

# BC SOLUTIONS

News & Commentary from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' BC Office | MAY 2023



## But is it a *good job*? Understanding employment precarity in BC

BY IGLIKA IVANOVA & KENDRA STRAUSS

The rise of the ‘gig economy’ and on-demand work using online platforms like Uber and Skip the Dishes has ignited public debate about precarious work and what makes a “good job.”

Precarious work is not new nor limited to the gig economy, but we don’t know the extent of the problem mainly because Statistics Canada does not collect timely data on many of its dimensions.

That is why we developed the pilot BC Precarity Survey—the first of its kind—to address this gap and collect new evidence on the scale and unequal impact of precarious work in our province. The project’s first major study, *But is it a good job? Understanding employment precarity in BC*, was published in April.

We surveyed over 3,000 workers across the province, aged 25 to 65, in late fall 2019. We asked them about many aspects of their work lives to track how widespread precarious work is and who is most affected.

We then measured precarious employment in two ways:

First, we looked at whether or not respondents had a “standard job” (a permanent, full-time position with at least some benefits). Second, we used the *Employment Precarity Index* developed by an earlier research initiative called the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) project. The *Index* allowed us to combine a broader range of →

## IN THIS ISSUE ↘

- 4 Gender pay gap
- 5 Hello to our new Associate Director
- 5 The global loss and damages fund
- 6 Costs and contradictions of TMX
- 7 Why Canada needs a wealth tax
- 8 Personal reflections from Ben Parfitt
- 9 Running on empty
- 10 Thank you to our donors
- 12 Wage protection for farmworkers
- 13 Spending what it takes for climate action
- 14 Democratizing public hearings
- 15 The BC Budget priorities
- 16 Donor profile



CCPA  
CANADIAN CENTRE  
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
BC Office

aspects of precarity into a single measure and categorize workers' employment experiences into one of four employment security categories: *Secure*, *Stable*, *Vulnerable* and *Precarious*.

Key findings include:

**The standard job was not all that common and was unequally available.**

- Only 49% of BC workers surveyed had standard jobs.
- About 60% of recent immigrants, Indigenous workers and racialized women were in non-standard jobs.
- Standard jobs were more common in Metro Vancouver than elsewhere in the province and least common in the BC Interior.

**BC's job market was quite polarized.**

- 37% of survey respondents had *Precarious* jobs and only 18% were in *Secure* jobs.
- More than half of recent immigrants (less than 10 years in Canada) were in *Precarious* jobs (55%), the highest proportion of any group in our survey.
- Younger workers (aged 25 to 34) were more likely to be in *Precarious* jobs.

**Employment precarity had negative effects on individuals, families and communities.**

- Workers in *Precarious* jobs—especially those with low incomes—were more likely to report poorer physical and mental health.

- Parents in *Precarious* jobs were four times more likely to report that lack of access to child care impacted their ability to work (39%) compared with those in *Secure* jobs (10%).
- 60% of recent immigrants reported that lack of access to child care negatively affected their own and/or their spouse's ability to work (compared to 37% of non-immigrants).
- Workers with *Precarious* jobs were less likely to be able to afford school supplies and trips or to attend or volunteer at school and community-related events and activities.

A surprising proportion of jobs that have traditionally been secure have now become precarious.

We found that precarious employment is far more widespread in BC than many assume and puts tremendous strain on families and communities across the province.

BC saw historically low unemployment rates pre-pandemic, which should signal a strong labour market, yet we found that only 18% of survey respondents were in *Secure* jobs while 37 per cent had *Precarious* jobs.

While low-income workers in precarious jobs were the most vulnerable, we found that a number of higher paying jobs were *Precarious* as well. A surprising proportion of jobs that have traditionally been secure, such as in the public sector or that require university education, have now become *Precarious* and precarity negatively impacts families with middle-class (or higher) incomes too. →

**FIGURE 1: TWO WAYS TO EXAMINE PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT**

Proportion of workers in the BC Precarity Survey in “non-standard” vs “standard” jobs (full-time, permanent job with some benefits)



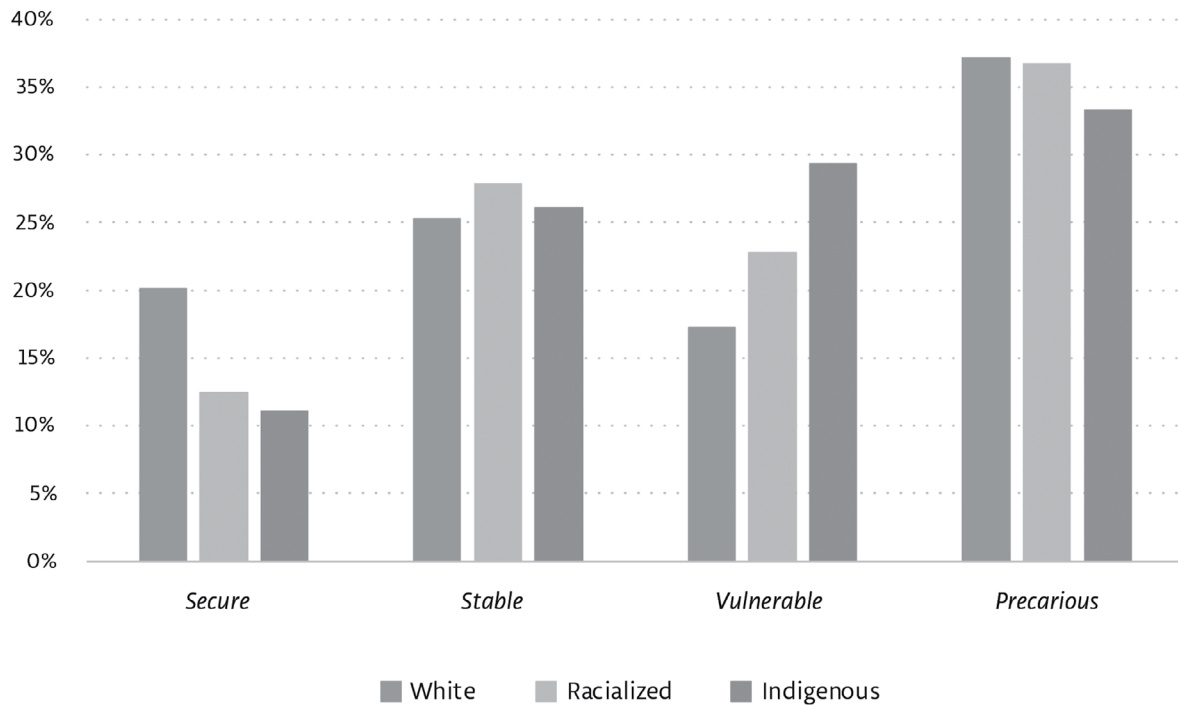
Proportion of workers in the BC Precarity Survey by employment precarity, using the *Employment Precarity Index*



SOURCE: BC PRECARIETY SURVEY, 2019.



