

FLASH SHEET #3

Gracia Janes, Environment Convener Dec. 09, 2002

GLOBAL WARMING- Step One Achieved - We Have Much More To Do!

My thanks to all of you who so energetically engaged in efforts to convince the Federal Government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol! Through letters, e-mails, phone calls, petitions, and personal contacts, you helped take the message from a supportive public to the Prime Minister and Government Members.

For our part NCWC has sent many letters on this issue to the Prime Minister over the past year eg. on November 16th, President Catharine Laidlaw Sly commended him for his determination to ratify the protocol before the end of the year, saying “ ***This is a far sighted step, which confirms Canada’s place in the international world, as an environmental role model, willing to make plans, and then some sacrifices, in the necessary battle to ameliorate the predicted significant impacts of global warming, and to greatly improve environmental, health and social conditions world-wide.***”

She went on to say that “ ***National Council of Women policy has for years advocated that alternative energy sources must be the way of the future, if that future is to be an environmentally responsible one i.e. caring for the world that sustains life in all its diverse and inter-related forms. A plan for Canada to reach, or over- reach , its Kyoto targets, must in our view include strong energy conservation and renewable energy source targets, as well as significant involvement of Canadian citizens.***”

While we give full marks for Prime Minister Chretien and Environment Minister David Anderson’s gritty determination to ratify Kyoto, we cannot lose sight of the means by which this is achieved. As they say, **The devil is in the details! Canada’s ratification of Kyoto is assured, but now comes the hard part!**

Recent information in the media has made it quite clear, that **the Federal Government must be watched closely as to how they put together the plan to meet Canada’s Kyoto objectives.** For instance, in late October I was dismayed to hear Environment Minister David Anderson on CBC radio, saying that he “***considers Canada and Ontario to be on-side in their determination that nuclear power could go a long way towards helping Canada meet its Kyoto reduction targets.***”

In a response letter to Minister Anderson Catharine Laidlaw Sly questioned the continued reliance on nuclear power and the “***avoidance (by the Minister) of the issue of human safety for the citizens of Ontario and other areas nearby in Quebec, New Brunswick and parts of the USA***” should there be an accident at these aging and unsafe nuclear plants.

She also challenged the Minister’s assumption that nuclear power would substantively reduce carbon dioxide emissions, saying “ ***this is absolutely incorrect. As we noted in a 1989 brief to the Government’s Standing Committee on Global Warming, international environmental consultant Jeff Passmore stated that “as a contributor to reduction in***

carbon dioxide emissions, nuclear energy is a non starter. To offset 5% of 1990 global carbon emissions, world nuclear capacity would have to double.”

In the past few days leading up to the Kyoto ratification in the House of Commons, the government appears to be attempting to ameliorate the perceived negative fall-out to oil producing provinces, particularly Alberta, and Health Minister Anne McLellan, has been quoted as saying Alberta interests come first. Canada also wants its ‘carbon sinks’ our vast forests and agricultural lands to be counted on the positive side, and to have countries trade emission credits. Just this week reports have emerged that with the US out of the Kyoto agreement, Canadian companies who may have wished reduce emissions and sell their credits to US companies, will find it cheaper to buy credits themselves than to spend more to actually reduce emissions. (Toronto Star December 9th Myths of Kyoto.)

The same report notes that while the Alberta Tar Sands project are often touted as the villain, or the victim in Canada’s greenhouse gas saga, coal gets off lightly. According to Star reporter, Peter Calamai “***coal is “the biggest single hurdle to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions... According to federal statistics for 2000, Canada’s total emissions of man-made greenhouse gases amounted to 726 megatonnes (MT) measured as carbon dioxide, or its equivalent in methane and nitrous oxide. To that total, coal-burning power utilities contributed 102 MT of that. Yet coal gets off lightly in the federal Kyoto action plan, with the federal government even assuming that utilities will build new dirty coal-fired power plants this decade instead of insisting on cleaner gas-burning ones.”***

On the positive side, those supporting the Protocol, now include many business and labour leaders. For example, Robert Schaed, the CEO of Husky Injection Molding Systems Ltd, has been touting the many benefits of waste reduction and energy savings to companies such as his; Trans Alta, CEO Steve Snyder, has called the purchase of wind power firm Vision Quest “***the cornerstone of our renewable energy strategy”***; Shell Oil, has made significant investments in the emerging Ballard fuel cell technology; and, Hassan Yussuff, secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Labour Congress states that “***A sensible transition plan will reduce emissions by expanding public transit systems, retrofitting houses and commercial buildings for greater energy efficiency, introducing tougher building codes, switching from coal to gas for electricity generation, investing in renewable energy sources, producing more efficient vehicles, modifying industrial processes...”***

It looks like an overwhelming number of Canadians are on board with us, and are very committed to making Kyoto work. **Our task now, is to hold the government’s Kyoto Action Plan up the clear light of day; spot the problems; suggest solutions; and help in its successful implementation.** Judging by our NCWC participation in Industry Mines and Resources Energy Plan to the year 2025 consultations, where the dinosaurs of oil, coal and nuclear fuels were the movers and shakers with the Ministry officials, Canadians have a very tough job ahead of them.

Nevertheless, past history proves we can do it, as evidenced by the acid rain battle. We invite you to join with the National Council of Women of Canada, as we make good on our recent

offer to the Prime Minister that “ ***We would welcome any opportunity your government extends to help make Canada’s Kyoto Plan work.***” And, may I add, we will also make every effort to ensure that it is a good plan, that will make a difference to all Canadians and others around the world , now and in the future.