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## West squares off on emissions B.C. vows to implement aggressive measures

**Miro Cernetig**

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VICTORIA - The B.C. government has embraced the push for environmentalism that has overtaken the federal government with a series of sweeping "green" announcements in a Throne Speech that aims to fight global warming.

Premier Gordon Campbell yesterday promised to set up a "climate team" to put limits on emissions from automobiles and proposed coal plants and encourage citizens to conserve.

The measures are highly aggressive, including a pledge to have "net zero" greenhouse gas emissions for all electricity produced in the province in less than 10 years, and a promise that all vehicles bought or leased by the government will be hybrids, starting immediately.

"The science is clear," the Throne Speech said. "It leaves no room for procrastination. Global warming is real."

The aggressive move on global warming is a surprise coming from Mr. Campbell, who has never been considered a staunch defender of the Kyoto accord on greenhouse gas emissions.

But the Premier is now planning to meet with California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who rode the green wave to a landslide election in 2006, in the weeks ahead and wants to form a united bloc with other states on the U.S. West Coast to set new green standards to fight climate change.

Carbon emissions have soared by about 30% from 1990 to 2004 in British Columbia -- one of the worst records in North America.

But Mr. Campbell is setting what may be some of the continent's toughest targets, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 33% below current levels by 2020.

The full details of the plans will come with the Feb. 20 budget.

B.C.'s Gordon Campbell vows "net zero" emissions on electricity production; Alberta's Ed Stelmach calls environmentalism "a runaway train."

The government's energy and climate change plans are due to be released in the weeks following the budget.

"It is an aggressive target and will set a new standard," the government said in the Throne Speech. "To achieve that goal we will need to be focused and relentless in its pursuit."

The Premier said he has been moved to action by both the emerging science and his own personal experiences with climate change, an allusion to his recent trip to China, where he found greenhouse gas emissions shrouding the cities he visited.

"I think 2006 is a time where frankly the world woke up to the challenges that are created by climate change," said Mr. Campbell after the speech from the Throne.

The B.C. Premier's advisors, eager to outflank the New Democratic Party on the key issue, began drafting the Throne Speech's climate change policy in recent weeks. Environmentalists also praised the government.

"We congratulate the province for recognizing the urgency of the science and also that battling global warming can be an economic opportunity," said Sierra Club spokesman Lisa Matthaus, who added the government's targets must need to be put into law, "as California has done."

New Democratic leader Carole James denied the Liberal government had outflanked her party on the issue.

Ms. James noted the Liberals have repeatedly not delivered on high-minded Throne Speech promises. "The question now for British Columbians is can they trust Gordon Campbell to deliver," she said in a statement. "Every year, Gordon Campbell picks a new priority for his Throne Speech and every year he fails to deliver."

The province's key business lobby wondered how the government could meet its targets.

"It's not clear how we're going to get greenhouse gas emissions down dramatically within a short term," said Jock Finlayson, a spokesman for the Business Council of B.C. "I think there is a lot of scrambling going on amongst governments, of which B.C. is one."

"There's some uncertainty in how this will come together," he said. "This really hasn't been developed through any collaborative process with industry at this point."

With 40% of B.C.'s carbon emissions coming from transportation, mainly cars, the automobile is also a key focus in the government's plan. Consumers will be forced to buy new cars that are cleaner and burn less fuel.

"New tailpipe emission standards for all new vehicles sold in B.C. will be phased in over the period 2009 to 2016," the speech said. "Those standards will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by some 30% for automobiles."

In a major move, the B.C. government wants the province to be "electricity self-sufficient by 2016."

At the same time, it is setting tough new standards for BC Hydro, the giant utility that has been proposing building coal fire plants and also now imports

electricity into its grid that originates from some coal fired plants in Alberta and the United States.

The government is now telling BC Hydro that "all new and existing electricity produced in B.C. will be required to have net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2016."

That appears to mean a tougher approach to two proposed coal-fired generation stations B.C. Hydro has been proposing, the first such coal-fired generation stations in the province. The Liberal government says B.C. "will become the first jurisdiction in North America, if not the world, to require 100% carbon sequestration for any coal-fired project."

B.C. will also extend a \$2,000 sales tax exemption to anyone who buys a hybrid vehicle.

"Moving to a hybrid car from a four-wheel-drive SUV can cut personal transportation emissions by up to 70% overnight," the government says. "Beginning this month, all new cars leased or purchased by the provincial government will be hybrid vehicles."

The federal government is poised to make a similar announcement tomorrow.

Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon and Environment Minister John Baird are both scheduled to unveil details of investments in what will be part of an "Eco Transport strategy" during an appearance at a government awards ceremony for fuel-efficient vehicles, spokeswoman Natalie Sarafian explained in an e-mail.

Following Prime Minister Stephen Harper's announcement last week that the government would soon introduce measures to help consumers buy fuel-efficient vehicles, several stakeholders and Conservative sources anticipate a tax incentive of about \$2,000 for cars such as hybrids introduced in the budget.

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#### B.C.'S GREEN PLAN

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 33% below current levels by 2020.
- Reducing the province's greenhouse gas emissions at "10% under 1990 level by 2020."
- All new and existing electricity produced in B.C. will be required to have net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2016.
- New tailpipe emission standards for all new vehicles sold in B.C. will be phased in over the period 2009 to 2016.
- B.C. "will become the first jurisdiction in North America, if not the world, to require 100% carbon sequestration for any coal-fired project."
- Build a "a sensible, efficient system for registering, trading and purchasing carbon offsets and carbon credits" in co-operation with the federal

government and the U.S. states of California, Oregon, Alaska and Washington.

- Offer assistance to homeowners to carry out "energy audits", to find out how they can save energy.
- Offer incentives to retrofit old homes, to make them more energy efficient.
- Extend a \$2,000 sales tax exemption to anyone who buys a hybrid vehicle.

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