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## A CANADIAN ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

**The credibility of the pan-Canadian Framework on Climate Change hinges on its inclusion of a series of tools that reinforce the accountability of the Framework and work to facilitate an increase in Canada's climate ambition over time beyond our current 2030 emissions reduction goal.**

### THE SITUATION

A federal-provincial process is underway to develop a pan-Canadian framework on climate change. This process will establish Canada's climate action plan and our innovation agenda. Ensuring a successful outcome will mean developing policies and strategies that put the country on track to doing our fair share in cutting carbon pollution and building a modern clean economy. Most importantly, our success will depend on the rich and diverse strength of Canadian communities rising up to support transformative action.

On the climate file, Canada has a long history of setting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets and failing to meet them because there is no comprehensive plan attached to those targets. Where plans have existed in the past, lack of political will and delay tactics have stifled progress and kept Canada from fulfilling its commitments.

It's time to break the cycle of empty target-setting in Canada.

We know it's absolutely possible to reach Canada's current goal of reducing GHG emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030<sup>1</sup>. We also know the 2030 target does not represent our fair share of addressing global climate change<sup>2</sup> and that Canada needs to do more. CAN-Rac's estimations of Canada's fair share contribution suggests we should be reducing emissions by 50% below 2005 levels by 2030 while increasing our contribution to international climate financing to \$4 billion/year by 2020<sup>3</sup>.

An effective pan-Canadian Plan must cover a myriad of issues but at its core it must include:

- Detailed plans to reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions in all sectors including buildings, transportation, energy, agriculture, etc.;

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<sup>1</sup> *Still Minding the Gap: An Assessment of Canada's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Obligations*. Deep Decarbonization Pathways Team. 2016. <http://climateactionnetwork.ca/2016/04/26/still-minding-the-gap/>

<sup>2</sup> Canada's INDC failed to meet the test of best practice as recommended by the World Resources Institute ([http://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Decoding\\_INDCs.pdf](http://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Decoding_INDCs.pdf)) and was rated inadequate by Climate Action Tracker (<http://climateactiontracker.org/countries/canada.html>)

<sup>3</sup> *A Paris Package that Shows Canada Cares*. Climate Action Network - Réseau action climat Canada. 2015. <http://climateactionnetwork.ca/2015/11/05/canada-and-the-un-climate-negotiations-a-paris-package-that-shows-canada-cares/>

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- Detailed plans to build the infrastructure and capacity to generate and convert to renewable energy;
- Detailed analysis and plans to maximize the job and economic development potential of the clean energy transition;
- Rigorous federal backstops for provincial plans;
- Detailed timelines with associated milestones;
- Well-designed federal funding streams;
- A timely commitment to increase Canada's ambition beyond our current 2030 target, early enough to position the country as a leader, rather than a follower, in the 2018 Global Stock Take, and;
- The completion of Canada's long-term deep GHG reduction strategy, including a 2050 emissions reduction target, by the end of 2016.

This brief focuses on one critical element required to reinforce the accountability of the pan-Canadian Framework, which can work to facilitate an increase in Canada's climate ambition beyond our current 2030 target as articulated in our Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the Paris Agreement.

## THE RECOMMENDATION

### *Bake a 'Canadian Accountability Mechanism' into the Pan-Canadian Framework*

Several pieces of the Paris Agreement work together to ensure regular evaluation of progress toward Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and to ratchet up ambition of national contributions over time. This package of measures, colloquially referred to as the Paris Ambition Mechanism, calls on parties to develop new NDCs, or update insufficient existing NDCs, following a Global Stocktake that will take place every five years starting in 2023<sup>4</sup>. Prior to 2023, countries will convene a facilitative dialogue in 2018<sup>5</sup>, which essentially serves as a dress rehearsal for the Global Stocktake. This first review of the Paris targets must lead to clear commitments from all countries to significantly increase their level of ambition, accelerate the transition to 100% renewable energy for all, and get on track to stop catastrophic climate change. Canada must adopt a more ambitious climate pledge (NDC) in 2018, by which time all countries should come up with the tougher actions they will take after 2020.

