

= John Baird ( Canadian politician ) =

John Russell Baird , PC ( born May 26 , 1969 ) is a Canadian former politician . Baird served from 2011 to 2015 as Canada 's Minister of Foreign Affairs in the cabinet of Prime Minister Stephen Harper . He had been a member of the federal cabinet , in various positions , since 2006 . Previously he was a provincial cabinet minister in Ontario during the governments of Premiers Mike Harris and Ernie Eves . Baird resigned from cabinet on February 3 , 2015 , and as a Member of Parliament on March 16 , 2015 .

= = Overview = =

Before his spell as Minister of Foreign Affairs Baird held the posts of Minister of Transport , Infrastructure and Communities , Minister of the Environment and President of the Treasury Board . Prior to entering federal politics he was a provincial politician serving in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from 1995 to 2005 and a cabinet minister in the Progressive Conservative governments of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves , serving as the Minister for Children , Community and Social Services , Energy and Francophone Affairs in addition to being the Government 's Chief Whip .

A long @-@ time resident of the former city of Nepean , where he attended Bell High School , and a graduate of Kingston 's Queen 's University , he was until recently the member of the House of Commons of Canada for the riding of Ottawa West ? Nepean . Baird was elected there as a candidate for the Conservative Party of Canada in the 2006 federal election , when his party defeated Paul Martin 's Liberal Party and established a minority government . Baird was sworn in as Leader of the Government in the House of Commons , replacing Jay Hill , on August 6 , 2010 . Prior to this , Baird served as Transport Minister starting October 30 , 2008 , Environment Minister starting January 2007 , and President of the Treasury Board during the Conservatives ' first year in power .

Baird served in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from 1995 to 2005 for the riding of Nepean ? Carleton ( part of Nepean until 1999 ) , and was a cabinet minister in the Progressive Conservative governments of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves . He served as the Minister for Children , Community and Social Services , Energy and Francophone Affairs in addition to being the Government 's Chief Whip . After the Conservatives ' defeat by Dalton McGuinty 's Ontario Liberal Party , he was the party 's critic for key portfolios including finance , culture and health . Baird had been a member of the Conservatives since 1985 , when he was the youngest delegate at that time and was also a political aide for the federal Progressive Conservative Party of Canada in the late 1980s .

Directly upon his entry into politics , Baird became well known for being vocal on many subjects in the provincial and federal levels of government . During his tenure in the Harris Cabinet he adopted several cost @-@ saving measures , including reductions in discretionary government spending and an attempt to sell Hydro One , the government @-@ owned utility firm . As the federal President of the Treasury Board in the Harper Cabinet , he adopted the Federal Accountability Act , which was put in place after the Gomery Commission which investigated the federal sponsorship scandal in the late 1990s and early 2000s . As Environment Minister , Baird signalled the Canadian government 's opposition to the Kyoto Protocol whose targets have been functionally ignored since its symbolic ratification by the Chretien government .

= = Early life and career = =

Baird was born in Nepean , Ontario , the son of Marianne ( née Collins ) and Gerald Baird . He became involved in politics when he backed a candidate for the local federal PC nomination in 1984 . The next year , at age sixteen , Baird was the youngest delegate to attend the party 's January 1985 provincial leadership convention , as a supporter of Ontario Attorney @-@ General Roy McMurtry .

He was later president of the youth wing of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario , and aligned himself with Dennis Timbrell during the latter 's abortive campaign for the PC leadership in 1989 ? 90 . He backed Mike Harris when Timbrell withdrew from the contest . Baird has also

indicated that he was charged with trespassing during the 1988 federal election , after he tried to question Ontario Premier David Peterson about free trade with the United States during a Liberal Party campaign stop in a Kingston shopping mall . He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Studies from Queen 's University in 1992 .

Baird worked on the political staff of Perrin Beatty when Beatty was federal Minister of National Defence in the early 1990s , and followed Beatty through subsequent cabinet shifts , culminating in his becoming Secretary of State for External Affairs in the short @-@ lived 1993 government of Kim Campbell . After the defeat of the federal Progressive Conservatives in the 1993 federal election , Baird worked as a lobbyist in Ottawa .

Baird says he has been a vegetarian since 1997 . However , he admits to eating fish , and he reportedly ate seal meat on a trip to the Arctic in 2009 .

