

# Canada must address real climate-change challenge, report says

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To reach Canada's goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 17 per cent below the 2005 level by the year 2020, federal and provincial governments, led by the Prime Minister and provincial premiers, must reach agreement on what portion of the total GHG reduction will be provided by each province say researchers from the University of Toronto's School of the Environment. Their report is being sent to all Canadian federal and provincial governments, opposition parties and other participants in the climate policy dialogue.

"Canadian governments have always known that allocation of reductions was their greatest challenge, but have refused to face that fact because they believed it was too divisive," said lead author Douglas Macdonald. "But experiences in other jurisdictions such as the [European Union](#) show that effective policy is impossible unless the federal and [provincial governments](#) stand up to that challenge."

This is because analysis by Environment Canada and the former National Round Table on Environment and Economy shows that current federal and provincial programs will only achieve half of the target by 2020. To reach the full target, governments must double their efforts. According to the researchers, that is impossible in the absence of a coordinated national policy, because each of the 11 federal and provincial governments is acting alone to implement its own climate change policy. "No single government will double its effort knowing that it alone cannot achieve the Canadian goal and with no guarantee other governments will also act," said Macdonald.

The basic problem which governments refuse to face is that GHG reduction imposes much higher costs upon the oil-producing provinces, in particular Alberta and Saskatchewan, than upon other provinces explains Macdonald. Understandably, the oil-producing provinces are less motivated than others, which mean their rising [emissions](#) will undercut action taken by other provinces or the federal government. But in the absence of any system for developing coordinated national [climate policy](#) it is impossible to reach agreement on how to share emission reduction costs and so ensure effective action in all provinces.

The U of T report draws on studies of the allocation problem in Canada and other jurisdictions to recommend that Canadian federal and provincial governments:

1. Establish a federal-provincial process of coordinated [climate-change policy](#) development, led by First Ministers
2. Use that process to reach agreement on an equitable sharing of the over-all cost, using mechanisms such as differing provincial targets or financial assistance for those affected
3. Set the new post-2020 target, as Canada has agreed to do under the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change 2011 Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, at home with full agreement of the provinces including agreement on GHG reduction allocation, rather than having the target set by the federal government alone at an international conference.

"The present system is not working," said Macdonald. "We need to do things differently and the EU, and to a lesser extent Australia and Germany, offer models for addressing Canada's need to share the cost of GHG reductions in a way in which those in all parts of the country believe is fair and reasonable. We need leadership from the Prime

Minister and all provincial Premiers. They have to start working together."

The executive summary and the full report Allocating Canadian [greenhouse gas](#) emission reductions amongst sources and provinces: learning from the EU, Australia and Germany are available at [uoft.me/allocate](http://uoft.me/allocate)

The report is the result of a three-year study done by faculty and graduate students at the University of Toronto, Technische Universität Darmstadt, Germany and Wageningen University, The Netherlands. Funding was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. "We hope to start a badly needed conversation in Canada," Macdonald said.

Provided by University of Toronto

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