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Likelihood of reaching long-term climate goals unclear until more details emerge from Alberta MOU, say environment experts

The Canadian Climate Institute released data in September showing that Canada made no progress on reducing emissions in 2024, and predicted that the 2030 emissions reduction target is now out of reach.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Canada's climate direction under the current Liberal government is a roll-back of policies from the previous administration in favour of a strategy addressing large industrial emissions, which environmental policy experts find lacking in details to determine if it will allow Canada to reach its long-term climate goals.

"They're definitely rolling back [Justin] Trudeau-era climate policy. There's no doubt about that," said Rachel Samson, vice-president of research with the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP). "The question that we still don't know the answer to is whether what they're replacing it with will be equivalent in terms of the emission reductions, or the extent to which it puts Canada on a low-emissions pathway."

The 2025 federal budget released on Nov. 4 included a Climate Competitiveness Strategy with a pledge to "strengthen industrial carbon pricing." According to the strategy, Ottawa will improve the effectiveness of Canada's industrial carbon pricing system by engaging with provincial and territorial governments to set a multi-decade industrial carbon price trajectory that targets net-zero emissions by 2050. The strategy also said Ottawa will improve its application of the benchmark, or the minimum national standard each province and territory must meet through their industrial carbon pricing systems.

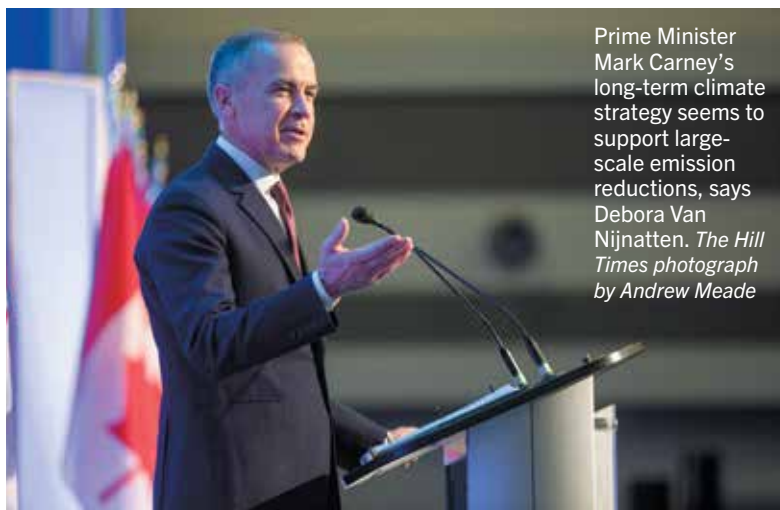
Samson told *The Hill Times* that it would be difficult to say



Environment Minister Julie Dabrusin told the House Environment Committee on Dec. 1 that the Liberal government remains committed to its 2030 emissions-reduction targets, despite the MOU deal outlining conditions for a new bitumen pipeline. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Rachel Samson, IRPP vice-president of research, says 'We need to see specifics [on the MOU]. We need to see the deal on industrial carbon pricing.' *Handout photograph*



Prime Minister Mark Carney's long-term climate strategy seems to support large-scale emission reductions, says Debora Van Nijnatten. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

if the strategy will help reduce emissions over the long term until more specific details are released regarding a recent major energy deal between Ottawa and Alberta.

Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Nov. 27, which set out a series of conditions that could result in a private-sector proposal bringing forward a pipeline—that would carry a million barrels of oil per day—from the province's oilpatch to British Columbia's coast.

Some details from the MOU that are yet to be worked out include a new carbon pricing agreement, and a methane equivalency agreement between Ottawa and Alberta that are to be finalized by April 1, 2026.

"We need to see specifics. We need to see the deal on industrial carbon pricing. We need to see the specifics on the methane regulations. We need to also see what sort of enforcement mechanism is going to be in place for the private companies that are involved, as well as the Alberta government, to be held to account for

the things that they've committed to," said Samson. "I think people are really looking for some guarantees and some measures in place that that will ensure that those commitments are met."

Canada's long-term climate goal is net-zero emissions by 2050. In the short term, Canada has also committed to reduce emissions by 40 to 45 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

Samson wouldn't go so far as to say the short-term target is impossible, but said "it is looking less and less likely that Canada would meet its 2030 target."

The Canadian Climate Institute (CCI) released data this past September showing that Canada made no progress on reducing emissions in 2024, and predicted that the 2030 emissions reduction target is now out of reach.

After the release of the 2025 budget, CCI president Rick Smith described the climate competitiveness strategy as "a good first step" towards helping Canada succeed in the context of a global economic activity generated by decarbonization, in a press release.

"The budget proposes actions and delivery timelines to bolster Canada's climate competitiveness—especially on core policies such as industrial carbon pricing, stronger methane regulations, sustainable investment guidelines, and tax credits for expanding clean electricity. We look forward to working with the federal government to ensure these essential policies result in more abundant and affordable energy, attract new investment to Canadian industries, support more well-paying jobs and economic growth across the country, and help make communities more secure and resilient," said Smith in the press release.

To help offset emissions from a new oil pipeline, the MOU includes a commitment by the province to extend the Alberta Carbon Capture Incentive Program to support Pathways Plus, a proposed, large-scale carbon capture, utilization, and storage project in the province.

Samson told *The Hill Times* that it's not clear that carbon capture and storage technology will sufficiently offset emissions from pipelines. Carbon capture technology has only captured 0.001 per cent of global emissions since its implementation five decades ago, according to the David Suzuki Foundation.

Samson described Carney as an "economist and an investor," and said that addressing Canada's long-term climate goals through that lens involves reducing the risk factors for Canadian businesses and the economy. Canada is currently engaged in a trade war with the United States, and "we need some cards," according to Samson.

"Right now, almost 80 per cent of our oil production goes to the U.S., and that is our highest value export," she said. "If we are looking at the cards we have in negotiations with the U.S., having an alternative export pathway for that high-value export is really critical for those negotiations—even if it never comes to pass."

Debora Van Nijnatten, a professor of political science, North American studies, and environmental studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, told *The Hill Times* that "it's been a little perplexing to figure out where the Carney administration has been headed on climate policy."

Carney's long-term climate strategy seems to support large-scale emission reductions, according to Van Nijnatten.

"He's chosen to put large scale, big money, and support behind carbon capture technol-

Policy Briefing **ENVIRONMENT**

Forging a stronger future: protecting Canada's economy and environment in a changing climate

We are building an economy which protects Canadians from climate impacts, creates opportunities for every region, and ensures that Canada remains a reliable and responsible energy producer and global leader in clean innovation.

Liberal MP
Wade Grant

Opinion



Growing up in the Musqueam First Nation where the mouth of the Fraser River meets the Salish Sea, I was taught by my elders the importance of stewarding the land, air, and water which make our home so beautiful. I carry these teachings with me, and am so proud to pass them on to my children so that they, too, can safeguard our planet for future generations. I am doing this because, unfortunately, in my lifetime I've seen the impacts of climate change devastate not only British Columbia, but also Canada.

In the past five years alone, our country has experienced more than \$11-billion in insured damages from extreme weather. Just this summer, we once again saw wildfires burn through the B.C. community of Lytton, and surrounding First Nations communities. Tragic events such as these have become far too common. We have seen that, in countless communities across Canada, climate change is doing lasting, irreparable damage to lives and livelihoods.

In my capacity as parliamentary secretary to the minister of environment and climate change, I know Canadians want us to be building a country which is reliable and resilient in a changing world, but also one that is affordable. As a member of the Musqueam First Nation, I also know that there is no economy without the environment.

Through the Climate Competitiveness Strategy, our government is bringing the economy and the environment together, understanding that growing our economy means taking climate change seriously. We are building an economy that is strong, resilient, and ready for the future; one which protects Canadians from climate impacts, creates opportunities for every region, and ensures that Canada remains a reliable and responsible energy producer and global leader in clean innovation.

The global market for clean energy technologies is expected to exceed \$650-billion annually by 2030, and it's



Canadians want us to be building a country which is reliable and resilient in a changing world, but also one that is affordable, writes Liberal MP Wade Grant. *Pexels photograph by James Wheeler*

predicted that by 2035, the global clean technology market will triple to US\$2-trillion, spanning solar, wind, batteries, green hydrogen, electric vehicles, and heat

pumps. The value of low-carbon materials like steel, aluminum, and cement

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ENVIRONMENT Policy Briefing

We know how to fight climate change. So let's actually do it

Kowtowing to the billionaire class and transnational corporations has never built a strong nation or healthy communities. We know how to do this.

