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BC's LNG strategy won't help global climate change: report

Analysis finds stronger climate policies needed to encourage a switch away from coal use, and a reduced role for natural gas in a carbon-constrained world

VANCOUVER — British Columbia's liquefied natural gas (LNG) strategy won't help the problem of global climate change in the absence of stronger policies internationally that limit carbon pollution, new research shows.

Given the climate policies currently in place globally, the BC government's claim that LNG will necessarily displace coal use is inaccurate. By considering coal and gas in isolation, the claim ignores the broader mix of competing energy sources. Without stronger policies that limit carbon, the study finds demand for coal, oil and natural gas continues to increase, pushing the world toward dangerous climate change.

The report notes that the policies required to give the world a reasonable chance of avoiding dangerous climate change — commonly held as being less than 2°C of global warming — would cause three main shifts in the global energy mix:

1. less demand for all fossil fuels relative to business as usual,
2. less overall energy demand because of better energy efficiency, and
3. more demand for renewable and nuclear energy.

Such policies would see a slight increase in natural gas in the short-term, peaking around 2030. Gas use then falls below current levels by mid-century due to a drop in overall fossil fuel demand.

The authors make three recommendations for the BC government:

1. apply a consistent, evidence-based approach to assessing the environmental impacts and economic resiliency of all energy exports,
2. improve domestic efforts to reduce carbon pollution from natural gas development, and
3. play an increasingly proactive role in encouraging stronger climate policy and better methane management globally.

The study was commissioned by the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS) and was researched and written by the Pembina Institute.

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Quotes

“Natural gas is often described as a bridge fuel. The question is, how long should that bridge be?” says Josha MacNab, BC regional director for the Pembina Institute. “Our research suggests it must be very short if we’re going to be able to get off the bridge in time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.”

“The BC government is missing a key point when it comes to recognizing the value of LNG in fighting climate change,” says Matt Horne, BC associate regional director for the Pembina Institute. “Without a global push for low carbon energy sources and efficiency, LNG will likely worsen rather than ease global warming.”

“The science is clear that we need to stay within two degrees of warming to avoid the worst impacts of climate change,” says Dr. Tom Pedersen, executive director of the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions. “It is imperative that the global community implement the kinds of policies we need to stay within this limit and that will mean that the role for natural gas is reduced.”

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Visit [The Pembina Institute](#) or [PICS](#) website to download a copy of the PICS White Paper ***LNG and Climate Change: The Global Context***.

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Quick facts

- Methane — the main constituent of natural gas — is a very potent greenhouse gas (GHG). Research has pegged it as trapping up to 86 times more heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide in the short term (20 years), and up to 34 times more heat over the long-term (100 years).
- The report uses scenarios that limits atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gas to 450 parts per million (ppm), representing an acceptable chance of avoiding 2°C of warming. It contrasts these results with “business as usual” scenarios, which fall between 650 and 850 ppm by 2100.
- The main difference between these scenarios is that holding GHG concentrations in the atmosphere to 450 ppm, or 2°C, requires strong climate policies such as putting a price on carbon pollution, phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and creating GHG emissions standards for power plants.