

SCAN!

Time to End the ‘Fossil First’ Climate Plan

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On April 22, 2022, Prime Minister Trudeau pledged to a more ambitious climate target for Canada. The Liberal government is now committed to a 40-45% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030.

On December 11, 2020 the federal government released a strengthened climate plan it claimed would result in Canada surpassing its Paris 2030 emission target. At that time the target was to reduce emissions by 30% by 2030 over the base year of 2005. In Budget 2021, tabled on April 19, the government magically upped its climate reduction ambition to a 36% reduction by 2030. This was quickly followed a few days later on April 22nd - Earth Day - with Trudeau once again increasing Canada’s reduction target to 40-45%, at the ‘Biden’ Climate Summit.

Moving Targets and a Hard Political Lesson

As has been reported by [The Energy Mix](#), Canada’s recent accelerating level of climate ambition was the result of pressure from the US. Years and years of science-based lobbying and argument advanced by scores of climate groups backed by thousands of climate activists had failed to get Trudeau to move beyond Stephen Harper’s 30% by 2030 emission reduction target. Yet one phone call from the White House and Trudeau is running back to the drawing board. That’s a tough political lesson. Trudeau can ignore climate scientists and his own citizens but he can’t ignore Biden.

Whatever it took to get Trudeau to move, the new Canadian emission target represents a whopping increase. It’s still not a fair Canadian share of the global reductions needed to keep global warming below 1.5 degree Celsius but Trudeau’s apparent climate “commitments” have risen dramatically in a very short period of time. A number of Canadian climate action groups have argued for a 60% target.

Canada’s cavalier approach to setting emission reduction goals is unnerving, considering that the country has missed all nine of its previous targets since 1988. In the space of a few short months Trudeau has raised reduction targets from 30%, to 36% and now 40-45%. How is it possible for Canada’s reduction ambition to be raised by up to 50% within 5 months of the unveiling of the Liberal’s “strengthened climate plan”— supposedly the best climate plan ever—on December 11, 2020?

The Numbers Add Up to Failure - Once Again

It was already highly unlikely that the government would achieve the 30% Paris reduction targets in place at the end of last year. With the government committing to a more ambitious target of 40%-45% success is even more unlikely.

Here's a quick look at some of the numbers.

In 2005 Canada's GHG emissions were 730 MT. At the 45% target level, emissions will need to be no higher than 402 MT in 2030. The difference is 328 MT. That is a huge number. It is more than the GHG emissions of the entire Oil and Gas sector combined with the Transport sector in 2005. There is nothing in the strengthened climate plan nor the 2021 Budget that suggests even a remote possibility of achieving those numbers.

The results of a recent [modelling study](#) prepared for a number of climate action groups before the recent government announcements, concludes that Canada's carbon price won't produce the results the government expects. The study concludes that on its current course the country's GHG emissions will be 572 MT by 2030, much higher than the 30% Paris target of 511 MT.

The latest National (Emissions) Inventory Report, required under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change UNFCCC), indicates that Canada's GHG emissions are still climbing (due to emissions from the Oil and Gas sector). We are the only G7 country where GHG emissions have actually increased since the signing of the Paris agreement in 2015.

The government's climate plan reported that Canada's GHG emissions in 2005 were 730 MT. The most current data, reported in the 2021 edition of the National Inventory Report, indicates that the GHG emissions for 2019 were 730 Mt. In the 14 years between 2005 and 2019 there were no reductions in GHG emissions. We have lost all those years. In the 11 years between 2019 and 2030 GHG emissions have to be reduced by about 30 Mt annually. This means that in every year we have to reduce GHG emissions by an amount that is greater than what the government projected for the Oil and Gas sector in the 25 years between 2005 and 2030. It is more than what the government projected would be achieved over 25 years in reducing emissions from buildings. Three times the projection from the transport sector.

Phoney Targets and False Promises

Developments in the past week have made a few things absolutely clear. One is the government doesn't take its climate pledges very seriously. But more important is the realization that the Liberal government can't achieve the new Paris targets if it continues to insist on a 'Fossil First' climate action formula. To have any hope of achieving the new target the government has to adopt a 'Climate First' plan and it has to strengthen the Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act.

A 'Climate First' commitment requires clear deadlines for the phase out of fossil fuels, hard and tightening caps on big emitters, and abandoning the fossil fuel hydrogen strategy.

A 'Climate First' plan requires unprecedented investments in renewable energy, energy conservation and retrofits, and the "electrification of everything". It requires a justice and green economic transformation that puts indigenous Peoples, racialized communities and workers ahead of Big Oil and Gas.

Now, that the government has been sent back to the drawing board, it's time for it to listen to voices other than Big Fossil. The next climate plan has to be shaped and endorsed not by those committed to a Fossil First climate policy, but by Indigenous Peoples, young people, climate action groups, unions, citizens and communities committed to putting people and the Climate First