

REAL LEADERSHIP IN THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Climate Action Network Canada's 2021 federal election Policy Priorities



PREPARED BY:



Canada

CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK
RÉSEAU ACTION CLIMAT

CONTACT:

Caroline Brouillette, Domestic policy manager | carolinebrouillette@climateactionnetwork.ca

Teika Newton, Managing Director | teikanewton@climateactionnetwork.ca

August 2021



This election, Canada is at a crossroads.

At the start of the summer, the village of Lytton, B.C. shattered Canada's all-time heat record for three days in a row before burning to the ground. That same week, there was massive flooding in the Yukon, hundreds of people died in B.C. from extreme heat, and more than a billion sea creatures cooked in their shells. The land currently called Canada was on fire from B.C. to Ontario, and the smoke stretched to the East Coast.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report released in August, dubbed "code red for humanity," makes it clear that without immediate, transformative action, this will be the new normal.

This is not the world we want to live in. We have the power to choose a different path, if we act with the urgency and the ambition the crisis demands.

The polls show that climate change will be top of mind for Canadians this election - but it is far from a single, isolated issue. Climate is intertwined with every other aspect of our lives: health, jobs, housing, education, social justice, and security. It impacts the well-being of every person, as well as every other species that shares this planet with us.

The federal government has the tools and the power to build the society we want and need. Climate action is about creating a more just, more caring country, while bringing about fast, deep emission reductions and delivering the resources to help people and communities adapt to climate impacts. It means finally respecting and prioritizing Indigenous rights, and living up to our global responsibilities. And it means acting now.

Our organizations, representing the concerns of millions of Canadians, call on all parties to centre strong, immediate, and concrete climate action in your election platforms. We can afford no more delay and no more missed targets. Voters will want to know how, and how quickly, you will implement the following principles and policies.



Indigenous Rights

Climate action cannot be separated from the broader project of Indigenous self-determination and decolonization. The climate crisis stems from colonial ways of thinking and operating and from the suppression of Indigenous rights and knowledge. We need to go beyond individual policies and address the systemic failures and injustices that have enabled and continue to perpetuate this existential threat. That means implementing systemic change to truly respect and honour Indigenous sovereignty.

To date, recognition and implementation of Indigenous rights has been piecemeal and inconsistent, especially when they conflict with the government's continued support of the oil and gas industry. This patchwork approach must be replaced by a whole-of-government effort to coordinate action to simultaneously honour Indigenous rights and address the climate crisis.

Compounding the urgency, the climate crisis is being violently felt by Indigenous peoples here and now. In 2019, the Assembly of First Nations' Chiefs-in-Assembly declared a First Nations Climate Emergency, calling for urgent and transformative climate action in line with guidance from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The incoming government must commit to re-contextualizing the climate conversation in Canada, from one rooted in a colonial mindset of bare-bones carbon accounting, towards an understanding of the need for transformative, systemic change to respect First Nations, Inuit, and Métis rights, including the right to self-determination.



WE CALL ON PARTIES TO:

- Fully implement the 94 calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;
- Fully and sincerely implement UNDRIP, paying special attention to Articles 3, 18, 19, and 25, including a promise to require full free, prior, and informed consent for any and all new energy projects, regardless of jurisdiction or degree to which a project is already complete;
- Commit to implementing in full the Assembly of First Nations Joint Committee on Climate Action recommendations, published in their 2020 annual report. These include:
 - “Ensure First Nations full and effective participation in federal clean growth and climate change programs” ;
 - “Enable meaningful participation of First Nations in the carbon pollution pricing system” ;
 - “Develop First Nations-specific indicators/criteria to report on the implementation of climate-related federal funding programs and outcomes for First Nations.” In recent years, Nature-Based Solutions have become increasingly visible and incorporated into federal climate plans - going forward, any and all Nature-Based Solutions must take into consideration and be implemented in respect of Indigenous land rights and jurisdictional authority. Further to this, advancement of Indigenous Guardianship and Indigenous Protected Areas must be prioritized and sufficiently supported financially.



Justice

The injustices in our society are clearer than ever. The pandemic has widened existing class, racial, gender, and intergenerational divides. The climate crisis likewise amplifies inequities: it affects everyone, but hits marginalized and vulnerable people first and hardest, including Indigenous and racialized communities on the front lines of climate impacts and environmental racism.

The climate crisis is also a question of intergenerational justice. The climate crisis is robbing children of their right to a safe and healthy planet. Remedying this injustice requires urgent and comprehensive action to decarbonize the economy.

In this transition, we need to support and give agency to workers currently employed in greenhouse gas-intensive sectors. The current uncertainty they face helps no one: workers deserve to feel secure in their careers and know what opportunities they will have for retraining, upskilling, and moving to new, well-compensated, stable jobs in the clean economy.



