

Bill C-311, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change

Presentation by Matthew Bramley to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, October 29, 2009

Good morning. Bonjour. Merci beaucoup de m' avoir invité.

I'd like to begin by referring members to my December 2007 testimony to this committee on this same bill, when it was known as C-377 (I've provided copies to the Chair). As time is short, I won't repeat the reasoning I presented then in support of this bill. Suffice to say that in light of the increasing urgency of curbing climate change, and the continuing lack of action to cut Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, major Canadian environmental NGOs believe it is more important than ever that Parliament pass bill C-311.

Bill C-311 makes no pretension to be a comprehensive plan to cut emissions. Instead, it would set a level of ambition for emission reductions, and enforce accountability mechanisms to increase the likelihood that the government of the day would fulfil *its* responsibility to develop and implement a plan to achieve those reductions.

Having said that, I'd like to present the results of a study by the Pembina Institute and the David Suzuki Foundation in which we did design a plan — a package of government policies — that meets the level of ambition set by Bill C-311 for the year 2020. We ran the plan through two leading economic models to determine its likely effects on Canada's economy. I've distributed copies of the report, entitled [*Climate Leadership, Economic Prosperity*](#), through the Chair. The report was published this morning.

Our study found that Canada can meet the level of ambition set by Bill C-311 for 2020 and still have a strong growing economy, a quality of life higher than Canadians enjoy today, and continued steady job creation across the country. However, to achieve this, the federal government would need to act immediately to put a significant price on most of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, either through a cap-and-trade system or a carbon tax. The emissions price would need to be backed up with strong complementary regulations and, ideally, major public investments.

Our study also examined the federal government's own current emissions target for 2020, and found that to meet its target, the government would have to implement far stronger policies than it has proposed to date — in particular, a price on emissions that would need to reach \$100 per tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2020.

To our knowledge this is the first study to comprehensively examine how Canada can meet a greenhouse gas reduction target for 2020 that goes beyond the federal government's current target, and the first published study of the government's target to show regional impacts on employment and GDP. We commissioned the leading economic modelling firm M.K. Jaccard and Associates to do the calculations. Their models have been widely used by the governments of Canada, Alberta and other provinces.

In our study we call the level of ambition set by Bill C-311 for 2020 the "2°C" emissions target, in reference to the objective of limiting average global warming to 2°C relative to pre-industrial levels.

The Prime Minister formally recognized the scientific community's support for this objective when he signed this year's G8 Leaders' Summit communiqué.

Our modelling analysis projects that Canada's GDP would grow between 2010 and 2020 at an average rate of 2.1 per cent annually while meeting the 2°C emissions target, compared to 2.2 per cent while meeting the government's target and 2.4 per cent under business as usual conditions. These are modest differences. The study does show that the need to address very high emissions in Alberta and Saskatchewan would significantly reduce projected growth rates in these provinces. However, Alberta would still have the highest rate of GDP growth and highest per capita GDP of any province, while Saskatchewan's per capita GDP would stay close to the Canadian average.

The analysis also projects Canada's total number of jobs to grow by essentially the same amount under the 2°C target, the government's target and business as usual. In the three cases, Canada adds 1.8–1.9 million net new jobs between 2010 and 2020.

An important aspect of the study is that it shows how revenue from emissions pricing — for example, revenue from auctioning allowances in a cap-and-trade system — can be used to address several concerns that are commonly expressed about ambitious action to tackle climate change. Our policy package uses this revenue to make payments to individuals to compensate regional variations in household energy cost increases; provide rebates to protect the international competitiveness of the most vulnerable manufacturing sectors; invest in public transit and electricity grids; reduce personal income tax to stimulate job growth; and purchase international emissions reductions to reduce the cost of meeting the targets.

In our study we close one-fifth of the gap between business-as-usual and the targets using international emission reductions. We would therefore be supportive of an amendment to C-311 to allow Canada to purchase high-quality international reductions to meet the targets in the bill.

In my remaining time I'd like to revisit the origin of the 2°C target for 2020, a 25 per cent reduction in Canada's emissions below the 1990 level. This is truly a science-based target because it starts from scientific analysis of the reductions in global emissions that would be needed to have a chance of preventing global warming from crossing the danger threshold of 2°C. When the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) looked at reasonable ways to share out those global emission reductions, it arrived at a 25–40 per cent reduction below the 1990 level by 2020 for industrialized countries. Although industrialized countries as a whole could, in principle, meet a target in this range even if Canada met only a weaker target, there are several reasons why Canada's target should be *at least* at the weakest end of the range, i.e., 25 per cent. Notably, the 25 per cent target is supported by published analyses of what Canada's fair share would be among industrialized countries; the 25–40 per cent range for industrialized countries corresponds only to about a 50 per cent chance of keeping warming below 2°C; and the international climate science community is now telling us that the problem is worse than they thought when the IPCC's most recent report was compiled, and that the emission reductions needed may therefore have been underestimated.

Environmentalists are not claiming that confronting climate change is easy. There's no doubt that it requires tough decisions. But the study we've published today shows that there are solutions to allow us to meet science-based climate targets, and opportunities that would be created in doing so. As we head into the difficult negotiations in Copenhagen, the world desperately needs leaders on climate change. Passage of this bill in time for Copenhagen would send an important signal of Canadian leadership to the world.

Thank you.