

CANADA'S ENERGY FUTURE IN AN AGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

PRESS RELEASE: New Positive Energy study shows that energy and environmental leaders occupy two separate realities over 'transition' in Canada

[The University of Ottawa's Positive Energy program released today a new study](#) suggesting that decision-makers in the energy and environmental communities occupy two separate realities over energy transition in Canada. The report's lead author, Positive Energy researcher Dr. Marisa Beck, uncovered the two realities by asking over 40 energy and environmental leaders about their use and interpretation of the term "transition".

Individuals within both realities agree Canada is undergoing an energy transition of some kind. However, they disagree on the necessary pace and scope of transition. One reality views "transition" as a gradual process that will be driven largely by market forces, with a diverse energy portfolio that includes oil and gas. The other reality views "transition" as a set of broader social and political changes that must occur quickly, with a phase-out of oil and gas, and emissions reduction targets that should be as aggressive as necessary to hold global temperature increases below 2 degrees Celsius.

The report suggests that "transition" is not a particularly useful term in conversations about Canada's energy future. Those interviewed tended to agree that it is either too vague, non-inclusive, or even pejorative to foster productive conversations. However, some noted that the term is vague enough that it can be a starting point to bring groups with diverging interests together.

The study's findings are crucial for those interested in addressing polarization in Canadian energy and climate debates. They suggest that those convening dialogues or developing policy about Canada's energy future should begin by focusing on areas of convergence to build bridges between the two realities. Moving beyond polarization will be nearly impossible if decision-makers fail to acknowledge critical differences between these two visions.

Quotes

"Our study shows how commonplace it can be to talk past each other on these complex issues. 'Transition' is a word that allows different groups to do that, without making any meaningful progress on Canadian energy and climate issues."

- Dr. Marisa Beck, Research Director, Positive Energy

"Positive Energy's research continues to demonstrate the importance of language and framing in debates over Canada's energy future in an age of climate change. Language and posture can help to bridge the two realities we're seeing, or wedge them further apart."

- Professor Monica Gattinger, Chair, Positive Energy, Director, Institute for Science, Society and Policy

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