



Council of the Federation

Summary evaluation of compliance with some Council climate change and energy commitments, 2007-2010

July 2011

Purpose of the evaluation

This document briefly assesses compliance with some of the commitments made by the Council of the Federation between 2007 and 2010 regarding the fight against climate change, development of the green economy and energy policy.

Background

The Council of the Federation, which was created on December 5, 2003 by Canada's provincial and territorial premiers, aims to:

- promote interprovincial-territorial cooperation and closer ties between members of the Council, to ultimately strengthen Canada
- foster meaningful relations between governments based on respect for the Constitution and recognition of the diversity within the federation
- show leadership on issues important to all Canadians¹

The Council of the Federation has a permanent Secretariat based in Ottawa. At least once a year, it brings together the provincial and territorial premiers for discussions. This forum can serve as an opportunity for the premiers to adopt political resolutions expressing their jurisdictions' perspective and willingness to act. The premiers also make commitments on various issues, either on behalf of their respective governments, or collectively.

Since 2004, the provincial and territorial premiers have individually and collectively made many commitments on climate change, the green economy and energy policies. The Council discusses such issues as support for the green economy, promoting energy efficiency, energy policies, and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In August 2005 and July 2006, the premiers committed to developing a pan-Canadian energy strategy for the Council of the Federation. This commitment led to the publication in August 2007 of A Shared Vision for Energy in Canada.² The seven strategic elements of the plan are:

- promote energy efficiency and conservation
- develop and deploy new energy technology
- facilitate development of renewable, green and cleaner energy sources
- develop and enhance energy transmission and transportation networks
- improve the timeliness of regulatory approval processes for new projects in the energy sector

1 <http://www.councilofthefederation.ca/aboutcouncil/aboutcouncil.html>

2 http://www.councilofthefederation.ca/pdfs/energystrategy_EN.pdf

- implement strategies to meet energy-sector human resources needs
- ensure provincial and territorial participation in international energy negotiations

Most of these points don't establish quantifiable targets, relying instead on a series of principles and an expression of willingness from participants to better collaborate in a number of areas. More specific commitments were subsequently made by the Council for some points of the plan, and these are the focus of this summary evaluation.

Approach

An analysis of the official Council of the Federation documents made public since 2004 (press releases, statements and policy documents) reveals nearly thirty specific commitments from the premiers regarding climate change, energy efficiency, renewable energy and the promotion of the green economy. From these, we've retained twenty – that have been adopted since 2007 – for evaluation, to validate whether or not they have been implemented as promised. These commitments are reproduced in Tables A, B, C and D.

There are two types of commitments:

- (1) commitments for each of the individual provinces and territories to take specific measures, e.g., to increase production of renewable energy (commitments A and B)
- (2) commitments requiring collaboration, e.g., carry out joint studies (commitments C and D)

This evaluation will be limited to commitments of the first type, made at meetings in Moncton (2007), Quebec City (2008) and Winnipeg (2010).

Commitments made in Moncton, August 2007

This analysis begins with a first series of commitments on reducing greenhouse gas emissions made at the meeting in Moncton (August 10, 2007), including:

A1 – Provincial and territorial participation in the Climate Registry³

The premiers promised to “develop consistent and verifiable measurement of greenhouse gas emissions by joining The Climate Registry.” The Climate Registry is a non-profit organization that sets consistent and transparent standards to calculate, verify and publicly report greenhouse gas emissions into a single registry.

³ Information taken from the Climate Registry website, <http://www.theclimateregistry.org/>, and from interviews with two representatives of this organization as well as a representative of one Canadian province during the weeks of June 27 and July 4, 2011.

Except for Nunavut, all the provinces and territories have since joined the Climate Registry. Some of them have also developed, in partnership with certain American states, a roadmap for establishing a carbon market as part of the Western Climate Initiative (WCI). The provinces and territories are also members of the Climate Registry board of directors.

A2 – Collectively produce an additional 25,000 megawatts of renewable energy by 2020 through such sources as hydro, wind, solar and tidal

Since 2007, most of the provinces and territories have increased the amount of renewable energy produced on their territory. About 3000 extra megawatts of wind power⁴ was produced between 2007 and 2011, and several provinces are working on implementing major hydroelectric projects that should start operating in the coming years: ,

- La Romaine (Quebec): 1500 megawatts
- Lower-Churchill (Labrador): 3074 megawatts⁵
- Eastmain 1A – Sarcelles – Rupert: 918 megawatts⁶
- Wuskwatim (Manitoba): 200 megawatts⁷
- Niagara Tunnel Project (Ontario): 150 megawatts⁸

In spite of these projects, the objective of producing an additional 25,000 megawatts of renewable energy by 2020 seems ambitious. To succeed, the provinces and territories would have to move faster to abandon such polluting modes of production as coal power plants and encourage energy efficiency and conservation.

