

Climate Climbdown: Sacrificing the Canadian Economy for Net-Zero Goals Others Are Abandoning

By Gwyn Morgan

Canada has spent the past decade pursuing climate policies that promised environmental transformation but delivered economic decline. Ottawa's fixation on net-zero targets – first under Justin Trudeau and now under Prime Minister Mark Carney – has meant staggering public expenditures, resource project cancellations and rising energy costs, all while failing to reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuels. Now, as key international actors reassess the net-zero doctrine, Canada stands increasingly alone in imposing heavy burdens for negligible gains.



The Trudeau government launched its agenda in 2015 by signing the [Paris Climate Agreement](#) aimed at limiting the forecast

increase in global average temperature to 1.5°C by the end of the century. It followed the next year with the [Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change](#) that imposed more than 50 measures on the economy, key among them a carbon “pricing” regime – Liberal-speak for taxes on every Canadian citizen and industry. Then came the [2030 Emissions Reduction Plan](#), committing Canada to cut greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent below 2005 levels by 2030, and to achieve net-zero by 2050. And then the “On-Farm Climate Action Fund,” the “Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program” and the “Green Municipal Fund.”

It’s a staggering list of nation-impooverishing subsidies, taxes and restrictions, made worse by regulatory measures that hammered the energy industry. The Trudeau government cancelled the fully-permitted Northern Gateway pipeline, killing more than \$1 billion in private investment and stranding hundreds of billions of dollars’ worth of crude oil in the ground. The Energy East project collapsed after Ottawa declined to challenge Quebec’s political obstruction, cutting off a route that could have supplied Atlantic refineries and European markets. Natural gas developers fared no better: 11 of 12 proposed liquefied natural gas export terminals were abandoned amid federal regulatory delays and policy uncertainty. Only a single LNG project in Kitimat, B.C., survived.

None of this has had the desired effect. Between Trudeau’s election in 2015 and 2023, fossil fuels’ share of Canada’s energy supply actually *increased* from 75 to 77 percent. As for saving the world, or even making some contribution towards doing so, Canada contributes just 1.5 percent of global GHG emissions. If our emissions went to zero tomorrow, the emissions growth from China and India would make that up in just a few weeks.

And this green fixation has been massively expensive. [Two newly released studies](#) by the Fraser Institute found that Ottawa and the four biggest provinces have either spent or

foregone a mind-numbing \$158 billion to create just 68,000 “clean” jobs – an eye-watering cost of over \$2.3 million per job “created”. At that, the green economy’s share of GDP crept up only 0.3 percentage points.

The rest of the world is waking up to this folly. A decade after the Paris Agreement, over 81 percent of the world’s energy still comes from fossil fuels. Environmental statistician and author Bjorn Lomborg points out that achieving global net-zero by 2050 would require removing the equivalent of the combined emissions of China and the United States in each of the next five years. “This puts us in the realm of science fiction,” [he wrote](#) recently.

In July, the U.S. Department of Energy released a [major assessment](#) assembled by a team of highly credible climate scientists which asserted that “CO₂-induced warming appears to be less damaging economically than commonly believed,” and that aggressive mitigation policies might be “more detrimental than beneficial.” The report found no evidence of rising frequency or severity of hurricanes, floods, droughts or tornadoes in U.S. historical data, while noting that U.S. emissions reductions would have “undetectably small impacts” on global temperatures in any case.

U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright welcomed the findings, noting that improving living standards depends on reliable, affordable energy. The same day, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed rescinding the 2009 [“endangerment finding”](#) that had designated CO₂ and other GHGs as “pollutants.” It had led to sweeping restrictions on oil and gas development and fuelled policies that the current administration estimates cost the U.S. economy at least US\$1 trillion in lost growth.

Even long-time climate alarmists are backtracking. Ted Nordhaus, a prominent American critic, [recently acknowledged](#) that the dire global warming scenarios used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change rely on implausible

combinations of rapid population growth, strong economic expansion and stagnant technology. Economic growth typically reduces population increases and accelerates technological improvement, he pointed out, meaning emissions trends will likely be lower than predicted. Even [Bill Gates](#) has tempered his outlook, writing that climate change will not be “cataclysmic,” and that although it will hurt the poor, “it will not be the only or even the biggest threat to their lives and welfare.” Poverty and disease pose far greater threats and resources, he wrote, should be focused where they can do the most good now.

Yet Ottawa remains unmoved. Prime Minister Carney’s latest budget raises industrial carbon taxes to as much as \$170 per tonne by 2030, increasing the competitive disadvantage of Canadian industries in a time of weak productivity and declining investment. These taxes will not measurably alter global emissions, but they will deepen Canada’s economic malaise and push production – and emissions – toward jurisdictions with more lax standards. As others retreat from net-zero delusions, Canada moves further offside global energy policy trends – extending our country’s sad decline.

The original, [full-length version](#) of this article was recently published in [C2C Journal](#).

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