



Let's get the job done!

Policy paper number 8:

**Green Canada,
Prosperous Canada**

February , 2012

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Dear friend,

When I launched my campaign to be leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada, I offered the view that the primary goal of the NDP national government we will elect in 2015 should (and must) be to work, in everything we do, toward building a more equal Canada.

That means building a more prosperous country, whose benefits are much more widely shared among Canadians. This includes meeting our responsibility to address the environment – because we must do so and should do so; and because doing so provides the Canadian economy with an opportunity to become more efficient, more prosperous... and more equal.

Our environment is central to both our prosperity and to our health. It provides clean air and water for daily living, natural resources that power our lives and our economy, and globally-envied wild space and species. Canadians want to live in a country that is both prosperous and has a clean environment. Protecting our beautiful environment – ensuring clean air, clean water and accessible green spaces – is key to maintaining our quality of life.

However, our country has fallen behind in reducing pollution in our air, reducing waste and conserving energy and water.¹ For example, on a per person basis, Canadians use eight times more water than people living in Denmark. Canada ranks 15th out of 17 OECD countries in greenhouse gas emissions and produces 75 per cent more waste than in 1980. This is the legacy of Conservative and Liberal governments who side with big polluters rather than safeguarding the health of Canadians.

We can do better. The false choice between “protecting the environment” and “creating jobs” so often perpetuated by the Conservatives and Liberals is hopelessly outdated. The successful economies of the future will include clean and green technologies that both protect the environment and create new, good jobs. Our government can put in place forward-looking policies that support the development of green industries while protecting the environment.

I believe that we can:

- **Take concrete action on climate change;**
- **Support the creation of good, green jobs;**
- **Improve the health of our communities by regulating use of harmful chemicals, and protecting our air and water; and**
- **Meet our international obligations, and regain our good name.**

This is the eighth in a series of policy papers I've released during this leadership campaign. You can find all of them at www.briantopp.ca. If you liked this one, please forward it to others you think might be interested, I would appreciate your comments and suggestions. And if I've persuaded you to support my campaign, please get in touch with me through my website to volunteer or donate.

All the best,
Brian Topp

Taking concrete action on climate change: Hard targets, and a concrete plan to meet them

There is no disputing that our planet's climate is changing rapidly, due to excessive production of carbon worldwide. Canada recognized this issue when it signed the Kyoto Accord, but Liberals and Conservatives in office have chosen to do effectively nothing to meet our international responsibilities.

The reality is this issue isn't going to go away. Action will be required, from us and from all industrialized countries. Delaying action will only serve to make it more difficult to make the changes needed down the road. I believe when we form the next government we must act quickly and decisively to tackle this problem.

We are also paying a steep opportunity cost for our inaction. Canada is already a decade behind some of our competitors -- we've lost the opportunity to get to work building a modernized, energy-efficient, greener economy.

So what is to be done? As first steps, I propose an eight-point plan:

- (1) Put a limit on carbon pollution;
- (2) An end to federal tax subsidies for carbon fuel production;
- (3) Make polluters pay the cost of their pollution;
- (4) A serious effort to reduce energy use in our economy and save homeowners and businesses money, through a home and industrial retrofit program;
- (5) Federal support for a determined phase-out of carbon-intense fuels, like coal, for energy production. And a determined investment in renewable fuels like solar, thermal and wind;
- (6) A sustained federal partnership to build up public transportation in Canada;
- (7) As that public transportation comes online, a sustained federal, provincial and municipal partnership to get fossil-fueled cars out of our cities; and
- (8) A strategy to limit the environmental impacts of oil sands development in Western Canada and ensure the sector does its share to reach Canada's climate change goals, as one key element of a new Canadian energy strategy that provides a roadmap for our energy industry to transition toward a prosperous, green economy.

(1) A limit on carbon pollution

I propose that the federal government and our provinces and territories legislate a hard target for carbon reduction: a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to a level 80 per cent below that of 1990, by the year 2050. Moreover, we should legislate interim targets to get us there between 2015 and 2050, and develop a credible and transparent plan to reach them.

