

Canada is home to 10% of the world's forests, the longest coastline in the world, and 7% of the world's freshwater.¹ We are home to some of the world's most beautiful natural landscapes, such as the Banff national park or Niagara falls. And yet, despite the grandeur of our environment, it is clear that the government has not done enough to protect it against the effects of climate change and global warming. Time is running out for us to ensure that our planet is sustainable for future generations. Canada is warming at twice the global rate,² and we need strong-willed leaders that will work towards beating climate change. The government has declared a climate emergency but has also decided to build a pipeline that will incentivize companies to extract more oil from our lands. They signed the Paris Agreement to cut back on emissions but have fallen flat on the targets set forth in the agreement. In order for Canada to step up and fight aggressively against climate change, the government must act now to prevent climate change from worsening. And as millennials and generation Z individuals begin to occupy more spaces in government, we must campaign for a more progressive climate plan that will overhaul our energy sectors and ensure a long-term solution to climate change.

The current government's actions have been insufficient in the fight against climate change despite their promises to do so. In 2019, the federal government set a target of net-zero emissions by 2050. Despite this promise, there has been no law or plan proposed in order to achieve their goal of zero emissions. In addition, the government attests that it is committed to fighting climate change, but is also predicted to expand natural gas production from 2024 to 2040.³ This blatant hypocrisy causes an inability to create any real legislation that will fight against climate change. In order for Canada to step up against this fight, they must listen to the scientists and work hand in hand with the international community. UN General Assembly President María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés has stressed that we only have eleven years left to act before the planet reaches a point where climate change will be irreversible.⁴ This means that every country must do their part to reduce emissions, and regulate oil extraction and deforestation.

¹ (Novak)

² ("Canada warming at twice the global rate, leaked report finds")

³ ("Canada")

⁴ ("Only 11 Years Left to Prevent Irreversible Damage from Climate Change, Speakers Warn during General Assembly High-Level Meeting")

In order to win the fight against climate change, legislators must listen to the demands of the people they serve. More people each year support climate change action⁵ and yet the actions taken by the government are insufficient. The first thing the current government must do is to clearly outline their position on climate change and take concrete actions to do better. This includes setting solid targets towards reducing their emissions for 2025 and 2030. Next, the government must put restrictions on fracking. There are over 100 fracking rigs present across the country.⁶ Fracking contaminates groundwater and poses a serious health threat to those who live in the vicinity of these rigs⁷ in addition to it being a major polluter. Fracking pervades the Canadian economy due to the immense influence of powerful oil companies, which is why politicians need to put the people first and stop prioritizing the whims of large corporations.⁸ And lastly, the government must give informed consent to Indigenous communities. Indigenous people have a deep connection with the land and value the environment greatly. We must listen to these communities and hear their opinions on how to best address this crisis.⁹

These are short-term goals that are attainable through strict government regulation and the determination of the politicians, but isn't enough. We need long-term changes to our society to prevent climate change from irreversibly damaging our planet. Generation Z values climate action more than any other topic, as it will be us who will feel the effects of global warming the most.¹⁰ Because of this, Generation Z must get involved in politics and push for progressive climate action. Such progressive policies today include the Green New Deal proposed by US Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The goals of the Green New Deal include net-zero emissions, reallocating lost jobs into green energy and guaranteeing clean energy, air, and water for communities.¹¹ These goals must be accomplished all while addressing how the effects of climate change disproportionately affect communities of colour.¹² These are difficult tasks that will take the combined effort of large amounts of people, but I believe that this is possible. With young, passionate individuals elected into positions of power, we can beat climate change. There is no shortage ardent youth ready to join this battle, as over six million

⁵ ("Canadian public opinion about climate change")

⁶ (Minkow)

⁷ "Fracking's Environmental Impacts: Water." *Greenpeace*, <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/global-warming/issues/fracking/environmental-impacts-water/>. ("Fracking's Environmental Impacts: Water")

⁸ (Steward)

⁹ ("Indigenous Peoples and the Environment")

¹⁰ (Barbiroglio)

¹¹ ("The Green New Deal")

¹² (Fernandez Rysavy and Floyd)

students have already come together worldwide to bring attention to this issue, with thousands attending in Toronto alone. When Generation Z finally reaches the age where they can make real change in positions of power, we must campaign for comprehensive climate action.¹³

The issues we face today are existential threats that can have permanent consequences, and the actions we need to take in order to beat it will not be easy. We are confronted with the herculean task of reversing the effects of decades of pollution, oil extraction, and gross misuse of the planet in a short amount of time. We are starting to see the effects of climate change today - the arctic has been warming at a rapid pace since the 1990s, natural disasters are worsening, and more. It will take the actions of all people, but mostly those in positions of power. We need to elect government officials who build their platforms on hope and with climate change at the forefront of the agenda. This is difficult work, but nothing good ever came easy. We need to stay informed, be conscious of our life choices, and more importantly - vote. We need to use our collective voices to make it known that time is running out for our vision of Canada to be realized. This vision of a better Canada is simple - it's one where clean air, water, and energy are rights, not privileges.

¹³ (Goodfield)

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