



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
to the CPA UK Branch Seminar on Climate Change**

**Canadian Branch of the
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)**

**London, United Kingdom
November 26 – 30, 2007**

The Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association was represented by the Hon. John McKay, P.C., M.P. and Mr. Bob Mills, M.P. at the CPA UK Branch Seminar on Climate Change held in London, United Kingdom from November 26-30, 2007 and has the honour to present its

Report

Overview

We arrived in London on Monday, November 26, after an overnight flight from Canada. The British Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA, UK Branch) representatives met us at Heathrow Airport and escorted us to our hotel.

That evening we attended a reception where we had the opportunity to meet the delegates from the other Commonwealth countries participating in the conference, in addition to representatives from a few nations which are not members of the Commonwealth. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, accompanied by the Speakers of the UK House of Commons and House of Lords, welcomed the delegates.

Over the next three days, we detected a pervasive sentiment amongst our colleagues that could best be described as a distinct urgent plea for action on the issue of climate change. From what he could observe, the overwhelming majority of delegates at the UK conference saw the upcoming Conference of the Parties conference in Bali as merely the beginning for what would inevitably be intense, often contentious negotiations concerning the nature of the post-Kyoto global approach to climate change after 2012. The delegates also expressed the hope that the negotiations would produce a unanimous consensus among all attendees to the Copenhagen meeting in 2009.

At the UK conference, there was a virtually unanimous view that climate change posed a real and existential threat to our survival as a species.

And, while there was universal agreement that we should continue our efforts to minimize the damaging effects to our common environment brought about by the climate change phenomenon, the Commonwealth delegates emphasized that attention should also be focused on educating the public. Some of its effects are, regrettably, irreversible, and, therefore, adaptation is absolutely necessary.

Another issue raised at the UK conference was that, while all nations will be adversely affected by climate change, its impact will most certainly be felt most acutely by the poorest regions of the world. This is truly most unfortunate, as these are also the countries that, because of their extreme poverty, are the least equipped to confront the challenges caused by climate change.

Of particular concern to many of the African participants was the likely scenario that climate change will provoke massive migration from the developing world to the developed world, with enormous social, political and economic consequences for all.

Another issue of concern for the Africans at the conference was that their long-awaited economic development, which in many cases is still in its infancy, would be aborted were the post-Kyoto agreement to impose the same stringent emissions regulations on them as it would on the nations of the West.

They conveyed to us the notion that since developed nations had already reaped the benefits of economic development, while being the major contributors to climate change in the process, it is only appropriate they should now shoulder the larger share of the burden for reducing its impact. They added that to impose the same expectations on those nations whose economies were just beginning to develop would be fundamentally unfair. It is reasonable to state that all the conference's participants agreed that climate change has, and will continue to exact a disproportionately heavy toll on the poorest nations of the world. Simply put, developing nations do not have to make the same mistake that Western countries did as they developed their economies in previous eras.

Contrary to what we expected, there appeared to be a fair deal of skepticism on the part of some nations' representatives that new technologies could produce a substantial and reduction to future deterioration of the global environment. The manner in which cellular telephones, satellites, and other wireless communications technologies have "leapfrogged" past conventional instruments of communication was cited by representatives primarily from developed nations as an instructive example that, if applied to environmental degradation, could be emulated by poorer nations to combat climate change.

The wide divergence among the conference's participants in terms of their respective perceptions of the most desirable approach to the problem of climate change was in evidence in the dichotomy between the advanced nations' representatives' promotion of technology as the best weapon, versus the developing nations' delegates preference for a less technological approach. For example, the Canadian, British and Australian delegates enthusiastically promoted the virtues of new technologies such as carbon sequestration, alternate energy sources, clean coal, etc., while some delegates from the developing countries expressed a belief that a spiritual approach could have some impact in the fight against climate change.

The above-mentioned provides one of the most glaring examples of the enormous difficulty associated with trying to reach common ground among representatives from such diverse nations. It also emphasized how important it is that the G-8 plus 5 nations, which represent 70 per cent of global emissions, take the lead in finding solutions to this very real and pressing threat. In addition, there needs to be a great deal of explaining to developing regions how such solutions will be environmentally beneficial without devastating their still fragile economic growth.

Session Reports

'Opening Session'

In the first session we attended, we received an updated (fourth) report from the IPCC at which the United Kingdom's Chief Scientist, Sir David King, emphasized the need to manage risks, and to develop a climate change plan on a country-by-country basis. The UK this past summer demonstrated the necessity of taking into account the particularities of each nation's specific climactic conditions, as it experienced nearly two straight months of drought, followed immediately by massive flooding. Due to situations such as this, the UK spends approximately £700 million (\$1.5 billion CAD) per year on flood containment/response.

