

Youth Declaration on Climate Change

November 18, 2005

We, the 57 youth representatives of Winnipeg, Manitoba feel that climate change is a real, visible and important issue that affects all people around the world.

We feel that changes in weather patterns and global temperatures are a direct result of human-related production of greenhouse gases and negative alteration of environment. Overall, we are concerned about how human actions contribute to this issue and question the sustainability of the future.

Specifically we are concerned about:

1. Energy use and the amount of green house gases created through heating of homes, transportation, electricity, industrial processes, and production of consumer goods.
2. Health implications such as disease, famine and water quality issues.
3. Increases in natural disasters, including floods and droughts.
4. Decreased global biodiversity.
5. Relocations of mass amounts of people.
6. Changes in agricultural practices.
7. A lack of education about climate change.

The above concerns are all long term in nature. As a result, it is the youth of the world that face the greatest challenges. Despite this, there is a lack of youth involvement in climate change issues. We feel that we are not taken seriously and that there is a lack of resources available for us to become involved. Moreover, too much emphasis is being placed on problems rather than solutions.

Given the above concerns, we demand that more action be taken to address climate change and involve youth in the process.

Education

People of all ages and countries need to be educated about the seriousness of climate change. Governments need to undertake massive educational campaigns to create awareness about climate change and support for the reduction of greenhouse gases. Governments should also provide organizations with funds to promote awareness about climate change at the community level.

Governments need to invest in preparing Youth with the skills and knowledge to address climate change. Funding needs to be increased in the renewable energy and energy efficiency technology sectors, as well as in climate change impacts and how we can adapt to them.

International Governments

Climate change is an international issue and, as such, all countries must sign onto the Kyoto Protocol and make efforts to reduce their greenhouse gases. There needs to be consequences for countries that do not sign or make efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. Governments of the world need to come together to put pressure on those countries that have not signed. They need to take whatever action is necessary to ensure that all countries are doing their part.

National Governments

Governments need to stop putting the economy above all else. After all, without a clean environment and properly-functioning climatic system, there is no economy. Governments need to move beyond voluntary measures and force industries and businesses to reduce their greenhouse gases, especially the large polluters. In addition, governments need to monitor companies to make sure they are meeting the targets.

Moreover, economic incentives and disincentives need to be created for individuals. Rebates or no taxes need to be made available for electric and hybrid cars, and gas guzzlers need to be heavily taxed. The government should also provide more funding for homeowners to increase the energy efficiency of their homes.

Municipal Governments

Municipal governments need to manage and plan cities with climate change in mind. Public transportation needs to be made faster and more accessible to everyone. Opportunities for walking and cycling need to be created. The green space in every city needs to be increased.

Youth

Youth need to be given a greater voice on climate change issues. We need a platform from which we can express our demands. We want to work with governments and the community to influence the policies that will affect our lives. Moreover, we need to be able to vote on policies, such as energy and climate change policies, that will have the greatest impact on our future.