

THE SASKATCHEWAN ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIETY PROPOSES AN ACTION PLAN TO ACHIEVE DEEP CUTS TO GREENHOUSE GAS POLLUTION IN SASKATCHEWAN

Bert Weichel, President of the Saskatchewan Environmental Society today released a recommended plan of action aimed at slashing greenhouse gas pollution in Saskatchewan 40% by the year 2020. "Greenhouse gas pollution has been on a steady rise in Saskatchewan" said Weichel. "At 73.8 tonnes of emissions per capita, we are now one of the highest greenhouse gas polluting jurisdictions in the entire world. The international scientific community is recommending that Canada reduce greenhouse gas emissions 40% by the year 2020. The Saskatchewan Government should adopt that reduction target and implement the public policy changes needed to accomplish it."

To date Saskatchewan climate change policy has focused on a proposal to achieve one million tonnes of reduction through a carbon capture and storage project at the Boundary Dam Power Station. "However, that reduction would only cut a tiny fraction of the seventy five million tonnes Saskatchewan now emits", Weichel observed. The Province also plans to expand wind power by 200 MW and is considering regulating Saskatchewan emitters who exceed 50,000 tonnes of emissions at a single facility. "These steps have merit" said Weichel, "but they will not get us anywhere close to the reductions the international scientific community says are necessary if we want to avoid dangerous climate change."

The Saskatchewan Environmental Society recommends the following additional public policy measures aimed at curbing and reducing greenhouse gas pollution in Saskatchewan.

1. Set target dates for phasing out each of Saskatchewan's coal fired generating stations.
2. Launch a large investment in electricity efficiency in Saskatchewan, a measure guaranteed to save SaskPower ratepayers money within five years. 300 MW of savings by 2017 is readily achievable.
3. Begin replacing coal fired power with cogeneration (using natural gas), efficiency measures and a broad mix of renewable energy sources ranging from biomass and small scale hydro to a decentralized wind power network that could readily supply 15% of Saskatchewan's electricity needs. Require SaskPower to target a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

4. Adopt regulations that require the oil and gas industry to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 40% by 2020, including sharp cuts to the flaring and venting of methane.
5. Adopt energy efficiency codes for all new building construction in Saskatchewan. Energy Star construction should become the new standard.
6. Utilize proven designs developed in Saskatchewan to construct homes capable of reducing energy consumption 80% at an incremental construction cost of 12%.
7. Launch a major energy efficiency retrofit of Saskatchewan homes and businesses through SaskEnergy, with retrofits designed to pay for themselves within 8 years using solely the energy savings.
8. Offer financial incentives for the purchase of super energy efficient vehicles; also offer financial incentives for trucking companies to save energy by installing auxiliary power units. Reduce the speed limit to 95km per hour on all Saskatchewan highways, as a way to curb gasoline consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Actively discourage the purchase of large trucks and SUV's when they are unnecessary to tasks that need to be performed. Support cities to construct a high quality network of bicycle trails and encourage cycling throughout the spring, summer and fall.
9. The Province and the federal government should work together to reinstate passenger rail service between Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw and Prince Albert. A shift from road to rail should be strongly encouraged in the commercial transport sector.
10. District heating systems that run on waste heat and renewable energy sources should be installed in large urban downtowns; district heating systems based on solar, wind and biomass energy should be installed in new subdivisions.
11. SaskPower should offer carefully planned financial incentives for the adoption of super energy efficient technology by the commercial, agricultural and industrial sectors. In other jurisdictions, such as Vermont and California this has greatly increased efficiency and helped utilities avoid the expense of having to build more generating capacity.

“These measures will make our economy more efficient and create thousands of new, environmentally friendly jobs” Weichel said. Most important, they will allow Saskatchewan people to play our part in sharply reducing greenhouse gas emissions, a measure that is crucial to protecting life on earth as we know it. Once emitted, greenhouse gases are very long lasting in the atmosphere. Another 10-15 years of failure to act in Saskatchewan and in much of the developed world, will unleash changes in climate that will be irreversible and will cause much human suffering around the globe. So the time for action is now” Mr. Weichel concluded.

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