

*Planning for
a Sustainable
Future* **PROJET
DE SOCIÉTÉ**

PROGRESS REPORT:

**Toward a National Sustainable Development
Strategy for Canada**

Prepared for:
Second National Stakeholders' Assembly
June 3-4, 1993, Ottawa.

ABOUT THE REPORT

This report summarizes the work of the *Projet de Société* between the First and Second National Stakeholders' Assemblies, which were held, respectively, in November 1992 and June 1993. It provides an update on the progress to date and makes recommendations for moving ahead with Phase II of the *Projet*. This document is organized into three parts:

1. an overview of the rationale, aims, and approach of the *Projet de Société*;
2. an assessment of Canada's response to the decisions made at the 1992 Earth Summit;
3. a draft framework within which a national initiative on sustainability planning can be created.

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PART I

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJET DE SOCIÉTÉ

The term "projet de société" is not lightly used, but it must be used for sustainable development... [It] embraces society as a whole and aims at becoming a driving force, a factor transcending our usual limits...The concept of projet de société includes absolutely everyone [and] best reflects what must be done to follow up on Rio.

The Honourable Jean Charest,
Minister of the Environment,
Statement to the House of Commons,
November 1992.

INTRODUCTION

The Projet de Société

The Projet de Société is a partnership of Canadian stakeholders dedicated to building a common future. It is based on the belief that moving to sustainable development is a collective responsibility: All levels and sectors of society must undertake the task of identifying and implementing the changes necessary if we are to ensure economic progress is consistent with ecological constraints and considerations of social equity. Striking such a balance places a premium on our creativity and initiative in working together.

At the invitation of the Honourable Jean Charest, representatives of every major sector of Canadian society met last November 5 and 6, to establish the Projet de Société. A coalition of national organizations, its mandate is to review the commitments Canada made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and to establish a draft framework and a process for planning for a sustainable future.

At the First National Stakeholders' Assembly, participants agreed on the Projet's guiding principles and characteristics (see Box 1). These reflect the widespread conviction that a new approach to problem-solving and decision-making -- one that is integrative, participatory, consensus-seeking, and action-oriented -- is essential if we are to achieve the goal of sustainable development. The concepts underlying that approach will be reflected and exemplified in the work of the Projet de Société.

In particular, the Projet is designed to apply the 'Rio Way' to Canadian activities that follow up on the Earth Summit and that move beyond it. The 'Rio Way' is the open and inclusive process developed by Canada and other countries in UNCED negotiations. Now, the task is to translate the words written for and spoken at Rio into concrete policies and practical actions by government, business, and the voluntary sectors. These initiatives must take place at all levels, from national to local, and they must reach and engage individual Canadians in their daily lives. New institutional models and processes are needed for this purpose.

The initial phase of the Projet de Société, from November 1992 to May 1993, focused on exploring ways and means of implementing such an approach. At the First National Stakeholders' Assembly, the Projet's Working Group was asked to report back on its progress after six months. This section of the report comprises an overview of the experience to date; it outlines the context and purpose of the Projet de Société; describes its aims, approach, and organization; and summarizes the status of work in progress. Several options for Phase II of the Projet are put forward for consideration at the Second National Stakeholders' Assembly.

Principles and Characteristics of the Projet de Société

- *The process is designed to be transparent, inclusive, and accountable.*
- *Each player and each sector is encouraged to identify and take responsibility for its contribution to sustainability.*
- *Dialogue and co-operation among sectors and communities are key elements of problem-solving.*
- *A shared vision and agreement on key policy, institutional, and individual changes are necessary for the transition to sustainability.*
- *Strategy and action must be linked, and must build on previous and ongoing initiatives.*
- *Canada's practice of sustainable development and its contribution to global sustainability should be exemplary.*

Box 1

BACKGROUND

The Earth Summit and Beyond

Heads of state from more than 100 countries attended the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro, between June 3 and 12, 1992. The Earth Summit was an unprecedented gathering of world leaders. It underlined the urgency and importance of sustainable development, which was first articulated at the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. Since then, international conferences and reports have examined the emerging problems of environment and development, and the policy options and costs involved in dealing with them. The work of the World Commission on Environment and Development and its report, *Our Common Future*, were a major milestone on the road to Rio, providing both impetus and foundation for the UNCED discussions.

The events and activities surrounding UNCED involved far more than official negotiations among governments and heads of state. Several thousand representatives of organizations from every region of the world took part in the Global Forum and in other parallel discussions. A global constituency for change emerged from this interaction, a network of institutions and individuals that both parallels and is interwoven with intergovernmental relationships. It constitutes a powerful force for maintaining the momentum of Rio, ensuring that all sectors live up to the commitments they made there.

Canada was a leading participant in UNCED, and wants to set an example in adopting and promoting sustainable development. Our role prior to and at Rio was more influential than either our economic weight or population size might suggest. The leverage we exerted was due to several factors, not least our past record of support and leadership in international agreements on environmental protection. Canada's participatory approach to UNCED negotiations, beginning with the decision to include non-government organizations in the delegations to both the preparatory meetings and the conference itself, also played a significant role. The process is a model for follow-up and delivery on the Rio declarations and documents.

The agreements signed and the decisions made at the Earth Summit provide a framework for global and national action to achieve sustainable development. Agenda 21 forms the cornerstone of the documents prepared for Rio. It is a massive text -- 40 chapters and several hundred pages -- dealing with the complex interaction of environment and development, the gap between North and South, and the policy options and hard realities that confront the world community in these closing years of the twentieth century. Chapter Eight of Agenda 21 deals with the problem of integrating environmental and economic decision-making. The focus is on the policy instruments and tools that facilitate "anticipate and prevent" approaches to assessment, planning, and management.

National sustainable development strategies (NSDSs) are identified as a key mechanism for implementing Agenda 21 and the Earth Summit decisions (Box 2). While processes are still in various stages of development, each country must establish its own individual approach, one that reflects its own ecological, socio-economic, and political conditions. Some countries, for example, are adapting existing national environmental action plans to meet Agenda 21 requirements; others are preparing new, more integrative strategies that co-ordinate and focus environmental, economic, and social goals and actions. The *Projet de Société* is Canada's answer to the challenge of Agenda 21: it recognizes the need to move beyond conventional planning and create a process of fundamental change.

National Sustainable Development Strategies

Agenda 21 calls on governments to adopt a national strategy for sustainable development. It urges that:

This strategy should build upon and harmonize the various sectoral, economic, social, and environmental policies and plans that are operating in the country ... Its goals should be to ensure socially responsible economic development while protecting the resource base and the environment for future generations. It should be developed through the widest possible participation. It should be based on a thorough assessment of the current situation and initiatives.

Box 2

CHANGING DIRECTION

Sustainability, the Future, and Canada

Sustainable development has become a fundamental theme of our time. This idea has been endorsed by many national governments and international agencies. At its core, sustainable development serves as a common currency that unites ecological, social, and economic values and that explicitly connects choices made today with their future consequences (Box 3). Further discussions of core values and principles of sustainability, as they relate to Canada, will be found in the accompanying reports by the Documentation and Information and the Vision and Process committees.

At this stage, it is easier to define what constitutes unsustainable development than to articulate all aspects of sustainable development. In essence, a lack of sustainability means diminishing prospects for future generations. By many measures, we are already witnessing progressive foreclosure of our environmental potential and economic opportunities. This can be detected in such global changes as loss of biodiversity, thinning of stratospheric ozone, climate warming, and land degradation.

In Canada, unsustainability is evident in the drawdown of natural capital -- resource stocks such as fisheries and forests and ecological processes that support them as living systems.

Sustainable development demands that we reverse these trends: We must stop borrowing from the resource and capital assets of future generations to pay for present demands. Otherwise, our children or theirs could become the first generation to live in a Canada of diminished prospects and reduced prosperity. Living within our ecological and economic means demands far-reaching policy, institutional, and technological reforms and, ultimately, shifts in individual values and behaviour. Many of the adjustments necessary are made plain in *Our Common Future*, Agenda 21, and other international and national documents, including Canada's Green Plan.

Only wartime provides precedents for a society that willingly makes fundamental changes to its economic course. However, this time the impetus must come from within, from our individual and collective sense of obligation and fairness to the next and future generations. It will not be an easy transition.

At the same time, however, sustainable development must not be equated with economic decline or competitive disadvantage, and even less with halting all forms of technological innovation. Quite the contrary: The challenge is not whether to grow but how to develop. Shifting to sustainable development must be seen as a positive enterprise, applying our research and development capabilities and entrepreneurial skills to manage change. The emphasis must now shift from talking about this approach to effecting it. In short, the mission of the *Projet de Société* can be defined as changing direction to secure tomorrow.

Sustainable Development
The Brundtland Definition and its Interpretation

...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

World Commission on Environment and
Development, *Our Common Future*

Our Common Future states, frankly, that if people go on producing energy, manufacturing, farming, and using forests and fisheries as they do now, and if they continue to reproduce in numbers at the present rate, then they will narrow sharply the chances of prosperity or even of safe secure livelihoods for the next and subsequent generations.

International Institute for Environmental
Development, *Defending the Future*

Box 3

SECURING TOMORROW

The Approach Taken

Options and Initiatives for UNCED Follow-Up

Is the intention of the national sustainable development strategies process to bypass democratic methods, to accelerate or supplement them? The issue is important because the answer determines who prepares the strategy, how it is prepared and for when it is prepared ... Canada is in the forefront of the consensus-building model, with the national stakeholder meetings ...

Centre for Our Common Future,
The Bulletin, Issue 19, March 1993

Box 4

The goal of the *Projet de Société* is to play an important role in catalyzing and focusing Canada's transition to sustainable development. It will achieve this by adopting and fostering a multi-stakeholder approach that links strategy and action, common purpose and individual responsibility. A recent issue of the Brundtland Bulletin highlights the comparisons between the *Projet de Société* and processes adopted by other countries to prepare national sustainable development strategies. The participatory aspect of Canada's initiative makes it quite different from the government-led exercises prevalent elsewhere (Box 4). Such a venture, of course, carries high risks, as well as large potential rewards.

The real challenge of sustainability planning is not just to be different, but to make a difference. In Canada's case, this involves following through on two keystone commitments:

- getting our own environmental and economic house in order; and
- providing leadership in international efforts to achieve global sustainability.

The two are interrelated and reinforcing. Canada exercises sovereignty and stewardship over the second-largest tract of the world's resource base. Our most significant contribution to global sustainability would be to practise what we preach. Only if we back our international advocacy by concrete example will our words be taken seriously by others. At the same time, there can be no secure future for Canadians without global sustainability.

From the outset, the work of the Projet must take into account Canada's geopolitical diversity and the numerous sustainability activities already taking place across the country. These encompass initiatives by government, business, and voluntary organizations, and occur on the national, provincial, regional, and local levels. Numerous examples could be given. At this point, however, the emphasis should be on the type of relationship the Projet de Société creates with the groups responsible for these activities.

The approach must be constructive, enabling, and flexible, building on and facilitating implementation of other strategies, plans, and initiatives. Members of the Working Group of the Projet de Société agree unanimously that planning for a sustainable future means rejecting a traditional, centralized, hierarchial system.

PROGRESS TO DATE

For the last six months, the activities of the Working Group of the Projet de Société have been carried out by three committees:

- the Ways and Means Committee
- the Document and Information Committee, and
- the Vision and Process Committee.

The reports prepared by the latter two groups are summarized briefly here, with the full text in parts II and III.

It is important to underline the overall relationship of the two reports. The task of the Document and Information Committee was to report on Canada's response to Rio commitments, while that of the Vision and Process Committee was to prepare a concept paper on planning for sustainability. These are complementary and reinforcing activities. A thorough assessment of current activities by all sections of Canadian society is an essential foundation for preparing an appropriate strategy to effect the transition to sustainability.

CANADA'S RESPONSE TO RIO

Summary of the Report of the Document and Information Committee

The initial terms of reference for this committee's work were:

- to identify Canada's UNCED commitments and those responsible for meeting them;
- to establish a process for identifying gaps and omissions; and
- to develop a rational information-sharing mechanism.

An in-depth assessment of post-Rio activities by Canadian sectors and institutions is being prepared in response to the first two objectives. It is based on a chapter-by-chapter review of Canadian follow-up to Agenda 21.

A comprehensive long-term database on sustainability activities and initiatives in Canada is being built by the International Institute for Sustainable Development. The survey provides input to the assessment report, as well as updated data that help meet the objective of developing a way to share information.

Highlights of the situation to date:

- A matrix for analysis is being prepared which introduces the topics and themes covered at UNCED, the complexity and relationship of issues, and the difficulty of integrating them.
- Several "test" chapters are nearing completion. Preliminary identification of deficiencies, gaps, and constraints in the UNCED process is relevant to ongoing work on planning for a sustainable future.
- It is still too early to draw firm conclusions regarding Canada's record for meeting the commitments contained in Agenda 21 and other Rio documents.
- Because of resource and time constraints, information gathering, analysis, and review have been slower than anticipated. Moreover, the process has been carried out, in the main, by volunteers, making it impossible to meet initial expectations of objectivity and comprehensiveness.
- The Committee recommends continuation of work on the report, but notes that changes in approach will be needed.

