

SPEAKING NOTES  
CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER

RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Barbados, 11-13 Dec, 2001  
Sherbourne Conference Centre

Honourable Minister of Physical Development and Environment, Elizabeth Thompson, Honourable Minister of Environment of Montserrat, Your Worship, Mayor of Georgetown, Distinguished Visitors, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs,

Let me say from the outset of my brief remarks how delighted I am to be with you today for the launching of the workshop on “A Risk Management Approach to Climate Change”. We are particularly honoured by the presence of the Honourable Elizabeth Thompson.

Today marks in fact an important event in Canada-Caribbean relations, as together the Caribbean Region and Canada formally inaugurate a major new program funded by the Canadian International Development Agency called “Adapting to Climate Change in the Caribbean”. This new C\$3.5 million project will build on the first phase of the World Bank’s Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change, or CPACC project as it is commonly known, funded through the Global Environment Facility, as it brings together Canadian consultants and a large group of Caribbean Regional experts to work together on various aspects of the climate change issue.

In launching the Adapting to Climate Change program, I want to address two principal misconceptions about climate change. I do so mindful that as a diplomat, I am taking on a daunting challenge of addressing a forum of well informed and aptly experienced climate change scientists and practitioners. First, I want to emphasize that climate change is an issue that will affect most aspects of Caribbean society and national economies. The broad range of participants at this meeting from agriculture, disaster mitigation, energy, housing and urban planning, insurance and finance, fisheries, public health

and safety, tourism, and water resources illustrates this point quite clearly. All of these sectors and others are affected by changes and variations in climatic conditions. We must, therefore, bring together our collective efforts in order to build greater resilience and manage more effectively the changing global climate. I am delighted to see so many representatives here from the business community, from governments, as well as from the scientific community. I would urge all of us to include climate change in our planning agendas.

Secondly, a misconception persists that climate change is really a problem for the future, say 50 or 100 years from now, a problem which future generations will have to address. In fact, the unmistakable signals of climate change are already upon us: rising sea levels, higher temperatures, and drying in parts of the Caribbean are all indications of our changing climate. If the climate scientists are right, these conditions will steadily worsen over the next 50 years. International analysts who have been mobilized by the United Nations also tell us that hurricanes and other extreme weather events will become more intense. So now is the time to plan and now is the time to prepare.

The Risk Management Approach presented at this workshop is a powerful method to deal with the risks associated with climate change for both businesses and governments. This workshop will allow us to share with you some of our Canadian experiences with risk management methods, and will also give us the opportunity to learn more about the risks facing this region from leading experts of the Caribbean and abroad.

Canada is pleased to be a part of this process, both to help fulfill our international obligations under the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and also to demonstrate our strong solidarity with Small Island States which are likely to be the most seriously impacted by climate change. This workshop will, I am sure, be a fitting start to CIDA's new program on Adapting to Climate Change in the Caribbean. May your discussions be fruitful over the next few days.