



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

**2016 Public Consultation on Climate Change  
Summary Report from Town Hall Meeting, July 14<sup>th</sup> 2016**

**Office of the Member of Parliament  
The Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor, P.C., M.P.  
Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe**

**August 8, 2016**

## INTRODUCTION

As part of Environment and Climate Change Canada's nationwide public consultation with Canadians on the issue of climate change and its impact, on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016 we invited stakeholders and constituents from across the riding to share with the Member their point of view and their priorities, as well as generate ideas and suggestions on how to address climate change in 2016.

To help generate a discussion around these issues, each participant was provided with the following 4 questions:

- 1. What have been your own personal experiences with the impacts of climate change?*
- 2. What are some of the solutions to reducing greenhouse gases that you would like to see governments, businesses, and communities implement?*
- 3. What are your ideas to both grow the economy and create jobs at a local level while reducing emissions?*
- 4. What can Canada do to better adapt to the impacts of climate change and to support affected communities, including Indigenous communities?*

Each participant was then invited to share their thoughts and experiences in relation to each of these questions. Once the discussion took place, a representative from each group was invited to share a summary of their discussion with the rest of the group in a plenary session. This was done so that everyone assembled could draw a more comprehensive picture of all the issues discussed during the session.

Our hope in organizing such an exercise would be that our constituents could help us to better understand Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe's most important challenges going forward in regards to the issue of climate change as well as some of the solutions that should be put into practice to help surmount these challenges.

The first question was not selected by any of the participants in this session, but their reactions in regards to this question were still captured by the rest of the discussion as part of the natural flow of the conversation between all of the participants. The rest of the group discussed Questions 2, 3 & 4 with Question 2 proving the most popular choice among the participants.

The following document represents a brief synopsis of some of these discussions and the key highlights all of which seem to translate the consensus of the group around these issues. For the purposes of the exercise this report will be broken down into the following two key categories:

1. The relationship between our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and change the ways we consume energy in general, and the direction of our economy.
2. Strategies that can be and should be implemented to help Canadians better adapt to the impacts of climate change that are already being felt in our society.

## **Relationship between energy consumption and the direction of our economy**

Many of the suggestions and ideas that sprung from this consultation pertained to what is perceived by the public as a real opportunity for Canadian businesses and consumers to capitalize on a unique moment in our collective histories; to find ways to build and renew our economy around greener practices, the likes of which would not only lead to the kind of economic growth we need as a country, but that would also have the added incentive of helping us protect our planet from the impacts of climate change, as well as help stave off a further degradation of our natural resources and our environment as a whole.

Participants certainly found a consensus around this issue and saw a clear relationship between our overreliance on fossil fuels and the state of climate change, but they also saw in this an opportunity for us to change the way we use energy and to stimulate our economy through this kind of change.

Here are some of the suggestions that were mentioned as well as a brief explanation of how and why these can work:

- The introduction of carbon pricing (some form of cap and trade system) to help offset our carbon footprint, and to mitigate the fact that it's much cheaper to burn carbon than other energy sources.
  - While it's very easy to say that we should leave carbon in the ground where it belongs and many would argue that this method remains the most effective way to combat climate change, the simple fact is that it's significantly cheaper to burn carbon.
    - Therefore we need to find real and concrete ways to encourage businesses and eventually consumers to find and make use of sustainable and renewable energy sources.
    - One way to do this is by providing a disincentive to the burning of carbon-based products through the form of a price (tax) on carbon. A cap and trade system would also encourage businesses to consume their carbon-based energy sources more responsibly, and create an incentive to that end.
- The same way that we can provide disincentives to discourage the use of carbon, we can also provide positive incentives through the form of government subsidies for businesses and consumers to use greener, but also for the most part, more expensive energy sources.
  - To offset the higher cost of these types of energy sources, the government could subsidize their use. For example, the federal government could provide subsidies for vehicles that produce lower greenhouse gas emissions in our atmosphere.
  - This would both encourage consumers to be more responsible in their vehicle purchases, as well as provide incentives for manufacturers to produce lower carbon-emitting engines.
  - The funding for these subsidies could be also derived by a gradual reduction of, moving towards an eventual elimination of government subsidies awarded to companies producing fossil fuels (i.e., oil companies).

