

CITIZENS FOR
PUBLIC JUSTICE



334 MacLaren St., Suite 200
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0M6

Emissions Down and Justice All Around

Submission to the Net-Zero Advisory Body re: advice for the
Government of Canada's 2030 emissions reduction plan

December 2021

Karri Munn-Venn

Introduction

The scientific requirement of transformational climate action signaled by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) echoes Indigenous voices and affirms the knowledge and experience of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples who have cared for, and defended the lands, waters, and ecosystems across this land for generations.

[Citizens for Public Justice](#) (CPJ) is a faith-based public policy advocacy organization that believes federal policy can and must serve the public good. Our research, policy analysis, education, and advocacy work are grounded in an understanding of the sacredness of creation and the dignity of all people. From this perspective, the central role of government is to promote the well-being of all citizens and residents, and the flourishing of the Earth.

The scale of change required can feel overwhelming—especially for those who are precariously employed, experience housing insecurity, or face discrimination in their day-to-day lives. It also presents particular challenges to those whose livelihoods and sense of identity and security are tied to oil and gas, including those who work in the service sector in fossil fuel communities. Yet it is clear that ambitious action is no longer optional if we wish to halt a full-blown ecological crisis.

Towards Greater Ambition

The changing climate is presenting huge challenges across Canada, especially in the far North and along Canada's coastlines. There was record-breaking heat in British Columbia this summer, along with severe drought across the prairies and an intense, Canada-wide wildfire season. This was followed by severe flooding in both BC and Nova Scotia. Close to 600 people died in the BC heatwaves and the wildfires forced evacuations of several thousands. As a result, the urgent need for climate action has hit closer to home for many more people in Canada.

The plans presented in [A Healthy Environment and a Health Economy](#) (December 2020) and the anticipated emissions reduction of at least 85 million tonnes (approximately 32 to 40 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030) signalled important steps forward. So too did Prime Minister Trudeau's April 2021 announcement that "Canada will enhance our emissions reduction target under the Paris Agreement – known as a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) – by 40-45% below 2005 levels, by 2030." The passage of the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act in June has the potential to be a significant game changer. And, done well, follow-through on the commitment to cap emissions from Canada's oil and gas sector (made at COP26 in Glasgow) could catalyze the necessary transformation of climate and energy policy.

Such a shift is essential since the Government of Canada still needs to align our emissions-reduction target with the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement (no more than 1.5°C over pre-industrial levels). Taking into account Canada's historic emissions and our current place among the top ten global emitters, this means a fair share target to reduce national GHG emissions by 60 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

Canada must adopt a holistic suite of measures to address the climate crisis effectively and equitably. We need a just transition with significant emissions reductions by 2030 to be well on the way towards decarbonization by 2050, ushering in a new green economy grounded in human rights, equity, and sustainability that benefits all people.

Advice for the Government of Canada's 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan

CPJ welcomes the opportunity to provide input as the Net-Zero Advisory Body determines what advice it has for the Government of Canada's 2030 emissions reduction plan. We support NZAB's [five foundational values and five design principles](#) with their focus on ambitious, people-centred, attainable outcomes and their emphasis on reducing emissions as much as possible before turning to offsets or removals.

We wish to affirm the direction that has been taken by NZAB and offer three brief precisions that would serve to strengthen and clarify the values and principles noted above.

- **Stop and Drop Oil and Gas Emissions.** With respect to the specific question of capping and cutting emissions from the oil and gas sector, CPJ believes that it is imperative that the Government of Canada lean into NZAB first design principle: “act early and urgently.”

To avoid the most severe consequences of catastrophic climate change, Canada needs a revised emissions-reduction target that is consistent with the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement. More specifically, a commitment to reduce national GHG emissions by 60 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

Fundamental to achieving a more ambitious target is capping and then cutting emissions.

Of course, this only works if the cap is set at current emissions levels. This seems self-evident, and yet in 2016 as part of negotiations toward the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, the Government of Alberta agreed to cap oil sands emissions at 100 megatonnes annually; over 30 megatonnes *above* emission levels at the time (and certainly far above levels aligned with any Canadian climate target). To be effective, Canada's emissions cap must correspond to current emissions levels. Moving into the future, emissions must be required to drop—significantly—from there.

- **People First in a Just Transition.** We wholeheartedly agree that the Government of Canada must “put people first” (value #2) as we move to a decarbonized future. We also appreciate NZAB's emphasis on the need for a just transition, which we understand as referring to a shift towards an inclusive, green economy that prioritizes societal and environmental health and well-being.

A just transition is about ensuring that the weight of change is not borne disproportionately by any one group of people, and especially not those who are already marginalized. It prioritizes

low-carbon energy development, funding for skills development and retraining programs for oil and gas workers, community supports, the protection of the most vulnerable, and a robust income security program.¹

- Action Towards Social Inclusion. A just transition must also be a transition to greater equity and inclusion. People who are Indigenous, racialized, disabled, women and/or gender diverse have historically had more limited access to the labour force and lower pay once employed. Just transition policies must address these environmental and socio-economic inequalities. Fortunately, as NZAB has also noted, the move to a modern, green economy presents tremendous economic opportunities. This shift also creates space to embed the principles of equity and justice in our new economic and social development practices.

The challenges presented by the confluence of the climate crisis and COVID-19 have been unrelenting over the last two years. And yet, as signalled by the movement that galvanized in the spring of 2020 around the launch of [Principles for a Just Recovery](#), the current moment holds tremendous potential to face these crises in tandem and to create a modernized, diversified green economy built on the principles of equity and justice, knowing it will lead to major emissions reductions, create good, secure jobs, and promote the well-being of everyone in Canada.

¹ Workers facing unemployment as a result of the managed decline of oil and gas, *should* be supported through this transition through Canada's Employment Insurance program, but in light of long-standing program limitations (including uneven qualification requirements and inadequate supports), the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit and the Guaranteed Income Supplement for Seniors offer better models for just transition income supports. Another option would be the implementation of a Guaranteed Liveable Income (for all or part of the Canadian population) to ease the burden and build resilience through the transition.

Citizens for Public Justice seeks human flourishing and the integrity of creation as our faithful response to God's call for love and justice.

We envision a world in which individuals, communities, societal institutions, and governments all contribute to and benefit from the common good.

Our mission is to promote public justice in Canada by shaping key public policy debates through research and analysis, publishing, and public dialogue. CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society, and governments to support policies and practices which reflect God's call for love, justice, and the flourishing of Creation.

Citizens for Public Justice

Faith | Justice | Politics

334 MacLaren St., Suite 200 Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0M6

cpj@cpj.ca

facebook.com/citizensforpublicjustice

twitter.com/publicjustice

T: 1.800.667.8046, 613.232.0275

www.cpj.ca