



## **CAPE Policy Statement Fossil Fuels and Climate Change April 2018**

CAPE acknowledges that climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and one of the most urgent challenges facing humanity today.

CAPE is therefore opposed to any project that results in an expansion of the extraction or use of fossil fuels.

Canada has fallen far behind on its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) production, and every jurisdiction in the country must address this failure by taking concrete and immediate steps to reverse this process, instead of repeatedly deferring action.

An unparalleled economic opportunity is before us to embark on a national initiative to enhance energy conservation and energy efficiency, as well as expand energy production from renewable sources, especially solar photovoltaic, wind and geothermal.

CAPE believes that the reduction of fossil fuel use and expansion of energy efficiency and renewable energy generation must happen together, because Canada needs and will continue to need large amounts of energy for a vast array of functions and activities.

In making this transition, the workforce employed in the fossil fuel industry cannot simply be displaced without profoundly negative health consequences. Workers in this sector must be protected by concrete assistance during the process of transition (e.g. through Infrastructure Canada funding), guided by careful intersectoral planning among relevant ministries at national, provincial and territorial levels. Expanded retrofitting of homes and commercial infrastructure to increase energy efficiency, coupled with expanded construction of renewable energy sources, offer an ideal way to maintain employment levels in the inevitable shift from "sunset" (shrinking) to "sunrise" (expanding) industries.

While the speedy implementation of currently available clean energy technology is critically important, we must not forget the need for visionary solutions. We must therefore encourage research into energy-smart health infrastructure, and the exploration, testing and implementation of new safe and non-polluting energy sources. In this research, as in the analysis of all activities related to energy production and resource extraction, we must constantly look for negative human and ecosystem health impacts and take steps to mitigate or eliminate them.

As we move along the trajectory away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy sources, we must bear in mind the disproportionately negative impacts of natural resource extraction on Canada's Indigenous Peoples. Non-Indigenous society bears a profound moral responsibility to incorporate, consciously and deliberately, the principles enunciated in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) into every step taken along this path. There will be no balanced and healthful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people – and no restoration of health within the Indigenous communities in this country – unless this is so.

Health is never achieved by simple prohibition. It is achieved by offering a better solution to a well-defined problem. As it is for individuals, so it is for communities, and for society as a whole.

CAPE believes that moving actively and rapidly away from fossil fuel dependency, enhancing energy conservation and efficiency, and vastly expanding renewable energy production, while recognizing and promoting the innate right of every person to a peaceful and secure life, is the necessary future of humankind.

Any steps that obstruct this path are to be avoided, and any that enhance this process are to be lauded and emphatically supported.