

- The Energy Mix - <https://theenergymix.com> -

THE INTERVIEW: COVID DEMANDS GLOBAL INVESTMENT TO BUILD BACK BETTER, MCARTHUR SAYS

Posted By *Alexandra Bly* In [Canada](#), [Carbon-Free Transition](#), [Climate Impacts & Adaptation](#), [Climate Policy/Meetings/Negotiations](#), [Energy Access & Equity](#), [Finance & Investment](#), [Health & Safety](#), [Human Rights & Migration](#), [International Agencies & Studies](#) |
April 26, 2020

Primary Author **Mitchell Beer** @mitchellbeer

[1 Comment](#)



Shaughn McArthur

Shaughn McArthur is Policy and Influence Lead at CARE Canada, and has been a leading voice for Canadian civil society at the last several United Nations climate change conferences. He's been looking at the way the global focus on the pandemic has drawn attention away from the climate emergency—and how action on COVID can bring both crises together.

The Energy Mix: What are you doing differently in light of the pandemic?

Like this story? Subscribe to *The Energy Mix* and never miss an edition of our free e-digest.

[SUBSCRIBE](#) ^[1]

McArthur: At the most basic, pragmatic level, COVID has disrupted the way we engage within the climate community, and with policy-makers. It's diverted political capital to immediate threats and concerns and raised questions about how ambitious governments will be in this critical year, when states have committed to enhance their Nationally Determined

Contributions [to climate action under the 2015 Paris Agreement] and devote US\$100 billion per year to international climate finance. And it has delayed moments like the COP that are typically used as points of accountability.

While we know we need to tackle the climate crisis, and that climate won't wait for us to manage our way out of COVID, we can't be tone-deaf in the way we communicate publicly. But many of our insider strategies remain largely the same. Our public communications have to acknowledge the human suffering going on, convey a message of hope, and look at how we recover better, greener, and more inclusively. At the same time, from CARE's humanitarian work around the world, we know how economic, social, and environmental shocks often open a window in which people can become more empowered, gaps can be identified, and policies can be optimized to support a better recovery. So we're trying to adjust to the new reality and keep the commitments and ambition on track toward the climate goalposts we need to meet.

The Mix: How is that balance working out so far

McArthur: We've been encouraged by some of the conversations we've had with ministers who want to keep existing priorities on track as much as possible. We're seeing a recognition that COVID will compound threats in exactly the same communities where climate change threatens the most havoc. So what remains the same in spite of the pandemic is that governments still have an existing obligation under the Paris Agreement. That means the climate community has an even bigger task ahead of us, reminding governments of those obligations and fostering a public discourse that supports progress on climate commitments, all while being sensitive to the fact that governments' main preoccupation is the protection of citizens' safety and security in the context of COVID.

There's a strong message here. We're still figuring out how to tell the story publicly that resilience to all crises involves the same things, beginning with an inclusive and human rights-based approach that empowers local actors to do what they do best. In the response to COVID, there is a real opportunity to recover better, recover greener, and recover more inclusively. It isn't an either/or between COVID and climate—we have to build resilience, both to help us withstand climate impacts and future shocks, and to respond more efficiently to the next pandemic or natural disaster. If your social security systems and services are more resilient, and if peoples' human rights are being upheld, you'll be able to rebound from shocks more efficiently.

The Mix: What are the best ways for climate organizations to connect with wider community concerns in this time and draw the links between the two crises?

McArthur: People in all countries have serious personal struggles right now, and governments are being torn in numerous different directions. We need to embrace that and work more than ever as partners, to build a shared understanding of the trajectory toward that greener, more resilient post-COVID world.

We should also emphasize the key similarities between COVID and the climate crisis—that global challenges have no borders and require systemic changes to tackle underlying drivers. We need to acknowledge that as a society, we're only as safe as our most vulnerable people, that prevention is better than a cure, and that our responses to all crises must be based on science. And we have to be clear that crises deepen existing inequalities, but also give us an opportunity to tackle some of those inequalities.

What we should not be doing is pretending that short-term emission reductions due to COVID will have any meaningful or lasting impact on climate change, or ignore the immense human suffering from this crisis. We can't manage out of this crisis with blinders on, but with eyes wide open to seize the systemic transformations taking place, to get us back on track to meet the [UN Sustainability Goals](#) ^[2] (SDGs) as well as the 1.5°C target under the Paris Agreement.

Remember that this is all hitting us in the final decade toward the achievement of the SDGs, and a crucial decade for the Paris Agreement target. We need to break that down and make it understandable, not only for policy-makers, but for people who will be extremely concerned about “dinner table” issues. As the curve starts to flatten in our own countries, things are going to get really ugly in developing and poor countries around the world, so we’ll need to do what it takes to tackle all of those challenges in tandem.

The Mix: How do you see the response to the pandemic connecting with the issues you expect to be working on after the immediate crisis has passed?

McArthur: COVID is a reminder that the biggest challenges facing humanity are issues of global public goods. It’s about how we manage the commons for everyone’s benefit, and it requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. Working for CARE Canada, I’ve always been passionate about my climate policy work because it affects everything we do. COVID is exactly the same, and they both point to the benefits of a more resilient, cooperative approach. The COVID crisis has shown that massive political and human capital and resources can be mobilized in the face of an emergency. We can use that mass mobilization to get us back on track toward the SDGs and the Paris targets, so that the next time an emergency hits, we’re ready to recover better, greener, and more inclusively.

The Mix: Is there anything you’d like to add?

McArthur: The COVID crisis risks rolling back development gains that have been hard won over decades. It’s going to be absolutely devastating to many communities. We can be smarter about the way we communicate in this space by offering a bit of a light at the end of the tunnel for a public that can now think about issues like climate change in a different way.

If we need the equivalent of a Marshall Plan to tackle COVID, let’s embrace that history. The Marshall Plan^[3] took a Europe that was completely devastated by war and turned it into a spectacular global success story. We can do the same for climate, and in a much more global manner than any other mass mobilization we’ve witnessed in our lifetimes.

Follow up @ShaughnMcArthur, carecanada

1 COMMENT TO "THE INTERVIEW: COVID DEMANDS GLOBAL INVESTMENT TO BUILD BACK BETTER, MCARTHUR SAYS"

#1 Pingback By The Interview: COVID Demands Global Investment to Build Back Better, McArthur Says – Enjeux énergies et environnement On April 26, 2020 @ 11:44 PM

[...] The Energy Mix^[4]; via [...]

Article printed from The Energy Mix: <https://theenergymix.com>

URL to article: <https://theenergymix.com/2020/04/26/the-interview-covid-demands-global-investment-to-build-back-better-mcarthur-says/>

URLs in this post:

[1] SUBSCRIBE: <http://eepurl.com/Z7ZCr>

[2] UN Sustainability Goals: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

[3] Marshall Plan: <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/marshall-plan-1>

[4] : <https://theenergymix.com/2020/04/26/the-interview-covid-demands-global-investment-to-build-back-better-mcarthur-says/#8230>

Copyright © 2017 The Energy Mix. All rights reserved.