



Decoding the Spin: Sierra Club’s Analysis of the Speech from the Throne
 October 17, 2007

Text of Speech from the Throne	Unspun by Sierra Club
Priority #5: Improving the Environment and Health of Canadians	Polls show that the environment is the #1 concern of Canadians. As a government priority it is presented as #5.
Threats to our environment are a clear and present danger that now confronts governments around the world. This is nowhere more evident than in the growing challenge of climate change.	Other governments have known this for years and have taken action to avert the danger by meeting and beating their Kyoto targets.
Our Government believes that action is needed now to ensure our quality of life, particularly for those most vulnerable to health threats from the environment—our children and seniors.	Children will bear the full brunt of Canada’s refusal to take effective action to combat climate change.
Climate change is a global issue and requires a global solution.	This is true. This is why the United Nations crafted a global solution, of which the Kyoto Protocol is the first timid step.
Our Government believes strongly that an effective global approach to greenhouse gas emissions must have binding targets that apply to all major emitters, including Canada.	The UN Kyoto process already allows for this, and for including all major emitters in next commitment period. This is why Canada must commit to serious negotiations in Bali in December 2007.
Canada has already engaged the international community at APEC, the G8 and the United Nations and will continue to press for a new international agreement that cuts global emissions in half by 2050.	Binding targets and timelines for absolute reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are essential, and only the United Nations process includes these. Based on the best science in the world, we must reduce emissions by at least 80% by 2050, AND we need to reduce emissions in the 2008 to 2012 period.
As we pursue a global consensus, Canada is acting even more aggressively at home. Our Government will implement our national strategy to reduce Canada’s total greenhouse gas emissions 60 to 70 percent by 2050. There will be a 20 percent reduction by 2020.	Unspun: This is the <i>Regulatory Framework for Air Emissions</i> announced in April 2007. The numbers are pure subterfuge, since they refer to meaningless “intensity targets” that do not correspond to an actual reduction in the amount of greenhouse gases emitted.

Text of Speech from the Throne	Unspun by Sierra Club
<p>Our Government will bring forward the elements from Canada’s Clean Air Act, which had all-party consensus, for parliamentary consideration.</p>	<p>Unspun: The government will undo all the work of the parliamentary committee and reintroduce only those parts that the Conservative Party supports. This means throwing out the Clean Air and Climate Change Act, and reintroducing the government bill that was laughed out of parliament in 2006.</p>
<p>This strategy will institute binding national regulations on greenhouse gas emissions across all major industrial sectors—with requirements for emissions reductions starting this year.</p>	<p>True... Sierra Club of Canada continues to advocate that Canada must regulate greenhouse gas emissions, and with the <i>Regulatory Framework for Air Emissions</i> referred to here the government is doing just that.</p> <p>... and false: Unfortunately the regulations are based on so-called “intensity targets” and so do not correspond to an actual reduction in the amount of greenhouse gases emitted.</p>
<p>Our Government will also bring forward the first-ever national air pollution regulations.</p>	<p>This is positive.</p>
<p>In so doing, our Government will put Canada at the forefront of clean technologies to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Our Government will also establish a carbon emissions trading market that will give business the incentive to run cleaner, greener operations.</p>	<p>We need a carbon emissions trading market based on a cap-and-trade system, which sets a cap on total emissions that decreases over time. If the government does that they will have our support.</p>
<p>At the end of 2005, Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions were 33 percent above the Kyoto commitment.</p>	<p>This is true, and as long as the government tries to evade its international commitments by using “intensity targets”, Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions will continue to get further and further from our Kyoto targets.</p>
<p>It is now widely understood that, because of inaction on greenhouse gases over the last decade, Canada’s emissions cannot be brought to the level required under the Kyoto Protocol within the compliance period, which begins on January 1, 2008, just 77 days from now.</p>	<p>This is false. It is an ideological statement, not a factual statement. The Kyoto protocol offers a range of mechanisms for countries to meet their commitments. After 658 days in office this government is still making excuses and taking partisan shots instead of taking effective action on climate change.</p>
<p>The world is moving on to address climate change and the environment, and Canada intends to help lead the effort at home and</p>	<p>The world is not “moving on” but rather carrying on with Kyoto, both with its 2008-2012 commitment period, and with negotiations for</p>

Text of Speech from the Throne	Unspun by Sierra Club
abroad.	the next commitment period that will begin in 2013. Canada needs to change its tune and be at the negotiations in Bali in December 2007 with a strong mandate to negotiate absolute emissions reductions in the next commitment period.
Beyond regulating greenhouse gases and air pollution, our Government has also acted to protect sensitive areas, including a massive expansion of Nahanni National Park, and preserving the Great Bear Rainforest, Point Pleasant Park and Stanley Park.	True. We support the government in the work it still needs to do to expand Nahanni National Park.
Through our new infrastructure plan, our Government will promote a cleaner environment by investing in public transport and water treatment, and by cleaning up contaminated sites.	These are positive commitments. Sierra Club of Canada has specific policy ideas in these areas and we look forward to discussing the details. The government still needs to extend the cleanup of the Sydney Tar Ponds, Canada's worst toxic site, to include neighbouring homes.
A new water strategy will be implemented to help clean up our major lakes and oceans and to improve access to safe drinking water for First Nations.	This is potentially very good news. Sierra Club of Canada has developed comprehensive policy recommendations regarding federal action on freshwater, which offers details on a broad range of issues including the ones mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. We look forward to discussing the details.
In the past, environmental legislation and regulation have had little impact because they have lacked an effective enforcement regime. In the coming session, our Government will bolster the protection of our water and land through tougher environmental enforcement that will make polluters accountable.	Not enough detail to comment.
Environmental protection is not just about protecting nature. It is about the health of Canadians. Recent events have called into question the safety of basic products such as food for our families and toys for our children. Our Government shares the concern of parents about the safety of consumer products and food. Canadians should expect the same standards of quality from imported goods as they do from products made at home. The Government will introduce measures on food and product safety to ensure that families have confidence in the quality and safety of what they buy.	Not enough detail to comment. For example we would like this to include "right to know" legislation regarding chemically treated and genetically modified foods.