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Canada to impose nationwide carbon price, questions over enforcement

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Canada will impose a carbon price on provinces that do not adequately regulate emissions by themselves, Environment Minister Catherine McKenna says.

Speaking on the CTV broadcaster's "Question Period", a national politics talk show, Ms McKenna said the new emissions regime would be implemented sometime next month before a federal-provincial meeting on the matter.

Ms McKenna said the government would have a "backstop" for provinces that did not comply, but did not address questions on penalties for defiance.

Canada's 10 provinces, which enjoy significant jurisdiction over the environment, have been wary of Ottawa's intentions and have said they should be allowed to cut carbon emissions their own way.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau persuaded the provinces in March to accept a compromise deal that acknowledged the concept of putting a price on carbon emissions, but agreed the specific details, which would take into account provinces' individual circumstances, could be worked out later.

Canada's four largest provinces, British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec, currently have either a tax on carbon or a cap-and-trade emissions-limiting system.

But Brad Wall, the right-leaning premier of the western energy-producing province of Saskatchewan, has long been resistant to federal emissions-limiting plans.

Ms McKenna said provinces such as Saskatchewan could design a system in which emissions revenues go back to companies through tax cuts, which would dampen the impact of the extra cost brought by the carbon price.

She said the government required some uniformity in emissions reductions, but provinces could have different regulation methods.

The previous government had pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions to 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, a target that official figures show is out of reach in the absence of radical measures.

Reuters

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PHOTO: Canada's Environment Minister Catherine McKenna announced the nationwide regime on a national talk show. (Reuters: Chris Wattie)

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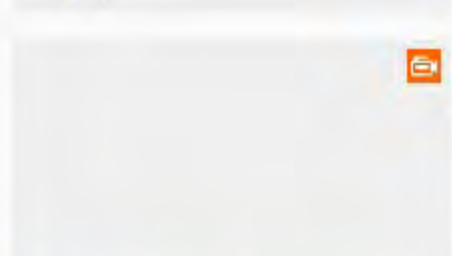
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