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Time for a Medicare approach to climate change

Dear editor:

Over the past nine years Canada's international reputation has been damaged and the Keystone XL pipeline has been stalled, all because our federal government has failed to deliver a sensible, credible approach to the environment and the economy.

At the same time, many provinces and territorial governments have begun their own initiatives because they know that climate change is real and that our children's future requires us to reduce carbon emissions. BC, Alberta, Quebec and, soon, Ontario?jurisdictions that represent over 85% of the economy?have all committed, in different ways, to a price on carbon.

History has shown that Canada works best when all orders of government work together to forge solutions to complex problems. Through provincial experimentation and federal leadership, Medicare was forged and now provides one common standard of public healthcare for every Canadian across in the entire country. That's the approach we need to take to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

As it stands, the Prime Minister has committed Canada to targets, but we're not collectively on track to meet them, not even close. And no wonder, when the Prime Minister refuses to meet with the Premiers to coordinate climate policies?or anything else for that matter.

That's why a new Liberal government would, within 90 days of the upcoming Paris climate conference, hold a First Ministers meeting to work together on a framework for combatting climate change?including the creation of national emissions-reduction targets. A national standard would be set in partnership with provinces and territories, who will have the flexibility to design their own polices to achieve it, including carbon pricing. The federal government would provide funding, similar to how it supports Medicare today.

In this way, we will build on existing provincial initiatives, in the best spirit of Canadian federalism. Through a healthy respect for regional differences, we will achieve progress on climate change; we will begin to repair our broken relationships and regain public trust.

Canada has solved bigger problems than this and we'll solve this one too, in the way we always have?together.

John McKay, MP

Liberal Party of Canada Environment Critic