



Episode Transcript

WEALTH IN MENTAL HEALTH: Mobilizing a Just & Green Recovery Economy

RICK 0:10

Welcome to the HEADS UP! Community Mental Health Podcast. Join our host Jo de Vries with the Fresh Outlook Foundation, as she combines science with storytelling to explore a variety of mental health issues with people from all walks of life. Stay tuned!

JO 0:32

Hey, Jo here! Thanks for joining me with my two guests as we explore the emerging economics of mental health, prompted by COVID-19, and how we can mobilize a just and green recovery that enhances well-being for all Canadians.

But first, a huge shout out to a major podcast sponsor, the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia. SPARC BC is a leader in applied social research, social policy analysis, and community development approaches to social justice, and works with communities of all sizes to build, a just and healthy society for all. Thank you for supporting the HEADS UP! Community Mental Health Podcast and the HEADS UP! Community Mental Health Summit. For more info about the summit, visit us at freshoutlookfoundation.org.

Our guests today are both passionate big-picture thinkers with innovative insights and ideas about the need for economic reform as we adjust to our post-pandemic reality. Trish Hennessy is director of Think Upstream, an initiative of the Canadian Center for Policy alternatives. A former journalist, Trish earned a bachelor's degree in social work, and bachelor's and master's degrees in sociology. Her work focuses on the social determinants of health, sustainable development goals, decent work and income, equality, an inclusive economy, and well-being budgeting. Welcome, Trish, it's so great to have you here.

TRISH 2:09

Great to be here.

JO 2:10

Before we get into the discussion about the link between mental health and economy, can you tell us a little bit about the Canadian Centre for Policy alternatives?

TRISH 2:22

Absolutely. We're an independent, nonpartisan think tank that has been advancing policy solutions to promote greater equality, social inclusion, as well as social and economic resilience and sustainability. I work out of the national office, which is based in Ottawa, and the national office is actually celebrating its 40th anniversary this year...we're one of the older think tanks. We also have offices in BC, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and

Ontario... I founded the Ontario office in 2012. Those offices focus on provincial and municipal issues, whereas the national office tends to focus on national issues. Sometimes we go into sub-national as well.

JO 3:06

So how much of the work you do relates to mental health?

TRISH 3:09

I think mental health and physical health are deeply intertwined, and the pathways toward improved mental and physical health include access to adequate income, to decent work, to an inclusive economy, to an economy that leaves no one behind and that protects the health and well-being of both our people and our planet. So, all of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative's work intersects on that front... is kind of like the hip bone's connected to the leg bone. If you leave one of those things out, you have worsening mental and physical health outcomes. So, we look at those social determinants of physical and mental health.

JO 3:50

When we spoke to prepare for this podcast, you said that policy is "behind everything that shapes our world." Now, I'm sure that, as a policy wonk, you can elaborate on that. First, what is policy? And why is it important for us moving forward toward better mental health?

TRISH 4:11

Year in and year out, governments at every jurisdictional level... whether it's local, provincial, or federal... make decisions and policies that affect our lives, for good and for bad. [In 2020], for example, [we saw] the federal government make a series of rapid policy decisions in the face of COVID-19 to create income security programs to try to soften the blow for the millions of workers who lost their job or their working hours due to the necessary economic lockdown in the spring [of 2020].

The government quickly realized that its previous policy for unemployed workers... the unemployment insurance system... wasn't designed for a moment of mass unemployment like we experienced at that beginning of the global pandemic. And we're still experiencing a lot of unemployment when you compare it historically. So, the federal government created CERB, the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit, and it's like a form of income guarantee for those who couldn't work at the start of the economic pause, so that we could all shelter down and give public health officials a chance to implement policies to try to get ahead of the virus, and limit the spread, and make sure that our hospitals weren't surged to beyond capacity.

And that is about as dramatic an example as you can get for how governments make policies that, in this case, save millions of people's lives in Canada. And it's so important because the number-one job of any government at any jurisdictional level is to protect public well-being. And governments don't always live up to that task, but governments who succeed use wise and strategic policies to get there.

JO 5:53

What types of policies affect public health in general, and mental health in particular?

TRISH 5:59

Public health is like this great invisible infrastructure of experts and health care experts, whose number-one job is prevention. They promote vaccines to prevent people from getting the chicken pox or the flu. They promote safe consumption sites to prevent even more deaths in the opioid crisis that's rippled across Canada. Because we are living in the age of a global pandemic, they promote policies to protect the public. Public health officials are usually rarely visible, but now they're hugely visible.

We see them on the daily news advising us to physically distance, to wear masks when we can't physically distance, to wash your hands, to protect ourselves against COVID-19. But the meat and potatoes of their work in a pandemic still kind of remains invisible. They're tracking the epidemiology of the virus, they're contact tracing, they're following up with those who are infected with COVID-19... and a lot of that isn't in front of the public eye. And yet that invisible work is what saves lives and what guides government policies to either reopen the economy or, like what's happening in Toronto where I live, to return to a modified stage two. We can't eat indoors in restaurants, the bars are closing, the gyms are closing, all to avoid swamping our hospital system, because there's a disconcerting rise in COVID cases here and in other places in Ontario, as well. And so that's public health, quietly in the background, trying to keep the wheels on the bus.

JO 7:35

What about the mental health meat in all of that?

TRISH 7:38

In terms of mental health policies, I think we have a long way to go to get to that preventative phase of mental health issues. Most of the policies that are in place are there to help you after you've developed a mental health issue, and even then those policies are inadequate to the task... we treat the symptoms downstream.

A lot of people don't have access to mental health services. Many people can't afford them. They can't afford to go to the private market, and the public sector has not created a robust plan here. I'm actually hoping that the pandemic is the push that our governments need to invest in a national mental health plan. It's something that the federal government has promised to do in its recent throne speech. It's a long time coming. And I think with COVID-19, we're going to see a rise in mental health issues and anxieties, depression, agoraphobia for people who are going to be afraid to go out after staying sheltered for so long. And so, we're still at the baby stages of a mental health system that is more upstream in nature and that prevents things that get to the root of mental health issues.

JO 8:52

I know we don't have any details, or either a firm commitment for a national mental health plan, but what might that look like to you?

TRISH 9:01

A national mental health plan for me would look like what a national dental plan should look like, too, because it's in the same boat. We don't have a holistic, universal public health system right now. You can get treated if you break a bone in your arm or your leg... you can walk right into a hospital and they'll fix you up. But you can't necessarily get treated if you've got something wrong with your teeth, or if you're in emotional distress. And so, it would be a coherent, coordinated plan, where just like I can walk into my family doctor to talk about an infection that I have, I would be able to walk into a mental health facility and immediately access counseling.