Green Party
Leader
Elizabeth May

Opinion



By his actions if not his words, Prime Minister Mark Carney has made it abundantly clear that reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and living up to our international commitments is not his priority, writes Green Leader Elizabeth May. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

An environmental activist since Grade 10, I have lived through numerous waves of urgent environmental threats. My Grade 10 activism was spurred the April 1970 *Life* magazine cover—"Lake Erie is dead." The cause was eutrophication, the result of over fertilization by phosphates and nitrates from laundry detergents and agricultural run-off. Action was taken and over time, waterways recovered. We fought DDT, spurred by Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring*, then acid rain caused by building higher smokestacks to reduce localized air pollution. The 1970s mantra, "the solution to pollution is dilution," was proven wrong and dangerous to ecosystems thousands of kilometres away. By the mid-1980s, action was taken by the Mulroney government to cut acid rain-causing pollution in half

with subsequent treaties with the United States to end the threat of acidifying lakes, streams, and forests. By 1987, Canada led the world in negotiating the Montreal Protocol that literally saved all life on Earth by protecting the ozone layer.

Increasingly, what we call "environmental issues" are really fundamental threats to our security. The climate crisis threatens millions of lives globally, as well as ecosystems from the Arctic to coral reefs. It is no longer a "future threat" as it was when Canada hosted the first international conference on global warming back in June 1988. But even then the conference title was "Our Changing Atmosphere: Implications for Global Security." In the 21st century, we live in a world in climate crisis. Last year,

Canada experienced \$8.5-billion in insurable losses from climate-induced events. Now, one-in-four Canadians say a climate event has personally affected them. From extreme weather events like heat domes, to hurricanes, wildfires, drought, and windstorms, the climate crisis is devastating communities and families. Over four days in July 2021, 619 British Columbians died in the heat dome, and a few months later, more died in the flooding caused by atmospheric rivers.

And somehow we still act as though this is an "environmental" issue—marginal, a "nice to have," as opposed to an urgent imperative.

Our new prime minister, by his actions if not his words, has made it abundantly clear that reducing our dependence on fossil fuels

and living up to our international commitments is not his priority.

Greens agree that we must protect Canada's economy from the erratic behaviour of U.S. President Donald Trump, but it is a logical fallacy that reversing action on climate change somehow helps our economic health.

Nation-building projects that reduce the costs of living for every Canadian while cutting pollution are possible. We need affordable public transit, electric trains and buses including in rural and remote Canada. We can cut the costs of heating and cooling our homes and powering our transportation by electrifying everything, relying on the cheapest and most reliable electricity from solar, wind, and geothermal. Once installed, the marginal cost for wind and solar approaches zero. We can build out an effective smart grid that runs east-west and south to north, allowing that grid to act as a giant battery—storing excess power until it is needed. We can break the assumptions of the past that renewable energy cannot meet base load demands. It can. And it is the cheapest form of electricity.

Yet, we have less connectivity between provinces than the European Union has between nations.

Norway and Denmark have it figured out with excess Danish wind energy sold to Norway, and when not needed in Norway's grid, it pumps water to higher elevations, in elegant "pumped storage." When the wind is not blowing in Denmark, Norway opens the sluices and generates electricity from the water power, only to pump it back to storage until needed again.

These are no longer techno fantasies. But the Major Projects Office and the Prime Minister's Office clearly prefer the improbable, unproven, and expensive over the proven and reliable. We are wasting billions of dollars on unproven, so-called "small modular reactors," and carbon capture and storage, yet failing to fund essential emergency preparedness for Canadians. We have not acted for climate adaptation while we continue to accelerate the threat of unstoppable, irreversible runaway global warming by promising expanded production of fossil fuels. We stand on the very edge of too late, but it is only too late if we throw in the towel and embrace suicide pacts like the Canada-Alberta memorandum of understanding.

I think back over nearly 60 years of battles won. Learning from those lessons, progress was made through political will and moral courage. Governments need to take the hard decisions. None of our battles won involved complex pricing systems to trade in pollution. When leaded gas threatened health, it was banned. We made ozone-depleting substances illegal. Kowtowing to the billionaire class and transnational corporations has never built a strong nation or healthy communities. We know how to do this.

We need to embrace the opportunities by embracing the innovative spirit of entrepreneurs who are building in Canada for Canadians. We need to ensure no raw resources are exported without value added to benefit our economy. We need strategic reserves to protect our economy from Trump's unhinged trade war. We can keep our elbows up, expand trade with those with whom we share common values, and get through this challenging time together.

Elizabeth May, O.C., has served as MP for Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C., since 2011. She is the leader of the Green Party of Canada.

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could reach \$1.2-trillion by the same year.

The Climate Competitiveness Strategy is designed to target these growing industries and drive smart investments by governments and businesses—capitalizing on a global trend which is already underway. Its goal is to have Canada lead the pack in producing, developing, and selling the technologies, products, skills, and services needed to reduce emissions. It is

a strategy focused on investment and results, designed to meet Canada's current circumstances while setting up the country for long-term prosperity.

We are building for the future, and investing in industries that create good jobs and drive down emissions at the same time. From cleantech innovation in my province of B.C., to electric vehicle manufacturing in Ontario, to hydrogen and biofuels in the Prairies, to wind energy in Nova Scotia, and much more, we are creating the foundation for long-term

economic strength. Through a reinforced industrial carbon pricing plan, investment in innovation-spurring investment tax credits, and the finalizing of powerful emission-reducing regulations, we are taking targeted action to build a competitive Canadian future.

This couples with the major projects we are building which are laying the groundwork for a net-zero Canada, like the North Coast Transmission Line here in B.C., and the Iqaluit Nukkiqsautiit Hydroelectric Project in Nunavut.

The global shift towards industries powering the clean economy is reshaping trade, investment, and jobs at a pace not seen since the industrial revolution. Canada is well positioned to seize the opportunities of the emerging low-carbon economy, to lead, and to leapfrog economies choosing to focus on the status quo. By leveraging these advantages now, we attract global capital, drive innovation, and create the high-skilled jobs that will define the next generation of growth.

As the representative of Vancouver Quadra, living by and on

the water, I often think about how I can ensure that I'm handing off to my kids a clean environment and a prosperous future. Through the Climate Competitive Strategy, I believe my government is doing just that, building a stronger Canada for today, and for generations to come.

Wade Grant is a lifelong resident of Vancouver Quadra, B.C., and a proud member of the Musqueam Indian Band. Grant has dedicated his life to building bridges between people and strengthening ties that connect us. He studied political science at the University of British Columbia, and continues to live, work, and raise his two children in the same neighbourhoods that shaped his values. Now serving as parliamentary secretary to the minister of environment and climate change, Grant is bringing his real-world experience and deep local knowledge to Parliament.

The Hill Times

Policy Briefing **ENVIRONMENT**

Can Carney answer for his climate track record?

The energy agreement with Alberta builds on top of a dangerous pattern of climate policy rollbacks since the spring election.

Laura Tozer



Opinion

Governments traditionally use their first months in office to tackle their highest priority initiatives. Prime Minister Mark Carney has used that window to retreat on federal climate policies across the board. That says a lot about where his priorities lie. No sector of society has been spared from rollbacks, including buildings, electricity, transportation, oil and gas—and even private jets and yachts.

When the winter semester starts next month, I need to stand up in front of my University of Toronto graduate students in my Climate Change Policy course and undergraduate students in my introductory climate course, and explain the Carney government's extensive retreat on climate policy over the last six months. I'd like to invite Carney, who once had a reputation as a climate leader in the finance sector, to my class to explain the following track record.

The memorandum of understanding between the federal government and the Government of Alberta is just the latest effort to gut climate policy. It delays the deadline on long-expected methane regulations, despite this being the biggest no-brainer we have in cost-effective climate policy. The MOU also scraps the cap on emissions for the oil and gas sector, allowing the fossil fuel industry to grow its pollution while the rest of the country works to cut it. The MOU suspends the Clean Electricity Regulations in Alberta. This is a dangerous precedent that will lead other provinces to demand equal treatment. And it reverses course to offer tax credits to fund carbon capture used to extract even more oil. All of this was apparently "traded" for a stronger industrial carbon price in Alberta. But a carbon price was already required in Alberta by federal law. Action was needed to enforce that law and close countless loopholes, but no MOU was needed to do so.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. This latest move builds on top of a dangerous pattern of climate policy rollbacks since the spring election. Carney's government has abandoned this country's consumer carbon pricing system, ended the Canada Greener Homes retrofit programs to electrify and improve household efficiency, allowed Canada's Incentives for Electric Vehicles program to expire, delayed implementing Canada's zero-emission vehicle mandate, and even announced plans to eliminate a luxury tax on private jets and yachts.

The federal government simultaneously weakened checks and balances protecting accountability. It has committed to claw back Canada's anti-greenwashing legislation so that companies are free to return to lying to you about the climate impacts of their initiatives. The Liberals have also

passed Bill C-5, the Building Canada Act, to allow the federal government to override 12 laws and seven regulations, including the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, for designated projects of national interest.

