

E. CAN THESE SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES BE ACHIEVED?

4.68 At the beginning of this chapter, the question was raised: will this strategy for the 1990s be effective? Is it likely to achieve the federal government's goal of capping greenhouse gas emissions at their 1990 level by the end of the century, or keep Canada on target to meeting the Toronto Conference target of a 20% reduction from 1988 emission levels by 2005?

4.69 The Committee cannot guarantee success, nor can it predict failure: we do not have either the competence or the chutzpah to make such an assessment. It is clear, however, that success or failure will depend to a very large extent on "the more efficient and conserving use of energy" and we heard from both Canadian and foreign witnesses who had grounds for believing that the target could be achieved. Mr. Haites, for example, suggested that the Toronto Conference target could be achieved through

... 75% conservation – improved efficiency is a more accurate term – and 25% switching fossil generation effectively to hydro.³⁸ (See also para. 5.8)

4.70 It was disturbing therefore to learn from a senior official of Environment Canada, Mr. Robert Slater, that there appears to be a significant division of opinion about the efficacy of such measures between Canadian experts on the one hand and European experts on the other.

[T]he sorts of [energy efficiency] measures ... listed... are exactly the same sorts of measures contained in the German proposals that are working their way through the system, the same sorts of measures the Swedes.. Netherlands.. and Norwegians have talked about. The big difference is in the results people expect to achieve from what seem like very similar sets of measures they propose to take....[T]he Germans believe they could achieve a 25% reduction in energy consumption by the year 2005 based on 1990 emission levels.

[O]ur colleagues in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources .. have taken that same array of measures and have said it would give rise to somewhere between a 10% and 12% reduction in the growth rate by the year 2005, but still implying a substantial growth...

So we are clearly faced with a huge difference in our forecasting...

Quite frankly, we do not understand why that should be the case...

One final point is the Germans told us, when we met with them in the last few days, that during the last year they achieved a 4.4% increase in gross national product and a 1.9% reduction in energy consumption. I am equally advised that in Canada, since 1988, our carbon dioxide emissions have gone up by some 10% or 11% or so.³⁹

In its August 1990 discussion paper on "Energy Use and Atmospheric Change", Energy, Mines and Resources Canada suggests that a broad package of efficiency and alternative energy initiatives ("intended to achieve energy savings at no net economic cost to society") would reduce Canadian carbon emissions by 35 to 50 megatonnes in 1990. Since "life as usual" was expected to lead to emissions of 596 megatonnes by 2000, an additional reduction of 38 to 53 megatonnes would be required if total emissions in 2000 were to be stabilized at the expected 1990 level of 508 megatonnes.⁴⁰