

The Canadian Commission on Clean Growth and Climate Change

A proposal for oversight of the Pan-Canadian Framework

This proposal was developed collaboratively in early 2017, beginning with a workshop convened by Clean Energy Canada. The **organizations** and **individuals** below support the proposal and contributed to its development.

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INTRODUCTION

In December 2016, most of Canada's provincial and territorial governments reached agreement with the federal government on a **new national climate plan**. The Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change includes commitments to reduce emissions across Canada's economy, to accelerate clean growth, and to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The Framework also includes four specific commitments related to reporting and oversight. In addition to enhanced coordination of emission reporting, reporting by signatory governments on the implementation of the Framework, and a review of carbon pricing policies, the Framework commits that:

“Federal, provincial, and territorial governments will engage with external experts to provide informed advice to First Ministers and decision makers; assess the effectiveness of measures, including through the use of modelling; and identify best practices. The will help ensure that actions identified in the Pan-Canadian Framework are open to external, independent review, and are transparent and informed by science and evidence.”

PRINCIPLES FOR A NEW INSTITUTION

In the areas of climate and clean growth policy, no existing national institution is adequately equipped to fulfill the analytical and advisory functions identified by First Ministers. Thus, this note proposes the creation of **a new institution** to provide expert oversight of progress under the Pan-Canadian Framework.

The proposal below was designed to be:

- Independent
- Credible
- Evidence-based
- Expert-driven
- Transparent
- Timely, and
- Policy-relevant.

The proposed Commission's relationship to existing institutions and processes is shown in Figure 1, below.

A CANADIAN COMMISSION ON CLEAN GROWTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE

In order to ensure effective oversight of the Pan-Canadian Framework, signatory governments should agree **in 2017** to create a Canadian Commission on Clean Growth and Climate Change.

Creating the Commission

The Commission could be created through federal legislation, complemented by a joint statement of support from all signatory governments to the Pan-Canadian Framework.

The Commission would report either to First Ministers or to the Parliament of Canada.

Mandate

The Commission would be an independent, expert body. Its mandate would span the areas included in the Pan-Canadian Framework, including:

- Greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions
- Clean growth, and
- Adaptation to the impacts of climate change.¹

Commissioners and Secretariat

The Commission would have a relatively small number of Commissioners (10 or fewer). The Commissioners would be experts selected for their knowledge of climate change, clean growth, energy systems, economics, or public policy.

The Commissioners' work would be supported by a professional secretariat with access to the data necessary to fulfill its mandate; to economic modelling capacity; and to other analytical capacity as needed.

The Government of Canada would be the primary contributor to its annual budget.

Appointment Process for Commissioners

To ensure the Commission's independence and credibility, its Commissioners should be appointed in as independent and politically-neutral a manner as possible. The appointments should also reflect the national nature of the Pan-Canadian Framework.

We believe that either of the two appointment approaches described below meet these criteria.

Option 1: When the Commission is launched, First Ministers or the Government of Canada² would appoint a small panel of trusted advisors. These advisors would then determine the

¹ At present, Canada's objectives in the area of emission reductions (e.g. reducing national emissions to 30% below the 2005 level by 2030) are more straightforward to quantify and assess than its objectives in the areas of clean growth and adaptation to the impacts of climate change. However, governments may set new objectives in these latter areas, and the Commission itself could help to recommend possible objectives in these areas, along with appropriate metrics to assess them, via its research capacity.

² If the Commission reports to First Ministers, then all signatory governments to the Pan-Canadian Framework could be involved in the appointment process. If the Commission reports to the Parliament of Canada, the Governor in Council would make appointment decisions.

competencies (skills and expertise) needed for an effective commission, and nominate Commissioners who exhibit those competencies.³

Option 2: First Ministers, or the Government of Canada, would ask an independent body to provide them with lists of names for potential commissioners and appoint the commissioners from among those lists. The independent body would produce the lists after assessing the competencies required for an effective commission.

