

### November 2006

A week does not go by without some study or report on the state of the planet's ecological balance and its effects on the economic and social well-being of the earth's people. This edition of *The Interim Plus* considers some aspects of this environment issue, and also the attempt to establish a more level playing field in Canada's public square when it comes to the promotion of competitive social agendas.

Recently, the Canadian government tabled new legislation that revisits Canada's commitment to the Kyoto Protocol and its obligations under that agreement. The opposition parties criticized the Conservative government's initiative as reneging on Canada's Kyoto commitment, accusing that government of not doing enough to counter the incessant harm being done to the environment. But the debate is not restricted to Canada. In many developed nations "Green" political parties present strong pro-environment platforms.

*Science* magazine published a study on the oceans (*Impacts of Biodiversity Loss on Ocean Ecosystem Services*). The research team headed by Boris Worm of Dalhousie University rang the alarm bell on the pending depletion of the ocean's food resources:

*Human-dominated marine ecosystems are experiencing accelerating loss of populations and species, with largely unknown consequences. We analyzed local experiments, long-term regional time series, and global fisheries data to test how biodiversity loss affects marine ecosystem services across temporal and spatial scales.*

*Overall, rates of resource collapse increased and recovery potential, stability, and water quality decreased exponentially with declining diversity. Restoration of biodiversity, in contrast, increased productivity fourfold and decreased variability by 21%, on average. We conclude that marine biodiversity loss is increasingly impairing the ocean's capacity to provide food, maintain water quality, and recover from perturbations. Yet available data suggest that at this point, these trends are still reversible.*

<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/314/5800/787>

For an interesting take on the problem of world fisheries see the November 4 article in the *Financial Post* by Terence Corcoran, Save the oceans, sell the fisheries. Corcoran argues that the problem of depleting fisheries is the lack of private property rights over fisheries, and thus official government attempts to save the oceans and fishing result in neglect, failure, depletion and growing risks. Corcoran argued that the fisheries should be sold in order to save them. Only private enterprises with a certain self-interest would make sure that the resources are not wasted or depleted because the private owner/user person or company would have too much at stake.

<http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/columnists/story.html?id=57cdfc82-5829-4d39-9011-7b38669810a2>



The catch from the recovered net (64% moratorium species). This mix of species is consistent with a "take-it-all" fishing strategy.

In another news report (*Humans living beyond Earth's resources*, James P. Leape, *The Hamilton Spectator*, Oct 25, 2006) the World Wildlife Fund warned of our "draining mother earth", claiming we'll use up the resources of the planet by 2050. James Leape, Director General of World Wildlife Fund International, went on to point out that Canadians are among the most resource-greedy people in the world.

Leape stated that in 1984 the Earth reached the limits of its capacity to provide for us. Since then, he insists, the inhabitants of this planet consume the Earth's natural resources at a rate that increasingly exceeds what it is able to replenish (25 per cent more than the planet can

sustain in the long term). Many would agree that the way energy is generated and consumed poses a growing threat, already manifest in rising temperatures and melting glaciers.

In the face of this “consumption” of energy and material resources is our way of life in danger? Can the people of this earth enjoy and continue to strive for a higher quality of life given the finite resources of this planet? Leape offered some hope: “In fact, we can meet the challenge, but the sooner we get started, the less costly it will be. First and foremost, we must change the way we use energy, and the ways we produce it.” In particular, the United States, Canada and Europe are seen to have special responsibility to act urgently and boldly with commitments to reduce emissions of polluting green-house gases. Leape went on to outline how emerging industrial powers like China may be able to “leapfrog the wasteful and obsolete models of the 20th century.” Because China and India are experiencing massive urbanization they have great opportunities to build the cities of the future – “with energy-efficient buildings and cutting edge mass transit – cities that are much nicer places to live and much gentler on the planet.”