**The pan-Canadian framework must include mechanisms to evaluate progress and ratchet up ambition across provinces and territories over time.** A plan that incorporates regular assessments of Canadian efforts, and can evolve to reflect those efforts by gradually escalating the ambition of climate targets, will build domestic and international confidence in the pan-Canadian framework. Parties included an ambition mechanism in the Paris Agreement to account for the momentum that can be expected once progress toward NDCs begins, momentum encouraged by factors such as the exponential decline in the costs of renewable energy. Many policies that seem ambitious today will quickly move into the realm of business-as-usual and, from there, become insufficient in the span of a few years. Given this, it will be necessary for Parties to regularly revisit and update their commitments to shift ambition ever toward science-derived targets and to ensure that previously set targets don't act as a limit to ambition when change happens faster than anticipated. This will prove as true in Canada as in the international context: a Canadian Accountability Mechanism can provide a

<sup>4</sup> Article 14, Paris Agreement, 2015: [https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/paris\\_nov\\_2015/application/pdf/paris\\_agreement\\_english\\_.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/paris_nov_2015/application/pdf/paris_agreement_english_.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Paragraph 20, Draft Decision - Adoption of the Paris Agreement, 2015: <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09r01.pdf>

means to ensure policies and targets reflect changing economic and technological conditions, and are responsive to scientific understanding as well as the worsening impacts of climate change.



**The Commissioner on the Environment and Sustainable Development to the Auditor General should be tasked with reviewing progress toward climate commitments.** For the first time on any issue, Canada's federal and provincial auditors general will develop a common system for auditing climate actions: by 2017, the auditors general will have developed a shared template to assess GHG mitigation measures across the country<sup>6</sup>. This provides an ideal opportunity to embed the Auditor General and this new national assessment process as a component of the accountability mechanism of the pan-Canadian framework. Shared federal/provincial/territorial audits of GHG mitigation efforts should take place every 3 years.

To make assessment meaningful with a plan that is responsive to the observations of the Commissioner, **a third-party panel, such as the Royal Society should be tasked with using the information on GHG mitigation progress provided by the Commissioner to assess the scientific adequacy of Canada's efforts and make recommendations to federal, provincial and territorial Ministers for improving policies and regulations to increase the efficacy and ambition of mitigation efforts**. This third-party entity should be empowered to conduct qualitative reviews of and make recommendations toward improving existing climate policies at the provincial, territorial, and federal levels on an ongoing basis (i.e. both aligned with and continuous apart from the timeline of the CESD's quantitative review). Equity - the fairness of Canada's contribution within the international historical context - would be key to the credibility of this stage of this review system.<sup>7</sup>

**The Minister of Environment and Climate Change should be charged with using the outcomes of the Auditor General's review and recommendations of the third-party panel to make recommendations on how the Canadian target could be strengthened to increase Canada's contribution to the global response to climate change, based on equity and the best available science.** In order to utilize the auditing exercise as a stepping stone of an actually-functioning ambition mechanism, the Minister would need to capture any changed expectations of what's possible in light of the speed of progress and ensure that a new level of ambition is articulated in updated targets.

**A 'Canadian Accountability Mechanism' would anchor the international MRV system in a domestic process.** The first audit of Canada's climate action plan, developed via the pan-Canadian framework process in 2016 and (presumably) implemented in 2017, must take place in 2018, just in time for the review/resubmission of NDCs anticipated by the Paris Agreement. The second audit would be available in 2023, in time for the first Global Stock Take. Aligning domestic evaluation with the international timeline works to reinforce the credibility and enhance transparency of both processes.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/federal-provincial-auditors-general-to-audit-greenhouse-gas-emissions/article28794666/>

<sup>7</sup> For a historical overview of similar bodies in Canada and a description of a potential Science Committee charged with advising all levels of government on GHG reduction efforts, see pages 21-29 of: A. Gage. *A Carbon Budget for Canada: A Collaborative Framework for Federal and Provincial Climate Leadership*. 2015. West Coast Environmental Law. ([http://wcel.org/sites/default/files/publications/CarbonBudget%20\(Web\)\\_0.pdf](http://wcel.org/sites/default/files/publications/CarbonBudget%20(Web)_0.pdf))

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Paris Agreement milestones are well aligned with key periods of this government's first term. COP21 offered the new government the venue to announce itself to the world and confirm its election campaign commitments to climate leadership and the innovation agenda. Leading into an election year, 2018's COP24 and facilitative dialogue might provide a powerful bookend to cement a new era of Canadian action on climate and responsible global citizenship.



Canadian and indigenous communities have spent decades demanding ambitious climate action from governments. The time to deliver on those demands is now. Both expectations of and faith in our federal government on this issue are at all-time highs. By combining a re-visioning of Canada's climate targets with a visionary climate action plan, this government can deliver on a once-in-a-generation opportunity to show the world that Canada can make good on its climate commitments.

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