

# British Columbians Want a Sustainable Energy Future for BC

The BC government is about to release a revised Energy Plan. This Plan is vitally important to BC's future because more than 80 percent of BC's greenhouse gas emissions come from burning and producing fossil fuels.<sup>1</sup> Concerned British Columbians are watching closely to learn what BC's energy strategy will be for the next 10 to 20 years to address the most pressing environmental, economic and moral challenge of our time – global warming.

British Columbians are already familiar with the impacts that global warming brings: extreme weather events, mountain pine beetle infestations, forest fires, and droughts. And there are more to come. Leading scientists from around the world tell us we have a 10 to 20 year window of opportunity where decisive action will help us avoid the worst impacts of global warming<sup>2</sup>. But it has to start with action now!

BC has a wealth of natural resources and the business expertise to lead the world on action to combat global warming. Recent polling<sup>3</sup> shows that British Columbians are highly committed to energy conservation and clean/green energy production and expect action from their government on these issues.

Living up to our Kyoto commitments is the crucial first step towards meeting that challenge. But to stop global warming for good, we also need a cutting-edge plan for deeper greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions in the long term.<sup>4</sup>

The release of the Energy Plan is the perfect time for the government to bring positive and lasting change to energy and GHG emissions in BC and show that it is a leader in the fight against global warming. Will the government recognize and seize this opportunity?

Summarized below are key elements of a world-leading Energy Plan, consistent with what British Columbians are demanding.

## 1. The Energy Plan must set binding greenhouse gas reduction targets

**"82 percent of British Columbians want mandatory targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions<sup>5</sup>"**

Canada committed through the Kyoto Protocol to reduce its GHG emissions to an average of six percent below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012. Since that time, British Columbia's GHG emissions have increased by 30 percent<sup>6</sup> earning British Columbians a ranking of 21<sup>st</sup> out of 28 in per-capita GHG emissions when compared to other OECD countries.<sup>7</sup> This is not surprising since the BC government's 2004 "action plan" on climate change outlined 40 measures, none of which require actual reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>8</sup>

The BC government must step up to the plate with a world class energy plan that surpasses North American environmental leaders like California in setting binding, easy to measure GHG emission reduction targets.

This requires the BC government, at a minimum, to mandate the following GHG reduction targets:

- short-term target that shows how BC will help Canada to meet its Kyoto obligations (an average of six percent below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012).
- medium-term target of 25 percent below 1990 for 2020.
- long-term target of 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.<sup>9</sup>

## **2. The Energy Plan must prioritize energy efficiency and renewable energy**

**“86 percent of British Columbians want their electricity to come from clean renewable sources and 79 percent want more energy conservation and efficiency initiatives.<sup>10”</sup>**

Significant energy savings can be achieved in BC simply by setting strict energy efficiency standards for buildings, appliances, lighting, and equipment.<sup>11</sup> California has already set the example – it has sector specific standards with established review cycles that include the ratcheting up of standards over time. A cutting-edge energy plan for BC needs to incorporate key principles of the California model, such as valuing energy efficiency as a resource and providing the necessary resources to make it a reality.

British Columbia also has a wealth of low-impact renewable energy options<sup>12</sup>, including small hydro, biomass (from sustainably-managed forests), wind, geothermal, solar, wave and tidal resources, for future development<sup>13</sup> and economic growth. There is enormous job creation potential for these renewables in both the short and long term.<sup>14</sup>

British Columbians have sent a clear message that they want these options to be pursued before non-renewable sources. The Energy Plan must put BC on the path to a renewable energy future.

## **3. The Energy Plan must move away from traditional fossil fuel sources such as coal, oil and gas**

**“69 percent of British Columbians don’t want coal-fired power in the energy mix<sup>15</sup> and 87 percent of area residents don’t want coalbed methane development rights sold in the Bulkley Valley<sup>16</sup> “**

The BC government continues to favour fossil fuel sources by providing subsidies and royalty breaks for oil and gas and coal exploration and development in B.C. Recently, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources announced that the government is considering new royalty breaks to promote drilling in areas devastated by the mountain pine beetle.<sup>17</sup>

In July 2006, the government also awarded contracts to build two polluting coal-fired power plants near Princeton and Tumbler Ridge.<sup>18</sup> If built, these power plants would increase BC’s GHG emissions from electricity generation by a whopping 130 percent.

While British Columbians are clearly calling for innovative solutions to global warming problems, the BC government so far is responding with outdated technology.