He had a pet grey tabby cat named Thatcher ; when the cat died on November 10 , 2009 , a message sent by Baird using his Blackberry which said " Thatcher has died " resulted in a false rumour to the effect that Margaret Thatcher had died . In June 2008 , he was selected by the Ottawa Business Journal as a recipient of the " Forty Under 40 " award .

= = Provincial politics = =

= = = Government backbencher = = =

While Baird had been associated with red Tories such as Timbrell and Beatty , he became associated with the conservative ideology of the Mike Harris @-@ led Ontario PC party upon entering provincial politics . He was first elected to the Ontario legislature in 1995 , defeating Liberal incumbent Hans Daigeler in the Ottawa @-@ area riding of Nepean . The youngest member of the legislature , Baird was appointed parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour on July 13 , 1995 .

He became parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet in April 1997 , and was promoted to parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance in November of the same year . As a backbencher , Baird proposed a bill naming Highway 416 as the " Veterans ' Memorial Highway " and successfully steered its passage through the legislature . He was easily re @-@ elected in 1999 , defeating longtime Ottawa councillor Gord Hunter by a margin of almost 15 @,@ 000 votes .

= = = Community and Social Services minister = = =

Baird joined Premier Harris 's cabinet on June 17 , 1999 as Minister of Community and Social Services , where he became responsible for implementing and expanding Ontario 's workfare program . As one of Harris 's few bilingual ministers , he was also named as Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs .

= = = = 1999 = = = =

Baird 's first press conference as a cabinet minister was held in July 1999 , and was intended to highlight the Harris government 's record in reducing the provincial welfare rolls . Baird told reporters that 15 @,@ 000 people had left the system since the introduction of workfare , and used this figure to argue that the government 's policy was a success . At the time , he lacked information on the number of workfare recipients who actually found jobs , and he also did not account for 40 % of the welfare recipients who had been cut from the list . A number of media reports subsequently criticized both the principle and the implementation of workfare in Ontario .

A September 1999 report from Baird 's ministry showed that 10 @,@ 600 workfare placements had been created in the first six months of 1999 , a figure which the Toronto Star observed was significantly lower than that which had been predicted by the government . Baird indicated that he

would continue with the workfare program , and that the proportion of welfare recipients on workfare would be increased from 15 % to 30 % .

Baird was criticized in late 1999 for refusing to cancel a five @-@ year contract that had been signed between his department and the Bermuda @-@ based private firm Andersen Consulting ( later Accenture ) , worth up to \$ 180 million . The contract , signed when Janet Ecker was Community and Social Services minister , entrusted Andersen with providing technological upgrades to the province 's welfare management system . The arrangement was criticized by Auditor General Erik Peters , who observed that there was nothing in the contract to prevent Andersen from increasing its hourly rates . A published report in early 2000 indicated that Andersen was charging an average of \$ 257 per hour for work that had previously been done by ministry staff at \$ 51 per hour . Another report indicated that the firm had charged a total of \$ 55 million to find roughly \$ 66 million worth of savings . In response to opposition questions , Baird said that he would not terminate the contract but would endeavour to negotiate a lower rate . Baird opposed the Harris government 's plan to amalgamate the city of Ottawa with neighboring municipalities , which was approved by the legislature in 1999 .

= = = = 2000 = = = =

In January 2000 , Baird unveiled a series of initiatives designed to reduce fraud and misuse in the welfare system . This was highlighted by the establishment of a welfare fraud hotline and a complementary conditionality three months later , in which anyone convicted of welfare fraud would run the risk of being given a lifetime ban from the program . The investigations Baird initiated during the fiscal year of 2000 uncovered \$ 58 @.@ 2 million in social assistance that people were not entitled to receive , and \$ 16 @.@ 6 million in avoided future costs , but critics of this approach , including opposition members , poverty advocates , and scholars , suggested that the Harris government was overstating the extent of fraud in order to undermine public confidence in welfare programs . In mid @-@ year , Baird announced that workfare placements had reached departmental quotas for most of the province .

Baird revealed a \$ 50 million program in May 2000 to help people with developmental disabilities become integrated into their communities . He later affirmed that the province was considering closing its remaining three institutions for the mentally handicapped as part of a larger strategy focusing on home care . Baird expressed concern about the physical condition of these institutions , saying that their residents " deserve better " . Later that same year , he stated that his department would spend \$ 26 million on shelters and other funding for the homeless .

