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REPORT FROM THE AMBASSADOR FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Honourable Gilbert Parent, PC



As we face the challenges of a new year, I would like to share with you the highlights of my first year as Ambassador for the Environment.

Since last January, when I assumed my post, I have travelled widely both nationally and internationally. I have attended conferences, at most of which I was invited to give keynote speeches about Canada and the environment, and I delivered Canada's statements on several occasions at the United Nations.

I have visited numerous public and private sector environmental sites and met with many environmental non-governmental organizations, other NGOs, stakeholders, Ministers, Members of Parliament and interested individuals.

I spent 10 weeks chairing roundtable consultations with stakeholders in the capitals of each province and territory in preparation for Canada's National Report to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which will take place in Johannesburg in late August 2002.

Throughout the year, I was astounded by the enormity of the challenges we face in protecting our environment and equally impressed by the many innovations and partnerships that already exist to do just that.

It has been most rewarding to discover the great number of Canadian environmental technologies available that can offset the damage caused to the environment by industrial wastes and population demands. Many of these are ready to be implemented and simply require the green light of recognition and support.

Among these technologies are solutions to the problems of solid waste disposal, the decontamination of toxic wastes and persistent organic pollutants, the clean-up of oil spills, the recycling of polystyrene, and alternative energies.

I have been encouraged by the growth of local environmental initiatives nationwide, which are created and executed, in many cases, by volunteer groups brought together by the common desire to save and reclaim their environments. A recycling program has just been initiated in Iqaluit; the St. Lawrence Action Plan, a successful partnership among three levels of