

Unfortunately, despite the important positive aspects mentioned above, the report is deeply flawed. Due to space limitations, only the most important flaws are considered here:

1. The main purpose of the Committee was not achieved.

The Committee announced the aim of its work and solicited input in a national advertisement that stated that the Committee was investigating "Canada's energy and mining sectors with the aim of identifying and proposing realistic solutions to the challenges of sustainable development and protection of the environment."

Unfortunately, in the vast majority of submissions, "detailed information on cost-effective... options and the costs to industry of responding to environmental initiatives was not forthcoming" (p. 2). As a result, the Committee was forced to shift its attention to other issues which, although they are of interest, are tangential to the original important objective.

2. The Report fails to transmit an appreciation for the profound significance of global warming and thus constitutes a serious abdication of the Committee's responsibility.

(a) The Committee was unwilling to acknowledge that the phenomenon of global warming is a fact and that it is accepted as such by the overwhelming majority of the world's scientists.

Instead, the Committee's proceedings contained numerous gratuitous attacks on the scientific basis of the phenomenon. Indeed, the phrase "global warming" was almost totally expunged from the text in favour of the far less definitive phrase "global climate change". In this instance, this amounts to distinct lack of intellectual rigour in that: (a) the majority of the Energy Committee Members refused to pursue the possibility of examining the issue in joint hearings with the Environment Committee, (b) the Energy Committee failed to study the issue itself, and (c) the Energy Committee has never even attempted to refute the conclusions and expressions of urgency contained in the report of the Environment Committee which did examine the matter.

(For a concise statement of the problem, readers are invited to read the March 1991 Environment Committee Report entitled "Out of Balance: The Risks of Irreversible Climate Change". The New Democrat Caucus supports that Committee's recommendation that "... a 20% reduction in human-sourced CO₂ emissions by the year 2005, compared to the 1988 level of emissions, be adopted by the federal government as its minimum interim objective in reducing Canadian CO₂ emissions".)

(b) The Committee majority used the lack of final and complete scientific certainty regarding aspects of global warming to rationalize its own lack of political will to address the problem.

By its very nature, science involves various degrees of uncertainty and the science of atmospheric change is no exception. It is true that there exists considerable uncertainty regarding the precise nature of the processes involved in global warming, the relative importance of each of its major causes, its absolute magnitude, and its likely future effects in any specific region. Unfortunately, the Committee seemed unable to distinguish these relevant but subsidiary issues from the pivotal point that there is overwhelming evidence that the phenomenon of global warming itself is a fact.