



Fast

FACTS

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES – MANITOBA

October 8, 2019

All talk and little action: climate today in Manitoba

First published in the Winnipeg Free Press October 8, 2019

“What do we want? Climate Action! When do we want it? NOW!” yelled thousands in front of Manitoba’s legislature. 12,000 people joined the September 27th Global Climate Strike at the Manitoba Legislature, this was also the seventh rally youth climate strikers held since last February.

But Premier Brian Pallister has yet to take action on the seven demands of these smart, passionate and concerned youth. On the day of the protest, Sustainable Development Minister Rochelle Squires announced a youth advisory council to the government on climate.

Is this government listening? The youth want action on climate science, not another advisory committee.

The “Made in Manitoba Climate and Green Plan” has had little impact at a time when Manitoban greenhouse gas (GHG) rates are at an all-time high; Manitoba is the sixth largest emitting Province. Pallister flip-flopped on the carbon tax and is using taxpayer money to sue the federal government, despite two provincial courts backing the federal government’s ability to lever the tax.

Our provincial target won’t meet the Paris Climate Accord. In 2017, the Province named a “cumulative” reduction of 2.4 to 2.6 megatonnes (MT) of GHGs between 2018 and 2022. This June, they lowered this already low bar to 1 MT – less than half their original target.

Manitoba is tracking emissions via cumulative measures, grouped in five year periods, not year-over-year reductions. They announced a “carbon savings account” this spring, which measures emission reductions adding up to 1 MT over a five-year period. If that reduction isn’t met, it’s tacked onto the next five-year period, and if it’s not met again, it’s kicked further down the road. There’s nothing holding government to account on this goal.

The Province isn’t taking a “whole of government” approach, so emissions could be reduced in one area (by introducing more electric buses, for example) and increase in another (like by approving more hog barns), but the government could still count the GHG emissions saved in one area – even if there is an overall increase.

The commitments to get us to this weak 1 MT goal are just as paltry.

Agriculture is the largest emitter in Manitoba at 39% of all emissions. The provincial response is the Growing Outcomes in Watersheds endowment, promising approximately \$5 million of funding annually. Wetlands and natural prairie can be effective carbon sequestration, but public funding should be tied directly to reducing GHG, and this program has no such metrics.

The Conservation Trust established by

there is an alternative.

CCPA-MB
205-765 Main St.
Winnipeg, MB
R2W 3N5

phone

(204) 927-3200

email

ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

website

[www.policyalternatives.ca/
manitoba](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/manitoba)

blog

www.policyfix.ca

twitter

@ccpamb

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the Province only yields \$5 million per year for climate and related projects, but \$2.8 million for 2019/2020 remains unallocated.

At the same time, approximately \$500,000 of budgeted 2019/2020 funding from the Sustainable Development department to key environmental non-profits and charities has stalled since April. The groups have not spoken out as they continue to hope funding will flow. Underspending allocated budgeted monies is one way this government is balancing the budget.

The government is also not adequately funding transportation – the second largest emitter in Manitoba at 31%. In 2016, the provincial government cut funding to the City of Winnipeg for transit, and bus ridership in Winnipeg is declining. Outside of Winnipeg, the Province didn't take up the federal offer to cost-share subsidized bus service to communities no longer served by Greyhound.

Natural gas is a GHG concern as the main heat source for Manitoba's housing stock, but uptake on efficiency programs is declining. Hydro predicted that 117,000 Manitobans will use their incentives in 2019, a decrease from the 142,000 estimated in 2018.

Immediate action and adequate investment are needed to severely reduce emissions by 45% in 2030 and to net zero by 2050, as advised by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. There is no time to waste in Manitoba.

It seems some leaders are not paying attention to the urgency for climate action.

But climate change will impact all of us. More frequent and severe heat waves result in heat stroke and death. Manitoba is slated to have more flooding in the spring and droughts in the summer. This summer, 10 communities declared agricultural disasters, and more incidences like this can threaten our food supply.

Climate change left unchecked will cost

billions of dollars – more than it costs to address it via the Green New Deal.

Today's youth are tomorrow's voters, and their calls to action must be heeded. Our political leaders would be wise to listen – and act.

Molly McCracken is the director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba and a member of the Climate Action Team Manitoba.

CCPA-MB
205-765 Main St.
Winnipeg, MB
R2W 3N5

phone
(204) 927-3200

email
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