Canada needs to demonstrate sincerity in its climate adaptation actions

It is not too late. Canada can still pledge to increase its contribution, by doubling it again to $2-billion a year. That would still amount to less than half its fair share, but would reflect much greater sincerity in its commitment to reach the $100-billion target.

The second of these goals, adaptation, is something of a late bloomer in the climate change discourse. It aims to strengthen the resilience of communities and habitats, faced with hotter temperatures, violent storms, flooding, and wildfires that promise to become ever more frequent and intense. Adaptations also live with the reality of climate change, but also limit the damage. In the context of policy attention and resources, mitigation, or reducing man-made carbon emissions, has until recently been given priority since it is aimed at the root causes of climate change, rather than the consequences.

Today, there is an emerging consensus that the war against climate change must be fought on two fronts: with mitigation in the offence against the perpetrators, and in the defense of its victims. They are both essential, and complementary, elements of Canada’s comprehensive climate strategy.

At the 2009 climate conference in Copenhagen, developed countries agreed to jointly mobilize US$100-billion a year by 2020 to meet the climate finance needs of developing countries. In the decade from 2010 to 2019, this target has never been remotely met. Preliminary data for 2020 shows that the amount was close to $80-billion, falling short of the target by $20-billion. Financing for the climate crisis has undoubtedly been made more challenging by the pandemic, and its economic fallout.

Moreover, in developing countries, a lot more financing is required for adaptation, which has garnered only about 20 percent of the climate funds. Recently UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for 50 per cent to go to adaptation. However, most developing countries are low greenhouse gas emitters, so they don’t need as much funding for mitigation. They are the least responsible for climate change, yet they suffer some of the worst extreme weather events, and a case can be made that much more than 50 per cent of the funding should be allocated to adaptation.

Going into COP26, the United States has agreed to co-lead, with Germany, the process of mobilizing the $100-billion per year. This puts Canada in a somewhat embarrassing position. If Canada were a generous contributor among the donors, it would set an example for other donors to match. Unfortunately, that is not the case: Canada, according to one reputable source, is far from paying its fair share of climate financing.

Calculating a donor’s “fair share” on the basis of an index combining its gross national income, its average level of greenhouse gas emissions, and its population, Canada should be contributing US$4.2-billion toward the $100-billion target. Instead, even though Canada has just announced a doubling of its commitment to US$80.8-billion a year, it is still only contributing only one-fifth of what it could be, and is listed among the most ungenerous group of climate donors, including: China, Russia, and $100-billion; India, the United States; and China, India.

In contrast, using the same composite index to calculate its fair share, Germany is contributing 112 per cent—more than its fair share. Sweden is contributing 124 per cent, and Norway 188 percent. Canada would have more credibility in persuading other donors to increase their contributions if it were also among this most generous group of donors. It is particularly noteworthy that Germany, which is co-leading the campaign with Canada to raise $100-billion to $2-billion per year, has spent more than twice Canada’s, yet spends more than 10 times as much on climate finance. It is more able than Canada to say to other donors “Do as we do.” It is not too late. Canada can still pledge to increase its contribution, by doubling it again to $2-billion a year. That would still amount to less than half its fair share, but would reflect much greater sincerity in its commitment to reach the $100-billion target.

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The Hill Times

Trudeau, O’Toole, Singh have some questions to ponder in light of election outcome

Voters delivered a Parliament that was virtually unchanged from the 2019 contest. As such, all the parties and their leaders, Liberals included, experienced at least some degree of disappointment.

In 2021, it dropped even lower to 32.02 per cent. Former top Trudeau adviser Gerald Butts can crow all he likes about the superiority of the Liberal vote. But if the Grits keep on breeding support the way they have been, they’ll soon find themselves back in opposition. Secondly, this election was called for one reason, and one reason alone: for Trudeau to re-cover the majority government he lost back in 2019; something he of course, failed to do. That mellowed whatever (favor) the Liberals can muster after the vote.

As Trudeau considers his party’s increasing loss of support and its failure to win another majority, he should ruminate on some questions to ponder. Why weren’t his efforts at modernizing the Conservative Party on issues like climate, labour, and the LGBT+ community enough to sway over more urban Canadians? Was it because his party lacked (and continues to lack) credibility on these issues? Or is it he who lacks credibility, after pitching himself to voters as both a “true blue Conservative” and a progressive, labour-friendly Red-Tory? Finally, that leaves us with the NDP’s Jagmeet Singh. After spending $24-million on a nation-wide campaign, why were the gains he made in the Prairies and Quebec and why did his party not get as much consideration as the tainted Liberals? Was it his platform’s breadth? Could it have been more progressive and therefore more distinguishable from the Liberals? Or did Singh spend too much time criticizing his opponents instead of promoting his own commendable credentials? If Trudeau, O’Toole, and Singh have any hope of improving their standing amongst the Canadian public, they best not waste the opportunity at hand to reflect on what could have been improved in their respective campaigns. Failing to do so risks even smaller victories in the next election results next time around.

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