Here's how I propose we take concrete action towards achieving these targets:

(2) An end to federal tax subsidies for carbon fuel production

I propose that the \$760million² the federal government spends every year on tax expenditures for the benefit of fossil fuel production be eliminated, to remove a perverse incentive for carbon production.

(3) Making polluters pay for carbon pollution

I propose Canada introduce "truth in pricing" for carbon, in order to reduce emissions. In our May 2011 election platform, our party proposed putting a real price on carbon through a cap-and-trade system. This system would establish hard emissions limits for polluters, ensuring the real cost of carbon is borne by its emitters, and creating a strong incentive to reduce emissions.

We have a number of international partners available to work with, including the European Union (who are implementing a cap-and-trade system), California and Australia (currently transitioning through a carbon tax model to a cap-and-trade system).

(4) Reducing energy use in our economy through a home and industrial retrofit program

I propose that the federal government make a commitment to retrofitting homes, in order to reduce home fossil fuel consumption (a key reason why Canada is such a hungry energy producer). The program should ensure that low-income Canadians have access to money-saving home retrofits.

I propose the federal government also partner with manufacturers and other businesses in a nationwide industrial retrofit program, designed to reduce industrial energy consumption.

(5) Transitioning from Future fuels, and a determined phase-out of carbon-intense fuels to renewable energy for energy consumption

I propose that the federal government implement incentives for renewable power, including solar, wind, water, tidal, biomass, and other renewable sources for electricity production. The federal government should also support industrial co-generation, with a focus on supporting community-owned renewable energy facilities. In return for these investments, I propose we work with provinces and territories to phase out carbon-intense power generation, notably coal-fired plants.

Coal is the most polluting form of electricity generation. Coal-fired power plants put sulphur dioxide, lead, mercury and other heavy metals and toxins into the air, and produce 93 million tonnes of carbon pollution each year. According to the Canadian Medical Association, in 2031, the “number of deaths due to long-term exposure to air pollution will be 710,000.”³

The federal government is failing to protect Canadians from the health impacts of coal-fired power plants. Federal regulations should be implemented to decrease pollution from all of Canada's coal-fired power plants -- not just future or very old units --and prevent construction on new coal plants. Instead, the federal government is currently proposing regulations that would allow about two-thirds of coal plants to continue business as usual pollution until 2020, let nine plants off the hook until 2030 and allow new coal plants to be built.

We can do better than that. Getting out of dirty energy and into clean energy production is a key opportunity for our economy – and you just have to look around the world to see why. The global transition to a low-carbon economy is well underway. Over 3.5 million people are now employed in renewable energy worldwide. In 2008, global investment in new renewable energy overtook fossil fuel electricity generation for the first time ever, with \$140 billion USD spent on renewable energy globally compared with \$110 billion for new coal and gas generation.⁴

In spite of the global economic downturn over the past three years, investment in new renewable energy technologies has continued to accelerate, reaching \$243 billion in 2010. That’s more than double the amount invested in 2006.⁵

The United Nations Environment Program acknowledges the importance of government policy in setting us on a path to a greener economy. According to the UNEP, “the continuing growth in [renewable energy] is not happening by chance. The combination of government target-setting, policy support and stimulus funds is underpinning the renewable industry's rise and bringing the much needed transformation of our global energy system within reach.”⁶

Canada can harness our abundant renewable energy resources and manufacturing ingenuity to transition our own economy to clean energy -- creating good jobs across the country in these rapidly growing global industries.

(6) A major, long-term commitment to public transportation:

I propose a permanent annual federal commitment to public transportation.

Some 80 per cent of Canadians live in cities. But you wouldn’t know it from looking at federal fiscal priorities – Canada is the only major industrialized country in the world without a national strategy to promote, maintain and improve urban public transportation. We pay a major environmental and economic price for this, as our cities choke on automobile emissions and our key economic centers become increasingly inefficient.

Public transit is the cornerstone of a liveable city. Improving transit accessibility and quality and decreasing commute times is good for our economy and good for our health. Increased access to transit improves access to employment, and decreases poverty and ill health.⁷ By encouraging less reliance on cars – and thus mitigating their impact on physical activity levels -- public transit decreases the probability of obesity and related health outcomes, including respiratory ailments, coronary heart disease and diabetes.⁸ By facilitating greater connectivity, public transit increases social inclusion. By decreasing traffic congestion, it decreases stress and increases well-being. Most directly, it decreases air pollution and therefore mortality.

