

Climate Change Task Force

NEWS RELEASE



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MANITOBA URGED TO TAKE MAJOR LEADERSHIP ROLE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Task force recommendations presented to government

Manitobans need to understand the implications of climate change and take early action to reduce emissions and slow the rate of change, according to the Manitoba Climate Change Task Force.

“The speed and scale of climate change predicted for Manitoba is unprecedented in human history. How Manitoba adapts to climate change will be crucial for future economic development, particularly for agriculture, transportation, forestry and energy. It will also show the way for other regions of Canada to begin a more concerted effort to reduce the harmful impacts of climate change,” the report says.

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and chair of the task force, The Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, presented the final report to Premier Gary Doer today at The Forks. The eight-person task force was established last March and was given the mandate to provide practical advice that can serve as the basis for the Government of Manitoba’s action plan on climate change.

The report explains the importance of Manitoba leading by example and participating in national and international efforts, and the necessity of beginning the process of adaptation, especially in the vulnerable northern region.

“Given Manitoba’s high stake in Canada’s clean energy future, the Task Force suggests that Manitoba take leadership among the provinces and territories in reformulating Canada’s climate change plans, especially in light of the July agreement in Bonn on how the Kyoto Accord could be implemented,” the report says. “This should include ensuring that Manitoba and its academic and private sector institutions are more directly involved in the national research pilot projects in climate change.” The report also calls for the establishment of new infrastructure program with a climate change focus.

The report calls for the establishment of a \$75 million Climate Change Partnership initiative, funded jointly by the three levels of government and modeled on the Winnipeg Development Agreement.

The Climate Change Initiative Office – a central agency within the Manitoba’s Executive Council – should be established to ensure that an integrated and cross-departmental approach is taken to respond effectively and efficiently to climate challenges and opportunities.

Among its other key recommendations, the Task Force calls for:

- A provincial energy policy that ensures future energy needs are met by developing renewable and alternative energy options, and maximizing the energy sector's potential as an economic development tool, especially in the areas of hydro, biofuels and hydrogen;
- A review of the Manitoba Hydro Act to determine how the utility should participate in the province's energy future, recognizing that it is the key energy provider in the province;
- An expanded grants and interest rate incentive program by Manitoba Hydro to encourage energy efficiency, building on its successful PowerSmart program;
- A northern strategic initiative that addresses crucial issues, including the shipping season for the Port of Churchill and employment opportunities affected by climate change;
- Incentives for alternative fuels and funding for transit, including support for special initiatives such as the South West Transit Corridor; and,
- Comprehensive education, outreach and training programs to raise the public's climate change awareness, integrating consideration of the issue into the curricula of the educational system and establishing a Manitoba climate change information hub.

The full report can be viewed at www.cecmanitoba.ca

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