By February 2026, Carney's government is required by Canadian law to release a credible plan on how it will achieve our climate change targets, which includes a detailed plan for how we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions 45 to 50 per cent by 2035. That target and the deadlines for a real plan to achieve it are enshrined in the Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act. Nearly all of the pillars of the previ-

ous plan have been shredded in just half a year, making it hard to see how the federal government could meet this requirement. Is the Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act next on the chopping block?

Perhaps Carney would like to share an explanation with my students in January. Seventy-eight per cent of young Canadians report that climate change negatively affects their mental health. Every single semester, a student raises their hand in my class and asks: "Professor, is there any hope on climate change?" How about this time, when the new semester starts in January, it is Carney's turn to look them in the eye and answer.



Prime Minister Mark Carney has used his first few months in office to retreat on federal climate policies across the board, writes Laura Tozer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Laura Tozer is an assistant professor of climate policy and energy transition in the Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences at the University of Toronto. *The Hill Times*

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Likelihood of reaching long-term climate goals unclear until more details emerge from Alberta MOU, say environment experts

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ogy. He's got Alberta to agree that there's got to be ... significant methane reductions in the oil and gas industry," she said. "There are pieces there of what seems to be his emerging climate industrial strategy. Does it look like it's going to add up to enough? I would say at this moment: not enough, and not fast enough."

However, Van en said that Ottawa needed to come to an energy and emissions agreement with Alberta in order to address a political standoff and potential threat to national unity.

"[Carney] had to figure out something in order to continue to move forward on climate policy in a way that included all parts of the country, including Alberta, and Alberta is for sure the biggest challenge there," she said. "I really believe that there had to be some kind of agreement with Alberta. Is this what we need to meet our 2030, targets? No, it's not."

Following the MOU announcement, Liberal MP Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.) resigned as minister of Canadian identity and culture with responsibility for official languages, nature, and Parks Canada. In a letter posted on X, he argued that a pipeline to the West Coast would contribute significantly to climate pollution, and move Canada away from its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

In an interview with CTV News on Nov. 29, Environment and Climate Change Minister Julie Dabrusin (Toronto-Danforth, Ont.) said she disagrees with the characterization that the Carney government has been rolling back on climate policies from the Trudeau administration. She argued the current government is committed to measures such as strengthening the industrial carbon price and methane regulations, extending the methane regulations to landfills, and also to building out infrastructure that will allow for the transition to a cleaner electricity grid over the long term.

Lisa Gue, national policy manager with the David Suzuki Foundation, told *The Hill Times* that the Carney government has rolled back several environmental policies since the spring, including a repeal of the consumer-facing carbon tax and a pause placed on the mandate for automakers to meet the 2026 Electric Vehicles Availability Standard, which was announced in September.

"It's just simple math, right? If we remove the instruments



Professor Debora Van Nijnatten says the prime minister has an emerging climate industrial strategy, but at the moment it doesn't look like it will add up fast enough. *Handout photograph*

that were supposed to achieve those reductions and replace them with nothing, it, unfortunately, becomes obvious that the target will not be met," she said. "A government that's serious about achieving those targets would surely be building on the existing measures and looking to strengthen them, not taking a step backwards."

On Dec. 1, Dabrusin told the House Environment Committee that the Liberal government remains committed to its 2030 emissions-reduction targets, despite the MOU deal outlining conditions for a new bitumen pipeline.

During the meeting, Conservative MP Branden Leslie (Portage-Lisgar, Man.) referred to climate-related policies introduced by the Liberals that have been "delayed, watered down, or abandoned entirely," and listed the consumer-facing carbon tax, the Two Billion Trees Program, the sales mandate for zero-emission vehicles, and the emissions cap on oil and gas.

He asked Dabrusin what Canadians should conclude from a pattern of her "supporting a policy and then having to step back from them?"

Dabrusin responded that the Carney government is moving forward on policies that are collaborative, that meet the needs of Canadians, and that fight climate change.

"We have very much set forward—and it says it in the Climate Competitiveness Strategy, which was in the budget—that we are working to strengthen the industrial carbon price, [and] strengthen methane regulations. We're working on a taxonomy for investment guidelines," she told



Conservative MP Branden Leslie recently questioned the environment minister about the Liberals' climate policies. *The Hill Times photograph by Stuart Benson*

the committee. "We're ... taking real actions and we're doing that in collaboration with provinces and territories and making sure that Canadians are at the centre of our policies."

When asked to respond to criticism that the Carney government's Climate Competitiveness Strategy isn't a strategy at all, Dabrusin said that "we have a climate strategy, which is our emissions reduction plan."

She described the new framework as "a tool to move forward on climate competitiveness."

"The Climate Competitiveness Strategy is really the economic piece putting in place things that were envisioned by the emissions reduction plan, but also going further in some places. It is not the emissions reduction plan—that is a separate document," she told the committee. "What I have said ... is that we always knew that the targets would be ambitious. We could set low targets. We could have stood by lower targets and they would be easy to meet, but this requires us to stretch. We're determined to keep doing the work to meet them."

Gue said she takes some comfort in Dabrusin's reassurances, but she also questioned the minister's influence when the MOU allows Canada to move forward on another oil pipeline project.

"I'm concerned that the minister of the environment is not central to the government's decision-making on major projects that will be setbacks on Canada's quest to achieve net-zero and our near-term climate commitments," said Gue.

Anna Kanduth, senior climate policy analyst for Climate Analytics, told *The Hill Times* that the MOU represents another



Lisa Gue, national policy manager with the David Suzuki Foundation, says she is concerned the environment minister is 'not central to the government's decision-making on major projects.' *Handout photograph*

setback to Canadian climate policy. Kanduth said she couldn't speak about Dabrusin personally, but added that "in a very short period of time, this government and this file under her leadership has seen a significant undermining of Canadian climate policy progress."

"I think we've seen a number of indicators that show that this government is deprioritizing climate policy and climate policy progress, from signals that they've been sending in terms of a general unwillingness to recommit to the 2030 and 2035 emissions reduction targets," she said.

The Carney government is expected to release a second progress report on climate

emissions before the end of the year. Kanduth said that report will provide an opportunity for Dabrusin and the Liberal government to show their commitment to addressing climate change.

"I think there's an opportunity for some clarity and some honesty from the government about how their current plans ... and arguably major changes to Canadian climate policy really match up to Canada's climate commitments—and not just for 2030, but also for 2035 and 2050," said Kanduth. "I think we've seen this interesting shift in minister Dabrusin and Carney talking about net zero by 2050, instead of those other milestones, but if you miss those other milestones, it's very, very difficult to get to that net-zero target."

Etienne Rainville, vice-president for Central Canada with Clean Prosperity, told *The Hill Times* that he would describe the Carney government's climate strategy as a pivot rather than a backslide on Trudeau-era policies.

"The Trudeau era ... initially started with carbon pricing being at the fore, and then eventually it became more regulatory-centric," he said. "The MOU puts the emphasis back on the industrial pricing, ... and it takes a little bit of the emphasis off of the regulations. The regulations are still there—like the clean electricity regulation is noted in the MOU—but the understanding seems to be that it's an equivalency agreement that's going to shape up around it."

Rainville said Dabrusin has shown herself to be "clear in her conversations with stakeholders," and committed to the federal government's environmental objectives.

"I think we're seeing some willingness to revisit exactly how things were being approached at the tail end of the Trudeau government, and I think that's positive," he said. "The Carney approach to things is a little bit different, and, ultimately, I think we have to bear that out and see how it goes for a little bit before we before we pass judgment."

jcnockaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Canada greenhouse gas emissions statistics



- Canada's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2023 were 694 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO₂ eq), a 0.9-per-cent decrease from 700 Mt CO₂ eq in 2022.
- From 2005 to 2023, Canada's GHG emissions decreased by 8.5 per cent (-65 Mt CO₂ eq).
- Between 1990 and 2023, Canada's GHG emissions increased by 14.4 per cent (+88 Mt CO₂ eq).
- While the overall trend between 1990 and 2023 was an increase in GHG emissions, some sectors saw a decrease. Canada's overall emissions growth over the 1990 to

2023 period was driven primarily by increased emissions from the oil and gas as well as the agriculture and transport sectors. The 8.5-per-cent decrease in GHG emissions between 2005 and 2023 was mainly a result of emission reductions from the electricity and heavy industry sectors.

● The effects of the pandemic created an industrial slowdown, and significant reductions in trade and travel by air and land. This contributed to the GHG emission decrease, especially in the transport sector where a 16-per-cent decrease was observed between 2019 and 2020.

—Source: Environment and Climate Change Canada

Policy Briefing ENVIRONMENT

As the Paris Agreement turns 10, Canadian policy must align to protect our health and future



Despite 89 per cent of people worldwide supporting climate action, this is a largely silent majority underestimated by policymakers, which delays critical climate action, writes Mili Roy. *Unsplash photograph by Markus Spiske*

Paris-aligned policy can position Canada's economy as one of the future rather than a failing, uncompetitive relic of the past in a decarbonizing world.

