

Climate Justice: A Call for Canadian Leadership

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As church, environmental, First Nations and international development leaders, we are compelled to express deep moral concern with Canada's role in promoting an energy path that the world's most distinguished scientists conclude is dangerous and unsustainable.

Canada is already the largest per-capita consumer of energy on earth. Yet Ottawa is actively supporting a continental energy plan that encourages even greater production and consumption of fossil fuels and nuclear power. These actions are worsening global warming and air pollution, threatening the land with radioactive waste, and compromising the health of the human and natural world. Energy policy decisions are being made without regard to their effects on the climate or on our international commitments to reduce climate-changing emissions.

We propose an alternative - that Canada takes a leadership role during international talks this summer on how to implement the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, and then develops an energy policy that supports this agreement. Climate protection policies must determine sustainable energy policies.

Many ecosystems and people in Canada, especially First Nations and those in the Far North, are expected to be severely impacted by climate change. Much of our natural heritage and many of our resource-dependent communities - farming, fishery, forestry - and those who still live off the land will be profoundly affected.

Throughout the world, it is those with the fewest resources that have the least capacity to adapt, and are the most vulnerable to floods, droughts, severe weather events, profound temperature changes and increased air pollution. Many of these people are in the developing world where Canada's long history of development assistance is now being jeopardized by our inadequate efforts on climate protection.

There are public priorities far more important than supporting the fossil fuel industries and technologies that arose in the last century. The quality of life we bequeath our children and grandchildren, and the long-term economic, social and ecological security of our planet must become our leading priorities.

As countries from around the world prepare to meet at the UN Climate Summit in July, it is time for Canada to re-assert its leadership role in the negotiations for a binding and effective Kyoto Protocol, and for its ratification in 2002. Those industrialized nations, such as Canada, with both the resources and with the overwhelming responsibility for the current rate of global warming, must accept the moral obligation for immediate

action.

Canada must stop the growth in production, consumption and export of energy from fossil fuel and nuclear sources that threaten the vitality of ecosystems around the world. We have an ethical responsibility to choose the safest, cleanest and most sustainable sources of energy the Earth offers. Conservation, efficiency and the maximum use of the abundant renewable energy of our Planet should guide our energy future.

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