

# IDEAS TO MEET THE MOMENT

Our job at the BC Society for Policy Solutions is to provide policy solutions to the most pressing issues facing British Columbia.

We face an emerging global trifecta of authoritarianism, growing inequality and a capture of our public institutions by wealthy elites—pushing us towards a breaking point for democracy and erosion of human rights. This makes existing crises on the climate and economic insecurity fronts worse—insecurity is in the air, by design.

This document is not a holistic vision of the better world we desperately need to counter this insecurity. It is a simple overview of bold and achievable ideas that are already lying around. Ideas that if acted upon could help our province take much better care of the people who live here, and the land that we live on.

On behalf of the BC Policy Solutions team, thanks for reading. If you have ideas to meet this moment, our contact info is on the back page.

Together in troubled times,  
Kevin Millsip, Executive Director  
*BC Society for Policy Solutions* | [bcpolicy.ca](http://bcpolicy.ca)

## 1. Public investment for a resilient economy

**1.1 Build homes and end exclusionary zoning.** Amid a severe housing shortage, BC should commit to build 25,000 non-market homes annually, including non-profits, co-ops and social housing. This would help struggling renters while stimulating the economy and benefitting businesses whose workers need housing. The province should also end exclusionary zoning policies in our big cities that effectively ban apartment buildings on most residential land. Allowing (at least) six-storey wood-frame rental apartments, without rezoning, across all neighbourhoods would create new homes, prevent displacement in existing apartment areas, open up quiet side streets to renters and lower transportation and infrastructure costs, while using Canadian lumber affected by US tariffs.



### **1.2 Make Community Health Centres the standard primary care model.**

Health care is BC's largest public expenditure, yet one in five residents lack access to a primary care provider. The current crises require us to redesign how we deliver and pay for primary care.

Community Health Centres (CHCs) are a proven solution offering better chronic disease management and lower costs due to fewer emergency department visits and hospitalization than other models. Research shows doctors prefer team-based, salaried practice with standard employment benefits, yet government policy reinforces their status quo as independent contractors. To address growing costs and wait times, BC must scale up CHCs.

**1.3 Guarantee free education and training for in-demand jobs.** Education is a critical part of economic infrastructure. We need trained and educated workers to meet the province's needs for housing construction, universal \$10/day childcare and robust healthcare, yet we underpay workers in these roles and make education and training for them financially inaccessible.

Starting with in-demand fields, we must guarantee free post-secondary and job training with living-wage supports while people study. At the same time, we must stop wasting the talents of internationally trained workers by recognizing their credentials. Expanding education and training and fairly compensating workers is key to building a resilient, equitable economy that doesn't rely on exploitation to meet public needs.

## **2. Helping business and people**

**2.1 Ensure business supports benefit communities.** Government business supports, in the context of a trade war and potential recession, must be leveraged to steer business activity toward solving societal challenges not reinforcing a status quo that marginalizes so many. This means that public funds granted to businesses must be conditional on preserving jobs and reinvesting profits in green innovation, better pay and working conditions, not just used to boost corporate profits. Moreover, robust public investment helps workers and businesses alike. For example, transit investment is widely recognized as boosting incomes and economic productivity. Child care investment means more women in the workforce, higher family incomes and greater tax revenue and spending in local communities.

**2.2 Redirect police funding toward public safety.** The theft and vandalism BC businesses are reporting should be addressed through prevention. BC must divest from harmful, expensive policing and invest in real public safety: housing, health care, income supports and social services. Police budgets balloon while they mostly target people in poverty—not violent crime. This approach disproportionately harms Black, Indigenous and racialized people and funnels too many into a costly prison system that prevents them from participating in and contributing to the BC economy. Redirecting public funds to eliminate poverty, support recovery and ensure stable housing would reduce crime and promote justice while creating safer, healthier communities for all.

### 2.3 Expand workplace democracy.

Research on democratic employee ownership of workplaces points to myriad benefits, including economic resilience, addressing income and wealth inequality and worker empowerment. As a concept, it has broad-based support across the political spectrum. The federal government has made inroads by creating the new Canadian Employee Ownership Trust (EOT) structure. To expand the role of democratic employee ownership in our economy, provincial and federal governments should take further policy action, including providing seed grants to establish regional employee ownership centres to incubate democratic workplaces and making permanent the capital gains exemption for EOTs—and extending it to worker cooperatives.