Mili Roy

Opinion



Being on the ground at the recent United Nations Conference of the Parties, birthplace of the landmark global Paris Agreement a decade ago, was a reminder of Canada's opportunity and obligation to secure the health and future of all Canadians.

Ten years ago, nearly every nation in the world signed the Paris Agreement, which included a commitment to urgently cut greenhouse gases to prevent global warming exceeding 1.5 C above pre-industrial levels.

A decade later, and we are seeing the consequences of insufficient action: 2024 and 2023 were the two hottest years in recorded human history, with 2025 also projected to be record breaking. Deadly heatwaves, wildfires, floods, and storms make headlines with numbing regularity, causing massive damage to human health, health systems, and economic systems. The climate crisis, driven by burning fossil fuels, is now humanity's greatest threat—

simultaneously our greatest health and economic crisis.

Yet although it has been slow to respond, the world is indeed now phasing out fossil fuels. Last year, 92.5 per cent of all new electricity worldwide was renewable. Gas prices have plummeted, temporarily hitting the negative range earlier this year, and are expected to remain low for years.

Yet Canada is headed in the opposite direction of this trend. The latest Parliamentary Budget Office report confirms Canada is not meeting its Paris targets. Of all G7 nations, Canada demonstrates the worst emissions reductions, even worse than the United States. At the recent COP30 negotiations, Canada refused to join the 87 other countries calling for fossil fuel phaseout.

Not only that, but recent announcements show our government doubling down on a regressive path. So where will Canada hope to market the fossil fuels being prioritized in "major nation-building projects," and in the recent memorandum of understanding with Alberta? While Canada plans to expand liquefied natural gas (LNG), the current U.S. government resorted to threatening tariffs on reluctant Asian countries to force their purchase of American LNG.

Furthermore, any economic gains from fossil fuel projects are expected to be eclipsed by their negative consequences. As we continue to export and burn fossil fuels, climate-related damages across Canada will total \$25-billion this year—or about half of our entire GDP growth—while air pollution health costs total more than \$146-billion yearly. Climate change and air pollution from fossil fuels are linked to diseases ranging from asthma, heart attacks, dementia, birth defects and cancers, to rising rates of infectious diseases and antibiotic resistance. Our lives

are on the line while health-destroying MOU's and nation-building projects are being hammered out with disregard.

As climate breakdown accelerates, it's clear we must massively change course. Paris-aligned policy can position Canada's economy as one of the future rather than a failing, uncompetitive relic of the past in a decarbonizing world. Policy can push back against disinformation, and sectors such as fossil fuels, nuclear, carbon capture, and corporate agriculture seeking to hold back national progress and public well-being for their own profit. It can support already-existing solutions ranging from inexpensive, abundant clean energy to sustainable agriculture, transportation, and buildings.

Despite 89 per cent of people worldwide supporting climate action, this is a largely silent majority underestimated by policymakers, which delays critical climate action. It's time to recognize the silent majority, acknowledge the existential threat of climate breakdown, and take urgent action.

The Paris Agreement remains our clearest path to a livable future. Cana-

dian policy must be the driving force to implement it. The 1.5 C target is not just a number, as every additional 0.1 degrees of warming represents 100 million additional human lives lost. Policy that ignores evidence-based climate science deprives us of our fading chances for a safe, healthy, and sustainable world. Meeting Paris targets isn't optional; it's survival. We are the last generation with the opportunity to deliver this for future generations.

Dr. Mili Roy is co-chair of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE), Ontario Regional Committee. She is a practicing Canadian physician, assistant professor in the faculty of medicine at the University of Toronto, and section editor at the Canadian Journal of Ophthalmology. Her advocacy work with CAPE involves education, lobbying, and policy work centred on environmental protection to protect public health. She recently attended COP in Belem, Brazil, with the CAPE team.

The Hill Times



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ENVIRONMENT Policy Briefing

Canada must find its climate path beyond fossil fuels



Environment and Climate Change Minister Julie Dabrusin has reaffirmed Canada's commitments to its climate targets, but Canada is no longer seen as a leader in international climate effort, writes Damon Matthews. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Nation-building starts in rural Canada

The country cannot meet its goals or maintain its economic edge without fully integrating the land that sustains us.

Bryan Gilvesy



Opinion

The 2025 federal budget presents itself as a nation-building plan, emphasizing resilience, competitiveness, and long-term economic security. Yet it overlooks one of Canada's most powerful nation-building assets: rural landscapes stewarded by the more than 200,000 farms that manage over half of the country's settled land. These working landscapes are not only foundational to our food security, but they are also among our most valuable forms of nature-based infrastructure.

Despite the budget's emphasis on climate competitiveness, it underestimates a fundamental truth: Canada cannot meet its nation-building goals or maintain its economic edge in a climate-impacted global economy without fully integrating the land that sustains us into national strategy.

In a world where market access increasingly depends on climate performance, countries that fail to align land stewardship with economic policy will find themselves at a disadvantage. Canadian farmers sit at the centre of this opportunity. Through stewardship of land, water, and ecosystems, they reinforce Canada's global climate credibility and strengthen its long-term economic competitiveness in a rapidly decarbonizing world.

Extreme weather is already placing measurable pressure on Canada's economy. The Canadian Climate Institute estimates that climate impacts will slow economic growth by \$25-billion annually as early as 2025, representing nearly half of projected GDP growth. These pressures are felt through flooding, drought, erosion, and shifting growing conditions, with farmers responding first to protect both production and natural landscapes.

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We are falling behind on climate targets and obligations because we continue to believe we can achieve our goals while continuing to support and grow the oil and gas industry.

Damon Matthews

Opinion



We can do our part to achieve a stable climate, or we can retain an economy based on fossil fuels.

We cannot do both. These are two alternate realities that represent incompatible visions of the world's future.

Canadian political and economic discourse has once again taken up the incomprehensible claim that we can continue to support and grow the oil and gas industry while meeting our domestic climate targets and international climate mitigation responsibilities.

Prime Minister Mark Carney has repeatedly stated the goal of Canadian leadership in both con-

ventional and clean energy, and has openly supported liquefied natural gas projects in the initial rounds of infrastructure projects sent to Canada's Major Projects Office. The recent memorandum of understanding signed with the province of Alberta speaks of a "grand bargain" that would trade federal support for oil and gas infrastructure expansion for provincial support of industrial carbon pricing.

Meanwhile, Environment and Climate Change Minister Julie Dabrusin has reaffirmed Canada's commitments to its climate targets, including a 45-to-50-per-cent cut in emissions from 2005 levels by 2035. Since 2005, national emissions have decreased by less than 10 per cent, and recent analyses have demonstrated that current policies are insufficient to achieve our 2030 and 2035 reduction targets.

Canada is no longer seen as a leader in the international climate effort. We are not among the 35 countries globally who significantly decreased their national emissions between 2015 and 2024 while growing their economies. We were awarded a Fossil of the Day award at COP30 this year for the first time in more than a decade.

We are falling behind on our domestic emissions targets, and are not meeting our international climate obligations. The reason for this is simple: we continue to believe that we can achieve our climate goals while continuing to

support and grow the oil and gas industry in Canada.

The International Energy Agency recently reported that world demand for oil and gas could continue to grow until 2050 under current policies. This is not a prediction of the future: rather it is an indictment of the failure of the world's climate policies. A world in which oil and gas demand continues to grow is a world in which we exceed 3 C of global warming by the end of this century. This is a world in which climate damages reach levels without historical analogue.

Fundamentally, we do not appreciate the potential damage that unmitigated climate changes could wreak on our economies and environmental systems. If we did, there would be no rational argument that could be put forward to do anything other than to phase out fossil fuel use globally as fast as humanly possible. Here in Canada, the political and economic conversation would be laser focused on the challenge of how to rapidly build out renewable energy generation, enable a just transition of the oil and gas workforce to other sectors, and build resilience to those climate damages that we will not be able to avoid.

The question we need to ask ourselves is not "are Canada's emissions targets achievable?" but rather "how much do we really want to achieve them?" This is what is implicitly being debated among our political leaders: not whether we are on track to

meet our targets, but rather how important this effort actually is. Continuing to support the expansion of oil and gas infrastructure in this country is equivalent to stating that Canada and the world's climate ambitions are unimportant enough to be pushed aside in favour of short-term economic gain.

Canadians want ambitious climate action. In April, more than 180 mayors, councillors, and other elected local officials signed an open letter calling for continued and strengthened federal climate leadership. In November, more than 500 scholars and academics from across Canada added their names to a second open letter articulating the importance of strong federal climate action and the potential to align climate policy with many other national policy priorities.

Fundamentally, we need to acknowledge the difficult truth that continued oil and gas expansion in Canada is not compatible with a stable and safe climate. There are available pathways forward to a resilient and prosperous Canadian economy that do not include fossil fuels: to realize our climate goals, these are the pathways that we must find.

