A CLIMATE ELECTION GUIDE for a WORLD ON FIRE
Executive Summary

In October 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) described the terrifying impacts of even a 1.5°C rise in global temperatures, and warned the international community about the importance of limiting any further warming beyond this point.

The authors of the IPCC report reminded us that a societal transformation of this scale “is possible within the laws of chemistry and physics,” but will require “unprecedented changes” before 2030.

So far, Canada has yet to heed the warnings or step up to the challenge. Over the last 25 years, Canadian governments have exceeded every one of the international climate targets, and the Trudeau Liberals are on track to repeat the failure.

In two weeks, Canadians will elect a new federal government, and for the first time, climate change is on the ballot. Poll after poll reveals that Canadians are growing increasingly concerned about the impacts of a warming planet, and are impatient with their political representatives, most of whom lack the sense of urgency needed to head off the worst impacts of a warming world.

We have assessed the climate plans of each major political party—the Conservative Party, the Green Party, the New Democratic Party, and the Liberal Party—to help Canadians understand how effective they will be at implementing the necessary “unprecedented changes” in how we live, work, and get ourselves around.

It’s time our leaders stopped betting on the failure of the global community to address climate change and do the hard work of turning our fossil fuel-powered society to one energized by renewables.

There’s no time to waste. These are the steps required to get the job done.

1. We need to stop approving, investing in, and building new fossil fuel projects. This means no new or expanded pipelines, no new LNG terminals, no new coal mines, and no new tar sands mines.

2. We need to create an exit plan that breaks our economic reliance on the oil and gas sector, while supporting workers and communities impacted by the shift to a sustainable economy.

3. We have to stop giving tax breaks and subsidies to fossil fuel companies. Every year our government gives $3.3 billion of taxpayer money to the very corporations that are causing the climate crisis. This money is better invested in renewable energy sources and other clean technologies that will power our grandchildren’s world.

4. We have to acknowledge the world cannot afford to burn all of our fossil fuel reserves, particularly the oil from the tar sands. It’s long past time we realized we can’t afford to burn it all, and all that’s left must remain in the ground.
Where the Parties Stand

**Liberals:** It’s true that the Trudeau Liberals’ climate track record is an improvement over the government that came before them, but it doesn’t matter if you lose a hockey game by one goal or 10—it’s still a loss. Like the Conservative plan, the Liberal Party’s effort won’t get the job done. Expect warming on the order of 3°C with global policies like these. It’s time Trudeau had an honest conversation with Canadians about what it takes to prevent catastrophic climate change. The weaknesses we’ve identified explain why Liberal climate efforts are projected to exceed their already inadequate targets by as much as 50 per cent (763Mt vs 511Mt). If every country followed our lead, we’d end up in a world more than three degrees warmer (six degrees in Canada), and, well, that’s just not good enough. The addition of a vague reference to “exceed Canada’s 2030 emissions goal” by introducing some unspecified “new carbon-reducing measures” does little to inspire confidence that the Liberals will somehow meet their fair share of the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C goal this time around.

**New Democrats:** The NDP’s aggressive emissions-reduction target makes it clear they take the issue seriously, but they haven’t provided enough details about their carbon-pricing scheme, and they have no supply-side policies to stop oil and gas expansion. This leaves their plan on track for a world of 2.5°C warming.

**Conservatives:** Nothing to see here, folks. The Conservatives are betting big on the world doing nothing meaningful to combat climate change. According to Marc Jaccard, Scheer’s “real” climate plan is just a reworked version of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers 2019 Federal Energy Platform,1 “a throwback to an earlier era in which climate-insincere politicians tried to trick climate-concerned citizens into believing that they were taking action to reduce GHG emissions”. It would leave Canada on the trajectory to a world of 4°C warming.

**Green Party:** The Greens delivered on their promise of a house-on-fire climate emergency action plan. It’s got all the key components that are necessary to more-or-less honor Canada’s commitments in the Paris Agreement and keep global warming to 2°C or slightly less. We expect the Greens to lead on climate but they have not explicitly communicated that much of Canada’s fossil fuel reserves will need to stay in the ground. If the Greens won’t say it loud and clear, the other parties will never feel any pressure to follow.
Climate Awakening

2019 will be remembered as the year climate change (finally) got on the ballot during a Canadian federal election. Less than a month before Canadians head to the polls, teen climate activist Greta Thunberg inspired a crowd of 500,000 in Montreal, as a million Canadians from coast to coast took to the streets to march for a safe and stable climate.

