



Climate Action Network Canada Réseau action climat Canada

September 14, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

Your upcoming meeting on September 16 with Canadian Prime Minister Harper falls at a time when the United States is moving forward with critical national climate legislation and with preparations for the upcoming international climate negotiations. Climate Action Network Canada and the United States Climate Action Network represent more than 100 leading organizations in the United States and Canada that are working together to prevent catastrophic climate change and promote sustainable and equitable solutions. USCAN and CAN Canada encourage you to use this opportunity to further discuss the critical role both the United States and Canada play in furthering a strong global agreement on climate change and growing the global green economy.

We are concerned that Prime Minister Harper wants to protect the tar sands oil industry from climate regulation, even though it is one of the fastest growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. Expansion in tar sands oil production and consumption makes any robust climate or energy security goals difficult to achieve. Facilitating expansion of tar sands oil consumption in the United States through approving new infrastructure, such as the recently permitted Alberta Clipper tar sands oil pipeline, undermines domestic and international efforts to achieve real greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Tar sands oil production is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada and was recently cited as one of the most important reasons Canada will miss its Kyoto targets by over 30%. Tar sands emissions and planned expansion will make it difficult for Canada, the United States and Mexico to reach their recently agreed upon climate and energy goals from the North American Leaders Summit.

We ask that you work with Prime Minister Harper to achieve the following:

- Leadership on the world stage, especially leading up to the Copenhagen climate meeting, and within each country, through addressing climate change head-on.

- Strengthened investments in renewable energy and in energy efficiency and conservation through creating new clean energy jobs and increasing prosperity through new clean energy technologies.
- Incorporation of climate science into policy and permitting decisions affecting natural resource management in order to best ensure that wildlife and natural systems can survive in a warming world.
- A moratorium on expansion of tar sands development, including on further approval of infrastructure that would lock us into using high-carbon liquid fuels from sources such as tar sands, oil shale and liquid coal.
- In Canada, a national system for regulating industrial greenhouse gas pollution that is fair to all economic sectors and regions. Tar sands emissions must not be allowed to continue to rise, nor to skew the system in a way that negatively affects other regions and sectors.

Canada's current climate policies have been widely criticized in Canada, by Parliament, external research bodies, the scientific community and the public. Most Canadian provinces have emissions reduction targets that are much more ambitious than the federal government, and Canada's largest province, Ontario, is moving ahead with a cap and trade system based on absolute caps aimed at meeting its reduction target of 15% below 1990 levels by 2020. Unfortunately, both the province of Alberta and Canada currently have regulations or proposals that rely on flawed "intensity" targets in their regulatory approaches for heavy industry. These targets can allow overall greenhouse gas emissions to increase, especially in the case of rapidly expanding sectors such as tar sands oil production. Canada's government plans to announce a new approach to emissions trading for heavy industry in the coming weeks; for it to be effective, this revised approach must include a hard cap on all sectors.

The U.S. and Canada should instead discuss their collective clean energy futures and how together, both nations can shift to renewable energy and technologies for energy efficiency. Canada is a vast country with prodigious and largely untapped renewable energy potential. Both countries also have world-class expertise in energy efficiency that is waiting for widespread deployment. Studies show that there are more jobs created by investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency than in fossil fuels. In order to move forward with the United States, Canada needs to overhaul its current approach and raise its level of ambition to have a credible climate change policy. Both countries need science-based caps on emissions, no special exemptions for any polluting sectors, and global warming solutions in both our countries that lead to real and rapid emission reductions.

Together we know we can help move our countries towards a sustainable energy future that builds our economies in complementary ways.

Sincerely,

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cc:
Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu
Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton
EPA Administrator, Lisa Jackson
Secretary of Interior, Ken Salazar