



Proposed Amendments to Bill C-12:
Canadian Net Zero Emissions Climate Accountability Act

Submitted by: Pour Nos Enfants/For Our Kids Montréal

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Pour Nos Enfants/For Our Kids Montréal is a community organization based in Tiohtià:ke (Québec). Our goal is to build a supportive community of families who advocate for climate solutions and a just world for all. Our organizing team is made up of parents, grandparents, caregivers, and kids – all volunteering their time and creativity to combat the climate crisis. Since our founding in 2019, we've mobilized thousands of supporters to take part in effective collective action.

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“For the health of our communities and the well-being of our children and grandchildren, we need stronger climate action – including real emissions reduction accountability – and we need it now.” For Our Kids Network

“The level of ambition we demand is not too high for Canadians to accept, and neither is it too high for government to achieve.” For Our Kids Montreal

Introduction:

For all its good intentions, the Climate Accountability Act (Bill C-12) is currently not robust enough to protect our kids. As parents and citizens, we are stepping in to insist that it be strengthened. The United Nations says we have less than 9 years to slash carbon emissions by at least 55% if we want to cap global warming at 1.5°C – the last threshold to maintain civilization as we know it – and yet Bill C-12 proposes cuts of only 45% by 2030, includes no means of ensuring that targets are met, and offers no way to hold government responsible for carrying out what has been promised.

Canada's 30-year history of failing to keep our climate promises makes this lack of accountability unacceptable. In 1992, our country signed its first accord at the Earth Summit. Ten years later, having failed to meet those initial targets, and with increasing emissions, we signed the Kyoto Protocol. The same pattern has been seen decade after decade – with failed targets and increased emissions – from the Kyoto Protocol through to the Copenhagen Accord and the Paris Agreement¹.

We will no longer stand by and watch as the world warms to a point that is dangerous for our kids. Fires, droughts, floods, storms and heat waves are already hurting our communities from coast to coast to coast. As weather becomes more extreme, the risk of disease, water and food insecurity, unrest, and violence, grows with every year.

There will be no subsequent chances if Canada fails to meet the targets in this specific Act. Our country has had decades to address climate change, but now time has literally run out.

An unamended Bill C-12 puts our children's health and security at risk

For Our Kids Montreal's members include physicians who have a front row seat to the health impacts of climate change on young people. They report that emergency departments in Canada are inundated with young children and babies struggling to breathe from an alarming increase in respiratory disease, a direct effect of increasing emissions which also leads to undue mortality. They are also seeing increasing numbers of children with incidences of hyperthermia after exposure to excessive heat, for instance playing outdoors at summer camps or at soccer games. In a trend that is new to such a temperate country, 2700 Canadians over the age of 65 die annually as a result of increasing heat and this increase accounts for an over 80% increase in lost

¹ Hrvatin, Vanessa. "A brief history of Canada's climate change agreements." Canadian Geographic. May 30, 2016. <https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/brief-history-canadas-climate-change-agreements>

work time². Our polluted air is now literally killing 10 million people globally each year, and in North America almost 900 babies a year die due to the effects of particulate matter in the air as a result of the burning of fossil fuels³.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought these heartbreaking – yet avoidable – health problems into deeper focus; giving us a terrifying preview of what we face as the climate emergency intensifies. The pandemic has also exposed the fact that existing inequities intensify in times of crises, more greatly impacting our most vulnerable. Above all, COVID-19 has taught us that we are not invincible – and so we cannot ignore the climate crisis, because doing so will lead to painful and irreversible losses in human, plant and animal life, with devastating impacts on our economy.

This is not science fiction or exaggeration. This is our current reality. The immediate impact we have already seen on our children's health and on vulnerable populations has proven to us the seriousness of the situation we find ourselves in, and we want binding, real solutions to prevent the worst from happening.

