



SIERRA CLUB QUÉBEC
Une terre • Une chance

Montreal, 15 July 2015

Open letter Public consultation New Energy Policy 2016-2025

Sierra Club Quebec is happy to accept the invitation by the Quebec government to contribute to the development of a provincial energy policy.

Sierra Club Quebec is the provincial chapter of the Sierra Club of Canada Foundation, a grassroots environmental organization with roots that go back to 1892 when the first Sierra Club chapter was opened in California.

The way people have dealt with energy in the past has been crucial for the development of humanity and the way we deal with energy in the present will be crucial for our future development. There is no longer any scientific doubt that climate change is induced by human activity. The main force behind climate change is emissions of CO₂, resulting from the combustion of fossil fuels.

The consequences of climate change are numerous. While it is still difficult to predict what a warmer world will look like exactly, it is certain that an increase in temperature will have catastrophic effects on both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, on our security situation, social cohesion and on our economies.

Sierra Club Quebec is convinced that limiting the scope and mitigating the effects of climate change is the single biggest challenge of humanity in the 21st century.

The province of Quebec can rely on hydropower for generating electricity. While we recognize that the environmental impact of hydroelectricity is not zero and that the most disruptive effects of Quebec's hydroelectricity projects take place on aboriginal lands, CO₂ emissions related to Hydroelectricity are relatively low.

However, the low CO₂ emissions related to hydropower are by no means a reason to sit back. On the contrary, Quebec has the possibility and the moral obligation to lead the way in phasing out fossil fuels entirely. We firmly believe that a CO₂ neutral province is possible and that accomplishing such a feat will make Quebec a world leader in sustainability. This will not only guarantee a safe and healthy future for the generations to come, but will also generate more jobs, business opportunities and competitive advantages for the Quebec economy than a fossil fuels based economy

ever can. The economic benefits deriving from the exploitation of renewable sources of energy can moreover be more equally shared among broader layers of society.

To achieve CO₂ neutrality, we propose the following measures.

- **Reduce consumption:** The cheapest and easiest way to make energy available in Quebec is still by reducing consumption and increasing energy efficiency. Governmental programs should continue to provide stronger negative and positive financial incentives to businesses and individuals to reduce per capita consumption.
- **Carbon taxing:** One proven successful method of using financial incentives in the process of phasing out fossil fuels is carbon taxation. By using revenues coming from carbon taxation to subsidize clean energy choices, the net effect on economic activity can remain zero, while environmental benefits are considerable.
- **Electrification of transport:** Transportation in Quebec is the activity using most fossil fuels. Electrifying transportation will break this sector's dependence on fossil fuels. Technologies for electric cars have developed fast over the past decennia. By investing in both the consumption and the production side of electric transportation, Quebec can become a global hub for such technologies and attract the kind of businesses, talent and investments that can create positive spin offs on all levels of society.
- **Ceasing all exploitation of fossil fuels.** When resources are present, the temptation is always there to exploit them. However, the question we need to ask ourselves is not what to do with the resources we have, but how to provide in our needs. According to most recent research, published in Nature¹, 82% of the world's coal, 49% of the world's gas and 33% of the world's oil reserves need to stay in the ground in order to prevent the critical temperature increase of more than 2 degrees. Quebec has all the means to provide in its energy needs without exploiting its oil and gas reserves. For as long as we hold on to our dependence on fossil fuels, we are still blocking alternative courses, getting farther away from sustainability and closer to disaster. Quebec must have the courage to choose for a green future and cease all exploitation and prospecting of oil and gas resources, be it with conventional methods, with fracking or any other technique.
- **Denying passage of fossil fuel transport:** Being a leader in sustainability and taking responsibility also means refusing to be complicit in the crimes of others. Not all countries, states and provinces are blessed with a socio-political climate in which long-term, society-wide

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http://www.nature.com/articles/nature14016.epdf?referrer_access_token=D0TH8QVCkPbzdkaLRREx09RgN0jAjWel9jnR3ZoTv0MEzzy4wDRQte5fViQxiPJjD2pVn_VEiIJXUIpyla0k52au177nPq6MK1EoZ4XWOqKviWFcWiotwOKaqMCCDQwv5MxrZGFxcncDB9ccGFis7YH2s39Ho2Z7p0b9IYK_MARdeXuDq8xxhmAW

interests are leading considerations in the public debate. In Quebec however, this is the case. It can not be that the shortsightedness of others prevail over Quebecer's sense of responsibility in Quebec's political discourse. Therefore, Quebec owes it to its citizens and to other generations to refuse transportation of fossil fuels, particularly those derived from tar sands, through its territory, be it by rail, boat, pipeline or any other means.

Making the transition towards a sustainable future, based on renewable energy resources is not a matter of waiting for fossil fuels to run out or for offer and demand making alternative resources economically attractive enough. Market forces are blind for environmental damage, so an active, interventionist approach is a necessity. Leaving a livable planet for future generations demands sacrifices now.

Sierra Club Quebec is convinced that a government that has the courage to underscribe these premises and act accordingly will earn the admiration from its citizens and will inspire people to take their individual responsibility. Such a government, whatever its political orientation, can count on our full support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Floris Ensink', written in a cursive style.

Floris Ensink
Chairman of the Quebec chapter of the Sierra Club of Canada Foundation
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