Polls show that Canadians are much more concerned about climate change than they are of wealth and income inequality, or the loss of good-paying jobs due to automation of workplaces. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Canadians believe we need to either “reduce fossil fuel use a lot” or “move away from fossil fuel use almost completely” as part of a plan to change the way our economy works and how we produce energy.²

More importantly, a majority of voters in every single riding across the country believe the climate is warming, and most of them want the government to take the climate threat more seriously.³

As for solutions, the majority of Canadians support emissions trading, and while taxing carbon is more divisive, the majority of Canadians in 88 per cent of ridings support a carbon tax — even in many Conservative ridings.

“In other words, the path to a majority government — or even a minority government — goes through many ridings where Canadians are worried about climate change and want the government to take aggressive action,” wrote Matto Mildenberger, assistant professor of political science at UC Santa Barbara, and Erick Lachapelle, associate professor of political science at the University of Montreal.⁴

For three decades, elected decision makers have failed to heed the warnings of the scientific community and address climate change with the urgency that’s required.

Is this the year Canadians elect a government that will leave fossil fuels in the ground and implement a plan that helps create a climate-safe world?
Canada’s Climate Crisis

In late September, the world’s leaders gathered in New York City for the 2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit. The goal, according to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, was to accelerate the implementation of the Paris Agreement by encouraging all nations to dramatically increase their efforts to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The UN meeting couldn’t have come at a better time. Record-breaking carbon emissions have boosted the global average temperature by 1.1°C since pre-industrial times—and 0.2°C in the last five years alone, making it the warmest five-year period on record.

In 2015, Canada, the European Union and 194 other nations signed the Paris Agreement, unanimously committing to limit the average global temperature increase to “well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.” They also agreed to pursue “efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C.” Now in 2019, we are already well on our way to warming that greatly exceeds the Paris Agreement goals.

This urgency has increased significantly since 2015.

The 2018 special report from the IPCC on the impacts of 1.5°C of global warming warned that even “moderate” warming of 1.5°C would cause irreparable damage. Its latest report on oceans is every bit as alarming. As the world’s oceans warm, lose oxygen, and acidify, it predicts a meter of sea-level rise, ecosystem disruption, far fewer fish, weakening ocean currents, a dramatic decrease in snow and ice, and worsening hurricanes, among other impacts.\(^5\)

To avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we have little more than a decade to radically shift our energy systems away from fossil fuels. This means we must cut global carbon dioxide emissions nearly in half by 2030 to have any hope of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. By 2050, just 31 years from now, carbon emissions should be at or near zero.\(^6\)

If we don’t, we’ll put enough carbon in the atmosphere to warm the planet well beyond 2°C—and as high as 5°C if we don’t rein in the planned expansion of oil, gas, and coal. Canada is warming twice as fast as the global average, so temperatures...
could increase as much as nine degrees north of the 49th parallel—and as much as 11 degrees in the Arctic.

The results would be catastrophic.

According to William Rees, professor emeritus of human ecology and ecological economics at the University of British Columbia, runaway warming would significantly reduce the carrying capacity of Earth. At 5°C of warming, sea levels would rise tens of metres, and deserts would creep into southern and central Europe. The equatorial belt would be too hot and humid to support human life for most of the year, and the southern hemisphere would become all but uninhabitable (except for New Zealand, Tasmania, Western Antarctica and Patagonia).

Under this scenario, the human population could be reduced to about one billion people, and the majority of humanity would be forced to live in high-latitude areas, such as Alaska, Siberia, Scandinavia—and northern Canada.

Canadians all over the country felt the fury of a warming climate in 2019. Record forest fires raged across B.C. and Alberta, and south-central Saskatchewan saw drought after the driest spring ever recorded. Excruciatingly hot temperatures scorched southern Ontario and Quebec for the second year in a row, and Quebec endured its second “100-year flood” in three years. Tropical storm Dorian brought floods and hurricane winds to Nova Scotia, leaving eighty per cent of its population without power. On August 1, seven hundred miles off the coast of Labrador, Greenland lost 12.5 billion tons of ice in one day, enough meltwater to cover all of Florida in five inches of water.