Amendments to Bill C-12

As parents, we *cannot* contemplate the idea of failing our children while we still have the chance to keep them safe, and so we demand very specific changes to Bill C-12 to ensure that it is effective in mitigating climate change:

1. We demand a crystal-clear system of accountability: Bill C-12 must ensure that Canada meets designated targets by making them legally-binding, and by using mandatory timelines, just as the UK Climate Act does. This forces all divisions of government to take climate change into account for each decision taken and every new policy developed. It also guarantees that regardless of which party is in power, our children's future is not jeopardized.

2. We demand a non-partisan advisory committee with our children's interests at heart: The majority of this committee must consist of experts in climate science and exclude industry representatives. This committee should be involved in evaluating targets and the plans set forth to meet the aforementioned targets and must be able to speak out publicly to ensure transparency. The UK has set up a very effective advisory board which could be the prototype for the

² Watts, N., Amann, M., Arneau, N., Ayeb-Karlsson, S., Belesova, K., & Boykoff, M. (2019). DEFINE_ME. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)32596-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32596-6/fulltext).

³ Vohra, Karn, et al. "Global mortality from outdoor fine particle pollution generated by fossil fuel combustion: Results from GEOS-Chem." *Environmental Research*, vol. 195, April 2021, 110754, ISSN 0013-9351, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envres.2021.110754>.

development of this committee. **A non-partisan, arms-length advisory committee is essential** in ensuring that, this time, we meet our targets.

3. We demand a 2025 target: Reset the first emissions reduction target to 2025, with a plan in place for 2021-2025. Canada is 30 years late in meeting our climate goals. Deferring until 2030 is unacceptable. The time to invest in the green economy is now, as we also require a green and just recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will have a large and long-term impact on lowering emissions and ensuring jobs in a green economy.

4. We demand 1.5°C ambition: 40-45% cuts in emissions by 2030 is not enough to protect our children. These targets allow for a potential rise in temperature of 3°C within their lifetimes. That level of risk is far too high. Cuts in emissions must be revised to be on par with those of the European Union, meaning at least 55-60%.

5. We demand annual progress reports: these will inform plans to achieve targets and help Canadians adapt to a changing climate. As parents, we want publicly-released data on Canada's progress in cutting greenhouse gases, so we can sleep at night.

6. We demand rolling 3-year carbon budgets: These budgets should be modelled upon the Department of Finance's three-year fiscal budgets and be presented annually. They should be allocated by province and industrial sector, and diminish over time, so that these jurisdictions and sectors have concrete goals to work towards and can plan accordingly.

7. We demand respect for Indigenous Rights: Indigenous peoples must have a role in the planning and advisory component of Bill C-12. Scholars and activists across the globe have shown that Indigenous peoples know best how to care for their lands and waters.

Conclusion

While it is too late to stop the increased severity of species extinction, droughts, wildfires, extreme storms, flooding events, and worldwide pandemics - all of which are outcomes of globally rising temperatures - our actions today can still reduce the impacts tomorrow.

Addressing climate change is not a political issue – it is an ethical issue. Our children either will, or will not, suffer from the effects of climate change.

In this question of ethics, the Climate Accountability Act is without a doubt the most important law that Canada will ever legislate – for Canadians, for biodiversity, and for the world – and it *must* be amended to be strong enough to protect our children.

The level of ambition we demand is not too high for Canadians to accept, and neither is it too high for government to achieve. When faced with the tangible risks that climate change entails – floods, fires, droughts, food shortages, water shortages, economic uncertainty – all of us, right across the country, are willing to make sacrifices to safeguard the security, health and well-being of our children.

If strengthened, Bill C-12 can ensure we don't have to make those sacrifices when it's already too late. If strengthened, this Climate Accountability Act will echo down through history as the moment when our government stepped in and took decisive action to protect Canada's children from climate change.

Our children are counting on you to mitigate this crisis. We, the parents and grandparents who vote in their name, are counting on you to do the ethical thing, so we can look them in the eyes and say that everything will be okay.

Sincerely,

Pour Nos Enfants / For Our Kids Montréal Steering Committee

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