But that's still addressing an [existing] mental health issue. A really upstream mental health national plan would look at those social determinants of health. There's just tons of research that shows that if people have adequate access to safe and clean and affordable housing, if they have food security, if parents have access to affordable, high-quality childcare... all of these are supports that take a lot of the pressure off of a household. And they can influence the amount of mental health issues that are out there.

When we think about mental health, we tend to think about what you personally can do to work through a depression or through anxiety. But it's so interrelated with everything else, like how we live, and whether we're

poor, whether we're scrounging to earn next month's rent and worried about getting evicted, which many people in the middle of this pandemic are worried about. So, thinking about health in all policies, not just a mental health plan, but every federal ministry, every provincial ministry, would look across all of their departments and ask what investments would actually fuel greater mental health? And it's a holistic approach. It's big.

JO 11:03

Are there any countries actually doing this kind of massive policy change and implementation of great programs like what you're discussing?

TRISH 11:14

I'm really inspired these days by New Zealand. The Prime Minister of New Zealand has basically said GDP growth isn't your measure of success, because if you don't have public well-being, then it's failure. And so, in New Zealand, they're investing in well-being budgeting, and that includes investing in mental health initiatives, investing in inclusion and empowerment of indigenous communities, investing in climate change interventions, because if you don't have a healthy climate, you can't even have a healthy economy.

So, she's kind of flipping the conversation where I think, for far too long and certainly in Canada, we have politicians who look at the job growth [and say] we're doing great. But the questions I asked are: Is that job growth part-time, crappy wages, where you don't even earn a living wage? Is every job that we're creating a good job that has a living wage that is not precarious, where you can actually plan for a future where you might have benefits at work in case you get sick... if you need prescription drugs? Those sort of things. That is a worldview that is counter to just looking at GDP growth and job growth. It's not asking how big is the growth, what's the percentage? It's asking about who's impacted by that? And are we lifting everyone up?

JO 12:44

For each of the past 25 years, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has released an Alternative Federal Budget. These what-if exercises outline what the federal government could do differently to ensure and integrate social, environmental, and economic well-being. This year's Alternative Federal Budget is called 'A Recovery Plan' that closes the chapter on the old normal, because it says the status quo after COVID-19 is no longer an option. "This is our chance to bend the curve of public policy toward justice, well-being, solidarity, equity, resilience, and sustainability." The plan goes on to say that economic issues can't be disconnected from everything else, and promotes a health-in-all-policies approach, "because if this pandemic has taught us anything, it's that public health is the requirement for economic health." So, Trish, in keeping with these quotes, tell us about the key principles and recommendations outlined in your recovery plan.

TRISH 13:56

As we were writing that recovery plan, it wasn't lost on us that it's the 25th anniversary of the Alternative Federal Budget that we've been putting out every year that the federal government could take up to reduce income inequality, to battle climate change, etc. So, our recovery plan, it's like a weighty document... it's 200 pages long. We work with civil society organizations from across Canada, they help inform this document. So, obviously, I can't tell you everything in it because it's quite a commitment. But the key principles are we're advancing income security, and that to me is the core role of public policy. It's to ensure that those who are getting left behind by an economy that has been growing, but the benefits of economic growth have been growing disproportionately to those who are at the highest end of the income ladder, while more and more people are getting left behind.

We promote income security for the unemployed, for people who can't get into the labour market, and we promote ideas of income adequacy as well. And if you look provincially, anyone on social assistance is trapped in poverty. Social assistance is hugely inadequate, and we think that has to be addressed. We look for income security and income adequacy, but we also look at four supports for households and individuals.

I was just saying earlier about the social determinants of health, affordable housing, food security, and affordable, universal public childcare. All of these are key to helping people not only survive, but to thrive, and no full economic recovery is possible without these things, and especially with childcare, since right now, in the middle of this pandemic, too many women are actually stepping out of the paid labor market because of the lack of childcare.

We're seeking an explicit equity-seeking agenda to address anti-black, anti-Asian, and anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination. And we know that COVID-19 has disproportionately affected these communities in terms of work, their ability to safely quarantine, and we've seen a rise in anti-Asian racist incidents during COVID-19. And there are higher incidences of COVID-19 among black communities, especially being tracked in Toronto and Montreal. So, we're taking a racial and gender equity strategy.

And last but not least, we're also promoting a caring economy and a public health agenda. This includes investments in long-term care. We've seen far too many vulnerable seniors who have been impacted by COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care facilities, as well as personal support workers who were not protected in the workplace from COVID-19. We're promoting investments in home care.

We do think it's time for a universal pharmacare plan and the throne speech, once again, promises that there's one around the corner. And then the creation of a universal mental health care plan, as we've already discussed. We address climate change. We address trade issues, taxation, how we pay for it all. You name it, there's a chapter on it.

JO 17:15

What's the URL if people want to get more information about the plan?

TRISH 17:20

www.policyalternatives.ca.

JO 17:23

For this plan to work, we'll need political and administrative buy-in from all levels of government, I assume.

TRISH 17:31

Over 25 years, let me tell you, it's been a long uphill climb. We've had our victories, and particularly, it's kind of notable to me, particularly in moments of economic crisis, we've noticed governments are a little bit more ready to act on some of our recommendations.

In the 2008-2009 global recession, we wrote an Alternative Federal Budget plan to get through the worst of that. Surprisingly, the Stephen Harper government implemented a number of our recommendations at that time, which kind of surprised us, but we were happy to see it happen. And then, again, now we're in the middle of a crisis, and we're seeing the federal government, now it's a Liberal government, and we're seeing them implement a number of the policies that we're advocating for, partly because what we're advocating for, it just makes sense.

It's like we suddenly noticed public health, it's suddenly visible in the middle of a pandemic. Problems that need to be fixed, like employment insurance, suddenly become glaringly obvious in the middle of a pandemic, or a global economic crisis. The sad thing is, had more governments taken up these policy recommendations over the years, we would have been more prepared for all of this because it wasn't a surprise that employment insurance wasn't up to the task.

We've known for more than a decade, that far too many unemployed workers didn't even qualify for employment insurance. And if they did qualify, it still isn't adequate. Because, remember, I was talking earlier about the importance of income adequacy. It's one thing to provide income benefits to Canadians, but if you're trapping them in poverty, you're actually just perpetuating cycles of poverty. And that's bad policy decision-making.

So, long story short, we've had our moments. We do feel like there's greater receptivity to our just recovery plan because these are just obvious solutions. But I would just submit that they shouldn't just be obvious in the middle of a crisis or an emergency. If we'd had investments in these policies decades ago, we would be fighting a pandemic from upstream instead of downstream.