Traffic congestion and long commute times also affect the economic health of cities. For example, the Toronto Board of Trade estimates that traffic congestion costs the Toronto region approximately \$6 billion per year and may increase to \$15 billion by 2031.⁹ A stalled transit system, long commute times and frustrated patrons are all disincentives for employers who might consider locating their businesses in Toronto.¹⁰

Federal support for public transit is also a means of supporting and rebuilding the manufacturing sector. Canadian content requirements will ensure these tax dollars have great economic as well as environmental benefits.

(7) Develop a national energy strategy to transition Canada to a low-carbon economy and limit the impacts of oil sands development during the transition

The federal government, the Governments of Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, the energy industry and civil society stakeholders need to arrive at a meeting of the minds about the pace and scale of development, and environmental management of, Canada's oil sands. This needs to happen within the broader context of a national energy strategy that addresses climate change. Our energy sector is a key economic asset, and we need to plan now for the energy sector of the future.

I propose a Canadian Energy Strategy that includes:

- **A much more reasonable and sustainable pace of oil sands development;**
- **A commitment to value-added development of our energy sector, to retain more of the value of our resources and to reduce our economic dependence on raw resource exports;**
- **A review of federal and provincial taxes and royalties, to ensure we are pricing our resources at their real worth;**
- **A commitment by federal and provincial governments to reduce dependence on revenues from fossil fuel for government general revenues, and into transition investment funds that will be used (on the model of, for example, Norway) to invest in the transition to a low-carbon Canadian economy that creates good, green jobs across the country; and**

- **In the context of these policies, an end to continental pipeline projects designed to build an energy economy dependent on the export of raw bitumen. We must also work to reduce the direct environmental damage caused by oil sands development. The technology exists today for oil sands companies to dramatically reduce the amount of air and water pollution they release.**

I propose that the federal government require the industry to use available technologies to phase out toxic tailing ponds within a decade, and set evidence-based limits on other forms of pollution.

Canada is not merely dragging its own feet on climate change action, but is actively working to sabotage the commendable efforts of other countries to reduce their emissions.

Transportation is one of the largest and fastest growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions around the world. In 2007, California began development of a “Low Carbon Fuel Standard” with the aim of reducing the carbon intensity of their transportation fuels by at least 10 per cent by 2020.

In a similar move, the European Union, often seen as a global leader in the fight against climate change, has worked to lower its transportation emissions through a new ‘fuel quality directive’.

For the past four years, both the Canadian government and the Canadian oil industry have toured, sent envoys and held diplomatic meetings in an effort to persuade California and the EU to drop their plans. Canada has threatened trade sanctions and pressured governments to back down on these ‘discriminatory’ policies in numerous jurisdictions in recent years.

By continuing to interfere with the climate change policies of foreign countries, Canada is causing real harm to the climate beyond its own lack of interest in reducing emissions at home.

The Canadian government should stop interfering in other countries’ efforts to tackle global warming, and instead focus on reducing emissions within Canada.

Three other proposals to build a greener Canada

Climate change is a critical environmental and economic issue for Canada and for the world. We must address it effectively and do so now -- while concurrently addressing a number of other pressing environmental issues. Here are three others I propose we make commitments to:

(1) Clean Water and Ecosystems

Over the past couple of decades, the federal government has systematically divested itself of responsibility related to the Great Lakes, a globally significant ecosystem and the source

of drinking water for the vast majority of central Canadians. As a result, the Great Lakes are threatened once again by pollutants, invasive species and falling water levels.

I propose that Canada work with the United States to reinvest in Great Lakes protection. As requested by the Great Lakes Commission, as part of an initial five-year plan Canada should do its fair share by investing \$200 million a year, to protect and restore the Great Lakes.

