

UP IN THE AIR

Canada's mixed record on ozone depletion and climate change

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Two of the most urgent global environmental challenges in human history gained prominence in the closing decades of the 20th century — depletion of the ozone layer and climate change.

Despite the serious risks ozone depletion and climate change pose to our environmental, economic and social health, Canada's response to these two environmental problems could not be more different.

Up in the Air is a joint effort by the David Suzuki Foundation and the University of Victoria that compares Canada's response to ozone depletion and climate change. Authored by environmental lawyer and professor David R. Boyd, the report examines the science, the impacts, the corporate lobbies resisting change and most importantly the international and domestic responses to these two problems.

On the issue of ozone depletion, Canada has been a world leader. Both federal and provincial governments passed strong and effective laws that ensured we met our international commitments. Corporate reluctance to change melted rapidly and Canadian consumption and use of ozone-depleting chemicals has fallen an impressive 95 per cent since 1987, at lower than expected costs.

With respect to climate change, Canada has been more of a laggard than a leader. Ottawa has only recently started to take small steps to fulfill its

Canada played “a pivotal role in the early development and ongoing evolution of the *Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.*”

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA,
1997



Canada's greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise.

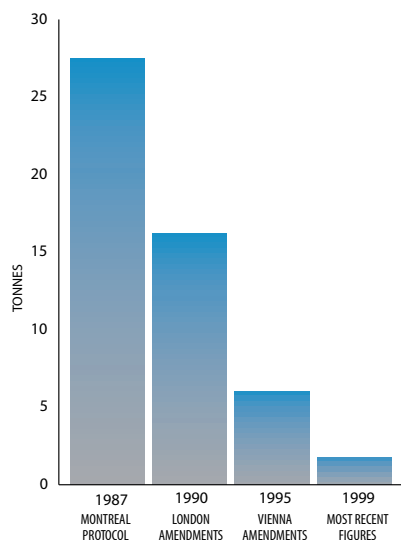
international commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Four years after the 1997 Kyoto Protocol was negotiated, resistance from some provincial governments and industry sectors continues to threaten its legal ratification in Ottawa. In the meantime, Canadian greenhouse gas emissions increased by 15 per cent between 1990 and 2000.

The contradiction between Canada's responses to ozone depletion and climate change is remarkable. This report examines Canada's record on these two problems and attempts to answer several questions: Why has Canada been at the forefront of global efforts to protect the ozone layer while showing little, if any, international leadership in defusing the threat posed by global warming? Why is Canada's domestic strategy for tackling ozone-depleting chemicals fully developed and implemented while our approach to climate change remains up in the air?

Canada's success in eliminating the use of ozone-depleting substances suggests that the obstacles to reducing greenhouse gas emissions are in no way insurmountable. By ratifying the Kyoto Protocol and then adopting laws, standards and policies similar to those used to respond to ozone depletion, Canada can achieve effective solutions and make progress in climate protection.

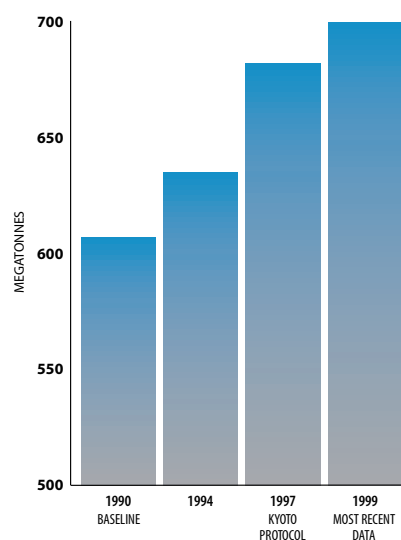
The ozone layer is expected to recover by 2100 but scientists warn that this recovery could be delayed by the impacts of climate change.

ENVIRONMENT CANADA, 2001



Canadian Ozone-Depleting Substance Consumption

source: Environment Canada, "National Action Plan for the Environmental Control of Ozone-Depleting Substances and Their Halocarbon Alternatives"



Canada's greenhouse gas emissions

source: Environment Canada, July 11, 2001

CANADA'S RESPONSE TO OZONE DEPLETION

The world's swift response to the destruction of the ozone layer is a powerful reason for environmental optimism. Scientists discovered the problem, the public became concerned, environmental groups called for quick action, politicians negotiated an international agreement and the treaty was repeatedly strengthened. Nations, both rich and poor, took concrete steps to address the problem.