JO 19:53

To talk more about the provinces' role in recovery and some options that are being explored in British Columbia, I welcome our next guest. Arden Hanley is Board Chair of the Green Technology Education Centre in BC, which has recently established the Council for the Green New Economy. With a Doctorate of Education, Arden is former vice-president of City University in Seattle. His recently published book, entitled *Social Architecture: Notes and Essays*, summarizes his 35 years experience as both a family therapist and organizational development consultant. Hello, Arden. And thanks for joining us.

ARDEN 20:36

Hi there Joanne, and hi Trish. I'm delighted to have this opportunity to have this conversation with you both.

JO 20:44

So, why don't you start by telling us what we need to know about the Green Technology Education Centre.

ARDEN 20:50

GTech, as we like to call it, will celebrate its fourth year in the spring of 2021. It's a nonprofit and its mission is to inform, support, and activate communities in responding to the climate crisis.

JO 21:09

You recently released a report called *Rebuilding BC: A Portfolio of Possibilities*. Can you summarize the principles and recommendations in that document, and how they mirror the model outlined in Kate Raworth's book, *Doughnut Economics*?

ARDEN 21:29

Let me give you a bit of background first. At the time COVID struck, we were delivering a community-based program called the Neighborhood Environmental Education Project in conjunction with Vancouver's Association of Neighborhood Houses. And basically, the objective of the program was to deliver education at a community level. We had 14 different environmental organizations make presentations at the neighborhood houses. We also held town halls to listen to the community and where they were standing in relation to the climate crisis.

Then along came COVID, and we pivoted at that point and formed the Council for a Green New Economy based on some of the thinking that Trish has already shared. It was very clear to us that when COVID was said and done, there was no way we can or should return to business as usual. What's the alternative? That was our question in terms of economic recovery. What a social justice and green environment and recovery looked like was the mission of the council. The council consisted of a core seven people of economists, environmentalists, lawyers, social workers, and we then surrounded ourselves with a circle of subject matter experts in areas ranging from building retrofits to corporate social responsibility.

The report, as you know, is based on what we might call 'doughnut economy' principles, and the doughnut economy suggests that in shaping the economy, we should consider not just how much money the society is making... what the GDP is... but we should also consider the social and mental health of the society, the education of the society. We should also consider its relationship to its environment or its ecology. So, if you picture the doughnut, then it has these three major layers, the 'social foundation', including mental health, education, and also social justice issues like income, equity, childcare, housing, and so forth. The inner layer is a social foundation. The next level is the relationship with the environment. If we destroy our environment, of course, our economy isn't going to function at all. And then finally, the outer layer is the economy.

JO 24:16

So, Arden, what are the specific recommendations outlined in the report?

ARDEN 24:23

First of all, the overall recommendation is to take the opportunity of reconstructing the BC economy, post-COVID, in terms of sustainable rather than extractive principles. And within that, then we make four key recommendations.

First of all, to generate employment through the construction of new affordable housing, including modular construction for the homeless. And this would be done by an expanded and more effective nonprofit sector.

We go on to say, number two, create jobs and reduce carbon emissions through programs that support large scale retrofitting of buildings. Interestingly, buildings are one of the major sources of carbon emissions up to 60% in cities. There's a tremendous carbon payoff from this, as well as great opportunities for employment.

The third recommendation addresses our food supply by encouraging BC to secure its food supply by supporting farm employment and increasing land use.

And finally, here, there's a tremendous convergence with mental health. As you know, we encourage the government to employ up to 30,000 young people as Recovery Rangers to help with BC's economic recovery. And in the report, we spell out a number of areas where youth employment could be particularly an asset, such as the restoration of environments such as wetlands, the further enhancement of walkability in cities... we identified several areas like that as employment opportunities for young people that would also result in a more green environment for us all.

JO 26:26

We heard from Tricia about the federal government's role in policy change. Ideally, what is the province's role in achieving your recommendations?

ARDEN 26:36

Well, as you know, the province has very many key domains, such as energy, mines and petroleum; municipal affairs; social development; and poverty reduction... all of those areas fall under the auspices of the provincial government. Provincial government does also have a lot to say about the environment and climate change strategy and has a ministry with that title. The provincial government is also responsible for forest lands and natural resources and rural development. So, all those domains, then there's tremendous steps forward that provincial governments can take to complement the broader strategy of the federal government.

JO 27:23

I know that you released this report a number of months ago, and I'm just wondering where you're at with that. Are you having discussions with the provincial government? And if so, how are they unfolding?

ARDEN 27:36

Jo, we've had three very productive conversations with government at the cabinet level. We've been very encouraged by their response and also by the inclusion of some of our recommendations in their first economic recovery strategy. But most importantly, we've opened channels for ongoing dialogue. The report has also been a springboard for some further definitive action on the GTech board's part, which we're very excited about.

JO 28:09

I know that you've also had discussions with a number of different organizations throughout the province, what has come of those?

ARDEN 28:19

In the construction of the report, we had a lot of great feedback from environmentally concerned organizations and environmental organizations. And we incorporated that in the report. But from our point of view, and it also enabled us to build on the relationships that we'd begun to establish through the Neighborhood Environmental Education Project, with a range of the many environmental organizations in BC. And through that, we also began to see a picture of not only tremendous industry and accomplishments, but also continued fragmentation, and a lack of consolidation of effort, which is really been a part of a new strategic plan that the board has been working on, in which GTech has a role in addressing this issue of fragmentation or, in more positive terms, consolidating our efforts.

JO 29:20

You've mentioned numerous times that a prime focus of this is enriched employment opportunities, especially for younger people. Have you had any input from organizations like the BC Federation of Labor, for example?

ARDEN 29:38

Yes, we have actually built a very positive relationship with the Fed, and we're engaged in ongoing discussions with them. Of course, they have tremendous sensitivities on behalf of their members about where employment takes place, and what government policy supports. I think what's very unique, and I think they would say that as well... that we have not taken a proselytizing stance. With the Fed, we've taken a stance that says let's find common ground, and they certainly do have environmental concerns. And they also have social justice concerns, which we share.

JO 30:22

Looking again a little deeper into the employment aspect of this, I know Arden that you have been long involved in counseling and social development and those kinds of things. Why do you think these kinds of green tech opportunities will be embraced by younger potential employees?

ARDEN 30:45

While there's no question that the next generations from Gen Z and on are already deeply concerned about the climate crisis. I recall vividly marching across the Cambie Street Bridge with nine- and ten-year-olds, along with parents, teachers, and people of all ages, carrying signs clearly very concerned and aware about environmental issues. There's no question that young people are aware of the climate crisis, its implications, and feel a tremendous urgency, understandably, about this issue being addressed.

JO 31:27

And they're also looking to make a contribution to their communities, aren't they?

ARDEN 31:32

Definitely. We have a great pilot project going right now, by the way, with Gen Z via two BC high schools, and we're doing an education project about electrified transportation, using an AI mediated application. It's so much fun, and they have so much concern, but also a really sophisticated understanding of these issues.

