

# The Evolving Hydrogen Landscape in Canada & Alberta

Building to a Net-Zero Future

Prof. Sean McCoy  
Department of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering  
Global Research Initiative on Sustainable Unconventional Resources

4 November 2021



# National Hydrogen Strategy released late-2020

## Climate Context

- Domestic targets of 40-45% below 2005 in 2030; net-zero by 2050
- Targets in *Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act*
- Federal government sets a carbon price backstop; provinces have the option to implement equivalent pricing schemes

## Hydrogen Targets

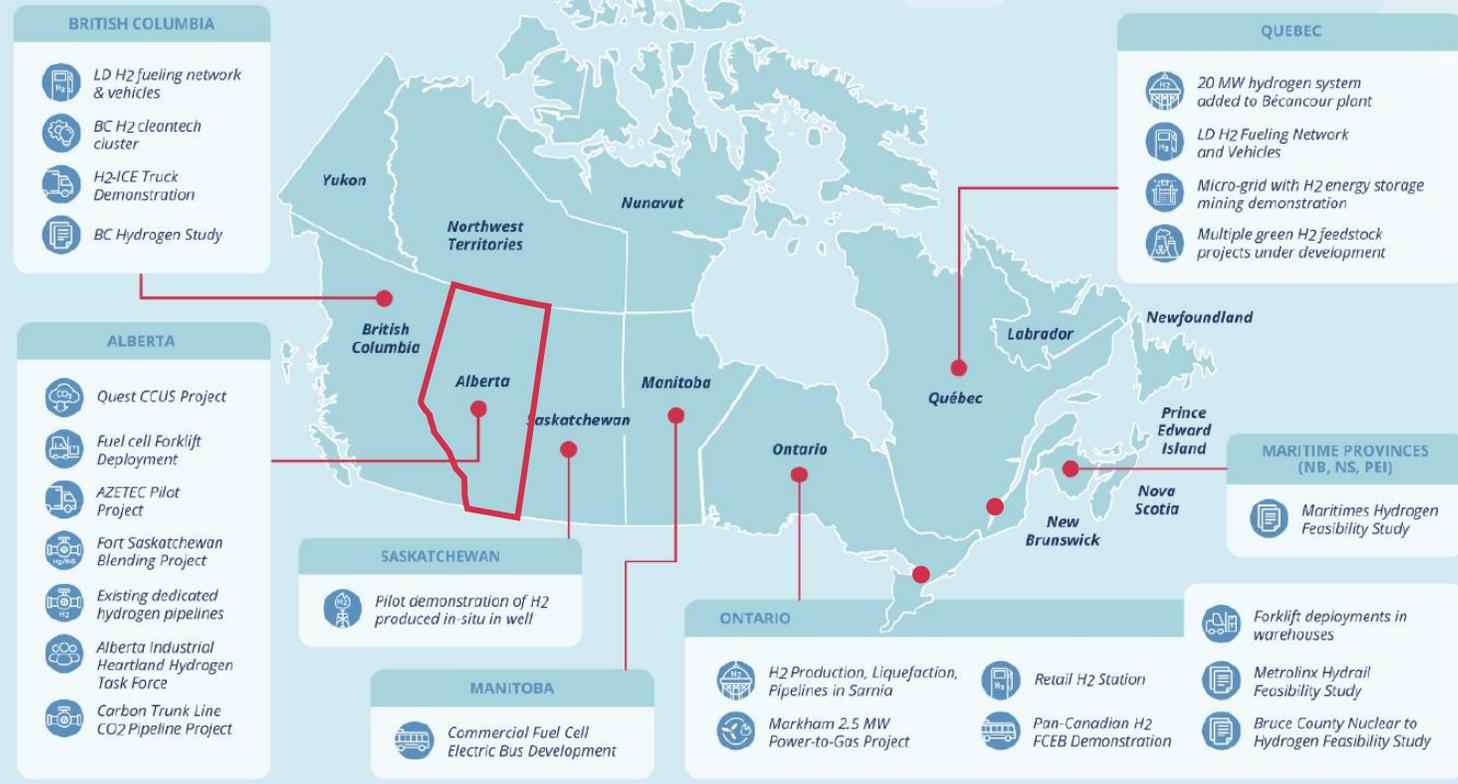
- 4 MtH<sub>2</sub>/y in 2030 growing to 20 MtH<sub>2</sub>/y in 2050
- 30% of total final energy demand in Canada
- Avoidance of “up to” 190 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e/y

