NEWS RELEASE

Actual climate measurements—not speculative models—should drive climate policy debate

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VANCOUVER—Relying on speculative climate models that try to predict the future rather than actual measurements of climate change has led to over-zealous policies in response to over-zealous predictions of warming, finds a new study published by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

"All too often, climate policy is based on speculative estimates generated by models that try to see into the future rather than being based in empirical measurements of what is actually changing today and how quickly," said Kenneth P. Green, senior fellow at the Fraser Institute and author of ***Models or Measures of Climate Change: Why Does It Matter?***

The study finds that predictive climate models, in which speculative scenarios of future social and economic trends are used to estimate future greenhouse-gas emissions, over-estimate both atmospheric warming and greenhouse gas emissions.

Crucially, the implications of basing climate policies more on modelling and less on actual empirical measurement leads to misallocation of government's priorities and regulation, leading to expensive and often ineffective policies.

"Implementing overly aggressive climate change policies based on overly-aggressive guesstimations of future climate change imposes direct harms on the economy and Canadians," Green commented.

The fixation on preventing predicted future levels of CO2 from causing predicted levels of warming has kept policymakers from giving proper attention to potential resilience and adaptation strategies such as strengthening coastal areas from rising sea levels; improving water distribution system resilience to periodic drought or flood; ensuring resilient transportation systems; and strengthening power systems needed to deliver sufficient affordable energy for heating and cooling of homes and businesses in the event of climate fluctuations.

"Climate models tend to generate the most extreme climate change scenarios, whereas when we actually measure what has changed in the climate, the results tend to be more moderate," Green said.

"Instead of using the extreme model-based scenarios to drive climate policy, policymakers should make much more use of actual climate measurements to better target actual areas of concern when it comes to climate change."

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