COP 31: Canada risks being left behind as the world electrifies

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER
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environmental defence

Key Take-Aways

- Electrification takes centre stage at COP31, with Presidency's "35 by 35" Global Electrification Pledge
- COP31 will advance global transition away from fossil fuels, building on momentum from previous COPs and the Santa Marta conference
- At COP, countries will tackle the emissions gap between their climate plans and necessary emissions cuts
- Canada at risk of a credibility gap as Prime Minister Carney prioritizes fossil fuel expansion, fossil fuel subsidies and climate policy rollbacks

Electrification at the top of COP31 Agenda

COP31 comes at a critical moment as many countries around the world are increasingly shifting away from burning fossil fuels towards electricity to power their homes, transportation systems and industries. The COP31 Presidency has launched the "35 by 35" Global Electrification Pledge, which sets a target of increasing electricity's share of global energy consumption to 35 per cent by 2035. Electrification will be a major focus of this year's COP.

The shift is already underway globally. The International Energy Agency (IEA) projects that global clean energy investment will reach US $2.2 trillion in 2026, which is nearly double the investments in fossil fuels. In 2025, a quarter of new cars sold globally were electric and global oil demand is set to peak by the end of this decade.

Fossil Fuels at COP31

At COP28, countries agreed on the need to transition away from fossil fuels, triple renewable energy and double energy efficiency improvements. At COP30, after efforts to secure a formal roadmap for transitioning away from fossil fuels was blocked, the Brazilian presidency committed to developing a fossil fuel transition roadmap outside the formal negotiating process, in time for COP31.

In a parallel diplomatic process that was kick started in April in Santa Marta, nearly 60 countries participated in the first international conference dedicated to transitioning away from fossil fuels. In Colombia, countries agreed to work towards voluntary national roadmaps away from fossil fuels. Several countries have already developed these roadmaps, including Germany, France and the Netherlands.

Canada's Climate Credibility Gap

Canada arrives at COP31 facing serious questions about its commitments to tackling climate change. While other countries are prioritizing clean energy, Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney is prioritizing a new oil export pipeline, growing the LNG industry, committing billions of dollars in public support to fossil fuels, gutting Canada's environmental laws through Bill C-39 and has dismantled much of Canada's climate framework.

Due to his government's actions, Prime Minister Carney has been forced to acknowledge that his policy decisions will result in higher emissions domestically over the next few years. Canada is now more than 20 years behind schedule in achieving its 2030 climate target.

Taken together, these recent developments represent a widening gap between Canada's international commitments and its domestic policy choices.

What success at COP31 looks like

1. **Accelerating global electrification and clean energy deployment**: The COP31 Presidency's 35 by 35 pledge presents an opportunity to make electrification central to global climate action. COP31 should advance commitments to expand renewable energy generation, modernize electricity grids, improve energy efficiency and help developing countries access the financing and technologies needed to electrify their economies.
2. **Taking concrete action to transition away from fossil fuels**: At COP28, countries agreed on the need to transition away from fossil fuels. The failure to secure a formal fossil fuel roadmap at COP30 highlights the resistance from some countries that obstruct progress. COP31 must build on the momentum from Santa Marta and advance plans for reducing dependence on fossil fuels, national roadmaps, international cooperation on economic barriers, and ending fossil fuel subsidies.
3. **Closing the emissions gap and doubling down to achieve 1.5°C**: The growing gap between climate targets and tangible emissions reductions continues to threaten communities, ecosystems and economies around the world. COP31 must strengthen accountability measures for implementing national climate plans, particularly amongst wealthy countries and major fossil fuel producers.
4. **Delivering climate finance, adaptation and a just transition**: Climate change is already causing devastating consequences for communities around the world. Wealthier countries must deliver on their international climate finance commitments and ensure that support is provided to communities that need it the most.