

Summary:

Government of Canada Briefing Notes Reveal a Track Record of Unconstructive Positions in the Global Climate Negotiations

The accompanying Government of Canada documents, of which key extracts are presented below, provide insights into Canada's approach to the global climate change negotiations. The documents were obtained through an Access to Information request to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada. All of the documents date from 2008, which means they were drafted since the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesia (December 2007), which launched negotiations for a global deal to follow the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol. These talks are set to conclude in December 2009 at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

Several of the documents were prepared for senior Ministers and, in one case, for the Prime Minister in advance of his meetings with European leaders. The footnotes indicate which ministers documents were prepared for, and the dates at which they were drafted, where known. The footnotes provide references **in red** to the page numbers of the separate pdf file containing the documents.

1) Canada's "strategic negotiating vision" rejected the agreed terms of negotiation

→ Canada was demanding binding commitments from developing countries while being silent on the crucial issues of financing and technology transfer to support them.

The agreement reached in Bali clearly specifies that developed countries will commit to legally binding emissions reduction commitments, while developing countries will take nationally appropriate mitigation actions – not binding reduction targets - supported by financing and technology transfer from richer nations. This is acknowledged explicitly in the Government's own documents (see 3b, below), but contradicted by its "strategic negotiating vision."

→ Canada pressed new EU member states to advocate Canadian positions within the EU.

→ Canada's Prime Minister sought EU G8 allies to lobby the EU from within and draw them towards the Canadian position.

a) "[Canada's] strategic negotiating vision... seeks to leverage financial and technological assistance to extract binding emissions reductions commitments from the emerging economies." ¹

b) "In negotiating the future international climate change agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Canada's major objective is that all

¹ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled "Climate Change" (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, September 26, 2008), p. 3. **pdf p. 6**

major emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs) must make binding emission reduction commitments.”²

c) “All major emitters including the US, China, and India must accept binding obligations for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.”³ (emphasis in original)

d) “Pressure is already building to help financing for adaptation, as well as clean technology, in the developing countries. Canada believes that any new funding for climate technology and adaptation should be conditional upon obtaining binding emission reduction commitments from the emerging economies.”⁴

e) “For Latvia and Malta: In deliberations on EU climate change positions, we encourage you to advocate that the EU work with us on getting emission reduction commitments from the emerging economies.”⁵

f) “Will Croatia attempt to move the EU to a position which will require that all major emitters, including emerging economies such as China and India, take on binding obligations in any future climate change agreement?”⁶

g) “Question: Is Italy willing to push within the EU to ensure that all large emitters take on obligations under any future international climate change agreement?”⁷

note: identical question also posed to Heads of Government of UK and France, variant posed to Germany's Chancellor Merkel.

2) Canada attempted to water down the ambition of other developed nations

→ *Despite having failed in Bali to block science-based targets for developed nations, Canada continued to resist them and consistently downplayed expectations for ambitious action from developed countries in the Copenhagen deal.*

→ *Canada aligned itself internationally with other industrialised ‘laggards’ to shift the mitigation burden to developing countries.*

a) “Canada was unsuccessful in removing the reference in the conclusions of the *Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments* that all Annex I Parties to the Kyoto Protocol would reduce emissions reductions in range of 25-40 per cent below the 1990 levels by

² Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, September 26, 2008), p. 2. **pdf p. 5**

³ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, undated c. Nov 2008), p. 2 – prepared for Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon’s participation at OSCE Ministerial Council. **pdf p. 29**

⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, September 26, 2008), p. 3. **pdf p. 6**

⁵ Ibid, p. 2. **pdf p. 5**

⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, not dated), p. 1. **pdf p. 9**

⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, undated, c. May/June 2008), p. 2 – prepared for Prime Minister Stephen Harper. **pdf p. 16**

