# Climate change a 'real and present danger,' Kent says

### Next UN Climate Change Conference set for Doha, Qatar on Nov. 26

Federal Environment Minister Peter Kent thinks recent extreme weather events are forcing politicians in both Canada and the U.S. to focus on the issue of climate change, and that includes members of his Conservative government's cabinet.

"It has focused minds absolutely," Kent told reporters after appearing at a parliamentary committee hearing.

In perhaps his most forceful comments on climate change to date, Kent says the recent Hurricane Sandy that devastated parts of the U.S. East Coast is putting the issue top of mind, as are recent examples of extreme weather in Canada, such as the increasing number of tornadoes to hit Ontario.

"Scientists tell us on a regular basis you can't connect individual incidents of extreme weather with climate change, but I think it's quite clear that we are seeing increased incidents of extreme weather, droughts, floods, the diminishing ice cap, ozone opening and closing over the poles, he said.

"You don't have to convince me that climate change is a very real and present danger and we need to address it."

Kent said he talks to his U.S. counterparts on a "more than monthly basis" and there's a general consensus that it's an issue that has to be addressed. "We would ignore it at our peril."

In his first news conference after being re-elected, U.S. President Barack Obama talked about the growing number of severe weather events and the need to act on climate change for future generations.

**Canada aligns with U.S.**

Canada aligns its environmental policies with those of the U.S. But Canada has been roundly criticized for its continued lack of clear legislation to make so-called "large final emitters," like energy companies, reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Canada has been taking a sector-by-sector approach, bringing in rules for cars and coal-fired power plants but leaving the toughest for the last.

Kent has also been raked over the coals internationally for [pulling out of the Kyoto Protocol](http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2012/07/17/pol-kyoto-pull-out-valid.html) on climate change last year. That accord expires at the end of next month.

Global leaders and environment ministers are heading to Doha, Qatar for the next UN Climate Change Conference, which is set to begin Nov. 26. It's the annual conference where countries consider a new global agreement to replace Kyoto.

Canada will be in Doha, too. Even though it pulled out of the Kyoto Protocol, it's still a signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the overall international umbrella agreement of which Kyoto is a part.

Countries are now split over whether to negotiate a second Kyoto-like agreement or follow the Copenhagen Accord. That's the non-binding agreement signed in 2009 that calls for developing nations to do more to reduce their emissions along with the rich developed ones.

Kent says increased public attention on extreme weather events is bringing added attention to next week's global conference. He says Canada is committed to getting a new agreement but warns it won't be easy.

"The Prime Minister's signature is on Copenhagen," he said. "We also recognize a lot of countries that made commitments under Copenhagen have economies that have gone into the tank, particularly Europe, and their original plans to fight climate change, to develop renewable energy have been significantly derailed."

**Environmental Science 123**

Do you believe that Canada is doing enough when it comes to global warming and climate change?

Explain.

**Environmental Science 123**

Do you feel that we as Canadians do enough when it comes to global warming and climate change? Do you think Canadians have a clear platform to the rest of the world on this issue?