## **4. The Energy Plan must continue to protect BC’s stunning coast**

**“75 percent of British Columbians want the ban on offshore oil and gas exploration and tanker traffic to be maintained.<sup>19”</sup>**

The BC government is considering lifting the ban on offshore oil and gas development in BC’s rich coastal environment against the wishes of most British

Columbians and affected First Nations. A federal review panel found that an overwhelming majority of British Columbians are opposed to lifting the offshore exploration, drilling and tanker traffic moratoria.

To risk our globally significant coastal ecosystems and tourism assets at a time when BC needs to be developing non-polluting energy sources would be a huge step in the wrong direction. The BC government's Energy Plan must reflect the values of British Columbians by promoting renewable energy opportunities instead of risky offshore oil and gas development.

## 5. The Plan must provide for clean transportation in BC

**"57 percent of Canadians in western Canada are willing to cut the amount they drive in half to fight the effects of global warming"<sup>20</sup>**

Transportation is the single largest contributor to GHG pollution in British Columbia, representing 40 percent of emissions.<sup>21</sup> Exacerbating this trend, the BC Government recently announced its controversial plan to add more highways (and therefore more traffic) in the Lower Mainland. The Provincial Gateway Program to expand Highway 1 and twin the Port Mann Bridge will produce more dangerous GHG emissions hastening the impacts of global warming – a direction that British Columbians clearly do not want to take.

California has already addressed transportation emissions head on in setting aggressive vehicle emission standards for carbon dioxide, and several other US states are now adopting California's standard. Adopting these standards in British Columbia will allow us to achieve significant GHG reductions, lower fuel costs, and encourage the automotive industry to produce more fuel-efficient vehicles.

The BC government includes transportation in the scope of the Energy Plan – this is a great idea. But doing a good job on transportation and energy means making hard decisions and setting out in new directions like road tolling and an end to freeway building. Instead, the government has opted to expand BC's freeways.

The Energy Plan also needs to tackle the demand side of transportation. Funding public transit, promoting smart growth policies, encouraging walking, cycling and carpooling, and assisting in the development of bus and bike lanes will go a long way to reducing our energy demand and GHG emissions.

The government claims that some of its transportation investments will reduce GHG emissions – but this is not enough. The government must ensure that all of its transportation projects result in verifiable reductions in GHG emissions.

Premier Campbell has promised British Columbians that BC will be a leader in dealing with global warming<sup>22</sup> - it is time for the government to live up to this challenge with a world class Energy Plan.