MOVING AHEAD

Summary of the Report of the Vision and Process Committee

The mandate of this committee was:

- to develop a draft framework for a national sustainability plan for Canada; and
- to identify a participatory process by which to build commitment to implementing the draft framework.

The Committee organized its work to answer the question: What can usefully and strategically be done to facilitate the transition to sustainability? It prepared a concept paper that: articulates the vision needed to meet the challenge of sustainable development; outlines a framework and process for planning for a sustainable future; and identifies key issues, actions, and priority areas in the report phase of the Project's work.

Highlights of the report:

- Although a great deal of work is being done in Canada to move us toward sustainability, there is unlikely to be any significant progress until we deal with cross-sectoral issues and capitalize on the synergy that results from individual actions.
- A proposed five-part draft framework for sustainability planning, with a collaborative, consensus-based process for development and implementation, would have three key elements:
 - developing sector, community, and organizational strategies and plans for sustainability;
 - mobilizing networks to develop options and strategies to support sector and community processes;
 - linking Canadian discussion to the global dialogue on sustainability.
- An initial analysis identifies six key issues that block the shift to sustainability, with options to deal with each issue.
- A five-point work program, for the short- and medium-term, is identified for the next phase of the *Projet de Société*:
 - tracking who is doing what;
 - establishing Canada's research and action agenda;
 - developing a kit of best practices to achieve sustainability;
 - promoting greater consensus on goal setting and vision;
 - cementing partnerships for short-term practical results.

THE PROCESS IN PERSPECTIVE

During the initial phase of the project, the existing consortium of partners had to organize themselves and learn to work together -- not an easy process. It takes time to build relationships, to identify a common purpose, and to agree on an approach. Moreover, to date, the work of the Project de Société has been largely voluntary, with many individuals contributing well beyond any normal call of duty. While this level of participation and input has been crucial to the results achieved in Phase I, there is a serious question about whether we can or should continue on that basis.

At the same time, the purpose and dynamic of the Projet will not be served by establishing a traditional bureaucracy. This report sets out a number of options that should be considered; their common theme is the Projet's need for a flexible support unit that engages the resources and expertise of many institutions to carry out future initiatives. The Projet is well placed to experiment with a decentralized organization that uses communication technology to co-ordinate central and regional activities.

The next phase of the Projet's work should be characterized by a consensus strategy of adapting, testing, and learning ways to achieve sustainability. This process involves building on the experience gained by groups that have successfully applied concepts of sustainable development, using such groups to teach others. Now, the task becomes one of systematically applying the lessons learned to implement the architecture of change set out in the following two reports. By investing time and effort in the recommended actions and initiatives, stakeholders can fulfil a common purpose and individual responsibility to their constituencies and networks.

CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The Projet should be continued for a further six months, with progress to be reviewed by the stakeholders in November 1993.**

Progress to date has been sufficiently encouraging to warrant an extension of our mandate. A further six months would allow us to complete current work in progress, undertake additional outreach activities, and establish a structure for delivery. The next stakeholders' review should consider the options for a longer-term commitment -- say two years -- to the Projet.

- **The review of Canada's response to Agenda 21 and other Rio documents should be completed and include a balanced accounting of different perspectives.**

The current document is intended for wide circulation among Canadians and may be filed with the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and with other

interested international organizations. It helps provide a valuable assessment of our post-Rio activities and initiatives that could be further updated if it were linked to the IISD database.

- **The proposed framework and process for sustainability planning should be adopted as the basis for preparing a long-term strategy.**

A National Sustainable Development Strategy, or its equivalent, must provide a societal context and agenda for making the transition to a common future. It must also identify, catalyze, and facilitate the practical actions to be taken by all sectors of society. Now that we have the anatomy of an approach, a plan for implementation has to be fleshed out, to include the immediate steps needed to strengthen links with government- and private-sector strategies and initiatives.

- **To ensure that the Projet is a truly national effort, further dialogue with other sectors and regions must be undertaken in Phase II.**

We have described the *Projet de Société* as a network of networks. The present Assembly may be seen as its nucleus; next, there must be liaison with other interested organizations, especially those outside the Ottawa-Hull and Metropolitan Toronto areas. At the same time, the process must remain manageable and reflect available resources.

- **Arrangements for carrying out Phase II of the Projet should be streamlined and improved, consistent with the multi-stakeholder nature of the process.**

Because the *Projet de Société* represents a new type of institutional arrangement, we had to invent a process for working together. This should also be seen as a process of trial and error, in which the lessons learned can be put to good use in Phase II. In particular, the *ad hoc*, voluntary arrangement for preparing reports needs to be replaced with a more systematic approach to learning by doing and by disseminating case experiences to others.

- **The burden of support and the resources required for Phase II of the Projet should be shared as widely as possible among stakeholders.**

During the first phase of the *Projet de Société*, funding has come from five institutions: the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, Environment Canada, the International Development Research Centre, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. In the next phase, government and private-sector institutions should be asked to contribute financially or in kind, including support for participation by non-government organizations. Even small donations, earmarked for specific projects, can help.

A FINAL WORD

The Projet de Société is a coalition of Canadian government and non-government organizations working together to promote the transition to sustainability. We are a network of networks, a web that connects equals, held together by the understanding that some goals can be achieved by working together that could never be achieved separately.

PART II

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DOCUMENT AND INFORMATION COMMITTEE

What industrial man has been doing over the last three centuries is to break down the planet's defenses. We have disrupted the process that changed Earth from a lifeless planet to a life-sustaining one. At first we were unwitting agents of our own damnation. But we are no longer innocents. Against the charge of ecocide, the human species will soon have no defense.

Shridath Ramphal
Our Country the Planet

INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this section of the Project's report are to:

- outline the mandate given to this Committee;
- inform the National Stakeholders about the status of the Committee's progress to date;
- outline the two main streams of Committee activities;
- provide substantive examples of what, in the view of the Document and Information Committee, should be included in assessing the commitments that resulted from UNCED;
- provide a rationale for the process undertaken by the Committee and invite the National Stakeholders to consider and endorse it and the Committee's recommendations for future action; and
- encourage broader participation in the National Stakeholders, after the completion of this Assembly.

BACKGROUND

UNCED AGREEMENTS AND CONVENTIONS

At UNCED, the largest intergovernmental conference ever held on environmental issues, the majority of participating governments formally agreed to the principles and programs outlined in five key documents: Agenda 21; the Framework Convention on Climate Change; the Convention on Biological Diversity; the Rio Declaration; and the Statement of Guiding Principles on Forests. (The full name of the latter is: the "Non-legally binding authoritative statement of principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests". The complete name for the Rio Declaration is: the "Rio Declaration on Environment and Development".)

These were negotiated -- formally and informally, in working groups, plenary sessions, in corridors, and over cups of coffee -- during UNCED and the four intergovernmental Preparatory Committee conferences (PrepComs) that led up to it.

Although not officially a part of the Earth Summit Conference, two major parallel events, the International Non-Governmental Organization Forum (Global Forum) and the International Indigenous Conference on Territory, Environment, and Development (also known as the Kari-Oca Conference), were held in Rio at the same time as UNCED.

More than 3,180 non-government organizations (NGOs) registered for the Global Forum, where they discussed, planned, and networked on matters related to the environment and development. They produced a parallel set of documents: the NGOs' Earth Charter and 38 Alternative Treaties. These provide an interesting, alternative perspective on issues covered in Agenda 21, as well as on issues not discussed by UNCED (e.g., racism, disarmament, energy). At the Kari-Oca Conference, held immediately prior to UNCED by and on behalf of the world's indigenous peoples, more than 650 indigenous representatives participated in meetings and cultural events, where they developed and adopted a 109-point Indigenous Peoples Earth Charter. Kari-Oca reaffirmed the desire of indigenous peoples to be treated independent of interest groups or of the NGO community.

AGENDA 21: PURPOSE AND PREMISES

Of the five UNCED documents, Agenda 21 is the longest and most comprehensive, covering and linking issues of sustainable development (see Appendix I for a more detailed discussion of the term), as well as outlining the role of various sectors of society. Agenda 21 comprises 40 chapters, covering 115 program areas in almost 500 pages of text. It deals with a wide range of environment and development issues -- from atmosphere, soil, forests, and oceans to population, consumption, toxic and solid waste disposal, technology transfer, and financing. The program areas in each chapter are discussed from the perspective of a problem definition; the basis for action; objectives; activities to be undertaken; and means of implementation, including funding requirements.

The purpose of Agenda 21 is to forge a global partnership between North and South in sustainable development.

The Agenda's chapters are divided into four categories:

- those that outline the steps necessary to address major development problems in a sustainable manner (such problems as poverty, consumption patterns, population, and human settlements);
- those that address environmental issues such as protecting the atmosphere, combating deforestation and desertification, promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development, conserving biological diversity, and managing solid wastes in an environmentally sound manner;
- those that outline the ways in which the role of women, youth, indigenous people, non-government organizations, and industry can be strengthened to enable them to pursue sustainable development activities;
- those that describe the methods for implementing Agenda 21, including ways to provide financial resources and mechanisms for delivery, transfer of environmentally sound technology, promotion of education and public awareness, and creation of institutions.

In analyzing Canada's response to Agenda 21, it is important to be aware of the premises on which the Agenda rests, because these underpin its recommendations for allocating resources.

Premise 1: Promotion of sustainable development at regional, national and international levels should be encouraged wherever possible.

Premise 2: The main vehicle for preserving the environment is economic growth. This tenet was also articulated by the Brundtland commission report in 1987; Agenda 21 offers the hypothesis that economic growth, with the resources and income redistribution it can engender, is necessary if we are to realize the fruits of sustainable development: alleviating poverty and preserving environmental health and integrity.

In that context, such measures as trade liberalization, financial assistance, international co-operation, technology transfer, and increased competition within and among countries are viewed as integral to promoting sustainable development. As a result, many of the objectives and recommended activities in the document focus on fostering economic growth.

Premise 3: This involves two connected concepts: first, that present social-political-economic structures have the capacity to evolve into structures capable of promoting sustainable development; second, that nations will have sufficient political will to move forward on the Agenda 21 commitments. While Agenda 21 is not legally binding and contains no hard commitments to which governments must adhere, it is assumed that the necessary institutions and instruments will evolve, largely through multilateral efforts by governments and international institutions.

It has been argued, particularly by environmentalists, that the long and cumbersome processes required for multilateral action are inadequate, given the urgency of various ecological and social problems. Others, however, counter that only multilateral negotiations will make it possible to balance all legitimate interests. The latter is the position of both the Government of Canada and Agenda 21.

One may wonder whether governments actually have the capacity -- organized as they are by departments with separate and competing agendas -- to tackle the complex issues involved in integrating environment and development goals. Even more to the point, nation states, each seeking to protect its own self-interest, perhaps cannot be expected to adequately protect the common global interest. In effect, an increasingly interdependent world may no longer be able to afford the luxury of imaginary boundaries surrounding independent governments, particularly when it comes to negotiating international agreements promoting sustainable development. To this end, forms of global or universal governing authorities are seen by some as a necessary and logical remedy to ensure that

the environment is managed in a manner most conducive to achieving sustainable development.

Premise 4: The fourth premise is that Agenda 21's recommendations are adequate to assure preservation of the global environment. Agenda 21 is considered to be a sufficiently comprehensive blueprint to resolve the world's environmental and development problems; it assumes that there is still adequate time to implement the recommended activities. Agenda 21 notes, however, that many groups firmly believe much more is required within the Agenda 21 framework if we are to avert an inexorable downward spiral of economic stagnation coupled with environmental decay. (For example, in its recent *State of the World, 1993*, the Worldwatch Institute argues that, despite the enthusiasm generated by UNCED, "the strides made in Rio were not nearly long or swift enough to save the earth.")

Premise 5: International co-operation will be paramount in resolving environment and development problems at both the global and regional levels. Each of the Agenda 21 chapters has a section titled "capacity building"; the document recognizes that many nations will require considerable assistance in financing, designing, and implementing strategies and technologies that promote sustainable development. Clearly, if the activities recommended in Agenda 21 are to be successfully implemented, they must be undertaken in a spirit of international co-operation and support.

Premise 6: The final premise is that the United Nations will take the major role in international implementation of sustainable development and, therefore, in co-ordinating implementation of the Agenda 21 commitments. While the likelihood of the UN doing so successfully remains to be seen, it is clear that, at the very least, Agenda 21 implies both enhanced spending and administrative powers for the United Nations and places a commensurate onus on national governments to dedicate the resources (financial, technological, educational) needed to promote sustainable development.

