

I am pleased that the Government of Manitoba and its Premier, Gary Filmon, have taken the initiative in bringing us together this week in Winnipeg. It is an action which is fully in line with the record it has established in the National Task Force on Environment and the Economy and in its own policies.

This conference addresses one of the most basic conundrums of modern life - how we reconcile our economic goals with the natural systems of our planet.

The organizers of this conference have obviously recognized some basic facts about the nature of the problem. Bringing together representatives from both the public and private sectors across Canada highlights the reality that the environment is not the exclusive responsibility of governments. Similarly the participation of delegates from outside Canada points to another basic fact - that these issues transcend national boundaries.

Not very long ago it was possible to think of the environment and the economy as separate and mutually exclusive.

Today, thanks to the work of the Brundtland Commission and the appearance of global "mega-problems", it is evident that the environment and the economy are inextricably and symbiotically linked.

Farmers in Africa cannot be productive when desertification takes away their land. No more so than farmers in Bangladesh whose lands are washed away by uncontrollable floods. Fishermen on our Atlantic coast cannot stay in business when the fish stocks they depend on are over-harvested.

Astronauts like Marc Garneau fixed in our minds the image of earth as a single wispy-edged planetary spaceship. From outerspace, some of the impacts of our economic development are distressingly visible - urban smog, Arctic haze, trails of marine pollution in our oceans. With new technology our ability to understand and digest information about the planet is expanding by leaps and bounds. The story it tells is, increasingly, very disturbing. The harvest of our economic systems, in terms of "greenhouse gases", deforestation, acidification of lakes streams and soils, species extinction, and destruction of the ozone layer, is not sustainable. With computers and scientific models, the consequences of current economic trends can be projected ahead and from this we learn that in another two generations:

- tropical forests could have disappeared;
- the world could be warmer by 4 - 6 degrees and accelerating;