

**Mailing Address**

PO Box 1372
Saskatoon, SK S7K 3N9

Office

204-220 20th Street West
Saskatoon, SK

p 306.665.1915
f 306.955.5852

info@environmentalsociety.ca

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Press Release

Saskatchewan Environmental Society

Tuesday, December 15, 2015

For immediate release

Saskatchewan in a Fossil-Fuel-Limited World

In the wake of the Paris climate change agreement, the Saskatchewan Environmental Society (SES) is calling on the Saskatchewan government to come forward with a comprehensive plan for reducing Saskatchewan's greenhouse gas emissions. Reductions need to be made in all sectors of the provincial economy. To date the provincial government has only announced plans for reducing emissions in the electricity generation sector.

"Climate change endangers our quality of life and threatens our long-term economic security because of the enormous financial costs associated with its impacts," said Peter Prebble, SES Director of Environmental Policy.

One hundred and eighty seven national governments have filed pledges with the United Nations to limit their greenhouse gas emissions. The Canadian government's pledge is to reduce Canada's emissions 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. It is reasonable to expect that Saskatchewan will be asked to reduce emissions proportionately.

Saskatchewan's greenhouse gas emissions are currently 74.8 million tonnes per year (CO₂ equivalent). They were 69.5 million tonnes in 2005. A 30% reduction below 2005 levels means the province can expect to be asked to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 26 million tonnes per year by 2030.

"Saskatchewan needs to develop a strategy to accomplish an orderly transition to a low carbon economy," said Ann Coxworth, SES researcher and board member. "We are presenting an achievable plan for doing that. Our province must also seize opportunities to create new jobs in the renewable energy sector and energy conservation sector while pursuing this goal."

As a starting point, examples of emission reduction measures the Saskatchewan Environmental Society is asking the Saskatchewan government to implement include:

In the oil and gas sector: Curb methane emissions by following North Dakota's 2014 decision to ban the venting of methane, except for safety reasons. Put in place financial incentives to make the use of 'flare gas' for power generation financially viable.



In the transport sector: Introduce financial incentives for residents to purchase super-energy efficient cars and hybrid vehicles. Assist cities to improve their public transit services. Reduce the speed limit on divided highways to 100km/hr as an emissions reduction measure.

In the agriculture sector: Encourage the use of cropping systems that increase soil organic matter, thus sequestering carbon. Encourage more use of legumes in crop rotations to minimize the need for synthetic nitrogen fertilizers. Incent purchase of highly fuel-efficient farm equipment. Discourage over-grazing of pastures, allowing them to sequester more carbon.

In the buildings sector: Adopt strong energy efficiency standards for all new building construction. Increase financial incentives for installation of solar panels on homes, farms, offices, and industrial buildings. Implement a new round of incentives for home energy conservation retrofits³.

In the electricity generation sector: SES applauds the plans the government announced on November 23 to expand wind power and begin moving forward with solar and biomass installations. Other essential next steps are needed, however, including a big investment in electricity conservation and a phase out of Saskatchewan's coal fired power plants (except for the existing carbon-capture unit in Estevan).

In all sectors of Saskatchewan's economy: Follow British Columbia's lead by introducing a revenue-neutral carbon tax aimed at encouraging energy efficiency and discouraging consumption of fossil fuels.

"Saskatchewan needs to play its part in the global effort to prevent catastrophic effects from climate change," said Hayley Carlson, Climate Friendly Zone Coordinator. "Those catastrophic effects, if allowed to occur, include widespread flooding from intensive rainfall events, dangerous sea level rise that dislocates island nations, widespread loss of plant and animal species across the globe, unbearable heat waves, more dangerous forest fires, and more intensive droughts in already drought-prone areas."

Saskatchewan's per capita greenhouse gas emissions are nine times the global average and triple the Canadian average. In the wake of the Paris agreement, these high emission levels will be viewed very negatively, and are likely to impact on Saskatchewan's reputation as a trading partner and a global citizen. The time is overdue for the Saskatchewan government to take the climate change threat seriously and to implement a comprehensive plan to reduce provincial greenhouse gas emissions.

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Saskatchewan Environmental Society

The Saskatchewan Environmental Society (SES) is a non-profit, registered charity whose mandate is to work towards a world in which all needs are met in sustainable ways. SES has been active in Saskatchewan since 1970. We work on issues such as sustainable energy and climate solutions, water protection, biodiversity preservation, and reduction of toxic substances.



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For more information please contact:
Peter Prebble,
Director of Environmental Policy
Saskatchewan Environmental Society
306.665-1915
peterp@environmentalsociety.ca

Ann Coxworth,
SES Board Member
Saskatchewan Environmental Society
306.665-1915
annc@environmentalsociety.ca

Hayley Carlson,
Climate Friendly Zone Coordinator
306.665.1915
cfz@environmentalsociety.ca

Lynette Suchar,
Communications Coordinator
Saskatchewan Environmental Society
306.665.1915
communications@environmentalsociety.ca