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Going Green: Recent Climate Change and Energy Developments

While Canada, along with the rest of the world, continues its efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic, several recent federal and provincial announcements have confirmed that government has not lost sight of the threat posed by global climate change.

Federal Target Net-Zero by 2050

On November 19, Canada took legislative action to affirm its 2019 commitment to target “net-zero” greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. Bill C-12, the *Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act*, calls for the government to establish GHG emissions targets and reduction plans for milestone years: 2030, 2035, 2040 and 2045. Although no details have been released, the 2030 target and associated reduction plan are to be established within six months of the legislation coming into force. Subsequent targets and plans are due at least five years prior to the relevant milestone year.

The government will provide an opportunity for the provinces and territories, Indigenous peoples, a special advisory board formed under the legislation, and any other interested person to comment on all emission-reduction targets and plans. There are no penalties or other consequences under Bill C-12 for any failure to meet a reduction target or properly implement a reduction plan.

Ontario to Develop a Low-Carbon Hydrogen Strategy

Also on November 19, Ontario released a [discussion paper](#) proposing the development of a low-carbon hydrogen strategy that would further Ontario’s 2018 goal of reducing provincial GHG emissions to 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. The government has identified hydrogen as a lower-carbon alternative to fuels used in Ontario’s transportation systems, buildings and industries. Ontario is in the early stages of developing a low-carbon hydrogen strategy, and proposes to conduct public consultations until January 18, 2021.

Alberta to Develop a Natural Gas Strategy

In October, Alberta published *Natural Gas Vision and Strategy*, announcing its intention to further develop its natural gas sector and pursue access to new markets. Pledging a “whole of government” focus, the strategy seeks to attract investment and deploy natural gas to petrochemical, liquefied natural gas and hydrogen markets. In particular, Alberta aims to achieve large-scale hydrogen production and deployment across the province by 2030 and to other jurisdictions by 2040. Partnership opportunities under a federal hydrogen strategy are being considered.

Québec’s 2030 Plan for a Green Economy

On November 16, Québec unveiled the [2030 Plan for a Green Economy](#) (2030 PGE), reiterating its commitment to reduce GHG emissions in the province by 37.5% below 1990 levels by 2030 and paving the way to achieve carbon neutrality in 2050. Rollout of the 2030 PGE will be outlined in a five-year implementation plan, updated annually, the first of which has already been [released](#). Backed by a budget of \$6.7 billion over the next five years, the 2030 PGE is an electrification and climate change policy framework, focusing on the electrification of the Québec economy and adaptation to climate change. The 2030 PGE mainly targets the transportation sector, and aims to develop an industrial ecosystem focusing on electric vehicles, charging infrastructure and batteries. Measures under the 2030 PGE will include incentives for electric vehicles and charging stations, investments to support projects aimed at reducing GHG emission from industrial activities and building heating, efforts to increase the production of bio energy and green hydrogen, as well as financial support relating to flood risk prevention and to the reduction of coastal erosion and landslides.

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