King also informed us that, as massive amounts of naturally sequestered carbon are being released into the atmosphere; extreme conditions will be even further exacerbated, as already arid regions of the world will become even drier, while areas which receive considerably more moisture will get even wetter. To reinforce the idea that progress can be accomplished when the common political will to take decisive action exists, King pointed to the case of the ban on chlorofluorocarbons in recent decades, and the accompanying restoration of some of the ozone layer, and to the increased use of catalytic converters by automobile manufacturers, which has reduced the level of noxious emissions from cars.

We were reminded, however, that as a global community, we have essentially lost a decade in which greater progress could have been made, since the signing of Kyoto. Sir David King also emphasized the fact that each country has a moral imperative to find ways to lower its carbon emissions, switch to low carbon alternatives, conservation strategies, and to embrace new technologies in the global campaign to stem further erosion of our environment. On the other hand, development must also be sustainable, and in an open market, carbon must be priced realistically.

Professor King presented a list of four specific criteria that should be incorporated into the climate change agreement that will follow the Kyoto Accord:

1. The need for a unanimously agreed to stabilization level;
2. A clearly-defined target and time frame for each country;
3. A carbon trading system that is fully integrated into the global economy;
4. The smooth facilitation of technology transfer and adaptation strategies from economically advanced nations to less developed nation.

Session 2

'The UK Perspective on Climate Change'

In the United Kingdom, validity of the science behind theories of climate change is no longer open to debate; it is now a widely accepted truth in both political and scientific/academic circles. The only issue around which there is yet to be complete agreement concerns the stringency of emissions targets that are necessary.

The British consensus seems to be that doing nothing about climate change will be much more costly in the long run than would be the impact of taking whatever measures are necessary in the present to prevent further damage. Basically, the choice between economic development and environmental protection—the dominant view of many in the developing world and those in the developed world—is viewed as a false dichotomy by the British.

The UK government has an ambitious plan which asserts that both economic development and low carbon growth are possible without either being compromised in favour of the other. Recent history seems to substantiate their confidence, as over the past decade, the UK economy has experienced substantial growth while simultaneously managing to reduce their level of carbon emissions. Though the British position was contested by some conference delegates, the UK is firm about creating a carbon budget and proceeding with aggressive carbon emissions legislation.

Another issue raised by some delegates from developing countries was the idea of a market-based mechanism to compensate nations which agree to stop the practice of tropical deforestation. According to some estimates, approximately 18 per cent of all CO₂ emissions are attributable to deforestation in tropical and sub-tropical regions. The President of Guyana, who attended the UK CPA Conference, showed some receptiveness to this notion, provided a reliable compensatory mechanism can be found.

Session 3

As stated in the beginning of this report, though daunting for all countries, the challenges presented to developing nations in the face of climate change are comparatively more severe than for the more affluent societies of the developed world. For instance, rising sea levels present the greatest threat to low-lying island nations and delta states—the vast majority of which are located in the Caribbean, Africa, South Asia and the South Pacific—all regions of relative under-development. Indeed, it is predicted that, as sea levels rise, some islands may disappear altogether. And, a state such as Bangladesh, much of which lies in a river delta, could lose as much as 17 per cent of its present land mass.

Brazil, in particular, offers an instructive case study to demonstrate the importance of the transfer of the appropriate technology to assist a rapidly developing economy adapt to the restrictive measures required to fight climate change. This nation currently derives 46 per cent of its energy from renewable sources, largely from biomass fuels.

Session 4

Another dominant theme that emerged from this conference was the following idea: the world is fast approaching the point of no return on the climate change front, and that if the global community cannot at the very least halt further climate change, it will have far-reaching implications for humanity on economic, security, and poverty levels.

Ironically, though energy efficiency has improved in recent years, increased pressure on the worldwide energy supply caused by the rapidly growing economies of China and India, in particular, has essentially nullified any overall environmental benefits that might have accrued from the improved technologies.

It was clear to all attendees of the conference that 'business as usual' simply won't suffice anymore, and unless dramatic measures are enacted and implemented by all the world's major emitters, an environmental catastrophe awaits us all. The reality is that the climactic changes we are only beginning to become aware of today were caused by atmospheric changes that occurred a decade or more ago. Most experts who spoke at the conference agreed that there is, at most, a 15-20 year window of opportunity where, if the necessary action is taken, this impending catastrophic scenario can be averted.