THE COMMITTEE'S MANDATE

At its Assembly of November 1992, the National Stakeholders asked the Working Group that had been responsible for the preparations to continue and to carry out certain tasks in readiness for this second National Stakeholders' meeting. The Document and Information Committee was asked to discuss and recommend a process for four of the activities the National Stakeholders had agreed to undertake: identify Canada's UNCED commitments; identify the parties responsible for ensuring the commitments are met; organize a process for identifying gaps; and develop a national information-sharing mechanism.

The Document and Information Committee identified and initiated two distinct but mutually supportive areas of activity. First, an Assessment Document (referred to hereafter as "the Assessment") of the UNCED agreements and conventions must be provided, including relevant chapters in Agenda 21, in order to identify the actions Canadians are taking to achieve sustainable development. In order to prepared the Assessment, UNCED conventions and agreements must be reviewed objectively to:

- capture their essence and *raison d'être*;
- identify Canada's policies and positions with respect to UNCED objectives; and
- identify what sectors of Canadian society are doing, or are planning to do, that is consistent with the objectives.

Second, the Committee must develop and make accessible a database that provides information to Canadians on what is being done in this country with respect to sustainable development initiatives.

STATUS OF WORK IN PROGRESS

THE ASSESSMENT

Purpose

Assessment is essential if Canada is to choose an effective process that leads to sustainable development: Without identifying where Canada is now on the road to sustainable development, it would be extremely difficult to carve a path toward that goal in the coming years. Therefore, the Committee has been working on an Assessment framework and process which, when fully implemented, would provide essential information in establishing rational policies for sustainable development and for upholding Canada's UNCED obligations. This section describes the framework and process.

Framework

To fulfil its mandate, the Document and Information Committee decided to structure the Assessment in the same format as that used for chapters of Agenda 21. The Committee also agreed to relate other world-wide initiatives that promote sustainable development, to the UNCED documents. These include the results of the NGO Global Forum, the Kari-Oca Conference, and other international gatherings and agreements in which sustainable development matters are, and will be, addressed (e.g., GATT, OECD).

The proposed structure is as follows:

1. Introduction

2. Matrix

The matrix would provide a quick visual overview of the topics and themes covered at UNCED; the complexity and inter-relatedness of issues; and the difficulty of integrating them. By cross-referencing the 40 Agenda 21 chapters according to recurring themes (e.g., empowerment of women, full-cost pricing, building capacity), it would compare UNCED commitments -- whether firm or not -- with such existing policy documents as the Green Plan.

The matrix is supported by an introduction that briefly explains recurring, "cross-cutting" themes and their significance for Canada in general and for implementing Agenda 21 in particular.

3. Analysis of UNCED Documents and those of Other International Gatherings Relate to Sustainable Development

A brief introductory overview to this section will outline:

- the official documents that flowed from UNCED (Agenda 21, the Forest Principles, Rio Declaration, the Biodiversity and Global Warming Conventions) and the implications for Canada of signing them;
- the difference between "hard", legally binding commitments and "soft" recommendations; and
- an explanation of "NGO" in the context of the UN. This discussion looks at how the Assessment breaks down the UN definition of NGO into NGO (non-profit), business/industry (profit) and indigenous (other forms of government).

Each chapter of Agenda 21, as well as the Conventions, the Forest Principles, the Rio Declaration and, possibly, other sustainable development-related material not covered at UNCED, will be assessed under the following categories:

- nature of the problem addressed by the UNCED document;
- brief outline of the Agenda 21 chapter/document: program areas and their objectives; estimated cost of the programs
- Canadian participation at Rio (UNCED, Global Forum, Kari-Oca): official Canadian position at UNCED; other Canadian positions at UNCED; commitments made by Canadians at Rio;
- legally binding official documents signed by the Canadian government;
- political decisions (e.g., on aid and Overseas Development Assistance);

- alternative NGO treaties;
- gaps and constraints in UNCED documents, between what stakeholders wanted UNCED to achieve and what was actually achieved; government, NGO, business/industry and indigenous perspectives; omissions in recommended strategies that are paramount to actually achieving the objectives of the agreement/convention/document;
- Canadian participation in other international bodies and agreements that have an impact on sustainability (e.g., GATT);
- implications for Canada of implementing the agreements, conventions and recommendations;
- comparison between current federal government policy and commitments made;
- evolving Canadian activities/responses/initiatives to the sustainability process, from government (e.g., Green Plan, Canadian Environmental Protection Act, Canadian Council on Ministers of the Environment, provincial/territorial and municipal initiatives); NGOs; business/industry; indigenous; other Canadian organizations (e.g., International Development Research Centre, International Institute for Sustainable Development, National Round Table on Environment and Economy);
- possible future action to meet the objectives of Rio and of sustainability as a whole;
- suggested readings and information sources.

4. Deficiencies, Gaps, and Constraints in the UNCED Process

The fourth section of the Assessment will deal with problems in the UNCED process, which have not been fully enough identified at this point.

5. Further Information, Resources and Contacts

In general, this section will discuss the National Information Base on Sustainability Work in Canada (IISD) and will identify available information on sustainable development, as well as suggestions on how groups and individuals can get involved. Internationally, it will briefly describe the Commission on Sustainable Development; the Earth Council; Earth Action International; and others. Nationally, it will deal with the National Stakeholder Process; the Forum for Sustainability; the International Institute for Sustainable Development; the International Development Research Centre; and other Canadian organizations. It will also describe provincial and territorial round tables, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, and other groups. It will also examine municipal and other "green" action plans.

6. Acknowledgments

This part will acknowledge the work of editors, translators, desktop publishers, members of the Document and Information Committee, and others who contribute to preparation of the Assessment.

7. Response Form

A one-page questionnaire/response form will be attached at the back of the Assessment. Easily detached, it will encourage suggestions and input from the National Stakeholders and other readers.

Assessment Process

In assessing the UNCED documents, the Committee is reviewing the literature: background documentation, relevant papers, PrepCom material, as well as input from Canadian participants and from those involved in preparing Canada's contribution to Agenda 21.

Because of constraints of time, finances and human resources, it has been possible only to initiate an assessment of a few Agenda 21 chapters. The Committee plans to finalize those and to complete the remaining evaluations during the second phase of the Project de Société (i.e., after the current Assembly).

Members of the Document and Information Committee chose a chapter in which they had interest or expertise and slotted the compiled information into the framework described earlier; these rough first drafts were sent to an editor to ensure consistency in style. The completed assessment was forwarded for "peer review" and independent appraisal to three or four individuals outside the national stakeholder process, chosen because they have knowledge that is germane to the subject matter.

The assessments are not meant as the final judgment on the degree to which Canada is living up to the promises, made and implied, offered at UNCED. First, government action represents the response of only one sector. Second, while the National Stakeholders process was initiated as a result of UNCED, other groups -- for example, provincial, municipal, and even industry round tables -- are involved in projects, some quite significant, in respect of sustainable development. However, the Committee's assessments, when they are completed, will provide an excellent source for evaluating the progress of Canadians in achieving sustainable development. Moreover, once established, such data can be updated and expanded, and form a rich base on which later decisions, plans, and actions can be made.

PROJET DATABASE:

Sustainable Development Initiatives In Canada

A key issue discussed at the first meeting of the Project de Société was the immediate need, across Canada, for information on UNCED follow-up. In response, as part of its contribution to the Projet, the IISD is developing a database to identify and communicate information about projects in Canada that supports UNCED; this activity is an element of IISD's broader information base on sustainable development.

The IISD database will:

- become a mechanism to be used by organizations wishing to share current and planned activities with others;
- provide better understanding of the diverse initiatives being undertaken across the country; and
- make evident the gaps in actions needed to implement Rio's goals.

Access by stakeholders and constituencies to sustainable development-related information will generate opportunities for partnership and co-operation in program planning. The Projet's goal, in placing all these activities in an UNCED context, is to encourage Canadians to treat the agreements, conventions, and promises of UNCED as an international workplan for achieving sustainable development.

As a first step in creating its database, IISD carried out a survey designed to give a clear picture of current sustainable development activities in Canada. It approached stakeholders and their constituencies, as well as organizations involved in events leading to UNCED. The survey focused on the operational changes organizations have made as a reflection of their commitment to the goals of UNCED. IISD asked organizations to describe:

- programs related to Agenda 21 and goals of sustainable development;
- details of obstacles and opportunities they encountered in implementing such programs; and
- national gaps that might exist in the follow-up to UNCED.

As of May 1993, more than 1,600 organizations had been contacted; although a limited understanding of details relating to UNCED was often encountered in many of these organizations, it was evident that considerable work is being carried out locally, regionally, and nationally to help make sustainable development a reality for Canada.

The computerized system for the Project database provides a platform for complex queries and reporting of information collected. Two significant products were generated for use by the Project.

The first comprises information supplied by the respondent organizations, including:

- general comments;
- basic contact data;
- information needs with respect to UNCED and sustainable development;
- opportunities and obstacles to the sustainability efforts being made by the organizations; gaps in implementing Agenda 21 which have not yet been addressed nationally or internationally;
- specific program and management initiatives that reflect institutional support for sustainable development activities and for the goals of UNCED: many organizations, for example, noted substantive changes to mission statements and general policies, staff and financial allocations, and educational initiatives for both staff and constituencies.

The second, derived from the survey responses, relates organizational activities directly to Agenda 21 and the UNCED documents. Taken together, they represent, in effect, a snapshot of Canadian work in progress.

Because of the way information in the IISD system has been input, additional information can be generated on demand: Organizations have been categorized according to the sectors/constituencies they represent, which provides an overview of activities by sector: government, business, industry, NGOs, education and research, as well as others committed to sustainable development. A similar picture of provincial and regional activity, and the status of their work plans, can also be generated.

The data collected will be widely distributed through as many media as possible, including on hard copy, diskette, and electronic networks. Much of the information is already available in two companion computer conferences, **iisd.a21action** and **iisd.a21org**, on the Canadian APC electronic network node -- the "WEB". These conferences reach a wide audience of NGOs, government officials and researchers, and, in turn, are stimulating further response to this national information survey.

A partnership has been developed between IISD and Environment Canada's UNCED Task Group, which has responsibility for conducting a similar survey of federal government departments and agencies, using the IISD survey format. IISD and the Task Group will work together to merge the data. The result will be a user-friendly, interactive system that serves not just the federal departments and agencies, but all sectors and constituencies in Canada.

INITIAL WORK

PLANNING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

In discussions while the Assessment process was being developed, it was apparent to the National Stakeholders' Working Group that fundamental questions needed to be asked in forming a plan for Canada's sustainable future. For instance, the short-horizon social-political-economic models that have long governed public and private decision-making processes in many countries, including Canada, can no longer be seen as either satisfactory or immutable. Indeed, if the precepts of sustainable development are to be seriously addressed, the National Stakeholders, as part of their mandate, will have to challenge these models and the values that underlie them and put forth viable alternatives for the years ahead.

The increasingly abundant literature available on the subject of sustainable development addresses various regional and global environment and development problems. It is clear that with even the most optimistic projections, many of these problems may categorically be said to constitute impending environmental crises of massive proportions. By extension, it may also be said that any environmental crisis is an economic, social and political crisis: without a living and life-supporting environment, all else becomes little more than academic.

Therefore, the pursuit of sustainability transcends environmental paradigms to encompass all other aspects of human activity. From a purely anthropocentric perspective, endeavours directed at achieving sustainability may be reasonably equated to efforts to preserve the human species.

That the environmental sustainability of the Earth is seriously threatened is now seen by even casual observers as nothing less than a stark reality. Yet the ability of current decision-making models and parameters to respond to this reality is woefully lacking. For example, most economic and political objectives centre on the very short term -- a few years at most.

Unfortunately, the literature citing environmental problems is not matched by any catalogue of solutions for confronting these problems. This seems particularly true of global environmental problems, of which ozone depletion and global warming are simply the best known.

Therefore, in promoting sustainability, the National Stakeholders should advocate research and development into existing decision-making models and methodologies as yet undeveloped, to find the means by which these problems can be addressed. For example,

as well as encouraging development of new environmental technologies, means of applying full-cost accounting to environmental inputs and costs should be explored.

It is evident that the processes leading to sustainable development will be both iterative and lengthy. In view of current environmental trends, however, they are also essential. Certainly, reversing these trends will require changes to many of society's expectations; what is less certain, however, is the time humankind has available for making the changes necessary. Given both the finite boundaries of the Earth's resources and the limits of the Earth's ability to absorb the consequences of human activity, and in view of the exponentially increasing demand on resources and absorptive capacity, time itself is an increasingly scarce resource.

Given many of society's values, nothing short of a major paradigm shift may be necessary. Given the urgency and accelerating rate of many environmental problems, as well as the stakes involved -- the very integrity of the planet's life-support systems -- the National Stakeholders' Working Group urges that all levels of society, regional, national and international, work creatively and expeditiously to develop and pursue a course toward sustainable development. It is understood that this course may, at times, constitute a radical departure from existing modes of problem-solving and decision-making.

