

FLASH SHEET #1

by Gracia Janes Environment Convener

GLOBAL WARMING - WHAT WE'VE DONE AND WHAT WE CAN DO

If the recent firing and re-hiring of medical officer of health Dr. Swan is any harbinger of what will come from the Prime Minister's stated intention of ratifying Kyoto, then we are surely in for a rough ride, as anti-Kyoto forces flail at the government and the treaty. It is timely that members and affiliates of the National Council of Women of Canada play an educational role to bolster the Government's position.

On March 6th 2002, NCWC President Catharine Laidlaw Sly stated in a letter to the Honourable David Anderson, Minister of Environment of "***the absolute necessity for Canada to honour its commitment to the Kyoto Accord.***" and that, while "***some provinces and many in the business community are concerned about the financial costs of Kyoto.... may we say with equal conviction, that NCWC members believe Canada must take a leadership role and ratify the accord. Not to do so invites overwhelming health, environmental, economic and social damage to all the world's citizens of the future.***"

In his June 26th response, Minister Anderson acknowledged that "***climate change has serious environmental, economic, and health implications for Canada and Canadians,***" and that there were economic benefits to Kyoto, but dwelt unduly on the current "***growth of the economy***" that "***takes into account the degree of integration between our economy and that of the US***", and on the need for continued dialogue with the Provinces, before any ratification could take place.

We were very concerned with this answer and, knowing that many MP Back Benchers were gathering steam to support the Treaty, we sent an urgent letter on August 8th to the Prime Minister warning him that "***we cannot afford to wait. The immediate and ongoing costs of implementing the Kyoto Protocol will be negligible compared to the overwhelming economic disturbances precipitated by global warming and pollution in the future.***" We noted as well, that while we were willing to be part of a federal-provincial dialogue, that the ratification would "***enhance this important dialogue and send a strong signal that Canada is intent on finding strong, lasting solutions,***" and that "***Canada's ratification will ensure the plan will move ahead rather than stagnate in never-ending self interested consultations.***"

Our letter was e-mailed to all affiliates and we asked that you forward it and your own comments to your MP. May I thank you for your help eg. Carol Canzona, Past-President of Toronto Council wrote "***For decades now, the question of compounding environmental pollution from many sources, especially manufacturing, agriculture and automobile emissions, grows more serious daily for all nations and the world's populations. As a private citizen, I urge you, Mr. Prime Minister, and the members of Canada's delegation to the August World Summit on Sustainable Development, in Johannesburg, south Africa, to recognize the urgency of this critical issue by demonstrating Canada's willingness to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.***"

With his September 1st announcement in Johannesburg, that Canada would ratify Kyoto before the end of the year, the prime Minister seems to have trumped the Minister, business and the 'nay-saying' provinces. He now needs our support more than ever! We need to let every Canadian know of the benefits of the ratification. To help you in your task, consider contacting the David Suzuki Foundation at 2211 Wear Avenue, Suite 219, Vancouver B.C. Canada V6K 4S2 phone 1800-453 1533 and e mail climateaction@davidsuzuki.org In his leaflet "How Hot Does it Have to Get Before They Finally adopt Kyoto? David Suzuki suggests that we: write short letters to the editor; walk, take transit, or car pool and if you need a vehicle, consider fuel efficiency; choose recreational activities ..such as walking, biking, hiking and paddling.

As you prepare a letter, article or just to debate the issue with friends, consider the following points that have been raised in the media:

* September 7th, Toronto Star, business reporter Dana Flavelle, ***“ the Kyoto Accord could open an estimated \$90 billion in new domestic markets for technologies and processes that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”*** According to Colin Isaacs, chairman of the Canadian Environment Industry Association, ***“ We think Canada can meet its Kyoto targets without a dramatically negative impact on the economy. We can’t say there will be no impact. In general , it will mean a shift from industries that are more polluting to industries that are cleaner.”***

* September 7th, Toronto Star, Michelle Landsberg, ***“ Check out the far right Fraser Institute , one of the last surviving nay sayers about climate change. ..It cites a “scientific petition” purportedly signed by 22,000 scientists, being supported by the impressive-sounding Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine ...I checked out the “Institute” (faculty of six , address near Cave Junction Oregon, and found that in addition to climate change denial, the site promotes home schooling, creationism and family radiation meters to help you survive nuclear war.”*** Michelle also suggests a look at the web site for the Sierra Club, which provides a “crisp, clear refutation of this nonsensical petition @ www.sierraclub.ca .”

* October 10th, Globe and Mail, John Ibbitson, Politics ***“ Kyoto will make the Alberta oil industry richer than ever”*** according to Nick Taylor, senator, former Alberta Liberal leader and a geologist and engineer. In the article, Mr Taylor remembers how the oil industry was forced to pump salt water (a by-product of oil extraction) back into oil wells , rather than use it on roads to keep dust down; and while the industry complained that it would be ***“ the end of profit”*** they found salt water injection into the wells was a better way to get oil out of the wells. Then when they were told to store the natural gas being burnt off at oil wells, that made people down-wind sick, they again said it would be ***“the end of profit”***. But it turned out that ***“natural gas has uses of its own.”*** Then the sulphur escaping from the wells had to be captured and oil people again cried ***“the end of profit”***. Not so, as ***“they captured it and it turns out you can sell the stuff to help make fertilizer and plastics.”*** Now, ***“if Kyoto is implemented, the oil industry will be expected to capture the carbon dioxide expended during the heating process used to release the heavy oil trapped in the tar sands. It will be “the end of profit” the industry warns”*** But, in Saskatchewan, the oil industry is importing 95 million cubic feet of carbon dioxide a day from North Dakota. The carbon dioxide is captured from a plant that converts coal to natural gas, where it is shipped by pipeline to a depleting oil field outside Weyburn. Injected into the field, the pressurized carbon dioxide releases trapped oil, adding 25 years to the life expectancy of the field. Best of all, the carbon dioxide remains trapped in the reservoir.” ..”It is impossible to deny that Kyoto must impose serious economic costs in the short term.... Yet it is reasonable to wonder whether Kyoto might not actually benefit the economy in the long term, in this case by turning carbon dioxide into an oil extraction tool. After all , Mr. Taylor had precedent on his side. Salt water, natural gas sulphur,. Why is carbon dioxide any different? he asks. It seems like a fair question.”

These and other good articles are appearing daily in newspapers across the country. Let’s add our voices to those supporting Kyoto. And also, don’t forget to keep on saving energy, the best way to reduce energy use, carbon dioxide emissions and show we really care about the state the world will be in if we don’t act now!