A3 – Establishment of a distribution network for alternative fuels

The provinces and territories committed to “work together to develop strategies to implement a national biofuels and hydrogen distribution system, to ensure that Canadians have access to alternative fuels.” Although some initiatives have seen the light of day, access to alternative fuels such as biofuels and hydrogen remains extremely limited for motorists. According to Transport Canada, “only a limited number of retail locations currently exist, particularly in Ontario and Quebec.”⁹ There seems to be more headway on this front in the public transit and agricultural sectors.

4 http://www.canwea.ca/farms/wind-farms_e.php

5 <http://www.nalcorenergy.com/lower-churchill-project.asp>

6 http://www.hydroquebec.com/rupt/fr/projet_en_bref.html

7 <http://www.gov.mb.ca/jrs/wuskwatim/overview.html>

8 http://www.opg.com/power/hydro/new_projects/ntp/index.asp

9 <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/programs/environment-etv-biodiesel-eng-577.htm>

Table 1 – Main commitments by the Council of the Federation regarding the fight against climate change, promoting the green economy and supporting energy efficiency and renewable energy (2007-2010)

A- Reduce GHG emissions – August 2007

| Commitment | Status |
|---|---|
| A1 – Join the Climate Registry | Done |
| A2 – Produce 25,000 MW of renewable energy by 2020 | In progress. At the current pace, 25,000 MW will be hard to obtain |
| A3 – Distribution network for alternative fuels (biofuels and hydrogen) | Access still limited, including in Quebec and Ontario |
| A4 – Create an inventory of research underway | Not included in this evaluation |
| A5 – Add climate change to school curriculums | Not included in this evaluation |
| A6 – Develop programs and standards for energy efficiency and conservation | Not included in this evaluation. It is assumed that all provinces and territories are pursuing initiatives in this area |
| A7 – Capture methane gas from landfills | Partially fulfilled. Some large landfills in several provinces and territories still do not practice methane capture |
| A8 – Make climate change a central and ongoing agenda item at meetings of the Council | No mention in the final press releases from 2009 and 2010 |

A7 – Capturing methane gas from large landfills¹⁰

The methane gas produced by the decomposition of organic matter in landfills contributes in a significant way to climate warming. The provincial and territorial premiers committed to capturing methane gas before it escapes into the atmosphere. Some of the provinces have adopted regulations since 2007 obliging site managers to capture the methane escaping from their sites, particularly the largest sites (Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba), but many have yet to do this (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, P.E.I., Saskatchewan and the Territories), or have yet to do it in full, requiring methane capture for new sites only (Ontario).

¹⁰ From the provincial and territorial climate change plans and energy strategies, as well as Alberta's Specified Gas Emitters Regulation.

A8 – Climate change, a central and ongoing agenda item at meetings of the Council of the Federation

At their August 2007 meeting in Moncton, the provincial and territorial premiers agreed to add climate change to all future meeting agendas. Climate change was a major focus of their 2008 meeting in Quebec City, but not in 2009 or 2010, where it seemed to have been eclipsed by such topics as Canada – United States relations and the economic recovery. The importance of the provinces and territories promoting the green economy was a topic of some discussion, although always in the context of the economic recovery and, unfortunately, without any fixed targets. An online community of practice on climate change adaptation was also launched in July 2010 to help researchers and practitioners.¹¹

Commitments made in Quebec City, July 2008

In the wake of the previous year’s discussions on the question of climate change, and in light of concerns about rising energy prices, especially oil prices, the provincial and territorial premiers adopted a five-point action plan (reproduced in Table B) for energy efficiency and the green economy. “Improving energy efficiency is an effective and economical means to lowering consumer energy bills and achieving reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. It also reduces overall energy demand, generates economic development and employment opportunities, and increases the security of Canada’s energy supply.”¹²

B1 and B2 – Enhance the Model National Energy Code for Buildings (MNECB) by 25% and add energy efficiency as an objective to the National Building Code (NBC)

In Canada, building regulations are a provincial and territorial responsibility. The premiers agreed to update the Model National Energy Code for Buildings (MNECB), which hadn’t been revised since 1997. A new edition of the MNECB, which is expected to raise energy performance by 25%, should be published by the end of 2011. It will include new targets for energy efficiency.

The National Building Code of Canada 2010 (NBC) does not yet include a section on energy efficiency, but energy efficiency provisions for housing and small buildings are currently in development. A proposal to integrate these new provisions into the NBC will be submitted to public review by the end of 2011, and the new edition of the NBC should be published by the end of 2012.¹³

¹¹ <http://www.councilofthefederation.ca/keyinitiatives/climatechange.html>

¹² http://www.councilofthefederation.ca/pdfs/COMMUNIQUE_EN_climate_changeJuly13%5B1%5Dclean.pdf

¹³ <http://www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/eng/ci/v16n2/3.html>