While the specifics of a sustainable development plan for Canada remain to be developed by the National Stakeholders and others, a number of principles and parameters are apparent. Moreover, although people and groups may disagree on the meaning of "sustainable development" (See Appendix 1), there is little doubt that the ecosphere faces difficult problems. Once objectives for solving these problems are agreed on -- for example, a decision is made that reducing desertification or preserving biodiversity is important enough to warrant national and international attention -- a process for meeting these objectives becomes possible.

Unfortunately, however, experience would seem to dictate that several criteria, which drive policy, must be in place before action is forthcoming. These criteria are:

- a sense of urgency on the part of the public before the political will can be mustered to take needed action;
- economically viable alternatives to the causes of the environmental problem must be available or possible; and
- scientific certainty as to the causes of the environmental problem must exist before concerted action (international, national or regional) can be justified.

The example of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer is a case in point: Once ozone depletion was unequivocally identified as a serious environmental threat to the planet, an objective was set for reducing and ultimately eliminating the

manufacture and use of many of the chemicals scientifically proven harmful to the ozone layer. In turn, a process of international discussion, followed by the Protocol, was adopted to resolve the problem. Target dates have now been announced for eliminating use of these chemicals and it is expected that the ozone layer will gradually repair itself over the next two centuries. Meanwhile, alternatives to many ozone-depleting chemicals are coming onto the market. All this is evidence that the process to address global environmental problems *can* work when it is deemed sufficiently urgent, when economically viable alternatives are available, and there is no scientific doubt about the cause of the problem.

However, the lack of urgency associated with other environment and development problems, many of which are more complex than the causes of ozone depletion, may make further steps to sustainable development more challenging than the largely positive experience of the Montreal Protocol. Moreover, we cannot wait for the criteria to manifest themselves before action is taken because irreparable environmental damage may be done in the interim.

Obviously, the decision-making process must be amended to circumvent traditional paths to concrete and cohesive action. To do otherwise means running the real risk of delaying action and exceeding environmental carrying capacities and thresholds. In effect, a means must be adopted that invokes a "precautionary principle" for governments. This would motivate them to act on environmental problems in advance of traditional policy-driving criteria. The National Stakeholders should encourage active research and development in ways by which the decision-making process can be enhanced in this regard.

Canada will not be responding to environmental degradation in isolation. While the speed and method of responses from the international community will vary, Canada has an opportunity to take the lead on several fronts. Already, for example, this country has the potential to play a significant role in capacity-building in developing countries and in promoting technology transfer from our rapidly growing environmental services and technology sector. Moreover, as noted earlier in this report, the multi-stakeholder process being applied to post-UNCED activities in Canada is unique. The lessons it teaches can be usefully applied in other countries and in multilateral institutions that make decisions with environmental consequences. Indeed, reports from the National Stakeholders process will not only be of value to Canadians, but will provide necessary input to the Commission on Sustainable Development in its monitoring and facilitation activities.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the transition to sustainability will require new institutional forms based more on networks and partnerships than on the traditional model of hierarchical systems. Similarly, traditional models that govern societal behaviour must be challenged. Among the questions that must be considered:

- What are the alternatives to economic growth as it is now understood?
- Can values that often have little, if any, relevance to market-driven economies -- stewardship, tolerance, and inter-generational equity -- be brought to bear on public and private decision-making processes and, indeed, on the collective consciousness of society as a whole?
- Can improvements in the quality of life be achieved for populations that are growing, while concurrently reducing resource consumption?
- How will such changes in quality be measured?

These are just a few of the kinds of issues that must be explored, in the context of groups such as the National Stakeholders, in order to create a vision for a sustainable future for both Canada and the world.

DEFICIENCIES, GAPS, AND CONSTRAINTS IN THE UNCED PROCESS

Introduction

After spending several months looking critically at the results of UNCED and the UNCED process, the Working Group believes it is useful to identify some broader deficiencies, gaps or constraints that have become apparent.

Two types were identified by the Document and Information Committee: First are those in the UNCED process as a whole; second, are gaps in the Canadian government's post-UNCED performance. In examining the first type, the Committee addressed three issues:

- systemic weaknesses and constraints to achieving sustainability;
- key sustainability issues not covered by Agenda 21; and
- broad deficiencies in the UNCED process and its results.

The Document and Information Committee agreed that it would be most useful to reflect a range of views about key issues relating to sustainable development, rather than try to capture any sort of consensus among Canadian stakeholders. Not only was this approach more feasible, given the limited time the Committee had for its work, but it was seen as producing a more interesting report, and reinforcing the open, inclusive, and transparent spirit of the National Stakeholders.

Because a wide range of views have been expressed to date on gaps and deficiencies, a simple listing is provided for reasons of brevity and inclusiveness. It is important to note

that these lists are not yet complete but will be finished in the months following this Assembly and, accordingly, will be incorporated into the Assessment during Phase II.

All National Stakeholders are invited and encouraged to contribute to this discussion; one of the most useful ways individuals, groups, businesses, and governments can do so is to ensure that the IISD database is regularly updated. This means taking the time and effort to ensure that all the initiatives and activities being undertaken by stakeholders are reported to IISD and entered into its information base. Working from up-to-date and comprehensive data, it is possible to analyze and identify gaps between what Canada is doing and what it should be doing to meet UNCED objectives.

The task of identifying deficiencies, gaps and constraints in the follow-up to UNCED will be ongoing following the current Assembly. They include:

Systemic Weaknesses/Constraints to Achieving Sustainability

There are a number of weaknesses and constraints in social, economic, and political systems that are obstacles to making the transition to sustainable development, nationally and internationally. Not surprisingly, there are many different views about the identity of these roadblocks, and which are most important.

To remove these obstacles and address the weaknesses, the first is to develop a consensus on which of the obstacles/weaknesses present priority areas for action. In the context of the Assessment, however, the purpose is only to indicate the wide range of views that exists. As such, a list of constraints/weaknesses is presented in the context of the following categories: values; general problems; institutional/structural; economic; and science/research/tools.

Some of those listed are expressed as roadblocks, and others as needs. However expressed, they are among the key issues that must be addressed in the coming months and years.

Values:

- the need for environmental and development values that foster genuine respect for nature;
- the need to put people and environmental concerns ahead of economic concerns;
- the need to legitimize the concept of environmental security;
- the need to instill a sense of urgency in the transition to sustainable development;
- the need to move from being reactive to being proactive in addressing environment and development problems;

- the need to reassess consumption and growth patterns and ideology;
- the need to recognize, and alter, conceptual barriers to change by promoting intersectoral thinking, longer time horizons, etc.;
- the need to make a true commitment to equity among different races; among species and generations; and between the sexes;
- the need to alter traditional concepts of national sovereignty and nationalism;
- the need to shift from humankind's natural competitiveness to co-operation.

General Problems:

- differing economic views and values;
- lack of universal standards of education and access to it;
- insufficient public understanding and support of sustainable development, which is now poorly articulated and communicated;
- difficulties in defining sustainable development in a way that can be agreed to by all major stakeholders;
- restricted availability of information about practical successes in sustainable development;
- the lack of forums for sharing information and experience;
- the lack of information at the local level;
- the lack of access to information in rural communities;
- the currently impenetrable language about sustainable development;
- the lack of interesting, accessible public information.

Institutional/Structural Problems:

General:

- power relationships among people, and between people and nature;
- inertia in changing the status quo (vested interests) and the generally slow pace of organizational change;
- the lack of environmental and development priorities, which are needed to get the most from efforts at promoting sustainable development, and the need to establish national and international priorities for action;
- problems inherent in traditional institutional planning and decision-making models;
- the lack of involvement of women in decision-making;
- a frequent inability to use or maximize the potential of interdisciplinary efforts;
- the lack of timely communication among those involved in sustainable development;

- the lack of NGO access to formal UN processes;
- political barriers to NGO activism;
- the lack of democratic local involvement in decision-making related to environmental and development matters;
- the lack of systematic dialogue between practitioners of sustainable development and policy makers;
- the dysfunctional overlay of jurisdictions, agencies, and private-sector organizations, which constitutes a barrier to achieving UNCED goals;
- today's business culture, which is narrowly focused, with structured decision-making that is efficient within the "walls" of a company, but hinders interaction with those outside;
- the lack of public trust in business which indicates a need for public audits to regain people's confidence.

Specific to Government:

- the short-term nature of most political vision;
- modes of thinking by public servants are often not conducive to facilitating sustainable development initiatives, either internal or external to governments;
- inadequate means of setting priorities;
- cabinet decision-making processes often lead to inadequate or insufficient analysis, especially in central agencies;
- intergovernmental constraints -- constitutional ambiguities, overlapping, redundant and competing jurisdictions;
- inter-departmental conflict that diminishes co-operation and encourages inefficiencies and redundancy;
- political decisions that are often inconsistent with development goals;
- regulations, based on insufficient scientific evidence, that cause inappropriate allocation of resources.

Economic:

- lack of funds to finance sustainable development initiatives;
- environmental costs/benefits that are not being clearly linked to economic costs/benefits;
- environmental regulations that can be used as trade barriers;
- the need for full-cost pricing of environmental costs and benefits;
- needed improvements in efficiency of resource use;
- inappropriate production subsidies and economic incentives that, often, are incompatible with the objectives of sustainable development;

- the need for trade principles that support sustainable development;
- the lack of effective and appropriate use of market tools, rather than command and control legislation directed at preserving the environment;
- economic forces that promote unsustainable consumption patterns and scales of operation;
- short-term economic needs (employment, survival) over longer-term imperatives;
- lack of North-South equity;
- insufficient attention to combating poverty.

Science/Research/Tools:

- the reductionist nature of science;
- the need to ask questions about the kind of science necessary for a sustainable future;
- the need for better understanding of ecological limits;
- lack of knowledge about ecosystems and people's interaction with them;
- the need to strengthen and give more independence to the "risk" factor in any risk-benefit analysis;
- the need for a credible and independent data bank in order to establish public trust in environment-related information;
- the fact that the system of disseminating information about science and technology is as complicated as the legal system, without any help for those who want to gain access to the information/expertise it offers;
- vulnerability of scientists who could offer better information to policy makers if they were helped to operate independent of their constituent interests;
- the need to make sufficient and accurate scientific information available to NGOs and local communities so that they can set goals and act effectively in establishing policies directed at sustainable development;
- the lack of funds for research;
- the lack of multidisciplinary approaches to research and post-secondary education;
- the lack of concepts and methodologies to effectively integrate paradigms of environment and development.

Broad Deficiencies and Constraints in the UNCED Process and in its Results

It is useful to look critically at a process so that it can be improved on in future. In an overall assessment of the UNCED process, there is a wide range of views on a number of broader deficiencies and constraints that have been identified. Among those are:

- the tendency to achieve consensus on the basis the lowest common denominator of participating national interests;

- the fact that Agenda 21 suggests goals and objectives but does not provide a methodology for achieving them;
- the scarcity of "hard" commitments to which governments will be held accountable;
- the fact that the role of the private sector in promoting development and prosperity in developing countries is underplayed, although the subject is specifically dealt with in Chapter 30;
- UNCED's failure to address such major development constraints on sustainability as trade and debt;
- UNCED's failure to address development (i.e., economic) strategies that will ensure sustainability;
- poor communication of UNCED goals to the public;
- the fact that many countries did not have or use Canada's capacity to ensure non-governmental participation and input;
- the widespread perception that the Rio Declaration is too weak;
- the widespread perception that UNCED documents are too abstract or vague to attract general interest;
- the lack of political will to follow through on UNCED obligations, which detracts from the credibility of the UNCED process; and
- the general perception of UNCED as a failure, which has become an obstacle to progress.

Many of these concerns reflect the inherent difficulties of trying to achieve something -- in this case sustainable development -- on such a large scale. The purpose of highlighting some deficiencies is to lay the foundation for further work in Phase II of the *Projet de Société*.

Key Sustainability Issues Not Addressed in Agenda 21

The documents that came out of UNCED -- particularly Agenda 21 -- attempt to address a number of the systemic weaknesses or constraints listed earlier. There are, however, several issues not dealt with as chapters in Agenda 21, which the Document and Information Committee felt should have been covered. These include:

- militarism/demilitarization;
- Third World/international debt;
- trans-national corporations;
- globalization of trade;
- population growth;
- nuclear issues; and
- energy issues.

It has also been suggested that the Rio Declaration did not go far enough in addressing some very serious ethical and value-oriented questions that are important parts of the problem and the solution.

Observations And Recommendations For Phase II

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

In many respects, the past six months have been a learning experience for the Working Group: The use of a multi-stakeholder model to comprehensively and critically examine sustainability-related activities and policies is without precedents nationally or internationally. Consequently, there have been few benchmarks or standards to which the Working Group has been able to refer for direction. The challenge, therefore, has been to develop a process of objective reporting on Canadian activities and policies that meet the spirit and intent of UNCED conventions, agreements, and documents which, ultimately, will help facilitate Canada's move toward sustainable development.