JO 31:57

That's great. It sounds like you're doing amazing work.

ARDEN 32:00

I hope that's the case... I certainly feel good about it. The other thing I wanted to mention to you is that Rebuilding BC has also inspired the GTech board of directors to take GTech in a much more definitively educational direction, with the ultimate goal of creating an educational institute in a much more formal way than it is now, including, eventually, degree granting. So, we're quite excited about that development. And I want to assure you, by the way, that as we began to design what this center will look like, that mental health, providing support through counseling and community development initiatives, in relation to mental health has a key role to play in our view.

JO 32:48

Well, we'll have to have another discussion once that is all set and ready to go.

ARDEN 32:53

For sure... be delighted to.

JO 32:55

So, we talked about federal and provincial roles in the move toward a more sustainable economy that also supports mental health. What about the role of local governments in that transition? Arden, do you think local governments have any clout here? Or are they at the whim of senior government policies?

ARDEN 33:18

Well, I think Trish was very right in saying that municipal governments, city governments, right now are really struggling. They've lost enormous tax revenue, and at the same time, have had to provide additional services. But Vancouver, for example, does have a plan. And they've put a great deal of energy and attention into it. So, I think cities can play a very important role.

JO 33:43

Trish, any more thoughts on that?

TRISH 33:46

I agree, they've got one hand tied behind their back, for sure, because they don't have the fiscal tools that provincial and federal government have. But also, I think sometimes local governments have more weight, and some of them think they do, because all of those downstream problems have an economy that's not sustainable in terms of income inequality and climate emergencies. Those present themselves as major problems at the doorsteps of our municipal governments and our health units. So, municipalities are on the front lines, sending word back to senior levels of government to hopefully inform policy and fiscal transfers from those governments. So, I think sometimes municipalities don't have the strength. But especially when they get together and make demands of senior levels of government, real change can happen.

JO 34:39

We did a podcast about the role of local government in community mental health, and the big takeaway for me there was that it's not only important for local government to work with senior governments but also with people within their own communities. Groups like businesses, universities, colleges, schools at all levels, and particularly community groups, who not only have ideas about how things can be improved, but also they have the manpower and the passion to get these things on the ground. So, I think that's something else that's really worth noting.

TRISH 35:23

Absolutely. Whether it's city council, or provincial or federal, governments cannot make policy in a vacuum. It has to be shaped by the lived experience of people on the ground.

JO 35:34

Exactly. Both of your documents... Trish, your Alternative Federal Budget recovery plan... and Arden, your Rebuilding BC document, they both outline the need for a just and green economy. Let's dig a little deeper here, starting with a just economy. Trish, how would you define that?

TRISH 36:00

I talked a little bit about that earlier. And so really, to me, the core of a just economy ensures that economic growth isn't the only measure of success, because then you're leaving a lot of suffering out of that frame. A just economy operates on key principles of income, security, greater equality on all fronts... that caring economy that I talked about earlier. And it also understands that a green economy has to be embedded in the just economy, because if we can't save our planet, if the next 40 years is more trying to deal with climate emergencies, then the people in the communities who will be hardest impacted by that by climate change and those climate emergencies, will be people on the lower end of the income spectrum. We see it with every kind of crisis, and we're seeing it with COVID-19. It impacts lower income communities more... it impacts racialized communities more. So, a just economy really is focused more on like that doughnut economy that Arden was talking about.

JO 37:11

Arden... additional thoughts?

ARDEN 37:13

Let me start with a story. I teach a course called the Psychology of Aging. And one of the exercises I ask students to do is imagine themselves as 72 years old, and looking back over their lives, to ask questions like: What were the most significant turning points in your life journey? And are some of those ones that you would decide differently? Looking back, are there others that you're absolutely delighted with? I have them do it in triads. So, if you can picture that situation, and then following that, the class's debriefing their experience of the exercise,

by the way, this exercise, speaking of social justice, has the effect of getting younger people under the ages of barrier. That's one of the intentions.

In any case, we're debriefing this exercise, and suddenly, one of the students in the class, it's a graduate class, she's probably around 28, and she suddenly started sobbing. It was so powerful. And she and I talked, and what she said was, "I can't be sure that I'll be even alive when I'm 72. I don't know whether I want to get married. I don't know whether I want to have children. The future of the planet, the environment, but also the social world is so uncertain." It really broke my heart. And there you begin to see that connection between the climate crisis and mental health. It's very evident.

JO 38:54

Can you give us some examples as to how a just economy would support better mental health outcomes?
Trish...

TRISH 39:04

Let me try to loop it in with a just economy and a green economy, and how that could foster better mental health. And just thinking about Arden's exercise... I wish everybody would go through that thought exercise and really think about the future that faces them if we continue with the status quo. There's this term called 'eco-grief'. It describes the deep sense of angst and dread that many people feel, and especially young people, when they realize that our economic activities are compromising the health of our planet. And that time is really running out quickly. And it describes the despair that many people feel over the lack of concerted government efforts to treat climate change like the emergency that it is.

Arden mentioned Seth Klein, earlier in his comments, and Seth Klein has a new book called 'A Good War', and it draws on the lessons from previous war time in Canada, where governments treated things like an emergency and made incredible policy advances, and how we need to treat climate change like that emergency. And that's why it's called 'A Good War'... it's definitely a book worth reading.

I think that if you address climate change, like the emergency that it is, you would be addressing some of that eco-grief that's out there. And eco-grief isn't just when you think about your future and you wonder, "Am I going to have a future, because are we going to have a healthy planet?" But eco grief is already happening to people whose communities have been ravaged by wildfires, by flooding, by other community-related emergencies. And so, dealing a plan that anticipates more of this, and supports people through these climate emergencies, would also be part of addressing eco-grief. Human beings are deeply connected with our natural environment. We live in a built environment, but we have a deep connection with that natural environment. And if that natural environment isn't doing well, we aren't either... physically or mentally.

JO 41:11

Before we move on to a rather complex question. Arden, I'd love for you to just very briefly explain what a green economy is.

ARDEN 41:21

I think the major criteria of the green economy is its environmental sustainability. Are we relating to our environment in a way that will result in future generations having the same abundance that we've experienced? And clearly, our current economy does not meet that key criterion. If we continue to use fossil fuels at the level that we currently use them, we will fundamentally destroy environment of the planet. So that's, to me, the first criteria. And the second is how can we relate to the environment in a way that also supports our resilience as communities, families, and individuals. And this whole idea of connection is so important. When I asked Jody

Wilson-Raybould, who represents our riding [federally], and is also a colleague, what was the most important thing that Indigenous people had to say about a green economy, she talked, as Trish did earlier, about connection. We need to foster, embrace, and celebrate our connection to the natural world.

