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## Why I remain a climate optimist

Hope is one of the traditional themes of the holiday season.

The critical importance of hope for all humankind is something I think about often - particularly through the prism of what is the most central challenge of our age - climate change.

The scale and potential impacts of the climate crisis are daunting - and can be overwhelming. But when hopelessness becomes an overarching emotion, the resulting apathy and paralysis can make the situation even more difficult and threatening. "Climate doom is the new climate denial," it's been said, because both lead to inaction.

Harvard University's Mary Franck writes, "Climate optimism isn't about denying what we can see with our own eyes or ignoring our grief for what we've lost. It's understanding that we know how to prevent things from getting worse and that we're making progress."

### Promise and progress

I firmly believe that there are available pathways for limiting climate and biodiversity damage. The critical question is our level of collective commitment to travelling down these paths as rapidly as science demands.

I do see important progress. This progress sustains me and acts as a counterbalance to being overcome by the immensity of the gap between where we are and what we need to achieve.

In the spirit of the season, what follows are just a few of the many reasons why I personally remain very hopeful about the fight against climate change. Perhaps they might help fuel your optimism as well:

- Since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, economic growth has been very much tied to increasing carbon emissions. The historic link between rising prosperity and carbon emissions has, recently, been broken. Some 33 countries in recent years have seen a major decoupling of emissions from economic growth.
- There is an increasingly serious focus on the part of world leaders to taking urgent climate action. Today, more than 90 percent of the world's GDP and over 80 percent of global emissions are now governed by net-zero pledges of various kinds, each promising to embark upon massive decarbonization at historically

unprecedented speeds - of course, follow-through is key.

- As science - and extreme weather events - become ever more clear and present, public commitment to climate action has become the norm in Canada, such that I think it unlikely any political party lacking a credible climate plan can be elected at the federal level.
- We are seeing an exponential growth in recent years of ever cheaper and more effective renewable and non-emitting sources of energy. Wind and solar now make up 75% of global electricity capacity growth, while coal has fallen to just 4%, according to BloombergNEF Research.
- The energy transition presents unbounded economic opportunity. A recent report published by the International Energy Agency found that more people are now employed in clean energy than fossil fuel-related industries. Work by others, such as Clean Energy Canada, points to significant job creation and economic growth if we seize the economic opportunities available in the transition to a low-carbon future.
- Indigenous communities, cities and towns are taking energy and climate issues into their own hands and demonstrating real leadership.
- The energy crisis sparked by the war in Ukraine is dramatically accelerating the switch to clean energy - particularly in western Europe.
- Brazil's new president has promised to save the Amazon and has formed an alliance of nations that are home to the largest rainforests to prevent deforestation.
- And perhaps most of all, my sense of hope remains vital and alive because climate activism is thriving around the world - and it is our youth (very much including my youngest daughter) who are at the forefront.

There are very tangible reasons to be hopeful about climate change as 2022 comes to a close. Let us use that hope to redouble our efforts to address the climate crisis and to ensure a successful transition to a prosperous low-carbon future.

With that, I want to wish all North Vancouverites a very happy - and reflective - Holiday Season.

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