Natural Resources Canada predicts that in such a worst-case scenario, the risk of deadly heatwaves in Canada increases tenfold, bringing with it the desiccation of more droughts and the havoc of more forest fires. The risk of major rain would double, and urban flooding will decimate Canadian cities. At the same time, key sources of fresh water will diminish, and rising oceans would inundate parts of Canada’s coasts, especially in the east. A quarter of a million people in metro Vancouver would be displaced, and Stanley Park would become an island.

No wonder Canadians are beginning to take climate change more seriously. Canada may well come out better than many countries if we fail to rein in carbon emissions, but the impacts on us and our descendants will still be catastrophic.
Over Promising and Under Delivering

Once upon a time, back in the 1990s, Canada was a climate leader. Then-Prime Minister Jean Chrétien recognized the threat posed by climate change and the need for a global treaty to tackle it. Chrétien actively participated in the negotiations that led to the Kyoto Protocol, a binding agreement that Canada signed in 1997.

But over the decades, Canada’s GHG track record has been abysmal, and we’re now one of the worst performers in the G7.9

When the Harper Conservatives were elected in the 2006 election, Stephen Harper campaigned against the Kyoto Protocol, condemning it as a “socialist scheme to suck money out of wealth-producing nations”10 and eventually pulled Canada out of the Kyoto Protocol, the only country in the world to do so.

By the time the Trudeau Liberals trounced the Harper Conservatives in 2015, GHG emissions were back up over 700 Mt, about where they were when Harper took over as prime minister and 120 Mt short of his Copenhagen commitment. Another great climate fail for Canada.

Climate advocates welcomed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with cautious optimism. He called out the Harper Conservatives for failing to do anything meaningful on the climate file, and ran on a platform that included a strong commitment to “end the cycle of federal parties — of all stripes — setting arbitrary targets without a real federal/provincial/territorial plan in place.”11

He promised to “develop real climate change solutions, consistent with our international obligations to protect the planet, all while growing our economy.” This included concrete commitments to establish a pan-Canadian framework for combating climate change, put a price on carbon, and phase out subsidies for the fossil fuel industry over the medium-term.
Trudeau and Catherine McKenna, his Minister for Environment and Climate Change, adopted Harper’s emission-reduction commitments from Copenhagen, even though these targets wouldn’t meet Canada’s commitment to the Paris Agreement that they had just signed. These new-but-old targets were met with grave disappointment from the international community, because they were among the weakest climate commitments of any major industrialized economy.

However, the Liberals did negotiate the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, a historic document forged between the federal government and most of the provinces and territories, and they have passed laws that seek to reduce GHGs through both creating a price on carbon and new regulatory measures.

Then, in late August, Trudeau shocked the world by spending $4.5 billion to buy the Trans Mountain pipeline from Kinder Morgan. Perhaps the most controversial energy project in recent history, the Trans Mountain expansion project—if it is ever built—would triple the flow of bitumen from Alberta to Vancouver and facilitate the expansion of the tar sands.

Trudeau, like his predecessors, has over promised and under delivered. He was able to get provincial premiers to agree “in principle” to a carbon-pricing mechanism, but now, on the eve of the election, Ontario and most western provinces (apart from B.C.) are in open revolt, refusing to honour the federal government’s legally binding backstop carbon price. Trudeau’s promise to phase out subsidies to the oil and gas industry has all but evaporated in the overheated rhetoric from obstructionist provincial premiers.

Once again, Canada’s prospects of meeting its GHG-reduction targets are grim. Canada’s GHG emissions have risen to around 720Mt, and are projected to increase to as much as 763 Mt by 2030—27% above 1990 levels. This is significantly higher than the 511 Mt Canada committed to in the Paris Agreement. The Trudeau Liberals, despite more and better policies than ever before, will fail to reach Canada’s latest international commitments, just like every government before it.

Today, Canada emits more carbon than at any time in history, largely because of increasing emissions from the expansion of oil and gas production. Two decades of failure, and the growing concern among Canadians about the spectre of an overheated planet, points to the need for the next federal government to do more, not less, to reduce GHG emissions. Which party is up to the task?

Climate Action Tracker’s analysis, produced by four independent research organisations, dismissed Canada’s proposal as “inadequate.” It projected Canada would blow by its target by as much as eight per cent by 2030, 35 per cent above 1990 levels. And so it has.
Climate Election 2019: Action or Apathy?