In seeking input from a range of Canadian interests, the multi-stakeholder process is clearly democratic and participatory. In general, the National Stakeholders felt in November 1992 that this process would prove more effective than conventional processes of information gathering and issue-specific feedback. Indeed, because of the cross-cutting nature and overwhelming significance of many environmental and development problems, it was thought that a multi-stakeholder process could best identify and reflect the needs and views of Canadians from all sectors. After six months of activity, the Document and Information Committee has some observations and conclusions with respect to this objective, and these may be usefully applied to designing Phase II of the *Projet de Société*.

General Observations on Canadian Initiatives Toward Sustainable Development

This report would be incomplete unless it contained observations about Canadian initiatives that support sustainable development. While many of the specifics of such initiatives will be included in the Phase II Assessment, it is appropriate to offer such observations as part of this report.

Although, in general, it is still too early to say whether UNCED directly spawned Canadian activities or proposals directed at sustainable development, it is apparent that in

recent years Canadians have undertaken various policies and activities consistent with objectives articulated at Rio. Some of the more salient examples are:

- the Green Plan
- the federal and provincial round table movement;
- municipal "green" action plans;
- various business/industry initiatives directed at making operations more environmentally benign;
- a vigorous response from non-government organizations;
- restructuring the IDRC to emphasize sustainable development;
- continuous promotion of sustainable lifestyles.

It is in the context of those broad examples that many specific responses to Rio will be found, and will be detailed in the Assessment in Phase II.

Offsetting the merits of those policy initiatives is the recent reduction in Canada's contribution to Official Development Assistance, with even further reductions anticipated. Funding for the Green Plan has been reduced and there is a continuing battle to keep environmental priorities on the public (and hence, political) agenda in the face of many competing and more immediate priorities.

Lessons Learned from the Working Group Process

The Working Group process has been characterized, in the main, by the voluntarism of its members; its main strength has been members' dedication to the multi-stakeholder process and their genuine concern for a sustainable future. The main weakness has been insufficient time and resources for Working Group members sitting on the Document and Information Committee, which has made it impossible for them to fully capture all Canadian activities and proposals that support sustainable development.

While no process can be completely representative of Canadian interests, a lack of members from academic and independent business groups has detracted from the goal of fully reflecting interests in the multi-stakeholder process. However, with the coming availability of information on the IISD system, it is anticipated that many more Canadian constituencies (and Canadian individuals) will have access to the database describing Canadian sustainable development initiatives, and an opportunity to contribute to it.

It is possible that the natural biases and the particular expertise of Document and Information Committee members assigned to voluntarily make the assessments have somewhat eroded objectivity and comprehensiveness; moreover, peer reviews, envisioned

as providing such objectivity and different perspectives, did not always meet expectations fully. Fewer peer reviews than expected were submitted, and were, themselves, often somewhat biased toward a particular point of view; were characterized more by brevity than detailed and critical insight; and/or were accompanied by a great deal of documentation without content summaries. While peer reviews are a valid and essential part of the assessment process, which must be continued, the review process must be clarified, broadened, and given adequate time.

Remaining Work to be Done

As of May 1993, eight of Agenda 21's 40 chapters have been assessed by the Document and Information Committee and subjected to peer reviews; in addition, the Projet database has been established and is available on the APC Network (WEB). It should be noted, however, that neither is complete. With sufficient resources and the approval of the National Stakeholders, they should be completed in Phase II. It is suggested, however, that some changes to the assessment process be implemented. Despite its merits, the voluntary approach that characterized Phase I has proven to be limited in preparing the Assessment and collecting information to be incorporated in the database. (See below for a preliminary list of options for Phase II.)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHASE II

The Document and Information Committee makes the following recommendations based on its belief that basic information is needed as the foundation for making decisions or changes related to sustainable development. Because this information is the basis of the Projet's work, collecting it should be given priority and be completed as soon as possible.

In addition, the Document and Information Committee recognizes that the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) will be tracking Agenda 21 implementation. The Assessment and database will be a valuable Canadian contribution to the CSD's information on the progress of sustainable development. Therefore, the Committee specifically recommends that:

- the Assessment be completed;
- the Projet database be enhanced, maintained, and updated;
- the work of the Document and Information Committee and of the Vision and Process Committee be integrated;
- efforts to reach out to and involve other Canadian stakeholders be broadened.

PRELIMINARY LIST OF OPTIONS TO DELIVER THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Additional resources will be needed if a comprehensive and objective review and assessment of all UNCED products is to be completed. Options for identifying and obtaining these resources should be discussed at the June Stakeholders Assembly.

The Document and Information Committee has identified a preliminary list of possible means of delivery on the recommendations outlined above. These are as follows:

- the Phase I model of combining voluntary work, secondments, and a relatively small amount of money, comprising contributions made by selected stakeholders, be continued;
- agencies with mandates for sustainable development and consensus-building and with a need for the basic information provided through the National Stakeholders process be sought, to establish new partnerships and resources (for example, IISD has already volunteered to continue to enhance, maintain, and update the Project database);
- consultants be engaged to write and/or co-ordinate continued work on the Assessment;
- provincial/territorial round tables; trade associations; and academic groups be engaged to write and/or co-ordinate continued work on the Assessment;
- a timetable for assessments be created that is consistent with the clusters and five-year thematic work program proposed by the Commission for Sustainable Development.

APPENDIX 1

What is Sustainable Development?

The planet will transit to sustainability; the choice is between society planning for an orderly transition, or letting physical limits and environmental damage dictate the timing of the transition.

*Environmentally Sustainable Economic
Development: Building on Brundtland,
UNESCO, 1991*

Because Agenda 21 was intended as a blueprint for global sustainable development, it is useful to consider what is actually meant by "sustainable development". While the notion of pursuing development that is environmentally sustainable is not new, in recent years it has re-emerged as a catch phrase as a result of the 1987 Brundtland Report; nonetheless, there has been no clear consensus on a specific definition.

For example, the Brundtland Report contains more than one definition, but the most frequently quoted is: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." However, most writers on the subject of sustainable development consider that this deals not only with ecological preservation, but with the need to safeguard social and cultural values and norms. Nonetheless, many NGOs object to this definition as being insufficiently specific and, therefore, open to interpretation. It has also been criticized as being essentially anthropocentric: there is, for instance, no benefit explicitly attached to environmental preservation for the sake of other species or on behalf of nature itself.

The IISD has developed a definition that attempts to articulate sustainable development "in terms familiar to business and government leaders," to assist businesses in applying the concept to their enterprises:

For the business enterprise, sustainable development means adapting business strategies and activities that meet the needs of the enterprise and its stakeholders today while protecting, sustaining and enhancing the human and natural resources that will be needed in the future.

This definition is perhaps the most germane in the context of Agenda 21, which relies heavily on business and industry to move the world toward sustainable development. The business definition of sustainable development does not appear to be incompatible with that of Brundtland, but simply more focused on business needs.

Sustainable development is generally considered to require an element of economic growth. Does this "growth" necessarily demand ever-increasing physical assets in a finite world, or can we assume that technological innovation is capable of providing infinite resource possibilities? The so-far unanswerable question is: What if sustainable development is an oxymoron -- if encouraging economic development, regardless of how it is carried out, proves to be environmentally unsustainable? However, Agenda 21 and proponents of sustainable development have assumed that economic development, as measured by increasing GNP, can, indeed, be environmentally sustainable.

A number of distinctions in defining sustainable development must be kept in mind. In *Blueprint for a Green Economy* (Earthscan Publications Ltd., London, 1989) David Pearce et al outline these distinctions as follows:

- **Economic development** means that real GNP per capita is increasing over time, but such a trend does not mean that growth is "sustainable".
- **Sustainable economic growth** means that real GNP per capita is increasing over time and that the increase is not threatened by "feedback" from either pollution, resource problems or from social disruption.
- **Sustainable development** means that per-capita utility or well-being is increasing over time.

If economic growth does not require ever-increasing additions of physical assets, it would seem that achieving and maintaining sustainable development and a decent standard of living for everyone is possible. Some writers have noted a distinction between "throughput growth", which relies on an ever-increasing throughput of energy and other natural materials, and growth in human-made capital. (See Herman Daly, "From Empty-World Economics to Full-World Economics," *Environmentally Sustainable Economic Development: Building on Brundtland*, UNESCO, Paris, 1992.)

The latter involves further application of knowledge to expanding the economy, backed by continuing increases in efficiency and environmentally sound technologies. Inputs of this nature are far more environmentally benign than those that have traditionally been used to achieve economic expansion. Few, however, would contend that human-made capital could ever completely substitute for throughput elements of growth. After all, as the population increases, so too does the demand for physical necessities and the non-necessities, of life; these, in turn, require increases in physical inputs.

If there were ever any doubt that the United Nations relies on economic growth to cure the planet's many woes, it is effectively dispelled by the following excerpt from the United Nations 1992 Report on the *State of the World Economy*:

Without a more dynamic world economy, the current liberalization efforts of developing countries will not bear fruit. Outward oriented development strategies largely rely on buoyant international trade and, hence, an expanding world economy to achieve their objectives. There is today much concern about the lack of resources for such urgent needs as the reconstruction of the east, a concerted attack on poverty and human development in the poorest countries, and environmental investments of all kinds. If the growth of world output returns to the levels of the 1980s, total output would grow by about one trillion dollars a year. There is, in fact, no other way to resolve the economic and political crises multiplying in the world community than to give priority to the restoration of growth ... Restoring a more vigorous and dynamic climate of growth in the world economy must be the principal objective of international economic co-operation in the years ahead.

ANNEX I

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Lorraine Brook, ICC

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PART III

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISION AND PROCESS COMMITTEE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

The mandate of the Vision and Process Committee has been to develop a draft framework for a national sustainability plan for Canada, and a participatory process that elaborates and builds commitment for the framework.

The Vision and Process Committee has tried to answer the question: What can usefully and strategically be done to facilitate the transition to sustainability? While there is a great deal of work under way to move us toward sustainability, much of it is taking place in isolation. Many participants do not know what others are doing. Many opportunities for synergy are being overlooked, while there are key issues that can be resolved only if all sectors co-operate. Until these issues are addressed, we are unlikely to see significant progress in the move to sustainability.

We approached our tasks with a sense of excitement, of urgency, of commitment to the Rio Way, respect for the diversity of interests and approaches within the group. We tried to operate in a collaborative, consensus-building fashion that recognized the need to balance vision with practical, strategic, and effective action. We represented 14 sectors of Canadian society, each with different concerns, learning to work together.

We developed a draft framework for a sustainability plan for Canada and identified the processes needed to support its development. The draft framework should be seen as a table of contents or a compendium of plans, strategies and actions that are taking place across the nation; together, they will constitute a long-term sustainability strategy for Canada. It describes in a very general way the issues on which we need to build consensus across sectors. It will, undoubtedly, evolve over time.

The proposed planning process is innovative, bottom-up, consensus-building process that will allow interested Canadians from all sectors of society to collaborate and co-ordinate their efforts to develop the necessary strategies, policies, and tools needed to move to sustainability. The proposed process has three parts:

- developing sector, community, and organizational sustainability strategies and plans;
- mobilizing the latent network of sustainability thinkers and doers to develop options and strategies to support sector and community processes;
- linking Canadian dialogue to the global discussion on sustainability.

The development of visions of a sustainable society and of appropriate strategies for making the transition are essential to facilitate the changes that lie ahead. Credible images of the future are a powerful motivating and co-ordinating force in society. Experience

indicates that vision is best developed in a context where need and ability to influence behaviour coincide. In the Projet, we have tried to design a set of interlinked processes to facilitate the development of a vision and of strategies in settings (sectors and communities) where people are able to influence and implement them. We have also made provisions for sharing across and among sectors.

We also carried out interviews with key thinkers and analyzed roadblocks to sustainability. Based on our findings, the document sets out issues and priorities for the long term, and identifies a number of short-term strategic actions to be undertaken by stakeholders to advance the long-term objectives and priorities.

As a network of networks and a multi-sectoral collaboration, the Projet is ideally suited to promote organization of information on sustainability; encourage constructive public dialogue; and mobilize Canadians to work toward achieving sustainability. The Projet can help anticipate problems, strategize, co-ordinate, and catalyze action in ways that facilitate this transition.

Recommendations: We ask you, stakeholders in Canada's Projet de Société, to accept the challenge implied in that very term, to make a commitment to sustainability for Canada, and to do this by:

- continuing the Projet de Société;
- endorsing, in principle, the draft sustainability planning framework and process;
- endorsing an action plan to:
 - develop the capacity to track work on sustainability;
 - establish Canada's sustainability research and action agenda;
 - develop a sustainability kit of best practices;
 - identify high-priority goals.
- endorsing the Projet's catalytic and convening role to address the following issues:
 - reduce jurisdictional overlap;
 - increase public awareness and participation;
 - document progress toward sustainability;
 - identify economic opportunities related to sustainability.
- endorsing continued support and resources for the Projet;
- endorsing continuation of a secretariat to support the Projet.