[http://www.hamiltonspectator.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?page-name=hamilton/Layout/Article\\_Type1&c=Article&cid=1161726633818&call\\_pageid=1020420665036&col=1112101662670](http://www.hamiltonspectator.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?page-name=hamilton/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1161726633818&call_pageid=1020420665036&col=1112101662670)

**See also:**

**African countries must adapt to climate change or face destruction: UN**

<http://www.keepmedia.com/pubs/AFP/2006/11/05/1947962?extId=10053>

**Merkel calls for EU strategy on climate change**

<http://www.keepmedia.com/pubs/AFP/2006/11/03/1945208?extId=10053>

**Blair to push climate change in talks with Merkel**

<http://www.keepmedia.com/pubs/AFP/2006/11/02/1943135?extId=10053>

**Warming poses a fiscal threat**

<http://www.keepmedia.com/pubs/USATODAY/2006/10/31/1934894?extId=10053>

**Australia shuns Kyoto, targets China and India in pollution row**

<http://www.keepmedia.com/pubs/AFP/2006/10/30/1934831?extId=10053>

**Reaction to climate change report: cool to warm**

<http://www.keepmedia.com/pubs/AFP/2006/10/30/1934778?extId=10053>

Is the situation as dire as these reports suggest or is the concern somewhat exaggerated? Is there a conservative stance that is anti-environment and places the interest of business and industry ahead of the well-being of



**Strip mining aftermath**

the common people? Are profits more important than environmental health? Is there a liberal/progressive stance that is basically anti-life because it values the environment more than human life itself? Is there a balanced approach that recognizes the need to take care of the environment and the ecology of the planet in the interests of all of humanity?

## **A Cleric’s Observation**

On October 26, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, permanent observer of the Vatican at the United Nations, stated that an “ecological conversion” is necessary so that sustainable development can take place. He explained that nations must have sustainable economies in order to carry forward its people and keep them gainfully employed and progressing.

Those “economies in turn rest upon their relationship to nature – the substratum of soil, water and climate which form the world’s life-support systems. Logically, if these are spoiled or destroyed irreparably there would be no viable economies for any nations”.

He warned that rather than being external or marginal to the economy, “environmental concerns have to be understood by policy-makers as the basis upon which all economic and even human activity rests....The environmental consequences of our economic activity are now among the world’s highest priorities. The environmental question is not only an important ethical and scientific problem, but a political and economic problem too, as well as a bone of contention in the globalization process in general.”

He took a comprehensive view, maintaining that nations must not just integrate sustainable development into programs for poverty reduction and development, but such programs must also reflect the preoccupations

and environmental problems in security strategies, and in developmental and humanitarian questions at the national, regional and international levels. In light of this he stressed that the world needs an “ecological conversion so as to examine critically current models of thought, as well as those of production and consumption.”

The archbishop insisted that “serious public investment in clean technology must accompany this pragmatism as an urgent part of national and international strategies to diminish as fast as possible the impact of air and sea transport pollution and those sectors’ continued use of outdated technology.”

In his remarks the archbishop also touched upon another huge but little known crisis that impacts on the planet’s capacity to sustain its human inhabitants. One great climatic problem is that of desertification and drought which now affect more than one in six of the world’s population. Thus far little has been done to reverse this “alarming phenomenon”. Desertification results from degradation of land, primarily because of development and the demands of increased and shifting populations.

Speaking to the United Nations the papal nuncio also said the international community needs to do a better job of “governance of water resources.” As he put it, “the problem is not a lack of sufficient water for human needs but rather problems of management, infrastructure, technology and finance”.

The archbishop pointed to the global rural areas, within which three quarters of the world’s hungry reside and which “is being ever more degraded.”

“Policy makers cannot continue to treat the rural world as second class,” Migliore said. “Agrarian reform and rural development (are of great importance) in combating hunger and poverty, in promoting sustainable development and food safety, in guaranteeing the promotion of human rights.”

In short, the papal representative gave a sobering analysis of the need to do more to preserve and improve



**Archbishop  
Celestino Migliore**

the ecological health of the planet if its human family is to survive and thrive.

<http://www.cathnews.com/news/610/148.html>

<http://www.wcr.ab.ca/news/2006/1106/vatican110606.shtml>

## Questions

1. What is meant by “sustainable economies”?
2. What did the archbishop mean by his call for an “ecological conversion”?
3. Identify several action steps that ought to be taken to show a pragmatic approach to solving these ecological problems.
4. How extensive is the spread of desertification? What is causing this phenomenon? Is it reversible?
5. How are land policies affecting the ability of rural populations to survive?
6. Does the church leader’s view/concerns differ significantly from the views of the secular environmentalists cited above?