JO 42:36

So, ideally, we need policies and practices at all levels of government that foster a just economy, and that support a green economy as well. Now, let's talk specifics about how those can best intersect. In your two documents, there are areas of focus that overlap. And I'd like to explore those one at a time and their impacts on mental health.

Let's start with climate change. How can what we know about green technology enable not only environmental outcomes, but social sustainability as well?

ARDEN 43:17

Well, I think New Zealand, Norway, Finland, are showing us a lot about how to create a healthy society. Let's take for example, how business operates. In all of those countries, government is requiring that corporations... businesses... address environmental and social justice issues in their business planning and operations. So, that requirement is one way to bring the commercial sector of the economy on board with creating not only a more sustainable, but a more compassionate, supportive, and respectful society.

JO 43:58

Trish, any comments on that integration regarding climate change?

TRISH 44:03

I totally agree with Arden... I would just add one thing. There's this nascent but growing movement in Canada around inclusive economy initiatives. And here they're looking at what public anchor institutions can do in any community across Canada to foster a just economy that's inclusive, sustainable, and that is also a green economy. So, with public anchor institutions... your city council, your hospitals, your universities... these are examples of public institutions that make spending decisions every day, whether it's for procurement, they're putting out RFPs for work that has to get done. And so, with regard to procurement, they're saying, why not make your criteria for procurement social procurement criteria. Instead of just putting out an RFP, and the criteria is we're going to give the RFP to the lowest bidder... how are you the lowest bidder, well, you're paying your employees low wages. And some government policies and spending decisions are actually reinforcing the low-wage precarious economy.

If you actually make an inclusive economy, an element and a goal out of your procurement policies would be to look at RFPs from companies in our community who show a commitment to green sustainable practices, who hire and/or offer training opportunities and apprentice opportunities for people from marginalized and historically disadvantaged communities. You think of all the money that gets spent from all these public anchor institutions, and we forget the social and the sustainability question within it.

So, ideally, they would intersect by saying, we're not putting out RFPs, or making contracting-out decisions based on cheap. We're making those decisions based on inclusion and resilience and sustainability. And by the way, if public anchor institutions did this, this would be good for their local economies, because they would be less dependent on these external multinational corporations [that] are only interested in your community if you're a low tax jurisdiction, if they can actually get away with a low-paying workforce so that they can extract more profits that don't stay in the community.

So, an inclusive economic approach, if you're building a bridge, you would have a community benefit agreement, so that the general contractor who's building the bridge would be hiring people from the community who are on the sidelines of the labour market. They want in, but they don't have access to those opportunities. So, there's a lot more power that our public anchor institutions have, I think that they could be exercising, that we have to change the frame from cheap and low bidder, to social and sustainable.

JO 47:02

Trish talked in detail about inclusive economy, and both of your reports talked about equality. Are those the same thing?

TRISH 47:12

They're interconnected, for sure. I co-founded the National Income Inequality Project in 2006. Actually, since then, we've been tracking the growth of income inequality in Canada, and the storyline is the same today as it was in 2006. As we've grown the economy, the benefits of that economic growth haven't been redistributed... that more and more, if you're well off, you're even more better off. Corporations and CEOs, the CEO pay gap compared to the average income, keeps going through the roof. So, if you actually want to attack income inequality, and protect the middle class and the working class, and eliminate poverty, then you have to change how you do your economy.

And you have to make sure that the economy isn't simply extractive. That economy has to have social goals that say, we want to be a Canada that leaves no one behind, and we're one of the wealthiest countries on the planet, we actually have the resources to do it. The pandemic is forcing us to spend some resources to do some of this stuff, but it can't stop there. We can't go back to an old model because it wasn't working in the first place.

JO 48:32

Arden, any comments about inclusivity or equality?

ARDEN 48:37

Absolutely. Let me channel first Bernie Sanders a little bit... and looking at the example of the United States... three billionaires... Bezos, Gates, and Buffet... command as much wealth as the lower 50% or 150 million people in the US. This is income disparity. Now, let me link it directly to mental health through a book that I found so informative and fascinating, *The Spiritual Level* by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. And what that book does, and their subsequent research does, is report on the social and mental health impact of income disparity.

It turns out that there's a very direct relationship between income disparity and a whole range of societal wellness and mental health issues, ranging from infant mortality to longevity, including teenage pregnancies and delinquency. There's just a remarkable connection. And this research was enabled, of course, because over the last 50 years, the developing countries have kept very comprehensive statistics of the social dimensions or determinants of societies. So, let's talk about taxation and banks. If we want to have a healthier society, we need to adjust the tax system so that it redistributes income much more equitably. And we also need to provide sources of funding that recognize, explicitly, wellness and sustainability. We need instruments like social banks.

JO 50:24

Both of your reports also included information about affordable housing. So, Trish, starting with you, what is the link between that and both a just and green economy?

TRISH 50:38

Here, I'm just gonna give you an example. The City of Medicine Hat [Alberta] became the first city in Canada to eliminate chronic homelessness. And how did they do that? They gave people housing... they gave them access to housing. And once they had access to housing, they offered other income and community support to help the homeless integrate back into the community.

This is a model of how you actually look at solutions that aren't just one dimensional. Yes, the homeless need housing, but they also benefit from wraparound services so that they can get back on their feet and integrate into the community again. Unfortunately, I think too many times when we think about affordable housing, we think about it in commodified private market-sector terms. We think about affordable housing as the housing market is too expensive. Say, can we do something to lower my mortgage rate? And, [with] that focus on the private sector... can I buy my own home and afford to?" [This] pushes a lot of people out of the window... the homeless number one, but also people who will never be able to afford to carry a mortgage, people who will always be in the rental market or rental market that is squeezing more people is increasingly unaffordable, and not regulated to protect renters and tenants.

I think that you have to look at all of these things in an integrated way. And not just in that commodified private sector market. What can a government do to make it easier for you to buy a house or a second home... the well off? We have to think about who's missing from this frame?

JO 52:28

Arden, what about the impact of education on a just and green economy?

ARDEN 52:34

Let me just say one thing about housing if I can, Jo. One of the things we recommend is the support and further development of nonprofit housing providers, which can really make a substantial difference in the availability of housing to minorities and the economically disadvantaged. The other thing... I just want to highlight what Trish was saying about once you have people housed, then you can wrap services around them much more easily than if they're on the street or moving from place to place.

Education's my bias, one of the fundamental predictors of sustainability and health in a society. And there's so much that we can do with education. Let's just take the example of assuring that we're educating girls and young women. The level of education of women in the society is one of the most vibrant predictors of the society's wellness and its economic development.