Accepting these recommendations will demonstrate the willingness of members to continue working toward sustainability for Canada, to undertake one or more of the priority actions, to work in the 'Rio Way', and to continue to report on our collective progress and achievements.

VISION, ASPIRATIONS AND CHALLENGE

We recognize that humankind has not woven the web of life; we are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. Whatever befalls the earth befalls also the family on the earth.

Women's Environment and
Development Organization
Declaration of Interdependence

In undertaking to carry out its mandate, members of the Vision and Process Committee struggled to articulate our vision of a sustainability society, as well as our hopes and aspirations for the *Projet de Société*. In doing so, we became aware that there is no single vision of sustainability and that there are many paths to reaching it.

We are convinced that we must make our way along these paths together. We believe that while different points of view within the group and in society are essential, the only way to arrive at innovative solutions is by building trust and collaborating across the country. Thus, it is necessary to invent new ways of working, to transcend institutional and disciplinary boundaries and seek innovative solutions that will affect the very heart of society.

OUR VISION

As human beings, we are part of a larger context, part of the environment. We share the Earth with a variety of other species and we are both dependent and interdependent. We recognize that human beings around the world have the same needs and hopes for themselves and their children:

- » we need clean water, air, soil and food;
- » we need safety from poverty and disease;
- » we need respect, love, and a gentle touch;
- » we need music, laughter, and the peace of prayer;
- » we need social contact and a sense of community;
- » we need a livelihood and a healthy economy;
- » we need to learn and grow in understanding;
- » we need the wonder and discipline of nature;
- » we need work, rest, and celebration; and
- » we need to become one with our Earth.

OUR ASPIRATIONS AND HOPES

Only the agricultural revolution five thousand years ago and the industrial revolution two centuries ago can compare to the transformation required to continue sustaining life on this planet.

The world is truly at a threshold. We can rise to the occasion or we can let growing social, economic, and ecological problems overwhelm us. Only by changing the way economic development proceeds can the world hope to meet the legitimate aspirations of current and future generations without overwhelming the ecological carrying capacity of the planet.

The challenges on the road to sustainability are complex and daunting, but they can be met. Innovative solutions based on integrative, holistic approaches can enable and empower groups and individuals to undertake necessary change. These solutions must be based on participation that is inclusive, transparent, and focused on consensus-building.

Nothing less than a total system-level response is adequate. Marginal or partial transformations of our planet's systems will not suffice. Our approach must acknowledge that the world's social, economic, biological, and natural systems are complex, inter-related, and interconnected.

The *Projet de Société* can seize this historic opportunity to promote and facilitate the required system-level response because it has a unique capacity to bring together different points of view and facilitate consensus-building.

THE CHALLENGE

We propose that the National Stakeholders accept the challenge implied in the term *Projet de Société*. Transforming Canada into a more sustainable society will take decades. Given today's political and economic realities, the task of developing strategies, policies, and tools to integrate environmental, social, and economic strategies will require wisdom and creativity from many sectors and perspectives. We propose that the National Stakeholders create mechanisms that will enable interested Canadians to work together to facilitate the transition to sustainability. No group can do it on its own -- the only way we will succeed is by working together.

SUSTAINABILITY? SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

There is no single vision of sustainability. Although it will continue to mean different things to different people in different places, we know that national sustainability can be achieved only in the context of global sustainability. There is agreement on the need to "undo unsustainability". As we move from where we are now to where we would like to be, our personal and societal expectations of sustainability will develop and evolve. In the meantime, we value the creative tension between ideals and the existing situation, and the need to bridge them.

Sustainability is not just another phrase for environmental protection or management. It has economic, social, political, and cultural, as well as environmental, dimensions; these are interdependent in ways people have only begun to understand, and they are inextricably connected to our aspirations and visions for the kind of world we would like our children to inherit.

Sustainable development embodies the following principles:

- *respect for nature and for the rights of future generations underpins all deliberations;*
- *all persons are able to participate in the transition to sustainability;*
- *the process is based on anticipation and prevention;*
- *issues related to sustainability are neither won nor lost: they must be resolved;*
- *informed decision-making takes into account the full costs of actions;*
- *the process takes into account social, inter-regional, and inter-generational equity;*
- *it is a dynamic learning process.*

PLANNING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

A Draft Framework and Process

The world we have created today as a result of our thinking thus far has problems which cannot be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them.

Albert Einstein

In this section the Vision and Process Committee proposes a number of related activities which will facilitate the transition to sustainability. They consist of two essential elements: the first element is a general framework for a sustainability strategy and the second is a consensus-building process to elaborate and build commitment to the framework.

The draft framework should be seen as a table of contents or a compendium of plans, strategies, and actions that are taking place across the nation; together they will constitute a long-term sustainability strategy. It describes, in a very general way, the issues on which we need to build consensus across sectors. It will undoubtedly evolve over time.

The proposed process is a way to build consensus on the appropriate strategies and actions needed to facilitate the transition to sustainability. Both these elements are described below in more detail.

DRAFT FRAMEWORK FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

A. MISSION

The first section of the proposed framework is intended to affirm that there must be a movement toward a broad national consensus among the multitude of stakeholders on the assumptions, values, and rationale relevant to planning for sustainable development. This does not imply that there must be a single view of social, political, and economic doctrine. The sustainability planning process must, initially, be able to accommodate quite profound differences on many major policy issues, recognizing that we are striving for a more integrative and compelling vision of sustainability.

- ASPIRATIONS/VISION
- BASIC ASSUMPTIONS AND VALUES
 - new ways of thinking;
 - partnership and individual actions;
 - the new economics;
 - integration of environmental values in economic assessment;
 - inter-regional equity;
 - inter-generational equity.
- CONTEXT
 - state of the environment;
 - limits/constraints;
 - opportunities;
 - rationale for change.

B. INSTRUMENTS OF CHANGE

Issues of attitude, awareness, understanding, and capability are of such general and fundamental importance that they demand some special attention and concerted effort nationally, by Project stakeholders, as well as by governments.

- PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
 - building a culture of sustainability;
 - sustainability as a component of basic education;
 - consumer information;
 - employee training.
- INITIATING INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE
 - inter-jurisdictional co-operation;
 - international institutions;
 - sustainability in decision-making.

C. TOOLS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

There is a group of social, economic, and technical instruments which are likely to prove to be indispensable in formulating and implementing strategies for sustainable development. There has already been much effort dedicated to developing and shaping these tools. There will be a good deal of trial and error as the tools are shared among stakeholder groups, and then applied, tested, and improved. These tasks can be completed by a combination of central and local initiatives. They include:

- methods of consultation and consensus-building;
- indicators of sustainability;
- sustainable development reporting;
- environmental cost accounting;
- sustainability auditing;
- building a sound science base;
- methods of assuring responsibility/accountability.

D. POLICY FIELDS

This section identifies areas in which a strategy for sustainability must be developed, but is not a comprehensive list. In a typical policy field, a strategy for sustainability will not emerge from any one source, but will be a mosaic of contributions from local, regional, national, and even international sources. Multi-stakeholder groups cutting across governmental and non-governmental sectors should play a part at each of these levels.

➤ POPULATION POLICY

- the carrying capacity of Canada and its regions and ecosystems;
- immigration;
- migration;
- family planning/education.

➤ LAND AND WATER RESOURCES POLICY

- principles of land-use planning;
- principles of sustainability of water resources;
- designated areas: ecosystem plans;
- flora and fauna: biodiversity;
- waste, solid and hazardous.

- AIR RESOURCES POLICY
 - climate change;
 - ozone layer depletion;
 - acid rain;
 - smog/ground-level ozone.

- INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY
 - education;
 - transportation;
 - communication.

- INTERNATIONAL/FOREIGN POLICY
 - trade and environment;
 - capacity building;
 - financing sustainable forms of development;
 - international law/treaties/conventions.

- ECONOMICS AND FINANCE POLICY

- RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

- ENERGY POLICY

- TRANSPORTATION POLICY

- DEFENCE POLICY

- HEALTH POLICY

- SOCIAL POLICY

E. SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES AND PLANNING PREPARED BY STAKEHOLDERS

Any group of people or any institution with an interest in and commitment to sustainability can participate and contribute meaningfully to the process. The sum of all planning efforts and all the resulting changes in attitude, policy, and practice will *be* the national strategy.

- GOVERNMENTS
 - federal;
 - provincial;
 - regional/local.

- COMMUNITIES
- INSTITUTIONS
- INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE *
- VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS
- ABORIGINAL PEOPLES
- WOMEN
- YOUTH
- FAMILIES/INDIVIDUALS

* We have expanded the "industry and commerce" stakeholder set as an example of the next level of elaboration of the draft framework:

- INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE
 - GENERAL KINDS OF INITIATIVES
 - building a corporate culture of sustainability;
 - environmental audits;
 - life-cycle management;
 - corporate environmental reporting;
 - pollution prevention;
 - innovation, technology, and competitiveness.

ENERGY

TRANSPORTATION

RESOURCE INDUSTRIES

- agriculture;
- forestry;
- fisheries;
- mining.

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

- chemical;
- electronics;
- machinery.

SERVICE INDUSTRIES

- tourism;
- communications;
- food/hospitality;
- construction;
- financial.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

- engineering;
- accounting.

A PROCESS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABILITY

One of the key functions of the *Projet de Société* is to structure complex information and sequence the dialogue on sustainability to build a consensus and a commitment to make

the necessary changes. In this section we propose a sustainability planning process to accomplish this function. Some of the characteristics of that process are:

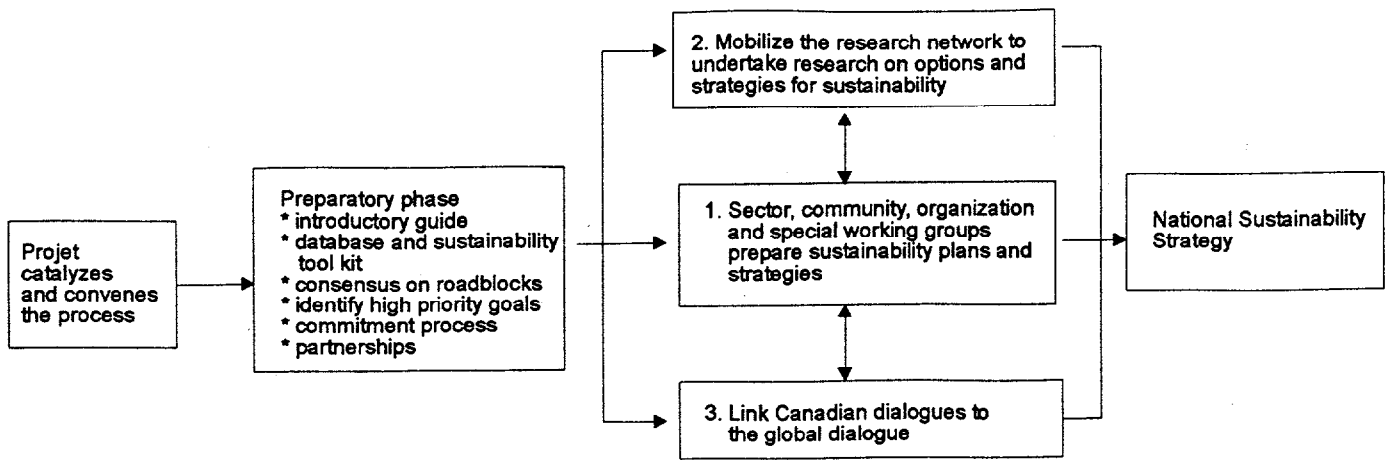
- Participation in the process is voluntary. It will have influence because it fulfills a need for cross-sector consensus-building and co-ordination in the transition to sustainability.
- It builds on what is already being done to promote sustainability in Canada.
- The process is flexible so that sectors, communities, organizations, and specialized working groups at different stages in the transition to sustainability can usefully participate.
- The process attempts to integrate economic, social, and environmental concerns in a consensus-building process.
- While the proposed process has an end point, it is anticipated that it will set in place new institutions and processes, after the initial round, that will be self-sustaining.
- The process is inclusive, transparent, and accountable.

Elements in the Sustainability Planning Process

To fill in the draft sustainability framework described in this chapter, we propose a process that comprises three parts:

- activities to encourage sectors, communities, and organizations to prepare sustainability plans that integrate economic, social, and environmental strategies. This voluntary process will build a consensus on national and provincial policies needed to facilitate the transition to sustainability;
- activities to mobilize the latent network of sustainable development thinkers and doers to develop options, strategies, and tools in support of sector and community plans;
- activities to link Canadian discussions on sustainability to the global dialogue. We need to know what other countries are doing and, on a few critical issues, we need to work with other countries to develop a global consensus on appropriate policies and strategies.

Diagram 1 Overview of the Major Elements



Each of these three processes is linked with the others. Because it is unlikely that we could carry out any one of them in isolation, we are proposing an integrated set of activities that will complement and build on each other. The following is a description of each process.