Canada was one of the first countries to ban the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) – the main ozone depleting substances – in a range of consumer items such as hair spray and anti-perspirants in the late 1970s. This early action propelled Canada into the role of an international leader on the issue.

In 1987, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer created deadlines for the reduction and elimination of ozone-depleting substances. Canada fulfilled its international obligations swiftly and effectively – passing laws and regulations that placed strict, mandatory limits on the manufacture, use, sale, import and export of ozone-depleting substances. Instead of harming our economy, as critics predicted, the phase-out of these substances produced economic benefits for companies, countries and the world.

OZONE LESSONS LEARNED

The Canadian experience in addressing ozone depletion indicates that:

- Regulations and economic instruments are effective means of achieving environmental policy objectives.
- Economic costs and technological obstacles tend to be exaggerated by industry.
- Constant pressure from the public and environmental groups motivates governments and businesses to act.
- The benefits of solving environmental problems can exceed the costs.
- Smart, targeted policies will drive technology innovation, increase societal benefits and bring compliance costs down.

CANADA'S RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Despite hosting a landmark 1988 conference on global warming, two years later Canada was covertly undermining international efforts to limit greenhouse gas emissions. For years, Canada participated in U.S.-led efforts to weaken the Kyoto Protocol, despite the fact Canada signed the agreement in 1997 and committed to reducing emissions by six per cent below 1990 levels by 2010. Reaching agreement on key details of the Kyoto Protocol proved difficult, in part because of provincial and corporate efforts to discredit the Kyoto agreement and avoid mandatory action.

Despite U.S. rejection of the protocol, Canada finally joined the rest of the global community in moving forward towards protecting the climate in 2001. To reach agreement, Canada relinquished its insistence that credit be given for nuclear reactor sales to developing countries. Canada succeeded in getting generous credits for agricultural and forest sinks, and for the use of 'flexible mechanisms' such as international emissions trading.



Canada needs to take concrete action on climate change to protect the balance of nature.

“The continuing rise in Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions place the country on a path that is far from sustainable.”

CANADA’S COMMISSIONER
ON ENVIRONMENT AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,
2001



Moving to clean, renewable sources of energy, like windmills, will provide economic benefits.

“The Government of Canada addressed fiscal deficits, to avoid leaving a burden for future generations. Likewise, it would be irresponsible to leave an environmental deficit of climate disruptions and pollution for future Canadians.”

PRIME MINISTER JEAN CHRÉTIEN,
LETTER TO BUSINESS COUNCIL
ON NATIONAL ISSUES, 2001

Now that Prime Minister Jean Chretien has said Canada is preparing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol in 2002, large corporate lobby groups have launched an aggressive campaign to get the federal government to back away from its Kyoto obligations.

By warning of economic doom, questioning the science and lobbying aggressively, corporate Canada has so far managed to convince Canadian governments to rely on voluntary programs instead of taking effective steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The main obstacle to concrete action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is fear of economic consequences. Yet Canada's experience with ozone depletion suggests this fear is misguided.

Scientists, academics, economists and other researchers have developed a range of win-win regulatory and policy changes, financial incentives and research and development priorities. These proposals, such as improving public transit and investing in energy efficient buildings, offer both environmental and economic benefits. The Royal Society of Canada, the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. National Academy of Sciences have published studies showing that reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will provide economic benefits. Estimates of the economic value of health care benefits alone are as high as \$10 billion each year. The economic costs of not addressing climate change are also in the tens of billions of dollars. Despite these facts, Canadian actions have been ineffective and greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise.

CONCLUSION

There is no shortage of solutions to the challenge of climate change, only a shortage of social and political will. The aggressive lobbying by certain industrial sectors must not be allowed to outweigh the overall public interest in protecting the climate. The protection of the earth's ozone layer provides an extraordinary and powerful symbol of environmental optimism and hope, proving Canadians are capable of summoning the wisdom necessary to protect the planet for future generations. We must now apply that wisdom to the challenge of climate change.

The full report can be found at: www.davidsuzuki.org/publications/climate_change_reports
Or call 1-800-453-1533 to order a copy of the report at a cost of \$10.

David Suzuki Foundation

Finding solutions

2211 West 4th Ave., Suite 219
Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6K 4S2
Tel: (604) 732-4228
Fax: (604) 732-0752
email: solutions@davidsuzuki.org
www.davidsuzuki.org



ECO-RESEARCH CHAIR
ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & POLICY