Baird supported mandatory drug @-@ testing for welfare recipients and argued that those who refused such tests should be at risk of have their assistance cut off . He introduced a policy initiative to this effect at a press conference in late 2000 , in which he dramatically cast a box of syringes onto the floor and said that his department planned to " stop people from shooting their welfare cheque up their arm , and to help them shoot up the ladder of success " . Baird acknowledged that his department did not have reliable figures on the number of welfare recipients abusing drugs , although he cited estimates of between 4 % and 10 % . The proposal was criticized by several people , including Ontario Human Rights Commissioner Keith Norton , a former Progressive Conservative cabinet minister , who expressed concern that it could violate Ontario 's human rights code , but officials including Baird justified the measures as , " necessary in order to push people still receiving assistance toward independence . "

Shortly after Baird 's announcement , a government website operated by the Ministry of Community and Social Services launched an attack against Liberal Party leader Dalton McGuinty for opposing the drug testing plan . The site claimed that McGuinty was " opposed to helping welfare recipients who are addicted to drugs " . Baird denied that the message was partisan and initially refused to apologize . The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario subsequently ruled that the site content was inappropriate and it was removed by the government , with an apology .

= = = = 2001 ? 02 = = = =

In early 2001 , Baird announced that his government 's proposed drug @-@ testing plan would be extended to identify welfare recipients addicted to prescription drugs and alcohol . He later announced that provincial welfare applicants would be required to pass a literacy test . The Harris government 's welfare policies were put under scrutiny in August 2001 after a pregnant woman in Sudbury , Kimberly Rogers , died while serving a house arrest for welfare fraud . The woman had been confined to her apartment for three months and reports indicated that her pregnancy was " exacerbated by sweltering conditions in her apartment " . Responding to criticism , Baird said that he could not comment on the specifics of the case until a coroner 's inquest was completed . He defended his government 's general policy on welfare issues . A subsequent inquest did not assign blame to the government for the woman 's death , but recommended that lifetime bans for fraud be eliminated , and that adequate food , housing and medication be provided to anyone under house arrest .

Baird was given additional responsibilities as Minister responsible for Children on February 8 , 2001 . His department increased funding for child services early in the year , amid a significant increase in provincial demand . In November 2001 , the provincial media obtained a confidential government report recommending 40 ? 45 % cuts in provincial child @-@ care programs . Baird initially declined to comment on the document 's contents , but rejected its proposals in early 2002 .

Baird was the first cabinet minister to support Jim Flaherty 's campaign to succeed Mike Harris as Progressive Conservative Party leader in the party 's 2002 leadership election . The election was won by Flaherty 's rival Ernie Eves , and early media reports suggested that Baird might be dropped from the new premier 's cabinet in April 2002 . He was not , but was demoted to the position of Chief Government Whip while remaining associate minister for Francophone Affairs . His replacement in Social Services was Brenda Elliott , who was from the more centrist wing of the Progressive Conservative Party .

= = = Energy Minister and Government House Leader = = =

Baird was returned to a more prominent cabinet position in August 2002 after Eves separated the ministries of Environment and Energy and appointed Baird to head the latter department . Baird was given additional responsibilities as Government House Leader in June 2003 after Chris Stockwell was forced to resign following allegations that he had used government funds for a family vacation .

As Energy Minister , Baird was entrusted with implementing the government 's plan to sell off part of Ontario 's Hydro One . A few months later , he became unexpectedly involved in two major and interrelated policy reversals . The Energy ministry came under intense media scrutiny in late 2002 after hydro rates increased significantly in many parts of the province . Critics argued that the Progressive Conservative government 's price deregulation policy ( implemented before Baird became Energy Minister ) was responsible . Baird suggested that the rate increases resulted from an unusually hot summer . Rates remained high through the autumn , and the Eves government was forced to re @-@ regulate the market in November by introducing a price cap . The government continued to support deregulation in principle , but maintained the cap for the remainder of its term in office . The second and more fundamental reversal occurred in late January 2003 , when Premier Eves announced that Hydro One would remain under public control .

Baird was regarded as less combative as Energy Minister than he had been in Community and Social Services . The energy policies of the Eves government were controversial , but opposition criticism was often directed at the premier rather than at Baird . Eves took a prominent interest in the Energy portfolio , and sometimes relegated Baird to a secondary role in policy announcements . In November 2002 , however , he was followed around the province by " Hydrozilla " , a man in a giant lizard suit sent by the Ontario New Democratic Party as a stunt to show that deregulating electricity rates would create an ' economic monster ' for consumers . In early March 2003 , Baird announced that the government might be forced to implement rolling blackouts as a response to energy shortages . He encouraged conservation in late summer 2003 , following a province @-@ wide blackout caused by a generator failure in the United States .