- Another important suggestion that emanated from the consultation insofar as energy consumption is that of transportation, both public and private. Most participants seemed to agree that the future of our public transportation system is electric, be it through electric buses or some form of light rail systems, and that the future of the transportation of merchandise in this country is through the railway system, with the proper safeguards in place of course. All of these methods would greatly curb our overreliance on carbon-based energy sources and lead to cleaner air and greener spaces in our communities.
- Finally, it was also mentioned by several participants that one concrete way we can move forward on limiting energy consumption by Canadians is by making important modifications to local building codes in order to ensure that greener practices are adopted more widely. This would require, as would most initiatives aimed at limiting the impact of climate change, a creative collaboration between all levels of government in enacting regulatory laws and practices that would aim to significantly minimize our carbon footprint in our atmosphere. While compliance with such code might be costly for some, as participant said it best, “it would be short term pain, for long term gain”.

What all of these ideas essentially have in common is that they seem to be providing a blueprint for businesses as to the way forward in their day to day practices, as well as some direction and guidance for prospective entrepreneurs to get in on the ground floor of this new green wave, all of which have the potential to contribute greatly to our local and eventually our national economy.

One participant also mentioned that, much like Canadians took pride in showing to the world our willingness to welcome to our country over 25,000 Syrian refugees as well as the efforts that we undertook to make them feel welcome in Canada, that with the issue of climate change and a conscious shift towards a greener direction for our economy, that we could accomplish something very similar, that is to show the world that the protection of our environment is actually ingrained in our culture, that we can be pioneers and leaders in this area and that other countries across the world could admire and strive to imitate us, all the while providing our largely resource-based economy with the much-needed boost for which it has been searching for decades.

## **Strategies for adaptation to the impacts of climate change in Canada**

The other aspect that seemed to dominate the discussion related to how do we, now that we are able to forge a consensus around the idea that climate change is real and that its effects are already being felt currently in our communities, able to adapt ourselves and our practices so as to ensure that we are better equipped to face the impacts of these changes in our society that stem from climate change. What kind of strategies can we adopt going forward to ensure that the effects of climate change that we are already seeing do not affect our lives in a wholly negative fashion?

This question arises from the fact that now, more than ever, adaptation to the effects of climate change is as equally important as our efforts towards mitigation; in the past most of the focus has been on mitigating the effects of climate change, but now as a country we must shift our focus significantly towards adapting to the impacts that are already being felt.

To this end, a concerted effort must be made to educate the public on, and communicate to them as well, the real effects of climate change that are already being observed in our communities (e.g., a change in mean temperatures in Canada, the melting of glaciers in turn causing lakes and rivers to

overrun their natural boundaries, etc.) as well as the devastating effects that are set to occur if we do not take real action today. Several of our participants noted that very few people have climate change on their collective radars and that this needs to change. It is imperative that most Canadians understand that climate change is not some far off phenomenon that will only manifest itself in a few decades but that it's here now and we see it in very real and alarming ways that affect our daily lives.

Therefore, our government must search for new and innovative ways to engage Canadians in the discussion on climate change and then demonstrate to our citizens that their feedback will be a vital part of Canada's strategy on adapting to the impacts of climate change in our country. In other words, this current consultation must be taken very seriously by our government because we are at a crucial juncture in our history, and the decisions that we make now could have serious repercussions in the future. We must do everything we can to educate the population and ensure that they are ready to be involved in shaping the future of our environment. This is a truly unique opportunity in our nation's history-let's not waste it.

Another element that was discussed in terms of adaptation is that the federal government also has a distinct role in fostering innovation in regards to the science of climate change and one such way that they can do so is by creating centres of excellence within several universities across the country that would be tasked with developing new research and development in the areas of energy conservation and renewable energy resource development. The hope here is that this type of R & D will lead to practical applications that can then be used in small businesses and subsequently have a real impact in terms of energy conservation and consumption patterns in our region.

Finally, there was a consensus that the Government of Canada needs to seriously think about the creation of a long-term energy conversion plan that would allow not only for a greater diversity in terms of the different renewable energy sources being used and which would allow us to meet COP21 emission targets, but that would also have a concrete impact on the lives of Canadians and help curb our overreliance on fossil fuels. To this end, one such suggestion that was mentioned is a greater effort by our government towards the financing of renewable energy projects and the protection of green spaces and wetlands in order to protect our biodiversity. Such projects could also, as it was suggested, be financed at a 0% interest rate by using the Bank of Canada as a lender, as it has been done in the past. In the 1960s, for example, water and sewage treatment plants across the country were financed in this fashion.

## **CONCLUSION**

In closing, the citizens of Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe, just like most Canadians, recognize that this is watershed moment in our history and that we have a real opportunity to effect real change across our country-the kind of change that will leave a lasting impression on the lives of our children and grand-children.

They are also eager to lend their voices in helping to shape this kind of change. In fact, mostly everyone who participated in our discussion had a long-term view of Canada and it is this kind of legacy-thinking that we think will help set us on a path towards a cleaner environment and a stronger, more responsible economy for generations to come.