## Further Questions

7. How does globalization fit into the picture regarding global warming?
8. Is globalization the result or the cause of inequalities between the various countries and regions of the world?
9. Can the fullest development of human and natural resources be guided by love and justice or is there a basic and irreconcilable contradiction between care for others and pursuit of material improvement?

## Facing the Crisis

(editorial appearing in *The Catholic Register*)

Joe Sinasac

*It is very easy to forget that Christianity has something to teach us about our responsibility toward the environment.*

*As the Canadian bishops said in their October 2003 pastoral statement on the environment, “God’s glory is revealed in the natural world, yet we humans are presently destroying creation. In this light, the ecological crisis is also a profoundly religious crisis. In destroying creation we are limiting our ability to know and love God. ‘The ecological crisis is a moral issue’ and ‘the responsibility of everyone,’ says Pope John Paul II. ‘Care for the environment is not an option. In the Christian perspective, it forms an integral part of our personal life and of life in society. Not to care for the environment is to ignore the Creator’s plan for all of creation and results in an alienation of the*



## Questions

1. What can Christianity teach us about our responsibility towards the environment?
2. Research the Oil Sands projects in Alberta and comment on the characterization of it as “an environmental catastrophe and a national shame”.
3. Is the “green” philosophy essentially anti-life? What is the vision of man that the ‘greens’ embrace? (Research philosophy of the Sierra Club and the World Wildlife Fund, and the platform of Green Parties in various nations across the globe)
4. If 100,000 people consume  $x$  amount of energy and material resources does it follow that 200,000 would consume  $2x$ ?
5. How can freedom to consume be curbed if it is in the very nature of human beings to acquire, consume, develop, progress?
6. Provide some conspicuous forms of stupid and irresponsible consumption.
7. Is there an ecological crisis? Is it a moral issue? How?
8. Can we really destroy creation?
9. According to the editorial writer what is wrong with the “intensity based” system of pollution controls being promoted by the current Canadian government?

human person” (Pastoral Letter on the Christian Ecological Imperative, Social Affairs Commission, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, no. 3). Canada is facing a crossroads today when it comes to environmental degradation. We have now admitted that our commitment to the Kyoto Agreement to reduce production of greenhouse gases is just so much hot air. The Liberal environmental program has been shown to be completely ineffective by the federal auditor general. And the booming Oil Sands development in Alberta, as bountiful as it is to the Canadian economy, is an environmental catastrophe and a national shame.

We have looked to our political leadership in vain for action on this front. The Conservatives were gleeful in pointing out the inadequacies of their predecessors in Ottawa. Yet their own plan, introduced this month by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, will not reduce harmful pollution by one kilogram. At best it will slow down the increase in the amount of gases we emit.

The heart of the plan, as explained by Harper in Vancouver, is to develop with industry and the provincial governments mandatory levels of pollutants that can be emitted with each unit of production, the so-called “intensity-based” system. While this is moderately useful, we will continue to move further away from our Kyoto targets.

The fatal flaw of the Conservatives’ proposed legislation is that it refuses to tackle the elephant in the environmental living-room: consumption. As long as Canadians continue on their orgy of consumption of high-energy using goods, whether in the form of SUVs or over-packaged goods of all sorts (bottled water comes to mind), we will continue to poison the planet at an alarming pace.

This qualifies as social sin on a grand scale. We can do better, much better, as Christians and responsible citizens of planet earth.

In the next article D’Agostino of the Population Research Institute attempts to refute the arguments made by anti-population growth environmentalist groups.

## Population and Kyoto

Joseph D’Agostino

*Opponents of population growth almost always cite environmental concerns, and this week’s media coverage of America hitting 300 million in population was not an exception. Environmentalists’ big problem is that by almost every measure, the environment of the United States has gotten cleaner in recent decades as her population increased by 50%. Our population hit 200 million in 1967 and 300 million last Tuesday. In those 40 years, America cleaned herself up quite well. At the same time, the supply of natural resources has expanded, not contracted, as*

*new discoveries and new technologies outpace resource consumption.*

*Consider the following evidence for an ever-cleaner environment and more abundant natural resources:*

- *In 1982, half of our nation's ozone monitoring stations detected levels exceeding the federal health standard. Twenty years later, only 13% did.*

- *Water has become similarly cleaner, and the United States' drinking water is generally considered the best in the world.*

