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What's at stake at the UN climate summit?

Global action on climate change is vital for the health of our economy, our communities and our future. Canada is at a crossroads.

What many Canadians don't know is that we're falling behind in achieving the targets scientists tell us we need to avoid runaway climate change.

Our country is now one of the top 10 global warming polluters in the world.

Citizens can make a big difference in their everyday lives. But the public can't do it alone. Canada is at a crossroads. Our political leaders have the power to jumpstart big changes — through law-making, carbon reduction targets and investments in clean-energy projects.

Our economy

Action on climate change is vital for our environment. But it will also open up tremendous job and business opportunities for Canada in the emerging global clean-energy economy.

Many countries are already taking action, investing in a clean-energy economy and workforce with innovative technologies like solar and wind power, leading the global economy into the 21st century.

But Canada is lagging: Canada produces less than one per cent of its energy from renewable sources like wind and solar power — employing just a few thousand people. Most European countries emit two to three times less global warming pollution per person than Canada. And Canada is now investing six times less per person than the U.S. to build a clean-energy economy and clean-energy jobs.

Our future

The stakes are high for everyone living on this planet.

Rising global temperatures are changing the climate balance that has existed on Earth for hundreds of thousands of years and we are reaching a tipping point.

A heat-trapping blanket of pollution caused mainly by burning fossil fuels to heat our homes, power our cars, and run our industries is building up in our atmosphere and heating the planet — our home. Leading scientists say that if average temperatures on Earth rise just one more degree (or above 350 parts per million) global warming could reach a point of no return with melting icecaps, rising sea levels,

growing numbers of climate refugees, extinction of plants and animals, and floods, droughts and other severe weather events.

Runaway global warming would destabilize our climate, impacting our water supply, food production and economy for generations.

Solutions

The good news is that we have the know-how and resources to seize new economic opportunities and create jobs by acting on climate change.

Canada has the opportunity to work together with other leading industrialized nations to meet science-based targets to cut global warming pollution and create clean, renewable energy solutions at home and around the world.