Canada must “Walk the Line” in finding the right balance of taking advantage of our oil-and-gas resources and transitioning to a lower-carbon future.

This relates to the second area where governments need to walk the line: balancing and bridging local and Indigenous energy interests and concerns with those of the broader community, be it regional, provincial, or national. This is probably the toughest line governments have to walk on Canadian energy.

Local communities and Indigenous communities want a say in their energy futures, along with meaningful decision-making roles and active participation in energy projects. This includes jobs, long-term-economic development, or ownership. It also means strong environmental protection, robust risk mitigation, and adequate resources and time to develop local capacity to participate. Further, it means building and strengthening long-term planning mechanisms to address the cumulative environmental, economic and social effects of multiple energy projects. Long-term regional planning frameworks for energy can provide greater certainty and clarity for all involved.

Some 80 per cent of Canada’s end use energy (including investors), but must be developed in ways that seriously consider the impacts—both positive and negative—on the country’s investment climate and the competitiveness of its energy industry as an input to the broader economy.

In sum, when it comes to Canada’s long-term energy future and local and Indigenous communities, governments will need to develop policy, planning, and regulatory frameworks that walk the line in innovative ways, balancing, bridging—even aligning—core imperatives. Only this will ensure that Canada’s collective market, environmental, and social interests are served. None of this is going to be easy. But it’s essential if Canada is to maximize the energy opportunities before it transitions to a lower-carbon energy system, and realize the social, economic, and environmental benefits of a more inclusive energy system.

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