

crane-canada-needs-to-rethink-its-zombie-identity-as-an-oil-and-gas-superpower

OPINION

Crane: Canada needs to rethink its 'zombie' identity as an oil and gas superpower

By DAVID CRANE (/AUTHOR/DAVID-CRANE) SEPTEMBER 19, 2022

The global green transition should not be, for Canada, just another opportunity to miss an opportunity.



Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson is likely aware of the risks of the transition to a green economy, which will be highly disruptive, changing the kinds of industries and jobs we need, and turning carbon-intensive assets into stranded assets. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

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Canada — In Canada we have a new zombie—a bad idea that refuses to die. This is the ongoing push to build liquified natural gas plants on Canada’s East Coast to replace natural gas from Russia in Europe. Goldy Hyder, president of the Business Council of Canada, implies we even have a “moral obligation” to do so. For many, the litmus test for the Justin Trudeau government is the extent to which it boosts or constrains the fossil fuel industry.

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Our real moral obligation, though, is to the well-being of billions of poor people around the world who are already paying an extraordinarily high price for climate change, and to our own future generations who face an ugly future unless fossil fuel use is seriously curbed.

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Climate change is our greatest existential threat. But it is also our greatest opportunity, if we develop the technologies, systems, and capacities to help the world make the green energy transition. Climate change innovation can actually make Canadians richer. But we are still too far from developing a strong, clean energy industry with Canadian technology and ownership—even though this is imperative for our future.

The International Monetary Fund, in a report released earlier this month titled *Climate Change and Energy Security: The Dilemma or Opportunity of the Century*, argued the current crisis could provide an important chance to accelerate the shift away from fossil fuels.

“Climate change is accelerating rapidly, with a narrow possibility to escape its worst environmental and socioeconomic consequences,” the IMF report warned. The global average surface temperature has already increased by about 1.1 degrees Celsius, compared to the baseline 1850-1900 average, leaving little room to hold the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, or even two degrees Celsius—goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

This means the risk of extreme weather events—such as heat waves, wildfires, droughts, flooding and severe storms—is projected to increase with “greater probability of large and irreversible environmental changes unseen in millions of years that threaten devastation in swathes of the natural world and render many areas uninhabitable.”

The world has to deal with two climate risks, the IMF says. Both need our attention.

First, there are the physical risks of climate change, such as hurricanes, heat waves, floods, droughts and flooding, which are projected to increase in frequency and intensity. Long-term climate changes include global warming, and rising sea levels. These pose huge threats to food

supply, human health, water availability, and significantly raise the threat of mass migrations and geopolitical conflict.

Then, second, there are the risks from the transition to a green economy, which will be highly disruptive, changing the kinds of industries and jobs we need, and turning carbon-intensive assets into stranded assets. Managing the transition so the needs of communities and workers are met is critical.

Another warning this month came from a *Science* report showing that several critical parts of the world climate system were already reaching tipping points, “conditions beyond which changes in a part of the climate system becomes self-perpetuating.” These changes, the study said, “may lead to abrupt, irreversible, and dangerous impacts with serious implications for humanity.”

In fact, the study warned that the rise in temperatures may have already pushed the planet beyond a “safe climate state” and concluded that five tipping points, including permafrost thaw in the north, and the collapse of the West Antarctic ice sheet, were already within reach, with looming risks to the Greenland ice sheets, current flows in the Gulf Stream, the degradation of the Amazon rain forest, and shrinking coral reefs. This, the study said, provided strong scientific support for “efforts to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.”

Another report, published in *Nature* last month, used a metric that quantified heat exposure in human beings—the Heat Index—to warn that rising temperatures pose dangerous risks to an increasing proportion of the world’s population. “Even if the Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to two degrees Celsius is met, the exposure to dangerous Heat Index levels will likely increase by 50-100 per cent across much of the tropics, and increase by a factor of 3-10 in many regions through the midlatitudes.”

British Columbia and the prairie provinces got a taste of this future last summer when temperatures soared. Some 619 B.C. residents died of the effects of heat in just one week. The village of Lytton in British Columbia set a record high temperature of 49.6 degrees Celsius and was wiped out by fire. Prairies farmers, with severe drought, saw wheat production fall 39 per cent, and canola production fall 35 per cent. As this century progresses, “the kinds of deadly heat waves that have been rarities in the midlatitudes will become annual occurrences,” the report warned.



The town of Lytton, B.C., was devastated after the 2021 heat dome saw it set a heat record in Canada, and associated wildfires destroyed the village. *Photograph courtesy of MP Brad Vis*

“The impacts of very high temperatures on public health and agricultural systems are highly consequential; the impacts of climate change on heat waves stand to present even more daunting challenges,” it added. Extreme heat contributes to chronic illnesses and makes outdoor work almost impossible, with “the potential to threaten the habitability of large swatches of Earth’s land surface if greenhouse gas emissions are not curtailed.” A temperature of about 40 degrees Celsius is dangerous, while at about 50 degrees is extremely dangerous—approaching the level of survivability.

