While Trudeau’s Liberal government has repeatedly promised an “ambitious green agenda,” its real record has been one of missed climate targets, greenwashing, and billions of dollars in Big Oil bailouts.

CLIMATE “PLANS”
Late last year, the federal government launched A Healthy Environment and a Healthy Economy (HEHE), calling it the country’s first-ever national climate plan. But that plan fails to leave fossil fuels in the ground or organize a managed decline of the fossil fuel industry. HEHE also ignores downstream emissions from fossil fuels extracted in Canada – which is like building landmines and exporting them around the world, then pretending we bear no responsibility when they explode.

In June, the Liberals’ net-zero emissions act, Bill C-12, became law. That bill brings us a step closer to climate accountability, but it’s far from perfect. It doesn’t include just transition planning for workers. Nor does it centre Indigenous peoples and knowledges in climate action planning.

The Trudeau government also squandered the opportunity to take meaningful climate action in its 2021 Federal Budget. It doubled down on business as usual, with the window dressing of carbon capture and storage, a false and unproven “solution.” It also failed to deliver the deep emission cuts we need. The Liberals pledged to cut Canada’s emissions by 36 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, later increasing that target to 40-45 per cent.

This is a far cry from what’s needed. It’s worth noting that the U.S. targets are now 52 per cent. And the science tells us that Canada needs to reduce its emissions by at least 60 per cent by 2030 – and assist other countries to reach 80 per cent reductions in the same timeframe. We need a plan to actually get us there, starting now.

GREENWASHING BIG OIL BAILOUTS
You can’t solve the climate crisis by sticking a windmill on a pipeline. That’s not how climate science works. But that’s basically the approach the Liberal government has been taking. Climate action under Trudeau’s Liberals has amounted to a handful of policies that may sound nice on the surface but in fact double down on support for the causes of the crisis. In other words, greenwashing.

Trudeau’s government refused to shut down energy work camps this past year, despite their dual contribution to the COVID-19 outbreaks and the climate crisis. It subsidized major greenhouse gas emitters like Big Oil, fracked gas, and megadams like Site C and Muskrat Falls, which violate Indigenous rights and produce massive amounts of climate-polluting methane.

The government also created the dubious Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB), saying that it would lend billions of dollars to green public infrastructure. In reality, the bank requires public projects to use a public-private partnership investment model, which brings a profit motive into projects that should be addressing a public need, and it has only led a paltry number of the projects it promised. Meanwhile, since 2016, Export Development Canada has provided $45 billion in subsidies to finance fossil fuels, compared to $7 billion for clean technology.

And, as the saying goes, Trudeau bought a pipeline.

WHAT NOW?
Trudeau promised a Just Transition Act, but there’s been no substance to it so far beyond a last minute “consultation” launched just before the election. With the Liberals failing to secure a majority government with this year’s snap election, we have an opportunity to win meaningful climate action, but it will take serious organizing.

Our movement needs to redouble its efforts to win just transition legislation with teeth – legislation that ensures a managed decline of fossil fuel production, good jobs for workers, supports for communities, full and permanent immigration status for all, and respect for Indigenous rights.

What the newly-elected Parliament does or doesn’t do to address the climate emergency will be defined by the battle between movements for a just transition and the efforts of the 1% to wreck the planet in pursuit of profit.

The outcome of that battle depends on us.

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