**FIGURE 2: EMPLOYMENT PRECARIETY, BY RACIALIZATION AND INDIGENOUS IDENTITY**



SOURCE: BC PRECARIETY SURVEY, 2019.

Our study provides an important piece of the puzzle and a baseline for future analysis. But we need more data to better understand precarious employment and its unequal impacts, and to be able to monitor workers’ experiences in today’s rapidly changing labour market.

That doesn’t mean action can or should wait. The burden of precarious work falls more heavily on racialized and immigrant communities, Indigenous peoples, women and lower-income groups—compounding longstanding systemic and intersecting inequalities in the province.

The BC government has the power to improve the lives of precarious workers and their families right away. It’s crucial to modernize workplace rights and protections and to enforce them proactively so that those who don’t have standard jobs aren’t left behind. This starts with extending basic workplace protections like minimum wage and workers compensation to gig workers but doesn’t end there. Expanding access to benefits and paid time off, addressing unpaid care work and the lack of access to child care and bringing in strong pay equity legislation are additional ways to reduce precariousness in BC.

For thousands of workers stuck in precarious jobs, the long-promised provincial precarious work strategy can’t come soon enough. [↑](#)

**Understanding  
PRECARIETY  
in BC**

The pilot BC Precarity Survey was undertaken as part of the creation of the Understanding Precarity in BC (UP-BC) partnership. The survey will be repeated several times over the coming years, allowing us to study changes over time, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as public policy changes.

For more information about UP-BC and to download the full report, visit [understandingprecarity.ca](http://understandingprecarity.ca).



IGLIKA IVANOVA is a senior economist and public interest researcher at the CCPA-BC.



KENDRA STRAUSS is director of Simon Fraser University’s Labour Studies Program.

# We know BC has a gender pay gap— it's time to do something about it



SHANNON DAUB is the director at the CCPA-BC.

In March, over 125 organizations, academics and advocates—led by a coalition that includes CCPA-BC, West Coast LEAF and others—penned an open letter urging the government to introduce an intersectional *Pay Equity Act*. BC has one of the worst gender pay gaps in Canada and such an Act would enshrine in law the responsibility of all employers to identify and close gaps in pay for work of equal value.

Women and people who are marginalized because of their gender are systematically underpaid compared to the wages their male counterparts earn. This is especially true for people who are Indigenous, Black, racialized and those who have a disability or are otherwise marginalized.

As a province with obligations under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) and with Reconciliation Agreements with Indigenous nations, the wage gap between Indigenous peoples and others reflects Canada's failure to act on its promises. Studies show higher unemployment rates and a larger wage gap for First Nations people.

Shortly after the coalition published an open letter, the provincial government unveiled its planned new pay transparency legislation, which would require employers to *report* on gender-based differences in pay but wouldn't require them to *do* anything about it.

The new pay transparency legislation does include some important features, such as requiring employers to include a salary range with job postings and preventing employers from asking candidates what they were paid at previous jobs. But overall it creates very minimal reporting requirements, will not result in systematic publicly accessible data about gender pay gaps in BC and is being phased in over several years.

BC's pay transparency legislation should be strengthened so it lays the groundwork for a robust pay equity system. Here's how:

- 1. Robust enforcement regime.** Oversight and accountability mechanisms should ensure employers' compliance, and non-compliance should lead to public naming and fines.
- 2. Transparency in all aspects of compensation.** Total annual compensation, including bonuses and non-monetary benefits, must be transparent, tied to job titles and core duties to ensure pay equity.

BC needs  
pay equity  
legislation!



**3. Broad application across the economy.** Mandatory for all employers with 10 or more employees across all sectors.

**4. Data system built to support pay equity.** Pay data must be stored in a central repository to support future analysis.

**5. Single interface for public access to data.** One easily searchable online interface must be made available to the public.

**6. Disaggregation of data for deeper analysis.** Data must be collected, allowing researchers to understand links between identity factors, revealing gaps between and within areas of the economy.

**7. A new Pay Equity Office to lead implementation.** An office providing expertise in pay equity is needed to oversee a future pay equity regime.

The good news is that the coalition's open letter received so much attention that the government made a public commitment to bring in pay equity legislation as a next step—though the timeframe for that commitment remains uncertain.

Pay transparency legislation alone, even well designed, will not secure the right to equal pay for work of equal value unless it is followed by a true Pay Equity Act. One *discloses* the issue, the other *addresses* it.

*This article draws on an open letter by a coalition that includes Indigenous organizations, labour and workers' rights groups, researchers and community leaders. Join the call at [www.ccpabc.ca/pay-equity-now](http://www.ccpabc.ca/pay-equity-now).*



## Hello from the CCPA-BC's new Associate Director

Hello! My name is Lisa Akinyi May and I'm delighted to bring my experience in journalism, communications and research to the CCPA-BC. My early career focused on telling the stories of vulnerable communities at the UN in Kenya and at VRT News in Belgium. Before moving to Canada, I managed communications and grants at Journalismfund.eu, where I supported global investigative journalists in exposing corruption, money laundering, and human rights abuses. With a global perspective and deep commitment to social justice, I'm thrilled to direct the CCPA-BC's communication team and co-manage the organization alongside Director Shannon Daub and Associate Director, Operations and Finance Mariwan Jaaf.

Read my article for a possible global solution to some of BC's climate change concerns.

## Does the global “loss and damages” fund negotiated at COP27 offer lessons for BC?

Last November, COP27 concluded with an agreement to establish a “loss and damages” fund to address climate change impacts on vulnerable nations.

Given the disasters BC has faced over the last couple of years, is this a model the province could draw on to support historically marginalized communities that bear the brunt of the climate crisis?

For thirty years, so-called developing nations have requested a loss and damages fund to address climate-induced losses from floods, droughts, and rising seawater. The fund is seen as one of the few successes to emerge from COP27, where countries that have historically contributed the most to climate change will compensate those that have contributed the least.

