



Successful Conference in Regina
Multiple Pathways to Clean Energy: Canada's Western Provinces
May 8 and 9, Hotel Saskatchewan, Regina

Greetings to members and friends of the Energy Council of Canada.

Our conference last week in Regina was a great success. Over 160 attendees heard keynote sessions and policy insights from four provincial energy and environment ministers from western Canada, and from the federal Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources Canada. Sessions examined three "pathways" to clean energy in western Canada, two pertaining to individual jurisdictions, transformation of the electricity generation mix and climate policy, and a third calling for close collaboration to seize the emerging regional opportunity to develop a western Canada electricity grid.

We have posted the highlights on the Energy Council website, but here are a few points from the conference to whet your appetite.

There is close policy alignment between the federal and provincial governments around finding a prudent balance between developing Canada's natural resources and protecting and preserving the environment. Each province is following its own path based on the characteristics of its economy, its resource base, and policy preferences, leading to a diverse mix of policies, measures and initiatives. Preserving competitiveness in trade-exposed sectors was frequently mentioned as an important economic consideration as climate policies are designed and implemented. Innovation, seizing opportunities for Canadian companies providing global environmental expertise and GHG mitigation technologies, and aggressive targets to transform provincial electricity generation portfolios were government initiatives mentioned frequently by the Ministers.

Transformation of the Electricity Generation Mix

Session Chair: Mike Marsh, President and CEO, SaskPower

Key points were the importance of: avoiding policies that pre-determine or bias technology choices so that choices can be made from a diverse mix of cost-effective options including fossil fuels, nuclear options, and renewables rather than "picking winners" or prematurely eliminating technology options; developing energy storage capacity; not over-burdening the electricity system alone with policy initiatives to achieve GHG targets; keeping the public informed and engaged; avoiding unintended consequences such as reducing competitiveness; and, improving further on Canada's current clean electricity generation, which is already 80% emissions-free.

Climate Policy

Session Chair: Martha Hall Findlay, President and CEO, Canada West Foundation

Highlighting this session were the need for: cross-Canada government leadership acting altruistically in Canada's best interest; engaging politicians in the federal, provincial and municipal governments to avoid conflicting

policies; finding a way to consolidate the results of the diverse mix of policies which have emerged to date; clearly stating the implicit carbon prices and social impacts arising from individual policy initiatives; and, for a source of comprehensive and reliable data which reveals the actual reductions achieved, the cost per tonne, and the broader economic impacts.

Discussion of the many social dimensions of climate policy on Canada's First Nations must start, and continue, with honour, trust, and respect. This approach will foster genuine, value-based cooperation between indigenous peoples, governments, and energy companies which includes consideration of education, health care, and demographic dimensions.

Western Canada Regional Electricity Grid

Session Chair: Kelvin Shepherd, President and CEO, Manitoba Hydro

Summarizing this session, there is a significant opportunity at hand to substantially increase the interconnections between Canada's western provinces. Enhanced reliability and grid stability, enabling the transformation from coal-based generation systems to a greater share of clean generation, and profiting from sale of excess power to a neighbouring jurisdiction were seen as advantages of increased electricity trade. Requirements to make this happen were cited: new financing from the federal government for new transmission capacity; communicating the advantages of increased trade to the public; and, providing support for workers and company towns impacted negatively by the transition from coal to a cleaner generation mix.

In closing, I believe that this conference provided information, insights and recommendations to guide progress along pathways to clean energy in western Canada. The conference was an excellent example of how the Energy Council of Canada acts to fulfill its strategic goals of informing public policy and fostering objective and open energy dialogue amongst a broad cross-section of policy-makers, energy leaders, academics, and experts.

As always, I welcome comments and insights on these brief highlights and on the more detailed online version.

With best regards,

Graham Campbell
President
Energy Council of Canada