**Ontario Provincial Election – Policies on Climate and Environmental Protection**

The purpose of this letter is to seek your position publicly on the policies and actions you and the members of your party intend to take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote a low-carbon economy and to preserve the environment in the Province of Ontario. We believe it is strongly in the public interest for political leaders and the parties they represent to clearly articulate their positions on these important issues leading up to the June 2018 Provincial election so that Ontario voters can cast their ballots on an informed basis.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stated that the scientific evidence for warming of the Earth's climate system is unequivocal. Ninety seven percent of climate scientists agree that climate-warming trends of the past century are very likely due to human activities.[1] Atmospheric carbon-dioxide concentrations have risen over the past century at an unprecedented rate and now are at or exceed 400 parts per million.[2,3] They are projected to reach between 800 and 900 parts per million by the year 2100 at the current trajectory of growth in emissions.[4] This compares to an average of between 200 and 290 parts per million that has existed in the atmosphere over the past 400,000 years.[5] Researchers have found that human activities on Earth are causing the climate to change through atmospheric warming at a rate of 170 times faster than natural forces.[6] The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) has stated, "The science linking human activities to climate change is analogous to the science linking smoking to lung and cardiovascular diseases."[7]

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[1]  https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/

[2]  http://scrippsco2.ucsd.edu/history_legacy/keeling_curve_lessons

[3]  https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/earth-s-co2-passes-the-400-ppm-threshold-maybe-permanently/

[4]  http://www.acer-acre.ca/resources/climate-change-in-context/introduction-2/global/scientific-projections/projections-for-carbon-dioxide

[5]  https://climate.nasa.gov/climate_resources/24/

[6]  Owen Gaffney, Will Steffen, "The Anthropocene Equation" 10 February 2017, https://doi.org/10.1177/2053019616688022

[7]  https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/climate-risks-as-conclusive-as-link-between-smoking-and-lung-cancer/

Recent polls show that a large majority of Canadians agree that the Earth is warming due to human activities such as burning fossil fuels.[8] A majority support moving the economy to renewable or green energy solutions and that combating climate change should lead the country's decisions on energy development. [9,10] A two-thirds majority of Canadians approve of the Federal government's plan to proceed with climate regulations. It is clear that as a province and as municipalities, there is an urgent need for the government and citizens of Ontario to take measures now that will slow down the rate of climate change through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. There are already significant costs borne by cities and communities to recover from floods, fire and drought. We need smart measures that help communities adapt or mitigate the effects of climate change, while accelerating the investment in a low-carbon economy that will help to slow the warming of the atmosphere and the resultant climate destabilization.

Pricing carbon emissions to reflect the actual costs they impose on the economy, communities and environment can be an effective method to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move towards cleaner and more sustainable technologies, if structured correctly. It can capitalize on market forces and promote the development of low-carbon technologies that in turn lead to lower greenhouse gas emissions. The world will have to transition to a low-carbon economy in order to preserve the health and quality of life of the population. Becoming a leader in the transition to green technologies and a low-carbon economy would put Ontario at the forefront of the future global economy, as well as preserving the natural environment that we all cherish.

Any future Ontario government needs to approach this issue in an informed and responsible manner by taking concrete steps in the policy, legislative and funding/investment areas as they pertain to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting a low-carbon economy and preserving the environment. Failure to do so will lead to further degradation and destruction of Ontario's natural environment, negative economic impacts on individuals, communities and provincial assets in both the short and long term, and jeopardize the health and quality of life for all residents of Ontario.

The solutions are there, but they need coherent and informed public policy decisions and action at the provincial, as well as federal and municipal levels. It requires strong leadership, transparency and courageous public policy. The residents of Ontario are craving for political leaders who demonstrably act with integrity and balance short-term issues with the longer-term welfare of their constituents and their children.

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[8] https://ecofiscal.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Ecosfiscal_Polling_February2018_FINAL_RELEASE.pdf

[9] https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2018/01/22/canadians-back-shift-to-renewable-energy-poll.html

[10] http://abacusdata.ca/public-attitudes-on-oil-pipelines-climate-and-change/

**GREENPEACE**
Ottawa-Gatineau Local Group

In closing, we are asking that you provide a public response regarding the policies and actions that you and your party intend to take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote a low-carbon economy and to preserve the environment in Ontario should you win the election.