

National Office  
2717 Wentz Ave.  
Saskatoon, Sask.  
S7K 4B6  
Tel (306) 652-9465  
Fax (306) 664-6226



**national farmers union**  
*In Union Is Strength*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **CANADIAN PUBLIC POLICY AND OUR KYOTO TARGETS**

**SASKATOON, Sask.**—There is no level playing field between rail and road transportation, a reality that is costing Canadians dearly, both in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and public dollars, according to Dale Marshall, Resource Researcher for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

At a public session entitled “Climate Changes: Impacts and Ethics” at the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the National Farmers Union, Marshall noted that “Every time that any government puts any money into rail, it’s considered a subsidy, but that every time we build roads it’s considered infrastructure. Rail companies have to maintain their rail lines on their own, whereas the government provides all the roads we have.” The federal government’s current policy direction means that the Canadian grain transportation system is not going to help this country achieve its Kyoto commitment to decrease greenhouse gas emissions to 6% below 1996 levels.

Appearing on the same panel, Peter Tabuns, Executive Director of Greenpeace Canada, noted that if we are to meet our Kyoto target, we are going to have to achieve efficiencies “not just in the agricultural sector, but throughout Canada, in the manufacturing sector [and] in the transportation of people.”

Both were speaking in response to a comment by an NFU member that: we are going backwards because semis contribute a lot more to pollution than a train with three engines and a hundred grain cars. Marshall asserted that one of the ways to encourage a shift from road back to rail would be to “cost things appropriately. If an activity has a greater impact [on greenhouse emissions], then the people who undertake it have to pay more to do it.”

Marshall also addressed the common misunderstanding that implementing Kyoto will cost Canadians their jobs and slow economic growth. While some jobs will be lost, far more will be created. In reality, he stated, research indicates that as society shifts from using fossil fuels to using renewable energy to power its activities, “there will be an overall increase of nearly 1.5 million jobs.” The Canadians who may lose their existing jobs, will require support, training and

education, to make what Marshall called a 'fair transition' to a new and different job.

The centrality of socially just public policy in making the transition to a 'decarbonized' economy was endorsed by another member of the evening's panel. According to founder of EcoEquity and author, Tom Athanasiou, whether we achieve the goal of reducing global warming will depend more on social policy than on climate policy. He said "Just transition is a really important concept. Changes [that are made in response to global warming] must be just and they must be fair. If they're not, people won't accept them."

The NFU's Convention continues through Saturday, November 22. NFU members from across Canada are focusing on Climate change, its impacts on farmers and the environment, and energy conservation and alternatives.

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For more information:

Between November 20 and 23, contact the following people at the NFU's Convention hotel, the Hotel Radisson in Saskatoon: (306) 665-3322

Stewart Wells, NFU President:	(306) 773-6852 or 741-7694
Darrin Qualman, NFU Executive Secretary:	(306) 652-9465