Damon Matthews is a professor in the department of geography, planning, and environment at Concordia University; fellow of the Academy of Sciences of the Royal Society of Canada; and interim director of the Future Earth Canada Hub.

The Hill Times

Policy Briefing **ENVIRONMENT**

Canada's PFAS opportunity: why smart chemicals policy is smart trade policy

At a time when Canada is actively seeking deeper trade relationships with reliable democratic partners, regulatory harmonization with Europe advances core economic security objectives.

Rémy Alexandre

Opinion



January 2026 marks the third annual Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month. It's a moment to recognize the occupational cancers that cause 94 per cent of the line-of-duty fatalities suffered by Canadian firefighters. It's also the moment when Canada should finalize its proposed order to list PFAS—per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances—as toxic under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA), unlocking critical risk management tools that would phase out PFAS-containing firefighting foams.



For firefighters exposed through fire suppression foam and PFAS-treated protective gear, the health consequences have been severe, writes Rémy Alexandre. *Pexels photograph by Tim Eiden*

PFAS are a class of more than 14,000 synthetic chemicals that resist heat, oil, and water. These properties made them invaluable to industry, from Teflon cookware to firefighting foam. They're also what makes them "forever chemicals" that persist in the environment for thousands of years.

PFAS is ubiquitous in our drinking water, our environment, and our bodies. More than 99 per cent of Canadians have PFAS in their blood. These toxic chemicals are linked to cardiovascular disease, multiple cancers, liver damage, and developmental impacts. For firefighters exposed through fire suppression foam and PFAS-treated protective gear, the health consequences have been severe.

The result is a contamination crisis that Canadian municipalities and provinces are now scrambling to address. But there's another

cost to delayed action: economic isolation from our most important trading partners.

There is an urgency to act now. Europe's new regulations for PFAS in firefighting foams begin to take effect in April 2026, establishing transitional periods that will reshape how the chemical industry operates across the Atlantic. Just three months later, this country will enter the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) renegotiations. The question facing policymakers is straightforward: will Canada harmonize its chemical regulations with its most reliable trading partner, or will we allow regulatory divergence to create barriers for the domestic industry?

The answer should be equally straightforward. Aligning Canadian PFAS regulations with the

European Union isn't just sound environmental policy—it's essential trade strategy.

The EU has established clear timelines for phasing out PFAS-containing firefighting foams, with transitional periods beginning in 2026. The regulations include disclosure requirements, labelling standards, management plans for existing stocks, and defined thresholds for the incidental presence of PFAS, which provides industry with clear compliance pathways when procuring materials or retrofitting old firefighting systems.

Canada's proposed approach mirrors the EU framework. This isn't coincidental—it's strategic regulatory design. When Canadian products and processes are interoperable with European standards, our industries gain seamless market access. When we diverge, we create compliance costs, supply chain complications, and competitive disadvantages.

At a time when Canada is actively seeking deeper trade relationships with reliable democratic partners, regulatory harmonization with Europe advances core economic security objectives. The alternative—regulatory isolation—makes Canadian products harder to export and Canadian processes more expensive to maintain.

Some industry stakeholders have expressed reluctance about transitioning to fluorine-free foams. These concerns deserve acknowledgment, but they miss a

fundamental reality: alternatives already exist and have regulatory approval. In stakeholder consultation, the government itself has concluded that nothing has been identified to suggest that safer alternatives cannot be made to work for all required scenarios.

What industry needs isn't more time to develop alternatives—it's regulatory clarity about transition timelines. Providing that clarity through strong federal regulations would benefit Canadian firms by ensuring their products remain compatible with European markets. Delay, by contrast, extends uncertainty and widens the regulatory gap with our trading partners.

The current proposal would allow some high-hazard facilities to continue using PFAS-containing foams until 2039. That's not ambitious—it's an invitation to regulatory divergence that will disadvantage Canadian industry as European markets move forward.

January 2026 offers the federal government a perfect opportunity to demonstrate leadership on multiple fronts. Announcing the finalized CEPA listing during Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month, alongside an ambitious timeline for phasing out PFAS-containing firefighting foams, would recognize the disproportionate harm these workers face.

It would also position Canada for the CUSMA review by signalling our commitment to evidence-based regulation, and alignment with our European partners.

And the economic case is clear. Canadian industry needs regulatory certainty to compete in global markets and trade seamlessly.

All that's required now is political will.

Rémy Alexandre is toxics project lead at Ecojustice, Canada's largest environmental law charity, where she leads federal policy and campaign strategy to combat toxic pollution.

The Hill Times

Nation-building starts in rural Canada

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Farm-level stewardship delivers tangible national outcomes. Wetlands restored on agricultural lands reduce downstream flooding and store carbon. Natural vegetation along streams and rivers filter nutrients before they enter waterways, improving drinking water quality. Native grasslands and rows of trees that protect fields from wind and erosion provide critical habitat for pollinators and species at risk while stabilizing soils and moderating microclimates. These practices do not simply protect individual farms; they strengthen surrounding municipalities, infrastructure systems, and regional economies.

Farmers are ready to lead through these efforts, yet the systems that support agricul-

tural stewardship remain poorly aligned with on-the-ground realities. The Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute's *Matching Conservation Programs to Canadian Farm Realities* report found that only seven per cent of producers feel "very familiar" with existing conservation programs. A follow-up workshop led by the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute and Ducks Unlimited Canada described Canada's conservation program landscape as "fragmented" and "frustrating"—too centralized and too distant from local contexts to drive widespread adoption.

This is not a question of willingness. It is a question of meeting farmers where they are.

Where stewardship is designed and delivered in step with local realities, progress is already clear. Across the Prairies and rural

Ontario and Quebec, regionally led approaches are reducing flood risks, improving water quality, enhancing biodiversity, and strengthening rural economies. Watershed partnerships, Indigenous communities, municipalities, and farmer-driven initiatives demonstrate a simple truth: when nature-based infrastructure is delivered locally, it can be scaled to deliver nationally.

This represents precisely the kind of nation-building opportunity the federal budget seeks to advance. Stewardship on the farm supports competitiveness by making our landscapes and economies more resilient, protecting communities, and reducing the long-term fiscal burden of climate impacts. It aligns with the government's framing of climate action as economic strategy, but it requires a redirecting

of federal investment: farmers must be positioned not as passive beneficiaries of policy, but as strategic partners in delivering Canada's climate and economic future.

Models such as ALUS, which support community-led stewardship partnerships with farmers, reflect the kind of locally grounded approach that aligns with Canada's climate competitiveness ambitions.

As the government moves to implement the 2025 budget, it should prioritize: recognizing farmland stewardship as a core pillar of Canada's climate resilience and competitiveness strategy; integrating nature-based infrastructure into national planning; and strengthening regionally designed, outcome-based delivery models led and shaped by farmers themselves.

Canada's farms are more than production engines. They are ecological and economic systems that underpin long-term resilience and prosperity. If the 2025 budget is truly a nation-building plan, agricultural landscapes must be part of its vision. The next generation of infrastructure investment will be defined not only by concrete and steel, but also by the stewardship of the land beneath our feet.

Bryan Gilvesy is the chief strategy officer of ALUS, a charitable organization that supports communities in engaging farmers and ranchers to create nature-based solutions on their land that build climate resilience and enhance biodiversity for the benefit of communities and future generations.

The Hill Times

ENVIRONMENT Policy Briefing

‘I don’t know if she’s playing any role’: NDP critic slams Environment Minister Dabrusin’s ‘rubber stamping’

‘The minister can say she commits whatever she wants about [Canada’s emissions], but the physical reality of climate science is that building pipelines and extracting more oil increases emissions,’ says environment advocate Caroline Brouillette.

BY ELEANOR WAND

Environment and Climate Change Minister Julie Dabrusin is “rubber stamping” the prime minister’s agenda and allowing climate policy backsliding, say critics, after the minister was noncommittal about whether a pipeline would increase emissions.

“I don’t know if she’s playing any role at the moment because we don’t see her, we don’t hear her,” NDP environment critic Alexandre Boulerville (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, Que.) said in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

In a Dec. 1 meeting of the House Environment Committee, Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Ont.) was pressed on the new energy deal between Ottawa and Alberta, which has drawn fierce criticism from First Nations and climate activists, but she was noncommittal on her stance.

The memorandum of understanding (MOU) lays a path for the construction of a new oil pipeline running from Alberta’s oil sands to British Columbia’s coast. It also exempts Alberta from clean electricity regulations, and opens the door to an exemption from the oil tanker ban on the B.C. coast, “if necessary.”

Bloc Québécois environment critic Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, Que.) pressed Dabrusin on whether the proposed pipeline would increase or decrease emissions in the meeting, repeatedly asking for a response.

But Dabrusin didn’t give a clear answer, pointing to the agreement’s commitment to carbon capture and storage. The minister was also noncommittal



Environment Minister Julie Dabrusin did not answer questions about whether a new pipeline would increase emissions in a recent parliamentary committee appearance. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

regarding her support for the pipeline project as a whole, saying that it is not up to her, but rather the provinces and Indigenous people.

