

Counterpoint: Carbon Capture Is Vital to a Low-Carbon Transition

Thesis

Carbon capture technology is a key component of Canada's emissions-reduction strategy, is relatively quick to implement, and can contribute to the future economic welfare of provinces such as Alberta.

Talking Points

- Implementing carbon capture technology is one key component of Canada's multi-faceted approach to meeting its emissions and climate goals.
- Carbon capture infrastructure and technology can be built and put to use faster than many alternative technologies.
- Investing in carbon capture technology can help protect the economies and workforces of regions with significant fossil fuel production.

Summary

For supporters of carbon capture, widespread implementation and use of that technology represents a key component of Canada's multi-faceted approach to reducing the nation's emissions, meeting domestic and international emissions goals, and ultimately combatting climate change. Major proponents of that argument include the Canadian government and specifically Natural Resources Canada, which, on its official website, described CCUS as "one of the four key technology areas critical to achieving global climate and energy goals." The department specifically noted that increasing investments in carbon capture technology is "critical to six key pathways to a prosperous net-zero economy in Canada," which include "decarbonizing heavy industries," achieving "low-carbon hydrogen production," and producing "cleaner oil and gas." Due to its potential benefits as part of a multi-faceted emissions-reduction strategy, Natural Resources Canada stressed the importance of carbon capture to Canada's plans to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

In addition, some supporters argue that investing substantially in carbon capture infrastructure and technology is prudent because such technology can be built and put into operation relatively quickly to make an impact, while rollouts of alternative technologies would take far longer. Andy Mah, a member of the board of Advantage Energy Ltd., made that point when speaking to Yadullah Hussain for *Financial Post* in 2022, asserting, "We

(the oilpatch) have the ability to leverage our technical expertise, our people and everything that we've done, to get there quickly. It's faster than some of the other new technologies that are being developed." Mah further suggested that if carbon capture technology were used to "produce a net-zero energy unit of natural gas," there would effectively be no substantial difference between that energy unit and an energy unit derived from solar power.

Some supporters of carbon capture also argue that large-scale carbon capture operations are essential because they will enable provinces such as Alberta to continue reaping the economic benefits of their oil and natural gas resources even as Canada works to meet aggressive emissions-reduction goals. Of particular concern for such individuals and organizations is the fate of Alberta's workers, many of whom were employed in the fossil fuels industry as of 2022 and would thus be harmed economically by reductions in oil and natural gas production. Writing for Reuters in 2021, Jack Graham reported on a TD Economics report that suggested that as many as 450,000 Canadians working in the fossil fuels industry, predominantly in Alberta, could face job loss by 2050 due to decreasing demand for the fuel products they produce. Some carbon capture supporters from that region, then, view investments in carbon capture as a means of limiting the country's shift away from fossil fuels, as capturing and storing emissions from fossil fuel production would render fossil fuels more compatible with Canada's emissions-reduction plans. Alberta minister of energy Sonya Savage expressed that viewpoint, telling Graham, "It's not the oil and gas that is a concern, it's the carbon emissions." Savage further noted that because of continuing development in carbon capture technology, Alberta has "a strong future ahead in oil and gas."

Ponder This

- The author has presented the fundamental positions for this perspective in the debate. Outline the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective.
- If asked to begin forming an argument for this position, what sources would you need to build your case? What fundamental information do you need? What opinion leaders in this debate would you look to in solidifying your argument?

- What are the weakest aspects of the position outlined by the author? How might those weaker arguments help you prepare a counter argument?
- What additional Talking Points could you add to support this position?

Bibliography

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