THE COMMISSION'S FUNCTIONS

The Commission would have three functions: providing analysis, offering advice, and reaching out to Canadians.

1. Providing Analysis

The Commission's role in providing analysis could include:

- Regular assessment of Canada's progress toward the goals of the Pan-Canadian Framework, including the national 2030 target and longer-term goals under the Paris Agreement.
- Assessment of the impacts of policies implemented under the Pan-Canadian Framework, using both climate-related and economic metrics. This could include metrics such as:
 - change in GHG emissions
 - change in the percentage of renewable energy generation
 - the cost-effectiveness of measures
 - change in investment, or
 - impact on employment.

This independent analysis would build on the annual reports that signatory governments to the Pan-Canadian Framework have committed to deliver to First Ministers.

- The Commission could publish other relevant analysis to assist in the implementation of the Pan-Canadian Framework (e.g. sector-level assessments, assessments of the costs of climate change) at its discretion.

Existing institutions have the capacity to fulfill some of these analytical functions today. In order to ensure coherence and avoid duplication, the Commission's mandate should require regular coordination with, at a minimum:

- the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development,
- the Parliamentary Budget Officer,
- officials at Environment and Climate Change Canada charged with GHG reporting to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- the Chief Science Advisor of Canada, and
- relevant provincial and territorial oversight bodies as appropriate.

2. Offering Advice

The Commission's role in offering advice would be forward-looking, filling a gap in today's institutional landscape for climate change and clean growth. This advice could include:

³ The Commission's approach will also need to conform to existing government requirements for appointments, such as those described at <https://www.appointments-nominations.gc.ca>.

- Where appropriate, suggesting cost-effective pathways to help achieve commitments under the Pan-Canadian Framework, including reducing emissions, spurring clean growth, and adapting to climate change. This advice could draw on best practices or benchmarks from jurisdictions outside Canada.
- Offering advice on future GHG targets that, as noted in the Pan-Canadian Framework, “will increase in stringency as required by the Paris Agreement.” This advice would include assessments of economic and social impacts of emission reduction goals.
- Recommending additional steps or approaches to strengthen policies, investments, and measures, or to fill gaps, in order to achieve future emission reduction targets and accelerate clean growth.

3. Reaching out to Canadians

In order to do its work effectively, the Commission will need to communicate its findings to the public in a compelling manner. In addition to regular public reports, this role would include conveying its findings and analysis to Canadians in a variety of channels (for example through media outreach, public speaking, online engagement, or social media).

Convening and outreach would be important elements of the Commission’s research process.

ADVISORY COUNCIL TO THE COMMISSION

Governments would also appoint an Advisory Council to the Commission, to provide guidance on the Commission’s plans. However, the Council’s advice would **not be binding** on the Commission, which would retain full independence on its research, assessments and analysis.

The Advisory Council would meet less frequently than the Commission (e.g. 1–2 meetings per year). The Advisory Council would consist of about 25 members, including:

- One advisor selected by each signatory government to the Pan-Canadian Framework, which could be a government official
- Indigenous advisors, and
- Advisors representing other relevant constituencies, such as youth, labour, business, civil society (particularly environmental non-governmental organizations), academia, colleges and training institutions, and municipalities, including remote or rural communities.

Via their advisors, signatory governments to the Pan-Canadian Framework could **request that the Commission undertake specific research projects** in support of the goals and objectives of the Pan-Canadian Framework. Any such research projects agreed and conducted by the Commission would have to align with the Commission’s operating principles.

The relationship between the components of the proposal is illustrated in Figure 2, below.

CONCLUSION

Ongoing expert advice to governments on actions to tackle climate change and spur clean growth is essential to the success of the Pan-Canadian Framework. The Canadian Commission on Clean Growth and Climate Change will recognize success, suggest improvement where required, and recommend best practices. Its work will support durable and ambitious climate policy implementation that contains costs, maintains competitiveness, and helps to position Canada for success in the global clean energy transition.