

BACKGROUND

2017 Report Card: Top Asks for Climate Action: Ramping up Low Carbon Communities

Released by the Columbia Institute, June 1, 2017

Context:

In 2015, 197 nations signed on to the Paris Agreement, agreeing to slash greenhouse gas emissions in order to keep global warming below two degrees Celsius and to work toward 1.5 degrees Celsius. Canada's ability to meet its Paris commitment involves the leadership of local governments. Local government decisions impact over fifty percent of greenhouse gas emissions and sixty percent of energy consumption.

Enhancing the ability of local governments across Canada to act on greenhouse gas emissions is both a powerful opportunity and an absolute necessity for meeting Canada's climate commitments says a newly published report card released by the Centre for Civic Governance at the Columbia Institute. The report card was launched at a press briefing at the Parliament in Ottawa on June 1.

Purpose:

The *2017 Report Card* evaluates federal government action on the 2016 study *Top Asks for Climate Action: Ramping up Low Carbon Communities*. Released in Winnipeg in June 2016, the study pinpoints the measures local governments need from the federal, provincial and territorial governments to realize climate action. It lays out 18 federal policies and 24 provincial/territorial policies for capacity building, funding, buildings, transportation and smart growth. The 2017 report card examines the 18 federal policies through the prism of commitment, funding and implementation.

Key findings:

In the report card, the federal government gets check marks for:

1. Establishing a national price on carbon.
2. Funding for local government capacity building.
3. Establishing a national transportation strategy.
4. Matching transit funding to local governments.

The report card also notes room for improvement:

- 1) Establishing scientific GHG targets that will meet Paris Agreement commitments.
- 2) Establishing a mechanism that will guarantee new infrastructure spending that won't lock Canadians into a high carbon path.
- 3) Moving faster on eliminating fossil fuel subsidies.
- 4) Providing more robust tools for retrofitting homes and commercial buildings.
- 5) Providing all communities with energy, emissions and natural capital baseline data.
- 6) Prioritizing transit and active transportation over auto-only infrastructure.
- 7) Giving priority to community and Indigenous-owned renewable energy projects to advance energy democracy in Canada.

- 8) Developing a national thermal energy strategy.
- 9) Helping local governments transition to low carbon fleets.

Key Messages

1. Columbia institute issues report card on federal climate action.
2. We need to speed up our climate action plans. We're off to a good start, but we have 50% still to go! Canada can't be a climate leader without federal government action.
3. Canada must ramp up climate action by empowering low carbon communities. We can't be a climate leader without local government action.
4. Local governments influence 50% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions and are taking the lead on climate action, but they can't do it alone. We need federal support.

Quotes

“In 2017, we can say that the federal government has implemented 28% of our *Top Asks for Climate Action*. Another 22% are in progress. That leaves fifty percent awaiting action. After decades of climate foot dragging, we are in rapid catch up mode, and that fifty percent offers great potential.”

Charley Beresford is the Executive Director of the Columbia Institute

“We need a guarantee that new infrastructure funding won't lock Canadians into a high carbon path. Now is the time to ensure that public infrastructure spending and climate change policy are tied together.”

Charley Beresford is the Executive Director of the Columbia Institute

“To power up the transition to a low-carbon, climate resilient future, the way forward is clear: power up communities.”

David Miller is the President and CEO of WWF (World Wildlife Fund)

“Federal, provincial and territorial governments must do more to ensure local governments have the tools they need to engage Canadians, where they live, work and play, in the transition to a low carbon economy. I'd like to see measures that support energy democracy.”

Dr. Karen Farbridge is an adjunct professor in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University and Urban Connector

"Had the world acted on such 'top asks' earlier, sustainability might have been an easier path forward. Instead, many communities are now reeling from warning bursts of extreme weather and full-on climate turmoil may yet be the legacy of further procrastination and denial. It's time for decisive action."

Dr. William Rees is a bio-ecologist, ecological economist, former Director and Professor Emeritus of the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning

“Our greenest city action plan calls for Net Zero Buildings by 2030. We need the federal and provincial governments to back us up and help communities across the country ramp up deep retrofits and make sure our new builds have Net Zero emissions.”

Andrea Reimer is a Vancouver city councillor and the lead councillor on the City of Vancouver's award-winning [Greenest City Action Plan](#)

Download Report:

To view the 2017 report card and 2016 report, visit <http://www.civicgovernance.ca/top-asks/>

About the Columbia Institute:

The Columbia Institute is a Vancouver-based, Canada-focused public policy think-tank focused on inclusive, sustainable communities. Our programs focus on civic governance, leadership initiatives, responsible investment, and capacity building. Established in 2000, the Columbia Institute is a national charitable organization. Learn more: <http://www.columbiainstitute.ca/>

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