

Speaking Notes

**Smog Summit
June 8, 2005**

Minister Stéphane Dion

(Check against delivery.)

Thank you so much David, thank you so much for yourself and Madam Ligeti to have invited me to this sixth Toronto Smog Summit. It is a pleasure and it is an honour. I also would like to recognize my colleague the Honourable John Godfrey. I heard a lot about your New Deal, John, before you came with this roundtable.

It is great to see all these counselors and Mayor John Grey arguing about how they will share the investments in the New Deal that you are making. It is really interesting to see that because in many other countries, as you know, they argue about how to cut. Here in Canada we argue about how to add. This is thanks to the fiscal policies that we have had for a decade now.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate Minister Godfrey for his New Deal for Cities and Communities. Prime Minister Paul Martin has been very clear that every penny of this New Deal, the gas tax, the transfer of the gas tax to municipalities, will go towards environmental purposes. Not a penny will go to urban sprawl. We have programs for bridges and roads.

Gas is a polluting substance, and this gas tax transfer to the municipalities must try to correct the problem. This is why everything should go to either urban transit or environmental infrastructures.

I was looking for a title for my speech today, and in the video a little girl gave it to me, *Birds Fly Through It*. The title of my speech is *Birds Fly Through It*. To the sponsors and the organizers let me say merci, mille fois, tout le monde. And now I will go right to the point.

I would like to talk to you about our focus today - clean air, smog, transportation as a source of smog, and the problems and solutions that we're all pushing ahead. Let me first focus on the problem. Ontario has a large population. It is very close to the United States' most populated regions. Ontario is large industrial engine surrounded at the south of its border by other industrial engines of North America. These conditions make this province very vulnerable to smog, acid rain, air pollutants and climate change. These problems share a main common source, fossil fuel combustion. Health Canada has reacted. The mortality level associated with air pollution is a concern. We will die from it if we do nothing. Health Canada estimates that the number of deaths that can be attributed to air pollution in Canada is 5,900 deaths per year.

Just this Monday, we were reminded of the severity of the problem in the Montreal-Windsor corridor. Toronto Public Health, in collaboration with Environment Canada and Health Canada, released a study on the combined health effects of air pollution in extreme hot weather in the cities of Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Windsor.

The study estimates that smog causes 822 deaths per year in Toronto, 818 in Montreal, 368 in Ottawa, and 258 in Windsor. The study predicts that if the trend continues, health related deaths will double by the year 2050 and triple by the year 2080 because of climate change. We risk facing more heat, more smog, and more death.

So far in 2005, Toronto has had fourteen days under an air quality advisory already and it is still early June. Fourteen is usually as many as we get in a year. I have been told that there is no smog alert today in Toronto, but there is one in London, in Sarnia and in Windsor. Advisories are only issued for Ontario, not for the rest of the country.

There are many sources of air contaminants such as industrial, electric power, and residential wood burning. But transportation is the theme of today's Smog Summit. Transportation is indeed the major source of air contaminants. The transportation sector accounts for almost one-third of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions which trap heat and contribute to climate change and hot days which create more smog.

I invite you to read the declaration that we will sign before leaving. It is very interesting to see the numbers in the declaration that we are giving to Canadians for their information. In Ontario, the transportation sector is responsible for 20 percent of smog causing particulate matter, 85 percent of carbon monoxide emissions, 29 percent of VOC's and 63 percent of NO_x. Transportation is also responsible for 30 percent of Ontario's carbon dioxide emissions which trap heat and contribute to climate change. In the greater Toronto area, transportation accounts for up to two-thirds of smog forming pollutants. This is the problem.

I would like to take this opportunity now to address the solutions that we need to continue in order to move forward together. What have we done since the first Smog Summit in 2000? The Government of Canada launched our conferences and the Ten Year Clean Air Agenda in the year 2000. I was at the table supporting my courageous predecessor, David Anderson when he announced the Ten Year Clean Air Agenda at the 2000 Smog Summit..

We have committed \$210 million to deliver on key elements of the Clean Air Agenda. But our financial commitment is not all that is important. The path forward created by this very important policy is equally significant. We have put forward ways to minimize pollution, reduce transportation sector emissions, lower emissions from major industrial sources, advance clean air science, and engage the public in finding solutions to clean air issues.

Since I cannot speak about all of this, I will focus on transportation, the topic of today. One of the key elements of the Ten Year Clean Air Agenda for transportation is a strict regulatory action plan for vehicles, engines and fuels. This is already paying significant dividends. These regulations will reduce smog forming emissions from new vehicles by 90 percent by 2010 compared to 2000. This is good, it is too bad that these regulations only impact new vehicles.

We are making progress with stricter vehicle and fuel regulations for both diesel and gasoline. Taken together, Canada and the United States have the strictest vehicle engine and fuel regulations in the world for air pollutants. Our transportation regulatory plan will also ensure that starting in 2007, bus standards will require a reduction of 85 percent from current allowable levels of emissions of NO_x and of hydrocarbons and 95 percent for particulate matter.