It’s not easy to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of climate commitments at election time. Unlike the IPCC reports, which are grounded in the best science possible, political platforms are works of rhetorical art that can say nothing and everything at once.

Ideally, climate experts would model the impacts of every commitment in every plan, in an attempt to quantify their net effect (if implemented) on GHG emissions. Where this has been done, we include it. But most of the plans are too new or so vague that they haven’t been modeled.

Ultimately, a successful plan must at a minimum be able to meet Canada’s Paris Agreement obligations to reduce GHG emissions in line with the 1.5°C target. Canada’s current policies are not consistent with holding global temperatures below 2°C in 2030, never mind 1.5°C, so the next government will have to improve on the efforts to date of the Trudeau Liberals.20

Legislating an accountability measure that sets five-year carbon budgets and tracks progress on GHG reductions is also a good idea.

But Canadians are living in a fantasy world if they think governments can meet Canada’s GHG promises without reducing how much oil and gas Canada produces.21

The demand-side policies that successive Canadian governments have relied on have failed us, and will now take too long to meaningfully reduce GHG emissions. We also must use supply-side policies to meet the aggressive GHG reduction targets required to meet the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C goal.22

Several studies indicate that governments have already approved, invested in, and developed enough coal, oil, and gas to warm the world beyond 2°C.23 Given that Canada’s oil and gas industry is predicted to account for 66 percent of Canada’s 1.5°C carbon budget in 2030, it’s imperative that no new fossil fuel projects are approved in Canada (or anywhere else).

Canadian oil and gas production must be capped and then decreased. Buying back and retiring leases and licenses for fossil fuel projects also makes sense, as does the rapid phase out of fossil fuel subsidies.24

Lastly, it’s essential that any climate plan includes a strategy to ensure that the transition to a 100 per cent renewable economy is a just one, and that governments provide the people and communities that currently rely on fossil fuels for their livelihoods with assistance in making the transition.

Let’s see how Canada’s federal political parties measure up to the challenge the Canadian electorate has laid before them.
HOW CANADA’S FEDERAL POLITICAL PARTIES MEASURE UP
As the incumbent government, the Trudeau Liberals’ plan is the one to which all others are compared. However, despite more and better policies than any government before them, the Liberals have failed to lead us to the summit of responsible climate policy. And yet, Trudeau keeps telling Canadians his government is “on track” to meet their 2030 emissions targets. Is this just spin, or can they really do it?

The Plan

Anyone who has paid any attention to climate politics in Canada over the last few years probably knows what’s in the Liberal Party’s climate plan. The Liberals have used most (but not all) of the key components required of a successful plan. They’ve just announced a couple of new elements that should enhance what they’ve managed to accomplish since 2015. Will it be enough?

Here’s the skinny on the Liberal party’s new and improved climate plan, “Fighting and Preparing for Climate Change”.

1. In June, the Liberal government passed a motion declaring a national climate emergency in Canada.

2. Their climate plan maintains the same goal for 2030, 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, but with an enhanced target for 2050: net-zero emissions.

3. The Liberals have already introduced a legally binding backstop carbon-pricing mechanism, which will increase to $50 per tonne by 2022, that will force the provinces to put a price on GHG emissions.

The plan includes:
- a suite of economic incentives to build or retrofit energy-efficient homes and purchase zero-emission vehicles
Likewise, the Liberals have already pledged to eliminate coal as a source of energy by 2030, toward which much progress has been made.

They’ve also adopted a national clean fuel standard, and subsidized electric vehicles.

One new element is a commitment to set legally binding five-year milestones, which would keep reduction efforts on track.

Another is a 50 percent tax break for clean-tech companies, from 9 to 4.5 per cent for small businesses, and from 15 to 7.5 per cent for larger companies.

There is also a suite of economic incentives to build or retrofit energy-efficient homes, purchase zero-emission vehicles, and build zero-emission buses and rail systems.

It would also introduce a Just Transition Act, to ensure energy workers and communities can shape their own futures by giving workers access to the training, support, and new opportunities needed to succeed in the clean economy.

Like the NDP and Green Party, the Liberals recognize the seriousness of climate change and say they are committed to reaching the goals and commitments laid out in the Paris Agreement.

