

# Economics and Environmental Policy Research Network

## Research Symposium

February 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### Session Notes for Opening Plenary by

## Environment and Climate Change Canada: Policy and Research Priorities

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### 1. State of Existing Research and Discussion Context

This session explored how Environment and Climate Change Canada's policy agenda pertaining to climate change has advanced over time. Key themes discussed in the session include:

- **The Past:**

- There used to be more climate deniers than there are now, and public understanding has increased. Although overall climate change science still provides the same information as it used to, the information and outcomes are becoming more clear and evident.
- Climate change used to be considered as solely an environmental issue but is now a cross-cutting issue and is a top concern for many Canadians.
- Technology is no longer seen as an alternative to policy but is now rather seen as *complementary* to it. Clean technology is therefore seeing an acceleration, partly due to government support in backing it, but also due to a surge in market demand.
- The debate has gone from “should we act on climate change” to “how best to act on climate change”.

- **The Present:**

- We are currently heading in the right direction with carbon pricing, methane regulations, investments in a low-carbon economy fund, green infrastructure, public transit, and green programs targeting emission reductions.
- We now have many tools to fight climate change – like nature-based solutions, efforts for a circular economy, climate finance, cleantech, and the role of cities – which are all showing tremendous potential and are increasingly entering the mainstream.
- There are currently 19 federal government departments that are working together to implement the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Technology Growth and Climate Change.

- **The Future:**

- The Canadian federal government recently announced its target to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.
  - This is in addition to the goal of meeting the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals targets which will require a new approach and lens to design solutions.
- Canada will need to go beyond adding new programs and will need to focus on how to run programs more efficiently.

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## 2. Research Questions Identified

- **What is the best approach to reach the net-zero carbon emissions targets by 2030?**
- **What will it mean to “reach” our 2030 and 2050 targets?**
- **Is there the potential to exceed our targets?**
- **How can we move towards a more circular economy?**
- **How do we get more results from all the activities happening within the federal government? There are currently 19 federal departments – how can we improve collaborations to get more (and better) results?**
- **Where do cities fit in when it comes to approaching federal climate actions?**

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