



David
Suzuki
Foundation



Best and worst moves on climate change: Provinces, territories and the Council of the Federation

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The Council of the Federation meeting this summer in Winnipeg allows us to take a look back and offer a snapshot of significant provincial and territorial actions over the past year and to look forward to what we can expect in Winnipeg and beyond.

Top five actions on climate change in the past year

Nova Scotia caps power emissions: Last August, Nova Scotia regulated a hard cap on greenhouse gas pollution from its power plants, one that will reduce pollution significantly by 2020. Covering half of the province's emissions, this is a strong and welcome move.

Ontario implements groundbreaking energy bill: The most cutting-edge clean energy legislation on the continent (notwithstanding some recent badly managed changes or updates), Ontario's Green Energy Act has already led to billions in investments in clean energy production and jobs. Model legislation to be emulated.

New Brunswick government to build only green certified buildings: In April this year, New Brunswick implemented its Green Building Policy, ensuring that all buildings built for or funded by the government will meet at least LEED Silver environmental certification. While this policy still leaves out the majority of buildings built in the province, it is a step in the right direction.

Manitoba increases efficiency of furnaces and hot-water heaters: Since December 2009, furnaces, hot-water heaters and hot-water boilers sold in Manitoba will have a minimum efficiency that approaches the best available technologies. This is a small move, but it sends an important signal that wasting energy makes no sense.

B.C. carbon tax now at \$20/tonne: With the July 1 increase, the B.C. government now has the highest price on carbon pollution anywhere in North America, while protecting low-income households from energy price increases. Even better, the NDP opposition now agrees to retain and further improve the tax. The B.C. government should now improve the fairness of the tax by increasing the low-income tax credit.

Five best commitments to near-term climate change action

New Brunswick shutting down dirty power plants: The New Brunswick government will be retiring the aging and polluting Dalhousie power plant within the next year (the Grand Lake coal plant was closed in March). The 300 MW Dalhousie plant burns a dirty and expensive water-and-bitumen fuel available only from Venezuela.

Quebec sets strongest 2020 GHG targets in North America: The province with some of the fewest low-cost options for reducing greenhouse gas pollution has nonetheless set the strongest target in North America. Quebec wants to reduce its emissions to 20 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020.

Territories commit to climate adaptation: The Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut committed to completing a pan-territorial adaptation strategy by the end of 2010. With impacts in the north mounting more quickly than elsewhere, it makes sense for the territories to collaborate on challenges they each face, including melting permafrost, a disappearing ice cap and invasive species from further south.

Nova Scotia makes wide-ranging clean energy commitments: A target of having 40 per cent renewable power by 2020, a community-based feed-in tariff for clean power and a new energy efficiency agency to pursue aggressive action in saving energy—these are just some of the commitments coming from Nova Scotia.

B.C. will have carbon-neutral government: Starting in 2010, B.C.’s government operations will be entirely carbon-neutral. Though the quality of the offsets could be higher, requiring all public-sector organizations to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and offset whatever remains is an impressive move.

Five most misguided moves on climate change

Alberta adding another coal plant: Ontario and New Brunswick are shutting down polluting plants while Alberta continues to build them. The new Keephills 3 coal-fired power plant will be spewing greenhouse gases and other toxic pollutants into the air within months.

Quebec and B.C. lack coherence on addressing transportation pollution: Setting an emissions-reduction target is a good first step but Quebec and B.C. also need to address the #1 source of greenhouse gases in the province—road transport. Spending billions on new roads and highways will exacerbate car use and urban sprawl, sending emissions in the wrong direction.

Saskatchewan exempts oil and gas production from draft regulations: In 2009, Saskatchewan introduced greenhouse gas regulations. Unfortunately, they cover less than one third of the province’s greenhouse gas pollution and completely exempt the biggest

industry, oil and gas. Even the province's recently weakened 2020 emissions-reduction target is unlikely to be met with the feeble policies proposed or in place.

Ontario delays funding for transit: In March's budget, the Ontario government cut \$4 billion out of its previously ambitious plan for public transportation, with Greater Toronto taking the brunt. Deferring much needed transit infrastructure for up to five years will cost jobs, increase gridlock, and cause people to spend more time commuting.

Manitoba lowers tax on aviation fuel: Starting last July, the Manitoba government *lowered* the tax on aviation fuel used for hauling cargo between the province and all of North America. This is *not* the way to encourage more sustainable ways of shipping goods.

Top five priorities for climate change for the Council of the Federation

More provinces agree to regulate industrial pollution: Quebec, Ontario and B.C. will be regulating their industries within the Western Climate Initiative (WCI). Nova Scotia has capped its power sector. It's now up to other provinces to step up. **Manitoba** needs to re-commit to the WCI. Reducing emissions from **Alberta and Saskatchewan**'s polluting electricity and oil and gas sectors should be a priority.

Assess progress on and re-commit to past promises: Clean energy and climate change promises were made in 2007 and 2008. Provinces need to revisit promises made to implement clean energy, improve energy efficiency, strengthen the model building code, and develop common rules for measuring greenhouse gas emissions.

Collaborate on joint clean energy and climate change projects and policies: A number of collaborative provincial and territorial initiatives already exist. Inevitably, we need greater collaboration across provinces on setting energy-efficiency standards for buildings and appliances, setting low-carbon fuel standards for transport fuels, and implementing adaptation strategies.

Establish a provincial-territorial climate change secretariat: The creation of institutional capacity will enable country-wide collaboration and action on climate change that Canadians are demanding from their leaders.

Agree to meet again to make progress on climate change: A meeting in late fall or early winter that is dedicated to climate change and clean energy would allow progress on this important issue