= = = Opposition member = = =

The Ontario Liberal Party won a majority government in the 2003 election , although Baird was comfortably re-elected in his own seat . Between 2003 and 2005 he served as Official Opposition critic for Finance , Culture , Francophone Affairs , Intergovernmental Affairs and Health . He opposed the imposition of a health premium by Dalton McGuinty 's government in 2004 , charging that the Liberals broke an election pledge not to raise taxes . Baird and New Democrat Peter Kormos were vocal critics of Speaker Alvin Curling for allegedly favouring his Liberal colleagues , saying that he sanctioned Conservative and NDP members for behaviour he would allow from Liberals . At one stage , Baird described Curling 's job performance as an " absolute disgrace " .

Baird co-chaired Jim Flaherty 's second campaign to lead the Progressive Conservative party in 2004 . Flaherty was again unsuccessful , losing on the second ballot to the more centrist John Tory . Baird and Flaherty left provincial politics in 2005 to campaign for the federal House of Commons . Although Baird was generally on the right wing of the provincial Progressive Conservative Party , he expressed liberal views on some social issues . He supported same-sex marriage during the 2003 provincial election , and in 2005 helped the McGuinty government achieve quick passage of a provincial bill granting legal recognition to same-sex couples .

= = Federal politics = =

Baird supported a Canadian Alliance candidate in the 2000 federal election , and later endorsed Stephen Harper 's bid to lead the newly formed Conservative Party of Canada in its 2004 leadership election . He was appointed as the Conservative Party 's Ontario co-chaire for the 2004 federal election . There were rumours that Baird would leave provincial politics to contest the 2004 election , but this did not happen . In 2005 he resigned his provincial seat to campaign federally for the Conservative Party .

Baird won a contested nomination battle for Ottawa West - Nepean Conservative nomination on May 5 , 2005 , defeating challengers Ed Mahfouz , Margret Kopala and Ade Olumide . John Pacheco , a leader in the social conservative movement against same-sex marriage , had sought the nomination but was disqualified due to past comments he had made alleging that homosexual practices posed a health risk . Pacheco later campaigned in the election as an " Independent conservative " , with the specific intent of being a spoiler against Baird . He argued that if his campaign caused Baird to lose , the Conservatives would " get the message that social conservatives are serious about their politics . " Baird chose to ignore Pacheco entirely in at least one all-candidates debate .

Baird was elected , defeating Liberal candidate Lee Farnworth by about 5,000 votes . The Ottawa Citizen endorsed Baird in this campaign , and argued that his political judgment had improved considerably since his tenure as a Harris cabinet minister . In December 2006 Baird was one of thirteen Conservative MPs who voted against reopening the national debate on same-sex marriage .

Baird has played an aggressive role in Question Period since his appointment to cabinet , leading MP Garth Turner to describe him as Stephen Harper 's " Commons pit bull " .

= = = President of the Treasury Board = = =

Baird was appointed President of the Treasury Board on February 6 , 2006 . Following his appointment , he said that one of his priorities would be to prevent government jobs from being relocated from Ottawa to other regions for political purposes . Baird also indicated that his government was not planning to introduce job cuts or initiate a radical reduction in the size of government . In June 2006 he announced the creation of a three-member panel to advise the federal government on grant and contribution programs and accountability issues . One of the

members was Frances Lankin , a former Ontario New Democratic Party cabinet minister .

=== Accountability Act ===

Baird introduced the Conservative government 's first piece of legislation in April 2006 . The Accountability Act promised significant reform to the structure of Canadian politics and government . Prime Minister Harper said that it would " put an end to the influence of money " in the Canadian government . The Accountability Act restricted the ability of former politicians and bureaucrats to become lobbyists , provided protection to whistle @-@ blowers in the civil service and gave the Auditor General of Canada new powers of oversight . It limited individual donations to political parties and candidates to \$ 1 @,@ 100 per year ( down from \$ 5 @,@ 200 ) , created nine new or revised positions to oversee the activities of public officials and placed crown corporations such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation under access @-@ to @-@ information legislation .