First Nations in BC, who have contributed the least to climate change, already face severe impacts that will likely worsen. BC, as an oil and gas exporting province with high per capita emissions, has a moral obligation to acknowledge climate crisis inequities. A loss and damages fund, similar to what was negotiated at COP27, could support First Nations in their self-determined efforts to rebuild their communities and make them resilient for the future.

For example, one of the communities making up the Nlaka'pamux Nation in the Lytton area has developed an adaptation strategy to preserve water resources, deal with forest

fires, protect traditional foods and support self-sufficiency.

The province can afford to set up such a fund, and it could be financed from a share of BC's carbon tax revenues, which is set to reach \$170 per tonne by 2030. Allocating some of these revenues to a climate fund would be an opportunity for BC's new premier David Eby to deliver on his commitment to prioritize climate action.

BC cannot successfully confront the climate crisis without addressing social, economic, and racial injustices.

Thinking about the parallels between global and local climate inequities is an important part of climate justice. But it is up to First Nations in BC to determine their respective and collective priorities.

BC cannot successfully confront the climate crisis without addressing social, economic, and racial injustices. As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres notes, “the fund is an important step towards justice for poor countries that have done little to cause the climate crisis but are suffering its worst impacts.” The parallels with the First Nations and the settler colonial state are painfully obvious.

# Costs and contradictions of the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion



MARC LEE is a senior economist with the CCPA-BC Office.

Canada's uneasy relationship between climate change and fossil fuel development was illustrated in November 2021 when seven atmospheric rivers hit southern BC, leading to massive flooding and landslides that crippled infrastructure and isolated the south coast from Canada.



PHOTO: BLAKE ELLIOTT / SHUTTERSTOCK.

Among the shutdowns and reduced capacity was the Trans Mountain pipeline that delivers Alberta crude and other refined petroleum products to BC. Construction of the pipeline's much larger twin, the Trans Mountain expansion project (TMX), was delayed.

In 2018, the federal government bought Trans Mountain from Kinder Morgan for \$4.5 billion and committed to deliver on TMX at an estimated further cost of \$7.4 billion. The TMX project was billed as "in the national interest"—despite environmental impacts and opposition by many First Nations—because it would reduce Canada's dependence on exporting to the US, in favour of Asian markets.

Over four years later, TMX has been plagued by delays and cost overruns, and only a small portion (\$1.4 billion) of this

increase is attributed to 2021's extreme weather. Trans Mountain says only 20 per cent of the cost increases will be passed on to the pipeline's customers—oil companies. The other 80 per cent will be absorbed by Canadians.

Even worse, higher prices are unlikely to be found in Asia due to higher transportation costs and lower prices for the heavy oil produced from Alberta due to differences in refining capacity.

TMX is scheduled to be completed by year's end and could not be more ill-suited to this time when more extreme weather means more future spill risks. Extreme weather disasters like BC experienced in November 2021 are increasingly common worldwide and governments are responding with climate actions. The US Inflation Reduction Act is a game-changer driving new clean energy investment.

Our recent research estimated the economic costs of BC's 2021 extreme weather disasters—heat dome, wildfires and floods/landslides—at \$11-\$17 billion. Not counted is the potential damage to land and water from a pipeline or tanker spill.

TMX is scheduled to be completed by year's end and could not be more ill-suited to this time when more extreme weather means more future spill risks.

And, if TMX successfully expands Alberta's oil production, it will add carbon emissions that will cause future damages.

TMX symbolizes the contradictions in Canada's climate policy. Never have Canadian politicians spent so much for so little, and at the wrong time.

*In January, Marc spoke on a panel discussing the hidden costs of Canada's fossil fuel expansion. A video recording of the event can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/2c2rb3nx>*





# Why Canada still needs a wealth tax—and what it could fund



ALEXANDER HEMINGWAY is a senior economist at CCPA-BC Office

Calls for an annual wealth tax on the super-rich have been increasing in Canada and worldwide, driven by extreme inequality. Yet such a tax is nowhere to be seen on the federal government’s agenda—despite research showing that a well-designed wealth tax can help reduce inequality, improve economic growth and generate revenue for public investment.

Currently, the richest 1% in Canada controls 25-29% of the country’s wealth, while the 12 million Canadians at the bottom of the economic ladder hold less wealth than the 87 richest families in Canada combined. And during the pandemic, Canadian billionaires saw their wealth increase, exacerbating inequality.

High levels of inequality hurt economic growth, are linked to worse performance on a wide range of health and social outcomes, skew public policy towards the rich and deprive governments of revenue for public investments.

Wealth tax research suggests that a well-designed and enforced tax could be efficient, effective and raise significant revenue for public investment.

My research shows that a tax on net wealth above \$10 million with three brackets and rates of 1%, 2% and 3% could raise an estimated \$32 billion in the first year alone, rising to \$51 billion by the tenth year and a cumulative \$409 billion over 10 years. Even a smaller wealth tax as proposed by the NDP could generate \$19 billion in its first year and \$246 billion over 10 years.

Recent economic research shows that a wealth tax is enforceable if it is comprehensive, applies to all types of assets and includes mandatory

third-party reporting. Focusing wealth taxes on the super-rich makes frequent audits easier, creating an ongoing threat for tax avoiders.

The revenue from a wealth tax could fund any number of public investments—such as universal pharmacare, free post-secondary education, a massive build out of non-market affordable housing and enhanced public transit.

A wealth tax should be viewed as a complementary measure to a suite of badly needed tax policies, such as ending the special treatment of capital gains income, raising corporate tax rates and investing in tax enforcement. Canada also needs stronger labour standards, higher minimum wages and more union organizing to address extreme inequality.

Proposals for a wealth tax enjoy massive public support in Canada, reaching 89% in national polling, including 83% of Conservative voters. Such a stark disconnect between public opinion and public policy shows the power of wealthy elites to protect their interests, but a wealth tax is within our reach if we mobilize and could be a game-changer when it comes to both enhancing public services and reducing extreme inequality.

**TABLE 1 WEALTH TAX REVENUE ESTIMATES (BILLIONS OF DOLLARS)**

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Gross revenue	\$32.7	\$34.3	\$36.2	\$38.2	\$40.4	\$42.5	\$44.7	\$47.0	\$49.4	\$52.0
Funds for admin/enforcement	\$0.7	\$0.7	\$0.7	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.9	\$0.9	\$1.0	\$1.0
<b>Net revenue</b>	<b>\$32.0</b>	<b>\$33.6</b>	<b>\$35.4</b>	<b>\$37.5</b>	<b>\$39.6</b>	<b>\$41.6</b>	<b>\$43.8</b>	<b>\$46.0</b>	<b>\$48.4</b>	<b>\$50.9</b>

Tax rates applied on net wealth: 1% above \$10 million, 2% above \$50 million and 3% above \$100 million.