## Recommendations

- Total of 32 across eight pillars
- Important focus on regional “blueprints” or hubs



## CANADA'S STARTING POINT FOR HYDROGEN



[NRCan \(2020\)](#)

## Canada's hydrogen mix will likely be "teal"

### Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba

- Generally low-CO<sub>2</sub> grids, with large hydroelectric resources
- Low prospectivity CO<sub>2</sub> storage resources

### Alberta and Saskatchewan

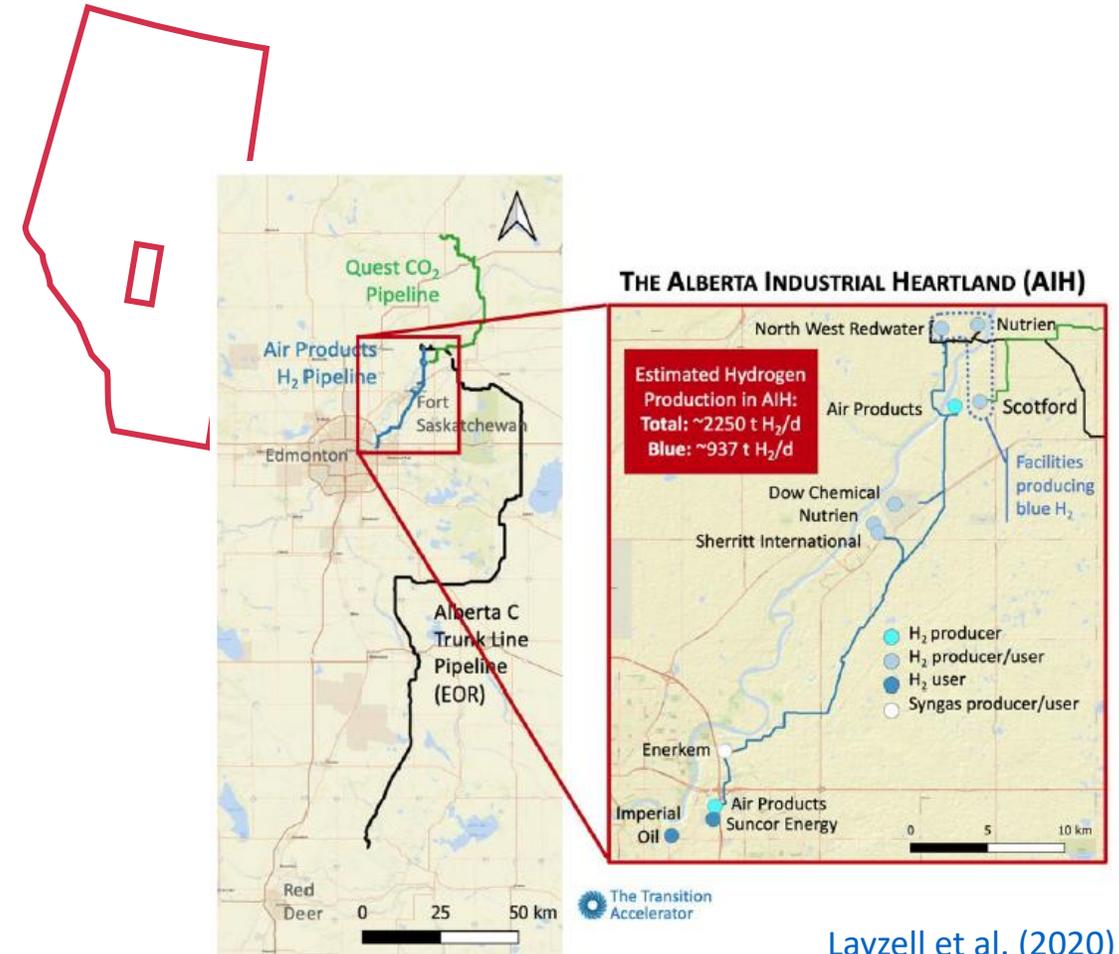
- High-CO<sub>2</sub> grid today, strong variable renewable potentials
- Large natural gas and emerging CO<sub>2</sub> storage reserves