Opposition MPs complained that several recommendations for access @-@ to @-@ information reform were left out of the bill , and were instead sent to committee for further review . New Democratic Party MP Pat Martin suggested that this deferral could delay meaningful reform for the foreseeable future . Martin later made a deal with Baird to give the bill an easy passage through committee , in return for the Conservatives accepting some NDP amendments .

Information Commissioner John Reid has criticized the new proposed powers for his department under the legislation , arguing that they will create unnecessary bureaucracy . Shortly after the Accountability Act was introduced to parliament , Reid issued an emergency report saying that the legislation would " increase the government 's ability to cover up wrongdoing , shield itself from embarrassment and control the flow of information to Canadians " . He added that no government had ever put forward " a more retrograde and dangerous " set of proposals for dealing with access to information laws . Baird described Reid 's criticisms as " excessive " , stating that most of the commissioner 's specific concerns were minor in nature . Representatives of Canada 's business community also expressed concern about changes to disclosure laws , arguing that their commercial secrets could be exposed to competitors .

The bill passed the House of Commons on division in June 2006 . The Canadian Senate approved it in December 2006 , with several amendments , and sent it back to the Commons for further consideration . The amended act was approved by the Commons without debate on December 8 , and was signed into law four days later .

Shortly after the bill first passed the Commons , Baird acknowledged that the Conservatives might have unintentionally broken political financing laws by failing to report convention fees collected in 2005 . He told a Senate committee that \$ 1 @.@ 7 million was left unreported and that he did not realize it was an issue at the time . The matter is under review by the Chief Electoral Officer . The Conservatives quietly tabled an amendment to the Accountability Act in November 2006 , stipulating that convention fees will not be counted as political contributions .

=== Program cuts ===

In May 2006 , Baird was asked to find \$ 1 billion in cuts for 2006 and 2007 . On September 25 , on the same day that the government announced a \$ 13 @.@ 2 billion surplus , Baird announced cuts to sixty @-@ six federal programs , including Status of Women , medicinal marijuana research , Canadian museums , adult literacy , youth employment and social development and the British Columbia pine beetle program . One of the most controversial cuts was to the federal Court Challenges Program , which provided funding for Canadians to pursue rights cases in the Canadian court system . Baird argued that government funding would be redirected in a way that " reflects the priorities of working families " and that he " just [ didn 't ] think it made sense for the government to subsidize lawyers to challenge the government 's own laws in court . " In justifying cuts to adult literacy programs , Baird referenced his government 's support for youth literacy and said , " We 've got to fix the ground level problem and not be trying to do repair work after the fact . "

===== 2006 Ottawa municipal election =====

In early October 2006 , Baird 's department reviewed a promised \$ 200 million grant to the City of Ottawa 's light @-@ rail expansion project for the O @-@ Train . Baird indicated that the government would keep the funding at least until the November election , but added that the Council elected in November would have the final say on the issue . He also leaked details of the city 's contact with the German firm Siemens . As a result , the rail program became a focal issue in the 2006 Ottawa mayoral election and Baird 's opponents accused him of trying to influence the outcome . Baird and Ottawa Mayor Bob Chiarelli accused one another of lying about details of the project , and Liberal MP Navdeep Bains asked the Federal Ethics Commissioner to investigate Baird 's decision to release details of the private contract . Chiarelli was defeated in the election and the light @-@ rail expansion was stopped by the new council .

An Ottawa Citizen report in January 2007 revealed that federal officials had not posed any objections to the light @-@ rail project before Baird 's intervention , and suggested that his involvement was political in nature . Green Party leader Elizabeth May speculated that Ottawa may have been deprived of light @-@ rail service because of an apparent " personal vendetta " from Baird against Chiarelli . Baird denied this charge , saying that his intervention was not political .

Opponents of the light @-@ rail project have argued that it was undertaken without sufficient consultation with the public . In February 2008 , it was reported that the House of Commons committee on government operations would be looking into his involvement over the case . MP and committee member Mark Holland voiced a concern that Baird leaked information on the contract . Baird replied that he made the right decision and dismissed the investigation saying " there is no evidence of anything " . Speaking to reporters he added following the announcement of the investigation : " If you want to avert a billion @-@ dollar boondoggle , you have to make some difficult decisions " .

