



Workshop Summary Report

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Strategic Dialogue on Climate Change Policy Research in Canada – Workshop Summary Report

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- The Forum guest speakers: Anne Hammill and Corinne Le Quéré

Disclaimer

The authors alone are responsible for the content of this report and any opinions expressed in it are theirs alone.

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Foreword by the Canadian Institute for Climate Choices

The *Strategic Dialogue* workshop was organized, developed, and delivered independently by Ouranos and the Institut de l'énergie Trottier, with financial support provided by the Ivey Foundation and the Trottier Family Foundation.

The staff at the Canadian Institute for Climate Choices would like to thank the organizers for their hard work in coordinating and delivering this workshop.

Climate Choices' staff participated in the workshop as engaged observers—we listened for compelling insights on Canada's climate policy context and potential areas to explore in future research. We hope the discussion sessions and this summary report will provide ideas that resonate with other participants and could inform future research that contributes to addressing climate change.

Our responsibility at the Institute now is to reflect on what we heard at the workshop and read in this report, adding this contribution to other important perspectives informing our research priorities—including those of leaders in industry and the financial sector, governments across Canada, Indigenous voices, and young people—to ensure our work at the Institute is relevant, practical, and contributes to evidence-based climate policy and decision making in Canada.

Introduction

This report is the final summary of the 2020 *Strategic Dialogue on Climate Change Policy Research in Canada* workshop hosted by the Institut de l'énergie Trottier and Ouranos on behalf of the Canadian Institute for Climate Choices. The objectives of this document are twofold: to provide a synthesis of the key ideas discussed and to list the research questions that emerged from the discussions.

The pandemic forced us to revisit the format of the workshop, which was initially planned as a two-day, in-person event. It was decided to hold online meetings for the equivalent of the 12 hours that would have been committed in person. The event was held from September 14th to October 8th, starting with parallel thematic discussions built around themes from the framing document¹ and culminating in two half-day forums.

¹ The framing document, as well as all material produced prior to or during the workshop, is available online at <https://iet.polymtl.ca/climate-dialogue-climat/>.

Thematic discussions (September 14th to September 25th)

The following highlights some of the key ideas that were discussed during each of the thematic sessions prior to the forum, although the descriptions are not meant to be exhaustive. For a more detailed summary of these discussions, please refer to the theme synthesis documents available on the event's website. For more information on how these themes emerged and their intended focus, please see the framing document (available at <https://iet.polymtl.ca/climate-dialogue-climat/>).

Cohabitation in governance: a need for new policy approaches?

- The difficulties of designing mechanisms for collaboration between multiple orders of governments, and in particular the central issue of co-developing both policies and governing processes with Indigenous governments.
- The respective role of centralized solutions and bottom-up approaches more inclusive of communities and players outside of government.
- Institutional innovation: how to develop an innovative culture in government institutions, essential to a public sector, that would be effective for transition.
- How to ensure learning from best practices both inside and outside of climate policy within Canada and internationally.

Social and equity dimensions of low-carbon transitions and adaptation to a warming world

- How to improve the way in which research is conducted, notably to ensure the right conditions to foster trust and collaboration.
- How to better braid both Western science and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge systems to improve policy.
- The social justice implications of both action and inaction on climate change.
- The use of measures of wellbeing as policy outcomes and objectives.

- The lack of expertise in certain key fields like environmental psychology.
- How to frame the issue of climate change differently: defining future pathways based on a common vision and climate change communications that focus on issues of importance to people, such as health, food, housing, effects on wages and labour, etc.
- The need to better support action from practitioners and communities, notably to significantly enhance access to existing information and support behavioural change.

Integrative strategies: realizing transformations through the successful implementation of climate policy

- The many challenges of incremental versus disruptive change.
- How to drive social innovation as well as invest in technical innovation.
- The necessary multifaceted approach to thinking about financial, technological and behavioural dimensions.
- How to produce meaningful change through integrated approaches and greater policy certainty and consistency.

On natural resources

- The crucial aspect of meaningfully involving historically marginalized and disenfranchised groups in the development of research questions and policies.
- The importance of broadly defining “natural resources” and clarifying their interconnections with health and the land.
- What and where are the most promising opportunities for biomass.
- How to design pivot plans for small communities dependent on natural resource extraction.

- How to develop and build support for transformation pathways for Canada's natural resource sectors, notably the current fossil fuel sector.
- The incompatibility of maintaining certain natural resource sectors in line with our Paris agreement engagement and the failure to resolve this issue by past and present governments.

