



CMRC Environmental Sustainability Commitment

The Canadian Midwifery Regulators Consortium (CMRC) is committed to developing and implementing a Sustainability Plan aimed at:

- Limiting the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from CMRC's organizational activities and activities related to the regulation of midwifery and;
- Creating a plan for CMRC to become a carbon-neutral organization over the next five years;
- Engaging with the Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM), Canadian midwifery educators, and the Canadian midwifery community in educating and supporting the profession to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to the regulation, education and practice of midwifery; and
- Engaging with national midwifery bodies such as CAM in taking a leadership role in:
 - modeling best practices in sustainability and
 - advocating with government for a comprehensive plan to significantly reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions in the interests of the health and safety of all Canadians, and in support of a comprehensive international agreement to stabilize climate.

Why Climate Change Matters

Today millions of people are already suffering from climate change. In their 2009 *Human Impacts Report*, the Global Humanitarian Forum tells us that 300,000 people are now dying every year as a direct result of climate change, and 325 million others are severely affected. Currently most of those most seriously affected are in the least developed parts of the world, yet this is changing as effects become more widespread. Much of Africa is devastated by global warming driven droughts and desertification, exacerbating ethnic conflicts. Australia is also experiencing a decade long drought. Island nations are disappearing as sea levels rise, their citizens becoming refugees. It is no longer a distant threat that may affect our future. In the words of Kofi Annan, "Humanity is facing a rare challenge. But it is a common challenge. There are no sides in the fight for climate justice."¹

In the summer of 2007 Canada's Arctic sea ice melted much more than the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicted that it would melt over the next ten years (IPCC 2007 report). This trend is continuing. The permafrost is thawing and beginning to release its stores of methane and CO₂, further accelerating global warming.

Canadian Inuit leader, Sheila Watt-Cloutier, former chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), speaks eloquently of how the world's polar regions are heating up several times faster than the rest of the planet. As the ice and snow melt they take with them the white reflectivity that bounces sunlight back into space. The darker surfaces of exposed water and soil absorb and hold the sun's heat, amplifying circumpolar warming through a feedback loop. While the planet as a whole has warmed about one degree, average temperatures in the north have risen five full degrees since the 1970s, with devastating effects on the bio-region and on northern and aboriginal communities. Watt-Cloutier says, "...what is happening in the Arctic is a snapshot of the future of the planet, and that, indeed, we are all connected. Climate change is a matter of survival of humanity as a whole. It is the most important global issue we face today. Protect the Arctic and we will save the planet."²

¹ Annan, Kofi, *Human Impacts Report, Climate Change*, Global Humanitarian Forum, 2009
http://ghfgeneva.org/Portals/0/pdfs/human_impact_report.pdf

² *Message from the Chair*, Inuit Circumpolar Council (Canada) <http://inuitcircumpolar.com/>
November 2009

Climate scientists tell us that Canada, like other parts of the world, will also continue to see increased rains, storms and floods in some areas and increased drought and forest fires in others, as atmospheric greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations rise and our human-produced, largely fossil-fuel-based GHG emissions continue to exceed the capacity of the earth's oceans and forests to absorb them.

The science is clear that a rise in global temperature greater than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels is an important limit beyond which the risk to human health and the planet's ecosystems becomes especially dangerous. Average global temperatures have already increased about one degree C since 1900. Business-as-usual will add at least another degree C increase between 2015 and 2020, putting another 240 million people under acute "water stress".³

While Europe's emissions have been declining as a result of efforts to meet Kyoto targets, Canada's emissions have continued to rise, despite our Kyoto commitment. The most current climate science now indicates that atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations need to be reduced to no more than 350 parts per million (ppm) in order to stabilize climate at a level that can support human communities.⁴ The global atmospheric concentration of CO₂ is now 390 ppm. Significant emissions reductions must be initiated immediately around the globe and must continue until overall emissions are in balance with natural drawdown mechanisms, or we are at carbon neutrality.⁵

Why this is a Midwifery Issue

Collectively we have a very short window for turning around the trend in rising greenhouse gas emissions in order to stabilize the climate so that our children, the children we have cared for as midwives, and all the children of the world have a habitable world. What we do in the next five to ten years is critical.

In 2007 an editorial by Seren Wildwood in MIDIRS Midwifery Digest asked the midwifery community to consider what the world will look like in 2020, when the babies born in 2007 are approaching their 14th birthdays. She challenged midwives and midwifery organizations to take responsibility for reducing our individual and corporate contributions to climate change, and encouraged us to advocate with the institutions we work with, as well as with governments, to put in place the policies required to limit greenhouse gas emissions for the sake of current and future generations.⁶

Climate Change and Canadian Midwifery

We believe that every organization has a responsibility to be actively involved in creating sustainable solutions to this pressing global problem - a problem that is now being called the most important and urgent issue facing the world today. As midwifery regulators, our role in public protection makes this a particularly relevant issue for us. Canadian midwives, who care for families and children every day, care about the future health and safety of the children born into their hands. The future of those children, indeed the future of all our children, will be grim if our society continues with business-as-usual and its rising greenhouse gas emissions. We are also a profession that believes in the importance of applying evidence to decision-making. We believe that the evidence on this issue is compelling and merits strong and immediate action on the part of individuals, agencies and governments.

³ *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

⁴ Pachauri, Dr. Rajendra (IPCC chair); Hansen, Dr. James (NASA Goddard Institute) 2009 <http://www.350.org/about/science>

⁵ Weaver, Dr. Andrew (IPCC), *Keeping Our Cool: Canada in a Warming World*, 2008

⁶ Wildwood, Seren, *MIDIRS Midwifery Digest*, 17:3, 2007