



Conférence religieuse canadienne  
Canadian Religious Conference  
4135 rue de Rouen Street  
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CANADA

November 8, 2006

Hon. Rona Ambrose  
Minister of the Environment  
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière  
10 Wellington Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Gatineau, Quebec.  
K1A 0H3

Dear Minister Ambrose,

We are writing to you as Religious Congregations across Canada representing 22,000 members. At our national meeting in Cornwall in June 2006, we committed ourselves as a body to speaking and acting in ways that reverence the earth and that show our relationship with the earth as a sacred trust. Care for the earth is an integral aspect of our justice work which is at the heart of who we are. Cutting green house gas emissions is for us a spiritual as well as a moral and ethical issue.

We are already experiencing the effects of climate change. The Prime Minister's recent trip to the North West Territories in June 2006 was in large part in response to this shift in our climate. While we appreciate the intent of a "made in Canada" plan to deal with the effects of climate change, we are clear that it is impossible for any country to act in isolation when it comes to our environment.

Religious Congregations have always been concerned about issues of justice and we have, over the years, had many of our members working in developing countries. At present we know that there are thousands of environmental refugees in our world and that the effects of climate change have their most profound and devastating effects on those who live in poverty. A visionary plan that demands change of us as Canadians is needed.

The Kyoto target of a 6% reduction in green house gas emissions from the 1990 levels is a demanding target. When Canada signed the Kyoto Protocol, we were proud and we saw it as a hopeful document that had the potential to wake us up to the seriousness of our situation. That Kyoto is not even mentioned in your "Clean Air Act" is disturbing and indicates that from your perspective we can act more slowly. We could not disagree more.

From our perspective, three areas of change that could have immediate effects are:

1. A comprehensive plan to increase funding and development of public transportation in our cities and between our cities. We as a nation must reduce our dependency on oil and a good public transportation system is one way to make that more possible.

2. The government of Canada already has in place rebates for retrofitting of buildings. Many of us are building new buildings or retrofitting old buildings according to LEED standards and such energy efficiency further reduces green house gas emissions. Further subsidies so that ordinary Canadians could participate in energy efficiency programs will pay off in the long run. Rebates and interest-free loans to cover the up-front costs of measures such as geo-thermal systems, green roofs, converting to alternative forms of energy seem very do-able.

3. Continue to call on Canadians to individually make a difference. Converting to energy-efficient light bulbs, using our cars less, being conservative with our heating and cooling systems will all help. Unfortunately, tepid bills like the Clean Air Act do not send the signal to us as ordinary citizens that the Conservative Government sees the environment as a priority. In fact, cutting such programs as the “One Ton Challenge” sent a countersign.

We care about our world. We are more than willing to do our part as Canadian citizens to reduce the negative impact of greenhouse gas emissions. We also want our Canadian government to enact policies which reflect the best of who we are as global citizens.

*Donna Geernaert, s.e.*  
Donna Geernaert, SC  
President

cc: Prime Minister Stephen Harper