

Submission to the New Brunswick Select Committee on Climate Change

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By

Margo Sheppard

Fredericton, NB

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my suggestions on climate change in writing; I am unable to present in person due to pre-existing travel arrangements.

Thank you for spending much of this summer hearing from New Brunswick citizens, many of whom feel they have not had government's ear for many years, particularly on this topic.

For what are we to think of a Government (Liberal and Conservative, there is little difference in this context) that constantly champions the country's largest proposed pipeline—Energy East-- a venture that at best would provide a few hundred jobs and at worst, would inject huge amounts of greenhouse gas into the globe's atmosphere thus worsening climate change? Both parties are being hypocritical if they say we can have Energy East AND a liveable, sustainable climate. It doesn't work that way. To argue a safe climate can co-exist with this or any future large oil pipeline transporting extreme energy is to essentially **deny the laws of physics**.

I will use my 35 years of experience working in environmental planning and conservation in Ontario and for the past 20 years, New Brunswick, to construct my recommendations to the Committee in the format requested. But before that, I would like to elucidate some **principles** by which each and every climate change initiative taken by government needs to be assessed before adoption.

These principles are:

Equity: does the measure make society more or less equal? Can negative societal effects be 'off-set' by taxation or other compensating programs? Does it keep future generations central to its mission in terms of maintaining inter-generational equity and access to all of nature's bounty?

Zero or negative emissions: does the measure reduce, eliminate or naturally sequester emissions at all stages of the project’s life-cycle? If not, it has no place in the toolbox and should be discarded.

Preserving biodiversity: does the measure harm directly or indirectly wildlife? Canadians are among the worst offenders contributing to biodiversity decline. GHG emissions and climate change account for half of the loss of species and ecosystems, according to the World Wildlife Fund’s Living Planet Index (http://www.wwf.ca/newsroom/reports/living_planet_report_2010.cfm). No measure can be adopted that will further degrade habitat or inflict hardships on wildlife populations be they game or non-game species. Particular care needs to surround large engineering works done to upgrade drainage, transportation, sewage and other infrastructure due to climate change.

Small scale/decentralized solutions: the obsolete ‘growth at any cost’ approach involving mega-projects, extractives, raw materials export, etc. has caused species extinctions and climate change. Trends in all areas are towards small-scale, community-owned, decentralized solutions including for energy and economic development. No measure can be adopted that promotes large-scale construction, private sector ownership of public assets or centralized control, as these will fail.

Unintended consequences: What are the project’s potential unintended consequences—have these even been considered? What is the worst-case scenario and can we live with it? Too often these thought-processes are not part of decision-making, but should be.

These are principles I value. I hope you will put them to use in this exercise.

Recommendations to the Select Committee

Mitigation: Transitioning to a low-carbon economy

We need to reduce our roughly 20 tonnes/year/capita emissions. This approximates the annual carbon that each North American produces, while European and Asian populations produce only one-quarter to one-twentieth of this, respectively. Due to our lack of public transit and other factors, New Brunswickers may in fact

individually emit more than 20 tonnes/capita/annum as could other car- and fossil fuel-dependent provinces.

I support a **carbon tax** levied on the consumption of fossil fuels. It should also apply to the import, processing and export of fossil fuels. The industries which have created in large part this climate crisis—regardless of their ‘sacred cow’ status-- cannot be let go without paying their fair share of the transitioning costs. Consumers are restricted in their choice of heating and mobility; the sting of a carbon tax should be mitigated by the increase in options and availability of low-carbon items including cars and (locally-built/installed) heating systems. Industry payments should help programs that incentivize uptake of these items.

Industry also has to have **strict emissions regulations** placed upon them. New regulations have proven to induce innovations in technology, which can in turn be exported to help other areas. Corporations have for too long convinced government to take a hands-off approach to regulation, in effect leaving the fox in charge of the chicken coop and giving rise to our current climate predicament. This must end.

One-half of NB is ‘Crown land,’ otherwise known as unceded aboriginal territory, most of which is given over to **industrial forestry**. 85-90% of all forestry on Crown land is by clear-cut. Clear-cuts have been controversial and for good reason: they have been heavily implicated in recent flooding events (Sussex, for example) and the steep decline in deer populations. New Brunswick is beholden to an industry that practises unsustainable forestry but **claims otherwise**. Any (truthful) forester in Government will confirm this. Further go onto the Global Forest Watch website (<http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/>) and you will observe satellite imagery showing NB clear-cutting has occurred at a rate that is 1.7 times the regeneration rate over the past fifteen years. Unsustainable—yes most certainly. Will taxpayers suffer financially for this in the long-run—there is no doubt.