“The minister has no power over physics, and new fossil fuel infrastructure resulting, thereby, in further oil extraction we know will result in more emissions,” Caroline Brouillette, executive director of Climate Action Network Canada, said of Dabrusin’s comments.

“The minister can say she commits whatever she wants about this, but the physical reality of climate science is that building pipelines and extracting more oil increases emissions.”

“We have to look at the facts,” Independent Senators Group Senator Rosa Galvez (Bedford, Que.) also said of the feds’ approach to development. “We have to look at the math. ... I see the probability of a lot of problems, a lot of litigations, a lot of obstacles.”

‘What is the plan?’: NDP MP Boulerville

The controversial MOU spurred the resignation from cabinet of then-culture and identity minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, Que.), who was also Quebec lieutenant and responsible for Parks Canada. The longtime climate activist, who was also an environment minister under then-prime minister Justin Trudeau, said the agreement was “the last straw,” when he appeared on Radio-Canada’s *Tout le monde en parle* after his resignation on Nov. 30.

“Over the past few months, several elements of the climate action plan I worked on as minis-

ter of the environment have been, or are about to be, dismantled,” Guilbeault wrote in his resignation statement, pointing to the oil and gas emissions cap, the consumer carbon tax, and the elective vehicle sales mandate, among others.

Since taking office, Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has ditched a number of Trudeau-era climate policies. The former United Nations special envoy on climate action and finance removed the consumer carbon tax; paused the electric vehicle sales mandate, pending a review; and has decided not to go ahead with the proposed oil and gas emissions cap, as per the Nov. 27 MOU signed with Alberta.

Boulerville said that while Guilbeault took “too much time” to make his decision, it was “the only honorable thing to do.”

But the NDP MP stopped short of saying Dabrusin should resign, too.

“Maybe one day, I will go there. But now, at least show me that you take that seriously,” he said.

“What is the plan? What is the plan to be effective, to respect the Paris Agreement, to reduce and tackle our pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, because you’re just rubber-stamping what the prime minister is doing right now.”

Dabrusin did not point to any hard lines when asked by Conservative MP Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, Man.) if there was any piece of policy being axed that would cause her to resign, too, in the Dec. 1 committee meeting.

The minister has committed to respecting Canada’s 2030 target

to reduce emissions by at least 40 per cent below 2005 levels. That target has been forecast to be out of reach by both the parliamentary budget officer and the Canadian Climate Institute.

Galvez said the lack of clear mandate letters makes it harder to judge the minister’s performance. Carney opted to hand his cabinet a single letter of direction earlier this year, rather than the minister-specific list of priorities handed out by his predecessor.

“Without mandate letters, how can we know whether she’s doing right or wrong [in] her job?” said Galvez in an interview with *The Hill Times*. “So, what we have is the platform that was sort of described before the election.”

But the Senator said what she’s hearing from Quebecers “is very clear” that “lots of people are very disappointed.”

“The general feeling is that we want to give a chance to [Dabrusin]. We want to give the benefit of the doubt, but time is passing very fast,” Galvez said, adding that projects are being proposed without “traditions” being respected.

She highlighted B.C. Premier David Eby and Indigenous leadership being excluded from talks, which she said could spell trouble for the proposed pipeline project. The Assembly of First Nations voted in favour of a resolution demanding the withdrawal of the deal during their special chiefs assembly, held in Ottawa starting Dec. 2, after coastal First Nations in B.C. denounced the deal.

“The fact that B.C. was not in the table and that Indigenous people were not consulted initially, that will put pressure at the end of the project,” Galvez said.

Boulerville also pointed to Quebecers’ opposition to the deal, saying that it would be a “dangerous” road to try in that province.

“Quebecers, in general, are really opposed to oil and gas exploitation ... and they are afraid that if the federal government is ready to do that to British Columbia, maybe they can try to do the same thing with Quebec,” he said.

Constituents ‘felt comfortable with the answers I gave’: Liberal MP Grant

Brouillette said the only climate action seen under Carney’s government has been “backwards,” adding that she “would be curious to see the dynamics at the cabinet table right now.”

“Climate action is being sacrificed to fulfill some very short-termist political goals,” she said. “In this case, appeasing the oil and gas industry and its key political spokesperson, [Alberta Premier] Danielle Smith.”

She pointed to the resignation of Simon Donner as co-chair of the Net-Zero Advisory Board, and Guilbeault’s cabinet departure as the “political consequences” of the approach.

Donner resigned on Dec. 3, writing on LinkedIn that he was leaving with a “heavy heart” after “the situation became more difficult this year as the government, and its priorities, changed.”

“I was comfortable chairing an appointed body whose advice is considered but ultimately rejected—after all, no one elected us,” the statement reads. “I was not comfortable with the process becoming neglected or performative, and it had begun to feel that way to me.”

Dabrusin has pushed back on the assessment that the feds are rolling back climate policy, telling host Vassy Kapelos on CTV’s *Question Period* that Ottawa has “committed to strengthening the industrial carbon price, strengthening methane regulations, extending the methane regulations to landfills, and also to building out infrastructure that, in the long term, does help us to move towards a cleaner electricity grid.”

Those commitments are part of the feds’ climate competitiveness strategy, which was released with the Nov. 4 budget and is intended to put Canada on a path to reach the target of net-zero by 2050.

But the MOU could spell bad news for some B.C. Liberal MPs, some speculate, as the project is not popular in the province. Rookie MP Wade Grant (Vancouver Quadra, B.C.), who also sits on the environment committee, dismissed suggestions that he was concerned for his seat in the wake of the agreement.

“I had a Christmas party yesterday with a number of constituents and I had a very constructive dialogue with them, letting them know that, as a new MP, I am committed to being transparent with them ... They felt very comfortable with the answers that I gave,” he told *The Hill Times* after the Dec. 1 committee meeting.

Asked if he supports the MOU, Grant said only, “I am in support of First Nations’ title and rights and being ... part of the economy, as well.”

Galvez, who attended COP30 alongside Dabrusin, said that many of the environmental regulations that have been walked-back under the minister were “not perfect,” but some “could have been modified” to make them “more efficient.”

She emphasized that not addressing climate change will cost Canadians more money in the future, saying Carney seems to have forgotten “where we were going with the climate.”

“Every day of inaction cost us billions,” she said. “We’re going into [a] chaotic transition if we don’t handle very well this transition.”

ewand@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Policy Briefing ENVIRONMENT

To protect Canadians from rising climate costs, restoring natural infrastructure is essential

Wetlands, dunes, shorelines, and forests absorb floodwaters, buffer storm surges, stabilize soils, filter pollutants, recharge aquifers, and lower temperatures in surrounding areas.

Anabela Bonada

Opinion



Climate disasters are becoming a major financial burden for communities across Canada. Taxpayers are now paying an average of \$10-billion each year for damage from flooding, wildfires, and coastal erosion—costs that are driving up municipal budgets, and accelerating the deterioration of public infrastructure. One of the most effective tools to reduce these risks remains underused: natural infrastructure.

Wetlands, dunes, shorelines, and forests deliver essential



As climate impacts intensify, restoring and protecting key systems is one of the soundest fiscal, environmental, and public-safety decisions the country can make, writes Anabela Bonada. *Pexels photograph by James Wheeler*

climate-security services. They absorb floodwaters, buffer storm surges, stabilize soils, filter pollutants, recharge aquifers, and lower temperatures in surrounding areas. These benefits are well-documented. Research from the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo shows wetlands can reduce flood-related damages by up to 38 per cent in urban settings, and 29 per cent in rural areas during extreme rainfall. In cities, expanded tree canopy can reduce local air temperatures by as much as 5 C, lowering heat-related health risks and easing pressure on energy systems.

The economic case is equally clear. According to analyses by the World Resources Institute, each dollar directed toward adaptation measures can yield more than \$10 in benefits within a decade. Natural infrastructure consistently

delivers these returns by reducing disaster damages, and supporting municipal service continuity.

Our work at the Intact Centre shows that natural systems play a critical role in limiting climate-related damage and supporting faster recovery. The national shoreline guidance we developed with the Standards Council of Canada underscores that shoreline management must be regionally tailored, reflecting the very different physical and governance conditions of the Atlantic, Pacific, Arctic, and Great Lakes coasts. The report identifies where natural and hybrid approaches can offer durable, lower-cost protection compared to hard infrastructure when matched to local shoreline processes.

Despite their value, Canada continues to lose wetlands, forests, and shorelines. Fragmented regulation, development pres-

ures, and short project funding cycles all contribute to the erosion of these climate-protective systems. Strengthening natural infrastructure also aligns with Canada's international commitments: the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework calls for restoring at least 30 per cent of degraded ecosystems by 2030. The recently released report by Canada's Infrastructure Council likewise underscores that natural infrastructure should be optimized before new grey infrastructure is built.

