



Written by [James Murphy](#) on November 27, 2023

## Alberta Premier Prepared for War With Trudeau Over Unrealistic Emissions Targets

In the Canadian province of Alberta, Premier Danielle Smith is prepared to invoke the “Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act” as a means of protecting the province’s oil producers and energy grid from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s unrealistic climate goals. Smith made the comments on Saturday on her weekly radio show regarding Ottawa’s plan to have net zero emissions by 2035.

Passed in December 2022, the [Sovereignty Act](#) allows Alberta to refuse to comply with specific national laws or dictates if provincial authorities believe that federal laws are in violation of Canada’s Constitution.



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“We have been trying to work collaboratively with them on aligning their targets with our targets,” Smith said, but she believes that Trudeau and Canada’s Minister of Environment and Climate Change Steven Guilbeault are putting provincial oil companies at risk with an unnecessary and unrealistic plan to make Canada’s energy grid net zero by 2035.

Smith declared that she “has had it” with Guilbeault’s net zero ambitions, and further claimed that the climate minister didn’t seem to care about the law or Canada’s Constitution.

“We will not put our operators at risk of going to jail if they do not achieve the targets that have been set, which we believe are unachievable,” she said. “We have to have a reliable grid. We have to have an affordable grid, and we’re going to make sure that we defend our constitutional jurisdiction to do that.”

Trudeau and Guilbeault’s plan is not yet law in Canada, but is in the proposal stage. Some believe that Smith is attempting to block passage of the controversial new emissions targets by signaling that Alberta will not go along.

Last month, Alberta won a [key victory](#) in Canada’s Supreme Court when the court ruled that the nation’s Impact Assessment Act (IAA) was largely unconstitutional, as it gave too much power to Ottawa to stop projects involving natural resources.

“Parliament has plainly overstepped its constitutional competence in enacting this designated projects scheme,” Chief Justice Richard Wagner wrote in the majority decision.

Smith may be looking to ride the momentum of that court victory to another by blocking the new emissions targets before they become law. Others claim she’s putting the cart before the horse by challenging something that is not yet enshrined in law.

“Legislation that’s targeted on something that doesn’t yet exist — perhaps, again, it’s a negotiating tactic to try to push it in a particular direction,” [said political scientist Lori Williams](#).



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But the unrealistic emissions goals are already out, prompting many to believe that Smith is correctly setting up a court battle with Ottawa before the plans can take effect.

“Quite frankly, I think Smith has wanted to use this for a while and this now seems like the perfect opportunity for her,” said Duane Bratt, a political science professor at Mount Royal University.

“What Premier Smith is doing right now is simply saying, look we’ve got jurisdiction as well, and the courts are going to have to settle that,” said former New Democratic Party leader Tom Mulcair. “Here, the federal government says, ‘we have got jurisdiction in the interest of future generations to do this.’ But recently ... the feds have overstepped the bounds.”

“They’re actually not opposing the goals, they’re just saying they’re coming too fast,” Mulcair added.

Smith contends that 2050 is a much more realistic goal for meeting the net zero emissions goal that Trudeau and Guilbeault covet. Although 2050 is better, it’s still unnecessary and irrelevant as a means to control the climate.

Leave it to a Canadian politician to show American governors how to, essentially, use [nullification](#) as a means to keep an unconstitutional law from taking effect.



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