2020 (a range set by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change); although not within itself legally binding, it sets a target to which all developed countries under the Protocol will be held politically accountable by the G8, the European Union, G77/China and environmental non-governmental organisations. ”⁸ (all emphasis in original)

b) “The recommended reduction goal of 25-40% by 2020 for developed countries as set out at the Bali Climate Conference is not realistic, including for many European countries, and not attainable by Canada.”⁹

c) “Berlusconi reportedly shares industry concerns about the European Commissions’ targets and is likely to be a strong voice within the EU for balance and for the participation of developing countries, particularly the emerging economies. Furthermore, Italy is struggling to meet its Kyoto Protocol target which might make Berlusconi more sympathetic to countries like Canada that find the EU position of 2020 targets overly ambitious.”¹⁰

d) “There are a couple of “like-minded” countries that support the Canadian position on major emitters, including Japan (e.g. Japan, like Canada, also faces serious challenges in meeting medium term 2020 targets). Australia, while on track to meet its current Kyoto Protocol target, is similarly “2020 challenged”, i.e. unable to meet the reduction targets proposed by the EU and by the developing countries.”¹¹

3) Recognition that Canada’s 2020 target is weak

→ *The documents state that Canada’s weak 2020 target made our position challenging.*

→ *The Prime Minister was warned that Canada’s goals are squarely outside the parameters agreed in Bali Action Plan, which makes achieving them “all the more difficult.”*

→ *Canada’s position that emerging economies must take hard targets failed to engage them.*

a) “Canada’s negotiating challenge is compounded by the fact that our domestic goal for 2020 is a reduction of 20% from 2006 levels (this is equivalent to roughly 2% below the 1990 levels), whereas the EU and many developing countries are looking at significantly deeper cuts in the range of 25-40% below 1990 levels by 2020.”¹²

*Variant also included in briefing for Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon.*¹³

⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, undated), p. 2. **pdf p. 2**

⁹ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, September 26, 2008), p. 1. **pdf p. 4**

¹⁰ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, undated, c. May/June 2008), p. 2 – prepared for Prime Minister Stephen Harper. **pdf p. 16**

¹¹ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, September 26, 2008), pp. 2-3. **pdf p. 5-6**

¹² Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change: International Negotiations and Structure” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, August 18, 2008), pp. 1-2. **pdf p. 12-13**

¹³ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, undated c. Nov 2008), p. 2 – prepared for Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon’s participation at OSCE Ministerial Council. **pdf p. 29**

b) “The [Bali Action Plan] section that applies to developing countries does not provide for commitments to binding emissions reductions, rather, reinforces the status quo supported by enhanced technology, financing and capacity building. This will make the overarching Canadian goal of having all major emitters take on emission reduction obligations, including the USA, China and India, all the more difficult.”¹⁴

c) “The emerging economies, like China and India, have shown no shift from the negotiating position that they will not restrain economic growth by taking on reduction targets.”¹⁵

d) “The MEP [Major Economies process initiated by George W. Bush] failed in the attempt to have emerging economies “commit to commit” to emissions reductions in the future international agreement.”¹⁶

4) Canada tried to lower expectations of U.S. action

→ Canada warned others that the U.S. might be slow to come to the table, presumably to avoid U.S. action being used to pressure Canada to do more.

→ A briefing note for Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon notes that President Obama’s long-term targets align with the EU’s.

a) “While we are all working for success at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, we urge caution about overestimating the readiness of the USA to negotiate and the willingness of emerging economies to make commitments.”¹⁷

b) “President-Elect Obama has stated his support for a return to 1990 levels by 2020 as a mid-term target for the US, with a long-term emissions reduction target of 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. This long-term target brings him in line with EU targets, and will be viewed favourably by European counterparts. However, new Administration appointees may not be confirmed until the spring of 2009, leaving very little time for the Obama Administration to lay the necessary domestic groundwork for a substantive commitment at Copenhagen.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, undated, c. May/June 2008), p. 4 – prepared for Prime Minister Stephen Harper. **pdf p. 18**

¹⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change: International Negotiations and Structure” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, August 18, 2008), p. 2. **pdf p. 13**

¹⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “International Climate Change Negotiations–Brief” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, October 24, 2008), p. 3. **pdf p. 26**

¹⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, September 26, 2008), p. 2. **pdf p. 5**

¹⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade briefing note entitled “Climate Change” (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, undated, c. November 2008), p. 1 - prepared for Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon’s participation at OSCE Ministerial Council. **pdf p. 28**