Like the NDP plan, the Liberal plan has some, but not all, of the most important components of a Paris-compliant plan. These include a legally binding backstop carbon-pricing mechanism, and meaningful regulations that would decrease the use of fossil fuels and speed the transition to renewable energy.

The new legally binding five-year milestones are a welcome addition (for which we can probably thank the NDP and Green Party).

What’s in the plan contains enough details to get a pretty good idea about if and how it will work.

By sticking to the Harper government’s emission targets (30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030), the Liberal Party continues to chase an inadequate goal.

Trudeau still refuses to take on the growing problem of emissions from fossil fuel extraction, despite having acknowledged the need to phase out our reliance on fossil fuels. Approving new oil and gas projects and expanding infrastructure (like the Trans Mountain pipeline) has no place in a Paris-compliant world. Projections already indicate that the fossil fuel reserves being developed today will swallow most of the world’s 2°C carbon budget, which means there’s no room for new projects. The absence of a prohibition on oil and gas expansion is more than conspicuous. It’s another recipe for failure.

Trudeau has once again failed to make good on his promise to phase out the significant subsidies Canada gives the fossil fuel industry, including the so-called “output-based pricing system” that returns the carbon taxes they pay in the form of a subsidy based on their output. (This is a reminder, Prime Minister, of your earlier commitment so you can rectify the oversight.)
4. The Trudeau Liberals’ backstop carbon tax is planned to top out at $50 per tonne in 2022. This is not nearly high enough to get the job done. It has to push up into hundreds of dollars to do the job.

5. It’s strange that Trudeau keeps telling the Canadian public that the Liberal plan is “on track” to meet their (admittedly insufficient) commitments under the Paris Agreement. Numerous sources, including his own Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, indicate they’ll overshoot their target by a considerable margin. Lying to the Canadian public about such an important issue makes it more difficult to trust he’s committed to doing the right thing.

6. It bears repeating that Trudeau bought a pipeline with plans to triple the amount of carbon-heavy tar sands oil it would carry to the west coast. That’s a crazy way to reduce GHG emissions.

Conclusion

It’s true that the Trudeau Liberals’ climate track record is an improvement over every government that came before them, but it doesn’t matter if you lose a hockey game by one goal or 10—it’s still a loss. Like the Conservative plan, the Liberal Party’s effort won’t get the job done. Expect warming on the order of 3°C with global policies like these.27

It’s time Trudeau had an honest conversation with Canadians about what it takes to prevent catastrophic climate change. The weaknesses we’ve identified explain why Liberal climate efforts are projected to exceed their already inadequate targets by as much as 50 per cent (763Mt vs 511 Mt).

If every country followed our lead, we’d end up in a world more than three degrees warmer (six degrees in Canada), and, well, that’s just not good enough. The addition of a vague reference to “exceed Canada’s 2030 emissions goal” by introducing some unspecified “new carbon-reducing measures” does little to inspire confidence that the Liberals will somehow meet their fair share of the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C goal this time around.
Traditionally, the Conservative Party of Canada hasn’t been all that keen on regulating carbon emissions, and it’s not a good sign that Conservative Party Andrew Scheer already blew off the climate strike. But Scheer has an opportunity to turn history on its head and become a Conservative climate change champion. Has he done it?

The Plan

Unlike their fellow conservative People’s Party, the Conservatives do have a climate plan. It’s called “A Real Plan to Protect Our Environment,” and the title itself is illuminating: it doesn’t mention the word “climate” and emphasizes the fact that it’s practical. It also promises to save Canadian money, so they can “get ahead.” Best of all, it claims to be the plan that gives “Canada the best chance at reaching” the Paris Agreement targets. On its surface, it seems the best of all possible worlds...but is it really?

The key components are as follows:

1. The main thrust of the climate part of the plan is to “encourage and support the development of green technology to make environmentally friendly alternatives available … without making the lives of Canadians harder and more expensive” with new taxes.

2. As part of this effort, it will “proudly launch the ‘Canadian Clean’ brand,” which will “stamp our products as ‘Canadian Clean’ and market them as an alternative to the carbon intensive options that exist in other countries.
3. It encourages community engagement and consultation to, in part, “work to combat air pollution, protect our waters and oceans, and take action on plastics and waste.”