WE CALL ON PARTIES TO:

- Implement a Working Group on Just Transition responsible for establishing the process, mechanisms, tools, and funding for a just transition. Trade unions must be stakeholders of this working group;
- Adopt a climate justice lens to federal decision-making. Decisions and policies should not be judged solely by the metric of carbon emissions, but also by their reductions in air and water pollution and their restoration of communities harmed by decades of industrial pollution;
- Legislate the development of a national strategy to redress environmental racism, building on last Parliament's Bill C-230;
- Hold polluters accountable, especially for the disproportionate harm to communities of color and low-income communities, including through the polluter-pays mechanism and the implementation of a wealth tax.



Caring for People and Places

As heat and wildfires blaze across Canada, demands for emergency services and care have surged past provinces' and communities' capacity to respond. For families and communities whose lives have been upended by evacuation orders, destroyed property and disrupted livelihoods – as well as the tragic loss of family and loved ones – climate change has become deeply personal and urgent.

Faced with a convergence of crises, we must look out for each other and ensure that we leave no one behind. The pandemic has shown us that policies and investments that keep communities, workplaces, and vulnerable populations safe make all of us safer. This includes recognizing the importance of paid and unpaid care, the responsibility for which is disproportionately shouldered by women, in contributing to the well-being of families and communities – particularly in times of crisis. Investments in care build a future where both people and planet are nurtured, and resilience to climate change is strengthened by care-based approaches that support the well-being of both people and nature.



WE CALL ON PARTIES TO:

- Devise and implement a national climate adaptation strategy that empowers regional, municipal, and Indigenous governments to design adaptation plans that meet their needs and protects people from acute climate harms such as mental and physical traumas of wildfire smoke, forced relocations due to fires and floods, and heat-related illnesses, while best preparing for long-term resilience and safety. Such a strategy must recognize the outsized impacts on Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable communities.
- Build a single-tier immigration system with full and permanent resident status for all on arrival;
- Develop a care labour force strategy focused on ensuring care work is decent work and revitalizing social infrastructure;
- Develop a new and credible plan to reverse nature loss and meet Canada's international commitments, including to protect 30% of lands, freshwater, and oceans by 2030.



Global Responsibility

In a globalized world, crises know no borders. The climate crisis, just like the COVID-19 pandemic, requires global cooperation.

As one of the world's top ten net emitters, Canada bears disproportionate responsibility for the climate crisis, and has a poor track record of living up to its commitments. As more and more countries step up with greater ambition to fight the crisis, Canada is falling behind.

The good news is that, as a rich country, we have the power to make a significant contribution to combatting the climate crisis. It is time to do the right thing, live up to our responsibilities, and show solidarity with an approach that looks beyond our borders. 5 weeks after the election, Canada will participate in the most important climate summit since 2019 - COP26 - in Glasgow, where it will be asked to show up with determination and say how it will contribute to limiting global warming to 1.5°C.



WE CALL ON PARTIES TO:

- Commit to bring transformative and more ambitious pledges to COP26 to align Canada's climate plans with a 1.5°C compatible future, which requires reducing domestic emissions by at least 60% below 2005 levels by 2030;
- Mobilizing CAD 5.3 billion annually for international climate finance until 2025, with CAD\$1.8 specifically coming from the official development assistance envelope;
- Commit to ensuring that 50% of climate finance will go to adaptation;
- Actively support the text-based negotiations of the waiver on intellectual property and patents being proposed at the WTO by South Africa and India to rapidly scale up vaccine manufacturing and production.



Addressing the Urgency

Climate action isn't just about protecting the Earth for future generations. As we saw this summer, the impacts are here now. Canada is warming at twice the global average rate - three times in the north of the country. We are in an emergency, and we need to act like it.

The International Energy Agency's Net Zero by 2050 report made it clear: to contain global warming to 1.5°C, there can be no new investments in fossil fuels and no new oil and gas fields and coal mines. We cannot afford to waste any more time on false solutions that only perpetuate the status quo and delay the necessary transition to cleaner, safer sources of energy.

Action this decade is critical to curb global warming: our window to secure a livable future is rapidly closing. Yet we're still pouring fuel on the fire. We need to use every available effective tool to put it out, now.



WE CALL ON PARTIES TO:

- Immediately end the expansion of fossil fuel production in Canada and reject all new and proposed fossil fuel projects currently going through the federal evaluation system;
- Immediately phase out subsidies and public financing to fossil fuels, including fossil support through Export Development Canada;
- Account for and commit to reducing emissions accruing from Canadian fossil fuel exports, which outstrip domestic emissions;
- Commit to an overall spending target of at least 2% of GDP on climate investments and actions;
- Commit to communicating regularly to people in Canada about the climate emergency and what is needed from the government, businesses, and the public;
- Implement 5-year interval carbon budgets on advice from the Net-Zero Advisory Body;
- Develop a Clean Electricity Standard that will get Canada to a 100% clean grid by 2035.

We can still chart the right path forward, and we have an incredible opportunity to do so. Pandemic recovery offers us the chance to build a healthier, more resilient society. There is massive public support for climate action, at home and around the world. All parties should be racing to convince voters that they will deliver on the most ambitious climate efforts.

Through swift, thoughtful, and transformative action guided by these principles, the next federal government can lead the way to create the world we want: one in which we truly value, care for, and protect people and the planet.