

case 7-234-668
April 11, 2019

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The Cultural Challenges of Meeting Climate Change Goals: Montreal Weighs an Emissions Ban on Iconic Wood-Fire Bagel Shops

As she settled in at her desk to start the day, Anna Clementⁱ bit into her sesame bagel, taking an extra moment to savor its freshness and texture before washing it down with tea. As the member of the Montreal Executive Committee responsible for environmental issues, Clement had a big day ahead of her; she awaited the results of an important study being conducted by Montreal's public health department and researchers from McGill University. The results of the study might seal the fate of the city's beloved bagel shops, which had come under fire in recent years for their use of wood-burning ovens.

Montreal had made a lot of progress in its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. From 1990 to 2014, the most recent year with available data, the city had reduced its GHG emissions by 23%.¹ Yet Montreal still had a long way to go to meet its ambitious 2020 target. In one recent effort to curb emissions and reduce fine particulate matter (PM)—a mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets in the air—Montreal passed a bylaw prohibiting use of residential wood-burning ovens and stoves that did not meet a strict maximum 2.5 g/hr emission requirement, affecting nearly 50,000 heating units across the city.² The ban, which carried a fine of up to \$2,000 for unregistered units, was passed with high hopes for significantly reducing the 40% of PM pollution in Montreal caused by wood-burning devices.³ After the ban went into effect in October 2018, Clement had turned her attention to commercial usage of wood-fire ovens, including those in the city's most famous bagel shops.

The study, which included taking air samples in a radius of up to 500 meters from commercial establishments (including 20 bagel shops), was finally ready to be released to city lawmakers.⁴ Clement was confident she already knew what the results would be, and that the report would only further compel her to endorse a ban on commercial wood-fire ovens.

ⁱ Anna Clement is a fictional character.

Published by WDI Publishing, a division of the William Davidson Institute (WDI) at the University of Michigan.

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