Federal policy increasingly recognizes this opportunity. The Natural Infrastructure Fund supports projects that use natural or hybrid solutions. The Canada Water Agency advances co-ordinated watershed restoration. Programs under the Nature-Based Climate Solutions initiative help conserve and rebuild key ecosystems.

However, analysis from the International Institute for Sustainable Development finds that natural infrastructure remains only partially integrated into major federal programs. Definitions vary, incentives are inconsistent, and funding structures often do not match the multi-year timeframes required for ecological restoration.

Scaling natural infrastructure requires several federal actions:

- Expand and stabilize funding for long-term restoration of wet-

lands, dunes, and forests—particularly in high-risk regions.

- Require natural or hybrid solutions to be evaluated first in federal infrastructure, disaster-mitigation, and adaptation investments.

- Modernize codes and standards to ensure clear, consistent design and maintenance requirements for nature-based solutions.

- Address capacity gaps in smaller and rural communities by providing technical support and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, which strengthen understanding of watershed dynamics and shoreline change.

Canada's wetlands, dunes, shorelines, and forests are not just part of the landscape—they are essential components of our national infrastructure system. As climate impacts intensify, restoring and protecting these systems is one of the soundest fiscal, environmental, and public-safety decisions the country can make. Investing in natural infrastructure is ultimately an investment in Canada's climate security, economic stability, and long-term resilience.

Dr. Anabela Bonada is the managing director of climate science at the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo where she leads national research and policy work advancing evidence-based strategies to reduce climate risks across Canada.

The Hill Times

The Alberta energy deal is worse than you think

Canada's clean electricity regulations—finally published less than 12 months ago—are on the chopping block as part of this deal.

Stephen Thomas

Opinion



It's easy to make a deal when you're willing to compromise on everything.

That's what November's memorandum of understanding between the governments of Alberta and Canada demonstrates.

This moment may represent a new low for climate politics

in Canada. Much has been said about the catastrophically bad idea of a new bitumen pipeline to the Pacific coast. However, there are many other details, compromises, and conditions in this memorandum that have important climate and economic implications.

After three years of consultations, development, and revisions, Canada's clean electricity regulations were finally published less than 12 months ago. But they're on the chopping block as part of this deal.

Alberta's electricity system is by far the most polluting in Canada, with 59 per cent of the total emissions reductions from the federal regulations coming from the province. But last week's MOU created a pathway to potentially exempt Alberta from these regulations.

The deal contemplates the immediate suspension of the regulations in Alberta pending a new carbon pricing agreement. A vague and unenforceable commitment to net-zero greenhouse

gas emissions by 2050—as the moratorium seems to suggest—would be a poor substitute for the federal regulation in Alberta, which sets requirements starting in 2035.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith has been talking in recent weeks as though the province will get a straightforward exemption, while federal Environment, Climate Change, and Nature Minister Julie Dabrusin continues to defend the memorandum, saying the clean electricity regulations are still in full force.

So, which is it? Former Canadian identity and culture minister Steven Guilbeault seems to have made his determination clear, citing this policy betrayal on clean electricity clearly in his resignation letter—pointing to the 182 million tonnes of emissions savings and more than \$3-billion in avoided health-care costs that would have come with the regulations.

It's difficult to trust that the Alberta government would act in good faith to reduce electricity

sector emissions—especially after the province spent more than \$8-billion of public money on misleading attack ads against the regulations and imposed investment-killing moratoriums and other barriers on renewables.

Alberta is also challenging the regulations in the Alberta Court of Appeal. Will the province rescind the court challenge now that it has its way?

The federal government seems willing to cancel or delay its own laws and regulations to allow a new bitumen pipeline. What will it get in return? A plan to make a plan to fix Alberta's broken industrial carbon pricing system, and a condition that a \$16.5-billion carbon capture and storage project be built—with up to 60 per cent of the capital costs being covered by taxpayers as part of a federal tax credit.

This rollback on climate action is in addition to Canada's existing climate stance, which is bleak. This month, Climate Action Tracker updated Canada's climate stance to “highly insufficient.” Canada also won the infamous “Fossil of the Day” award at COP30, and the Parliamentary Budget Office said that Canada could be 102 million tonnes of emissions short of its 2030 targets.

Leaning into a hockey analogy—as our prime minister loves to do—we need to skate to where

the puck is going, not to where it has been.

As experts have routinely pointed out, the future is electric. Wind and solar are the cheapest forms of electricity in history, and virtually every modelling study that considers cleaner electricity, better connected grids, and more energy efficiency shows that this transition will bring down the cost of energy for Canadian households.

There's still time for the federal government to recommit to a future that sets Canada up for the long game. A pan-Canadian, east-west electricity grid is part of that future—one that creates tens of thousands of good union jobs, and supports sectors like aluminum and steel. One that saves billions of dollars on health-care costs. One that highlights and supports existing Indigenous leadership in clean electricity from coast to coast to coast.

The federal government has the opportunity to make better choices, and show up for people struggling with the cost of living and mounting climate impacts. We just need government to leave oil lobbyists behind, and start building the Canada we know is possible.

Stephen Thomas is the clean energy manager at the David Suzuki Foundation.

The Hill Times

ENVIRONMENT Policy Briefing



Alberta's new energy MOU could kick-start a race to the bottom on climate

Giving Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and her province special treatment invites copycat demands from other provinces and territories, write Rick Smith, Dale Beugin, and Dave Sawyer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Canadian climate policy has now become the art of the deal, moving from rules-based policy to deal-based bargaining.

Rick Smith, Dale Beugin & Dave Sawyer

Opinion

The recent agreement signed by Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and Prime Minister Mark Carney in Calgary risks fracturing the foundation of Canada's entire approach to tackling climate change and narrowing the pathway to achieving climate goals.

The memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been hailed as a "historic reset" of the relationship between Ottawa and energy-rich Alberta; it outlines the conditions by which the federal government would support a new bitumen pipeline to tidewater, and grants Alberta special treatment on a suite of federal policies. Those range from a province-specific suspension on the clean electricity regulations, to a promised but to-be-determined equivalency agreement delaying tougher limits on methane pollution, and

a pledge to adjust the tanker ban on the West Coast "if necessary" to enable bitumen export.

Other provinces, like Ontario, wasted no time getting in line to request their own special treatment.

Is this the start of the race to the bottom on Canadian climate policy?

We've seen this dynamic before: most recently, when the Trudeau government granted a carve-out removing the consumer carbon tax from home heating oil in response to political pressure from Atlantic Canada. Within short order, Alberta said it would sue the federal government for unfair treatment. Saskatchewan stopped collecting the carbon tax altogether.

That carve-out was the start of the unravelling for consumer carbon pricing. And it's a textbook example of why minimum national standards, applied fairly across the country, are critical to the effective functioning of federal policies and regulations within the federation. Giving Alberta special treatment in this case invites copycat demands from other provinces and territories. The likely result is an erosion of national standards, greater economic fragmentation, and less coherent and effective policy overall.

That's a problem in a world where Canada is working hard to reduce trade barriers, diversify its economy, and attract new investment. Policy certainty is among the deciding factors companies and investors take into account when making long-term invest-

ment decisions. When the rules of the game become negotiable on political grounds, it puts a chill on investment—because who's to say the rules won't change again a few years down the road when the political calculus or players change?

There is, however, one potentially major step forward amidst the maze of red flags in this MOU: namely, Alberta's commitment to improve its industrial carbon pricing system, the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Regulation (TIER). This system covers roughly 25 per cent of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions, so modernizing TIER is one of the most important and cost-effective steps Alberta can take to reduce emissions.

The MOU includes commitments for Alberta and the federal government to collaborate on developing "globally competitive, long-term" carbon prices, revenue recycling protocols and sector-specific stringency for large emitters, while promising to "ramp up to a minimum effective credit price of \$130 per tonne"—though without locking in a specific timeline for doing so.

Whether these changes live up to their potential will be contingent on the details that will be worked out in the coming months (mark your calendars for April Fools' Day, 2026, the agreed-upon date for these details to be finalized).

Modernizing TIER would increase and stabilize incentives for reducing emissions and investing in low-carbon projects, and establish a precedent for

carbon market transparency. Unfortunately, by framing these elements as part of a negotiated deal with Alberta, the MOU undermines the credibility of the federal industrial carbon pricing benchmark and backstop as an objective, consistent minimum standard across all provinces—a principle the Supreme Court has explicitly recognized as central to effective national carbon pricing.

That's why, in parallel to working out the details on these changes with Alberta, the federal government should move quickly to fix the federal benchmark that defines minimum standards for all provincial systems, strengthen the federal backstop, apply it decisively in jurisdictions that do not meet the benchmark, and work with provinces to develop a long-term price trajectory and a nationally consistent price "floor" for industrial emissions credits. These changes are essential to bring greater credibility and certainty to carbon markets both now and beyond 2030 so that businesses can make big investments in low-carbon projects.