- *Proven oil reserves are at an all-time high of 1 trillion barrels. Far from running out, we keep finding more of it. And in North America alone, there are an additional 2.3 trillion barrels of oil in shale and other forms currently too expensive to use. Technology may soon make them economically viable. Plenty of alternatives to petroleum currently exist, from liquefied coal to diesel from agricultural waste. And nuclear power is still there, ready to provide an almost inexhaustible supply of power for any purpose if people ever get over their hang-ups about it.*

- *World food production is so efficient that many governments, including our own, spend billions of dollars a year to pay farmers not to grow food in order to prevent a food price collapse. Barring some unforeseen blight on world agriculture, there is no chance of the world's being unable to feed itself. Famines today are caused by distribution problems, usually produced by war or deliberately inflicted by corrupt governments to enhance their own power.*

- *Bored of combating everyday environmental problems such as mercury in seafood and hormones in drinking water, environmentalists invented something much sexier: The imminent destruction of Earth unless you do what we say! ...Perhaps it's just a coincidence, but global warming theology produces the same practical results as the socialism Western leftists have been forced to abandon: An immense increase in the*

*power of the political/regulatory class and an immense reduction in the standard of living of ordinary people. Why have so many scientists jumped on the bandwagon? Contrary to popular myth, scientists are just as venal and fallible as anyone else, and he who pays the piper calls the tune....The Earth's climate is always trending warmer or cooler at any given moment. There is no genuine evidence that any current warming trend (if one even exists) falls outside the range of natural climatic variation....According to global warming hysterics' own studies, there is no correlation between when the bulk of man-made greenhouse gases were put into the atmosphere and warming. In fact, temperatures declined for decades during at least one of the most intense periods of industrialization.*

- *Proponents of the Kyoto protocol, which would decimate the standards of living of the common peoples of America and Western Europe, themselves admit that it would have no significant effect on stopping warming. They want something far more radical and which would have to apply to the whole world to work.....Reducing the world's overall greenhouse gas emissions is impossible. Instead, it is as certain as such a thing can be that greenhouse gas emissions will continue to rise for decades to come, even if Al Gore becomes President of*



*the United States—unless affordable technologies that allow unfettered industrial development but prevent greenhouse gas emissions are invented and then adopted by the Third World.*

*There is no correlation between population growth or population density and environmental degradation. Instead, wealth correlates to environmental degradation and then improvement. When a country begins to develop, her environment suffers. But when she has reached a certain level, between \$3,500 and \$15,000 in per capita income, her environment begins to improve as people can afford (and demand) cleaner technologies.*

*And then the wealthier they get, the cleaner their environment becomes. That's why ultra-poor sub-*

sistence-level areas, Western Europe, Canada, and the United States all have the cleanest environments. Getting China, India, and other developing countries over the wealth hump is the surest way to improve the world's environment. Preserving America's economic and per capita wealth growth is the best way of continuing to improve ours.

<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2004/may/040518a.html>

### Questions

1. How does this article deal with the concerns brought forth by environmentalists?
2. According to D'Agostino how does wealth and economic development relate to a polluted and/or to a clean environment?
3. Which groups claim that population growth poses a genuine threat to the environment? How does D'Agostino counter that claim?
4. Does the author believe in "global warming"?
5. Is the "developed" world the most likely to clean up the world's pollution problems?
6. Does D'Agostino present a credible thesis overall?

### Climate Non-Conformity

#### Saving lives versus saving planet Earth.

Thursday, November 2, 2006 12:01 a.m. EST

*Two scientific events of note occurred this week, but only one got any media coverage. Therein lies a story about modern politics and scientific priorities.*

*The report that received the headlines was Monday's 700-page jeremiad out of London on fighting climate change. Commissioned by the British government and overseen by former World Bank chief economist Nicholas Stern, the report made the intentionally shocking prediction that global warming could eliminate from 5% to 20% of world economic output "forever." Meanwhile, doing the supposedly virtuous thing and trying to forestall this catastrophe would cost merely an estimated 1% of world GDP. Thus we must act urgently and with new taxes and policies that go well beyond anything in the failed Kyoto Protocol.*



*The other event was a meeting at the United Nations organized by economist Bjørn Lomborg's Copenhagen Consensus Center. Ambassadors from 24 countries – including Australia, China, India and the U.S. – mulled which problems to address if the world suddenly found an extra \$50 billion lying around. Mr. Lomborg's point is that, in a world with scarce resources, you need priorities. The consensus was that communicable diseases, sanitation and water, malnutrition and hunger, and education were all higher priorities than climate change.*

