-2009 found that 26.7% of all shelter users were female.*
- *Youth who end up experiencing homelessness are more likely to belong to another equity seeking group.*
- *28.2% of those experiencing homelessness are members of racialized groups, compared to the Canadian average of 19.1%.*
- *Recent immigrants are particularly at risk of homelessness, due to issues that include language, cultural adjustment, lack of employment opportunities or recognition of foreign experience, credentials, lack of affordable housing, and health care access.*
- *Studies suggest that 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, who are prone to rejection from family members, face acute barriers in housing, along with employment and education, and also in accessing services and support.*
- *According to the CHRC report, the number of adults in core housing need is 6.2% higher for those with disabilities and 10.5 percent of them spend more than 50% of their before-tax income on housing compared to 7.7% of Canadians in 2006.*

Women

- *1.9 million women are living on low incomes: women are more likely to be poor and generally earn less than men.*
- *21% of single mothers are on low incomes, compared with 5.5% of married couples.*
- *A 2018 report states that 24% of all women report a disability, yet women with disabilities continue to be face obstacles to employment, affordable care and decent incomes. They are overlooked, ignored and hidden away in institutions.*
- *Women in Canada face violence daily and 80% of Canadians believe the next generation of women is just as or more likely to experience sexual assault.*
- *In 2019, a total of 118 women and girls were killed by acts of violence in Canada.*
- *On average, one woman or girl is killed in Canada every three days.*

- *With a gender pay gap that ranks Canada 31st out of 36 OECD countries, Canadians will have to wait 164 years to close the economic gender gap alone.*
- *In the workplace, women are underrepresented in corporate board rooms. In 2016-17 fewer than four out of 10 boards included any women: Statistics Canada reports 18.1% of director seats were held by women in 2017.*
- *Women are 60% less likely than men to move from middle management to executive ranks.*

Racialized Canadians

- *Racialized communities face high levels of poverty: The 2016 Census shows that 20.8% of racialized people are low-income compared with 12.2% of non-racialized people.*
- *Most recent immigrants, overwhelmingly from racialized communities, spend more than 50% of their income on housing; 15% spend 75% or more.*
- *In 2011-2012, almost 11 million households faced food insecurity; the percentage was higher among recent immigrants - 19.6%, versus 12.4% among Canadian born.*
- *Racism, racial inequality, and violence against racialized Canadians, is on an upward trend.*
- *Though not as bad as in other countries, right wing racist politics are on the rise.*
- *Racialized minorities experience racism in the workplace, in society, and in their dealings with the state and its agencies, whether in policy, the courts, social services or in health care.*
- *The Health System is failing many Black and racialized minorities, as a consequence of exclusionary practices, discrimination and systemic racisms.*
- *Canada has a 200 year history of slavery and racialized segregation, in law or de facto, founded on systemic racism that has disproportionately impacted on the lives of Black Canadians. Legacies of these historic racisms still exist and are still embedded many aspects of Canadian society and legislature.*

Differently abled

- *Persons living with disabilities are more than twice as likely to live below the poverty line as other Canadians.*
- *Homelessness among the differently abled or mentally ill is estimated to be as high as 45% of the overall homeless population and children with disabilities are twice as likely to live in households relying on social assistance.*
- *According to the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, there are over 6 million Canadians above the age of 15 (22% of the population) who identify as living with a disability, although actual figures may be higher.*
- *The Canadian Human Rights Commission 2018 Annual Report reported “little improvement” for Canadians living with disability.*
- *Energetically implement and enforce the 2019 Accessible Canada Act while monitoring results to ensure accessibility is realised and take further steps if it is not.*

- *Canadians living with disabilities also face increased likelihood of financial insecurity and poverty; even greater incidence of poverty among women; greater difficulty of finding and keeping a full-time job; higher rates of unemployment; lower earnings; discrimination by employers; a “confusing patchwork of benefit programs”; difficulty in accessing benefits with 60% of applications being rejected; and increased likelihood of critical health issues, such as dementia and depression and a deterioration in physical health, due to loneliness and isolation.*

2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians

- *2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians are disproportionately affected by violence, discrimination and exclusion and the poor among them, more so.*
- *An LGBT+ Realities survey shows that while the 2SLGBTQIA+ community as a whole rated Canadian society as fairly open to sexual and gender diversity, fewer than 10% think it is “totally” open, while 45% view Canadian society as “not very” or “not at all” open to sexual and gender diversity.*
- *2SLGBTQIA+ people face discrimination, violence and bullying.*
- *2SLGBTQIA+ are disproportionately targeted by the police.*
- *In Canada, 2SLGBTQIA+ people face barriers in accessing health care, including discrimination; potentially harmful treatment; a refusal to administer treatment and a lack of appropriate care and dignified treatment, thanks to “unexamined biases, ignorance, and even the overt discriminatory behaviour” of health practitioners, as well as from a lack of knowledge of and preparation for the unique psychosocial needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ people.*

Violence

All equity seeking groups are a greater risk of violence – murder, domestic violence, sexual assault, harassment, and trafficking.