PHOTO: ALEXI ROSENFELD / SHUTTERSTOCK

# Reflections on a lifelong interest in natural resource extraction and the consequences for communities



BEN PARFITT is the resource policy analyst at the CCPA-BC.

When I was six, my mom, sister and I took an overnight train to visit my grandparents, who lived in Schumacher on the outskirts of Timmins in northern Ontario.



Their big, white, wood-sided house was one of a handful on a crescent overlooking a lake, all occupied by senior managers working for the McIntyre copper and gold mine, whose massive headframe pierced the sky on the lake's distant shoreline.

Every night the mine hummed from across the lake, a backdrop to the music emanating through the floor beneath my bed as my grandpa, McIntyre's chief engineer, listened to Beethoven.

I trace my lifelong interest in the extraction of natural resources—timber, fish, minerals and hydrocarbons—to that visit.

Since 2005, I have deployed my investigative journalism skills on those extractive industries in my capacity as a resource policy analyst with the CCPA-BC.

As I approach my 20<sup>th</sup> year at the CCPA-BC, I realize that much of what I warned about when I first commenced this work has come to pass.

In January of this year, my analysis *Running on Empty* chronicled how thousands of forest industry workers had lost their jobs due to the overly aggressive logging of BC's forests. The piece echoed *Battling the Beetle*, my first comprehensive report for the CCPA in summer 2005, which warned of the consequences of hyperinflated logging rates.

In March, I amplified the theme with *Houston Falling*, which explored the opening of the world's largest sawmill in Houston, BC, and how that presaged a day of reckoning for the province's forests and rural communities. The piece advocated for an alternative: smaller mills rooted in communities, where the emphasis was on value, not volume.

Many reports like these happened over the years because people shared their stories with me. Travelling to where they lived and worked also gave me insights that I wouldn't otherwise have had.

Looking ahead, the overexploitation of our forests is about to be replicated. Natural gas drilling and fracking is poised to explode when exports of liquefied natural gas from BC commence in the next few years. The effects on Indigenous peoples in the province will be particularly profound.

A surge in mining is also likely as more primary metals like copper, lead and aluminum and many lesser known rare metals are excavated to power up our "clean" electric cars, solar panels and wind turbines. This extraction promises to come at considerable social, cultural, economic, environmental and, yes, climatic cost.

I hope to be there to cover those stories, to cover not just how industrial exploitation wrecks ecological and social chaos, but how if done right we can support good jobs in healthy communities where we do much more with much less.

The generous donations we receive from our supporters enable us to travel and listen to communities impacted by natural resource extraction, informing our research and recommendations. Please support our work to ensure their voices are heard—donate to the CCPA-BC today.





# Running on Empty

## Closure of Prince George Pulp all about running out of forest



BEN PARFITT is the resource policy analyst at the CCPA-BC.

Early in 2023, workers in Prince George, the powerhouse of British Columbia’s Interior forest industry, learned they faced a precarious future.

On January 11, Canfor announced it would soon close a pulp mill in the city with a loss of 300 high-paying jobs.

It was just the beginning of a brutal round of announcements by BC’s largest forest company.

Hundreds more jobs were soon gone at Canfor sawmills, pellet and pulp mills in Houston, Chetwynd and Taylor—all of which were foreseeable and all of which the CCPA warned would happen in the aftermath of the news to hit Prince George.

The evidence has been there for years—decades in fact—that a day of reckoning lay ahead.

Consider for a moment the massive Prince George Timber Supply Area (TSA), the largest forest administrative zone in British Columbia, dwarfing in size European countries like the Czech Republic, Ireland and Lithuania.

Most of the readily accessible primary forests in that 80,000-square-kilometre land mass are gone, stripped of their green gold by the logging industry in just 50 years.

It is hard for many British Columbians who live in cities far south of Prince George to grasp the size of the province they live in, let alone just how much of its natural endowment is gone.

For those choosing to look, readily available satellite images provide a starting point.

As the MLA for Prince George and Mackenzie, and as a hunter,

trapper and angler, Mike Morris has seen more of BC than many residents ever will—and on the ground, where it matters most.

“This shouldn’t come as a surprise. We need to change our forestry in BC,” Morris said shortly after Canfor announced its pulp mill closure.

Evidence of Canfor and other companies logging too much today, and therefore impoverishing tomorrow abounds. This was writ large in the late 1980s and again more dramatically in the 2000s when the provincial government allowed them to turbocharge logging rates in response to insect infestations that killed millions of trees.

The dramatic uptick in logging proved fortuitous for Canfor and a few other companies that all had built “super mills” that could easily process all of the additional logs coming out of forests—mills that have now closed or soon may because the most economically accessible trees are gone.

There is an alternative to this—something that the CCPA has advocated for 20 years.

The focus on extracting massive numbers of trees and turning them into a small number of commodity lumber products must give way to logging far fewer trees and then extracting far more value from each one cut down.

The government can help make that happen by ending all exports of raw, unprocessed logs from BC and turning more of what little forest remains directly over to mills that are creating higher-value products and putting people to work.

# Thank you!

The CCPA is a supporter funded organization. Our largest source of funding comes from individual donors.

We extend our thanks and appreciation to everyone who gives to the *BC Solutions Fund*. When you donate to the BC Solutions fund 100% of your support goes to the CCPA-BC office. Here we publicly recognize those who gave \$100 or more annually from January to December 2022.

We also thank the many, many people who donated smaller—**but equally valuable**—amounts and those in BC who support the CCPA through general donations. We are truly grateful for your support!

We strive to ensure that each name is appropriately listed and spelled. Please contact Rav Kambo by phone at 604-801-5121 x 225 or [rav@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:rav@policyalternatives.ca) if we have made an error so we may correctly recognize you in the future.