4. It will help to “make Canadian oil and gas the cleanest in the world, making our country a sought-after supplier” of lower-emission hydrocarbons that can replace “dirtier products.”

5. Marc Jaccard, professor of sustainable energy in the School of Resource and Environmental Management at Simon Fraser University, has already modeled the Conservative climate plan to see how effectively it would reduce Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions. The results aren’t surprising.

Strengths 😊

1. It recognizes that “climate change is real” and that “evidence from around the world clearly shows that there is a global warming trend” (though there is no mention that human activity is causing it).

2. It embraces the Paris Agreement and Canada’s commitments (developed by Conservatives, Scheer reminds us) to reduce our GHG emissions 30% below 2005 levels by 2030.

Weaknesses 😞

1. First and foremost, Scheer’s “Real Plan” would, according to Marc Jaccard’s analysis, actually increase GHG emissions, by as much as 100 Mt more than the current Liberal government’s policies. Remember: The Liberals are on track to exceed this 2030 target (511 Mt) by 250 Mt, which is far from good enough, and the Conservatives are worse.

2. One of the main aspects of Scheer’s plan is to replace many of the most effective policy tools put in place by the Liberal government—the federal backstop carbon price and the clean fuel standard. Without these demand-side policies, GHGs will continue to increase.

3. Instead, the Conservative plan relies on voluntary initiatives and subsidy policies. These policies are not effective at reducing GHG emissions, and most independent experts have empirically demonstrated that green technology innovation is most effective when incentivized by carbon pricing and/or regulations that make alternatives financially attractive.

4. Not only does the Conservative climate plan not commit to phasing out Canadian fossil fuel production
and combustion by 2050, it ignores the economic realities that are already putting coal companies out of business and proposes to expand fossil fuel use and market it to the world. This is based on pie-in-the-sky assumptions that ineffective policies will bring nascent technologies (such as carbon capture and sequestration) to scale fast enough that we won’t have to phase out fossil fuels. Such a claim is not just misleading, it’s dangerous. Any Paris-aligned climate plan must include a legally binding strategy to stop approving new fossil fuel projects.

5. Fossil fuel subsidies are not even mentioned. They need to be phased out and invested into the development of renewable energy technologies and projects.

6. Passing off such ineffective policies as “Canada’s best chance” at reaching the Paris Agreement targets is dishonest, and only serves to confuse Canadians and delay the inevitable transition to a 100% renewable economy. Canadians don’t have time for climate delayers and their dangerous strategy of “slow-walking transitions away from fossil fuel.”

Conclusion

Nothing to see here, folks. The Conservatives are betting big on the world doing nothing meaningful to combat climate change. According to Jaccard, Scheer’s “real” climate plan is just a reworked version of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers 2019 Federal Energy Platform, “a throwback to an earlier era in which climate-insincere politicians tried to trick climate-concerned citizens into believing that they were taking action to reduce GHG emissions.” It would leave Canada on the trajectory to a world of 4°C warming.
NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Climate leadership, short on details

Like the Conservatives, the NDP doesn’t have a climate plan *per se*, but includes it in an overarching environmental platform. Unlike the Conservatives, its “Power to Change” plan is ambitious, and recognizes that, “Canada is facing a climate emergency and we need a government with the courage to make the right choices.”

**The Plan**

Jagmeet Singh’s “Power to Change” plan contains multitudes. It firmly promises to accelerate the reduction of Canada’s GHG emissions and align Canada’s carbon emission reduction targets with the Paris Agreement. It also commits to creating 300,000 jobs, saving families money, and taking on big polluters. Sounds like the best of all possible worlds, but as always, the devil is in the details.

Here’s what you need to know:

1. The NDP would declare a climate emergency, just as the Liberals did last June.

2. It would revise and legislate Canada’s pollution targets to reduce our carbon emissions to 450 Mt by 2030.

3. It would ensure the provinces set and meet interim reductions targets out to 2030, and then again to 2050.

4. It would improve on the Liberal party’s carbon-pricing scheme by removing the additional exemptions for heavy polluters, returning the revenue to all but the wealthiest Canadians as rebates.

5. It would eliminate fossil fuel subsidies and redirect the money to low-carbon initiatives, like 100% electric transit by 2030.

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initiatives, like 100% electric transit by 2030 and making all buildings energy efficient by 2050.

