

OPINION & ANALYSIS

Business plays critical role in climate solutions

Industry must look past short-term profits as Canada struggles with Paris Agreement targets

SUSAN UTHAYAKUMAR

OPINION

Canadian president at Schneider Electric, a global energy management and automation company

Canadian cities are unprepared to deal with the threats posed by climate change. This was the primary finding from a survey of 63 municipalities across the country released earlier this month in the journal Climatic Change. The challenge facing us from climate change is daunting and touches all of us. As the leader of a Canadian business, I truly believe the onus is on business and industry to make bold changes to our operations and our energy consumption to fight climate change. Under the Paris Agreement, Canada committed to reducing emissions by 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. And yet, as revealed in our 2018 greenhouse gas inventory report, Canada's emissions are only down 1.4 per cent from the year before. We are

the 38th-largest country in the world by population, but we're the seventh-biggest emitter, and the highest among all G20 members.

We are struggling to meet our emission-reduction targets, and we have more work to do if we hope to exceed them. Canada isn't alone in this regard. A recent report from Climate Transparency, a coalition of international climate organizations, reveals that no G20 country currently has a plan in place that would meet the goals determined in the Paris Agreement. Any serious climate plan includes a price on pollution, and our federal government has kickstarted this with a national carbon tax. However, our plans, as they stand now, aren't enough.

On Dec. 15, following two weeks of meetings on climate change at the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP24) in Poland, 194 countries decided on universal rules to guide implementation of the Paris Agreement. This conference represents the first time the United Nations has met to discuss climate change since October's shocking report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which concluded the world must limit the increase in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees, and needs to take immediate and drastic action in order to do so. The report was a stark

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wake-up call for every government, person and business to prioritize adopting new programs, habits and solutions to limit the global temperature rise.

While it is promising that the UN member countries have agreed on a standard set of rules at COP24, the current agreement lacks ambitious goals, including specifics on how to curb greenhouse-gas emissions and the mechanics of a global emissions trading program. While we consider how to solve these issues at a global level, Canadian business leaders must take greater responsibility to stem our national emissions and their impact on climate change.

Business and industry are significant users of our energy resources and must play a critical role in helping Canada limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. It's up to Canadian businesses to be stewards of the environment and use the technologies we have available to us now, and the ones that are yet to be introduced, so we can stay ahead of this upcoming challenge.

At Schneider Electric, we are strengthening our own sustainability target of zero emissions. We have pledged to become carbon-neutral globally by 2030, and to avoid 100-million metric tons of carbon dioxide emitted by our customers through our energy management technologies. We

are one of 197 companies that attended COP24 to demonstrate our commitment to fighting climate change, something we have been doing for more than a decade.

This passion for fighting climate change and innovating business operations means that I know sustainability and profitability can co-exist with the technology we have available today. Industry and business need to see past the short-term profits and risk aversion that has, for decades, plagued their ability to adopt newer technologies that have the potential for significant impact on climate change. There's a financial benefit to carbon-reducing technologies, too. The return on investment from introducing an energy-management and automation system can be met within a few short years.

Energy awareness is no longer a nice-to-have in Canadian business. Canada's business and industry leaders must make bold decisions today to transform to a low-carbon or no-carbon organization.

The work ahead is challenging, but it can be done. We have a responsibility to our country and our citizens to take the necessary steps and make the smart decisions that will preserve the economy for our businesses, and more importantly, protect the Earth for future generations.



A worker tends to cannabis plants in Lincoln, Ont., on Oct. 12. It is estimated the sector in Canada will add more than 150,000 jobs in the next few years. LARS HAGBERG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

How to secure your spot in Canada's rapidly expanding cannabis sector

PETER ACETO

OPINION

Chief executive of CannTrust, named 2018 Licenced Producer of the Year in Canada's cannabis industry

The new year offers a chance for us all to pause and reflect.

For many, that means taking a hard look at our career and workplace. Are we fulfilled? Do we like the culture? Is this a sector that offers opportunity? For some people, plant closures and global consolidations are forcing them to reimagine their future. Canada's cannabis industry is a potential lifeline for many of these people with huge upside opportunities.

The reality is that our cannabis sector is moving at the speed of a race car on a steeply curved road. Those looking to move into this rapidly evolving environment must think differently and quickly.

Since the legalization of cannabis was first announced, its impact on the Canadian job market has been a hot topic. There are estimates that the sector will add more than 150,000 jobs over the next few years. If our experience at CannTrust is any indication, that's a real possibility.

We've added more than 300 jobs in the past year. And we're just getting started. Our human-resources department is in overdrive. And I know we are not alone. Recruiters are currently sourcing diverse talent for available cannabis-sector jobs that number in the thousands.

Since few applicants have meaningful cannabis-sector experience, our challenge is to find the right people. We applaud the many postsecondary institutions that are adding the business of cannabis to their curriculum - including our partner schools Niagara College and Kwantlen Polytechnic University. These graduates will be in high demand.

However, we also need to find potential employees with transferable skills who want to jump into that speeding race car, even though they might not be able to see where the next curve may take them.

If that describes you, here's what you need to break into the cannabis industry: ingenuity, adaptability, courage and confidence. Look at your skills. How can they be adapted to the cannabis marketplace?

I'm an excellent example. I am a lawyer by training, who came from the banking industry. But my experience in expanding companies, leadership, business

management, decision-making and communications serve me well. What skills and experience make you an asset? Is adaptability one of your strengths?

Cannabis companies are about more than growing and harvesting. Innovation is driving opportunities. Right now, we're looking at hiring for positions ranging from regulatory scientists, software developers, marketers and call-centre staff, to planners, clinical consultants and analysts. And that's just today. Our company continues to expand in exciting ways including areas such as medical, recreational, pharmaceutical, consumer packaged goods and global expansion. The possibilities are endless.

Not surprising, most of our

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staff have never worked with cannabis, but we all share a passion for this industry and for innovation.

What drives our people is the meaning and purpose in their jobs. What drives me is offering Canadians choices. Cannabis is a choice. A legal choice. A tested, proven, natural and effective choice. Our 57,000 medical customers tell us that cannabis improves the quality of their lives. We're also involved in research to assess the impact of cannabis on diseases such as ALS, chronic pain and so many others. That's what helps me jump out of bed every morning.

I've been asked if I'm concerned about the stigma associated with working in the cannabis sector. Before I joined the

sector, I spoke to my family and friends about it. Anyone contemplating joining our industry should do the same. But stigma is often associated with lack of understanding. I'm optimistic that Canadians will adapt to this social change and embrace the cannabis industry and its many benefits and opportunities. To be global trailblazers is both motivating and rewarding.

Anyone can start something new. But it takes real courage to stop something old. If your career goals for 2019 include stopping your old routine, we welcome you. Get off the sidelines. Jump in the car with us. Shape the evolution of our industry and be part of an exciting and prosperous future.

It's going to be a wild ride.