Time will tell just how slippery a slope the Alberta-Canada MOU has carved into Canada's climate policy landscape. But the outlook is clear: Canadian climate policy has now become the art of the deal, moving from rules-based policy to deal-based bargaining.

To counteract that trend, the federal government should reinforce its role in setting clear, rules-based minimum standards. It should clearly define the terms for provincial equivalency for

methane regulations. It should ensure that improvements to industrial carbon pricing, especially for electricity, can make up for any concessions on the Clean Electricity Regulation in Alberta and other provinces. And it should update the carbon pricing backstop to require all provinces to maintain a rising minimum carbon price.

Rick Smith has led the Canadian Climate Institute since 2021, growing it into the country's most respected climate policy research organization. A biologist by training with expertise in the human health impacts of pollution, he has, over his 25-year career, played a central role in major provincial and federal policy advances, from Ontario's Greenbelt to Canada's Species at Risk Act.

Dale Beugin, executive vice-president of the Climate Institute, previously served as executive and research director of Canada's Ecofiscal Commission, worked as an independent consultant advising governments across Canada, and internationally, and was a policy adviser at the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

Dave Sawyer, principal economist at the Institute, is a leading environmental economist with more than three decades of experience, including senior positions at Environment Canada, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, and major Canadian consultancies.

The Hill Times

Policy Briefing **ENVIRONMENT**

Jump-starting a Canadian power grid

Canada needs a forum for provinces to co-ordinate planning on a regional or national level, and a process to help provinces work together to get electricity projects built.

Madeleine McPherson & Peter Fairley

Opinion



On Nov. 28, the Manitoba government signed on to an Ontario-led initiative to work towards a national electricity grid, and called for “all provinces and territories across Canada” to sign on to their memorandum of understanding. It’s a welcome development given the enormous potential of stronger electricity connections between provinces to propel energy investment. As provinces build generation based on their own resources and needs, expanding interprovincial power links offers a true nation-building and cost-reducing opportunity that merits far more attention than the divisive bitumen pipeline proposal that dominated the energy agenda last month.

While transmission expressways run south, strongly plugging provincial grids into the regional power systems in the United States, the electrical equivalent of two-lane parkways interconnect the provinces. In reality, there is no Canadian power grid. But here’s the real rub: this country lacks all of the mechanisms required to build one.

In fact, in Canada, we don’t even think about the power grid at national scale. That makes us an outlier. Europe and Australia plan on a continental scale. Most planning in the U.S. occurs within regions spanning over a dozen states each.

Narrower thinking leaves our electricity systems more vulnerable to extreme weather, such as the storms that took down the Texas grid in 2021, and South Australia’s in 2016. In both cases, weak interconnections were blamed. In Australia’s case, the blackout spurred a new planning process to build bigger grids.

Lack of interconnections also makes our electricity bills higher. We’re building more expensive generation because each province behaves like an island, rather than complementing its neighbour’s natural endowments.

But we can develop a plan to change that. As laid out in a recent C.D. Howe Institute report, the keys are planning and governance. Canada needs a forum for provinces to co-ordinate planning on a

regional or national level, and a process to help provinces work together to get projects built. This wouldn’t replace provinces’ authority—broader co-ordination can co-exist with provincial jurisdiction.

It’s not that provinces can’t connect on their own. That does happen when neighbouring provinces seize an opportunity of mutual benefit.

Recent examples include the Maritime Link between Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia—completed in 2016—and the beefier connection New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are gearing up to start building next year.

But this ad-hoc process is slow, and lacks a sense of where each opportunity fits in the bigger picture. Given the pace at which energy systems are changing today, Canada needs a dedicated team that’s using the best tools available to peer ahead and create a portfolio of projects to meet needs and opportunities of the system as a whole.

Recently, for the first time for a Canadian study, one of us applied the methodologies that are standard practice elsewhere, and looked at the full suite of benefits that a bigger grid offers—cutting operating costs and the price of building new generation to power Canada’s future needs, sustaining grid reliability in a more extreme weather world, and cutting pollution.

When given free rein to find the lowest-cost pathway for our grid, the simulations tripled the electrical bandwidth between British Columbia and Alberta, and quintupled the capacity between Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

What drove the model to prescribe was the variability of wind and solar power, and the opportunity to firm it up with B.C. and Manitoba’s abundant hydro. By giving all of the western provinces access to the hydro capacity, all of the provinces could add better generation at lower cost. In our model, that yielded an estimated \$4-billion in net benefits by 2050.

The C.D. Howe commentary lays out a blueprint for grid integration in Canada drawing on international best practices and detailed modelling of the power system. We need new institutions: a Grid Planning Council to run national planning, following the lead of Australia and Europe; a Power Exchange to facilitate cross-border trades across the provinces’ disparate market structures; and a Grid Co-ordination Forum to harmonize regulations and foster innovation.

It’s a no-brainer that provinces seeking to expand energy exports, lower costs, and meet climate goals should plan their power grids together. But making that happen will require a sharper national focus than what the 2025 budget offers.

Madeleine McPherson is associate professor at the University of Victoria, and Peter Fairley is an award-winning journalist who has covered global power systems for a quarter century.

The Hill Times

Canada’s chance to lead the critical minerals race should be based not only on extraction, but also on tech

Fast-tracked reclamation projects can transform waste into wealth, and secure global supply chains.

Apoorv Sinha

Opinion



Do you know where the copper in your microwave came from? Or the rare earth elements that make your TV or laptop screen capable of high definition? Chances are they traveled thousands of kilometres, extracted from remote mines in countries with fragile supply chains.

Meanwhile, millions of tonnes of critical minerals lie dormant in Canada’s own backyard—locked in mine tailings, coal ash, and industrial residues.

With Prime Minister Mark Carney’s recently tabled budget and announcements of major projects, Canada has declared its ambition to become a critical mineral superpower. The federal strategy rightly points to our geological abundance. But the reality is stark: most domestic deposits are remote, expensive to access, and years away from production.

Canada is decades behind building the infrastructure we need to unlock our growth in this sector. We also consistently miss economic targets and climate commitments, and struggle with volatile unemployment—especially for our youth. We need solutions that deliver impact on all three fronts now, not in 15 years.

One answer is hiding in plain sight: industrial waste streams.

Across Canada, legacy mining sites and coal plants hold billions of dollars’ worth of rare earth elements (REEs), nickel, cobalt, and other critical metals. These resources are co-located at existing industrial hubs, meaning they can be tapped without long-drawn permitting processes.

Most importantly, recovering these minerals can go hand in hand with environmental remediation, turning liabilities into assets and helping local communities restore and reinvent themselves.

This is not a pipe dream. Canadian innovators are already proving it works. Calgary’s Carbon Upcycling Technologies, as one example, has developed an advanced mineral recovery process that can extract up to 75 per cent of critical metals and 50 to 80 per cent of REEs from waste streams.

The residual material? It doesn’t need to go back to landfills; it can be transformed instead into low-carbon building materials, reducing emissions in one of the world’s most important heavy industries.

Circularity in action, this process can enable building local infrastructure in Canada’s most remote communities.

Global momentum is clear. Countries like Australia, South Korea, Japan, and the United States are accelerating investments in critical mineral extraction and processing. Australia has committed billions of dollars to rare earth projects, while the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act is catalyzing domestic supply chains for EV batteries.

Korea and Japan have gone further, creating long-term market signals through structured incentives for hydrogen and clean fuels, paired with ramp-down timelines similar to carbon capture, storage, and utilization investment tax credits.

These policies don’t just subsidize, they also create urgency and conviction for private capital to deploy at scale.

Canada needs a similar approach: clear, time-bound incentives that reward early movers and taper over time, signalling that the window for advantage is now.

Canada has always been a nation defined by its natural resources—forests, oil, minerals—often exported as raw materials to fuel prosperity elsewhere. Fur trade between the 1600s and 1800s formed the economic foundation of early Canada, centered on beaver pelts used in European hat-making, while the discovery of gold and silver in the 1850s, and subsequently, uranium, nickel, and other base metals shaped Canada’s economy for much of its history.

Onshoring critical mineral production through circular, fast-tracked projects like waste reclamation offers a chance to rewrite that story.

We have an opportunity to evolve from a resource exporter to a technology-driven economy, launching another generation of productivity and wealth while meeting climate commitments.

The question is simple: Does Canada keep exporting raw resources, or build the next economy from yesterday’s waste? If we get this right, Canada won’t just kick-start the future economy, build productivity, and growth for its citizens, but will also lead the world in building a circular economy powered by innovation, not just extraction.

Apoorv Sinha is the founder and CEO of Carbon Upcycling Technologies (CUT) based in Calgary. CUT is building the world’s first integrated, commercial-scale carbon dioxide-to-value plant in Mississauga, Ont.

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