JO 53:36

This last one is really near and dear to my heart as a communication specialist to all levels of government with regard to public outreach and engagement. What is the link between public engagement, a just economy, and a green economy?

TRISH 53:53

In researching what some communities across North America and in the UK are doing to foster an inclusive economy, I was struck by what the City of Seattle has done. They've actually set up a table where all of the representatives from frontline service workers in those most marginalized and disadvantaged communities, they have a table to inform the city policies and budget decisions. In Canada, often there'll be consultations, and there might be a brief mayor's table that's created. And you might be able to come in and weigh in at that one time, and then you're gone. This table is a permanent table. The people who are actually seeing the devastation of public policies and an economy that leaves too many behind have a permanent place influencing the city's budget and policy decision-making. And those are frontline leaders who are deeply connected in their

communities and they're bringing back the information, the stories. and the recommendations from their communities. I think that's a powerful model.

JO 55:06

It's very progressive. Arden?

ARDEN 55:09

I was just thinking of in terms of an inclusive economy. And I'm sure that an inclusive economy contributes to the mental health of the society and its members. It's about the availability of money. And this is another strength of public banking, which is very well developed in Europe, for example, public banking is much more inclined to make money available to disadvantage groups.

JO 55:38

So, you're talking about public investment, then?

ARDEN 55:41

Yes, absolutely. Public banks are generally owned by government. It's an instrument that government can use to generate a more just and more fair economy.

TRISH 55:54

And imagine if we had that here, and that if you were very low income and needed cash quickly, that your option wasn't solely to go to payday lenders who are charging exorbitant, I would say criminal, amounts of interest that can just keep you stuck in poverty forever. Imagine if we actually delegitimize the payday lender sector and said, there's a role for government here.

ARDEN 56:22

Thanks so much for getting there, Trisha. That's where I was going to go next. Yes, let's get rid of a loan outfit.

TRISH 56:29

Exactly.

JO 56:30

I know you both agree that social justice, resilience, and sustainability are three sides of the same coin. So, have we already covered that? Or are there other things that you'd like to add here? Arden?

ARDEN 56:45

COVID made it very clear, I think Trish was saying that earlier. The people who are suffering most, let's even say dying, or frequently are the disadvantaged members of our society. So, you can begin to see there... the sides of the coin relate to one another. Or if you look at climate change... the communities and the countries in the world who are already suffering the impact of climate change, most dramatically, are the countries who are in poverty with disintegrating societies, and so forth. We need to approach these issues from all three sides of the coin, that is including social justice and resilience along with sustainability.

JO 57:30

So, that triples the complexity then of the challenges and the opportunities?

ARDEN 57:36

It also amplifies the benefits of making significant progress, and any side of the coin, because it's likely to influence the other sides in a positive way.

TRISH 57:48

I think it acknowledges the complexity... it acknowledges that all of these things are interconnected, that the Minister of Health doesn't just look at doctors and nurses and hospitals. If the Minister of Health really wants to promote healthy societies, that Minister of Health is working with the Minister of Education is working with the Minister of Labour, to create decent work, to create educational opportunities, skills, training, lifelong skills, an economy that keeps changing and demands more and more of us.

So, it's like what I said earlier about the leg bone being connected to the hip bone. Sometimes public policy acts as though they're not connected at all. But if you acknowledge that complexity, and how interconnected all of these things are, then you're actually not putting good money after bad money, you're actually investing in solutions that can lead to a healthier, more cohesive society. And also more inclusive economies that give people hope and make them feel like they have a chance in life.

And all of that is deeply interconnected with the health and vibrancy of our democracies, because I've long said that democracies can't run on autopilot... it requires a deeply engaged citizenry. And you can't do that if you're just fighting to keep a roof over your head. If you're fighting to get some kind of food, any kind of food into your home, you can't feel like you're actually engaged. You've got this other full-time job and it's trying to stay alive and keep your family going. So, acknowledging those complexities would be a very upstream approach to government policymaking.

JO 59:33

How do both your organization's recommendations for a just and green economy stack up against the World Health Organization's sustainable development goals? Arden?

ARDEN 59:46

We know that Rebuilding BC is fundamentally aligned with the sustainability goals of the United Nations and was something that we took into consideration and were aware of. And the amazing thing is, so many of these documents, these reports, these policy recommendations, are aligned with one another. And my hope for the future is that we'll work more closely together and have more dialogue.

TRISH 1:00:14

If we embraced well-being budgeting and inclusive economy initiatives, we would make far more progress on those Sustainable Development Goals than we're making today. As I said earlier, Canada is one of the wealthiest countries on the planet. The only thing preventing Canada from achieving those Sustainable Development Goals has been political will, at every jurisdictional level. And so, I'm hoping that if one good thing can happen from a pandemic, that will snap us out of the status quo approach, because the status quo hasn't been the option. Both of our documents that we're talking about today give us a pathway to achieving those goals.

JO 1:00:53

Talking about what we've learned from the pandemic, what have you learned about each of the following? First of all, the potential for rapid policy change and financial support? Trish?

TRISH 1:01:05

Everything is possible. Everything's on the table, and everything is possible. And like I said about Seth Klein, what he has to say... treat it like an emergency... and the solutions present themselves.

ARDEN 1:01:16

Governments can pivot enormously quickly when they have to, and they can command more resources than they've allowed us to know.

JO 1:01:27

How about the drawbacks of bipartisan politics and their impact on our ability to move toward better mental health?

TRISH 1:01:37

I think we've seen less performative politics... performative, partisan jostling during the pandemic. I mean, there's still some of it, but there hasn't been a huge public appetite for that sort of thing.

JO 1:01:48

Not in Canada, anyway.

TRISH 1:01:50

That's right. Watching the US news can feel very defeating some days. So, there's been more cooperation than I think we're used to seeing in recent years. And I think that you're seeing how things can work when provinces and municipalities and the federal government work in common cause. And I just want to see more of it over the long haul.

JO 1:02:10

What about the role of innovation?

TRISH 1:02:13

We've seen huge innovation from the public service to create federal programs to support those workers and businesses that were sidelined at the start of the pandemic. There were public servants who were writing new policy overnight, and doing very innovative work under duress, often from their homes with children under foot at the beginning of the economic lockdown. It's not just in this moment that we see it.

Economist Mariana Mazzucato, she's written about the history of the public sector, and how governments have historically led the way on innovations that later get picked up by the private sector. And so, governments and the public sector often get short shrift when it comes to appreciating the power that they have to create innovative new solutions to the problems that are before us. But I actually hope that this pandemic is fostering a renewed appreciation for the role and the responsibility that governments have not only to protect the public good, but to spur the innovations required to meet that goal, to protect and support the public good.

