Dear Senator Galvez,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written feedback on Bill C-69. I appreciate the time Senators are taking to review Bill C-69 and to listen to stakeholders regarding its composition and operational implications. As an academic and social scientist who has been active in conducting research on the global climate crisis and global and national climate change mitigation policies, I believe that I am well positioned to comment on why Bill C-69 is a vitally important piece of legislation that should be enacted into law within Canada.

As I am sure all Senators on the Committee responsible for reviewing Bill C-69 are aware, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its Special Report on 1.5°C of Warming in the Fall of 2018. The Report detailed in no uncertain terms that in order to limit warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, a threshold now considered critical to stem truly catastrophic climate change, sweeping systemic change across all sectors was required; changes unprecedented in scope and scale. Additionally, Canada’s Changing Climate Report, released by Environment and Climate Change Canada, details data that shows Canada is warming at double the rate of the global average, and that this rate is even faster in Canada’s North. Data also shows that Canada is far off track to meeting its current Paris Agreement commitments, with targets that would place us at over 4°C of warming. On a per capita basis Canadians are amongst the highest emitters of CO₂ globally.

The impacts of climate change are increasingly apparent and will continue to worsen annually: wildfires, droughts, heat waves, increasingly severe and more frequent storms, flooding, more erratic and unpredictable agricultural cycles, and so forth. Climate change drastically impacts human health, and the security and socio-economic viability of our communities. Moreover, it exacts severe economic costs in the wake of disasters: infrastructure and homes must be rebuilt; health systems must absorb the costs; insurance companies struggle to cover payouts, often increasing premiums to account for increased risks, or refusing coverage altogether; and significant work hours are lost, to name only a few. It is for these reasons that the youth of the world are now rising up, calling on the leaders who make decisions today to think about the world that will be left behind for our young people - one increasingly inhospitable to human civilization as we know it.

It is within this context that Bill C-69 must be assessed. Across the nation Canadians have lost faith the environmental assessment process for failing to adequately weigh the costs and benefits of proposed development projects, particularly with respect to climate change, and for also failing to allow for meaningful participation of all affected stakeholders in the assessment process. Bill C-69, while imperfect, helps to strengthen the environmental, health, economic, and social assessment process in relation to proposed developments. It requires that potential climate impacts be assessed as part of the process of consideration. In doing so, it provides a policy framework within which the government of Canada can comply with its commitments to the Paris Agreement.

It is the duty of government to represent the public interest, in the interest of all. The debate over Bill C-69 has become deeply partisan, obscuring the fact that as a piece of
legislation, it in fact seeks to represent all citizens, regardless of income, gender, or race, while also ensuring stewardship for Canada's natural heritage, itself critical to maintaining healthy communities and economies. As a holistic piece of legislation, it seeks to balance and assessment of the environmental, health, social, and economic effects of proposed projects, providing the opportunity to give all equal weight.

With all of this in mind, I urge the Senators on the Senate Standing Committee on Bill C-69 to support the ultimate adoption of the Bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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My latest book, Carbon, is now available from Polity:
http://politybooks.com/bookdetail/?isbn=9781509501113