===== Other responsibilities =====

Baird held ministerial responsibilities for the Toronto Harbourfront Centre and the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation . He developed a working relationship with Toronto Mayor David Miller soon after his appointment , and was present for the announcement of a comprehensive new waterfront strategy in June 2006 . Ontario cabinet minister David Caplan described Baird as a champion of waterfront renewal and Miller described him as an ally of the city . Baird spent Christmas 2006 meeting with Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan .

===== Environment Minister 2007 ? 08 =====

On January 4 , 2007 , Baird was appointed as Environment Minister in a cabinet shuffle , replacing Rona Ambrose . In making the appointment , Prime Minister Stephen Harper acknowledged that his government needed to do more to make the environment a priority . Some commentators remarked favourably on Baird 's appointment , describing him as a strong communicator and negotiator . Columnist Andrew Coyne , however , described Baird as " the man sent to kill the issue , " suggesting that Baird 's appointment was meant to neutralize the environment as an election issue rather than to initiate any meaningful reforms . Baird is a vocal opponent of the Kyoto Protocol , which he argues will bring about an " economic collapse " . Later in 2007 , he added that any new environmental agreements must include reduction targets for major greenhouse emitters such as China , India and the United States who have not signed the Protocol or does not have any mandatory reductions set by the Protocol . Baird met with renowned Canadian environmentalist David Suzuki following his appointment . At the time Suzuki said he was encouraged by Baird 's approach , but remained skeptical of the Harper government 's environmental plans . However , when Baird unveiled the Conservative government 's plan in April 2007 , Suzuki confronted him , calling the plan " a disappointment " .

===== Approach to the Kyoto Protocol =====

In February 2007 , the Liberal opposition brought forward a non @-@ binding motion for Canada to renew its commitment to the Kyoto Protocol . All Conservative MPs who were present in the House , including Baird , voted against the motion , which passed with the support of the three opposition parties . The following month , opposition members on a special Commons committee used their majority to bring forward sweeping changes to the government 's Clean Air Act . Among other things , the revised act called for participation in international carbon markets and the fulfillment of Kyoto targets .

Baird indicated that the opposition 's changes would not be included in federal targets or regulations .

In April 2007 , Baird produced a federal study supported by five independent economists to support his approach to the Kyoto Protocol . Among the five economists was Toronto @-@ Dominion Bank chief economist Don Drummond , who also wrote a private letter to Baird arguing that the " economic cost [ of implementing Kyoto ] would be at least as deep as the recession in the early 1980s . " Opposition parliamentarians dismissed the report as a scare tactic , while Liberal Environment critic David McGuinty argued that the study was misleading , saying that it did not properly examine international emission trading and ignored jobs to be created through the " green economy " . The report claimed that Canada 's ability to invest in developing nations to meet emissions targets through CDM by misquoting the amount of credit to be \$ 85 million instead of the real approximation of \$ 3 billion . Soon afterward , a United Nations report also contradicted the study mentioning that " steep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions can be accomplished at a cost of only 0 @.@ 12 per cent of the world 's annual economic output " but Baird responded that Canada 's gas emission levels would peak in 2012 , three years before the UN 's set target of 2015 .

===== Environmental strategy =====

Baird was the Harper government 's representative at the release of a major United Nations report on climate change in Paris in February 2007 . He described the report as a " turning point in the battle against climate change , " while indicating his surprise that human activity was found to be a major cause of the phenomenon .

Baird released his government 's targets for greenhouse gas emissions in late April 2007 . The plan calls for Canada to begin cutting its existing rate of greenhouse gas emissions by 2010 and for cuts to reach 20 % by 2020 . Under this plan , Canada will reach its Kyoto targets between 2020 and 2025 , taking an additional eight to thirteen years longer than Kyoto . The government plan uses production intensity targets instead of hard caps . Baird said that the " plan strikes a balance between the perfection some environmentalists may be seeking and the status quo that some in industry seek to protect . " In December 2007 , Baird revealed in a plan that over 700 big @-@ polluter companies , including oil and gas , pulp and paper , electricity and iron and steel companies , must cut greenhouse emissions by six percent between 2008 and 2010 . The companies would also have to produce an annual report every May 31 that would include data regarding the level of greenhouses emissions produced each year . Baird 's proposal has been met with approval from Canada 's oilpatch executives , who described them as the toughest emission regulations in the world , and who feared that more stringent standards would stifle oil sands exploration . Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty had been considerably less critical than his brother , federal Liberal Member of Parliament David McGuinty , having written to Prime Minister Harper on the environmental policy . The Premier had stressed the importance of a policy that considered the North American market as a whole , due to the automotive industry 's importance to his province . McGuinty said the Conservatives ' environmental plan could have gone further but described the auto emissions part of the plan as " very sensible " .

