



March 26, 2021

Re: Carbon tax, nuclear energy and decentralization of hospital laundry services

In order to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from road transportation, the Pays de Cocagne Sustainable Development Group has asked the provincial government three times since December 2019 to invest in decentralizing hospital laundry services using carbon tax revenues, but our requests have been ignored.

The rationale for the request to decentralize services is that a return to local laundries would reduce the number of large gasoline-powered vehicles on our roads. The large vehicles currently used to deliver hospital laundry services emit 743.184 tons of CO₂ annually. By reducing emissions by this amount, the return of local laundries would have a positive short-term effect on a cleaner climate and a significant long-term impact.

And now the Higgs government wants to provide \$5 million in funding for the development of small modular nuclear reactor (SMR) technology using carbon tax revenues and is considering redistributing the additional \$28 million in carbon tax revenues to taxpayers. This is an untenable situation.

The carbon pricing system was implemented to rapidly reduce GHG emissions and accelerate the transition to a green economy to protect public health. The carbon tax must be used wisely. The decision to fund nuclear power is unsustainable. In addition to contaminating soils with their residues, SMRs do not meet the objectives of the carbon tax. It is inconceivable, even unfair, to fund nuclear power with carbon tax revenues at the expense of decentralized services that would rapidly reduce GHG emissions.

It is also inconceivable, even unfair, that the additional \$28 million in carbon tax revenues is not being invested in decentralizing hospital laundry services. Even more astonishing is that this \$28 million was not included in the N.B. 2021 Climate Action Plan or the post-Covid-19 Economic Recovery Plan.

Yet, the horror of Covid-19 pandemic linked directly to climate change sends an unequivocal message that we must rapidly reduce GHG emissions to prevent future pandemics. The government has an obligation to protect public health. It has an obligation to use carbon tax revenues wisely. This can be done by investing the additional \$28 million in bringing back local laundries. The carbon tax is our tax, it's our health!

That is why we are repeating for the fourth time our request to the Higgs government to invest in the decentralization of hospital laundry services by using the revenues from the carbon tax, including the additional \$28 million.



We are asking the provincial government to consider GHG emissions in the delivery of public services by road transportation and to opt for better practices. We don't think it makes sense to haul dirty laundry across the province when the same services can be delivered more easily by local laundries that don't pollute as much. This polluting practice must not be allowed to continue.

The decentralization of all types of services is preferred because it promotes the development of communities in a sustainable manner. It is a way of doing things that we want to leave to future generations. In addition to reducing GHG emissions, decentralization provides local services that promote job creation and allow individuals to actively participate in the decisions that concern them. It saves time, energy and money on both sides. In fact, it promotes the quality of life.

With this in mind, it seems fair and equitable to taxpayers to use the carbon tax revenues to fund the return of local laundries and give back to communities the jobs lost a decade ago when laundry services were centralized.

The government has an obligation to protect the health of New Brunswickers. To this end, the Department of Health must step up its role in the fight against climate change by setting short-term targets for rapid GHG emission reductions. Health reform must address these goals at the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention levels.

We urge the provincial government to prioritize the fight against climate change and not the development of SMRs. We ask for the support of all elected provincial officials from all political parties to ensure that the decentralization of hospital laundry services becomes a reality.

Respectfully,

Odette Landry, Co-Chair of the Board of Directors
Pays de Cocagne Sustainable Development Group