B – Achieve a 20% increase in energy efficiency by 2020 – July 2008

| Commitment | Status |
|--|---|
| B1 – Enhance the Model National Energy Code for Buildings (MNECB) by 25% | In progress. Too early to evaluate |
| B2 – Add energy efficiency as an objective to the National Building Code (NBC) | In progress. Part 9 energy efficiency requirements are expected to be adopted in 2012 |
| B3 – Increase the number of energy-using products covered by the minimum energy performance standards | Ongoing |
| B4 – Adopt green building policies for new construction of government-funded facilities, including sustainable procurement guidelines for energy and water use | Not included in this evaluation |
| B5 – Implement a public or private mechanism in each jurisdiction so that individual homeowners have access to energy efficiency home audits and assistance with energy efficiency retrofits | Done |

B3 – Increase the number of energy-using products covered by the minimum energy performance standards

The Canadian government actively promotes the ENERGY STAR program, which recognizes the most energy-efficient products in certain categories, including appliances and building products. Every year, the Office of Energy Efficiency (OEE) assesses new products or categories for inclusion in the program. The premiers have agreed to continue to develop the ENERGY STAR program. Recently, air purifiers and residential light fixtures were added to the list of products that can carry the ENERGY STAR label.¹⁴

B5 – Implement a public or private mechanism in each jurisdiction so that individual homeowners have access to energy efficiency home audits and assistance with energy efficiency retrofits

When the federal government ended its ecoENERGY Retrofit – Homes program on March 31, 2011 (a decision that has since been reversed), all the provinces and territories offered initiatives of their own to help homeowners renovate for energy efficiency. It’s interesting to note that these programs are administered by NGOs (Climate Change Central in Alberta), government-owned corporations (Power

¹⁴ <http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/residential/business/manufacturers/requirements/index.cfm?attr=12>

Smart by Manitoba Hydro, Rénoclimat by Hydro-Québec), or directly by the provincial or territorial governments (LiveSmart BC, Efficiency Nova Scotia).

Council of the Federation initiatives, Quebec City 2008 and Winnipeg 2010

In addition to committing to change in their own jurisdictions, the provincial and territorial premiers also directed their staff to report to the Council and to carry out studies on (1) adapting to climate change and (2) the impact of the green economy on the labour market. Tables C and D summarize the premiers' main commitments.

C – Adapting to climate change – July 2008

| Commitment | Status |
|---|---|
| C1 – Finalize a draft Forest Carbon Management Quantification Framework | Council of the Federation is waiting for the report |
| C2 – Finalize a tree species study | Council of the Federation is waiting for the report |
| C3 – Finalize a forest landscape/ecosystem study and an analysis of the forestry sector | Council of the Federation is waiting for the report |
| C4 – Finalize a collaborative study on water conservation and scarcity | Council of the Federation is waiting for the report |
| C5 – Finalize a flood mitigation strategy for consideration by ministers | Council of the Federation is waiting for the report |
| C6 – Report by Saskatchewan on research underway on agronomy in light of adapting to climate change and evaluating the gaps in the research and the possibility of applying the results of such research, as well as coordinating the funding | Council of the Federation is waiting for the report |
| C7 – Collaboration by research centres to create an inventory of research on climate change | Council of the Federation is waiting for the report |
| C8 – Establish a climate change adaption community of practice | Council of the Federation is waiting for the report |
| C1 – Finalize a draft Forest Carbon Management Quantification Framework | Council of the Federation is waiting for the report |

D – Evaluation of the impact of the green economy on the labour market – August 2010

| Commitment | Status |
|---|---|
| D1 – Identify labour market gaps and opportunities in Canada's green labour market, | Council of the Federation is waiting for the report |

| | |
|---|--|
| evaluate training capacity to meet the needs of the green economy, and identify measures and best practices for the creation of and training for green jobs | |
|---|--|

These commitments cannot be assessed here for compliance. It's not possible to identify whether the reports have been filed with the premiers. It's up to the premiers to report to Canadians on whether or not these objectives (C and D) have been attained, as with all other commitments made since 2007.

Conclusion

As noted in this report, the Council of the Federation has made many commitments in recent years to protect the environment, fight climate change and develop green energy.

Although the provinces and territories have kept some of their promises, they haven't kept them all. In particular, they have failed to make climate change a central and ongoing agenda item at Council meetings. The Council seems to have weakened its resolve on this issue, which does not appear to have played a significant role at its 2009 and 2010 meetings.

Our analysis also uncovered other problems:

- Many of the commitments lack measurability and;
- there is no provision for the Council itself to report in detail on its progress to the population. (It is interesting to note, though, that some of the provinces already do this. British Columbia and Quebec, for example, prepare regular reports on the implementation of announced measures as per their strategies against climate change.)

There is a lot of room for improvement, but the fact that the provinces and territories are working together is encouraging. The ecoENERGY Retrofit – Homes program is a good example of how effective this kind of cooperation can be. When the federal government dropped the program (which was recently temporarily reinstated), all the provinces and territories offered initiatives of their own to help homeowners renovate for energy efficiency.