

Attention Editors: Op-Ed – for your consideration

Where is the conserve in Harper's Conservatives?

Prime Minister Harper's 1960s piano tunes may be timeless, but his single-minded approach to developing new energy supply is long out of fashion. Attitudes have changed, and Canadian leaders need to keep up. Before proposing new megaprojects to produce more energy, decision makers should follow this simple checklist:



- **Save Energy First** - Canadians want to get serious about energy efficiency. If governments fail to embrace energy efficiency, efforts to develop new energy supply will face an increasingly uphill battle.

- **Home retrofits first** - A good litmus test of a government's commitment to energy efficiency is a consistent, long-term strategy to upgrade our existing housing stock. On-again, off-again home retrofit programs don't cut it anymore.

- **Embrace it, don't fake it** - The Harper government closed the popular ecoENERGY Retrofit-Homes program on January 29, two months early and with less than half the promised \$400 million invested in home energy retrofits. Canadians expect better.

Home energy efficiency retrofits create jobs in all communities across Canada. They improve the affordability and quality of life for Canadian families. They lower energy bills, reduce pollution, and give Canadians healthier, more comfortable homes.

Some Canadian leaders are catching on. In December, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE) published *Energy-Wise Canada: Building a Culture of Energy Conservation*. They say energy policy focuses too much on questions of energy supply, when the demand side of the equation shows the greatest potential for positive change. The CCCE report refers positively to the federal ecoENERGY Retrofit program.

Many provinces continue to invest in home retrofit incentives. For example, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick all have programs that should remain open to new participants for the next year or more. Ontario's home retrofit program was also extremely successful, until it ended last year.

Industry and environmental groups want to accelerate home energy efficiency with a forward-looking Home Energy Action Plan. As a first step, the Save ecoENERGY Coalition calls for a three-year continuation of federal and provincial home retrofit incentive programs.

The debate over Canada's energy future involves a host of difficult issues and controversial options. Energy efficiency is our common ground. Getting serious about upgrading Canada's existing housing stock is one energy megaproject we can all agree on. Right now.

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