Members of opposition parties have criticized the government 's abandonment of the Kyoto goals , while David Suzuki described the proposal as a " sham " with " weak targets " . Former US vice president Al Gore said Baird 's plan was a " complete and total fraud " that was " designed to



mislead the Canadian people " . Baird responded by defending his plan and by criticizing Gore 's environmental record , noting that no similarly stringent measures were passed during Gore 's tenure in office and that the Kyoto Treaty was never submitted to the US Senate for ratification . Liberal Party MP Pablo Rodriguez introduced to the House of Commons a private bill that would have forced Canada to comply with the Kyoto Treaty in response to the government 's plan . While the bill passed , Baird mentioned that , even though that the government wouldn 't dismiss the idea , there were no new environmental measures planned . All three opposition parties demanded that the environment become one of the main points of the government 's Throne Speech in the 2007 fall session .

= = = = Environmental record = = = =

Shortly after his appointment , Baird , Stephen Harper and Natural Resources Minister Gary Lunn announced \$ 1 @. @ 5 billion for clean @- @ energy initiatives over the next decade . Baird and Lunn also announced a \$ 230 million program for clean energy technology . Lunn said that " there were literally hundreds of programs but there was no focus " when the Conservatives took office . Critics argued that the new Conservative measures were similar to measures introduced by the Liberals in their 2005 budget . Former Liberal leader Stéphane Dion has argued that the Conservative Party 's strategy is too strongly focused on nuclear energy .

On February 12 , 2007 , Baird appeared at a press conference with Stephen Harper and Quebec Premier Jean Charest to announce a \$ 1 @. @ 5 billion environmental fund for the provinces . Journalist Frances Russell criticized that as a reduction from the \$ 3 billion promised by the previous Liberal government .

Canada is a signatory to the Kyoto protocol which legally requires signatory countries to set up compatible carbon trading markets . In direct defiance of this international legal obligation , in March 2007 , Baird indicated that he wanted Canadian companies to be banned , or at least severely restricted , from participating in the international carbon market . Several European countries had already set up a trading system to allow companies that reduce their emission levels below government targets to sell " credits " on an international market . Many industry leaders argued that Canada should adopt a similar policy . Then @- @ opposition leader Stéphane Dion argued that participation will allow Canadian firms to make " megatonnes of money " . Baird however described some carbon markets as " shaky , " and argued that trade should be restricted to within Canada , or perhaps within North America . In April he indicated that Canadian businesses would soon gain the right to earn credits by investing in overseas environmental projects .

Baird defended another Conservative government decision to cut funds for climate science research , arguing that further studies are largely superfluous in light of recent United Nations reports . Gordon McBean of the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences has disagreed , claiming that further research is the best way to adapt to a changing climate .

Baird said in a House of Commons Committee that his government would not consider the implementation of a carbon tax . He told that the government 's approach " will be to provide regulation for industry to ensure we reduce both greenhouse gas emissions and reduce air pollutants "

= = = = Bali = = = =

While participating at the United Nations Summit On Climate Changes in Bali , Indonesia , Baird announced a \$ 86 million funding to help Canadian communities notably coping with the loss of forests due to pine beetles in the west and of infrastructures in the north due to softer soil . The four @- @ year plan included \$ 56 million on several projects and \$ 29 million for research .

Baird was criticized by some parties and observers for obstructing progress on what was to become ' the Bali Action Plan ' . Baird showed up for the Bali Conference at which it was intended he explain Canada 's position at a meeting with non @- @ governmental activists , but instead quickly left , with one of the activists alleging that Baird left because he " probably did not want to confront young

activists critical of Canada 's stand . "

= = = Draft Baird Movement = = =

In late November and early December 2008 , a website went online allegedly representing a movement to draft Baird for leader of the Conservative Party , in the face of Stephen Harper facing possible defeat by an opposition coalition .

The draft group allegedly comprised over 100 party members from across the country ? including two MPs and one Senator ( who , reportedly , had requested anonymity ) . In its only contact with the media , the campaign claimed it had nearly 3 @, @ 000 visitors and 237 new supporters in less than ten hours .