1) Sector, Community, and Organizational Sustainability Plans

These are the core of the sustainability planning process: decentralized, flexible, and voluntary. They are not consultation processes but consensus-building processes for dealing with issues of deep concern to Canadians. They focus on jobs, competitive business opportunities, viable communities, and a healthy environment. In tackling these problems, Canadians have to think and act in new ways if they are to effect change.

After consulting with stakeholders and potential partners across the country, a working group would prepare an "introductory guide" describing the process, with material to assist sectors, communities, organizations, and special working groups to organize their own multi-stakeholder planning process as their contribution to the national strategy. The guide would include a statement of the challenge, an overview and rationale for the process, the sustainability planning framework, the sustainability tool kit, a number of alternative planning and visioning processes, examples of success stories, and lists of people who could act as resources.

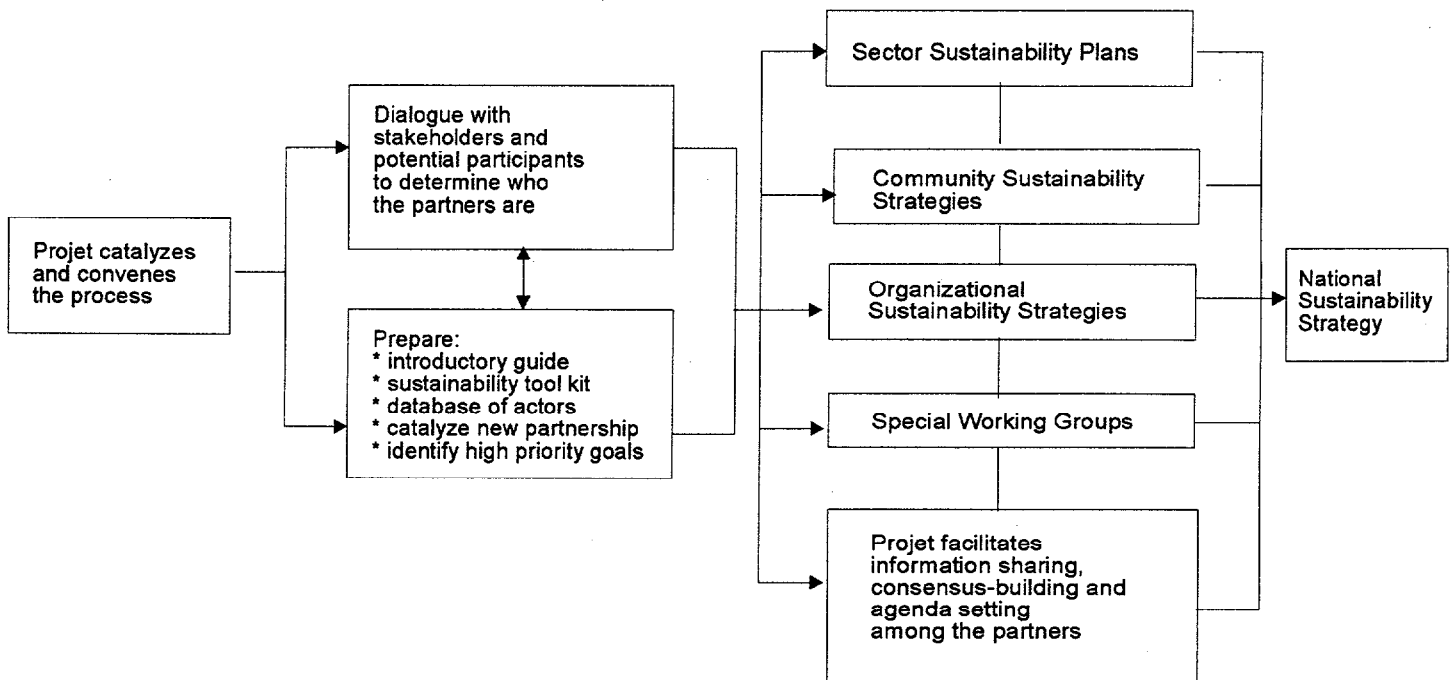
There would be a formal "commitment process": Projet staff and stakeholders would contact potential participants and get their commitment to participate. New participants would use the introductory guide to organize their own multi-stakeholder process.

Once the sustainability planning process was under way, the secretariat, the stakeholders, the working groups, and the network of partners would work together in a variety of ways. This would facilitate information-sharing, networking, consensus-building, and agenda-setting across sectors and among partners.

A number of provinces, industrial sectors, and communities have already prepared sustainability strategies or plans. Where these exist, groups would be encouraged to contribute them for inclusion in the framework; to share their experience with others; and to assess the existing plan against the need to integrate economic, social, and environmental considerations advocated in the framework.

It is assumed that sector and community plans will raise public policy questions that cannot be solved directly by the groups involved. These "national" questions will require a broad, national political consensus before Canada can create an economic and social policy framework to facilitate the transition to sustainability. The dialogue on these national questions needs to take place within and between the sector and community planning processes and in a related national process.

Diagram 2 Steps in the Sustainability Planning Process

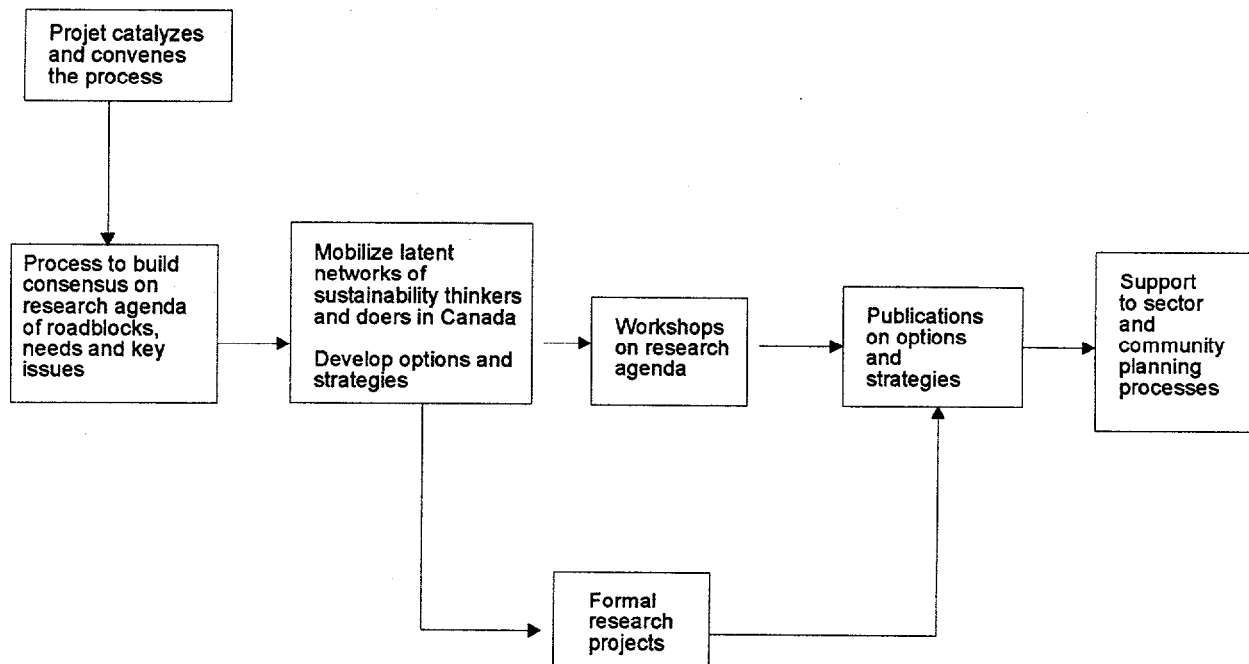


2) Research on Options and Strategies

The starting point for the *Projet de Société* was to develop a consensus across sectors on the issues currently blocking progress in the transition to sustainability. It is assumed that little progress will be made until we develop options, strategies, and tools to overcome roadblocks.

The sustainability planning process would mobilize the latent network of sustainability researchers and change agents to provide expertise on which the sector and community planning processes could draw. It is anticipated that the sustainability planning process would present this informal research network with a research agenda of needs, roadblocks, and national questions and ask them to develop options and transition strategies. With the research network, a series of workshops would be convened, and the best advice would be published and circulated. For some problems such as roadblocks and national questions, key concepts, policies, institutions, and tools must be invented to facilitate the transition to sustainability. We may want to establish more formal research projects to deal with these questions.

Diagram 3
Possible steps to mobilize the sustainability research network



3) Linking Canadian Dialogue to Global Dialogue

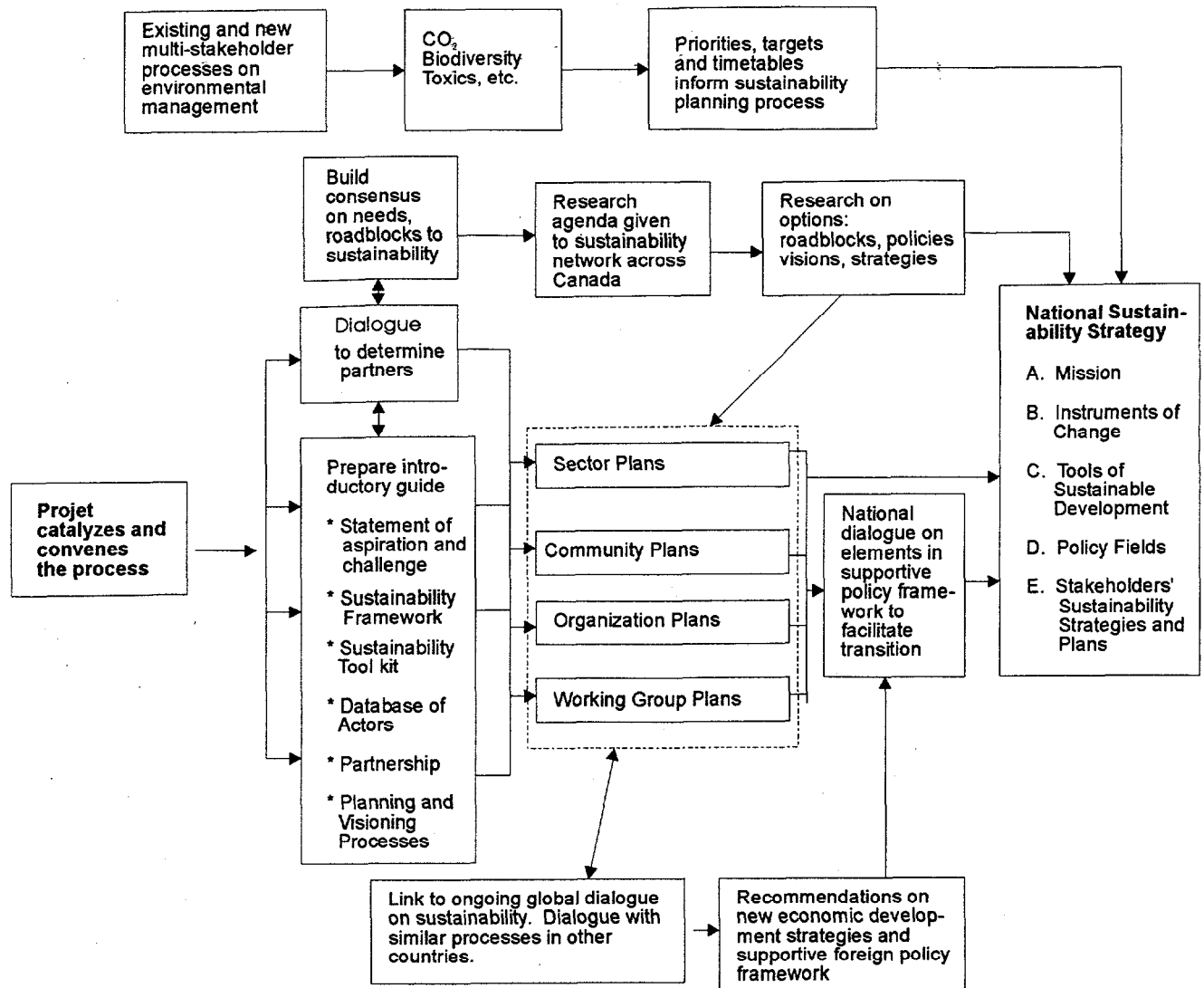
There are two compelling reasons why we should link the Project to the global dialogue on sustainability. First, sustainability can be achieved only on a global scale; if other countries increase their production of CO₂ or ozone, for example, the impact of Canadian efforts is reduced. Second, national economic and environmental decisions are increasingly being influenced by negotiations or decisions in international fora. Canadians have to work with people in other countries to invent the policies and strategies that are going to create an equitable, just, and sustainable world for all.

We propose that the participants in the Canadian process enter into a dialogue with similar process in other countries (such as the Netherlands, the Philippines). For instance, representatives of Canadian communities, businesses, and NGOs working on a sector plan could meet with similar groups in other countries to identify supportive global policies. The results could help shape Canadian foreign policy, as well as our positions at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and at the GATT.

