



Opinion

New Parliament should put best foot forward to address climate change

Canada does not contribute the world's largest share of greenhouse gas emissions, but Canada's emissions per capita are among the highest in the world. We have the knowledge and the resources to do better.

BY SOPHIA MURPHY

The health and wellbeing of Canadians is irrevocably tied to the health and wellbeing of the planet. Our newly elected government needs to demonstrate they understand what this interdependence implies.

In 1987, the Bruntland Commission published a report with the title, *Our Common Future*. The commissioners presented a straightforward argument: the planet's resources are finite and shared. Our survival as a species depends on taking responsibility for the effects of our actions, and our future is not just up to us, whether as individuals or as nation states, but also depends on globally coordinated interventions.

Most Canadians get this. We know that our well-being is linked to that of other countries. The relationships are commercial, based on trade and investment. They are cultural, and often personal, too. And they are environmental. Whether it is plastics in our oceans or mercury in our lakes, Canada's prosperity cannot be sealed at the border.

Front and centre of this international interdependence is



Climate strike protestors pictured on Parliament Hill on Sept. 27. As a new Parliament convenes, let us insist that Canada offer the world our best—the best of our diplomacy, the best of our science and research, and the best of our policy analysis, writes IISD's Sophia Murphy. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

the question of climate change. Canada does not contribute the world's largest share of greenhouse gas emissions, but Canada's emissions per capita are among the highest in the world. We have the knowledge and the resources to do better. But until we act, we cannot hope to persuade others to join us.

Climate change is already affecting Canadian eco-systems. In the Arctic, the damage is spreading much faster than scientists predicted. Two reports in the last few months from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), one on land and the other on oceans and cryosphere (cold places), make these points in stark detail. Both talk about food and agriculture.

Climate change is harming the land and adversely impacting food security. The IPCC notes that, "Climate change ... contributed to desertification and land degradation in many regions."

At the same time, agriculture and food systems produce greenhouse gases (GHG), which are driving climate change. Within Canada, the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI) reports that changes in cropping practices in Canada over the past 20 years have reduced GHG emissions, but that there is a potential for much more, including reducing non-carbon sources of agricultural GHGs, such as nitrous oxide and methane. CAPI and IPCC agree that farm practices that reduce GHGs

can also improve soil health and farm profitability.

Better policies at home can strengthen our hand abroad. As a new Parliament convenes, let us insist that Canada offer the world our best—the best of our diplomacy, the best of our science and research, and the best of our policy analysis. And while we are at it, let us ensure our best is backed with a substantial and thoughtful investment of public funds. Our future depends on the understanding that Canada will only prosper if the world is prospering with us.

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