

Climate Choices Canada Commentary¹

Climate Change Policy: Who are We Talking to, and Who is Listening?²

By

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Key Observations:

- Policymakers need to pay more attention to partners and stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of measures to address climate change.
- Important partners include non-environment departments and agencies, provincial and territorial governments, municipalities, the private sector, non-governmental and local organizations, Aboriginal Peoples, and Canadian citizens.
- Failing to recognize the perspectives of partners and stakeholders, or ineffective engagement could hold up progress or undermine the political viability of climate change measures altogether.
- Useful strategies that can help policymakers to build constituencies, formulate measures, and coordinate action on climate change include improvements to transparency, framing, linkages, and processes surrounding the formulation and implementation of climate change measures.

Introduction:

Partners and stakeholders have an important impact on the policy making and implementation process, shaping what is politically and operationally feasible. “Unlikely allies” can lend critical support for a policy measure,⁴ while opposition from key partners and constituents can hold up progress. If Canada is to move forward with effective measures to address climate change, policymakers must identify and engage key partners and stakeholders. Policymakers must also dedicate attention to understanding stakeholder perceptions, interests, and concerns, and must frame climate change measures in ways that are relevant to these actors. The following discussion offers practical guidance for policymakers. First, key partners and stakeholders, and

¹ *Climate Choices Canada* took place February 18 to 20, 2016 in Waterloo, Ontario. This commentary is based on the conference presentations and participants’ discussions.

² Insight offered by Dale Beugin during Session 6 “Wrap-up” of the Climate Choices Canada conference.

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⁴ Mel Cappe (Session 2 “Stock Taking Panel”).

their perspectives, interests, and concerns, are identified. Second, strategies for effective engagement are proposed.

The Importance of Engagement:

Several relevant partners need to be engaged in climate change policy discussions and in the implementation of specific measures in different ways. These partners include other departments and agencies, provincial and territorial governments, municipalities, the private sector, non-governmental and local organizations, Aboriginal Peoples, and Canadian citizens. In addition to these partners, the international community is an important stakeholder that should also be considered in climate policy and action. Policymakers need to be aware that different partners and stakeholders do not necessarily have the same knowledge or understanding on a given issue, policy, or measure. Providing information to these stakeholders does not guarantee that they will share the same perspectives.⁵ In order to effectively build support for climate policy measures, policymakers need to pay attention to the knowledge, perspectives, interests, and concerns of each of its partners.

Government Departments and Agencies:

While climate change is conventionally thought of as an environmental issue, environment departments do not necessarily have the full range of tools or authorities needed to make necessary changes to address climate change. Whether this means mainstreaming climate change into all policies or undertaking specific measures in certain sectors (e.g. the energy or transportation sector), numerous departments with differing responsibilities will need to work together and coordinate policy and action to build a coherent approach to climate change.⁶ Although climate change is rising on the political agenda, many of these departments have never dealt with climate change or environmental issues before, and have not yet developed the knowledge or expertise to consider it in policies, planning, and decision making at the working level. Better support is needed at the working level to share knowledge and build skills to ensure that climate change is addressed from all dimensions.⁷

Provinces and Territories:

Canada's climate change policy context is characterized by a history of dynamic relations among federal, provincial, and territorial governments. While certain areas of responsibility have been explicitly delineated in the Canadian Constitution, other areas, including the environment, have not. Responsibility in these areas is considered to be shared. The specific delineation of responsibility has been the product of negotiations among governments. The negotiation of roles and responsibilities has been, and will continue to be, central in discussions on climate change. Governments are not necessarily bound by the division of responsibility adopted under previous governments or for previous arrangements, and opportunities for negotiating new roles remain open.

Several roles for the federal government were proposed by presenters at the *Climate Choices*

⁵ Mark Jaccard (Pre-Conference “Climate Policy and Decision Making”, Session 2 “Stocktaking”, “Dinner Keynote”) quoting Richard Thaler.

⁶ Mark Winfield (Pre-Conference “Climatizing Government”).

⁷ Mark Winfield (Pre-Conference “Climatizing Government”).