*We invited Mr. Lomborg to address the Stern report, and he takes apart its analysis brick-by-brick. Go to the following site for Lomborg's detailed analysis.*

*([www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110009182](http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110009182))*

*Among the points that Lomborg makes I highlight but two. The first is that the Stern review almost surely understates the real costs of combating climate change. The International Energy Agency has estimated that the world must spend \$16 trillion on infrastructure from 2001 to 2030 just to meet growing energy demand. That by itself would be 1% of GDP over that period. And that doesn't include the cost of moving to carbon-free power from fossil fuels, or the financial "incentives"—i.e., global subsidies from Western taxpayers—that China and India would need if the Stern report's policies were to have any chance of being implemented. The Stern review also calls for substantially increasing taxes, which we know from experience would also reduce global GDP and thus leave fewer resources to fight the consequences of any warming.*

*The second point is that the Stern report barely mentions the potential benefits from warming in the world's cold-weather regions. Al Gore and others warn about the damage from coastal flooding and changing weather patterns, among other horror scenarios. But the world is large and its climate diverse, and a longer growing season in Siberia or Canada is at least one possible benefit of warming. The Stern*

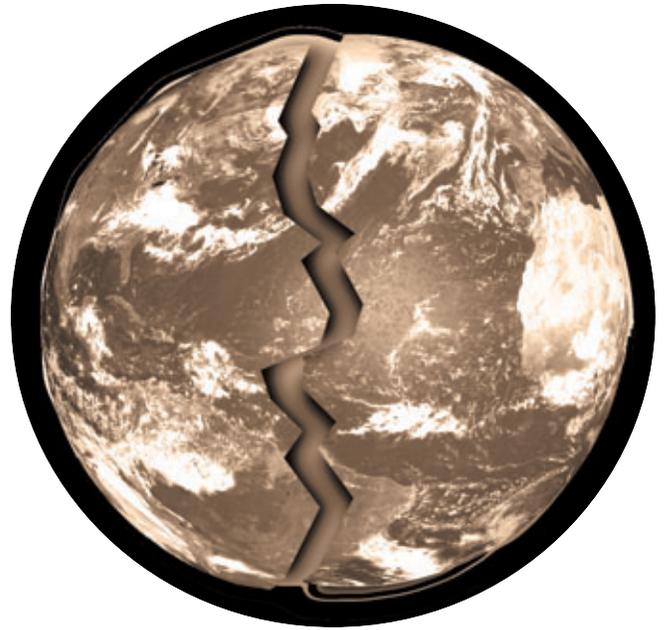
*report also dismisses any chance of moderate warming (meaning temperatures in 2100 only two to three degrees Celsius higher than in 1900), even though many climate models say this is in fact the most likely outcome.*

*Unlike the Stern report and its patrons, those of us who take a skeptical*

*approach to these doomsday climate scenarios aren't trying to end the discussion. The Earth is warmer now than it was in the recent past, and this may be partly attributable to human behavior. But everything else—from how much warmer, to the extent of mankind's contribution, to the cost of doing something about it—remains very much in dispute.*

*Some of the Stern review's recommendations, such as carbon trading rights, are also worth debating. But most of its proposals are merely openings for government to expand its role in allocating investment, raising taxes and otherwise controlling economic decisions. Socialism was supposed to have died with the Soviet Union, but it is making a comeback under the guise of coping with global warming.*

*Meanwhile, there are far more urgent, and far less speculative, problems that we know how to solve with the right policies. That message may not get scary headlines, but it would improve the lives of more human beings around the world.*



### Questions

1. The source of this reading is the online *Opinion Journal*. What is the editorial stance of that journal? Would that influence its reaction to the Stern Report?
2. Are the real costs of combating climate change known? Which nations are expected to pay for it?
3. What does the *Opinion Journal* writer see as the fundamental flaw in the Stern Report's recommendations for dealing with climate change?
4. Are there any potential benefits to climate change?

---

---

## Leveling the playing field

Governments can at times be helpful to the pro-life movement unintentionally and indirectly. Consider recent decisions taken by the Conservative government in Ottawa. At the core of the decision seems to be a political desire to limit government funding for special interest groups of any sort.

