



Drought in Alberta, 31 smog alerts in southern Ontario, freak storms ... the list continues. Natural systems seem to be in disarray and the consequences are already becoming evident. But it is increasingly apparent that very few people really understand the issues that are at hand. Energy Action Council of Toronto (EnerACT) is pleased to present its Kyoto Brief – an introduction to climate change and the Kyoto Protocol.

THE KYOTO BRIEF

The problem

Scientists around the world agree that the Earth's climate is warming. It is estimated that average global temperatures could increase by 1 to 3.5 degrees Celsius over this century. In the past, the Earth's climate has varied, but the changes we are facing now are expected to be far more rapid, resulting in noticeable, drastic environmental effects. Already, glaciers have been retreating, sea levels have risen and climatic zones are shifting.

The "greenhouse effect" is a natural system that controls the temperature on Earth. The atmosphere naturally contains "greenhouse gases" (GHG's) without which the sun's heat would escape, making our planet too cold to support life, as it exists today.

By increasing the amount of greenhouse gases that are discharged into the atmosphere, we are intensifying the warming effect of the natural greenhouse. Carbon dioxide (from burning fossil fuels for electricity and transportation), methane (a by-product of the decomposing of organic material), and nitrous oxide (from burning fuels) are GHG's of major concern because they are strongly connected to human activities. And a burgeoning human population means that energy use for transportation and building heating and cooling will continue to rise.

The federal government predicts that Canada will experience unpredictable and/or extensive environmental, social and economic consequences:

- ✘ **More frequent extreme weather conditions (heat waves, droughts, blizzards, etc)**
- ✘ **Harmful health impacts due to heat stress and declining air quality in urban areas**
- ✘ **A decrease in the quality and quantity of drinking water**
- ✘ **A decline in water levels in Canada's southern lakes**
- ✘ **A 3-5 week extension of the frost-free season, ultimately resulting in reduced crop yields**
- ✘ **Serious impacts on our fisheries: populations and ranges of fish species will be altered**

The 1st step

The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement reached by over 160 countries in 1997 that limits GHG emissions to 5% below 1990 levels by the period 2008 - 2012. Canada has made a commitment to reduce its GHG emissions to 6 percent below 1990 levels by the same period. However, five years later the federal government has yet to ratify the protocol. GHG emissions have escalated in Canada by 13% between 1990 and 1997 and today **Canada is now the second-highest emitter, per capita, of GHG's in the world.**

To fulfill its obligations to the agreement the country must now decrease emissions by 21%, by 2008.

Reports by the media, high-polluting industries, and the Government of Alberta declare that the supposed economic losses caused by ratifying Kyoto will be devastating. Such reports are, simply, false. Economic analysis done by Ottawa and the provinces in May showed that, with Kyoto, the Alberta economy, including the oil and gas sector, would instead continue to grow.

IT IS CRITICAL TO UNDERSTAND THAT TO DO NOTHING WILL COST US MUCH MORE DEARLY THAN ANY OTHER OPTION.

Further, a report by the David Suzuki Foundation states that **implementation of the Kyoto Protocol will also create as many as 52,000 additional jobs through domestic action.** Canada's GDP would increase by \$2 billion and average household income would grow by \$135 per year beyond business as usual projections. By shifting toward a cleaner energy future, the hi-tech and construction industries will grow and we will see advances in more fuel-efficient cars, better public transportation, and home and building upgrades. It is clear that ratifying Kyoto is a much-needed first step in mitigating the far-reaching effects of global climate change, urban smog and acid rain.

What you can do

It is critical that we make it known to the mass media and all levels of government that the Canadian public firmly supports the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol as the first step to a solution.

Here's what you can do to help:

- ✘ Write a letter or an opinion editorial to the national dailies and/or your local papers.
- ✘ Write, call or email your elected government representatives letting them know what you think.
- ✘ Send the Kyoto Brief on to your friends and colleagues. This will help raise awareness of the issue and of what they, in turn, can do to help.

Newspaper contacts:

- ✘ Globe and Mail: email: letters@GlobeAndMail.ca
fax: (416) 585-5085
- ✘ National Post: email: letters@nationalpost.com
fax: (416) 442-2209
- ✘ Toronto Star: email: lettertoed@thestar.ca
fax: (416) 869-4322
- ✘ Toronto Sun: email: editor@sunpub.com



Government contacts:

- ✘ You can access the contact information for your federal Members of Parliament (MP) by going to this website: <http://www.parl.gc.ca> or by calling **1-866-599-4999**.
- ✘ You can access the contact information for your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) by going to this website: <http://www.ontla.on.ca> or by calling **1-800-267-8097** or **416-326-1234**.

EnerACT: *Agents of Change for Conservation and Renewable Energy*

51 Wolseley St, 5th Flr, Toronto, ONT M5T 1A4

Ph: 416.488.3966 Fax: 416.203.3121 Website: www.eneract.org