Canada's northwest Pacific coast is a unique and fragile marine ecosystem. Home to B.C.'s abundant salmon rivers, it supports a diversity of life and cultures, provides livelihoods and is home to dozens of First Nations communities. An oil spill would devastate this important region. In response to the threat of oil supertanker traffic through BC's coast, more than 130 First Nation communities oppose the Gateway pipeline project¹¹ and 80 per cent of British Columbians support a ban on tanker traffic as well.¹²

I propose that Canada enact a legally-binding ban on oil tankers off Canada's northwest Pacific coast.

(2) A Safe Chemicals, Safe Kids Act.

Though modern chemistry has brought with it many advantages, it's also true that some common chemicals often found in consumer products are linked to serious human disease. The US Centre for Disease Control, which undertakes extensive yearly monitoring, has identified more than 200 synthetic chemicals coursing through the bodies of Americans. Even more worrisome is that recent US studies have found nearly 300 toxic chemicals in umbilical cord blood, many of which are linked to cancer, developmental delays and brain and nervous system problems. The scope of this problem is similar in Canada. In order to protect the health and welfare of Canadians, dramatically improving the regulations of toxic chemicals needs to be a top priority.

I propose that the federal government introduce a *Safe Chemicals, Safe Kids Act*, which would require chemical companies to demonstrate the safety of their products, supported by credible scientific evidence. Hazardous chemicals detected in human cord blood would be immediately targeted for restrictions on their use. New funding and incentives would be provided for development of safer alternatives and technical assistance in "green chemistry."

(3) Ending the Immoral Asbestos Trade

Asbestos is, in effect, banned in Canada. The federal government has spent decades removing the substance from homes, schools and offices, and has banned it from manufacturing processes. It has even been stripped out of the House of Commons. However, this past June, Canada remained the only Western country that stood opposed to listing asbestos on Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention, which would force the country to warn export recipient countries of health hazards.

Instead, the government has vocally supported the industry by funding an asbestos industry lobby group and financially assisting in reopening the Jeffrey mine, which would triple

Canada's chrysotile asbestos production and increase asbestos exports. Despite the government's insistence that chrysotile asbestos is benign, all forms of asbestos are considered carcinogenic and many health professionals assert that no level of exposure is safe.

According to the World Health Organization, approximately 90,000 people die every year from asbestos-related diseases. This figure has recently caused the Canadian Medical Association to call on the federal government to rethink its position.

I propose that the Canadian government heed the advice of Canada's physicians and end the current unethical federal position -- supporting the listing of asbestos as a hazardous substance, and beginning a just transition for workers in the industry into other more sustainable forms of employment.

¹ The Conference Board of Canada. How Canada Performs 2011: A Report Card on Canada, September 2011.

<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/documents.aspx?DID=4423>

² Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Alternative Federal Budget. P,106

³ Canadian Medical Association. No Breathing Room: *National Illness Costs of Air Pollution*. 2008.

http://www.cma.ca/index.php?ci_id=86912&la_id=1

⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/jun/03/renewables-energy>

⁵ <http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/rea/news/article/2011/01/2010-clean-energy-investment-hits-a-new-record>

⁶ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=38969&Cr=green+economy&Cr1>

⁷ Commission on Social Determinants of Health. (2008). Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health. *Final Report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health*. World Health Organization. Page 37, 39, 43, 64, 78. Retrieved from: http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241563703_eng.pdf

⁷ Toronto Public Health. (2008). *The Unequal City: Income and health inequalities in Toronto*. Page 24. Retrieved from:

http://www.toronto.ca/health/map/pdf/unequalcity_20081016.pdf

⁸ Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing & Ontario Professional Planners Institute. (2009). *Planning by design: A healthy communities handbook*. Page 2. Retrieved from: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=7171>

⁹ Toronto Board of Trade. (2011). *It's about time*. Page 16. Retrieved from:

<http://www.bot.com/VOXI/#/1/zoomedhttp://www.bot.com/VOXI/#/1/zoomed>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Wendy Stueck, "Native leaders vow to block Northern Gateway pipeline". The Globe and Mail. December 1, 2011.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/british-columbia/bc-politics/native-leaders-vow-to-block-northern-gateway-pipeline/article2257573/>

¹² <http://dogwoodinitiative.org/blog/media-centre/media-releases/april-poll>