

Adrian MacNair: British Columbia government produces loads of gas. And not from wells

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[Adrian MacNair](#)

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[I wrote back in late December](#) about the contradictory position on carbon emissions that the B.C. Liberal government is taking by taxing carbon with one hand, while offering subsidies and corporate incentives to oil and natural gas extraction with the other.



At the time, I wrote that the B.C. government has been quiet about admitting that our natural gas extraction is tied to Alberta's oilsands development. Northeast B.C., where natural gas exploration and extraction provides the huge royalties to the province, without which the deficit would be even deeper than it already is, has been planning a natural gas processing plant for some time now.

he EnCana Cabin Gas Plant would emit 2.166 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year when it hits full capacity, the equivalent of letting 450,000 new cars onto B.C. roads. So much for the carbon tax.

Well, that plan has become a reality, [according to a report in the Tyee](#), as the province awarded an environmental assessment certificate for the \$800-million gas plant on January 28. The shale gas processing plant, originally slated to include a so-called carbon capture program to reduce emissions, will be going ahead without the capture program.

Premier Gordon Campbell touted the plant as a "bridge" to newer and cleaner energies. He acknowledged that natural gas is an essential part of the B.C. energy economy, and that it "helps the whole western corridor substantially."

I don't disagree for a moment. But wait a minute. Didn't Gordon Campbell bring in a [carbon tax](#) in July of 2008 as part of a broad and comprehensive "green" initiative to reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions in the province by 33 per cent [36 million tonnes] below current levels by 2020?

Why yes, [yes they did](#). Thanks for reminding me of that.

When EnCana's brand spanking new shindig is up and chugging away at full capacity, it will produce the equivalent of a 3.27 per cent increase in emissions to the province from 2006 levels. Nor does it now seem likely that their shorter-term target of 6 per cent below 2007 levels by 2012 is at all likely.

Yet there was Gordon Campbell, proudly announcing a new energy plant in North East B.C., while adding "[we] have not moved off of our targets."

Really? Is there some other, more sinister plan in the works for the saps who are already forced to heat their homes and buy gasoline to get to work that we don't know about yet? If there is, I'm sure we'll be the last ones to know about it.

As for the carbon capture program, the idea fell through when EnCana said it “would effect an undue burden on new development.” Which is sort of what I’d like to say when I fill up my car, but I don’t get that option. And as far as the level of importance the province assesses on my opinions about the carbon tax, I’m fairly certain EnCana has a stronger lobbyist.

Don’t get me wrong. I’m pleased that the province is putting the economy ahead of “global warming”. After all, I’m not the one who buys into the whole nonsense that reducing 30% of the carbon emissions of 2% of the global total, would do anything to slow down warming, and that’s provided you buy into the whole theory in the first place. Which I think people are [increasingly disinclined to do](#).

All I’m asking for is the government to be consistent with their own battered logic. If they believe invisible forces are heating up the planet, and they want me to reduce my consumption of the gases they believe contribute to it, then it stands to reason that they shouldn’t be offering [generous subsidies and corporate breaks on royalties](#) for oil and gas companies.

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Adrian MacNair is a Vancouver-based writer and blogger. Read more [here](#).

Photo: A gas well flares against the setting sun in northern B.C. (Ed Kaiser/Edmonton Journal)