

# **What roles should government, industry, civil society and universities play to enable a sustainable energy future?**

Elizabeth May

Sierra Club of Canada has the longest history of working on climate change among Canadian environmental groups, with a continuous presence on the issue since 1989.

Our work on the issue of a sustainable energy future has followed the same fundamental principles of all our campaigns:

- Get the facts;
- Educate the public;
- Run an effective media campaign;
- Work in coalition with other sectors (faith, youth, municipalities, trade unions, etc);
- Mobilize the public to contact elected officials;
- Persuade politicians that action is required, and
- Highlight the viable alternatives to provide a way forward that meets society's economic needs, while maintaining a healthy global ecosystem.

## **The Facts:**

On the climate change issue, Sierra Club of Canada campaigners made an early determination to ensure all our statements were bounded by the consensus view of the science. All our fact sheets were (in fact) vetted by government scientists to ensure nothing we said would be contradicted by experts. This meant that we may have hedged from telling the public our own worse fears. Potential impacts, such as the collapse of the Western Antarctic Ice Sheet, have been published in peer reviewed scientific literature for some time, but fell outside the IPCC scientific consensus. Increasingly, scientists are looking at such “non-linear perturbations” and finding them more plausible. Nevertheless, SCC has stayed within the range of the global consensus in our media work and public education.

## **Educate the Public:**

In addition to accessible fact sheets, brochures, and website information (including the very helpful “*Top Ten Global Myths on the Science Climate Change*,” selected by PBS as the best material they had found on the www), SCC has run hundreds of workshops and provided speakers for local groups across Canada. Our grassroots membership structure ensures strong engagement and follow-up at local levels.

## **Media Campaign:**

SCC has a crack media team, able to respond quickly to developments with news releases and policy analysis. We conduct press conferences and media briefings on a regular basis. When the urgency of the event requires, we have also moved to paid advertisements, including the highly visible full page ad in the Globe and Mail and elsewhere in the lead-up to Kyoto ratification: *“Quick, Name ten prominent Canadians who are against Kyoto? You can’t, can you? Nobody can.”*

### **Work in Coalition:**

SCC has served as the secretariat for Climate Action Network Canada (CANNET) since 1993. The CANNET network was expanded beyond environmental groups early in the last decade. We worked deliberately to engage the faith community (United Church, Anglican church, KAIROS), trade unions (such as the Canadian Labour Congress), health groups (such as the Lung Society) and others. We also sought out those private sector players pushing for action on climate change. In addition to renewable energy companies and alternative fuel innovations, such as Iogen and its cellulose ethanol, we worked with more conventional industry. At least partially due to our work and advice, large industry associations such as the Mining Association of Canada and the Forest Products Association of Canada developed viable Kyoto plans.

### **Mobilize the Public to Contact Politicians:**

SCC has run a number of letter writing and petition campaigns in the last fifteen years. Our role is to educate the public for the purpose of creating change. Empowering the average citizen to use the tools of democracy effectively is our core mission. SCC runs activist training workshops across Canada, helping thousands of people, both SCC members and not, learn how to write an effective letter to your member of provincial legislator or Member of Parliament.

### **Highlight Viable Alternatives:**

SCC has consistently emphasized energy strategies that meet economic and climate change requirements. We have published many reports dealing with options in ecological fiscal reform, demand side management, renewables and other strategies to meet carbon reduction goals.

Our work has included leadership within the Green Budget Coalition to press for tax shifts and an end to subsidies for nuclear and fossil fuel industries.

### **Impact:**

Thanks to all of our work and that of our partners in coalition and, particularly the role of the municipalities across Canada, we were successful in seeing Kyoto ratified. In the last

year, Prime Minister Paul Martin has maintained a commitment to meet Kyoto targets and took a bold step of offering to host the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change and First Meeting of the Parties under the Kyoto Protocol. The global climate negotiations will open November 28<sup>th</sup> and run till December 9<sup>th</sup> in Montreal.

The role of NGOs is critical for the Montreal conference. CANNET and our international colleagues through CAN International are pressing for a Multiple track, leading to post 2012 targets:

- **START SECOND COMMITMENT PERIOD (2013-2017)  
NEGOTIATIONS FOR KYOTO PROTOCOL TO CONCLUDE NO  
LATER THAN END OF 2008**
- **GREENING (DECARBONIZATION) TRACK TO BEGIN ON SAME  
TIME FRAME AND UNDER KYOTO PROTOCOL**
- **ADAPTATION TRACK SHOULD BE PULLED TOGETHER FROM  
DISPARATE ELEMENTS INTO UNIFIED ADAPTATION TRACK  
WITHIN CLIMATE REGIME (within UNFCCC)**
- **DEVELOP TRACK TO STOP TROPICAL DEFORESTATION.**

We have an uphill challenge to meet these goals. The position of the Bush Administration in the U.S. is the largest obstacle. Fortunately, the Bush Administration is increasingly isolated even within the U.S. State level, regional and municipal governments have been embracing and meeting Kyoto targets. It is critical to reach to the United States, without being deterred by the Bush administration. The challenge for President of the COP, Environment Minister Stephane Dion will be substantial.