Canada conference, including leader, mediator, and “systems integrator.”⁸ Beyond the delineation of roles and responsibilities, federal, provincial, and territorial governments need to continue building on previous experience in working together collaboratively, and put in place a more institutionalized mechanism to facilitate collaboration and coordination on climate change.⁹ It is important to remember that provinces and territories have diverse interests and concerns, which are defined by different political, economic, and environmental situations. Moreover, governments need to be realistic about their role, and recognize that they can provide a framework but not the solution. Such a framework should engage all partners and should be flexible enough to encourage creativity and innovation, rather than prescribe specific actions.¹⁰ Failing to do so could mean another “lost decade” of ineffective in climate change policy.¹¹

Municipalities and Local Government:

Municipalities and other local government administrative entities have an important role to play in addressing climate change, given that 81 percent of Canada’s population lives in urban centres (Statistics Canada, 2011) and given that urban lifestyle and transportation practices have been identified as major sources of greenhouse gas emissions (and thus major challenges to be addressed through climate change measures). Municipalities are in direct or indirect control of 44 percent of greenhouse gas emissions through city planning, transportation infrastructure, and other measures (FCM, 2009).¹² However, many municipalities that might have the willingness to undertake climate change measures face challenges in achieving results because of limited capacity and resources. Provincial and federal governments could provide better support to municipalities in this regard. Moreover, a major gap exists between the goals and targets articulated in federal and provincial strategies and the specific roles and concrete actions required of municipalities to realize progress.¹³ Better progress can be achieved through better engagement of municipalities to create common understanding, ensure realistic expectations, and communicate needs and support.

Private Sector:

Businesses in a number of different sectors make important contributions to climate change mitigation and adaptation through their business practices, and investment choices. Gaining their support for specific climate change measures adds credibility, and can help build support among other stakeholders.¹⁴ Although businesses are conventionally considered to be against taking action on climate change, many businesses have already begun considering climate change as a relevant factor in business decision making, client service, product development, and are key participants in the emerging cap-and-trade markets.¹⁵ Key private sector actors include those in the energy, transportation, and other emissions intensive sectors, as well as the banking,

⁸ Points raised by Mel Cappe (Session 2 “Stock Taking”), Mark Winfield, and Paul Boothe (Session 3, “Linkages and Coordination”), respectively, reiterated by Simon Dalby (Session 6 “Wrap-Up”).

⁹ James Meadowcroft (Session 2 “Stock Taking”).

¹⁰ Points raised by Mel Cappe (Session 2 “Stock Taking”) and Mark Jaccard (“Dinner Keynote”), respectively.

¹¹ Expression coined by Mark Winfield (Session 3 “Linkages”).

¹² Erik Davies (Pre-Conference “Climatizing Government”).

¹³ Sarah Brown (Session 5 “Subfederal and Sectoral”).

¹⁴ Point raised by Mel Cappe and James Meadowcroft (Session 2 “Stock Taking”).

¹⁵ Points raised by Laura Zizzo (Pre-Conference “Climatizing Government”), Mark Jaccard (“Dinner Keynote”), and David Houle (Session 5, “Subfederal and Sectoral”), respectively.

insurance, and financial sectors.¹⁶ Many more “unlikely allies” have yet to be identified. However, the private sector needs a clear signal and guidance about what is expected of them, and how they can contribute.¹⁷

Non-governmental, Local, and Aboriginal Organizations:

Like the private sector, non-governmental organizations, local organizations, and Aboriginal peoples organizations are important partners for building public support for specific climate change measures, as well as key partners in implementation. These organizations are eager to participate in discussions. The perspectives, interests, and concerns of these organizations are wide ranging, but are not necessarily opposed to a given policy approach. Their exclusion from discussions, however, could have consequences for the political and practical viability of proposed measures, as illustrated through recent statements by Aboriginal organizations that were excluded from talks on the role of Aboriginal peoples in addressing climate change (McSheffrey, 2016).

Canadian Citizens:

Public support for climate change policy and measures will be crucial, and Canadians should be actively informed and engaged on climate change issues, proposed measures, and progress. While building public support provides a huge advantage in achieving tangible progress, failing to do so can have disastrous consequences, both politically and environmentally.¹⁸ For example, the lack of public awareness about climate policy measures in British Columbia was considered to be a major factor that contributed to negative public attitudes towards its carbon tax.¹⁹ At the same time, addressing climate change will ultimately require fundamental transformations in the economy, lifestyles, and attitudes of Canadians.²⁰ Encouraging the active participation of Canadians will be essential if Canada hopes to achieve progress.

The International Community:

Although addressing climate change will involve actions at the national and sub-national level, Canada also needs to pay attention to its international commitments as well as its international image. Presenters expressed acute awareness of Canada’s negative image abroad as a result of its lack of action on climate change, and emphasized the need for Canada to re-brand itself.²¹ Foreign countries, businesses, and international organization may be impacted, either directly or indirectly, by Canada’s choices. The country’s climate action (or inaction) has the potential to impact future economic and political relationships.