**CCPA**  
CANADIAN CENTRE  
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
BC Office

## Donor Circle Patrons \$5000 +

Aqueduct Foundation—  
Eburne Mill Fund  
Estate of Lillian Fullen  
Estate of Raymond Gaudart  
John Harrison

Illahie Foundation  
Joy & Ken Williams Social  
Justice Fund held at the  
Victoria Foundation  
Philip Resnick

Penny Tilby & Ron Peterson

*And 3 other generous  
individuals who prefer to  
remain anonymous*

## Donor Circle Members \$1,000 - \$4,999

Thomas Adair  
Ian Clague  
Jude Coffin  
Marcy Cohen  
Duncan & Nora Etches  
Christopher Fleck  
Douglas Ford  
Louise Gallie  
Marjorie Griffin Cohen  
Robin Hanvelt & Vera  
Rosenbluth  
Joey Hartman  
George Heyman  
Eileen Little  
Malcolm MacLure &  
Patricia Lane

Arlene McLaren  
Elsie McMurphy  
Walter Meyer Zu Erpen  
Kenneth Novakowski  
David Osborne  
Richard Pollay & Carole  
Christopher  
Janet & Clif Prowse  
Chris & Sandra Purton  
Denise Reinhardt & Paul  
Schachter  
Bill & Mary Ann Robertson  
David Rosenbluth &  
Molly Moss  
Leonard Schein  
Pat Sexsmith & David Yorke

Muggs Sigurgeirson  
Joan Stelling  
Susan Stout  
Melinda Suto  
Swale Fund held at Vancity  
Community Foundation  
Sally Teich & Paul Tetrault  
Maia Tsurumi  
Susan Walp  
Lois Jean Yelland  
Paul Yorke & Ingrid Kolsteren  
Mee Young & Phillip Aird

*And 13 other generous  
individuals who prefer to  
remain anonymous*

## Champions \$500 - \$999

Toni Boot  
Anne Boulton  
John Boyle  
Robert J. Brebner  
John Calvert  
Nicole Charwood  
Sharon Chow & Bo Martin  
Ian & Barbara Cochran  
Alan Eastwood  
Jeff Finger  
Gregory Flanagan  
Ann Godderis  
Ellen Gould  
Janet Hall  
Jo-Ann Hannah  
Marianna Harris  
Ruth Herman  
Susan Hollick-Kenyon  
Robert Hollies

Richard Hoover  
Valerie Hunter  
Graham E. Johnson  
Marilynn King  
Michael & Bonnie Klein  
Seth Klein & Christine Boyle  
Anne Kloppenborg  
Steve Koerner  
Miroslav Kolar  
FT Lam  
Brent & Kate Lister  
Andrew Longhurst  
Moira MacKenzie  
R.V. MacLeod  
Jim & Eva Manly  
Rita McCracken  
Reta McKay  
Sandra J. Micheals  
Jim Murphy

Joanne & Neil Naiman  
John Neal  
Robert Openshaw  
Bill Pegler  
Philip & Claire Daykin Fund  
held at Vancity Community  
Foundation  
Sheila Pratt  
Andrea Rolls  
Lothar Schaefer  
Maureen Shier  
Stephanie Smith  
Christian & Magda Theriault  
Annette Toth  
Bill Zander &  
Mickey Bickerstaff

*And 24 other generous  
individuals who prefer to  
remain anonymous*

## Advocates \$100 - \$499

Neale Adams &  
Rosalind Kellett  
Robert Ages  
Dave Ages & Virginia Monk  
Heather Allison  
Roald Anderson  
Andrea Carol Anderson  
Starla Anderson  
Suzanne Andre  
Ruth Armstrong

Alex & Ann Atamanenko  
Caitlin Atkinson  
Robert Bach  
Eric Ball  
Keith E. Barnes  
Michelle Baudais  
Trudy & Jim Beaton  
John Bechhoefer  
Simon Beck

Maryellen Belfiore &  
Ken Klonsky  
Alan S. Bell  
Craig A. Benson  
Sandra Berman  
Sam Black  
Gregory Blue  
Nancy Bradshaw &  
Robert Brown  
Vanessa Brcic

