

Green as Tar: Harper's "Environmental" Conversion

Posted by

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WCWC - Prime Minister Stephen Harper's renewed criticisms of the Kyoto Protocol has drawn the ire of Canada's largest wilderness protection organization, the Western Canada Wilderness Committee (WCWC).

www.wildernesscommittee.org

Wilderness Committee to embark on "Pre-Election Environmental Education Campaign"

Western Canada Wilderness Committee
Tuesday, January 9, 2007

For Immediate Release

Canada's Prime Minister Harper "about as Green as the Alberta Tar Sands": renewed verbal attack against Kyoto draws environmentalists' ire.

"Doesn't Harper ever learn? I thought he was supposed to be promoting a new green agenda in light of the environment being the number one issue among Canadians according to recent polls," states Ken Wu, Campaign Director of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee in Victoria, British Columbia.

"Harper's new criticisms of Kyoto shows that at heart he really is a Climate Change Dinosaur. He seems about as green as the Alberta oil sands."

On Sunday, Harper remarked to the media that "[climate change] is a real long term challenge?it can't be fixed overnight. This country is headed to be 50% over its Kyoto target in 2012. We can't tell the Canadian population to heat their home to one-third less of the time," while Harper spokeswoman Sandra Buckler stated that Kyoto's targets are "unachievable."

"Canada will be 50% over its Kyoto targets if the Harper government lets it happen ? which judging by Harper's new comments, he may very well," states Wu. "If our greenhouse gas

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emissions are rising farther away from Kyoto's targets, we need to take stronger not weaker measures to meet those targets. And certainly Canada shouldn't lead the way in undermining the Kyoto Accord internationally by being the only signatory nation to declare that it will renege on trying to meet its targets."

Before the coming federal election, which some analysts predict may occur as soon as this spring, the Western Canada Wilderness Committee will embark on a "Pre-Election Environmental Education Campaign" where scores of volunteers will talk to thousands of households, door to door, in important neighborhoods in order to educate the public about the federal government's environmental and anti-environmental policies. Volunteer environmental educators will hand out information brochures, circulate petitions, and tell voters to remember the environment when they cast their ballots.

The Harper government's proposed Clean Air Act has faced intense national and international criticism for committing Canada to fall short of meeting its Kyoto emissions reduction targets of 6% below 1990 levels by 2010. The Act doesn't set any firm emissions reduction targets until 2050, and also relies on reductions based on emissions intensity (emissions per unit of energy) instead of absolute reductions in emissions. Currently, the Clean Air Act has been taken to a special committee in Parliament, where the New Democratic Party is hoping to negotiate revisions to the proposal with the federal Conservative government in order to strengthen the Act so that it adheres to Kyoto's targets.

Last week, Harper also replaced former Environment Minister Rona Ambrose with John Baird, who toured amongst the toppled old-growth trees in Vancouver's storm-damaged Stanley Park with Minister of Natural Resources Gary Lunn yesterday. Baird made several strong statements about the importance of tackling climate change and the disastrous effects of more extreme storms (which climate change models have predicted should increase in intensity and frequency) which have relentlessly battered Canada's Pacific coast this winter. Baird's comments seemed at odds with Harper's statements that minimized the government's responsibility to undertake strong measures to counteract climate change.

The WCWC is calling on the federal government of Canada to:

- At the very least, honor Canada's participation in the Kyoto Accord by working to achieve its emissions reduction targets.

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- Enact significant regulations for heavy industry "final emitters" based on absolute reductions in emissions, not emissions intensity, in the near future (ie. by 2010, as stipulated by Kyoto).

- Implement a national carbon tax, as the Quebec government has recently done, and as recommended in the Nicholas Stern report commissioned by the UK government, released last November.

- Establish national automobile efficiency standards equivalent to those in California, where Governor Swartzenegger has set vehicle emissions standards that will reduce automobile greenhouse gas emissions by 23% by 2012 and 30% by 2016.

- Reinstate the popular Energuide program of the previous government which gave tax rebates for Canadians who invested in energy efficient appliances and home improvements.

- Stop the vast subsidies for the fossil fuel industry, and instead give tax breaks and assistance to renewable, clean energy projects like wind, solar, and tidal power projects.

Some consequences of global warming in Canada include:

- More extreme weather events and storms.

- Increased frequency and intensity of forest fires and the dramatic spread of the pine beetle throughout dry conifer forests.

- Increased droughts on the prairies.

- Increased salmon mortality in the rivers (lower water levels, less oxygen, more disease) and in the ocean (less nutrients).

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- Rising sea levels that will wipe out entire coastal ecosystems/ species and flood large parts of major cities

- Major increases in the extinction rates of species and ecosystems across the country.

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