Alternate energy sources—nuclear, wind, tidal, solar, etc.—must all be essential elements of our collective arsenal to fight climate change; otherwise, "abrupt and irreversible climate change" will be inevitable.

Not surprisingly, many delegates singled out the United States for condemnation on the climate change issue. However, it was also noted that the U.S. has recently changed its official discourse from "dangerous climate change" to "abrupt and irreversible climate

change." Many delegates also agreed that, at the sub-national level, the United States has actually done more to reduce its emissions than many other developed nations.

The presenters cited several examples—the melting of permafrost and the resulting release of dangerous amounts of methane gas; the erosion of the polar ice cap, and the "drying out" of the Amazon rainforest—as harbingers of what the future hold, 'canaries in the mineshaft', if you will, unless dramatic action is undertaken immediately.

It was also noted at the conference that 80 per cent of greenhouse gases (GHG's) are due to our increasing energy needs. Current GHG in the atmosphere are mainly from the developed world, but in the future, an increasing proportion of the total amount will be from the developing world. Currently, the U.S. accounts for 25 per cent of total GHG; China, 25 per cent; the E.U., 23 per cent; India, 19 per cent; and the rest of the world combined produces only 18 per cent. As China's economy continues to expand, it is expected that, together with the U.S., emissions from these two nations will comprise approximately 50 per cent of global GHG. The final point made at this session was that there are presently technological solutions available for the decarbonization of power generation.

Session 5

'Managing Impacts: the role of legislators'

a). International Level (Beyond Kyoto)

Dealing with the issue now means that the cost of doing so will be less in the future. Success in doing so, however, rests largely with the U.S., China and India.

There also needs to be a consensus reached stipulating that the earth's temperature increase cannot exceed 2 degrees Celsius, and that we cannot permit more than 450 parts per million (P.P.M) of GHG's in the atmosphere. For this to occur, GHG's would have to be reduced by 80 per cent by 2050.

The cost of doing what needs to be done in this respect is estimated to be 1 per cent of total world GDP, whereas the cost of not doing so is estimated at 5-20 per cent of world GDP.

It was also predicted that the increase in the cost of food will be comparable to the increase in energy costs, as the world switched to biomass energy sources. Also, the estimated \$170-200 Billion per year subsidy for fossil fuels would need to be eliminated.

The challenge before us, then, is to be able to prosper in a more equitable, low-carbon economy, in which water will be relatively scarce, oil will be more limited than it is today, and where we practice hyper-efficient energy use in a closed-loop system.

Session 6

'The Regional Picture'

The defining issue once again was a sense of urgency. China, in particular, will be the nation facing the biggest challenge from the deviation from the 'business as usual' scenario. The recent rapid industrialization and drive towards prosperity in that country may have been economically beneficial to 300 million Chinese; however, if the current

pace continues, it is expected that within 10 years another 200 million Chinese will become urbanized and more prosperous.

Given the trade-off between reducing global reliance on fossil fuels and the seemingly unstoppable drive by the Chinese for ever-greater economic prosperity, if the Chinese are unable to be thoroughly convinced of the need to accept a low-carbon economy, this initiative will prove to be ineffective.

The U.S. needs to change its approach at the federal level; however, at the state level, there have been numerous hopeful signs, particularly those initiated in recent years by California. Low carbon emissions needs to be firmly placed at the centre of America's economic infrastructure, while simultaneously alleviating Americans' collective anxiety that, in so doing, the country will lose many jobs to China.

For its part, the European Union has agreed to the 2 degree Celsius temperature rise targets, and has committed itself to ratifying a binding international agreement to reduce emissions on the continent by 30 per cent by 2020; however, should such an agreement not come to fruition, then emissions will only be reduced by 20 per cent by that date. The E.U. predicts that it will reach this target by achieving gains of 20 per cent in energy use efficiency, 20 per cent in renewable energy sources, and 10 per cent through the use of alternative energy sources.

A low-carbon economy is gaining momentum in the U.S. As it often has in other areas, California is leading the way, having invested \$3-Billion in green power projects using a variety of technologies as the state works towards a 2012 goal of 'cap & trade'. A variety of innovative responses are being presented; the successful ones are being implemented at the state level. As they like to say in California, "Winners go to market, losers go to Washington."

Session 7

'The Challenge to Energy Companies'

The dilemma facing the world's energy suppliers is this: mankind wants more energy. But it needs to use the energy it has far more efficiently than it ever has before, because the atmosphere cannot sustain a decent quality of life unless carbon emissions are dramatically reduced very soon.