The forum (October 7th and 8th)

During the first day of the forum, discussions focused on how climate change is transforming natural resource sectors across Canada, bringing together ideas from discussions held during the thematic sessions. The key topics addressed are presented below:

- The future of the Canadian fossil fuel industry in light of the current pressures it faces—even before COVID—both within and outside Canada.
- Biomass production, use and disposal, with special attention paid to the need for more research on the limited but substantial availability, as well as the unintended consequences for biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- The issue of mobility, since small communities dependent on access to resources, for instance, are especially affected by any transformations tied to climate change, including when these changes are the result of policy.
- The importance of not having this entire conversation outside the issue of co-governance with First Nations, both for essential legitimacy concerns and for ensuring adequate resource management.

The second day wrapped up the event by presenting syntheses from each series of thematic sessions to kick off the concluding discussions. The following additional topics were discussed:

- The challenge of developing an integrated approach to climate change issues from the perspective of adaptation.



- How to define, interpret and implement integration in the building of knowledge, as well as the design and implementation of policy and action.
- The importance of communication in the context of climate change efforts and the need for research on communication approaches that can differentiate based on geographic priorities, demographics and climate risks and opportunities.
- Better coordination of existing climate change organizations to prevent excessive regional, sectoral and subject specialization, which sometimes constitute a major barrier to progress.

Lines of research emerging from a synthesis of the forum discussions

Several crossover themes can be identified from the ample list of ideas raised and discussed during the thematic workshops and forum. This last section presents these themes, along with a list of research avenues to explore. The summary of the thematic sessions (available online) also contributes several research issues to be addressed.

Line of research No. 1: The urgency of action and the legitimacy of the governance process

One overarching tension that was noted throughout the discussions on climate policy and action was how to balance the following two key objectives: first, to find ways to **urgently correct the course and spur progress** toward mitigation targets or adaptation objectives, since action and policy have so far resulted in insufficient achievements; and second, to **make climate governance much more inclusive** to better incorporate social equity objectives in the process, and in particular to ensure a much more important role for Indigenous governments:

- While many insisted that we achieve both objectives at the same time, several concerns were raised about their compatibility in the short term.
- Some participants pointed out that we may have to act forcefully, as in the context of a crisis like COVID-19, and design appropriate mechanisms to resolve the second objective along the way.
- From this perspective, resolving the many issues Canada faces in terms of social equity, Indigenous rights and governance at the same time as we correct the course on climate action may result in further delays, given the country's poor track record to date on both the above objectives.
- Other participants highlighted the utmost importance of the second objective—more inclusive climate governance: first, because addressing the shortcomings respecting Indigenous governance is a priority that can be second to none; and second, because any forceful action that is perceived as illegitimate by significant portions of the population may encounter hurdles and fail to achieve meaningful

results. From this perspective, achieving the second objective must be part of any short-term plan.

- Further research on this difficult and complex tension between these two objectives is therefore urgently needed and essential.

Line of research No. 2: Integration vs. co-development in knowledge building

A second research theme derives from another tension participants identified, related to improvements in the development of knowledge:

- While the topic of integration was central to several of the discussions throughout the event as well as to Anne Hammill's presentation on the forum's second day, several participants cautioned against framing the specific issue of knowledge development as one of integration of different knowledge production systems.
- Instead, **how to properly design knowledge co-development systems**, especially with regard to Indigenous populations' contributions and local experiences and knowledge, should be further addressed through research in order to **identify the most effective inclusive codesign processes and the right conditions to foster the trust and collaboration required**.
- Research should also encourage interdisciplinary approaches that are able to consider **different types of knowledge (science, practice, traditional)**, including through a review of practices in other jurisdictions (Indigenous peoples in Canada, New Zealand, India, etc.).

Line of research No. 3: Improving communication and proper consideration of behavioural aspects

A third set of research avenues mentioned throughout the event relates to the central role of communication in climate change policy and action:

- Communication was described as key to all efforts to meet the many challenges at hand.

- This is related to different framings of climate change policy and action, for instance making sure to **talk to people about things they actually care about**, such as health, equity, employment, etc. (and avoiding lecturing them on climate change-related behaviour).
- This issue was also discussed **in relation to behavioural aspects**, which are essential for any transformation of people’s attitudes towards climate issues and their choices and participation in mitigation or adaptation efforts.
- Since there is already **a significant body of research contributing to the understanding of climate change communication**, this knowledge should be better disseminated and deployed, for example, in policy and for advocacy. The CICC could indeed play the role of a hub to improve this aspect.