Our priority must be to accelerate the transition to a green and clean world. But this will mean that our business will have to actively join the energy transition. That’s not happening today, despite isolated examples. Business has been cutting back on research and development spending, with total business R&D spending falling from \$18.9-billion in 2014, to \$17.0-billion in 2020.

The time has come—indeed it’s overdue—to chase away the zombie dream of Canada as an oil and gas superpower. We must be part of the essential green future. The global green transition should not be, for Canada, just another opportunity to miss an opportunity. But if we don’t want to miss out, we must work much harder.

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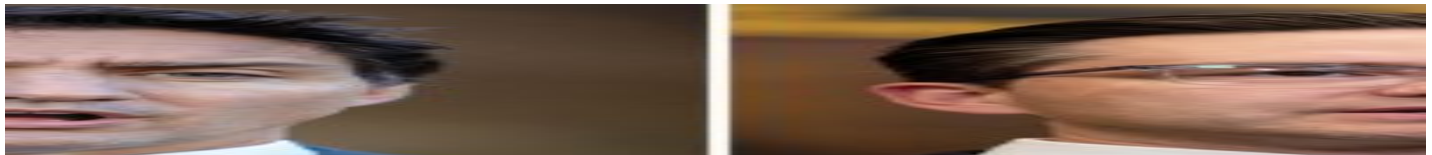
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(<https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/19/expect-nasty-divisive-political-fist-fight-this-fall-between-poilievre-and-trudeau-say-political-insiders/382632>) Liberals will take 'whatever steps are necessary' to protect the Liberal brand from Pierre Poilievre's attacks, says Liberal MP Judy Sgro.

Poilievre 'putting his stamp' on party by shaking up top echelons of Conservative ranks, say politicians (<https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/19/poilievre-putting-his-stamp-on-party-by-shaking-up-top-echelons-of-conservative-ranks-say-politicos/382825>)

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**On fighting slavery, geopolitics,
and Pierre Poilievre: veteran Liberal
John McKay previews the fall**
(<https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/19/on-fighting-slavery-geopolitics-and-pierre-poilievre-veteran-liberal-john-mckay-previews-the-fall/382887>)

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**NDP caucus members
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(<https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/19/ndp-caucus-members-angling-to-be-adults-in-the-room-as-house-resumes/382790>) While new Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre appeals to the working class, the NDP say they're not threatened, and are focused on what they can deliver for people by leveraging the supply-and-confidence agreement.

**LeBlanc to play bigger role
in cabinet while government
keeps an eye on Poilievre**
(<https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/19/leblanc-to-play-bigger-role-in-cabinet-while-government-keeps-an-eye-on-poilievre/382569>)

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(<https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/19/leblanc-to-play-bigger-role-in-cabinet-while-government-keeps-an-eye-on-poilievre/382569>) Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc, who is much more aggressive and a better combatant in the House than the prime minister, is expected to play a bigger role this fall.

**'Reserved' yet 'powerful' Queen
Elizabeth II had a special relationship
with Canada, say officials**
(<https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/19/queen-elizabeth-ii-had-a-special-relationship-with-canada-say-officials>)

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(<https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/19/reserved-yet-powerful-queen-elizabeth-ii-had-a-special-relationship-with-canada-say-officials/382733>) From gently using her 'heft' through the repatriation of the Constitution, to presenting the RCMP commissioner with a hobby horse, the late monarch built a deep relationship with Canada.

Big banks, challengers jockey for position as government plans open banking rollout (https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/16/big-banks-challengers-jockey-for-position-as-government-plans-open-banking-rollout/382686)

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(<https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/16/big-banks-challengers-jockey-for-position-as-government-plans-open-banking-rollout/382686>) Conservative MP Adam Chambers says open banking will encourage more competition in the financial sector and generate more choice for consumers.

House of Commons pays tribute to Queen Elizabeth II, Canada's head of state, and 'family member' to Canadians (https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/15/house-of-commons-pays-tribute-to-queen-elizabeth-ii-canadas-head-of-state-and-family-member-to-canadians/382698)

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(<https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/15/house-of-commons-pays-tribute-to-queen-elizabeth-ii-canadas-head-of-state-and-family-member-to-canadians/382698>) Opposition leaders navigated the potentially politically murky waters of mourning a monarch while being anti-establishment in Pierre Poilievre's case, being a sovereigntist in Yves-François Blanchette's case.

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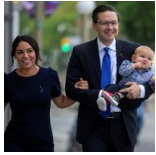
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(<https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/15/internal-strife-has-held-canadians-back-from-voting-green-say-candidates-looking-to-revitalize-party-governance/382455>) Four of six candidates are seeking to become co-leaders of the Greens, but the party constitution says that regardless who wins the race, that can't happen right away.

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Poilievre's landslide win in Quebec could redefine the national political landscape (<https://www.hilltimes.com/2022/09/15/poilievres-landslide-win-in-quebec-could-redefine-the-national-political-landscape/382115>)



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