6. It commits to net-carbon free electricity by 2030, and “moves to” 100 per cent non-emitting electricity by 2050.

7. It would overhaul the environmental review process to ensure proposed projects align with their emissions reductions targets.

8. The NDP Party platform recognizes the fact that rapidly reducing GHG emissions will have socio-economic impacts, and that “workers most impacted by the changes in our economy will not pay the price of action on climate change.” There are several references about the need to support First Nations, workers and industries, and create jobs.

9. It provides an estimate of the “new investment required”, the only party to do so. The price tag is $15 billion, broken down by the various strategies included in the plan.35

### Strengths 😊

1. The NDP platform acknowledges the climate emergency we’ve foisted upon ourselves and provides a multi-faceted plan to turn things around.

2. It’s got all the key, demand-side components: a legally binding target (450 Mt) that exceeds Canada’s 2030 Paris Agreement commitment (511 Mt), and is as much as 313 Mt less than the projected emissions under current Liberal policies. Its carbon-pricing scheme is likely stronger than the Liberals.

3. It includes a phase out of oil and gas subsidies, a welcome supply-side policy that Trudeau failed to implement once he climbed into the Prime Minister’s chair.

4. It recognizes the importance of providing government support for those impacted by the necessary transition to a zero-carbon economy.

5. Like the Green Party plan, it probably pushed the Liberals to improve their climate efforts. Trudeau recently announced legally binding five-year milestones, mirroring a similar commitment in the NDP Power to Change Plan.

### Weaknesses 😞

1. It suffers from the same lack of detail as the Green Party plan. It commits to “continue carbon pricing”, but doesn’t tell us what the price will be and how it will change over time. That’s a significant oversight for voters who are comparing climate plans to decide who they vote for.

2. It includes a “Low Carbon Industrial Strategy” that will support Canadian industrial emitters during the transition to a low-carbon economy, which actually smells like a cloaked subsidy similar to the Liberal Party’s “output-based pricing system” (see below for details).

3. Most troubling of all is the fact the NDP plan doesn’t include enough supply-side policies to rapidly phase out fossil fuel production. Yes, they promise to phase out subsidies to oil and gas, but it doesn’t even mention the tar sands or B.C.’s LNG project, and the only mention of the Trans Mountain pipeline is to remind us that Trudeau bought it. Instead, the NDP plan emphasizes the fact “oil and gas will continue to form a part of Canada’s energy mix in the immediate future.” This is an egregious oversight. Preventing the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and phasing out oil and
gas production by 2050 is essential to meet the goals and commitments of the Paris Agreement. If they have the “Power to Change,” why isn’t it here?

Conclusion

The NDP’s aggressive emissions-reduction target makes it clear they take the issue seriously, but they haven’t provided enough details about their carbon-pricing scheme and they have no supply-side policies to stop oil and gas expansion. This leaves their plan on track for a world of 2.5°C warming.

The NDP plan doesn’t include enough supply-side policies to rapidly phase out fossil fuel production.
If you assumed that a political party named after the environmental movement would take climate change seriously, you’d be right. It’s right there in the name of their plan: “Addressing the Climate Emergency”. Elizabeth May’s Green Party boasts they have the only “climate emergency response plan that recognizes our house is on fire.” Can its plan put the fire out?

The Plan

Riffing off their “Mission Possible” theme, the Green Party’s climate plan takes up more pages than any single line item in their platform, and lays out a very aggressive target and the plan that will get them there if they win a majority.

Here are the basics:

1. A Green government would pass a legally binding Climate Change Act requiring a 60 per cent cut in carbon emissions below 2005 levels by 2030 (to 278Mt) and reaching net zero in 2050. Interim targets would be set at five-year intervals beginning with 2025.

2. This would include the transition to 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030, and an interconnected national electric grid across the country.

3. It would keep a broad-based, revenue-neutral carbon fee on all sources of carbon dioxide pollution. Revenues from the carbon fee would be returned to Canadians as a dividend.

4. It would set legal emissions limits for industries that decline over time, with penalties for exceeding those limits.
5. It would ban hydraulic fracturing. No new pipelines, or coal, oil, or gas projects, including offshore wells, would be approved.

6. It would cancel all subsidies to the fossil fuel industry, as well as the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project, and redirect this money to enhancing Canada’s enhanced electrical grid and renewable energy transition.

