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A renewable energy parade is waiting for Canada's next prime minister

The procession is already marching forward with a great many Canadians cheering it on

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Iour first federal election where the campaign platforms of five of the top six parties propose actions to accelerate the scale and pace of efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Canada.

Each would maintain an increasing carbon price for large greenhouse gas emitters including fossil-fueled power plants. They all want more electricity production from our abundant renewable energy resources, and more sharing of it between regions. And they've all proposed initiatives that would drive electrification in sectors currently powered mainly by other energy sources, including passenger vehicle transportation and industrial hydrogen production.

This high-level consensus represents important progress. But whatever government takes office after the election will need to move quickly to implement and expand upon these commitments if Canada is to successfully meet its emission reduction targets.

Renewables at the core of our ambitions

Renewable electricity must be at the core of these efforts. In Canada today, we have the tremendous advantage of an electricity supply that is already almost 70% from renewable energy resources. And there is vast undeveloped potential within our flowing inland and marine waters, blowing wind and shining sun. It's an enviable starting point.

Moving to fully decarbonize electricity production is critical and within reach in Canada, and we need to do so well before 2050. We then need to expand our use of this invaluable resource, because electricity meets only about one-fifth of Canada's total final energy needs today.

Renewable electricity will be instrumental in displacing more of the polluting fuels that currently meet the other four-fifths of our final energy. This means we need to dramatically and rapidly ramp up generating capacity. Numerous studies have shown that by 2050 we will need to produce two to three times as much clean power as we do currently.



ready to proceed rapidly.

They include wave and tidal energy on our coasts, hydropower refurbishment and development, new wind and solar generation across the country, and more transmission lines and energy storage to knit it all together. The development, construction and operation of such projects will require significant investment and a very large skilled workforce, and will provide significant opportunities for Indigenous communities across the country. Successfully moving to the scale required from a climate change perspective, however, requires swift action.

A critically important leadership opportunity

Leadership, it is sometimes suggested, involves finding a parade and getting in front of it. The renewable electricity parade is already marching forward with a great many Canadians cheering it on. Getting in front of it and sustaining its momentum will be a critically important job for whatever government is sworn in later this year.

That leadership needs to entail maintaining Canada's long-standing commitments to phase out coal-fired electricity, and to work towards a 90% non-emitting electricity grid by 2030; with full elimination of electricity-related greenhouse gas emissions well before 2050.

It also must involve encouraging rapid investments in new renewable electricity generation, storage and transmission to both enhance Canada's future economic competitiveness and meet climate policy objectives. The Canadian Institute for Climate Choices has identified such investments as "safe bets" that will be required on any pathway to significant emission reductions.

Our post-election leaders must give investors increased certainty by providing a transparent schedule for increased carbon pricing at an accelerating pace that prices-in the impact of emitting generation and solidifies the business case for non-emitting alternatives. They will also need to work with the provinces and territories to design and implement comprehensive plans to electrify key energy uses and streamline regulatory review and approvals



In the remaining days of this short campaign, we can indeed take satisfaction from the emerging consensus around Canada's clean-energy future. But we should also be asking all leaders and candidates pointed questions about their readiness to turn vision into action, and about their keenness to get in front of this ready-made parade.

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