I have listened to the debate about the use of public buses and changes that need to be made in the greater Toronto area. I have also heard what Mayor Bill has said about what needs to be done for the TTC. I am very pleased that the Government of Canada has recently announced its expansion of the National Urban Transit Bus Retrofit Program. The program expansion consists of retrofitting an additional 101 urban transit buses with diesel oxidation catalysts with the TTC upgrading an additional twenty buses. These are some of our actions, but the Government of Canada cannot act alone, we need to act with the provinces, territories, municipalities and our American friends, along with everyone, all the stakeholders, and all Canadians. According to the Constitution of Canada, many of the sources of air pollution and smog fall within provincial jurisdiction. The Federal Government is working very closely with the provinces and territories to implement the Canada-wide standards for particulate matter and ozone, the two main precursors to smog. We are moving forward through the Canadian Council of Ministers for the Environment.

The federal provincial and territorial governments, led by Ontario, are also finalizing Canada-wide standards to substantially reduce mercury emissions from the coal fire electric power generation sector by 2010. The goal is to capture mercury from coal burned in the range of 60 to 90 percent. If I have time, I would also like to address later the local air quality initiatives that we are undertaking with many of you including the activities of the greater Toronto area, clean air council and of course today's summit. But you know that very well.

I would like to turn now to what we are doing with the United States. In January of 2003 we pledged to build on the success of the 1991 US-Canada Air Quality Agreement to combat transboundary air pollution in the Great Lakes Basin airshed and elsewhere in Canada and announced a Border Air Quality Strategy five months later.

In August 2004, together with my counterpart at the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States I made a commitment to negotiate a particulate matter annex to the Canada-US Air Quality Agreement to bring about reductions in both countries. We have now completed the science background and are moving forward.

Canada and the United States now have strong policies to reduce emissions of air pollutants. But the fact is that progress is difficult to assess because indicators are difficult to reconcile. They change over the years. In my assessment, we have been able to keep the problem stable. But we must consider the impacts of population growth, economic growth, the increasing number of vehicles on the road and so on. If we not have done that, the solution will be substantially worse today. And certainly we could be at the range where Houston and Tokyo are or even worse. But we have been able to stabilize.

It is not enough. I have been told, and Mr. Mayor will tell me it is a good number, that before 2020 about two million people may be added to the greater Toronto area. So that means that we need to do what we are doing to move forward with the Ten Year Clean Air Agenda. We must try to do as much as possible to decrease the pollution we have., We must make process or we risk ensuring that the prediction that deaths will go up will come true. We must move forward and we must do more. The number of air quality advisory days that we now have must decrease.

In addition to our actions to address smog, we are implementing other policies that are delivering co-benefits. The most important of all of them is the improved climate change plan which we recently released called *Moving Forward on Climate Change*. With this plan the Federal Government has committed \$10 billion towards honouring our Kyoto commitment. And in this plan you will find a lot of ways to improve our capacity to work with municipalities.

One key point of the plan, for instance, asks the auto industry to decrease their emissions by 5.3 megatonnes. Another key aspect of the plan is the Climate Fund which will operate as a Canada environmental bank. If you provide reductions of greenhouse gas emissions, then you will receive credits for them. You can sell your credits to the market and make money with it. I would be pleased to discuss with all of you the way it will work. But certainly if you come with initiatives for transportation it is something that we can discuss further.

Our climate plan also includes a Partnership Fund. The Partnership Fund helps us to work on joint priorities with the provinces and territories. It will be important that your priorities are reflected in this Partnership Agreement that I hope to sign soon with my colleagues at the Government of Ontario. My colleague, John, will be talking further about the New Deal as this is also a key point of the revised climate change plan. Let me conclude by announcing the launch of the National Clean Air Online Website. This Website is designed to provide Canadians with timely, locally relevant and action oriented information. I'm very proud of that. It will be a tool and a resource to help Canadians take action to improve local air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help Canada meet its Kyoto commitments.

I would also like to say that the declaration that we are signing today is very important for Toronto. One of the commitments of the declaration that I am particularly interested in is to explore the possibility of expanding the Toronto Atmospheric Fund Model so that it will apply across the entire greater Toronto area.

I am also interested in exploring the benefits of hosting a cross-border Canada-US Smog Summit to engage in transboundary air quality discussions and identify issues and strategies with municipal, state and federal representatives in the Great Lakes Basin Region.

To conclude very shortly, we are now only halfway through on delivering on our federal Clean Air Agenda. It gives us the strictest vehicle engine regulations and regulations for air pollutants in the world. It will give us cleaner buses, cleaner cars, and cleaner snowmobiles.

With Canada-wide standards for mercury emissions from electric power generation, the numerous local air quality initiatives we are supporting, the particulate matter annex we are negotiating with the United States, the climate change plan we just announced as part of the government's broader vision, Project Green, and with the New Deal for Cities and Communities we have so many things to do.

Next year when we meet again for the GTA Smog Summit 2006 I am sure we will have much more progress to discuss. We owe this to Canadians, and quite frankly to human kind. Merci beaucoup, thank you.