



A Non-Profit Centre for Applied Sustainability

Prime Minister, Stephen Harper
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa
K1A 0A2

November 18, 2009

Dear Right Honourable Prime Minister, Stephen Harper,

Re: Climate Change and Copenhagen

This December, you face a decision that will shape the world that future generations will inhabit. The 15th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen represents our best hope for changing the trajectory of greenhouse gas emission growth before runaway climate change radically alters the global environment, undermining our economy and political stability. As the head of government of a world-respected G-8 economy, your leadership will be crucial to the success of an agreement at Copenhagen. We are concerned that you have not so far shown the leadership necessary on this important issue, and ask that you commit to Canada making dramatic cuts in greenhouse gases before 2020.

Canada is already experiencing the effects of global warming. Arctic sea ice has declined to record levels the past decade and is on track to disappear altogether within twenty years. Drought is affecting wide swaths of the prairies and pine beetles are devastating the forests of British Columbia. Climate change threatens to disrupt every ecosystem in Canada, and along with them, the economies and cultures that depend on them.

The most dramatic social effects of climate change will be felt in lower income countries, where increasing temperatures will lead to scarcity of food and water, overturning development progress of the past century. The World Health Organization estimates that 150,000 people are dying from increased disease attributable to climate change every year already. These numbers will skyrocket in the coming decades without a global treaty on greenhouse gas emissions. If you fail to set and meet appropriate targets for Canada, you will erase Canada's longstanding reputation as a source of fairness and equality on the world stage.

Canada is one of the largest per capita emitters of greenhouse gases on the planet. At 746 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalents in 2007, we ranked among the top three major polluters on a

per capita basis. We have also had one of the worst records of emission growth in the OECD, increasing our emissions over 25% since 1990. We have more scope to reduce our emissions than most other countries, and with our great wealth, we have the resources to do so.

Indeed there is evidence that our economy can grow with a less destructive energy supply and usage. Denmark is an excellent example of one that has prospered in making the shift. Denmark has reduced its net emissions 5.9% since 1990, while its GDP expanded 150% over this period. Norway, like Canada, a Northern, energy intensive, oil-exporting nation, has committed to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions by 40% of its 1990 levels by 2020.

We do not need to wait for other countries to start getting our own house in order. Your leadership in Copenhagen will be an important step in getting a global treaty on greenhouse gases and help ensure that the world your grandchildren inherit will be one with the same opportunities the present generation enjoys.

In particular, we ask you to commit to a 25 per cent cut in Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions relative to 1990 by 2020.

We also ask that you commit to developing and adhering to a realistic plan to ensure that Canada's commitments at Copenhagen are met and to setting interim targets to benchmark our progress.

Sincerely,

Colin Croll, President
Resource Conservation Manitoba