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House of Commons
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May 14, 2021.

Dear Ms. Crandall,

In May 2021, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development invited Canadians to contribute to *Bill C-12, An Act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050*. The Atmospheric Fund (TAF) supports the intentions outlined in this Bill and recommends key areas for improvement. We identify areas that require federal leadership to help accelerate the transition towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, or sooner. Seventeen municipalities across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area have declared climate emergencies and are addressing the challenges of climate change at a municipal level, but they need a federal partner to amplify and support local climate action.

Four Key Areas for Federal Leadership

1. Annual Reporting Requirements and Publicization of Advisory Body Reports
2. Preparing an Initial Report
3. Aligning with UNDRIP
4. Including Municipal Perspectives

Annual Reporting Requirements and Publicization

As cities across Canada address their own greenhouse gas emissions and attempt to tackle the urgent threats posed by climate change, they would benefit from frequent and transparent updates on the Government of Canada's actions and emissions reductions progress. Consistent ongoing reporting on Canada's progress towards achieving its climate targets will be critical in determining implementation of and amendments to policy actions at all levels of government.

Recommendation:

TAF Recommends requiring the Environment Commissioner to issue an annual report beginning in 2023 and publicizing any reports generated by the Advisory Body.

Bill C-12 requires the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to report on the Government of Canada's implementation of measures taken to mitigate climate change "at least once every five years." We argue that reporting on a five-year basis is insufficient if the Government of Canada aims to take timely and immediate action to address the urgent threats posed by climate change. Instead, we recommend the Government of Canada require an annual public report from the Environment Commissioner on the status of measures taken to mitigate climate change beginning in 2023.

Additionally, the legislation requires the Minister of Finance to report annually on climate-related financial risks and opportunities under Section 23. If the Minister of Finance is already required to report annually, the Environment Commissioner could just as feasibly issue an annual report on the status of implementation of climate mitigation measures and Canada's progress towards achieving climate benchmarks. Annual reporting on progress would help inform municipal climate policies across Canada. We also recommend the Government of Canada require that all reports generated by the Advisory Body outlined in Section 20 be tabled in each House of Parliament, thereby making them available to the public.

Proposed Legislative Changes:

- **Section 14 (1):** In consultation with the ministers referred to in Section 12, the Environment and Sustainable Development Commissioner **must prepare a progress report each year beginning in 2023** and each year thereafter leading to 2050 updating on incremental milestone targets each year.
- **Section 22 (1):** The advisory body must submit an annual report to the Minister with respect to its advice and activities. **The report must be tabled by the Minister in each House of Parliament on any of the first 15 days on which that House is sitting after the day on which the report is received.**

Preparing an Initial Report

Getting on track to Canada's 2030 climate target will require rapid and large-scale acceleration of climate action. The first progress report may well be too late to achieve necessary course corrections, given the first report does not occur until two years prior to the 2030 milestone year. As such we recommend an earlier report be tabled in each House of Parliament to assist in chartering a path to the 2028's milestone reporting year prior to 2030's legislated target.

Recommendation:

Generate an initial report two years after enacting the legislation.

We recommend Bill C-12 include a requirement for the Government of Canada to provide a transparent overview of the state of Canada's emissions reduction efforts starting two years after the legislation is adopted. This report will establish a baseline of understanding and

evidence to inform Canada's future climate change mitigation policies. The initial report will provide transparency on Canada's progress towards achieving its 2030 and 2050 climate targets at the mid-decade point. This will inform Parliament and Canadians that the Government of Canada is taking the necessary actions to ensure a pathway to its 2030 climate target. The intention of this report would be to hold the Government of Canada accountable for making rapid progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and would inform any needed course corrections for all levels of government before it is too late to achieve Canada's 2030 climate target.

Proposed Legislative Changes:

- **Section 14 (1):** In consultation with the ministers referred to in section 12, the Minister must prepare at least one progress report relating to each milestone year and to 2050 no later than two years before the beginning of the relevant year.
 - **(a) The Minister must also prepare at least one initial report establishing Canada's state of progress to-date, no later than two years after the legislation is enacted.**

Aligning with UNDRIP

Toronto has the largest Indigenous population in Ontario and the fourth largest in Canada¹. While the Government of Canada takes necessary steps forward to reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions, it must consult with urban residents, including Indigenous Peoples. The Federal Government has an opportunity to implement climate mitigation measures that address the diverse needs of urban municipalities and the inclusion of Indigenous voices in the development of these strategies is vital.

Recommendation:

Align targets and measures for climate change mitigation with UNDRIP. We recommend the legislation align with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, especially regarding the duty of "recognizing that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment"². Bill C-12 lacks specific mention of the Government of Canada's efforts to undertake meaningful consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples of Canada. The proposed legislation should include a commitment to including a diverse range of voices, particularly Indigenous voices, in Canada's proposed pathway to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions.

¹ [Indigenous people of Toronto](#)

² [The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

Proposed Legislative Changes:

- **Section 21 (2)** The advisory body is composed of no more than fifteen members, who are appointed on a part-time basis for a renewable term of up to three years. **Furthermore, the Minister must undertake meaningful consultation with Indigenous peoples by guaranteeing equitable representation on the advisory board.**
- **Section 21 (3)** The Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the minister, designates two co-chairs from among the members appointed under subsection (1), **one of whom must be Indigenous.**

Including Municipal Perspectives

Municipalities across Canada are leading the fight against climate change by declaring climate emergencies and developing and implementing climate action plans. As municipalities confront the challenges posed by climate change, we need to continue to strengthen federal-municipal partnerships to achieve our municipal and federal climate goals. This cross-jurisdiction relationship is important and synergistic, as demonstrated by the Government of Canada's support for the Low Carbon Cities (LC3) network. Municipalities have crucial and practical input that must be included in the proposed stakeholder consultations.

Recommendation:

Include municipalities as an equal stakeholder in all public consultations with other stakeholder groups. Municipalities are driving emission reductions through programs that also improve the lives of urban citizens. As such, the Government of Canada should continue to develop and grow its partnership with municipalities by engaging them in meaningful consultations regarding Canada's efforts to tackle climate change.

Proposed Legislative Change:

- **Section 13:** When setting or amending a national greenhouse gas emissions target or establishing or amending an emissions reduction plan, the Minister must, in the manner the Minister considers it appropriate, provide the governments of the provinces, **municipalities**, and Indigenous peoples of Canada, the advisory body established under section 20 and interested persons, including any expert the Minister considers appropriate to consult, with the opportunity to make submissions.

Sincerely,

Bryan Purcell
VP, Policy & Programs, The Atmospheric Fund

About the Atmospheric Fund

The Atmospheric Fund (TAF) is a regional climate agency that invests in low-carbon solutions for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and helps scale them up for broad implementation. Please note that the views expressed in this submission do not necessarily represent those of the City of Toronto or other GTHA stakeholders. We are experienced leaders and collaborate with stakeholders in the private, public and non-profit sectors who have ideas and opportunities for reducing carbon emissions. Supported by endowment funds, we advance the most promising concepts by investing, providing grants, influencing policies and running programs. We're particularly interested in ideas that offer benefits in addition to carbon reduction such as improving people's health, creating local jobs, boosting urban resiliency, and contributing to a fair society.