

**Greenhouse Gases: Business Panel Largely in the Middle
between Fraser Institute and U.N. Panel on Climate Change**

**BDO Dunwoody Weekly CEO/Business Leader Poll
by COMPAS for publication in
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1.0 Introduction

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a major report recently warning somewhat starkly of the consequences for the planet and humankind of inaction on climate change. The Fraser Institute subsequently issued a counter report by major scientists around the world.

COMPAS' panel of CEOs and business leaders aligns strongly with neither side. Only 10% believe that either side is completely right. The largest group (37%) takes a wait-and-see position, looking for more persuasive evidence either way. The remainder are divided evenly between those who think the U.N. Panel is mainly right and a fourth who think Fraser is mainly right.

Those who oppose the U.N. Panel's position are deeply skeptical. Some perceive the U.N. Panel as highly politicized; others recall many examples of error and confusion in the history of the natural sciences.

Those who support the U.N. Panel's position tend to see plausibility about the impact of increased Greenhouse gases rather than certainty about the scientific evidence.

These are the principal findings from the weekly business web-survey conducted by COMPAS for the *Financial Post* under sponsorship of BDO Dunwoody LLP.

2.0 Very Few in Either Camp

Very few CEOs and business leaders on the COMPAS panel find themselves in either the U.N. or Fraser camps, as shown in table 2. Only 5% are strongly on a given side whereas 37% declare themselves undecided.



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Skepticism about both sides is immense, as evidenced in the following verbatims:

The IPCC UN is completely politicized, which has resulted in science being eclipsed.

At one time the leading scientists of the day thought the world was flat.

Personally I believe that the science being used is just as much bunk as the science back in the 1960's was on a coming ice age. The earth's atmosphere is not enclosed at all. It is very open to space therefore it is completely unlike a greenhouse. The fear mongers are hard at work and seemingly winning. The old adage, you cannot fool mother nature, will again be popular.

I find the Fraser Institute Report to be an embarrassing attempt to curry favour from potential funders. I would put it in the same category as the American Enterprise Institute's (AEI) offer of \$10,000 per article for similar sceptical articles written by scientists and funded by Exxon. The summary conclusions of the IPCC were significantly compromised by the insistence of the Chinese members of the panel. The full report when it comes out in May will have a more realistic and challenging scenario.

I am back from Hong Kong – anything Canada does is insignificant in relation to the huge, uncontrolled pollution in China. Canada is playing boy scout again.

Since I am an engineer it is quite interesting to think about things like climate change. The basis of climate change is that we are producing greater quantities of Green House Gases (GHG) than in earlier times. What we don't know is how much this is changing our planet as there are long term variability trends that don't support a scientific conclusion. One uniquely Canadian indicator that might be useful in this analysis is the fact that plants use GHG to live. They process



GHG and through photosynthesis produce oxygen. It would make sense to me that if a significant increase of GHG exists globally that the so-called "Arctic Tree Line" in Northern Canada (and also in Scandinavia/Russia/Alaska) should be consistently moving North. I wonder if scientists have looked at the mean latitude of the Arctic Tree Line and whether or not it really is moving north as this indicator should be somewhat independent of temperature. I would love to see a scientist's response to this.

The UN report is shy on verifiable data and long on the politics of social engineering. If this were 1547, the "humans caused global warming" zealots would all be members of the Flat Earth Society. Unfortunately we will not likely find out how wrong they are until we have spent trillions world wide to solve a perceived problem that is almost totally the result of the Earth's natural atmospheric cycles.

The Fraser report is so flawed that it is nothing more than paid propaganda.

There is a word for the current inane belief by many people that we and we alone are responsible for global warming, if indeed it is occurring at all, and that we and we alone can fix the problem if there is one. That word is 'glubris' (global hubris), displayed in all its glory in the pronouncements of David Suzuki and his ilk.

While many members of the panel were deeply suspicious of both sides and especially of the U.N. Panel, many were nevertheless open to the idea that humans were producing more greenhouse gases and this could be problematic:

It is about time to stop questioning the negative effects of climate changes due to human activities. For a long time politicians decided not to deal with environmental issues by hiding behind data uncertainties and junk science. It is time to react quickly and effectively to minimize the damage.