ARDEN 1:03:23

On the ground level, my local coffee shop has been so innovative in continuing to connect with, reach out, and serve the local community. And also, I think the business sector of the economy has been incredibly innovative, and shifting a great deal of their transactions, meetings, and work online to lower the risk of transmission through face-to-face encounters.

JO 1:03:52

This next one is really key to me in that the Fresh Outlook Foundation has really focused on increasing communication and collaboration. So, what have you learned about the importance of collaboration during the

pandemic? That could be across geographies, governments, businesses, NGOs, academics, demographics, etc. We could go on. Trish, what's your takeaway there?

TRISH 1:04:23

This is a big one. But I'll just focus on how we have seen public health experts and epidemiologists from around the world collaborating on learning in real time about this virus, sharing that information so that other countries can be better prepared to deal with outbreaks, working collaboratively to try to develop in real time vaccines that can sometimes take decades to create. And so, I'm seeing a level of cooperation for all around the public good that is not just national in scope. You're seeing it across Canada, but you're also seeing it globally as well. And that is very heartening to me.

ARDEN 1:05:08

I think the level of collaboration, level of action, and how networks has increased quite dramatically. And it's really heartening. And it's really a lot of fun. So, let's reach out, listen, connect, learn, and then take action together.

JO 1:05:28

When we talk about these revelations for rapid policy change, financial support, the role of innovation, the importance of collaboration, how can we use these revelations to best inform response to other very big societal challenges such as loneliness and systemic racism, for example?

TRISH 1:05:53

I'm going to go back to Seth Klein's findings from his book, *The Good War*. Treat it like an emergency. Treat loneliness and depression like it's an emergency, instead of putting people on six-month waiting lists that they may or may not ever be [able to] afford or to have access to help from. Treating homelessness like an emergency. Before this pandemic, we just really became complacent, and I'm really hoping that this pandemic jolts us out of that.

ARDEN 1:06:24

I think we need to work together on the fundamentals. And to me, the fundamentals are building communities and supporting families. That's the cornerstone of our society.

JO 1:06:36

Given the tenure of existing free-market economic policies and practices, how can we make the break to a more just and green economy?

TRISH 1:06:49

We might be reaching the tipping point with this global pandemic. It broke down supply chains. It's illustrated the power of governments to act. It's reduced many private-sector actors to businesses begging for government help, and we can't unsee that. That is something that's happening, and it's affecting how we view who acts and where the leadership needs to come from.

ARDEN 1:07:12

To go back to Trish's point, I think the fundamental flaw is prioritizing material gain over the public good. And I think that we need to prioritize the public good, and all of our thinking, and especially our thinking about economies. And yes, COVID has helped us to make that transition. The great majority of people are very aware of the imperative to take care of one another during this period, to wear masks to keep appropriate distance, to limit our social contact, at the same time finding new ways to be connected with one another.

JO 1:07:54

Exactly. And I hear over and over again amongst my family and friends and professional networks that people are really thinking about what really matters. And I think that's just a hugely important shift. Let's say that we do hop on that path to a more just and green economy. How long would it take before we start seeing positive impacts of that?

TRISH 1:08:22

I think almost immediately... you put the inputs in, and the outputs will start presenting themselves almost immediately. It will take as long as required, but not a second more, and change can happen swiftly.

ARDEN 1:08:35

I live near a very busy street called King Edward. It's an east-west thoroughfare in Vancouver, not quite as dramatic as the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto, but a very busy street. For two weeks, during the height of the pandemic, King Edward went quiet. There were occasional vehicles rather than herds of vehicles. And those vehicles were driving very slowly. There was a lull, there was a pause. There were more birds singing first thing in the morning. There were reports of the people in Venice being able to see fish in the canals for the first time in a century. The impact can be immediate... we just need to make the environmental, social justice, and resilience file *the* file rather than a file among files.

JO 1:09:30

And thinking practically, how will we measure success toward a just and green economy?

TRISH 1:09:37

On a high level, I would just say the planet won't be on fire. Greta Thunberg might be able to write the book about how the world came together and combated climate change. But also, I'm inspired by what Arden was just describing, because I live on a busy street in Toronto and saw the traffic slow down in Toronto and many many core's arteries. The City suddenly created bike lanes that people have been asking for for decades. And now we have a new infrastructure of cycling lanes, and we've got outdoor restaurants with beautiful patios that are encroaching on the street. The car is not as paramount as it was before the crisis. I live in a sixth-floor balcony and watch a lot of airplanes usually overhead, and now it's notable when you see an airplane. Do you see how quickly change can happen?

JO 1:10:31

How can we as individuals help to speed up the transition?

ARDEN 1:10:37

Jo, let me just talk about how we measure success. Very briefly, here are two really critical measures: the level of carbon emissions, and the extent or otherwise of income disparity. Suffice it to say there are probably six to eight key measures that we can pay attention to in terms of wellness and the health of the society. What we can do, well, what we're doing today, gives me heart... that is engaging in dialogue, taking a hold of these issues, and wrestling with them and listening to one another.

TRISH 1:11:11

Listening to each other is huge. Especially in the years before this pandemic, the public discourse was becoming more and more polarizing. And people, especially on social media, are just yelling at each other and not trying to reach across differences. We've sort of lost our curiosity about not only what's possible for our communities in our country, but what's possible among us to have civil society discussions and debates that are meant for us to

find common cause to look at what we share in common. And how can we move toward that? And so, I think right now, the majority of Canadians are working in common cause to protect our public health and well-being in this pandemic... Can we transfer that over to all of the other thornier issues and debates?

JO 1:12:06

At the Fresh Outlook Foundation, we inspire community conversations for sustainable change. And we know that people from all sectors, ages, cultures, genders, and abilities, have to be involved in those conversations if we're going to truly optimize the potential for positive change and innovative change. When we talk about different sectors, we've already talked about the role of different levels of government. What about the role of business in the transition toward a more just and green economy? And I know Arden, that's going to be a big one for you, with your focus in Rebuilding BC.

ARDEN 1:12:51

For sure, let it be the case that businesses are required to state their social purpose. Let it be that they're required to report not just on their finances, in the amount of profit, but on the contribution to the society and to their impact on the environment. And to how they treat their employees. Let it be the case that businesses are accountable in all those critical ways for the health and wellness of the society.

TRISH 1:13:25

And I would just add, stop resisting efforts to ensure decent work for everybody. It's good for business to pay your workers a living wage, to give them benefits, etc. And it's good for your community because those workers spend that money with local small businesses, which is something that we're going to need during the recovery phase of this pandemic.

JO 1:13:47

What about academia's role in the transition?

ARDEN 1:13:51

I think that academics need to think more about how the findings of their reflections and research can be integrated in the day-to-day life of the society. We used to call the approach that we evolved at City University in Canada, Conversations in the Agora, and it reflected an approach that we took to making sure that what we were teaching and what we were learning together actually had a practical and pragmatic side to it that enabled it to connect to the day-to-day life of society.

