

# Hot Topic #3



## Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement adopted in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan.

It is a global response to rising greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that cause climate change. The Protocol binds countries to limit or reduce their emissions.

The Kyoto Protocol is a significant **first step**. It is the most far-reaching environmental agreement ever adopted. The agreement is a sign that the international community is willing to acknowledge and **take action against climate change**.

Under the Protocol, each industrialized country set a binding GHG emission target to reduce emissions below 1990 levels by 2012. These targets are different for each country. **Canada** set a six per cent reduction goal. Because we have allowed emissions to increase since 1990, **Canada** is now required to reduce emissions by about **24** per cent below today's levels.

Kyoto officially became legally binding on **February 16, 2005**.

### Why has the USA not ratified?

The USA backed out of the agreement in 2001. President Bush believed the treaty would hinder the US economy. He also cited uncertainties in the science and specific details within the agreement as reasons for withdrawal. The USA has since signed the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate.

### Is the Protocol useless without the USA?

No. The Protocol represents 162 countries (62% of GHG emissions) providing a strong majority to lead the fight against climate change. Although climate change doesn't appear to be a priority at the US national level, numerous states are taking action to reduce GHG emissions.

## How will the Kyoto Protocol be enforced?

Compliance and enforcement of the Protocol is governed by a Compliance Committee made up of two branches: a Facilitative Branch and an Enforcement Branch. The Enforcement branch has the power to determine sanctions for countries not meeting their commitments.

## How are developing nations involved?

Developing nations insisted they be excluded from the treaty's mandated emissions limits. They argue that their emerging economies, many already burdened with international debt, would be hurt by any limitations to energy policies. India and China projected to be the leading producers of greenhouse gases in the next century were included in this group.

## What is the Carbon Trading System?

*Emissions Trading* allows a country with an excess of emission units presumably from reducing emissions below commitment levels to sell its credits to another country unable to meet its commitments. Trading is probably the most controversial of all the mechanisms in the Protocol. The actual principals, rules, and guidelines for trading have yet to be decided.

## What is Canada doing to reach its Kyoto targets?

To date, Canada has laid out voluntary agreements with industry, demonstration projects, and public awareness campaigns. Canada has also made investments supporting Canadian innovation in cleaner fossil fuels, ethanol, and hydrogen fuel cells. In 2005, Canada set out a LFE (large final emitter) system to secure emission reductions from Canada's 700 largest industrial emitters.

## What's new with the Kyoto Protocol?

In December 2005, Canada hosted the first U.N. session for the Kyoto Protocol called the Meeting of Parties (MOP1). During this meeting, a new chapter in action on global climate change was written. The signatory nations agreed to extend the life of the Kyoto Protocol beyond 2012 and increase reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The agreement is being called the "Montreal Action Plan" or the MAP for the future of the Kyoto Protocol.

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