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Maybe the UN report is not completely accurate, but there is no doubt about the seriousness of climate change.

Debating the science of climate change is completely unproductive at this stage of the game. The impact of a "do nothing approach" would be catastrophic. This being said, the world and Canada need to be smart about the overall strategy which should be to move the world to a low carbon economy in the middle term (2050), and an ultra low carbon footprint in the longer term (2100). The childish debate about the Kyoto short term approach is just that: childish, political gamesmanship. Tackling the climate change imperative will arguably bring about the most significant structural changes to the economy and consumption patterns since industrialization. This is no small task, and one the politicians are wilfully inadequately prepared to tackle. But tackling it we must: that is the only prudent thing to do, and I am not willing to bet the planet on the musings of the Fraser Institute.

Table 2: Q6) All things considered, do you believe that...

	%
the UN Panel is completely right	5
the UN Panel is mainly right	27
you are undecided and want more evidence	37
the Fraser report is mainly right	26
the Fraser report is completely right	5



3.0. No Majority Opinion on Any Aspect

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a series of assertions in the Fraser Institute rebuttal to the U.N. Panel report. A majority failed to occupy one side or the other on any aspect of the issue, as evidenced in table 3.

The issue on which Fraser elicits strongest agreement is that “natural climatic variability is now believed to be substantially larger than previously estimated.” Meanwhile, the issue on which Fraser provokes the most disagreement is that “there is no compelling evidence that dangerous or unprecedented changes are underway.”

Table 3: (Q1-5) Please assess each of the following conclusions from the Fraser report using a 7 point scale where 1 means disagree strongly and 7, agree strongly.¹

	Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK
“Natural climatic variability is now believed to be substantially larger than previously estimated, as is the uncertainty associated with historical temperature reconstructions.”	4.4	18	16	12	12	10	12	11	11
“Attributing an observed climate change to a specific cause like greenhouse gas emissions is not formally possible, and therefore relies on computer model	4.3	16	18	16	7	17	9	11	7

¹ The question was preceded by the following explanation: “The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a major report recently. It concluded that the planet’s climate is undergoing serious change as a result of increases in greenhouse gases caused by human activity. This report received much media attention, and appears to be supported by most political leaders.

“This week the Fraser Institute came out with a climate change report written by ten scientists, assisted by several dozen other scientists from around the world. The Fraser report has a different perspective.”



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simulations. These attribution studies do not take into account the basic uncertainty about climate models, or all potentially important influences like aerosols, solar activity, and land use changes.”									
“Data collected by weather satellites since 1979 continue to exhibit little evidence of atmospheric warming, with estimated trends ranging from nearly zero to the low end of past IPCC forecasts. There is no significant warming in the tropical troposphere (the lowest portion of the Earth’s atmosphere).”	4.0	12	15	13	12	11	9	16	12
“There is no globally-consistent pattern in long-term precipitation trends, snow-covered area, or snow depth. Arctic sea ice thickness showed an abrupt loss prior to the 1990s, and the loss stopped shortly thereafter. There is insufficient data to conclude that there are any trends in Antarctic sea ice thickness.”	3.8	8	17	12	15	14	9	17	8
“There is no compelling evidence that dangerous or unprecedented changes are underway. Perceptions of increased extreme weather events are potentially due to increased reporting. There is too little data to reliably confirm these perceptions.”	3.6	9	17	6	13	15	17	18	4



4.0. Methodology

The COMPAS web-survey of CEOs and leaders of small, medium, and large corporations was conducted February 7 - 9, 2007. Respondents constitute an essentially hand-picked panel with a higher numerical representation of small and medium-sized firms.

Because of the small population of CEOs and business leaders from which the sample was drawn, the study can be considered more accurate than comparably sized general public studies. In studies of the general public, surveys 121 are deemed accurate to within approximate 8.9 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The principal and co-investigator on this study are Conrad Winn, Ph.D. and Tamara Gottlieb.

