

Canada failing in climate change fight: watchdog

April 3 2019

Canada is doing too little to combat climate change, a parliamentary report warned Tuesday, a day after government scientists warned the country was warming at twice the global rate.

The rebuke came as Canada's independent environment auditor released a new report on [government efforts](#) to end fossil fuel subsidies, and as [climate change](#) shapes up as a divisive issue in elections seven months from now.

"For decades, successive federal governments have failed to reach their targets for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, and the government is not ready to adapt to a changing climate," wrote environment commissioner Julie Gelfand.

"This must change."

A report by Environment and Climate Change Canada, details of which were released on Monday, showed that [average temperatures](#) in Canada have risen by 1.7 degrees Celsius (3.1 degrees Fahrenheit) since 1948, about double the global average of 0.8 degrees Celsius.

In northern Canada, approaching the Arctic Circle, temperatures rose on average by 2.3 degrees Celsius over the same period.

Canada has pledged to meet a Paris Agreement target of reducing CO2 emissions by 30 percent from 2005 levels by 2030.

On Monday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau—who has declared climate action a top priority—slapped a carbon tax on four provinces that had not fallen in line with his emissions reduction strategy.

But the government's overall efforts have been panned by the environment auditor, and in December the environment ministry acknowledged a best case scenario of a 19 percent emissions cut.

In her latest report, Gelfand outlined a badly defined process, a lack of good data and little progress in making decisions to meet Canada's G20 commitment to eliminate inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by 2025.

She also slammed the government for looking only at the economic impact of fossil fuel subsidies, without considering potential social and environmental damage.

For fossil fuel producers, subsidies can take the form of tax breaks, cheap loans, protection from competitors, or favorable trade restrictions.

For consumers, they generally result in below-market prices for oil, gas or electricity.

The intergovernmental International Energy Agency (IEA) last year estimated the global value of fossil [fuel](#) consumption subsidies in 2016 at about US\$260 billion, down from US\$310 billion the year before.

Electricity and oil each accounted for just over US\$100 billion, with natural gas topping US\$50 billion. Coal subsidies were only about US\$2 billion.

Coal, natural gas, and oil extraction contribute nine percent of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP). Together with transportation, the sector produces half of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions.

Environmental groups said the report shows Ottawa "continuing to stall" while seeking to justify "irresponsible handouts to the oil and gas industry."

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