



November 17, 2015

VIA E-MAIL: pm@pm.gc.ca (hard copy to follow)

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Office of the Prime Minister
Langevin Building
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

Along with other international leaders, the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) believes both you and the minister of environment and climate change have an historic opportunity at the upcoming UN climate change conference in Paris to help protect Canadians and people around the world from disastrous health consequences.

CNA is encouraged by your government's renewed role on climate change and are pleased to see its commitment to work with the provinces, territories and like-minded countries to combat its effects.

Climate change is putting the health of global populations at risk. Without extensive measures, up to half of the world could face severe food shortages by 2100. Many of our oceans, a primary food source for millions, may face ecological collapse as they absorb carbon dioxide and further acidify. By 2050, the impacts of climate change could displace 200 million people, and these are impacts Canadians will not escape. Health Canada predicts that its effects will lead to more extreme weather, a greater frequency and severity of heat waves, the spread of infectious disease and lower air quality. Canada's rural communities and our elderly, indigenous and vulnerable populations are at particular risk.

As you know, Canada fell far short of its Kyoto commitment to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to six per cent below 1990 levels by 2012. In fact, by 2012 our GHG emissions were 18 per cent above 1990 levels. Faced with the prospect of having to buy carbon credits to meet its Kyoto targets, Canada withdrew from the accord in December 2011.

Canada isn't a large emitter, but it is a high emitter per capita and could take an international leadership role. Our Copenhagen commitment to reduce GHG emissions by 17 per cent of 2005 levels before the end of 2020 is similarly insufficient, as emissions in 2005 were near Canada's highest. The Climate Action Network estimates that Canada would have to cut current emissions by one-third of 2012 levels by 2025 (equivalent to 21 per cent below 1990 levels) to decarbonize its economy by 2050.

Failure to act on climate change will also severely compromise the UN's millennium development goals, aimed at significantly reducing poverty and disease by 2015. Malnutrition, heat stress, diarrhea, extreme weather events, infectious disease, population displacement and conflict over depleted resources — all are expected to rise as a result of climate change.

On behalf of Canada's nurses, we urge you and your provincial and territorial counterparts to actively pursue a fair and strong international agreement on climate change to ensure healthy lives for ourselves and future generations.

Please ask your staff to contact David Granovsky, CNA's manager of government relations, for any inquiries on this issue. David can be reached at 613-237-2159, ext. 525, or dgranovsky@cna-aiic.ca.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Karima Velji', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karima Velji, RN, PhD, CHE
President

cc: Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Canada
J. Michael Miltenberger, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Northwest Territories
Wade Istchenko, Minister of Environment, Yukon
Mary Polak, Minister of Environment, British Columbia
Shannon Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks, Alberta
Herb Cox, Minister of Environment, Saskatchewan
Thomas Nevakshonoff, Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship, Manitoba
Glen Murray, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Ontario
David Heurtel, Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and the Fight against Climate Change, Quebec
Johnny Mike, Minister of Environment, Nunavut
Brian Kenny, Minister of Environment and Local Government, New Brunswick
Randy Delorey, Minister of Environment, Nova Scotia
Robert Mitchell, Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, Prince Edward Island
Dan Crummell, Minister of Environment and Conservation, Newfoundland and Labrador