**Environmental Law: International Issues and Advocates for Environmental Protection**

**Advocates for Environmental Protection**

Government and the courts play an important role in protecting the environment. Additionally, in the last thirty years, there have been a growing number of non-governmental organizations and individuals that strongly advocate for the protection of the environment. Some non-governmental organizations include the Sierra Club of Canada, the David Suzuki Foundation, and Pollution Probe. Individuals like David Suzuki and Elizabeth May also actively work to protect the environment. Such individuals and groups seek to promote awareness of environmental issues and influence government policies regarding the environment. The influence of such groups and individuals cannot be underestimated, as their continued work helps to focus media attention on the environment and bring it to the forefront of government policy making.

**International Agreements**

Since environmental issues have far reaching effects around the world i.e., climate change, air quality, and water pollution, it is necessary to put pressure on countries to enter into international agreements regarding environmental protection. Canada has entered into a variety of international agreements. They include:

* The Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (1979)
* The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987)
* The United Nations Convention on Climate Change (1992)
* The Kyoto Protocol (1997)
* The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001).

Whether agreements are made domestically or internationally, there is often a great economic cost to implementing them. Some countries refuse to sign international environmental agreements because they fear that they will have a disastrous effect on their economies. Sometimes countries refuse if it means relinquishing a resource. The largest problem associated with international agreements is that there is no way to force countries to comply with the agreement. International pressure may be the only way to encourage countries to sign and fulfill their obligations in the international community.

**Research and Discuss:**

1. In Canada, calls for the government to fulfill its obligations to the Kyoto Protocol became increasingly vocal amongst environmental groups. What is the Kyoto Protocol? How can Canada meet Kyoto’s targets? What will the cost be to meet Kyoto’s targets?