



Climate Action Network Canada Réseau action climat Canada

May 5, 2008

The Honourable Gary Doer
Premier of Manitoba
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 0V8

Dear Premier Doer:

The Climate Action Network Canada-Réseau action climat Canada, Canada's national network of NGOs working on climate change issues, welcomes the leadership role that Canadian provinces and territories are increasingly assuming on climate change.

In recognition of this leadership, we are writing to all provincial and territorial leaders in Canada to request support for the goal of keeping global average warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius relative to pre-industrial levels. The amount of increase in global average temperature is the fundamental yardstick of global warming, and is the basis for projecting all other impacts expected from human interference in the climate system, including regional temperature increase and sea level rise.

Given that all regions of Canada are warming more than the global average, and the far north will be warming at 2-3 times the global average, Canada has perhaps more reason than other countries to be concerned about the eventual extent of global temperature increase.

Two recent Canadian developments have brought home yet again the urgency of action to prevent dangerous climate change, and the need to consider carefully how much warming is acceptable without causing unacceptable disruptions to societies, ecosystems and economic activities, both within Canada and worldwide.

The first is a memorandum prepared by Environment Canada scientists in 2007, drawing on the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). This document, recently released under the Access to Information Act, concluded that:

- The world has warmed by about .74 degrees Celsius over the past century, and the rate of warming is expected to continue to increase over the coming decades;
- Sustained global warming of over 2°C above the pre-industrial level could lead to irreversible melting of the Greenland Ice Sheet with an associated sea level rise of about 7 meters;

- 20-30% of plant and animal species assessed so far likely face increased risk of extinction for global average temperature increases exceeding 2-3 degrees;
- The risks are substantially greater for greater warming; and,
- If we want to avoid such risks, it would be desirable to avoid a global increase of greater than 2oC.

Despite this clear guidance from its scientific advisors, the Government of Canada has yet to state officially what it considers to be an acceptable limit for temperature increase.

The second notable development is the recent publication of a Government of Canada report called “From Impacts to Adaptation: Canada in a Changing Climate 2007”, which provides a detailed assessment of the impacts already being felt in Canada from climate change, and projects future impacts from rising temperatures.

According to this report, with rising temperatures, Canada will face increasing risks of floods, heat waves, droughts and water scarcity, rising sea levels and coastal erosion and flooding, ecosystem stress, spread of vector-borne diseases, and a range of other impacts. Whatever benefits Canadian agriculture and forestry may experience from longer growing seasons and warmer temperatures could soon be wiped out by falling soil moisture, increased insect infestations and more frequent forest fires.

Without concerted actions to reduce emissions, the global average temperature could increase as much as 4-6 degrees by the end of this century, which would create an extremely high risk of catastrophic impacts in Canada and elsewhere.

Clearly no single province or nation alone can determine how high global temperature will rise, but all jurisdictions have the responsibility to contribute their fair share to the global effort to limit emissions and the resulting temperature increase to acceptable levels. Without knowing what the global effort should be, it is difficult to credibly determine the fair share of a given country or province. All jurisdictions thus have a direct stake in answering the question of what constitutes an acceptable increase in average global temperature.

This is why the countries most committed to effectively addressing the problem of climate change, including the European Union and many small island states, have adopted the policy of keeping global average warming to below 2°C. In Canada, Quebec is the first province to support this goal.

This does not mean that 2°C is a “safe” level – in fact, such warming will have a very destructive impact on sensitive systems like coral reefs and Arctic regions. However, keeping warming to as far below 2°C as possible gives us the best chance of avoiding the most catastrophic and irreversible impacts.

We are thus asking the provinces to show leadership in this area by adopting a policy, preferably through a resolution passed by the provincial legislature, stating that the increase in global average temperature should be kept as far below 2°C as possible, relative to pre-industrial levels.

We thank you in advance for your serious consideration of this urgent matter, and look forward to hearing your decision on this matter.

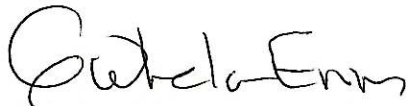
In closing we wish to congratulate you and your government for tabling Bill 15 'The Climate Change and Emission Reduction Act'. As well, your release of 'Beyond Kyoto, Manitoba's Green Future 2008' shows commitments to the future being made by your government.

Congratulations on these important steps.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Coon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Coon" clearly distinguishable.

David Coon
National Chair, Climate Action Network-Réseau action climat Canada

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gaile Whelan-Enns". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name "Gaile" and last name "Whelan-Enns" clearly distinguishable.

Gaile Whelan-Enns
Director, Manitoba Wildlands