Domestic violence is both pervasive and poorly recorded. The Globe and Mail has complained, of ‘Canada’s jumble of rules and record-keeping’ on domestic violence that ‘doesn’t add up.’ Lack of official statistics means that our understanding of violence must be made up of the isolated fragments of the big picture that journalists and activists uncover. For instance, of 12 confirmed homicides in the first half of 2019, six were “believed” to be “domestic”.

Further,

- *almost 67% of family violence victims were women and girls;*
- *79% of intimate partner violence reported to the police is against women;*
- *women were the victims of intimate partner homicide at a rate four times greater than men; and*
- *according to the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice Accountability (CFOJA), in 2019 a total of 118 women and girls were killed by violence in Canada and women aged 65 and older constitute 20 percent of the victims.*

Since the COVID pandemic, as is the case with many countries, family violence is likely to have increased.

Similarly, a 2019 [investigation of intimate-partner violence](#) by Maclean's, revealed how systems, politicians and people have failed women and girls.

- *Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) reported a rise in the number of women it assesses as facing "extreme danger"—from 54 percent in 2011/12 to 64.8 percent in 2017/18.*
- *Alberta shelters received more than 58,000 crisis calls in 2018, up 10 percent over 2017. Demand at the country's 550 shelters exceeds beds, according to Women's Shelters Canada. The 2018 average turn-away rate was 78 percent, up 2 percent from 2017.*
- *Although against the law, a 2012 survey of men in Alberta indicated that nearly one in 10 Alberta men believed it is acceptable to physically assault a woman "if she does something to make him angry".*
- *Only just over half (52%) said that they disagreed with the statement, "If a woman wears provocative clothing, she's putting herself at risk for rape."*
- *Human trafficking involves the recruiting, holding and controlling a person to exploit them. Sometimes referred to as "modern-day slavery," 19 percent of its reported victims are women and girls trafficked into the sex and entertainment industries, agricultural work, construction, and domestic work.*

The trafficking of people is a specific form of violence that is on the rise. The UN General Assembly defined it in 2000 as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation."

The exploitation involved includes, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs.

Human trafficking and exploitation exist in every country in the world, and Canada is no exception. The Canadian Women's Foundation has found that the overwhelming majority of human trafficking victims are women and girls and in Canada, over half of those trafficked are Indigenous.

Others

- *3.2 million Canadians, including more than 560,000 children, are living in poverty.*
- *The gig economy of independent qualified contractors, freelancers, 'on demand' workers and online workers in the arts, entertainment and recreation, essentially people without continuing full or even part time jobs,*

let alone benefits or paid sick leave, accounts for 8.2% (1.7 million Canadians) of the workforce in 2016, an increase from 5.5% (or 1 million Canadians). Equity seeking groups are overrepresented here.

APPENDIX B: Impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic

We have discovered that our healthcare, care home and other ‘essential workers’ are disproportionately underpaid and undervalued members of equity-seeking groups and temporary migrants. We have applauded them and called them heroes, while doing little to address their economic and cultural marginalization, or to acknowledge how their work on the front lines of the war against COVID 19 systematically exposes them to infection, disease and death.

We have also discovered how inequality and poverty makes it more likely that many equity-seeking groups, thanks to poor housing, poor nutrition and resulting co-morbidities, have suffered worse morbidity and greater fatalities due to COVID-19. We have learned how the lack of culturally responsive health care services, the systemic prejudice in them against equity-seeking groups that devalue and deprioritize their needs, has worsened the impact of the pandemic on them further.

Pandemic lockdowns have also set back the cause of equality by hitting equity-seeking groups’ work and incomes disproportionately. Consider some examples:

- In March 2020, women faced 63 percent of job losses but, as the economy started to open up in May, it was men rather than women that returned to their jobs (2.4%, 1.1% respectively) due to caregiving duties and lack of access to safe, affordable, and high-quality care and schooling.
- Gender-based violence spiked in the lockdown everywhere; the UN referred to it as the ‘shadow pandemic’. Canada officially reported an increase of 20% to 30% in domestic violence rates, though police forces and service providers are reporting surges as high as 62 percent. The Federal government’s allocation of \$50 million for funding shelters and sexual assault centres has not yet stemmed the surge in violence.
- The impact of COVID-19 has also been hard for 2SLGBTQIA+ people who have faced increased difficulties and barriers and their Black, racialized, and differently abled members more so. Egale Canada’s recent national study on the impacts of COVID-19 on 2SLGBTQIA+ communities shows
 - more than half (52%) of Canada’s 2SLGBTQIA+ households have faced lay-offs or reduced employment, compared to 39 percent of overall Canadian households;
 - higher rates of chronic illness and compromised immune systems among these groups put them at greater risk of COVID-19;
 - two-spirit and Indigi-queer communities face significant barriers to accessing health care; and
 - lockdowns expose LGBTQIA2S+ youth and adults, confined among unsupportive family members, to violence and mental health problems.

The COVID-19 crisis has impacted everyone’s lives but for people living with disabilities it is even harder.

- With recreational facilities, libraries, community centres and so on closed down, isolation has increased.
- Material hardship and financial burdens, rent arrears and food insecurity, have increased and Canadians with disabilities and ongoing health issues, who

qualify for disability benefits, have been excluded from the CERB, despite their lower incomes. They have instead been allocated a one-off payment of \$600, giving them no option other than to resort to their credit cards and fall deeper into debt.