



Federal budget 2008 and the Environment

The 2008 federal budget is a green failure. Canadians' top concern during the time the Harper government has been in power is the environment. But this budget shows the Harper government doesn't care about Canadians' priorities or about the environment.

Yesterday's budget is yet another missed chance by the Harper government to show leadership to act on climate change and preserve the natural environment.

What's in the budget?

Nothing meaningful for the environment. The words "climate change" are not mentioned in the budget. Here are some key environmental announcements:

- \$300 million to support nuclear energy, including the development of the advanced CANDU Reactor.
- \$250 million for a full-scale commercial demonstration of carbon capture and storage in the coal-fired electricity sector.
- \$66 million over two years to set up the regulatory framework for industrial air emissions.
- \$21 million over two years to make environmental law enforcement more effective.
- \$10 million over two years for scientific research and analysis on biofuels emissions.
- Increased tax incentives for investment in clean energy generation.

What does it mean ?

The Harper government has failed Canadians on environmental issues. The federal government has said many times that climate change must be addressed but yesterday's budget takes no meaningful steps to deal with climate change.

Canada is lagging further behind the rest of the world – and further behind some Canadian provinces – in the drive to green the planet and create sustainable societies and economies. Countries with vibrant economies, such as Finland, Sweden and New Zealand, have had carbon taxes in place for years. Their economies have not collapsed. These countries and others are moving forward on climate change while Harper's Canada idles at the back of the pack with its head in the sand.

The Harper government has no vision of a clean and green future for Canadians. Canadians should look elsewhere for direction on the environment. For example, the British Columbia government's recent budget marked it as the first in Canada to create a significant tax on carbon that will lead to real greenhouse gas reductions. The BC government also announced \$1 billion for climate action in that province. By contrast, Harper's government announced considerably less for *all* of its national environmental plans.

At best, the Harper government is looking for technological fixes to climate change by encouraging nuclear power and carbon capture and storage. This "magic bullet" approach will do little to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

What are the better choices?

Real action on climate change. That's what Canadians want. But this budget does not deliver meaningful actions.

A better choice would be a revenue-neutral carbon tax that would recycle funds into environmental initiatives to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The tax would also have built-in provisions to help low-income Canadians and be used to support a just transition plan for workers. The federal government's own advisory body on climate change – the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy – urged the government to put a price on carbon. This recommendation was ignored in the budget.

A better choice would be a greenhouse gas emissions cap and trade system for large emitters.

A better choice would be major investments in energy efficiency and low-impact renewable sources of energy.

A better choice would be major investments in environmental infrastructure.

A better choice would be investment in a strategy for green jobs development and a green industry investment fund.

A better choice would be large-scale funding for public transit.

A better choice would be national vehicle fuel economy standards modelled on the California example to encourage cleaner and greener personal transportation.

Canadians are crying out for real action on climate change but the Harper government has failed to deliver yet again on the environment.

For more information, visit www.cupe.ca/budget

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