## Advocates Continued \$100 - \$499

John Brennand	David Green	Jaime Matten	Michael Purves	Jane Bracken
Alison Brewin	Paul Grinder	Barbara Jo May	Lucille Rasmussen	Rasmus Storzjohann
Rowan Burdge	Orest Gulaga	Ann & Miles McClenaghan	Walter Rasmussen	Coro & Philip Strandberg
Margaret Burkhardt	Sachiko Charlotte Gyoba	Kenneth McFarlane	Rhea Redivo	Lynda Strutt
Russell Cameron	David Hadley	Pegasis McGauley	Robert Blair Redlin	Richard Sullivan
Simone & Jon Carrodus	John Hall	Kathy Mcgrenera	Brian Redway	Catherine Talbot
King-Mong Chan	Wendy Hamblin	John McHugh	Blaize Reich	Joseph Tannenbaum
J. Chang & M. Offer	Sandra Hanson	Janette McIntosh	Andrea Reimer	Elizabeth Templeman
Toby Chernoff & Tanya Lewis	Judith Harper	Paule McNicoll	Paul Reniers	Dave Thomas
Sarah Chesterman	Dawn Hemingway	Emira Mears	Katherine Rennie	Mark Thompson
Beth Clarke	Henry Hightower	Donald J Meen	Keith Reynolds	D. Gillian Thompson
Gerrit & Diane Clements	Shelly & John Hilditch	Mary-Lee Merz & Richard Holmes	John Richmond	Anona Thorne
Lorne Clerihue	Steven Hill	Colin Miles	John Richmond	Jason Tockman
Ben Clifford	Helena Hiltz	John Millen	Sylvia Riddell	Claire Trevena
Karen Cooling	Lee & Ilean Hollaar	Colleen Miller	Joan Robillard	Alex Tunner
John Cossom	Stan Holman	Kevin Millsip	Arthur Robinson	Glenyss Turner
Lisa Cowan	Garry Horne	Carrie Mishima	Sandra Rodin	Mariken Van Nimwegen
Michael Crawford	Jeff Hoskins	Maureen Mitchell	Donald J. Rosenbloom	Kathleen Vance
Ian Cromwell	Ruth Houle	Barbara Mitchell-Pollock	Sheila Rowswell	Laura Vilness
Kathleen Cross	Linda Howard	Denise Moffatt	Jay Rudolph	Katherine Vincent
D&D Coates Fund held at the Vancity Community Foundation	Perry J.A. Hunter	Nicole Molinari	Kathleen Ruff	Glenn Vockeroth
Gretta D'Alquen	Erica & Mariwan Jaaf	Candice Morgan	Barbara Ryeburn & Kim Eaton	Donna Vogel
Bill Darnell	Sue Jackel	Anne Morris	Mayta Ryn	Lezlie Wagman
Kirsten Daub	Nancy Jackson	Jim Morrison	Karen Saenger	Darryl Walker
Alexander Daughtry	Margaret Jackson	Richard Morrow	Vince Salvo	Gillian Walker
Astrid Davidson	Karen Jamieson	Toby Mundy	Paul Sanborn	Kate Walker
Kenneth Dent	Ellie Johnson	Keith Murdoch	J. Sandkuhl	Elinor Warkentin
Sav Dhaliwal	Bernhard Juurlink	Catherine Murray	Vandy Savage	Susan Webber
Sonya Dunn	Mihoko Kanashiro	Nancy Hawkins & Bill Bargeman Fund held at the Vancity Community Foundation	Joan Sawicki	G.R. Barrie Webster
Allison Dunn	Maggy Kaplan	Gayle & Ron Neilson	Joey Schibild & Marc White	Patricia Wejr
Deborah Dunne	Jean Kavanagh	Robyn Newton	Peter & Heather Scholefield	Greg & Sheila Whincup
Jan Eagle	Danny S. Keeton	Ib Nielsen	Olga Schwartzkopf	Kathleen Whipp
Rae Eckel	David & Linda Kennedy	Peter Northcott	Megan Scott	Randall White
Mia Edbrooke	Maggie Knight	Mab & Colin Oloman	Brian Sears	E. Sheila White
Raymond Edger	Patricia Jane Laidley	Ruth E. Orcutt	David Secord & Amy Adams	Elizabeth White
William Ekins	Gudrun Langolf	Leslie Page	John Sewell	Shirley Whyte
Gail Brenda Elder	Jean Lawrence	Marilyn Paquin	Carolyn Shaffer	Barry Wiebe
Val Embree	Heather Leighton	Maureen D. Paterson	Paul Shaker	Suzanne Wilkinson
Leo Eutsler	Gloria Levi	Bonnie Pearson	Maurice Shapiro	Maureen Williams & Ralph Garrison
Susan Evans	S. & A. Levitan	Pelter Family Fund held at the Victoria Foundation	Carol Shaw	David Winchester
Arlene E. Feke	Jacqueline Levitin	Wayne Peppard & Dianne Novlan	Yvonne Shewfelt	Manfred Winter
Dorothy Field	Anita Lindsay	Robert Pettit	Pat Shields	Ann Wood
Ronald Fisher	Ursula Litzcke	Evelyn Pinkerton	Jane Shoemaker	Kathleen Woodley
Cynthia Flood	Sharon Lorz	Marion Poggemiller	Jane Shofer & Steven McKinney	Erlene & Robert Woollard
Jo Fox	Michael M'Gonigle	Gus Polman	Jim Slade	Jacqueline & Neil Worboys
Lynda Gagné	Jack MacDermot	Lily Popoff	Andrea Smith	Jo Worster
Crissy George	Steve MacDonald	Lee A. Porteous	Miriam Sobrino	John Worton
Fred Girling	Peter & Nancy Macek	Stuart Poyntz	Christine St. Peter	Ken A. Wotherspoon
Alvin Glover	Edith MacHattie	George Prevost	Margaret Stegman	Gary Wright
Michael & Dianne Goldberg	Verna MacKlin	Joyce & John Prothero	Margaret Stevenson	Eileen Wttewaall
James Gordon	Greg & Margaret MacNeill		David Stevenson	William Zeschin
Elizabeth Gordon	Ron & Marion MacQueen		Bob Steventon & Anne Hogan	
Margaret Gorrie	Julia MacRae		Donna Stewart	
	Ronald Manzer		Fred Stockholder &	
	Richard & Judith Marcuse			

*And 255 other generous individuals who prefer to remain anonymous*



# Will 2023 be the year BC farmworkers finally receive basic minimum wage protections?



ANELYSE WEILER is an assistant professor at the University of Victoria's Department of Sociology.



Labour economist DAVID FAIREY is Co-Chair of the BC Employment Standards Coalition.

One group of farmworkers—who legally may earn less than minimum wage—are even more stressed than most British Columbians because of debt and inflation.

One group of farmworkers—who legally may earn less than minimum wage—are even more stressed than most British Columbians because of debt and inflation.

When British Columbians rang in the New Year, the provincial government quietly increased the minimum piece rate wage for farmworkers by a pitiful 2.8 %—their first increase since January 2019.

Meanwhile, BC's cost of living has increased by 11.5 % since 2019. And a 2019 Ministry of Labour report shows that some blueberry pickers are still legally paid less than minimum wage. Will 2023 be the year the government stands up to the power of growers and supports basic fairness for farmworkers?

Many farmworkers excluded from standard BC labour protections are highly exploited, racialized recent immigrants.

If a farmer hires workers in one of 15 crops, including peaches, mushrooms and daffodils, wages can be based on the amount hand-harvested instead of an hourly wage. Hand harvesters are not only excluded from the Employment Standards Act's hourly minimum wage provision, they are excluded from labour protections regarding hours of work, overtime pay and paid statutory holidays.

Minimum piece rates have not kept pace with the cost of living.

Piece rate wages are archaic and the special minimum wage legislation for hand harvesters has been racist and discriminatory since it was introduced in 1981.

Minimum piece rates have not kept pace with the cost of living. Temporary foreign workers who perform equivalent work in BC are guaranteed the minimum hourly wage, giving lie to employer claims that the hourly minimum wage would be too costly or require more onerous supervision.

Growers often complain about US competition yet all Washington State farmworkers must earn at least the hourly minimum wage.

Since the NDP government was elected six years ago, the minimum hourly wage has increased annually, 37.9 % in total. However, hand harvester minimum piece rates only increased twice—in 2017 and 2019—for an 11.4 per cent total.

It's well past time to end the discrimination, exploitation and abuse of the hard-working people who pick BC fruit and vegetables under precarious conditions and the government-appointed Fair Wages Commission has reached the same conclusion.



# Spending What It Takes

## A public investment agenda on climate and energy for long-term prosperity in Canada



MARC LEE is a senior economist at the CCPA-BC.

Canada must urgently and equitably decarbonize every sector of the economy for the good of the planet and for national interests.

The March 2023 federal budget signaled a desire to let the market do most of the heavy lifting on climate policy, by introducing and expanding a range of investment tax credits, alongside continued annual increases in the federal carbon tax.

