

**OP-Ed**  
**How does Canada's Climate Policy Rate?**  
**2016 Progress Report from Sustainable Canada Dialogues**

**Words: 528**

The Paris Agreement was ratified earlier this month and is unprecedented amongst international agreements for how quickly it has come into force. This Agreement allows each country to decide how it will tackle climate change and requires, as of 2020, regular reporting on progress. Countries of the world have officially embarked in a global race to implement ambitious climate policies that contribute to reducing green-house gas emissions at the planetary-scale.

This process is not unlike the Olympics games where countries get together to compare their strengths and performance. If Canada wants to be a medalist in 2020, domestic climate policies must rapidly be adopted to accelerate the low carbon transition. In this context, *Sustainable Canada Dialogues* – a network of 60+ scholars from across Canada – produced a progress report on Canada's climate actions over the past year. We analysed climate decisions made in Ottawa in 2016 in relationship to the 10 policy orientations that we proposed previously in our position paper entitled *Acting on Climate Change: Solutions from Canadian Scholars*.

Canada took two important steps forward. First, the federal government will price carbon throughout the country starting in 2018. Second, the \$120 billion infrastructure investment plan explicitly highlights support for infrastructures reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This investment plan raises hopes that Canada can make the transition to low carbon development, but its real impact depends on identifying and funding infrastructure projects that best contribute to desired low-carbon and sustainable outcomes.

Despite this progress, the decision to approve the Pacific Northwest liquefied natural gas (LNG) project is a step backward casting doubt on the willingness of the Federal Government to meaningfully tackle climate change. The impact assessment indicates that this LNG project would be one of the largest point source of emissions in Canada and would increase BC's emissions by 8.5%. Continued development of projects with high greenhouse gas emissions will compromise progress in other sectors. It will prevent Canada from meeting its emissions

reduction target for 2030, and is incompatible with Canada's stated goal to help limit global temperature increases to 1.5°C. Research indeed estimates that, to maintain global temperature increase below 2°C, half of existing gas reserves and one third of existing oil ones must remain unused.

Canadian climate policy must tackle the most difficult question: how to transition away from fossil fuels? We call for federal political leadership that steadily and strategically adopts innovative low-carbon tools to drive future economic growth. This requires engaging with a broad range of stakeholders from the oil and gas industry, unions, Indigenous peoples, environmental NGOs, the clean technology sector and academia to discuss how to reorient subsidies away from the fossil fuel industry, promote transitions to low-carbon energy, while ensuring that workers from the oil and gas industry can transition their skills to other sectors.

Ambitious Canadian climate leadership is necessary more than ever in North America. Only by working together and building commitment across all sectors will Canada live up to the expectations it rose by joining the *High Ambition Coalition* in 2015. Despite positive steps, the federal government has been unable so far to develop a coherent climate action plan largely because of its inability to address fossil fuels coherently.

*Sustainable Canada Dialogues'* progress report on climate actions at the federal level can be downloaded at: <http://www.sustainablecanadadialogues.ca/en/scd/acting-on-climate-change>

**For Sustainable Canada Dialogues:** Catherine Potvin, McGill University; Aitken, Sally, University of British Columbia; Anctil, François, Université Laval; Bennett, Elena, McGill University; Berkes, Fikret, University of Manitoba; Bernstein, Steven, University of Toronto; Bleau, Nathalie, Ouranos; Brown, Bryson, University of Lethbridge; Burch, Sarah, University of Waterloo; Byrne, Jim, University of Lethbridge; Creed, Irena, Western University; Cunsolo, Ashlee, Memorial University; Dale, Ann, Royal Roads University; de Lange, Deborah, Ryerson University; Dyck, Bruno, University of Manitoba; Entz, Martin, University of Manitoba; Etcheverry, Jose, York University; Fenech, Adam, University of Prince Edward Island; Fraser, Lauchlan, Thompson Rivers University; Henriques, Irene, York University; Heyland, Andreas, Guelph University; Hoberg, George, University of British Columbia; Holden, Meg, Simon Fraser University; Hoffmann, Matthew, University of Toronto; Gordon Huang, University of Regina; Jacob, Aerin, University of Victoria; Jodoin, Sébastien, McGill University; Kemper, Alison, Ryerson University; Lucotte, Marc, Université de Québec à Montréal; Matthews, Ralph, University of British Columbia; Matthews, H. Damon,

Concordia University; Mauro, Ian, University of Winnipeg; Margolis, Liat, University of Toronto; McDonnell, Jeffrey, University of Saskatchewan; Meadowcroft, James, Carleton University; Messier, Christian, Université de Québec en Outaouais; Mkandawire, Martin, Cape Breton University; Morency, Catherine, Polytechnique Montréal; Mousseau, Normand, Université de Montréal; Oakes, Ken, Cape Breton University; Otto, Sally, University of British Columbia; Palmater, Pamela, Ryerson University; Palmer, Taysha S., Knowledge Transfer Consultant; Paquin, Dominique, Ouranos; Perl, Anthony, Simon Fraser University; Potvin, André, Université Laval; Raudsepp-Hearne, Ciara, Consultant; Ramos, Howard, Dalhousie University; Robinson, John, University of Toronto; Sheppard, Stephen, University of British Columbia; Simard, Suzanne, University of British Columbia; Sinclair, Brent, Western University; Slawinski, Natalie, Memorial University; Stoddart, Mark, Memorial University; Sylvester, Shauna, Simon Fraser University; Villard, Marc-André, Université du Québec à Rimouski; Villeneuve, Claude, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi; Wesche, Sonia, University of Ottawa.