The driving forces of this process are economic and demographic growth. In short, we need to double the amount of energy we possess, while at the same time, cutting carbon emissions levels by 50 per cent. To have a realistic expectation of accomplishing this, there has to be effective economic stimuli in place. Carbon has to be priced in a worldwide market exchange system. There also needs to be investment assistance for the research and development (R & D) of new energy sources, and uniform standards and regulations of emissions levels throughout the world.

The challenge, therefore, is to take the carbon out of fossil fuels, because if you are not at the table of solutions, you will not be on the menu. Carbon sequestration technology is ready to go mainstream, and this technology alone is estimated to be capable of cutting emissions by 20 per cent.

Paradoxically, the international business community sees climate change as both a business risk and as a business opportunity. For many companies, there is an economic risk associated with compliance with new, more stringent emissions guidelines; however, there is also the risk to a company's reputation in the eyes of customers and potential employees if they do not appear to be environmentally conscious. Today, an increasing number of highly-skilled employees are demanding that their companies be more eco-friendly in terms of their products and practices.

Session 8

'The Role of Other Actors'

a). The Role of Media - Frightening citizens into adopting a greener mindset will not work. The climate change file, because of its complexity, is difficult for media to adequately explain because of the emphasis in that sphere on the simple, visible, and immediate. Both the media and the public like certainty; however, the issue of GHG's does not easily lend itself to certainty because they are not visible, the science behind it is not always precise, and its effects often appear to be far off in the future.

Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) also need to encourage people to incorporate major changes in their lifestyles, some of which might be very painful, with no guarantee of success. Suggestions made toward this end included more local living and less reliance on carbon-based transport. Other points raised were to encourage what works and discourage what does not, and to tax the right things and not the wrong things.

b). Energy Alternatives - This session also included a wide-ranging discussion of the potential alternatives to the usage of fossil fuels, as well as the importance of new technologies such as carbon capture and storage (sequestration). The main theme of this portion of the discussion was that no single 'silver bullet' exists to undo the damage that has already been done, but that to be successful, any approach will have to consist of a suitable combination of various technologies, practices, and strategies.

c). The Role of Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's) - The World Wildlife Federation, to cite one example, is an NGO with over five million members worldwide. The supporters of such organizations provide the campaign to fight climate change with a valuable human resource of highly motivated individuals; unfortunately, NGO's cannot do it by themselves. Consequently, the best approach would harness the efforts and energies of NGO's and team them with the organizational and operational capacity of governments.

Session 9

'Ashden Award Winners for Sustainable Development'

In this session, a number of projects were presented to delegates as innovative responses to climate change challenges in developing countries. Presentations were heard on projects in the following three countries:

1) Bangladesh: A project involving school boats which ran on solar and provided schooling up and down the rivers for those who would have never had schooling otherwise.

- 2) Tanzania: The use of biomass to fire bricks and build houses which were much more durable.
- 3) Philippines: Building simple ram pumps for moving much needed water for drinking and agriculture.

Session 10

'The Next Generation'

At the conference's concluding session, a number of presentations were given on other initiatives. There was the example of a school project in Manchester, England, in which students play an active role in monitoring the school building and surrounding property with an eye towards identifying potential areas where energy savings could be made.

At this particular school, the students performed an educative function by raising the level of environmental awareness among their fellow students, teachers and parents, while also 'greening' their school environment.

Another program that was discussed during the final session, called 'Sandwatch', helps island nations monitor their beaches for signs of erosion.

This session's presenters then encourages everyone in attendance to go to the following website—http://www.ashdenawards.org/finalists_UK_2007— where they could view video case studies of how various UK corporations, public institutions, and schools have incorporated environmentally-conscious programs as parts of their respective organizational cultures and daily operations.

The wrap-up entailed the preparation of a final communiqué, as well as a talk from Lord Malloch-Brown, who warned us not to hold out too much hope for the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesia, as it was a just a starting point for what would inevitably be long, tough, and very likely contentious negotiations leading up to Copenhagen in 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Russ Hiebert, M.P., Chair,
Canadian Branch
of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) for Hon. John
McKay, P.C., M.P. and Mr. Bob Mills, M.P.

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
ACTIVITY	UK Branch Seminar on Climate Change
DESTINATION	London, UK
DATES	November 26 – 30, 2007
DELEGATION	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Hon. John McKay, P.C., M.P. Mr. Bob Mills, M.P.
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 7,375.14
ACCOMMODATION	\$
HOSPITALITY	\$
PER DIEMS	\$ 430.00
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$
MISCELLANEOUS/REGISTRATION FEES	\$
TOTAL	\$ 7,805.14