

September 21st: because tomorrow is today

On September 21st more than a thousand events are planned around the world to demand stronger action on climate change, echoing New York's People Climate March. As Canadian researchers who study Climate Change and Sustainability, we strongly support this global mobilization.

Canada is running a sustainability deficit. Unlike budgetary deficits, it does not seem to preoccupy our politicians. Canada has repeatedly missed its own climate change emission reduction targets. Last January, Environment Canada acknowledged that Canada won't meet its least ambitious target to date, proposed in 2009 as part of international climate negotiations coined the Copenhagen Accord.

Meanwhile, President Obama presented a Climate Action Plan indicating that, unlike Canada, the United States will meet their Copenhagen commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The US plan identifies carbon dioxide as a toxic substance akin to mercury. It highlights the health threats that "carbon pollution" poses and explains how the cost of adapting to climate change will soar unless we take rapid action now. Obama's plan also emphasizes the positive legacies of confronting climate change including future job security, economic competitiveness, and overall well-being.

Tomorrow is today; we can no longer wait to take up the opportunity to change course and begin to act. Countries must phase out fossil fuels to transition towards cleaner energy sources thereby guaranteeing both human and environmental wellbeing. To help Canada face this challenge, we have joined forces as a multi-disciplinary group of environmental and sustainability scholars to bring to public attention evidence-based research useful for developing constructive, forward-looking proposals. Our initiative, *the Sustainable Canada Dialogues*, brings together 55+ researchers from a wide range of disciplines including: agriculture, ecology, economics, energy, forestry, mining, philosophy, physics, political science, resource management, sociology and transport.

Our hope is that bringing together the best solutions-based research in the country will highlight what is possible and encourage public engagement and ultimately political action. In the upcoming 2015 election, Canadians will have an opportunity to demand that politicians and parties protect Canada's social well-being, economic competitiveness and extraordinary environmental assets by addressing climate change. Moving quickly and effectively on climate change will require a national conversation from all corners of society, a conversation we hope will benefit from evidence-based research on pathways forward.

Canada's current inaction on sustainability hinders our ability to play a positive role in the negotiations leading to the *Paris-Climate* Conference where more than 190 countries will meet in December 2015 with the aim of producing a more ambitious global climate change agreement. World leaders will revisit existing emissions reduction targets, which even if met will lead to a warming 2°C higher than the critical temperature identified by scientists. We believe Canada should act as a leader rather than a laggard in this process.

Opportunities for leadership begin with the preparatory activities for the 2015 *Paris-Climate* Conference. On September 23rd the UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, invites all Heads of State to a Climate Summit designed to generate momentum for acting on climate change. In response to this invitation, NGOs and environmental advocacy groups are mobilizing to participate in the *People's Climate March* (<http://peoplesclimate.org/global/>)

next Sunday. In Canada, over 100 events are planned from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island.

The time has come to accelerate the transition towards a low carbon society ensuring that the next generation of Canadians can inherit a productive economy with high social well-being standards, live in sustainable cities and enjoy Canada's unique wildlife, pristine lakes and ice capped mountains. For that world to be ours tomorrow, we must act today.

On behalf of the Sustainability Canada Dialogues,

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