

MORE THAN 1.2 MILLION SMALL BUSINESSES QUIETLY CUT COSTS AND CARBON

ELIZABETH SHEEHAN | Thousands of printers, restaurateurs, roofers, retailers are driving clean growth across Canada: report reveals the secrets of their success



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When it comes to clean growth and climate leadership, the big players often hog the limelight.

But Canada has another clean growth opportunity and it is hidden in plain sight. Our nation's more than 1.2 million small and medium-sized businesses not only make a big contribution to the GDP, but also have direct control over a staggering quantity of carbon pollution.

How do we know this? It is our business to know. For the better part of a decade Climate Smart has helped companies with fewer than 500 employees profitably reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. We've also used our tools and training to help cities, ports, airports and financial institutions more effectively engage with their business communities on carbon. The businesses we have worked with have shrunk their carbon footprint, on average, by 11 per cent. And they did so while cutting costs by \$27,000 per year on average.

We're proud of this legacy. But beginning last fall, we started to wonder about the greater potential. We wanted to know, what do these small and medium-sized companies actually contribute to Canada's economy? And how large is the clean growth opportunity?

With financial support from Environment and Climate Change Canada, we rolled up our sleeves and mined public data sources and our work over the past decade to find out.

The answers amazed us.

First, we confirmed what we already knew: small and medium-sized companies make a significant contribution to Canada's economy.

Taken together, Canadian businesses with fewer than 500 employees:

- comprise 99.7 per cent of all businesses;
- contribute more than half of the nation's private-sector GDP; and
- invest close to half (45 per cent) of all private-sector research and development spending.

Then we ran the numbers on their climate impact.

It turns out that, across the country, companies with fewer than 500 employees have direct control over 200 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. By that we mean the emissions they generate via the electricity they consume, the fuel they purchase, the natural gas they use and the waste they generate.

To put that number into context, 200 million tonnes of carbon emissions is about the same amount of carbon produced each year by every car, truck, train and domestic plane and ship in the country.

NEW REPORT AVAILABLE ■ It's also about the same quantity of carbon that Canada needs to cut in order to meet its Paris Agreement commitment.

We released our findings at the 2018 Globe Forum in a new report: *200 Million Tonnes of Opportunity: How Small and Medium-Sized Businesses Are Driving Canadian Clean Growth*. (The report is available at 200million.ca.) Now, for the first time, we have a sense of the massive impact we could see if hundreds of others follow in the footsteps of our early leaders.

But *200 Million Tonnes* is more than just a calculation of the potential out there. It's a how-to manual for Canadian businesses that wish

to stay competitive in the low-carbon economy.

This report highlights the work of business leaders in 12 sectors across the country. It offers crucial intelligence and valuable insights for others that want to follow in their footsteps, and for governments that want them to succeed.

Canada's small and medium-sized business leaders are unleashing a flood of changes, innovations and adjustments as they prepare for the low-carbon future: fleet upgrades, route optimization, paperless operations, heat recovery, waste diversion, employee engagement, shipping and more.

The *200 Million Tonnes* report scores this "symphony of actions" for the first time. It shows how, sector by sector, the early adopters are making real headway and what others can learn from them:

- BC Comfort Air Conditioning replaced its fleet of conventional vans with smaller and more fuel-efficient vehicles and installed GPS systems to optimize routes;
- Reid's Automotive Recycling improved insulation in its building, improved recycling, and engaged employees to commute more sustainably; and
- BC Plant Health Care is the first arboriculture company to purchase a hybrid aerial lift truck.

As Canada works to meet its climate commitments under the Paris Agreement, it's exciting that we have a growing number of climate leaders hidden in plain sight. Hundreds of thousands of printers, restaurateurs, roofers, retailers and other mom-and-pop operators are already driving clean growth. They're making it happen.

Just as small and medium-sized businesses make a significant contribution to Canada's economy of today, they will play a big role in the clean economy of tomorrow.

With coaching and support, and some carefully crafted enabling policies, these businesses could significantly shrink Canada's overall carbon footprint. That's Canada's 200-million-tonne opportunity, and it is just too big – and exciting – to overlook. 🐦



Elizabeth Sheehan is president of Climate Smart Businesses Inc. With hands-on training and data analysis, Climate Smart supports companies working to

profitably reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and helps governments effectively engage with private-sector partners. Visit climatesmartbusiness.com.

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