Baird has since indicated not only that he is loyal to Harper , but that he is uninterested in ever becoming party leader . In 2011 he told a newspaper , " Some people may have when growing up , always harboured leadership ambitions . I 've never harboured leadership ambitions . It is the honest @-@ to @-@ God truth . "

= = = Minister of Transport ( 2008 ? 2010 ) = = =

Baird served as Minister of Transport between October 30 , 2008 and August 6 , 2010 .

= = = ' Interim ' Environment Minister 2010 ? 2011 = = =

= = = = Cancun climate ' fossil awards ' = = = =

After resuming his environment portfolio from November 2010 until January 2011 , Baird was the Harper government 's main representative to the United Nations climate conference in Cancun in December 2010 . On the first day , Canada ? won ? three Fossil of the Day awards , awards which , after a vote by more than 400 leading international organizations , go to countries that do the most to disrupt or undermine UN climate talks . " Canada under Baird was accused of " working against progressive legislation to address climate change " , cited for " cancelling support for clean energy and for failing to have any plan to meet its very weak target for reducing [ Canada ] ' s greenhouse gas emissions . "

= = = Foreign Affairs Minister 2011 ? 2015 = = =

Activists on board a Canadian boat taking supplies to Gaza ( which had been blockaded by the Israeli government to ensure that weapons and other contraband did not enter Gaza ) in November 2011 urged Baird to resign as foreign minister for " failing to do his job " . They said they had been roughed up and Tasered by Israeli forces and that " If minister Baird wants to put the interests of a far @-@ right Israeli government before Canadians , he should apply for the job of Israel 's ambassador " . Baird affirmed Canada 's support for Likud 's opposition to Palestinian statehood while visiting Israel in February 2012 . On September 7 , 2012 he announced the sudden closure of Canada 's embassy in Tehran and the expulsion of all Iranian diplomats from Canada . Baird made the announcement at an Asia @-@ Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Russia . He said Canada 's decision was not linked to growing speculation of an imminent attack by Israel on Iran 's nuclear facilities . Baird said " Canada views the government of Iran as the most significant threat to global peace and security in the world today . " Canada 's actions were immediately praised by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who described them as " bold leadership . "

Baird signed an agreement between the Governments of the United Arab Emirates and Canada for cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of nuclear energy .

Baird 's criticism of the stance of several African countries on same @-@ sex rights and of the Russian Federation for its ban on " homosexual propaganda " and other moves to suppress LGBT

rights have been condemned by the social conservative lobby group REAL Women of Canada which issued a statement accusing him of " abuse of office " claiming that " Mr. Baird 's actions are destructive to the conservative base in Canada and causing collateral damage to his party . " A spokesman for Baird 's office replied stating " The promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of Canada 's foreign policy . "

Baird refused to sign the world Arms Trade Treaty , with the Canadian government reportedly ordering its diplomats to play a ? low @-@ key , minimal role ? during negotiations and protect the rights of Canadian gun owners .

= = = Resignation and departing public office = = =

Following his resignation as Minister of Foreign Affairs , Baird remained a backbench MP for several weeks . On February 19 , 2015 he represented the government at the re @-@ opening of Canada House , the home of the Canadian High Commission to the United Kingdom . Baird 's resignation from parliament took effect on March 16 , 2015 .

= = Private sector = =

Since leaving politics , Baird has accepted several private sector appointments . In June 2015 he was hired as a strategic adviser to Hatch Ltd , an international engineering and consulting firm for companies in the resource industry . In October 2015 , he joined political risk consulting firm Eurasia Group as a senior adviser , where he offers strategic insight to companies on how global politics affects business . He has also been hired as an adviser to Barrick Gold and Bennett Jones , and accepted an appointment to the board of directors of Canadian Pacific Railway .

= = Electoral record = =

Source : Elections Canada

All electoral information taken from Elections Canada and Elections Ontario . Italicized expenditures refer to submitted totals , and are presented when the final reviewed totals are not available .

The 1999 and 2003 expenditure entries are taken from official candidate reports as listed by Elections Ontario . The figures cited are the Total Candidate 's Campaign Expenses Subject to Limitation , and include transfers from constituency associations .

= = Return to private sector = =

On March 27 , 2015 , Barrick Gold Corp. announced Mr. Baird 's appointment to its international advisory board , along with former U.S. Speaker of the House of Representatives , Newt Gingrich . No compensation details were disclosed in the filings .