### Ottawa cuts special interest funding

*The Interim*, November, 2006

**W**hen the Harper Conservative government announced \$1 billion in spending cuts in late September, special interest groups, their friends in the media and opposition politicians went ballistic. Opposition leader and militant homosexual rights advocate Bill Graham attacked the reductions as “vindictive, mean-spirited cuts targeted at the weak,

*the needy, the vulnerable and the marginalized in Canada.”*

*Graham's hysterics aside, in actual fact, many of the cuts announced couldn't have affected a more affluent and influential group of elites. Among the programs on the chopping block were the Court Challenges Program (CCP), the Law Commission of Canada (LCC), the Status of Women department with its unfortunate acronym (SOW) and “medical” marijuana research.*

*These programs funded wealthy left-wing lawyers, academics, medical researchers and numerous Ottawa-based lobby groups in their quest to revolutionize Canadian society. Among the causes taxpayers funded through these programs were efforts to promote state-run daycare, legalize homosexual marriage and adoption, promote abortion, decrimi-*



**Status of Women Minister Bev Oda faced tough grilling in parliament over the Conservative government's decision to no longer fund women's groups that lobby or conduct research on behalf of women.**

nalize marijuana, normalize polygamy and give prisoners the vote.

The Court Challenges Program, with its \$5.6 million annual budget, was probably the most societally destructive of the axed programs. A

Trudeau-era project that paid the legal bills of activists to challenge the legality of various laws,

the CCP has played a decisive role in forcing extremist agendas before Canadian courts. In fact, the program actually took the leading role in organizing and forcing the homosexual "marriage" agenda in front of the courts.

While liberal elites were ranting about the cuts, Conservative government members and their supporters, regardless of their social policy perspectives, were quick to back them. As the socially conservative finance minister, Jim Flaberty, put it, the spending reductions reflect the priorities of "working families. Does the money that we spend as a government reflect the priorities that Canadian families have for their federal government? Those were the baselines that we looked at."

Instead of wasting money on social engineering, Flaberty said, "We are investing more resources in programs that are important to ordinary Canadians, such as child care and safer streets. We won't apologize for our capacity to say no to bad ideas."

High-profile social conservative MP Maurice Vellacott of Saskatoon had long been an advocate of cutting funding to the SOW department. Vellacott pummelled the Liberal government last year for SOW's half-million dollars in grants to pro-prostitution activists and their efforts to decriminalize the exploitative trade in Canada.

Ironically, the most outspoken homosexual rights advocate within the Conservative ranks, Treasury Board president John Baird, also gave his strong endorsement to the cuts. Baird agreed that Canadians want the government to focus limited tax dollars on "priority areas" such as healthcare, fight-

ing crime and more tax cuts. And, despite its central role in forcing homosexual "marriage" on Canadians, Baird took special aim at the Court Challenges Program, saying it doesn't make sense for the federal government to "subsidize lawyers to challenge the government's own laws in court."

....John Williamson, federal director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, was quick to support the Conservative government's new spending restraint. He said, "I don't see why taxpayers should be funding advocates for daycare. It's a political decision and each group should be out raising its own money."

Indeed, the cuts thus far appear to be only the tip of the iceberg. For instance, Status of Women will continue on for now as an \$18 million department, instead of a \$23 million department.

Nevertheless, groups such as REAL Women, which does not qualify for grants because its pro-family ideology is at odds with SOW's extremist agenda, feel the cuts help level the political playing field for advocacy organizations. REAL Women vice-president Gwen Landolt says, "This is a good start, and we hope that the Status of Women will eventually be eliminated entirely, since it does not represent 'women,' but only represents the ideology of feminists."

### Questions

1. Which government introduced the Court Challenges program?
2. Was the intention of the program to help to "revolutionize Canadian society"?
3. Which groups have benefited from the program and why would these groups have been given favourable treatment ?
4. Why did organizations like REAL women not receive any funding for their efforts?
5. What was the rationale behind the cuts to the Court Challenges Program and reduction in funding of Status of Women department?
6. Are the cuts justified in your opinion? Why or why not?
7. Should governments be involved in funding any special interest groups? Why or why not?
8. Have these government funding programs had a harmful effect on Canadian society as its critics claim?
9. Which groups would welcome the new approach and why?