TRISH 1:14:26

Yeah, totally agree with that... get out of the department meeting and onto the world stage.

JO 1:14:32

And what about nonprofit organizations? How can they help speed up the transition?

TRISH 1:14:38

I think that in the same way that we've talked about different government ministries, that working across silos, instead of just in their own silo, also can apply to the nonprofit sector. That we have to work across silos in a concerted effort to change how we do things, because the world is changing rapidly. The nonprofit sector has to adapt or die. And I actually think success happens when we're working in concert together in common cause and not just on our specific one issue, but across all of the issues.

JO 1:15:15

What I've learned over 30 years, bringing people from all sectors together, is that the role of community engagement... we don't do that just because it's the right thing to do. We do it because people from different sectors bring different insights, ideas, passions and influences to the table. That results in the best solutions to our challenges. And I hope that these sectors continue to look beyond themselves and to communicate and collaborate with people from other sectors, so we get the best solutions.

Just one last question. Before we get to our conclusion. Our first podcast featured a discussion about upstream approaches for mental health care. And what I'm hearing you both say is that we need an upstream approach to our social and economic and environmental discussions as well.

So, Trisha, as director of Think Upstream, how would you define upstream thinking? And how can the concept apply to overall societal change?

TRISH 1:16:39

At Upstream, we look at the social determinants of health... the factors that can influence whether you live a good healthy, long life, or whether you have a shorter lifespan. Those factors are things like income, the kind of work that you do, the level of education that you've been able to attain, the amount of housing and food security in your lives. An upstream approach would go to the root causes of our social, economic, and ecological problems, and treat it at the source instead of treating the problems, because we haven't actually been investing in those root causes. And that's why we look at reducing income inequality, promoting an inclusive economy... these are the sorts of things that can determine people's health, and they're examples of upstream policy making and thinking. It's evidence based, and you're trying to get to the problem before it becomes a disaster.

The opposite is true. Downstream thinking is like, okay, we have a global pandemic that public health experts have long warned was a question of when, not a question of if, and they warned governments at all levels in Canada, especially after SARS. And governments ignored that. And so now we're doing downstream trying to mitigate a disaster, when we could have had a lot of more upstream policies and investments in place, readier than we were in March [2020] when this struck.

ARDEN 1:18:13

Here's a question which I think is important. To what extent does the policy program or project in question, support or facilitate belonging?

JO 1:18:25

That's a very simple question, but not an easy one.

TRISH 1:18:30

Yeah, belonging... that's cohesion there.

JO 1:18:32

Okay, so let's bring this all to a finer point. What I'm hearing is that as a society, we can and must move to a robust and resilient economy, supported by all levels of government... an economy that enables and encourages social, environmental, and economic health and security. And within that, we'll have an integrated and collaborative system, where all sectors contribute human and financial resources to the well-being of individuals, families, workplaces, and communities.

In summary, I have some rapid-fire questions for you both about mental health and the economy. In one word or sentence, the greatest challenge associated with our current economic system...

TRISH 1:19:30

It puts profit ahead of people and planet, and that's backwards.

ARDEN 1:19:35

It incentivizes selfishness and materialism.

JO 1:19:40

The greatest political barrier to positive change...

TRISH 1:19:45

Public complacency... the sense that our actions don't make a difference. They do, and they must, make a difference.

ARDEN 1:19:50

Public urgency about the issues of social justice and the climate crisis.

JO 1:19:57

The greatest structural or bureaucratic barrier to change...

TRISH 1:20:02

The unwillingness of governments to exercise the fiscal tools that they have, in order to invest in the change in the future. We have to get beyond tax-cut politics, because they've cheapened our public discourse. They've limited our sociological imagination.

JO 1:20:19

I love that. Arden?

ARDEN 1:20:22

I think that many of the barriers, like systemic racism, are embedded in how we live our lives. We have to become aware of them, and we have to systematically uproot them together.

JO 1:20:38

What about the biggest community benefit of a just and green economy...

ARDEN 1:20:43

Happiness and well being.

TRISH 1:20:45

Yes. And we all get to live... only better.

JO 1:20:49

Arden you talk about happiness, and I think it's so important that we talk about that at all scales. So, individuals, families, workplaces, and communities are all happy places where we all meet our full potential.

What about the one thing we can do right now, in the transition to a just and green economy...

TRISH 1:21:13

Get engaged... be the future you want... we need you!

ARDEN 1:21:16

Have a vision.

JO 1:21:18

And finally, your personal commitment to being the change we want to see...

TRISH 1:21:23

Well, for my part, I'm going to keep on listening and learning and sharing and attempting to be a good ally. And you know, those times when I'm advancing a vision for a just, inclusive, more integrated society, more equal society, and someone says, "Oh, that's very Pollyanna of you," I'm not going to take that bait. The opposite is potential dystopia if we aren't actually pushing for a vision and not being told that it's not possible. Everything and anything is possible, and we're seeing some of that right now. So, I'm going to be tenacious about it.

JO 1:22:07

Fabulous. Arden?

ARDEN 1:22:09

I think it's important to have a vision of the world that we're going to create together. What does the better world look like? And then having that picture in mind, to talk with, learn, listen, share with others about the tangible steps that we can take to create the better world that we've envisioned.

JO 1:22:32

And for me, my vision has been very clearly articulated now that I have grandchildren. I so want them to live in a world that is free of all the challenges that we have, so that they can realize their full potential within a just and green economy. I think that is possible, and that's what I pray for. And I promise to continue the conversation about systemic change, and just and green economies in future podcasts. So, you can hold me to that.

So that's a wrap. Thank you, again, Trish Hennessy and Arden Hanley for joining us. You're both so knowledgeable and articulate. It's been a real treat.

TRISH 1:23:18

Thanks, Jo, and thanks, Arden. It's just been a really rich and deep conversation. I really appreciate being a part of it.

ARDEN 1:23:26

Thank you, Jo, for pulling this together, and Trish for being a part of it along with me. I've really, really enjoyed it. I've learned a lot. And perhaps most importantly, I feel inspired to go forward with the work that we're doing in common. My very best wishes for peace and prosperity for everyone.

JO 1:23:50

Great final words. Thank you.

To connect with Trish send an email to trish@policyalternatives.ca and for Arden you can email nwpses@gmail.com. For more contact details and a list of resources check out this episode show notes at freshoutlookfoundation.org.

And thank you for listening. If you enjoyed the podcast and would like to support the Fresh Outlook Foundation's valuable work, please visit us at freshoutlookfoundatoin.org/donations.

In closing, as Winnie the Pooh says, I'm so lucky to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard. So instead, I'll say be healthy. And let's connect again soon.