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**CONTRIBUTORS****OPINION**

# It is time for a principles-based National Energy Vision process

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Late in April, in conjunction with U.S. President Joe Biden's Leaders Summit on Climate, the Canadian Government announced that Canada's new Green House Gas (GHG) reduction target under the Paris Agreement would be 40 to 45 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. The previous target was 30 per cent. Canada's new target, the return of American leadership on GHGs, and renewed commitments from China, should all be good news for our GHG reduction effort. Right?

Maybe. There is a disturbing trend across Canada where our elected leaders make one-off political announcements supporting things like a carbon tax, hydrogen, small modular reactors (SMR), and electric cars, all of which have a role in reducing GHGs, and then continue pursuing the rest of their policy agendas. Most of these agendas would produce outcomes at odds with reducing or avoiding GHG emissions. It is obvious that without a broader National Energy Vision that knits these announcements together in a way that is coherent, complete, and actually works, our GHG reduction targets will remain just that: targets.

There continues to be an enduring need create a National Energy Vision and to resolve Canada's persistent energy policy dilemma — how to develop a consensus that aligns the conflicting demands between producing and consuming provinces and cultivates a common ground on which to move forward.

A National Energy Vision is not the same as a climate framework. A National Energy Vision is concerned with the management of energy supply and demand. A climate framework, on the other hand, is focused on the reduction of greenhouse gases. The two policies are, however, tied at the hip. They each inform the other and can only succeed or fail together.

Reaching a consensus on a National Energy Vision is no mean feat, given Canada's constitutional division of powers, the location and form of our energy resources, our rapacious demand for energy, and the cumulative legacy of past energy-related decision-making. A principles-based process will increase the likelihood of reaching a consensus on such a vision and do so in a way that aligns interests and reconciles conflicts based on what Canadian's value most.

Canadians deserve more from our elected leaders than gratuitous announcements that create a misleading impression that we are actually getting things done. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Canadians have overwhelmingly demonstrated a collective willingness and ability to act for the benefit of the broader community while simultaneously looking to government for a strong civil response and real action.

It is clearly time for a principles-based National Energy Vision process. In fact, it is well overdue.

The process to reach a consensus on a National Energy Vision should be designed with a number of key principles in mind.

The process should: advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, be inclusive, be built on a shared set of facts and be based on science, include comprehensive and reliable data, fulfil Canada's climate change goals and promote environmental sustainability, include a reasonable and defined transformation period, consider affordability and economic prosperity, equitably share benefits and costs, and be transparent.

The link between energy supply and demand and climate warrants a call to action. Canada desperately needs a well-organized and actionable transformation plan, one that addresses energy supply and demand from the perspective of Canada's climate framework. It is time for our national leaders to undertake a principles-based process to reach a consensus on a National Energy Vision.

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