## NOTES:

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- <sup>1</sup> Environment Canada. 2006. *National Inventory Report 1990-2004: Greenhouse Gas Sources and Sinks in Canada*. [http://www.ec.gc.ca/pdb/ghg/inventory\\_report/2004\\_report/ta12\\_21\\_e.cfm](http://www.ec.gc.ca/pdb/ghg/inventory_report/2004_report/ta12_21_e.cfm). The most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change identified emissions of greenhouse gases from the use of fossil-fuels as our greatest contribution to global warming; see pages 2-4 of the Working Group 1 Summary for Policy Makers, available at: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>
- <sup>2</sup> Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change see [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/Independent\\_Reviews/stern\\_review\\_economics\\_climate\\_change/sternreview\\_index.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/Independent_Reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/sternreview_index.cfm)
- <sup>3</sup> Strategic Communications poll of 601 BC voters conducted Nov 23 -30, 2006; accurate to +/- 4% 19 times out of 20. Poll results available at: [http://www.sierralegal.org/m\\_archive/pr07\\_01\\_02pollresults.pdf](http://www.sierralegal.org/m_archive/pr07_01_02pollresults.pdf).
- <sup>4</sup> David Suzuki Foundation and Climate Action Network, 2002. *Kyoto and Beyond: The Low Emission Path to Innovation and Efficiency* [http://www.davidsuzuki.org/files/Kyoto\\_72.pdf](http://www.davidsuzuki.org/files/Kyoto_72.pdf)
- <sup>5</sup> Strategic Communications poll of 601 BC voters conducted Nov 23 -30, 2006; accurate to +/- 4% 19 times out of 20. Poll results available at: [http://www.sierralegal.org/m\\_archive/pr07\\_01\\_02pollresults.pdf](http://www.sierralegal.org/m_archive/pr07_01_02pollresults.pdf).
- <sup>6</sup> Environment Canada. 2006. *National Inventory Report 1990-2004: Greenhouse Gas Sources and Sinks in Canada*. [http://www.ec.gc.ca/pdb/ghg/inventory\\_report/2004\\_report/ta12\\_21\\_e.cfm](http://www.ec.gc.ca/pdb/ghg/inventory_report/2004_report/ta12_21_e.cfm).
- <sup>7</sup> BC Progress Board Sixth Annual BC Program Board Annual Benchmarking Report, Vol. 1 p. 16. [www.bcprogressboard.com/2006/AnnualReport/VI\\_Final2006.pdf](http://www.bcprogressboard.com/2006/AnnualReport/VI_Final2006.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> "Weather, Climate and the Future: BC's Plan", Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, December 2004.
- <sup>9</sup> David Suzuki Foundation and the Pembina Institute. 2005. *The Case for Deep Reductions*, p. 38. [www.pembina.org](http://www.pembina.org)
- <sup>10</sup> Strategic Communications poll of 601 BC voters conducted Nov 23 -30, 2006; accurate to +/- 4% 19 times out of 20. Poll results available at: [http://www.sierralegal.org/m\\_archive/pr07\\_01\\_02pollresults.pdf](http://www.sierralegal.org/m_archive/pr07_01_02pollresults.pdf).
- <sup>11</sup> Canadian Renewable Energy Alliance. 2006. *Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Recommendations for British Columbia*. [www.canrea.ca](http://www.canrea.ca)
- <sup>12</sup> The term low-impact renewable energy refers to projects that meet the criteria for EcoLogo(TM) certification for electricity generation as developed by the Environmental Choice Program including wind, solar, small hydro, biomass, geothermal, tidal and wave energy.
- <sup>13</sup> For a description of the these options, see the British Columbia Hydro Resource Options Report in the 2006 Integrated Electricity Plan <http://www.bchydro.com/info/epi/epi43498.html> and the Pembina Institute/Pollution Probe report *Maximizing Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy in British Columbia* <http://www.pembina.org/pubs/pub.php?id=1319>
- <sup>14</sup> BC Sustainable Energy Association. 2005. *Sustainable Energy Solutions for BC*, [www.bcsea.org/policy/taskforcereport.asp](http://www.bcsea.org/policy/taskforcereport.asp)
- <sup>15</sup> Strategic Communications poll of 601 BC voters conducted Nov 23 -30, 2006; accurate to +/- 4% 19 times out of 20.
- <sup>16</sup> Synovate poll of 300 residents of the Bulkley Valley conducted Oct 23-29, 2006; accurate to +/- 6% 19 times out of 20. Poll results available at [http://northwestinstitute.ca/work/pr\\_nov2006.html](http://northwestinstitute.ca/work/pr_nov2006.html). Two statistics were merged: 87% of area residents agree that the BC government should not sell development rights for coalbed methane if the majority of residents feel the risk is too great; and the majority of residents are opposed to the proposal.
- <sup>17</sup> "B.C. hoping to lure drillers in remote beetle-ravaged areas", Nathan VanderKlippe, CanWest News Service, February 3, 2007.
- <sup>18</sup> Strategic Communications poll of 601 BC voters conducted Nov 23 -30, 2006; accurate to +/- 4% 19 times out of 20. Poll results available at: [http://www.sierralegal.org/m\\_archive/pr07\\_01\\_02pollresults.pdf](http://www.sierralegal.org/m_archive/pr07_01_02pollresults.pdf).
- <sup>19</sup> Results of Federal Review Process on Public Opinion on the Moratorium on Offshore Oil and Gas. 2004. Based on the opinion of 3700 participants. See the Report of the Public Review Panel on the Government of Canada Moratorium on Offshore Oil and Gas Activities in the Queen Charlotte Region British Columbia, p. 9 [http://www2.nrcan.gc.ca/es/erb/CMFiles/PRP-English-Final\\_for\\_web205KFH-18112004-9111.pdf](http://www2.nrcan.gc.ca/es/erb/CMFiles/PRP-English-Final_for_web205KFH-18112004-9111.pdf)
- <sup>20</sup> Strategic Counsel poll of 1,000 Canadians conducted Jan 11-14, 2007 and is accurate to within three percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Poll results available at [http://www.thestrategiccounsel.com/our\\_news/polls/2007-01-17%20GMCTV%20Jan%2011-14%20f.pdf](http://www.thestrategiccounsel.com/our_news/polls/2007-01-17%20GMCTV%20Jan%2011-14%20f.pdf).
- <sup>21</sup> Environment Canada. *Canada's Greenhouse Gas Inventory, 1990-2003*. [http://www.ec.gc.ca/pdb/ghg/inventory\\_report/2003\\_report/ta12\\_21\\_e.cfm](http://www.ec.gc.ca/pdb/ghg/inventory_report/2003_report/ta12_21_e.cfm)
- <sup>22</sup> "Campbell reworks energy plan with renewed energy", Vaughn Palmer, Vancouver Sun, January 19, 2007.