

Canada and the Kyoto Protocol

Overview: Climate Change Affects Us All

Climate change is a global problem, affecting all countries. While greenhouse gases (GHGs) form naturally, many human activities add additional GHGs to the atmosphere. Heating and cooling buildings, using energy at home and work, driving vehicles to move people and goods, powering industrial processes – most things we do that consume energy contribute to the problem. Radiation from the sun enters the earth's atmosphere, and GHGs act like a greenhouse's glass to block this heat from escaping back to space. There is a direct link between rising atmospheric GHG concentrations, particularly carbon dioxide (CO₂), global warming and more frequent extreme weather events. In Canada, climate change will affect fishing, farming, forestry, lakes, rivers, coastal communities and the North.

The Kyoto Protocol

Countries around the world have recognized the urgent need to take action to reduce GHGs in order to address the climate change challenge.

In December 1997, Canada and more than 160 other countries met in Kyoto, Japan, and agreed to targets to reduce GHG emissions. The agreement that set out those targets, and the options available to countries to achieve them, is known as the Kyoto Protocol. Canada's target is to reduce its GHG emissions to 6 percent below 1990 levels by the period between 2008 and 2012.

The Protocol will only become legally binding when it is ratified by at least 55 countries, covering at least 55 percent of the emissions addressed by the Protocol. As of November 13 2002, 97 countries had ratified or acceded to the Kyoto Protocol, accounting for 37.4 percent of the emissions addressed by the Protocol.

All the countries of the world have been meeting every year since the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 to define the operational rules of the Protocol – in other words, the international administrative framework within which countries will take steps to meet their Kyoto targets.

A vision for a cleaner future

It is Canada's intention to create a Canada for this and future generations with clean air, clean water, livable cities and healthy people. Canada's Climate Change Plan aims to help us all rethink the way we use energy. It balances the challenges presented by climate change with opportunities to create a strong Canadian presence in new markets. It envisions an economy that is based on cleaner energy using leading edge technologies. It envisions a Canada that is strongly competitive as a result.

Principles

The principles of fairness, sharing and no unreasonable burden are a foundation of Canada's Climate Change Plan. All governments, whether federal, provincial, territorial or municipal must act. All sectors must do their fair share. Consumers must do their part and business and industry must do theirs.

Action must be taken step by step. The Draft Plan recognizes that the Kyoto commitment period from 2008 to 2012 is but the first phase of the process.

After 2012, there will be another commitment period, then another, then another, each one building on the last, each one making a difference. As time goes by, we will assess our progress, learn as we go, make adjustments and capitalize on new developments and opportunities. It is our intention to minimize cost and maximize benefits. Why waste energy? Now is the time to take our first steps to a cleaner future.

**To find out more about what the Government of Canada is doing
and what you can do,**
please call 1 800 O-Canada (1 800 622-6232), TTY 1 800 465-7735
or visit www.climatechange.gc.ca
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