



February 11, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Re. Continental energy/climate security and your February 19th visit to Canada

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to support your energy and environment agenda as a basis for discussing climate change during your upcoming visit to Canada. As the CEOs of WWF-US and WWF-Canada, we have been greatly heartened by the steps you already have taken to put US climate change policy back on a sound, science-driven track. We share your conviction that well-designed policies to address climate change will lay the foundation for a new green global economy, help to end the current recession and contribute to prosperity around the world.

Key to this effort in the North American context is US-Canadian cooperation. We are united not only by our shared democratic ideals, but by historic and inseparable links between our economies, energy systems and environments. Together they constitute a strong foundation upon which to build successful climate solutions.

It is our hope that your forthcoming talks with Prime Minister Harper will build and expand upon this foundation. Two issues, in particular, require attention.

One issue is the need for greater US-Canadian collaboration on climate change as it relates to the Arctic. Nowhere is climate change happening faster, and nowhere are its impacts—both for the region itself and for the world beyond it—more devastating. Joint research is urgently needed to learn more about these impacts and their implications. The United States and Canada should lead discussions to strengthen governance of the Arctic as it faces unprecedented change. These challenges were appropriately recognized last week by the Northern Pacific Fisheries Council's precautionary ban on fishing in US Arctic waters.

The other urgent issue involves the rapid expansion of Alberta's tar sands. As we build the green economy that is our only hope in a warming world, we hope you will reject any proposed exemptions for the tar sands from hard caps associated with emerging continental and global climate and energy governance regimes.

The exploitation of unconventional oil (from tar sands, oil shale or coal-to-liquids) poses an unprecedented risk to the global climate, the local and regional ecosystems in which they are found, and to the health of the people who live there. We recognize that the Government of Canada has identified an economic interest in

the tar sands, but in our view this is an unduly narrow and short-term perspective, as the uncontrolled exploitation of the tar sands currently stands as the single greatest obstacle to Canada meeting its global climate change responsibilities.

It is important to underscore that the promise of carbon capture and storage (CCS) does not hold up as a means of ‘cleaning up’ the tar sands. While CCS technology has the potential to play an important role in mitigating climate change from large stationary sources such as electricity generating stations, its utility in reducing emissions from the tar sands is extremely limited. The Government of Canada’s own Carbon Capture and Storage Task Force found that “oil sands operations are very diverse (geographically and technically) and only a small portion of the CO2 streams are currently amenable for CCS.” Furthermore, CCS cannot mitigate the negative impacts on the boreal forest, regional water quality and quantity, and the health of local residents, including indigenous people, who are associated with tar sands extraction and refinement.

In short, the increasing exploitation of Canada’s tar sands amounts to a massive investment “locking in” a high carbon North American transportation system at the same time that we need to urgently tackle climate change. As you have recognized, there can be no energy security – or indeed any kind of lasting security – without a stable climate. As part of a strategy to reduce and eventually eliminate our dependence on the tar sands as a source of oil, the US and Canada should cooperate more actively on developing sustainable, green energy for a more efficient transportation system within our borders—activities that will contribute far more to our long-term energy and economic security.

We look forward to your visit to Ottawa on February 19<sup>th</sup> marking a new era of cooperation within North America in crafting and implementing climate solutions. Such continental leadership would surely reinforce the construction of a fair, effective and science-based global deal to fight climate change in Copenhagen later this year. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with representatives of your administration after your trip to further discuss ways in which we may advance this goal.

Sincerely,



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