

PM Lauded for His Role in Passing Kyoto Accord

Move will force U.S. to accept, he says
Chretien on hand to dedicate new park

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Canada's ratification of the Kyoto environmental treaty will likely force the United States to do the same in the near future, Prime Minister Jean Chretien told an environmental group last night.

"It will be something that will force our neighbour of the south to do..." he said to a crowd of about 300 people at a reception at the King Edward Hotel.

"We have made an agreement with the oil sector in Alberta. It's not perfect. But they have accepted the absolute necessity for them to adjust.

"If we can do that in Canada, they can do that anywhere in the world."

Chretien received an award for Advancing the Environmental Agenda from the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP), which hosted the reception in honour of their 33rd anniversary - the first time the award is being given.

"You (Chretien) took a bold and politically difficult step on Kyoto and held firm to it under great pressure from provincial government and many within the business community," said CIELAP President David Powell.

"We believe (Chretien) has shown real environmental leadership."

Anne Mitchell, executive director for the not-for-profit environmental group, also cited Chretien's devotion to establishing national parks while he was minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development under former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

Chretien's government passed the species-at-risk act last year, which protects 233 species. Anyone who harms or threatens these endangered animals may be subject to prosecution or penalty.

In August, Chretien announced a \$1 billion five-year investment to combat global warming.

The spending program, which includes home energy - efficiency rebates, technology funding and other measures - aims to get individuals, industry, and governments to meet Canada's pledges under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, now ratified by 113 states.

The federal government predicted it would buy 12 to 20 megatonnes of reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Chretien said being involved in the environment was one of his greatest joys in his public life.

Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister dedicated Downsview Park - touted as a major national urban park - to Canadians.

The design concept, created by Tree City Inc., was unveiled and the last stage of public consultation is beginning.

"It's a great day for the quality of life for the people of the biggest city in Canada," he said. "So enjoy Downsview Park for the rest of your lives."

The federal government made plans for the 243-hectare park materialize, blaming "complications in the system."

Chretien joked about staying in power until February and said one of his greatest pleasures - aside from quitting in a few months - was creating new national parks.