Strategies for Engagement:

Useful strategies that will enable governments to build constituencies, formulate measures, build

¹⁶ Points raised by Thomas Courchene (Pre-conference “Climate Policy and Decision Making”), David Estrin and Laura Zizzo (Pre-Conference “Climatizing Government”), Mark Jaccard (“Dinner Keynote”), and Jason Thistlethwaite (Session 5, “Subfederal and Sectoral”).

¹⁷ Laura Zizzo (Pre-Conference “Climatizing Government”).

¹⁸ Point raised by Mel Cappe (Session 2, “Stocktaking”), Barry Rabe (Session 3, “Linkages and Coordination”) and Mark Jaccard (“Dinner Keynote”).

¹⁹ Mark Jaccard (“Dinner Keynote”).

²⁰ Point raised by Mark Winfield (Pre-Conference “Climatizing Government”).

²¹ Simon Dalby (Pre-Conference “Climate Policy and Decision Making”, Session 6, “Wrap-Up”).

support, and coordinate action on climate change include improvements to transparency, framing, linkages, and process. These strategies are outlined below.

Transparency:

Canada needs to clearly and honestly communicate the details, costs, impacts, progress, and results of ideas and measures to address climate change as well as their implementation. Pushing through measures and burying the details will not conceal difficult news. The lack of information and public awareness about climate policy measures in British Columbia, for example, undermined public support.²²

Framing:

Alongside transparency, the way climate change issues and measures are communicated needs to change fundamentally, by focusing explicitly on benefits and opportunities that such measures will introduce, and by linking costs with benefits.²³ Canada's approach to climate change should be framed as a transition to a low-carbon economy, and should emphasize opportunities for business growth, innovation, and prosperity rather than the painful changes that the transition will involve.²⁴ Framing is not "rhetoric," and governments need to be clear about benefits and managing public expectations.²⁵

Linkages:

As part of framing, Canada needs to dedicate more attention to how climate change impacts various sectors, and how action in different sectors can address climate change. Greater focus on linkages can help identify concrete issues and actions on which partners can be engaged. For example, public health and quality of life considerations are linked with climate change.²⁶ Identifying and emphasizing benefits and improvements in these and other complimentary areas can help build support for climate change measures among various constituent groups in the immediate term as well as on an ongoing basis.²⁷

Process:

Canada needs to institutionalize a meaningful process for engaging and collaborating with multiple partners on climate change issues, measures, implementation, and progress. Canada does not currently have appropriate institutions and mechanisms for this purpose.²⁸ The current willingness of governments to meet and discuss climate change is a positive step, but Canada needs to go further. Immediate next steps include: 1) initiate a national dialogue about Canada's national identity or "brand" with respect to climate change and more broadly;²⁹ 2) formulate a nation-wide vision for Canada's future; 3) develop a multi-sector framework that includes roles and responsibilities for all of Canada's partners in key areas of impact.

²² Mark Jaccard (Pre-Conference "Climate Policy and Decision Making", Session 2 "Stocktaking", "Dinner Keynote"), Barry Rabe (Session 3 "Linkages and Coordination").

²³ Barry Rabe (Session 3 "Linkages and Coordination"), Natalie Chalifour (Session 4 "Instrument Design"), Sarah Brown (Session 5, "Subfederal and Sectoral").

²⁴ James Meadowcroft (Session 2 "Stocktaking"), Natalie Chalifour (Session 4 "Instrument Design").

²⁵ David McLaughlin ("Keynote Address").

²⁶ Mark Winfield, Erik Davies (Pre-Conference "Climatizing Government")

²⁷ Barry Rabe (Session 3 "Linkages and Coordination").

²⁸ Mark Winfield (Session 3 "Linkages and Coordination").

²⁹ Simon Dalby (Session 6 "Wrap-up"),

Summary:

Policymakers need to recognize the important role of partners and stakeholders, and need to encourage their active engagement and participation in order to realize tangible progress on climate change. These partners include other non-environment departments and agencies, provincial and territorial governments, municipalities, the private sector, non-governmental and local organizations, Aboriginal Peoples, and Canadians. Understanding their perceptions, interests, and concerns, and framing measures in ways that are relevant to them will help build support, and better engage these partners. Institutionalizing a meaningful process for engaging and collaborating with multiple partners on an ongoing basis will help ensure that they continue to be engaged as Canada moves forward to address climate change.

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