

Your introduction, in fact, touched upon some of the basic themes that I want to touch upon. One, particularly, is that we not lose the opportunity that is building. It is, in fact, a very important development that the environmental issue has risen to the top of international agendas.

I have had some experience in what happens in international agendas. Perhaps it is unfortunate that leaders are driven by the communiqués they issue and by the agendas that are set out when they gather, but it also ensures that because those questions are now on an agenda rather than off an agenda that they acquire much more prominence in the discussion, not simply of meetings such as the Toronto Economic Summit last June, but also in the preparation for that meeting, and in the consequences that flow from it. I think it is a very signal development, an important one, that environmental concerns which previously could not make their way into an Economic Summit are now very much a part of that Summit. I won't say at the heart of it, not yet, but very much a part of it. I think that is a development that is important, and it is important that we not lose the opportunity, to quote Dr. McNeil. I think that is something on which we all have to work.

Obviously, the world everyday is becoming more aware of the damage inflicted upon our planet's environment and, by definition, our own collective well-being.

Occasionally, as with Hurricane Gilbert last month or the ravages of flooding in the Sudan, the hand of man plays no apparent part.

In other cases natural disasters are made worse because of human activity. For thousands of years, the water basin that so dominates Bangladesh had coped with cyclical flooding. Now its capacity to do so has been critically jeopardized by deforestation in Nepal and India which in turn has clogged Bengali waterways.

In most cases, it is tragically and increasingly evident, that the most profound threats to our biosphere are man-made; that we have become our own worst enemies. The examples are seemingly endless: Bhopal; Chernobyl; lakes in this country killed by acid rain.

Actions we began innocently have had implications no one thought to anticipate. A wide use of chlorofluorocarbons threatens to destroy the ozone layer. One molecule of chlorine set free can destroy thousands of molecules of ozone. The ozone layer affords protection from the sun's ultraviolet rays. As it gradually disappears, the dangers to aquatic life, the risk of skin cancers and the prospects of reduced crop yields all increase. The warming of the globe's climate, accelerated by the enormous volume of pollutants discharged into the air, increase the risk that fertile agricultural areas may be turned into arid zones. With receding polar icecaps and alarmingly higher sea levels, shorelines may disappear.