

NZAB Submission
December 13, 2021
For Our Kids Toronto

Please accept For Our Kids' Toronto submission to the Net-Zero Advisory Body (NZAB) for feedback on the 10 values and principles and how they should inform action on the oil and gas, transportation and buildings sectors.

For Our Kids Toronto is a volunteer group of parents and allies working together for climate justice in Toronto, Ontario. Through collective action we aim to secure a sustainable and just world for all children for generations to come.

Question 1: How should the NZAB implement or refine its 10 values and principles to help ensure 2030 puts Canada on the most likely pathway to net zero by 2050?

Seize the upsides

There is the possibility that "benefits"" can be interpreted as continued growth, expansion, and maintaining the unsustainable and inequitable lifestyles we've developed. You can't have it all. A more focused definition of "Seize the upsides" as a principle could be to make the most of opportunities to support and invest in both existing and innovative ways of reducing our overconsumption of fossil fuels and natural resources - with the resulting benefits for health, well-being, economic and social equity, and overall resilience in the face of the climate change challenges to come.

Motivate and empower Canadians

It's important to re-imagine more sustainable (and therefore healthier) lifestyles, and more equitable (and therefore stronger and more resilient) systems within which we want to live. The government's role is to listen to those visions and find ways to lead us in that direction.

Collaborate every step of the way

Prioritize collaboration with marginalized communities that are most harmed by climate impacts. Recognize the impacts of environmental racism on Black and Indigenous communities and make addressing their concerns a priority.

Recognize and respect regional differences and circumstances

Listen to Indigenous leadership and respect their rights to protect their lands.

Act early, and urgently

Advise the Minister to create a full time net-zero accountability committee like the UK Climate Change Commission made up of climate experts to come up with a very specific and detailed plan about how emission cuts are going to be made every year until 2030 to reach the required 45% cut needed to avoid surpassing the 1.5 degree threshold.

Be bold and proactive

Key to getting us where we need to be is cooperation and collaborative leadership across parties and levels of government. This is not a political issue, it is an existential one. They must find a way to work together. As was done with the Covid pandemic, governments need to communicate with honesty and empathy, rely on the facts by listening to the experts, and educate the public about the climate crisis and the role they play in addressing it.

Acknowledge there is more certainty than uncertainty

This is important for creating a sense of capacity and capability among Canadians - using the pandemic as an example: we changed ingrained habits and traded convenience for safety relatively quickly; we could do the same if we understand that global warming is an existing threat and there are changes we can make that will immediately have an impact on reducing emissions.

Beware of dead-ends

This means listening to experts and understanding that there is no one solution to end emissions or counteract the impact of emissions. Change needs to happen in every facet of community and individual lifestyles.

Question 2: What key guiding principles should the NZAB consider in its advice on milestones for the oil and gas sector?

Acknowledge there is more certainty than uncertainty

- We know that we must stop consuming fossil fuels as quickly as possible. The time for incremental change has passed and there is no room for negotiation. We must immediately stop all fossil fuel subsidies. We want an immediate end to fossil fuel expansion and a cease to new fossil fuel projects in Canada. We want to see Canada sign and champion the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.
- Use carbon budgets when determining milestones, and ensure they are aligned with the science to hold warming to the Paris target of 1.5 degrees. This has proven to be a much more effective mechanism in places like the UK than using emissions reduction targets.

Put people first

- Be more explicit about a just and fair transition from fossil fuels. It could be interpreted narrowly as finding employment for those currently working in the fossil fuel industry.

Question 3: What key guiding principles should the NZAB consider in its advice on the transportation sector?

Put people first

- It's also important to avoid unwittingly substituting one resource-extraction disaster for another: manufacturing batteries for EVs has the potential to replicate the environmental impact and economic injustice caused by fossil fuel extraction. In order to be just and fair, we can't maintain the same system and only change the product - the transition and supportive structures around it has to refer to our lifestyles as well.

Question 4: What key guiding principles should the NZAB consider in its advice on the buildings sector?

Be bold and proactive

- We need to transition homes and buildings from natural gas to electric heat pumps as soon as possible. The government needs to highly incentivize this switch for homeowners, business, and landlords alike, and ultimately mandate the switch. Mass purchasing of heat pumps and solar panels and then distributing them to the provinces and territories at much lower cost could be a way to scale up and act boldly. Likewise, factories and manufacturers could be incentivized to switch to building heat pumps and solar panels at home, which could be a significant upside for communities and workers.

Seize the upsides

- Transitioning existing homes to be heated and cooled without GHG emissions will require long-term, sustained demand for the heat pump industry which is a significant upside for communities, businesses, and workers. Another upside of switching to electric heat pumps is that people will have cooling in the summer months, which are becoming increasingly dangerous due to more frequent and intense heatwaves. This could be considered a public health response to extreme heat.

Put people first

- There is also the issue of transitioning communities who are already disadvantaged in terms of accessing resources for retrofitting and adopting alternative forms of energy. The principle of leaving no one behind needs to be clearly expressed and reflected in the government's decisions.