



Opinion

Path to Canada's green future hinges on pragmatism, transparency

There has to be recognition that the transition from thermal coal and other carbon-intensive products to green alternatives will not happen overnight.

BY ROBERT BOOKER

The fall economic statement reaffirmed the federal government's ambitious goal to tackle climate change. Transparency and accountability will be crucial in this fight, and Ottawa must demonstrate these attributes not just in setting targets, but also in the even more vital task of determining how we'll meet them.

In the meantime, natural resource exporters, including our company, Ridley Terminals, continue to face great uncertainty which, in turn, makes an already unpredictable economic climate that much harder.

As a terminal in the Port of Prince Rupert, B.C., carrying Canadian resource exports to the Asia Pacific, Ridley welcomes Ottawa's commitment to achieving our climate change targets. As a thermal coal exporter, we recognize the status quo isn't going to get us to our Paris targets, let alone to net-zero emissions by 2050. That is why we're actively looking at green alternatives to set us on a path towards a lower-carbon future.

To get there, the government needs to work with industry on a plan grounded not just in a sense of climate change urgency, but also in pragmatism, recognizing the nature of our economy and



Environment Minister Jonathan Wilkinson, pictured with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Infrastructure Minister Catherine McKenna on Nov. 19, 2020, during a presser to announce the introduction of the feds' latest climate bill. To help businesses and workers to retool and to successfully pivot towards green alternatives, the government will need to support this transition every step of the way, writes Robert Booker of export company Ridley Terminals, Inc. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

our many competitive advantages, including our highly skilled northern workforce.

There has to be recognition that the transition from thermal coal and other carbon-intensive products to green alternatives will not happen overnight. It will take time and a detailed roadmap to attract global investment in green innovation. And hardworking people in Prince Rupert, and across the North and Canada, will need to support their families along the way, especially given the uncertainty created by the global pandemic.

The natural resource and energy sectors generate enormous benefits for Canadians. To help businesses and workers to retool and to successfully pivot towards green alternatives, the government will need to support this transition every step of the way. It won't be easy or inexpensive. But without governments backstopping the transition, there is no clear or widely supported path to success.

Governments need to work with industry in a transparent manner to jointly develop a

concrete and achievable plan for what Canada's green energy future will look like. What is our competitive edge? What products are we producing? Where are we exporting them to?

Prince Rupert and other western ports have many advantages as Canada's gateways to thriving Asian markets. Canada already has a comparative advantage with many natural resource exports. We need to clearly establish how to best leverage this as we look at green alternatives. We'll need to make a business case for each and every product and commodity we're producing.

Finally, we need to seriously up our game to attract investment into Canada. We must recognize that competitiveness is never set in stone; it's a constant effort to keep up. From taxation to regulatory policy, to highlighting Canada's skilled labour, world-class environmental standards and strong social programs, we need to show the world that the goals we've set, and the markets we've developed, will provide investors with solid returns as

we emerge from the dark cloud of COVID-19.

Other countries, especially throughout Asia, are focused heavily on courting green-energy investment and are taking rapid steps towards meeting their own energy-generation needs. The global renewable energy market is expected to exceed US\$1.5 trillion in the next few years, by some estimates. We need to all do a better job of ensuring Canada is in the game as early as possible, can court green energy investors and enjoy a piece of the pie.

The road to hitting our Paris targets and to net-zero in 2050 will be bumpy, no matter what the plan. But the fact that Canada has set these targets is confirmation that the political will is there to move forward. What we need now is accountability for turning promises into action and getting a proper and transparent roadmap in place for the journey ahead.

Robert Booker is the CEO of Ridley Terminals, Inc., which carries resource exports to the Asia-Pacific region.

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