

Concerned Citizens From Mississauga-Lakeshore

To: The Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Chair: Francis Scarpaleggia Co-Chairs: Dan Albas, Monique Pauzé
Members: Yvan Baker, Chris Bittle, Laurel Collins, Matt Jeneroux, Lloyd Longfield, Cathy McLeod, Brad Redekopp, Raj Saini, Ya'ara Saks

We are a group of citizens from the Mississauga-Lakeshore riding who care deeply about this planet and are gravely concerned about the ability of humans and all other species to survive in face of the climate emergency upon us today.

Canada was at one time considered to be a leader on the environmental front. In 1992, Canada attended the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Prior to this conference, Canada had just developed the UV Index and made a significant scientific contribution “that led to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.”¹ At the conference, Canada signed on to the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* which aimed to “reduce greenhouse gas emissions to a level that would prevent continued environmental damage”² and was the first G7 country to ratify the treaty. Since then, Canada has continued to commit to *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* targets, but has not demonstrated any leadership in combatting climate change and has yet to meet one of its internationally agreed climate goals. Canada signed on to the “Kyoto Protocol” in 2002, for a 6% reduction below 1990 emission levels, but overshot that target by 24% and actually withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol in 2011. At Copenhagen in 2009, Canada agreed to a 17% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions below 2005 levels by 2020, but in 2014, not only announced that it miss its Copenhagen target, but that it might also exceed the target. In 2015, Canada signed the “Paris Agreement” limiting greenhouse gas emissions to 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. Just this year, at the United States Earth Day Summit, Canada announced a new, higher target of 40% to 45% emissions reduction. The jury is still out, but many people doubt that Canada can even meet the 30% Paris target.

Based on this record, it is clear that Canada needs committed, purposeful, immediate action when it comes to addressing climate change. We are truly encouraged by the introduction of Bill C-12, the resolution to send it back to the Environment Committee for amendments and the opportunity for public consultation. In its current form, we feel the bill falls short of the qualities needed to be effective in ensuring Canada meets its climate goals. If strengthened to provide true, effective accountability that will ensure real emissions reduction, Bill C-12 will be an important vehicle in helping Canada in achieving its targets and addressing climate change and in securing a liveable future for us, our children, our grandchildren and generations to come.

We are calling for the following 6 amendments to strengthen Bill C-12:

¹Vanessa Hrvatin, “A Brief History of Canada’s Climate Change Agreements,” Canadian Geographic Online Magazine, The Royal Canadian Geographic Society, May 30, 2016, <https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/brief-history-canadas-climate-change-agreements>, Accessed May 14, 2021.

²Vanessa Hrvatin, “A Brief History of Canada’s Climate Change Agreements,” Canadian Geographic Online Magazine, The Royal Canadian Geographic Society, May 30, 2016, <https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/brief-history-canadas-climate-change-agreements>, Accessed May 14, 2021.

1. A stronger emissions reduction target of *at least* 50% by 2030, to align with IPCC recommendations
 - Canada's Net-zero Accountability Act sets a target of 30% reduction of current levels by 2030.
 - IPCC says that we must keep temperature increases to 1.5 degrees celsius to avoid catastrophic impacts. To do that, we must cut emissions by 45% below 2010 levels by 2030. This is not a guarantee; it only gives us a 50/50 chance of keeping temperature increases to 1.5. If we fail to cut emissions by 45% **below 2010 levels** by 2030, there is no hope for limiting warming to below 2 degrees, even if we do eventually get to net-zero by 2050. This is the most important decade for cutting emissions.
 - We should be going even further than a 45% emission reduction level. The IPCC targets do not take into account the feedback loops, i.e. ocean warming, permafrost melt and rainforest destruction, where carbon dioxide is no longer being absorbed and is now increasingly being released into the atmosphere. In fact, the Amazon rainforest is now considered a contributor to carbon emissions, among other greenhouse gases, rather than a carbon sink.³ Hence, the ask for targets **at least** as ambitious as, if not better than, the IPCC targets, if we really want to win the war against climate change.
 - The difference of half a degree is critical to life on earth. At 2 degrees the oceans will acidify and 99% of coral reefs will be lost, cutting off a primary food source for millions of people.
2. An additional milestone of 2025 for emissions reduction
 - 2030 is only 8+ years away; too far away for the first milestone. Canada needs to act immediately on climate change. We need an additional target to determine if we are on track for the important 2030 target and to give us time to replan and recalibrate to get back on track, if not. We don't want to get to 2030 and find out we have missed the target, again.
3. Adoption of 5 year carbon budgets instead of emissions targets to ensure we meet long term goals
 - Carbon budgets would cap total greenhouse gas emissions and fairly distribute emissions reductions across the country and would aid in mitigation planning. Experts have evidence that carbon budgets work better than longterm emissions targets. The UK and New Zealand are leaders in setting and attaining meaningful goals using carbon budgets. Canadians would be better served by the adoption of carbon budgets in its Net-zero Accountability Act.
4. A clear legal duty to reach the targets set out in the act
 - Bill C-12 must set clear, unconditional obligations on the Minister of Environment to actually meet the GHG reduction targets; not just plan to meet them. As it stands now, the bill makes it much too easy for the government to get away with weak targets and plans. The bill must require that, if the minister doesn't implement the plan

³ Alex Fox, "The Amazon Now Emits More Greenhouse Gases Than It Absorbs," SMITHSONIANMAG.COM, Smithsonian Magazine, March 26, 2021, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/amazon-rainforest-now-emits-more-greenhouse-gases-it-absorbs-180977347/>, Accessed May 14, 2021

recommended by the advisory body, the minister must explain why by presenting a report to Parliament.

5. An independent advisory body that must include climate science experts to advise the government on reaching its targets and must have a clear and strong mandate in shaping Canada's climate change solution
 - On Feb. 25, Jonathan Wilkinson announced the Net-Zero Advisory Body. While this new board is a diverse group of very capable people, it was not selected by an independent, arms-length committee and it represents a wide range of areas of expertise rather than a focused panel of experts in climate science and climate economics. To be truly effective in providing unbiased advice on how to achieve the country's climate targets, the advisory body must be independent of the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, must be chosen in consultation with all Canadian political parties and must be a self governing group of climate experts.
 - It is also unclear who will monitor and assess the government's progress in achieving targets and how progress will be monitored. Currently, this newly appointed body does not have the mandate or resources to assess whether the government's actions are on track with its ambition. The advisory body's mandate must be strengthened to make it the primary source for Canada's targets, plans and progress reports and it must have expert resources at its disposal to evaluate and recommend actions and plans.

The UK and New Zealand Climate Acts contain excellent examples of the what the composition and mandate of an advisory board should look like and should be used as a model for Canada's Climate Act.

6. Strengthen the role of the Environment Commissioner
 - Bill C-12 refers to a position of an Environment Commissioner, but its role and mandate are unclear. The commissioner must be given clear duties, preferably, to evaluate the accuracy of the government's reports, determine whether the government is on track to meet the next target and advise the Minister on further action required to meet the next target.

In closing, we ask that the Environment Committee follow the lead of the UK and New Zealand by consulting these acts in amending Bill C-12 and to act boldly and courageously to develop a comprehensive and authoritative law that focuses on, borrowing from the seventh generation philosophy, ensuring the survival of the planet for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Moleski
Christine House
Dr. Ron House
Carol Aziz
Barry Gilbert
Michael Darmody
Gerry Ruygrok, Chair of MCA (Mississauga Climate Action)
Chris Davidson
Joe Zammit
John Matos
Joanne Currie

Bill C-12 Submission

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Phil Currie
Maureen Teixeira
Lenore Foster