

**Dire facts, but also hope for future at climate change convention  
December 9, 2005**

**A lot has happened in Montreal at the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change since my last report to the Banner.**

**So you may be asking yourself what's going on there? Why is this meeting so important? Well it is the first meeting of all of the countries in the Kyoto Protocol since it came into action last February. We may not have heard much from the Kyoto Protocol yet in our daily lives as Canadians, but it is going to become an increasingly important issue because soon we will begin to see the mandatory cut backs in our Greenhouse Gas Emissions. It is going to be tough, but I am optimistic from my experiences at this conference that it is something that we can do, and it is a way that we as a country can act as a global example.**

**The most important purpose of the CCC is to look ahead to 2012 – when Kyoto ends – because if we are going to slow the process of climate change then Kyoto is only a first small step. As we look to the end of the Kyoto commitment period it is important to have another system in place so we can continue on the right track.**

**On Saturday I participated in the Global March on Climate Change. It was a lively and fun atmosphere. Over 14 000 people marched and met up in for speeches and live music in front of the building housing the CCC.**

**Tuesday was Arctic day at one of the side events with displays of traditional dancing and taste tests of traditional food. When it comes to climate change the Inuit people have the short end of the stick. The Inuit culture is as vulnerable as the polar bear to climate change. The arctic ecosystem in which they live is already showing signs of change and is expected for various reasons to be subject to some of the largest temperature changes on earth due to global warming. The Inuit culture is intimately linked to their environment and they will suffer the impacts of climate change. For example they have built up knowledge of successful hunting strategies in their environment for thousands of years and within a generation this environment has changed and their knowledge has become less reliable. This has led to less available food and even entire hunting parties falling through ice on traditional hunting routes.**

**Although in Dufferin County we are not as vulnerable to the effects of climate change as the Inuit, it is important to realize that we are going to see the effects in our lives and it is going to require us and people around the world to adapt in many different ways.**

**But as Jose Kusugak, an Inuit leader said it may be easier for us to adapt to environmental changes than the Inuit people. Kusugak said that since he had been at the conference he had no reason to go outside and that it was ironic that the Inuktituk word for tunnel was 'siti' (which sounds pretty similar to the English**

word city.) Montreal has a complicated path system underground connecting buildings together in the ‘underground city.’ I am no stranger to the elements here in Montreal or at home in Dufferin, but whenever I’m on my way to school and the weather isn’t the way I want it I am the first person to retreat underground. Might it be possible that as climate change progresses I will be spending more time underground in a space where humans can control the environment? And what about people in locations where they don’t have this option?

These are the questions that I am pondering as I attend this conference and think about how different life will be by the time I have children of my own. Although I have learned some dire facts about the impending changes to our planet due to climate change, I also feel that there are many people who are here in Montreal because they want to help mitigate these effects. I have heard about global and local programs on climate change I can say one thing for sure, I thought I was aware of environmental issues before I came here, but this event changed me for a lifetime and hopefully I am not the only one.

*Dufferin County resident Sarah Fairlie is a student at McGill University in Montreal and an observer at the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change.*