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INSPIRING CHANGE

**Remarks to the Standing Committee on General Government,  
RE: Bill 4, The Cap-and-trade cancellation Act.**

**Delivered by: Keith Brooks and Sarah Buchanan**

**October 17, 2018.**

First I'd like to thank the members of the committee for the opportunity to appear before you today. I'm Keith Brooks, Programs Director at Environmental Defence, and I'm joined by my colleague, Sarah Buchanan.

I'd like to begin by saying that Ontario's cap-and-trade program wasn't perfect. But its cancellation, alongside the cancellation of most of the programs funded by cap-and-trade and the suspension of Ontario's climate targets, is a set-back.

Evidence indicated that Ontario's efforts to address climate change were starting to work and were not having any negative impact on our economy. In fact, Ontario added 155,000 new jobs during 2017, the first year of cap-and-trade.

Our preference was and still is to keep cap-and-trade and the province's existing Climate Change Action Plan and work to improve them over time. That's why we don't support this bill and we urge the committee, and the members of the legislature, to rethink its passage, especially without a comprehensive climate change plan to put in its place.

If, however, the government is intent on cancelling cap-and-trade, I want to make it clear that we will engage with this government and work to put climate change solutions in place.

I'd like to acknowledge some things we all know: Everyone in this room knows that climate change is real, it's happening right now, and we need to do something about it. Ontarians



agree as well – in recent polling 76 per cent of Ontarians said that their government should be doing more to fight climate change. This isn't an isolated poll – we see this pretty consistently year after year.

Ontarians have spoken up in large numbers in response to this Bill – and many are watching it very closely. Over 11,000 comments were submitted to the Environmental Registry of Ontario in regards to this bill. To put this in perspective, a previous climate change discussion paper in 2016 received only around 500 comments.

Ontario businesses, industries, health organizations, and many others are also watching closely. We engage with these sectors through the Clean Economy Alliance. The Alliance includes over 100 organizations that want to see action on climate change, and want to work with government to find solutions. Many of the members commented on this bill as well, and are keenly interested in how their businesses will be affected by changing carbon pricing systems, and what kind of new programs they can access to help them transition to cleaner, more energy efficient ways of operating.

It's safe to say that the people of Ontario will only pay more attention to climate change over time. As we experience more flooding, forest fires, heat waves, and other extreme weather, Ontarians will look to their government for answers, and they'll remember the decisions made to address climate change

Last week's report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change should be a huge wakeup call. The crux of the report's findings is that we're aiming too low with our greenhouse gas targets and current policies. If we continue on our current path, we'll see some dire consequences.

The report shows that even 2 degrees of warming is unsafe and will result in massive loss of life. There's still time to limit warming to 1.5 degrees, but to do so, we all need to significantly step up our efforts.

That leads me to one of my big concerns with this bill – the notion of scrapping Ontario's current greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and replacing them with new targets.

If we soften our current targets - which are pretty middle-of-the-road in an international context – even to match Canada's federal targets, that would be a significant step backward. Canada's targets are too weak. They are the weakest in the G7, and far too weak if we aim to do our fair share to limit warming to 1.5 degrees. The federal government has committed to ratcheting those targets up. We're engaged with them on that matter.



When it comes to targets, more ambitious is the only way they can go. Any government who knowingly softens their greenhouse gas reduction targets will be seen as turning their backs on what scientists are telling us we must do. Yes, Ontario has done a lot, but this is not an excuse to sit back.

We know a lot more now than we did when Canada first set these targets. And given that all parties here acknowledge the reality of climate change, I would urge you to work together here based on the evidence.

We can't afford for this to be a political football. We're asking for you to take some time with this bill, step back and assess the evidence we have in hand, to do what's really best for Ontarians and their future.

The good news is that this Bill requires that the government create a new plan to address climate change - we support the need for a plan and are glad to see this requirement..

We're supportive of carbon pricing, but we're not blind adherents to it. Pricing is a necessary and effective tool to cut emissions, but not the only tool available. We'll support the federal government in implementing their carbon price here in Ontario and in other provinces, and we'll engage with this government to craft and implement Ontario's new climate change plan. We all need to do our part.

There are real opportunities here to implement low-cost solutions that will make a real dent in our carbon pollution. As Canada's clean technology leader, Ontario can get good value for every dollar spent on climate action AND create jobs for Ontarians while reducing the cost of living.

The province should look at low cost solutions like natural gas conservation – which actually saves money. An expanded natural gas conservation program has the potential to reduce Ontario's gas costs by \$85 billion by 2030, and cut GHG emissions from natural gas by 17.8%. Since we are importers of natural gas, this would also mean more money kept in the province. It's a Win, win,.

Another area of focus should be freight, emissions from which are growing much faster than are those from passenger vehicles. Freight emission will overtake cars in Canada by 2030 unless something is done.

Multiple solutions are available, from scrappage programs for old inefficient trucks, to a "feebate" which would add a fee to less efficient, polluting vehicles, and use these funds to help purchase more efficient vehicles. The government promised action on heavy duty

vehicles when they cancelled the Drive Clean program. This is a good area of focus, an area where improvements can be made.

I want to add that fighting climate change will make life in this province better.

Ontario can help repair public housing and schools at the same time as making them more energy-efficient, which cuts long-term costs and makes Ontarians more comfortable. Increasing the fuel efficiency of vehicles and moving to cleaner cars will reduce tailpipe emissions from vehicles, reduce fuel costs, and will lead to cleaner air and better health for Ontarians.

The members of the Clean Economy Alliance engaged with the previous government to make progress on a number of solutions to climate change – these organizations are keen to bring these solutions to whatever government is willing to listen and act on them.

The government has a responsibility to act on climate, but the government is not alone in this. Ontarians want to act too. And Ontario need not reinvent the wheel. There are ample examples of successes to draw from across Canada and around the world. We can help decision makers understand and implement these solutions. It's our understanding that the government intends to consult on its new plan to fight climate change. We are offering our assistance with forging that plan.

As a final point, provoked in part by yesterday's report from the FAO, we urge the government to do a line-by-line assessment of the policies, regulations and actions contained in the previous Climate Plan and keep or modify those that are working well, rather than jettison them without a factual assessment of the environmental and economic impacts of those actions.

We know that the members of the committee and the members of the legislature accept the science of climate change. And in that spirit, we urge you all to work together and craft evidence-based policy that delivers emissions reductions, economic opportunities, and cleaner air for all Ontarians. This issue is too urgent to be a political football.

I'll close here. Again, thank for the opportunity to speak before you today.

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