
1 August 2018

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2019 Budget
by Foundation for Environmental Stewardship**

Recommendation: That the government provide annual funding in the amount of \$10,000,000 to mobilize Canadians for a collective imagination of a clean future through civil society, industry associations, and local governments.

Background

In partnership with 23 United Nations entities, Foundation for Environmental Stewardship¹ (FES) has mobilized over 5,900 Canadian youth from 77 universities and colleges to advocate and locally implement the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through 32 trainings on campuses across Canada.

We are also leading *3% Project* which mobilizes 1,000,000 Canadian youth - that's 3% of Canada - through 4 national tours across 600 high schools. 70% of our tour route is in Indigenous and rural communities with a population of less than 100,000. *3% Project* provides youth-friendly education on climate solutions, themed *The Future We Want*, in the holistic context of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Students identify, analyze, and develop solutions to their community's Biggest Sustainability Challenge, exercising the muscle for sustainability problem-solving skills to make it a core competency of our generation.

We have met with young Canadians, in their communities, from coast to coast to coast, in all their diversity. Out of these conversations, FES is making a recommendation for the pre-budget consultations in advance of the 2019 budget.

Rationale

"If you wish to build a ship, do not divide the men into teams and send them to the forest to cut wood. Instead, teach them to long for the vast and endless sea."

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of *Le Petit Prince*

"... public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently he who moulds public sentiment, goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed."

Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States of America

The transition to a clean future that is decarbonized and electrified is an inevitable economic pathway with tremendous economic opportunities that Canada must not miss. The writing has been on the wall for decades. It's not a question of whether, but how fast, we should transition to a clean future to ensure Canada's economic competitiveness in the global market.

¹ Foundation for Environmental Stewardship (FES) is a youth-led, youth-serving sustainable development organization. FES is a Canadian not-for-profit corporation whose registered charity number is 801430307 RR0001. FES is an accredited organization by the United Nations who has a special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. Our mission is to create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future by empowering youth. We envision every young person who will grow to make their personal and professional choices to reflect the human impact on the environment for a sustainable future.

The following image provides a glimpse into a clean future: Louise is perfectly on time at work this morning, having summoned her self-driving electric car from the quick tap of her smart phone. She sits free, rolls down the car window to breathe deeply into the clean, crisp air, enjoying the morning ride. As the energy-efficient smart grid powers the vehicle, her mind wanders casually, not to any escalating hydro bill that awaits her at the end of the month, but to the day's tasks that lie ahead.

Sadly, most Canadians struggle to visualize a clean future². This is largely contributable to the dark money from fossil fuel companies that is perversely undermining civic and democratic processes. The rapid transition away from fossil fuels would prevent the production of tens of trillions of dollars of fossil fuel resources and the realization of hundreds of billions of dollars in profits. Those with fiduciary responsibilities to maximize returns on shareholder investments of fossil fuel enterprises are consequently required by law to take all steps in their power, including public relations, advertising, electoral campaign contributions, and astroturfing³, to block or delay effective action on investing in the economic future of Canada.

While an exact accounting of such covert spending is obviously impossible, one article⁴ shows that just between 2012-2013, various fossil fuel advocacy groups have spent over \$10 million on ads of various kinds. The former federal government also spent \$16.5 million on its “responsible resource development” ads in 2013 alone. As a result, we have a nation whose citizens are lied to and left confused.

Lasting policy frameworks do not go against the will of the people. A collective imagination of a clean future, therefore, is a pre-requisite to enact policies that match the ambition of the Paris Agreement. Canadians are, however, divided on climate action that matches the ambition of the Paris Agreement. While 79% of Canadians believe the earth is warming, only 44% believe that the warming is mostly a result of human activities.⁵

Ecofiscal Commission’s 2018 survey on Perceptions of Carbon Pricing⁶ also revealed a profound state of confusion on carbon pricing. Even among those who agree that climate change is mainly caused by human activities, only two-thirds see carbon pricing as the best way to curb carbon emissions, and less than half can confidently say they know what carbon pricing actually is. More than half the Canadians from provinces that already have carbon pricing instruments admitted they were unaware of its existence.

How can we expect people to pay for a transition whose benefits we cannot clearly picture?

² <https://ecofiscal.ca/reports/clearing-air-carbon-pricing-helps-canada-fight-climate-change/>

³ The practice of masking the sponsors of a message or organization (e.g., political, advertising, religious or public relations) to make it appear as though it originates from and is supported by a grassroots participant(s).

⁴ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/energy-and-resources/big-oils-push-to-move-the-mushy-middle/article12464590/>

⁵ <http://environment.yale.edu/ycom/canada/2016/>

⁶ http://ecofiscal.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Ecofiscal_Polling_February2018_FINAL_RELEASE.pdf

Recommendation Explanation

The Government of Canada is already committed to inform the public on the benefits of a clean future to ensure Canada's competitiveness in climate change, clean economy, and sustainable development. These commitments were made through article 12 of the Paris Agreement, target 4.7 of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, and others.

Not-for-profits can organize townhall discussions with various stakeholders in local communities, develop curriculums for students, provide professional development for teachers, and educate councillors, legislators, and parliamentarians on the benefits of a clean future.

Industry associations can better market the benefits of green buildings, energy-efficient gadgets and measurement tools, and cost-saving roof, pipe, and wall insulations. They can train car dealers on the benefits of electric vehicles and host trade shows and conferences to showcase cutting-edge Canadian technologies.

Local governments can inform the public on the benefits of existing programs that advance a clean future, remind citizens on how they can reap the benefits of clean future, and report back to the public on how they are ensuring Canada's economic competitiveness through realizing a clean future.

We call upon the Canadian government, therefore, to provide annual funding in the amount of \$10,000,000 to mobilize Canadians for a collective imagination of a clean future through civil society, industry associations, and local governments.

Contact

Steve S.J. Lee, Executive Director
steve@FESplanet.org
416-786-8938