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International Conference on Climate Change Communication

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INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS TO MEET IN KITCHENER-WATERLOO TO DISCUSS COMMUNICATING CLIMATE CHANGE

Waterloo, Ontario, June 19, 2000 - More than 200 delegates from across Canada, the United States and Europe will explore communication and its role in responding to the challenge of climate change at a conference taking place in Kitchener-Waterloo, June 22 to 24.

Organized by the University of Waterloo (UW), in partnership with the Adaptation and Impacts Research Group of Environment Canada, the International Climate Change Communication Conference will bring together leading academic researchers, government officials and representatives from non-governmental organizations. The Public Education and Outreach (PEO) component of the Government of Canada's Climate Change Action Fund (CCAF) has provided \$103,000 in funding for this conference.

"Education and understanding are essential to ensuring Canadians are informed and can take action to be part of the solution on climate change," said Environment Minister David Anderson. "The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of encouraging public action through projects funded under the Climate Change Action Fund."

"Increasing awareness of climate change is the first step towards taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet our environmental objectives," said Natural Resources Canada Minister Ralph Goodale. "Greater awareness will enable individual Canadians to take action through energy efficiency measures at home, at work, and on the road."

"The conference will look at ways to increase public awareness of the vulnerabilities and responsibilities that come with global climate change," explains Jean Andrey, UW geography professor and conference organizer. "Our goal is to raise awareness of this challenge, explore solutions and share success stories about communication as a foundation for action."

The conference will address these challenges and barriers through international representation from key organizations such as the climate change research unit of the University of East Anglia of the U.K., the US Global Change Research Program, the World Council of Churches, the Pembina Institute and the federal Environmental Protection Agency of Nigeria. It will feature approximately 100 speakers, several workshops, a poster display, and multimedia presentations. The conference program includes presenters from all over Canada, the U.S., Russia, several African nations, Europe, Asia and Australia. This representation is key to fostering the creation of an international climate change communication network.

Speakers include science writer Lydia Dotto who will address the media's role in communicating climate change, Ross Gelbspan, author of *The Heat is On* and Ralph Torrie, Canada's foremost energy efficiency expert, who will present a proposal for an economically attractive low-carbon future at the climate change public forum and communication showcase. Sondaky, an Aboriginal group from Quebec, will also be performing at the public forum at UW on Thursday, June 22 at 7:30 p.m.

The three-year, \$150-million CCAF, first introduced in the 1998 federal budget, supports projects that help reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. It was renewed in the 2000 federal budget. The \$30-million PEO component funds projects that increase public awareness and understanding of climate change and provide Canadians with the information they need to take action. Increasing awareness and understanding of this complex issue is critical for people to be able to take action to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

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