Instead, Canada needs an ambitious and well-funded public investment plan to drive the clean energy transition we need. Our research shows the federal government spends about \$10 billion per year—soon rising to \$15 billion—or about 0.5 % of GDP—on greenhouse gas emission reduction efforts across several sectors of the economy. These initiatives are a good start, but are insufficient to put Canada on a path to net-zero emissions by 2050.

In partnership with the Climate Action Network – Réseau action climat Canada, the CCPA recently published *Spending What It Takes: Transformational climate investments for long-term prosperity in Canada*. We outline a forward-looking, sector-by-sector alternative climate investment plan of \$287 billion in public spending over five years (an average \$57 billion per year) above and beyond currently planned spending. This works out to about 2 % of Canada’s GDP.

The necessary climate investments include:

- \$25 billion to support Indigenous-led climate policies and solutions.
- \$20 billion to build a clean electricity grid.
- \$66.5 billion to make homes and buildings more energy efficient.
- \$40 billion to accelerate zero-carbon mobility.
- \$4 billion to grow food more sustainably.
- \$80 billion to support good jobs and vibrant communities.
- \$25 billion to build a more resilient society.
- \$5.3 billion to support global climate action.
- \$21 billion to protect and restore nature.



“Green strings” must be attached to funding and financing mechanisms to ensure no more public money is used to subsidize fossil fuels or otherwise undermine the imperative of a just transition to a net-zero economy.

Massive new spending on zero-carbon solutions would cut emissions and stimulate the economy and will also serve to alleviate inflationary pressures by replacing volatile fossil fuels.

For Canada to be a climate leader, we need a far more ambitious climate investment plan to compete in the 21st century fossil-free global economy and ensure inclusive prosperity at home. Two cents out of every dollar of income is not a lot to ask for a habitable planet over the longterm.

*Spending what it takes* was co-authored with Caroline Brouillette, Climate Action Network Canada, and Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood, CCPA national office.



# To break housing gridlock, democratize unrepresentative public hearings



ALEX HEMINGWAY is a senior economist at the CCPA-BC.



SIMON PEK is an associate professor of business and society at the University of Victoria.

Amid a housing crisis, housing policy has a democracy problem. Unrepresentative public hearing processes contribute to land-use decisions that fail to reflect perspectives and interests of all residents.

The right reforms, however, can deepen democracy and break the housing gridlock in BC and Canada.

Municipally, land-use decisions are typically made after lengthy site-by-site rezoning and public hearing processes. Public hearings are required when changes are made to official community plans and zoning bylaws.

This system of decision-making falls short democratically and makes building new homes more difficult and expensive, contributing to housing shortages across the country. And, public hearings systematically underrepresent the interests of renters and those priced out or otherwise excluded from communities.

Property owners—in part because they are geographically concentrated—can easier self-organize and mobilize against proposed new buildings in their area, compared to the beneficiaries of new housing who are spread more diffusely. This imbalance is among the reasons why, even amid a severe housing shortage, most residential land in our cities is zoned only for low-density housing and prohibits apartments.

One way to democratize public engagement on housing is to move away from site-by-site rezonings towards decision-making with a larger geographic scope. Holding fewer but more

geographically encompassing public hearings recognizes that renters across a region have an interest in decisions about new housing. This could mean city-wide land-use policies or have provincial or national governments playing a bigger role.

The structure of public hearings also needs to be more representative and democratic. A promising way to accomplish this is to use deliberative mini-publics (commonly referred to as citizens' panels or citizens' assemblies).

Rather than relying on self-selection, which can skew public hearings towards groups like home owners, older individuals and whites, mini-publics select participants through democratic lottery. This means that if 40 % of residents are renters and 60 % are racialized people then approximately 40 % and 60 % of mini-public participants will be renters and racialized.

Research shows that mini-public participants make high-quality decisions based less on personal priorities and more on those of the broader community, and land-use policies can be better aligned with informed views of people from all walks of life.

*Read the full report here [policynote.ca/democratize-public-hearings](https://policynote.ca/democratize-public-hearings)*



# BC budget does the right thing by prioritizing investment over austerity



ALEXANDER HEMINGWAY is a senior economist at the CCPA-BC.



SHANNON DAUB is the director at the CCPA-BC.



IGLIKA IVANOVA is a senior economist and public interest researcher at the CCPA-BC.

BC's first budget under Premier David Eby includes substantial funding increases in housing, health care, income supports and cost of living tax credits.

It also allocates a record level of investment towards capital infrastructure. This not only represents much-needed progress towards meeting some of the big challenges facing our province, but also prudently continues to invest in the public good rather than cave to fear-mongering about deficits in light of the economic slowdown.

The budget projects modest deficits over the next three years: \$4.2 billion in 2023/24 and \$3.8 billion and \$3 billion in the subsequent two years. While these numbers sound big, they represent about one per cent of the provincial economy (or GDP) in 2023/24 and slightly less going forward.

Deficits are entirely appropriate with an economic slowdown underway. They are also far preferable to inadequate investment in critical public services and infrastructure, which leads to its own kind of deficits—social and environmental.

An eventual return to budget balance should come via increased revenue, not by neglecting public investment, which would be costly to BC's social and economic well-being in the long run.

Even with the spending increases in Budget 2023, provincial

operating spending as a share of GDP has declined substantially from where it stood 25 years ago (in part a consequence of severe social spending cuts under the previous BC Liberal government). Spending by this measure had largely levelled off since the BC NDP came to power, with the exception of a temporary jump during the pandemic. With Budget 2023, it has inched back up relative to those pre-pandemic levels. Even so, if spending in 2023/24 returned to the levels of two decades ago (as a share of GDP), we'd have about another \$5 billion available to invest in priority areas this year alone.

