



Doug Ford's carbon pollution failure

Facing climate breakdown calamity, government stumbling over its own low bar

When Doug Ford was elected, he ripped up the legislation that had committed Ontario to an ambitious emission reduction target. His government replaced it with a 30 per cent emission reduction target. By using a base year of 2005, this 30 per cent pollution cut will allegedly be in place by 2030. Ford assured us that his “Made in Ontario” plan would do the job¹.

But it can't. And it won't.

The 2030 emission target has three major problems. The target is inadequate and out of date. Emissions are going in the wrong direction. And, in any case, Ford is not serious about any climate targets.

The inadequate, out of date emission target

Ontario's original emission reduction target fit with Ottawa's plan. This is no longer the case. The federal government, after considerable pressure, has set a higher – though still inadequate – target of 40-45 per cent. If we want to keep Ontario's goals aligned with Ottawa's, Ontario needs, at a *minimum*, to match that target. If we want to prevent a climate

catastrophe by responding to the United Nations' urgent demands for much more ambitious targets, Ontario would need to increase its target well beyond 30 per cent carbon reduction.

The federal government's Emission Reduction Plan has indicated that Ontario must reduce its emissions by 36 per cent between 2005 and 2030 if Canada is to achieve its Paris emission reduction targets.²

Ontario's 30 per cent emission reduction target is a tragic admission: *The Ford government does not take climate breakdown seriously.*

Emissions headed in the wrong direction

When Ford was elected in 2018, Ontario had already reduced emissions by about 23 per cent since 2005.³ The new government had inherited considerable progress based on the closure of Ontario's coal fired power plants. Amazingly, Ford's climate plan uses the coal shutdown to boast that Ontario is an emission reduction leader. But the government has squandered that legacy. Instead of consolidating our gains, Ford did a sharp U-turn.

The latest available data indicate that, in the first years of the Ford administration, emissions *actually increased*.⁴



And while emissions are projected to have dropped during the economic downturn associated with the pandemic all indications are they are set to rise again.

No serious climate targets

The Ford climate plan was never intended to accomplish much at all. It only targeted 17.6 MT (million metric tonnes) of GHG emissions for elimination. But even that puny ambition is well out of reach of Ford's climate initiatives. Simply stated, the government has no credible plan to tackle carbon emissions.

According to the Ontario Auditor General's 2021 assessment, the government's 'committed policies' would eliminate only 3.4 MT of carbon emissions.⁵ The Auditor's evidence reveals a sorry failure: According to its current plans, the Ford government will fail to reach its 2030 targets.

Unfortunately, the shortfall is actually far worse than these figures suggest.

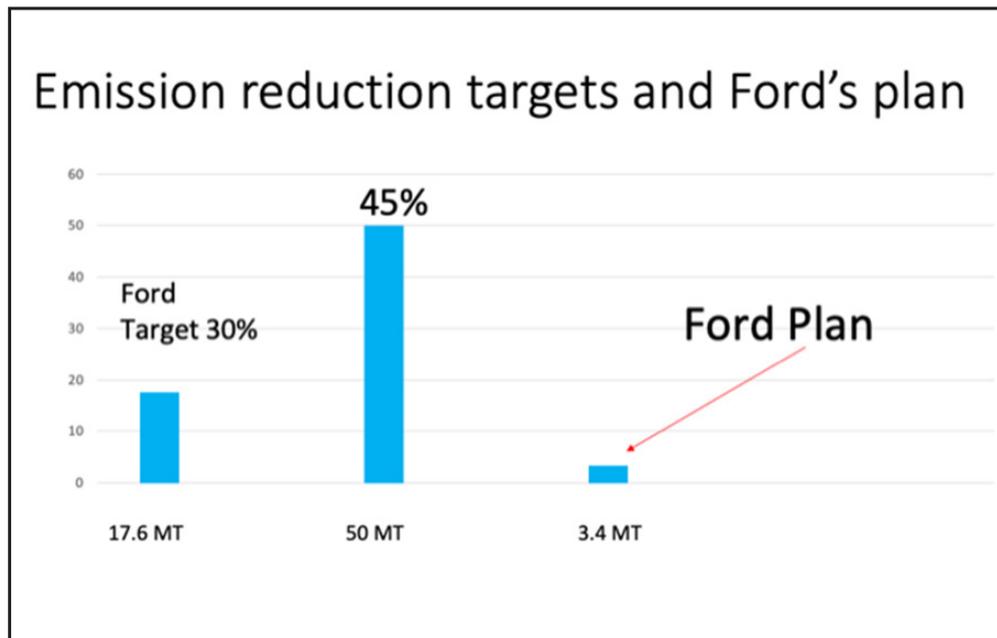
Because Ontario has to eliminate far more than 17.6 MT of greenhouse gas emissions.

If Ontario's policies were aligned with the federal government's target, Ontario would be planning to reduce emissions between 40-45 per cent by 2030 – not Ford's 30 per cent⁶. Using the higher number of 45 per cent, Ontario's 2030 emissions would need to be reduced by 50 MT not 17.6 MT between 2018 (Ford election) and 2030.⁷

Ontario needs to eliminate 50 MT but its plans will only eliminate 3.4 MT.

The Ontario government's climate plan is so inadequate that it will only address about 6.8 per cent of the emissions that need to be eliminated.

But in that there is no surprise. As the government's lawyer in the *Mathur et al* case revealed, the government's climate plan "has no compulsory effect on emitters...it is not a law that allows, authorizes, permits, prohibits, or requires any emissions."⁸





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Instead of the Ford climate plan Ontario needs a people and climate first plan that will:

- ! establish an ambitious emission reduction target of at least 60 per cent by 2030 and an interim 2025 target of 30 per cent embodied in legislation;**
- ! enact a Climate Accountability Act that requires the government to plan, report and achieve emission reductions;**
- ! convene a public and independent advisory panel with the resources to monitor and evaluate the government's progress;**

- ! adopt a carbon budget with annual reporting, clear emission limits and accountable timelines; and,**
- ! introduce effective emission caps for big emitters and clear sectoral and facility emission reduction requirements.**

“Humanity has a choice: co-operate or perish,” UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres told delegates to the COP27 conference in November, 2022. “We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator.”⁹

It requires little in the way of imagination to see Doug Ford with his pedal to the metal.

¹ “Preserving and Protecting our Environment for Future Generations: A Made in Ontario Environmental Plan”.

² Annex 5 of federal government's Emission Reduction Plan

³ Ontario Auditor general annual report 2019 chapter 3, auditor.on.ca

⁴ Information from Canada's national inventory, 2021. Ontario emissions in 2017= 158MT. Emissions in 2019= 163 MT.

⁵ Ontario Auditor General, Climate Change: Ontario's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 2021. Follow-up on value for money audit, Chapter 3, vol 2, 2019 annual report. Auditor.on.ca

⁶ The federal target of 45% is still inadequate. Climate action groups argue for a target of “at least 60%”.

⁷ Ontario's 2005 emissions =205.7 MT. 2030 emissions at a 45% reduction=113.1 MT. 2018 emissions = 163 MT. Difference between 2018 and 2030 163-113 = 50MT.

⁸ The Energy Mix Ontario Climate Plan is just a ‘Glossy Brochure’, Ontario Lawyer Says, Sept. 18, 2022.

⁹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/un-cop27-climate-guterres-gore-1.6642844>