### British Columbia

- Relatively low-CO<sub>2</sub> grid, with large hydroelectric resources
- Large gas and CO<sub>2</sub> storage resources, but geographically isolated from major centres

# Current Alberta hydrogen market is large

- 5,400 tH<sub>2</sub>/d primarily from natural gas (SMR) for upgrading of heavy oil, refining of fuels, fertilizers, etc.
- Current demand anchored near Edmonton (“Alberta Industrial Heartland”) and Fort McMurray
- “Blue” hydrogen from the Shell Quest Project (400 tH<sub>2</sub>/d) and the NWR Sturgeon Refinery (60 tH<sub>2</sub>/d)
- Merchant plants and existing pipeline (12-16”) in AIH delivers H<sub>2</sub> to various users



[Layzell et al. \(2020\)](#)

# Potential future demand for “low-carbon” hydrogen?

## Alberta Industrial Heartland

- 1,300 tH<sub>2</sub>/d** of existing “grey” hydrogen
- 600 tH<sub>2</sub>/d** to displace diesel (and gasoline) for heavy duty vehicle fleets in Edmonton region
- 1,500 tH<sub>2</sub>/d** for commercial and residential heating (highly variable demand)

[Layzell et al. \(2020\)](#)

## Fort McMurray

- 2,000 tH<sub>2</sub>/d** of existing “grey” hydrogen
- 100’s of tH<sub>2</sub>/d** to displace diesel for oil sands mine trucks
- 15,000 tH<sub>2</sub>/d** to displace natural gas for oil sands process heat (steam assisted gravity drainage, surface mining, etc.)

Unknown export potential as H<sub>2</sub>, NH<sub>3</sub>, and synthetic (non-fossil) hydrocarbons...

