

THE ELECTION and the ENVIRONMENT: make it personal!

Megatonnes are meaningless without personal responsibility

(Toronto, Ontario, September 9, 2008) Chris Winter has some advice for the men and women running in the Canadian Federal election: Paraphrasing, Thomas "Tip" O'Neill—a longtime Speaker of the House in the U.S. Congress who once declared, 'all politics is local,' Winter says "don't treat the environment like something far off and remote. Make it personal and help people deal with the effects of climate change and rising energy costs."

The Executive Director of the Conservation Council of Ontario knows what people want to hear from their candidates. He's been at community events all across Ontario, talking about the need for a united conservation movement and listening to their questions and concerns for the future of our society and economy.

"People are making the connection between climate change and their own lives. Every time a major hurricane sweeps across the Gulf of Mexico our gas prices go up. Every time gas goes up, food prices and the cost of living also rise. It's as simple as that."

The key question is not 'will you stop climate change', but 'what will you do *today* that will help me deal with the effects of climate change?'

"When politicians speak of reductions in CO2 emissions along the lines of megatonnes, people don't necessarily link that with their daily lives. However, when they speak about factors like fuel-efficient cars, funding for public transit, increased insulation and incentives for energy conservation, they are localizing and making personal connections with the lives of Canadians trying to cope with rising prices and economic uncertainty."

Over the past few years, Winter has also observed that at many public talks on conservation, people often will ask, 'Is it enough?'

"There is a deep-rooted fear for the future," Winter notes. "People see the impact of rising energy costs on the economy. They are afraid of economic collapse and the subsequent impact on our standard of living. As a result, they are looking for political leadership to create a more resilient environment, economy and a better quality of life."

Winter's advice to those seeking to win a seat in the Federal election is to focus on the cornerstones of a sustainable economy (food, shelter and transportation).

- Transform the automotive sector to become leaders in fuel-efficiency by 2012.
- Invest in the energy conservation sector by increasing energy efficiency standards in new homes, training builders in best practices, and increasing incentives to retrofit the existing building stock
- Invest in green infrastructure to create compact, transit-friendly communities with strong local economies
- Invest in local, sustainable agriculture and healthy food.

"Like it or not, we're moving towards a conserver society and economy," said Winter. "The only thing we have left to decide is whether we can ensure a smooth transition and avoid a rough economic ride."

-30-

For more information:

Chris Winter
416-533-1635 ext 1
cell: 647-393-5000

Chris Winter lives a conserver lifestyle with his family in a small village in Toronto. As Executive Director of the Conservation Council of Ontario, a provincial association of organizations and conservation leaders, he is working to facilitate the voluntary transition to a conserver society and a conserver economy in Ontario. Visit www.weconserve.ca for more information.