7. In the transportation sector, the plan calls for zero-carbon public ground transportation across the country by 2040.

8. It would also ban the sale of internal-combustion-engine passenger vehicles by 2030 to facilitate the transition to an all-electric fleet.

9. The Green Party platform is committed to a “just transition” for workers in the fossil fuel sector, and it would include various measures—including income protection, jobs guarantees, retraining and resettlement—to prevent any undue hardship from the transition away from fossil fuels.

**Strengths 😊**

1. May’s Green plan acknowledges the depth of the hole we’ve dug for ourselves and provides a bold vision for how to climb our way out of it.

2. It’s got all the key components: an aggressive, legally binding target (278 Mt) that exceeds by a long way Canada’s 2030 Paris Agreement commitments (511 Mt). This target is as much as 485 Mt less than the projected emissions under current Liberal policies. It also contains a legally binding carbon-pricing scheme and regulatory limits on industrial emissions.

3. It uses supply-side policies to keep fossil fuel reserves in the ground by cancelling subsidies, banning fracking, and putting a permanent hold on new fossil fuel projects, including the need to phase out bitumen production between 2030 and 2035.

4. It takes seriously the need for a “just transition” that doesn’t leave behind the hardworking Canadians that are employed in the fossil fuel industry.

5. It likely pushed the Liberals to improve their climate plan, which is never a bad thing. Trudeau recently announced legally binding five-year milestones and a net-zero 2050 goal, mirroring similar commitments the Green Party announced in May.
Weaknesses 😐

1. There aren’t as many details as there could be. For instance, how large would the price on carbon be, and how would it escalate over time? What would the carbon-emission limits be for industry, and how radically would they decline?

2. Banning oil imports without building east-west pipelines would likely be pretty hard on eastern Canadians, and there doesn’t appear to be any evidence that it would meaningfully reduce emissions, anyway.

Conclusion

The Green Party delivered on its promise of a house-on-fire climate emergency action plan. It’s got all the key components that are necessary to more-or-less honor Canada’s commitments in the Paris Agreement and keep global warming to 2°C or slightly less. We expect the Greens to lead on climate but they have not explicitly communicated that much of Canada’s fossil fuel reserves will need to stay in the ground. If the Greens won’t say it loud and clear, the other parties will never feel any pressure to follow.
Vote to Leave Fossil Fuels in the Ground

After analyzing the climate plans of the four main parties vying to form Canada's next government, one thing is patently clear: elected officials, especially those who hope to lead the country, lack the necessary sense of urgency on the climate file.

Too many of our politicians lack the courage to be honest with Canadians about the nature of the problem and the hard choices that have to be made to solve it. This is part of a “new form of climate denialism,” where political leaders and the fossil fuel industry say they understand and accept the scientific warnings about climate change, but they are in denial about what this scientific reality means for public policy, and the measures necessary to reverse the effects of climate change before it’s too late.19

At the heart of any meaningful climate strategy is the need to wean ourselves off fossil fuels—in just 31 short years. It’s a monumental task, and there is no time to waste. These key steps can get the job done.

1. We need to stop approving, investing in, and building new fossil fuel projects. This means no new or expanded pipelines, no new LNG terminals, no new coal mines, and no new tar sands mines.

2. We need to create an exit plan that breaks our economic reliance on the oil and gas sector, while supporting workers and communities impacted by the shift to a sustainable economy.

3. We have to stop giving tax breaks and subsidies to fossil fuel companies. Every year our government gives $3.3 billion of taxpayer money to the very corporations that are causing the climate crisis. This money is better invested in renewable energy sources and other clean technology that will power our grandchildren’s world.

4. We have to acknowledge the world cannot afford to burn all of our fossil fuel reserves, particularly the oil from the tar sands. It’s long past time we realized we can’t afford to burn it all, and all that’s left must remain in the ground.

We have run out of time for incremental policy improvements and betting on unproven technological solutions. We need a plan to regulate the supply and demand of fossil fuels if we are going to act fast enough in time to keep us safe from climate disruption.

We already have the technology for large-scale renewables and electrification at the global scale. We have to admit that the age of fossil fuels is over. We are already producing more oil and gas than the world can safely burn.

We need a plan for a 1.5°C world, and it cannot include another kilo of coal, or cubic metre of gas, or drop of oil.

Their time has come.
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