Line of research No. 4: Tracking progress systematically

A fourth difficulty requiring more extensive research, that of ensuring proper tools to track progress systematically, was raised during Anne Hammill’s presentation. This discussion echoed others expressed in break-out sessions and offline, pointing out that:

- Tracking progress systematically is **not only about indicators**, but also about setting up a system to better understand which are the most relevant.
- Most importantly, tracking progress necessitates **making sure that we learn from the information gathered**.
- The **development and use of equity mapping tools** are essential to these efforts; for instance, to track the socioeconomic impacts of various mitigation and adaptation actions—and the absence thereof.
- Mapping tools are also necessary to better understand the spatial dimensions of climate change and energy policies, and identify, for instance, the geographical, institutional and socio-cultural features both impacted by and impacting these policies.
- Research should address this need to help set up a **tracking progress system that is able to rapidly determine what is working and what is not**, as well as

whether some indicators will still be relevant 5 or 10 years from now so that rapid and appropriate adjustments can be made when necessary.

Line of research No. 5: Building effective stakeholder coalitions

A fifth overarching idea focused attention on key drivers and obstacles to building effective coalitions, which are essential to spur progress toward climate-related objectives across the country:

- These coalitions cannot always be formed at the national level but must instead be formed along common interests since **a one-size-fits-all approach is rarely possible in Canada.**
- Possible stakeholders would vary on a per coalition basis; they could be governments of various orders and jurisdictions, civil society organizations, academics, scientific or industrial organizations, etc.
- Research can contribute to this endeavour by **helping identify and develop pathways for and visions of a sustainable future.**
- This can be done through modelling efforts or by developing and refining inclusive narratives able to demonstrate the value of such pathways in what would be **a more deliberate approach.**

Recommendations

In light of the research axes outlined above, we recommend a few short-term research projects that should be undertaken by the CICC or other research organizations (and could be funded by partnering Foundations). Their main objectives and some examples of research questions are presented below.

Project No. 1: What we already know—or should know

Objectives:

- Produce a comprehensive review of existing knowledge on climate change policy and action; determine the best practices and how to adapt them to the Canadian context.
- Design new/more extensive equity mapping tools to assess and track the socioeconomic impacts of various mitigation and adaptation actions—and the absence thereof. System mapping allows for a more comprehensive explanation of interconnected issues, for instance through layered mapping of patterns (economy, ecology, equity, etc.).

Examples of research questions:

- *How can existing knowledge be effectively communicated to policymakers?*
- *How can information be adequately presented and what tools can help do so (e.g., equity or socioeconomic impact mapping)?*
- *How can distributional impacts be properly represented?*

Project No. 2: Who to work with in priority

Objectives:

- Identify the segments of population impacted by a given climate-related issue and likely to play a key role in a systemic transition; develop the appropriate narrative to reach them.
- Develop communication strategies and tools in order to tailor messages for the targeted audiences to maximize the impact of such communications;

- Properly assess the distinctions between early and late adopters, the varying risk perception and tolerance across populations, and the peer effects in behaviour changes to help develop effective targeting and behavioural nudges needed to unleash a given solution, thereby helping to remove barriers throughout larger populations.

Examples of research questions:

- *Which climate-related issues could be more efficiently addressed with actions targeted to a specific subset of the Canadian population?*
- *What is needed to develop behavioural and sociodemographic profiles that help identify promising target audiences for climate change communication?*
- *How can these profiles be used in communicating climate change action and policy objectives, at a local or a broader level, that will succeed in changing behaviours?*

Project No. 3: How to work together efficiently

Objectives:

- Given the difficulties associated with a one-size-fits-all approach in the Canadian context, more research should focus on how to foster collaboration or facilitate policy cohabitation on specific issues and involving specific orders of governments, identifying common interests or objectives across different populations or regions.
- Identify and lower barriers to collaboration among multiple orders of government.

Examples of research questions:

- *What are the best mechanisms for collaboration among multiple orders of government?*
- *How can common objectives and areas of interest in regions with multiple orders of government be effectively identified and selected?*

Conclusion

Most of these tensions and research avenues discussed above cannot be addressed or resolved through one single event. Nevertheless, the debates and synthesis of this workshop help highlight some of these tensions so that a research agenda can be developed to address them. Moreover, as some research on several of the above points already exists, the work remaining is largely one of synthesis; we believe that the CICC can provide a substantial contribution in this respect as well.

Participation was essential to the success of this event and the production of this report. While the use of an open discussion format throughout the workshop was sometimes difficult and often led to unforeseen directions, it enabled participants to feel free to discuss whatever they thought was crucial within the broad topics announced. In the end, these open discussions produced useful information.

Moreover, the level of participation and some comments early on indicate that a portion of the community sees limited interest in trying to integrate emissions reduction, clean growth and adaptation. This may suggest that while some may consider integration to sometimes be relevant and of interest, others prefer to stay focused on targeted fields of interest.

The main intention of this workshop was to allow questions to emerge from discussions between participants from various academic and professional backgrounds or areas of expertise related to climate policy in order to identify new ways to address policy design. We, the organizers, are confident that the research questions that arose present relevant research options and that the answers to these questions will help in the design of more efficient climate policies. We remain committed to working to make them a reality.