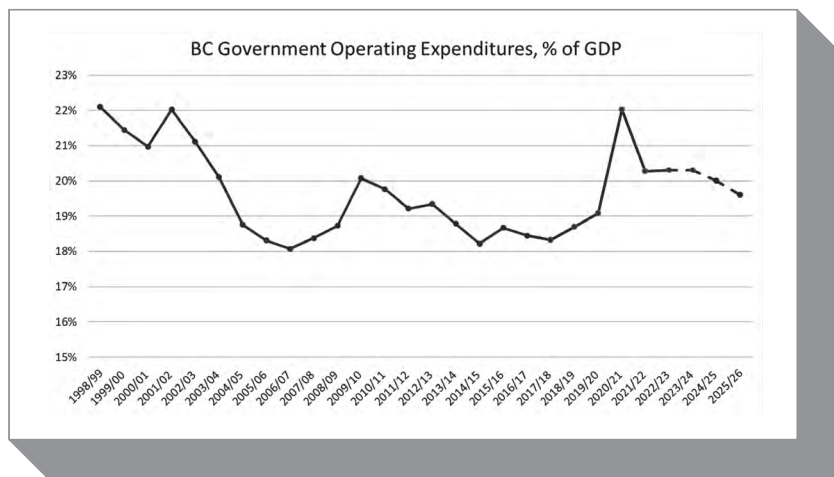
A return to those levels of public investment could be funded in part by more robust taxes on high incomes, corporations and wealthy landowners, with dual benefits of revenue and reducing inequality.

Another positive shift in this budget is the reduced use of “fiscal padding”—the practice of building in large unallocated contingency funds that ultimately serve to hide available fiscal space and create a bias against badly needed public spending (though some of this remains).

BC is facing big social and environmental challenges—sky high rents, health care under enormous strain, a toxic drugs crisis, climate disruption and the need to rebuild crucial but eroded public services (to name a few). BC has more than enough fiscal and economic capacity to meaningfully address these crises, and BC Budget 2023 rightly prioritizes badly needed investments over a return to austerity.

While this might not please corporate interest groups, it responds to what the rest of us need. A single budget won't solve these problems overnight but it is an important shift in the right direction.

Read our full budget analysis, including gaps in the budget at [policynote.ca/budget-2023/](https://policynote.ca/budget-2023/) and watch our budget briefing webinar at [vimeo.com/804402013](https://vimeo.com/804402013)





# Donor Spotlight

## Cathie Talbot

By Rav Kambo

Cathie Talbot is a CCPA-BC monthly supporter. Rav Kambo reached out to her to learn more about why she supports our work. Cathie has an extensive background in nursing, writing, editing, and working with children and families. She recently retired and moved to Victoria to start a new career as a grandmother.

**Rav:** What social justice issues are you passionate about?

**Cathie:** A childhood spent in South America and my work in Africa as an adult created the grounding for many of the social justice issues that have been my passion over the past 50 years. These have included women's rights, fair trade, health care inequities, basic living wage, and environmental justice. Lately, I have been focusing on climate and economic injustices.

**Rav:** How did you learn about the CCPA-BC?

**Cathie:** My mother introduced me to CCPA many years ago by passing on her well-thumbed copies of *The Monitor*. Through that, I became aware of the work of the CCPA-BC office and began attending local events featuring CCPA researchers. My interest was further piqued when my daughter participated in the Next Up program.

**Rav:** In your opinion, what is the most important work that the CCPA-BC does?

**Cathie:** The CCPA-BC's meticulous research and advocacy hold the provincial government accountable for their policies and decisions. You provide a trustworthy source of

economic news and analysis which both lay people and politicians can comprehend. In particular, I have appreciated your analyses and insights into provincial budgets and tax inequality.

**Rav:** Why did you decide to become a monthly donor?

**Cathie:** I donate to many charities, but I am a monthly donor to the ones I feel most passionate about. The CCPA-BC is one of those because I value your unrelenting good work towards effecting positive change in our province.

**Rav:** What would you say to encourage someone to become a monthly donor to the CCPA-BC?

**Cathie:** I would say that if you care about the future of our province, it's important to invest in organizations like the CCPA-BC, whose efforts aim to establish a just and civil society. Monthly donors provide a consistent baseline of support for this work.

**Rav:** What makes you feel hopeful about the future?

**Cathie:** The vision of an equitable and civil society that is echoed in the passion of so many young people today, and in the vision of organizations like yours, gives me hope. Collectively we can create a better world.

To become a monthly donor you can sign up online at [www.ccpabc.ca/give](http://www.ccpabc.ca/give) or return the enclosed form using the postage-paid envelope. Together, we can create a more just and equitable society.

## BC SOLUTIONS

News and commentary from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' BC Office

tel: 604-801-5121  
520-700 West Pender Street  
Vancouver BC V6C1G8

The CCPA-BC is located on unceded Coast Salish territory, including the lands belonging to the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətaʔ/Səlilwiltulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

[policyalternatives.ca](http://policyalternatives.ca)

[blog.policynote.ca](http://blog.policynote.ca)

[policyalternatives](https://www.facebook.com/policyalternatives)

[@ccpa\\_bc](https://twitter.com/ccpa_bc) [@ccpa\\_bc](https://www.instagram.com/ccpa_bc)

### Editorial team

Shannon Daub, Joel French, Rav Kambo, Jean Kavanagh, Lisa Akinyi May & Terra Poirier

Layout & production: Paula Grasdál

Design: Paula Grasdál & Terra Poirier

### ABOUT US

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives is an independent, non-partisan research institute concerned with issues of social, environmental and economic justice. We depend on thousands of supporters for our core funding.

### CCPA-BC COMMITTEES & STAFF

#### BC Office Steering Committee

Elaine Alec, Lou Black, Martina Boyd, James Coccola, Caelie Frampton, Andrée Gacoin, Leanne Marsh, Shannon Murray, Matthew Norris, Karen Renellatta, Sussanne Skidmore, Miriam Sobrino

#### Research Advisory Committee

Clifford Atleo, Marcy Cohen, Maya Gislason, Bethany Hastie, David Hughes, Andrew Longhurst, Kendra Milne, Maged Senbel, Kendra Strauss

#### Staff team

Shannon Daub, BC Office Director

Joel French, Communications & Digital Engagement Specialist

Alex Hemingway, Senior Economist & Public Finance Policy Analyst

Iglika Ivanova, Senior Economist, Public Interest Researcher & Co-Director of Understanding Precarity in BC Project

Mariwan Jaaf, Associate Director, Operations & Finance

Rav Kambo, Senior Fundraising Coordinator

Jean Kavanagh, Senior Media Specialist

Sylvan Korvus, IT Administrator

Marc Lee, Senior Economist

Lisa Akinyi May, BC Associate Director

Ben Parfitt, Resource Policy Analyst

Terra Poirier, Senior Designer & Communications Specialist

Bojan Stanojlović, Project Manager

- Understanding Precarity in BC

Stephanie Yu, Administration

& Operations Specialist



Printed by union labour.