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REPORT FROM THE AMBASSADOR FOR THE ENVIRONMENT • 2002

Honourable Gilbert Parent, PC



I look back with pride at the number of environmental and sustainable development milestones Canada has reached in the past year, both nationally and internationally. As Ambassador for the Environment, I have been fortunate in participating in the progress of many of our achievements and seeing them come to fruition.

My report contains the highlights of a productive period, during which the World Summit on Sustainable Development took place in Johannesburg, the Prime Minister brought about Canada's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and the Species at Risk Act came into effect.

The WSSD was a valuable exercise on many fronts. It brought together representatives of 189 countries to review the sustainable development efforts of nations with regard to Agenda 21, formulated at the Earth Conference in Rio 10 years ago. Tough negotiations ensued and concluded with the presentation of a Political Declaration and a Plan of Implementation which incorporated many decisions on trade and financing which had been arrived at in Monterrey, Mexico, and Doha, Qatar.

The multilateralism of the WSSD was not restricted to the countries present. It included input from ENGOs, NGOs, civil society and, best of all, business and industry. Type II partnerships, those that advocate alliances among all sectors of civil society, were not only proposed but also formed.

Canada's strong presence and leadership played major roles at WSSD, most particularly the presentation of Industry Canada's Sustainable Cities Initiative, the addition of a human rights clause to the universal health access negotiations and the Prime Minister's astute statements.

While visiting local environmental projects in and around Johannesburg, I was grateful that Canada has committed to funding the African Process. South Africa, one of the most advanced countries on that continent is itself in dire need of help, to say nothing of the needs of its neighbouring nations.

At home, I continue to be impressed by the environmental technologies we already have. Zenon Environmental, in Oakville, Ontario, has a water treatment and conservation technology that can solve water problems in Canada and worldwide. Hydrogenics, in Mississauga, Ontario, is a fuel-cell company that will lend its expertise to the creation of a hybrid hydrogen/electric bus that will be tested in Manitoba. Springhill, Nova Scotia, has opened a paint recycling plant.