*Many caveats to these estimates!*

# Multiple projects announced in Alberta

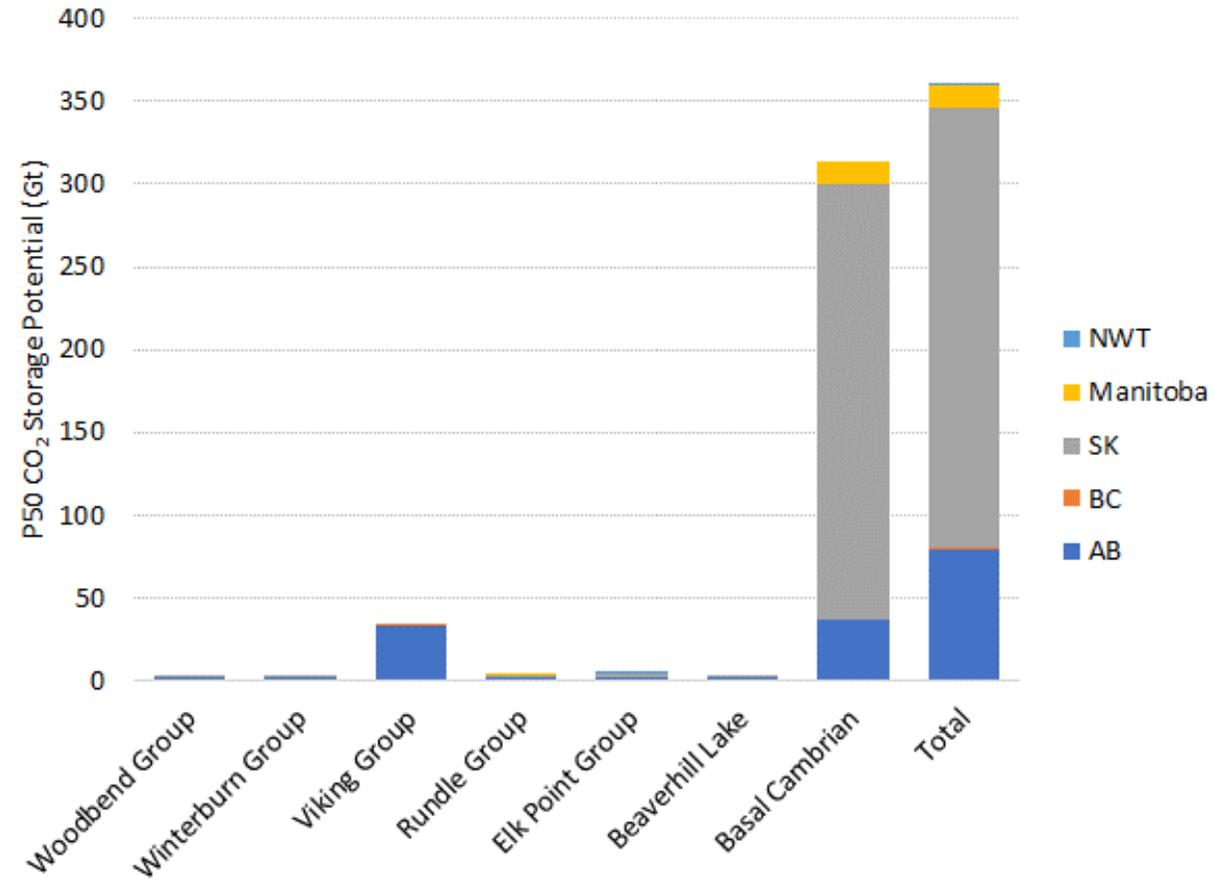
Proponents	Location	Capacity (tH <sub>2</sub> /d)	H <sub>2</sub> Market(s)	Technology	Status
<a href="#">Suncor &amp; ATCO</a>	AIH	850	65% Refining 20% Gas grid 15% TBD	TBD 90% Capture	Proposed FID 2024
<a href="#">Air Products</a>	AIH	1,500	Merchant 30 t/d LH <sub>2</sub>	Haldor-Topsoe ATR H <sub>2</sub> -Fired Cogen 95% Capture	Sanctioned* Operation 2024
<a href="#">Shell Polaris</a>	AIH	Unknown	Existing Refinery	SMR Unknown capture level	Proposed FID 2023
<a href="#">Mitsubishi &amp; Shell</a>	AIH	500	Export to Japan (NH <sub>3</sub> )	SMR Unknown capture level	Proposed#

\* "...approved by Air Products' Board of Directors, subject to final completion of the agreements contemplated in signed Memorandums of Understanding between Air Products and Canadian authorities, and with appropriate permit approvals."

# "...build and start-up the low-carbon hydrogen facility... towards the latter half of this decade..."

# Western Canada is well positioned for CO<sub>2</sub> storage

- Ample storage resource in assessed formations, but additional work needed to develop capacity
- Law governing subsurface access is clear; post-closure liability sorted; Alberta Energy Regulator has needed tools
- Recent government moves have created uncertainty, but these will hopefully be resolved soon



Data: [2017 PCOR Atlas](#)

# Where does Alberta go from here?

1. Acknowledge that H<sub>2</sub> is, primarily, a response to climate change that requires a focus on the cradle-to-gate life cycle impacts of H<sub>2</sub> production
2. Through continued development of hubs, continue develop regional options where H<sub>2</sub> makes most climate and economic sense
3. Invest in CO<sub>2</sub> storage to enable accelerated deployment in Alberta
4. Anticipate that “green” H<sub>2</sub> will, eventually, be economically competitive and may be preferred by some importers
5. Acknowledge that for hydrogen success, government will play a large role – individual players don’t have incentives to drive system change

# Questions?

Sean T. McCoy, Ph.D.  
sean.mccoy@ucalgary.ca | +1 (403) 220-3178  
<https://schulich.ucalgary.ca/contacts/sean-mccoy>

