

Reducing Carbon Pollution: What Do We Need to do to Prevent Climate Chaos?

What is Carbon Pollution?

Carbon is important for life on the planet, but too much of it becomes a form of pollution because it poses a threat to our global environment. Carbon dioxide is the major gas responsible for global warming produced by humans. Carbon as well as other gases¹ trap heat in the atmosphere. The rising global temperature contributes to ecosystem loss, risks to water supplies and food production, increases in pests and disease, and droughts and floods worldwide.

How much Carbon Pollution is there?

In 2005, 7.9 billion tonnes of carbon were emitted into the atmosphere worldwide, principally due to the burning of fossil fuels, such as coal, oil, and gas.²

Currently, the land and oceans absorb about half of these emissions. What is not absorbed contributes to global warming.

A grave concern is that the ability of the land and oceans to continue to absorb this carbon is likely to be reduced as the concentration keeps going up. At a certain point the oceans, arctic tundra, and rainforests will start to release, instead of store, carbon. When this occurs, we will be faced with a catastrophic and irreversible level of global warming. We must try to prevent this from happening!

At what Level will this Dangerous Level of Global Warming Occur?

To avert these catastrophic effects, the international scientific consensus is that we must prevent global temperature from rising more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Temperature has already risen by 0.6°C. To prevent this 2°C increase, global concentrations of carbon dioxide would need to be stabilized between 400 and 550 parts per million (ppm). Concentrations are now at 380 ppm and increasing.

How Might we Prevent a 2°C Warming?

For industrialized countries, the carbon pollution reduction targets that are consistent with avoiding a catastrophic level of warming are:

- 1) Meeting and exceeding the reductions specified by the Kyoto Protocol by 2008-2012;
- 2) 25-30% reduction from 1990 levels by 2020;
- 3) 80% reduction from 1990 levels by 2050;

These targets are based on the idea that equitable access to the atmosphere is a principle consistent with sustainable development. Richer nations have an historic responsibility to reduce pollution as well as an ability to pay, and the capacity to act.

What Targets has Canada Agreed to?

Canada is legally obliged under international law to meet its Kyoto Protocol target, to reduce carbon pollution to 6% below 1990 levels by 2008-2012. No further international targets have been negotiated, but Europe is starting to adopt the targets outlined above. Canada is currently 35% above the Kyoto target. Furthermore,

¹ other Greenhouse Gases include methane, nitrous oxide, ozone and water vapour.

² <http://www.csiro.au/csiro/content/standard/ps2im.html>

and Global Carbon Project Report No. 5, October 2006 – www.globalcarbonproject.org

the Harper government has abandoned our international commitments under the Kyoto Protocol and proposed 'intensity-based' targets that would allow pollution to continue to increase.

What Targets has Nova Scotia Agreed to?

In 2001, Nova Scotia signed a Climate Action Plan with the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers. The targets outlined in that action plan were to:

- 1) Reduce carbon pollution to 1990 levels by 2010;
- 2) Further reduce by at least 10% below 1990 levels by 2020;
- 3) Further reduce by 75-85% in the long-term to avoid dangerous interference with the atmosphere.

This action plan was signed by the Governors and Premiers to force action by the US and Canadian federal governments. The Governors and Premiers showed leadership by signing this climate action plan. However, Nova Scotia's carbon pollution emissions are *up* 16.5% compared to 1990 levels and political leaders rarely discuss the provincial targets.

What else did Nova Scotia Agree to do?

The Governors' and Premiers' Action Plan outlined a number of action items for each province and state to implement. Among these was *Action Item #2: Establish a Plan to Reduce Emissions and Conserve Energy*.

Even though the Governors' and Premiers' commitment was made in 2001 and the province has released an *Energy Strategy, A Green Plan* and a *Green Energy Framework* since, Nova Scotia has yet to create a plan discussing how they will meet the Governors and Premiers targets outlined above. In contrast, Quebec has published a plan to meet the Kyoto target as well as the Governors' and Premiers' targets.

You can see the Ecology Action Centre's annual grading of Nova Scotia's performance in reducing carbon pollution at http://www.ecologyaction.ca/energy_issues/Scorecard_2006.pdf

What can I do?

1) Demand Leadership!

Write to the Premier and your MLA to tell them you want Nova Scotia to establish a plan to meet our carbon pollution reduction targets followed by an 80% reduction by 2050.

The Honourable Rodney MacDonald
Office of the Premier
PO Box 726
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2T3
FAX: 902-424-7648

MLAs: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/MEMBERS/index.html>

Darrel Dexter, NDP Leader - ddexter@ns.sympatico.ca

Michel Samson, Liberal Leader - samsonmp@gov.ns.ca

2) Tell Stephen Harper that real targets and regulations are needed to fight the climate crisis

Go to: <http://www.climateactionnetwork.ca/cleanairactstinks/>

3) Join the Ecology Action Centre to help us ensure Nova Scotia reduces its carbon pollution <http://www.ecologyaction.ca/membership.shtm>