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## ANALYSIS | Alberta election could break climate change logjam in Canada

### Premier-designate Rachel Notley promises to stop lobbying for pipelines

By Margo McDiarmid, environment reporter, CBC News Posted: May 08, 2015 8:10 PM ET | Last Updated: May 08, 2015 8:10 PM ET

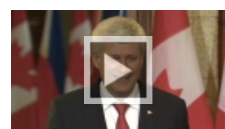


Alberta premier-designate Rachel Notley speaks to the media the day after her victory this week. The change in government in Canada's largest energy-producing province comes at a crucial time for climate policy in Canada. (Nathan Denette/Canadian Press)

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Harper says he'll work with Notley 0:34

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Canada's climate change conversation is about to take a dramatic turn with the election of Alberta's new NDP premier.

Premier-designate Rachel Notley signalled election night the province's environmental image will get a makeover.

"To build Canada's energy sector so that we build bridges and we open markets instead of having a black eye," she told cheering supporters.

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Notley's election comes at a time when climate change has become a global political hot potato.

World leaders are gearing up for a crucial UN climate conference in Paris at the end of November.

Countries are crafting new national targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions in the next decade.

Canada has said its targets will be ready for the G7 meeting in June, but they won't be in line with the ambitious cuts planned by the U.S. government.

That's in contrast to previous climate conferences where Canada has been in lockstep with the U.S. The departure is a consequence of Canada's rising carbon emissions as Alberta's oil and gas production grows.

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## No more lobbying for pipelines

The rising emissions have put the province on the wrong of side of the PR battle and led to growing criticism it's soft on industrial polluters.

But insiders say the industry itself has been waiting for someone to come along and change the channel.

"Their greatest worry was this public perception of decision-making here in Alberta, both corporate and government," said Bob Page who is former vice-president of sustainability with TransAlta, Canada's largest publicly traded power company. He's still involved with energy and environment issues, sitting on the board of several companies in Alberta.

"A number of elements in the oil and gas industry and in the pipeline sector here in Alberta were significantly ahead of the federal government and prepared to support a carbon tax," said Page in an interview with CBC.

Notley is short on specifics so far, but has promised her government will step back from its role as cheerleader for the industry and will no longer lobby for the Northern Gateway and the Keystone XL pipelines.

The irony, according to Page, is that new approach to the oil and gas sector could actually give the industry some much needed environmental credibility on future projects.

"No one will accuse Alberta of having a tight partnership between government and industry with the new government, and I think that will help speed regulatory approvals for projects like the Energy East pipeline," said Page.

## Ottawa losing close ally

Alberta's shift could also mean the federal Conservative government finding itself increasingly isolated. It's losing a close ally in Alberta that used to share its go-slow approach to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

"This is the new dynamic" said David McLaughlin, an adviser on sustainability in the environment faculty at the University of Waterloo.

McLaughlin predicts Alberta could join forces with Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, which are now taking the lead on climate and pushing for a more national approach to pricing carbon.

"If Alberta decides to take the federal government to the woodshed and say, 'Look you need to do more,' then that is a dramatic shift," said McLaughlin in an interview.

"The federal government used to be able to count on Alberta being in its corner; they can't count on that in the same way."

## From climate laggard to leader

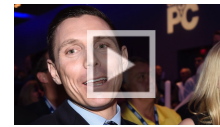
Prime Minister Stephen Harper was cautious Friday when asked about Alberta's new premier.

"All people who occupy the responsibility of office inevitably have certain shared priorities," Harper told reporters.



Prime Minister Stephen Harper said Friday he had no comment on the NDP's victory in Alberta, but said he'd work with Rachel Notley on areas of shared priorities. (Adrian Wyld/Canadian Press)

"I look forward to working with new premier Notley on joint priorities,



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6:17

The newly elected leader of Ontario's PC Party speaks with CBC News



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Alberta's premier-designate addresses the media following her first meeting with her new caucus



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May 2, 2015 2:01 PM

This week on The House, Evan Solomon takes a closer look at the report into the military's sexual misconduct problem, the auditor general's latest report, the heated provincial election campaign in Alberta and the latest developments in the Mike Duffy saga.

finding some common ground on some issues where we can both be of assistance to Albertans and Canadians more widely."

Ontario's Environment Minister Glen Murray, who leads the provincial push on climate, pointed out that Ontario had been working with Alberta's outgoing premier, Jim Prentice.

"At the practical level — we had a very good relationship with the Prentice government," he told CBC this week. But Murray is clearly hoping Alberta will be a bigger partner in the future.

"I think there is an opportunity there, given the orientation of what Notley has said," he said. "We'll probably see a greater engagement around that."

A new direction in Canada's energy province could help break the climate logjam, adding a new voice to the growing list of provinces that want to make the country a climate leader, not a laggard.

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