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It's time to stop dithering on Kyoto

A leaked federal document urging Ottawa to regulate reductions in greenhouse gases, because voluntary cutbacks aren't working, should light a fire under the Liberals to get them moving on Kyoto Protocol commitments.

In the industrial sector, the report suggests companies be given a figure on emissions allowed per unit of production.

It encourages them to make changes in technology or to buy credits from others to meet that standard. This, essentially, is the Kyoto model. In the long run, improved efficiency from new technology leads to higher profits and a leg up on competitors.

For motor vehicles, the paper, *Climate Change — Lessons Learned and Future Directions*, suggests a mix of incentives and regulations.

John Bennett, senior adviser on energy for the Sierra Club of Canada, says one recommendation the document suggests comes from a joint presentation by 16 environmental groups, including his.

It calls for a purchase incentive of \$5,000 for every vehicle that exceeds a fuel economy standard of five litres per 100 kilometres. Of this, \$4,500 would go to the buyer and \$500 to the dealer, to encourage it to market such cars. Currently, the Toyota Prius, a hybrid, meets that standard.

But regulations are also crucial. To that end, Canada is suggesting car companies reduce carbon dioxide emissions (the major cause of global warming) by 25 per cent in 2009-16. This is slightly less stringent than California's 30-per-cent requirement for the same time frame. Both standards can be met with existing technology.

California is the environmental leader, while other states with high levels of smog and global warming gases, such as New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts, usually follow its regulations.

Bennett notes Canada and the major environmentally conscious states account for 35 to 40 per cent of the North American automotive market. Together, they have the clout to force auto companies to meet their standards.

Even those who still don't accept the idea of global warming, despite its wide recognition by top climate scientists, should embrace many of these recommendations.

That's because overuse of fossil fuels that cause global warming also is the major source of pollution.

It's time to stop dithering and be pro-active.

This is an edited excerpt of an editorial from The London Free Press.

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