

Chapter 7: Inside the Federal Government: Mobilizing Policy Tools for the Green Transition

Key Messages

Perspectives

- The federal decision-making machinery is governed by conventional, hierarchical norms regarding decision-making roles and responsibilities, and tends toward closed decision processes in which lobbyists can operate more easily, but Indigenous and public interest groups with more difficulty

Processes

- The federal environmental protection regime was created through sporadic legislative spasms, rather than through a careful weaving together of multiple legislative threads to create an integrated tapestry of laws, regulations and policies – this is the context in which federal environmental decision-making unfolds
- The federal government makes thousands of decisions at multiple scales and has massive impact on Canadian environmental governance - no other player has the potential to influence Green Transitions to the same degree and this.
- This requires close attention to all of its elements:
 - L1 Micro Decisions
 - L2 Operational Programs
 - L3 Major Policies and Projects
 - L4 Policy and Regulation Making
 - L5 Legislative Decision-making
- The wide range of legislative, regulatory, policy and program design decisions made at L4/L5 establish the “rule sets” under which the government operates. “Rule sets” condition the way the government’s political and bureaucratic leaders think and the way the government operates. It is here that transformational changes must be made in order to move the Green Transition forward

Policies

- The current federal environmental machinery is not optimally suited to driving Green Transitions and typically generates decisions and actions falling into Chapter One's "greenwash" or "regressive" categories

Recommendations

- We need to embrace of Indigenous interests in environmental and conservation law and policy, not just in rhetoric.
- We need new, modern legislation that fuses the government's multiple biodiversity laws into a cohesive whole that drives integrated program delivery rather than the current fragmented approach. We need to establish clear transition measure targets and binding mechanisms for reporting on progress toward them.
- We need to put in place a set of formal legal and policy instruments that force departments to publicly share data and information
- And need to see the emergence of innovative legislative and policy tools that incentivize positive environmental behaviour coupled with stronger enforcement of environmental laws against those who consistently choose to flout them.