## 3. Climate and economic sustainability

**3.1 Build just, local food systems.** Grocery prices are soaring while big chains post record profits. Meanwhile, small farmers, fishers and food workers struggle to make ends meet. BC needs to move away from corporate-controlled food systems toward local, just and sustainable ones. That means supporting Indigenous food sovereignty, community-based farming and fishing, local processing and public food programs that buy from local, sustainable producers. We must ensure food workers are treated fairly, protect farmland and make space for traditional and sustainable ways of growing and sharing food. A just food system helps lower costs, creates good jobs and makes sure everyone can eat well now and in the future.

**3.2 Create the next generation of public corporations.** We can't wait for the private sector to solve BC's economic worries. We must do it ourselves. This means establishing a new generation of public and Indigenous-owned enterprises to drive the transition off fossil fuels, while creating good local manufacturing jobs.

Imagine a BC Hydro subsidiary mass-producing and installing heat pumps and solar panels or a public zero-waste corporation turning discarded materials into new products. Crown corporations could build zero-emission housing, electrify coastal fleets or manufacture batteries for transit and farm equipment. These ventures can generate revenue to improve public services while advancing climate justice and renewing local industry.

### 3.3 Institute a youth climate corps.

A youth climate corps would be an audacious public program for those under 35 to enlist in a two-year training and employment program for careers confronting the climate crisis. It's an idea for this moment. Young people would have jobs responding to extreme weather events, building community and ecological resilience to climate-induced events and reducing carbon pollution.

Repercussions of the Trump attack mean young people—often last hired, first fired—will face rising unemployment. A climate corps would provide work needed to separate us from the US and fossil fuels. We need a national corps, and BC could lead the way with a gift to the country.

## 4. Curbing inequality

**4.1 Tax the rich.** We need a more just and equal Canada if we're going to stand up to aggressive foreign powers like the United States. A federal wealth tax on the super-rich could address extreme wealth inequality while raising hundreds of billions of dollars to strengthen public services and build housing, transit and infrastructure.

Canada should also move to end the unfair preferential tax treatment of capital gains income, which is currently taxed at half the rate of income from work. At the provincial level, the BC government can tackle inequality and fund stronger public investments by taxing wealthy landowners, large corporations and the highest incomes.

**4.2 Realize Indigenous rights under UNDRIP.** To meet its United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) commitments, BC must move beyond consultation and embed Indigenous laws in decision-making. Free, prior and informed consent must be upheld, not bypassed.

Fully implementing UNDRIP means returning land and power to Indigenous nations to govern in their own ways. This shift offers a path to sustainable land stewardship, economic justice and climate resilience. Indigenous-led clean energy, housing and conservation initiatives are already creating jobs and restoring ecosystems.

Aligning BC law with Indigenous rights is not a threat to prosperity, it's the path we must take for a more just and secure future.

**4.3 Commit to an equity lens across all policy.** Inequality in BC is deepening and it is gendered and racialized—hitting Indigenous, Black, immigrant and communities of colour hardest, particularly women.

This isn't just bad optics; rising inequality undermines economic stability and feeds reactionary populism. When governments sideline equity, they abandon a growing population and fracture social solidarity.

Treating equity as something we can afford in good times but not in bad, reinforces the idea that poverty reduction is charity rather than a structural redistribution of wealth. It also fuels a false scarcity mindset that pits communities against each other.

Equity is a practical strategy for building a resilient economy and a society that refuses to be turned against itself.

### We want to hear from you!

#### What are *your* ideas to meet the moment?

Let us know at [bcpolicy.ca/ideas](https://bcpolicy.ca/ideas) or tag us on Bluesky (@bcpolicy) to share them with the wider community. Thank you for engaging with this work!

Find our work at [bcpolicy.ca](https://bcpolicy.ca) and follow us on Bluesky and Instagram [@bcpolicy](https://www.instagram.com/bcpolicy)