What is the solution? **Clear-cutting should be reduced** and replaced with more selective cuts that mimic natural forest processes. **Community forests** that function on a smaller, more local scale should be experimented with as they are in Nova Scotia. Spraying of glyphosate and other pesticides, which remove many thousands of tonnes of carbon-sequestering plant material from Crown land and

power-line rights-of-way every year should be stopped immediately and replaced with more manual cutting and alternative plantings. **NB absorbs fully one-third of the glyphosate deposited in all of Canada's forests** (only three provinces use it for forestry). It is exacerbating climate change, harming birds and other wildlife and is listed by the International Agency on the Risks of Cancer (IARC—part of the World Health Organization) as a “probable” human carcinogen. Banning spraying is a no-brainer from the point of view of climate change and even moreso from the perspective of its adverse health impacts. It would also save NB taxpayers over \$2M/year.

Finally, **permanently remove fracking for natural gas** from the government economic development portfolio. It is too GHG-intensive and is proven to be incrementally worse for climate change and perhaps more importantly, water, with the publication of each related scientific study. No new source of fossil fuel should be developed in NB, regardless of licences issued, promises made or whatever misguided departmental aspirations exist. It is time we all pull in the same direction to address climate change. Civil servants tending otherwise –perhaps in service to their own egos or improper industry allegiances--must be reined in for the broader public good.

Adaptation: Responding to the impact and risks of climate change

In the past fifteen years New Brunswick has seen the emergence, then unfortunate politically-motivated retreat, of **several critical planning tools** needed for systematically adapting to climate change. These include a Green Buildings Policy (finalized, not being followed); a Coastal Zone Policy Statement (never enacted); a Wetlands Policy Statement (abandoned in favour of endless public consultation) and Water Classification (passed in 2002, never implemented by government).

Many of the above policies *could have* guarded against ill-advised land use and development that has long been, and is proving ever more, problematic in light of severe weather events and the need to reduce emissions at every turn. This includes residential buildings being approved on floodplains, on unstable coastal dunes and in wetlands that are allowed to be filled-in. The government should resurrect these policies, update them to current standards of care and cause them to be scrupulously implemented by all planning authorities.

The **Water Classification program** that was developed with watershed groups and many millions of NB tax-payers' dollars over a period of over 25 years, was and is an outstanding start at measuring and **maintaining NB's high stream water quality and quantity**. However, recently leadership at the Department of Environment and Local Government has decided it is too democratic and/or resource-intensive to implement, despite the adoption of similar, citizen-driven programs in Maine and Ontario. This departmental stance appeared to arise only following proposals for several mega-projects in New Brunswick were being considered (Sisson Mine, fracking). Fearful of thwarting the projects through water classification, Government officials -- with no substantive reason given to the many hundreds of participants in the project—have put the program in abeyance for fourteen years! This is completely unacceptable.

If ever there were a time for maintaining good quality water, in stable quantities in natural streams and rivers, THIS IS IT. We must be able to say “no” to damaging industries that threaten our most precious resource. If an industry cannot function without harming watercourses in a community, the community should be able to prevent that industry from locating within its bounds. Under various climate change scenarios water is destined to become more valuable than most naturally-occurring substances. We must be able to protect it, and in these uncertain times brought on by climate change, **water classification in NB must be resurrected immediately**.

Provincial Government leadership

As noted in the discussion document on climate change, most of the adaptation to climate change will be done locally, by municipal councils and Regional Service Commissions charged with approving development applications. For this reason, the province must show leadership in issuing appropriate, climate-sensitive **provincial planning policies** for municipalities to implement in their land use approval role. These small jurisdictions cannot develop these themselves. Resurrecting the above-mentioned policies will:

1. Protect wetlands, which in turn act as buffers to major storm events, and absorb precipitation thus lessening flooding effects;
2. Allow for adequate setbacks for coastal development, thus preventing expensive claims for damages as sea levels rise;

3. Provide a framework for keeping high quality water high in the face of damaging industrial proposals, a sure safeguard against a water-thirsty world suffering under climate change, and
4. Mandate greener, more energy efficient and renewable energy-intensive construction (the Green Buildings Policy addresses institutional structures, but could be expanded to include residential and commercial structures).

I also favour the electrification of all government vehicles/fleets. Fossil fuel use (gasoline, diesel) should be reserved for those machines that need the energy intensity only petroleum products can deliver (transport trucks, snow plows, tractors, etc.)

Measuring and Reporting

All measuring and reporting needs to take into consideration the **full life-cycle of the emissions-reduction measure** to ensure that in fact, all emissions are accounted for. This is only good accounting practice.

For example, train engines that are refitted to become more energy-efficient, but that carry crude oil from the tarsands to refineries, should not get government funding. But this actually happened under an energy efficiency program the NB Government set up several years ago. All measures proposed must be assessed from cradle to cradle if government is serious about curbing emissions.

Of course, transparency is increasingly becoming the government watch-word. Government needs to guard against industry/corporate threats that information must remain confidential to assure 'competitiveness.' This argument has been over-used and in time, has undermined the public's confidence in government. New Brunswick needs to become more transparent.

Sincerely,

Margo Sheppard

Fredericton, NB

