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ACADEMICS SET CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL CLIMATE ACTION BY BRITISH COLUMBIA

Open letter to B.C. Premier outlines elements of effective policies ahead of first ministers’ meeting with Trudeau

VANCOUVER—More than 25 prominent academics and policy experts sent an open letter today to B.C. Premier Christy Clark, setting a high bar for the Province’s forthcoming draft climate leadership plan.

The letter states that “the Premier’s goals of reducing carbon pollution and growing the economy are compatible.” To be credible, however, B.C.’s climate plan must set interim targets aligned with B.C.’s legislated 2050 emissions reduction target. The plan must also include a variety of measures that collectively are projected to meet the province’s emissions targets, including:

- Increasing the level and scope of the carbon tax
- Increasing the stringency of the low-carbon fuel standard
- Strengthening building standards to reduce carbon pollution
- Implementing a zero-emission vehicle standard for motor vehicles with sales targets
- Regulating LNG and natural gas production to reduce carbon pollution

Among the letter’s signatories are prominent experts from a range of disciplines and academic institutions, including: Mark Jaccard, a renowned energy economist at SFU; George Hoberg, a specialist in environmental and resource management policies at UBC; Kathryn Harrison, a celebrated expert on environmental policy; Jonn Axsen, a specialist in sustainable energy system transition at SFU; and Kirsten Zickfeld, an expert in atmospheric climate science.

The letter and a full list of signatories follows.

QUOTES

“For the Premier's climate plan to be credible, it must have one or a combination of a rising carbon tax, a falling emissions cap, or increasingly stringent regulations that independent experts agree will meet her promised reductions. With these policies in place, B.C. can drive down its carbon pollution while growing its economy.” ~ Mark Jaccard
“Research shows that roughly a third of BC drivers already want electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles. A zero-emissions vehicle mandate would require auto makers to give British Columbians cleaner options for their next vehicle purchase—just as we already see in California and eight other American states. It is win-win policy for consumers and the climate.” ~ Jonn Axsen

"In 2007, British Columbia enacted a world-leading framework for climate policy. That was an impressive start. But to make real change, these policies need to be updated and strengthened—BC needs to plug the final gaps so we can sustain this momentum and confidently transition to a clean, green, vibrant economy and society." ~ Jonn Axsen

"To credibly present itself as a climate leader in Paris, BC must ramp up its efforts to reduce carbon pollution. It must set ambitious targets for 2020 and 2030 and present a portfolio of effective policies to achieve those targets". ~ Kirsten Zickfeld

"A credible climate action plan must include regulation of the LNG industry. New LNG projects should only be allowed to go forward if compatible with BC's targets". ~ Kirsten Zickfeld

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Dear Premier Clark,

Your goals of reducing carbon pollution and growing the economy are compatible, but only if your upcoming climate leadership plan includes meaningful policy to reduce carbon pollution in a manner compatible with a global carbon budget that limits global warming to 2 degrees Celsius.

British Columbia has led the world in driving down carbon pollution and growing the economy. But this is no longer the case. British Columbia’s carbon pollution has increased since 2012 and will continue to increase without your action.

In response you’ve created a climate leadership team and plan to share draft recommendations in late November or early December. This plan must include interim targets that align with B.C.’s legislated 2050 target. Any targets must be backed by effective policy and evidence-based public analysis showing how the policies will reduce carbon pollution, while maintaining a competitive and affordable economy. The plan must include a variety of effective measures that collectively are projected to meet the province’s emissions targets. These measures include:

- Increasing the level and scope of the carbon tax
- Increasing the stringency of the low-carbon fuel standard
- Strengthening building standards to reduce carbon pollution
- Implementing a zero-emission vehicle standard for motor vehicles with sales targets
- Regulating LNG and natural gas production to reduce carbon pollution

LNG development must fit within the targets, and the burden to reduce emissions should not fall solely on the rest of the economy. These policies can be supported by initiatives to protect low-income families and help businesses adapt. However, if we don’t see evidence of meaningful policy, your ambition to be acting on climate is not credible.

Sincerely,

Mark Jaccard – Professor Environmental Economics, SFU
Kathryn Harrison – Professor Political Science, UBC
George Hoberg – Professor Department of Forest Resources Management, UBC
Jonn Axsen – Assistant Professor Energy and Materials Research Group, SFU
Kirsten Zickfeld – Associate Professor
Sarah E. Gergel, Associate Professor
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