4) Summary

Three elements -- preparing sector and community processes, mobilizing the latent sustainability network to create options and solutions, and linking to the global dialogue -- would work together to create a consensus, a strategy, and a series of commitments which, together, would constitute a transition strategy for Canada.

Diagram 4
Conceptual Links Between Building Blocks in
Sustainability Planning Process



ANALYSIS OF KEY ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

... the story most worth telling in the last decade of the twentieth century has to do with the earth, and with the relationship to it of the one species that, while utterly reliant on it, has nonetheless seemed bent on, or perhaps just oblivious to, its destruction. If we're to give our endangered planet the time and space to heal, we must begin to see nature not just as a backdrop against which the human drama is enacted, but as an integral part of our lives, as something we must respond to, respect, actively care about.

Sisters of the Earth

In the course of its deliberations on the draft framework and participatory process, the Vision and Process Committee undertook an exploration of obstacles inhibiting Canada's move towards sustainability. Roadblocks were identified based on the Committee members' own experiences, on reading material, and on interviews conducted with a number of people outside the Committee who have given the matter some thought. The roadblocks included:

- lack of public understanding;
- lack of political commitment;
- absence of sustainability criteria and methodologies;
- jurisdictional gridlock;
- inappropriate economic growth and consumption patterns;
- institutional and structural rigidities;
- fragmentation of educational processes;
- difficulty in inter-sectoral thinking;
- short-term time horizons;
- desire to hang onto the status quo;
- the reductionist nature of science;
- inadequate knowledge of ecosystems;
- lack of policy integration.

On careful examination, major categories of roadblocks and critical needs were identified, including those that clearly must be overcome in order to advance the transition to sustainability. In the course of this process, the Committee identified six key issue areas to which the Project -- as a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral network of networks -- could make a significant contribution.

For each area, and in consultation with the entire Working Group, the Committee identified possible actions that could be undertaken by the Project; while extensive, the lists of possible actions are not comprehensive and do not include all possible activities that stakeholders could choose.

KEY ISSUES AND MENU OF ACTIONS

The six key issue areas are:

1. To build public support and political will for the transition to sustainability:

- by designing a process (or processes) that is broad, flexible, and educational; participatory, decentralized but cohesive; region/sector/industry specific but transferable; that has a capacity for cross-disciplinary research and option generating; that can integrate major social and economic policy agendas; that takes account of international/global links; that is iterative; that energizes individuals and mobilizes Canadian society; and that can deliver concrete action;
- by promoting grass-roots awareness through education programs and demonstration projects, well-targeted messages, and by gathering, synthesizing, and disseminating information on sustainability;
- by monitoring, assessing, and reporting on progress towards achieving sustainability;
- by developing a common language on sustainability to facilitate discussion and understanding;
- by recognizing, with an Order-of-Merit type of award, exemplary contributions to sustainability by individuals, organizations, politicians, and communities.

2. To create and support processes and institutions that facilitate the transition to sustainability:

- by proposing mechanisms or strategies that promote inter-jurisdictional co-operation and reduce jurisdictional overlap and duplication, notably in the environmental regulatory field;
- by proposing mechanisms to better integrate economic, environmental, and social considerations at the highest policy levels of the federal and provincial governments;
- by encouraging the development of methodologies for environmental assessment of government policies, notably in the economic and trade areas, including and encouraging the use of sustainability indicators and environmental accounting;

- by encouraging and promoting the development of sectoral, industry, and community sustainable development plans;
 - by promoting and furthering the establishment of round tables at the community and sectoral levels.
3. To facilitate practical steps leading to sustainability, including the creations of the necessary vision, goals, methods, tools, indicators, and strategies:
- by articulating, promoting, and fostering consensus on visions and goals;
 - by organizing, sharing, and disseminating information, defining research needs, and facilitating development of research capacity and networking with respect to concepts, models, tools, indicators, and strategies for sustainable development;
 - by endorsing and co-ordinating the development of a sustainability guide (i.e., a directory/catalogue of state-of-the-art concepts, methodologies, and practices related to sustainability);
 - by fostering partnerships to develop concepts, tools, strategies, etc.;
 - by working with the media to develop communication strategies best suited to disseminating information and conveying messages about sustainability.
4. To encourage re-examination and redefinition of aspirations concerning personal, community, national, and global security:
- by articulating a vision of sustainability and by redefining and rethinking what is meant by security;
 - by considering how local communities, indigenous peoples, developing countries, and industrialized nations other than Canada foster a sense of security;
 - by fostering a positive atmosphere in which dialogue on sensitive, emotional, and difficult societal issues and choices can take place;
 - by reaching out, engaging other constituencies and major groups, and ensuring that directly affected and interested parties are adequately represented in the Project and in any subsequent follow-up ;
 - by explicitly including security on the agenda for public discussion and debate.
5. To foster the development of economic strategies to facilitate the transition to sustainability:
- by highlighting the complementary and mutually reinforcing nature of relationships among a clean, healthy environment, trade, and a prosperous economy;
 - by promoting job creation and economic opportunities generated by the move to sustainable development (e.g., environmental industries and the opportunities arising from the greening of consumer demand);
 - by helping people in Canada understand the need to invest in labour and entrepreneurial retraining and in the development of new skills to take advantage of emerging markets and to create new ones;

- by developing strategies and proposing mechanisms on the best ways to integrate economic, environmental, and social objectives and policies to further sustainable development;
 - by intervening to eliminate subsidies that support unsustainable development;
 - by supporting the greater use of economic instruments for environmental protection.
6. To generate a consensus on the core values of sustainability:
- by fostering dialogue to energize individuals and mobilize society, which will involve multi-stakeholder participation, using mechanisms and approaches that are experiential in character, build respect and trust, avoid confrontation, are non-adversarial;
 - by emphasizing and proposing approaches and mechanisms that are in keeping with the 'Rio Way': inclusive and transparent, enabling and empowering individuals and groups, and holding them accountable for their actions or the lack thereof;
 - by articulating and promoting shared values, beliefs, visions, and goals of sustainability.

PRIORITIES FOR PHASE II

The sustainable state would make fewer demands on our environmental resources, and greater demands on our moral resources.

Lester Brown

The Committee believes that, given the multiplicity of activities that the Project could undertake, it should be strategic in deciding which to pursue first. There are three paramount considerations:

- Activities that can promote a number of objectives simultaneously are preferable to those that further fewer objectives.
- It is important to focus first on building blocks that will initiate and energize the participatory process (described in the "framework" section), itself a necessary and fundamental step in developing and implementing a sustainability plan for Canada.
- It is imperative to have some tangible results while the participatory process and the sustainability plan are being developed and implemented.

It is especially important to maintain the momentum generated by the Brundtland Commission; by such national plans as the Green Plan; such international initiatives as UNCED; and to keep participants interested and engaged in the Project. Progress on sustainability cannot wait for the Process and Sustainability Plan, but must occur in tandem with it.

As a practical first step to initiating the development and implementation of a sustainability plan for Canada, National Stakeholders are asked to consider the following five building blocks for the Project's participatory process and the activities to be undertaken by the Project over the short and medium term:

1. Database

The Project could develop, maintain, and update a database that identifies the stakeholders and what they are doing with respect to Agenda 21 and the conventions signed at Rio and, over time, with respect to the Project's own efforts. It would become a "catalogue of action" describing efforts across Canada that contribute to the transition to sustainability. IISD would be prepared to continue to do this as part of its ongoing communications work.

Such a database would provide the Project with tracking and reporting capacity; would engage and foster communications and networking; and would encourage greater cross-institutional co-operation and help forge partnerships.

2. Setting the Research and Action Agenda

Both the Vision and Process Committee and the Document and Information Committee have, as part of their work over the last few months, considered and deliberated on the key needs and gaps that must be addressed if Canada is to move to sustainability. The work initiated by both committees needs to be continued and expanded, in order to identify research needs and articulate Canada's research agenda. The Project is well suited to providing the forum for identifying necessary research and action.

The research agenda identified by the Project would be undertaken by the individuals, groups and agencies best placed to carry it out and would subsequently be shared with the broader set of stakeholders.

Such an endeavour would promote greater networking among researchers; encourage further development of research capacity; promote cross-disciplinary research; increase the capacity to create strategies and to generate options; encourage development of methodologies to integrate economic, environmental, and social considerations and policies; and promote new thinking and new ideas.

3. Sustainability Tool Kit

Using the draft framework described earlier, the Projet could undertake to access, collect, and organize information on sustainability-related work now in progress (e.g., conservation and environmental strategies, green efforts in communities, sectoral efforts), and on new ways of proceeding towards sustainability (e.g., consensus decision-making, use of economic instruments, sustainability indicators). Using this information and resource material, the Projet could co-ordinate the development of a sustainability tool kit, a catalogue of state-of-the-art tools and practices. It would also serve as a component of the introductory guide discussed earlier.

The Projet could play an important role in identifying and sharing best practices with respect to sustainability. It would act as a switchboard or reference point to make the tools widely available and would, where appropriate, be a catalyst for demonstrations and pilot projects using the tools.

By producing this kit, the Projet would contribute to the development of a common language on sustainability that would facilitate discussion and understanding. It would assess, report on, and endorse successful tools and practices; gather, synthesize, and disseminate information on new ideas and work; promote the "operationalization" of sustainable development; and promote sectoral, industry, and community-based sustainability plans.

4. Identifying High Priority Goals

Under normal circumstances the process of goal setting is very complex. Under the current economic circumstances it is even more constrained. There is a need to use scarce resources in the most effective way possible.

Initial conversations in the committee indicate that all stakeholders, including business and NGOs, think there may be considerable benefit in 1) identifying a small number of high-priority environmental goals that may be more central, or more strategic, in promoting the transition to sustainability, and then 2) trying to synchronize efforts across sectors to maximize the impact of limited financial and other resources in addressing these goals.

We propose that a multi-stakeholder task force be established in the context of the Projet to: 1) build consensus on a small number of high priority areas for action; 2) to work with all sectors to identify common goals and objectives in these high-priority areas; and 3) if possible to propose a program of joint actions to address these goals.

5. Partnerships to Accelerate the Transition

During its deliberations, the Committee identified actions that are of particular or vital interest to a number of stakeholders; these can and should be acted on immediately and need not await resolution of broader issues or development of the participatory process and sustainability plan for Canada. Indeed, they could help to resolve some critical or key roadblocks and thus facilitate the transition to sustainability.

Of particular importance at this point are:

- the need to streamline the inter-jurisdictional patchwork of environmental regulations, processes, and institutions that inhibit economic efficiency and the chance to attain environmental objectives;
- to increase public awareness and participation, particularly among Canadian youth and their parents, to act in ways that further sustainability;
- to search out, assess, and document creative efforts that are making a real difference in the way individuals, communities, and organizations operate;
- to develop Canadian capacity to take advantage of the market opportunities stemming from the transition to sustainability (e.g., promoting environmental industries and encouraging Canadian industry to take advantage of the greening of consumer demand).

One way to move on these specific issues would be for interested stakeholders to forge partnerships within the Project in order to create high-profile events and to carry out cutting-edge work in these areas.

Stakeholders working together would be mobilized and energized to resolve actual problems; provide a tangible demonstration of their determination to get practical results; promote greater inter-jurisdictional co-operation; foster cross-institutional co-operation; create a more suitable climate for dialogue; and promote a smoother transition to sustainability, economic opportunities, and the creation of jobs.

6. Recapitulation

Stakeholders are asked to consider the following five-point priority work program for the short to medium term:

1. develop the capacity to identify and track participants and what they are doing;
2. establish Canada's research and action agenda;
3. develop a sustainability tool kit of best practices;
4. identify high-priority goals;
5. cement partnerships for short-term practical results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recognize that participants are currently involved in activities related to sustainability, and encourage them to continue these efforts to move Canada in the right direction. The endeavours suggested here are intended to complement ongoing activities.

In addressing National Stakeholders, we ask you to make a commitment to sustainability for Canada, to undertake one or more of the priority action steps, by pledging to continue to work in the 'Rio Way', and to report back to the National Stakeholders group on your progress and achievements. We specifically ask that you endorse the following action plan to advance the Projet's long-term objectives:

- **Continue the Projet de Société:** This important multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral forum is essential to a collaborative follow-up on Canada's commitments at UNCED and to providing a national focal point for dialogue on sustainability in Canada. We encourage the Projet to undertake a significant outreach program to enlarge the range of stakeholder participants.

We recommend continuation of the Projet because, together, we can catalyze activity that will advance the transition to sustainability in Canada.

- **Endorse, in principle, the draft sustainability planning framework and process:** As outlined in this paper, these set the stage -- in policy and in action -- for sustainability in Canada.

We propose a broader consultation within and between stakeholders to further elaborate the draft framework and process. In parallel with this consultation, a working group of the Projet would, in the next phase, assemble an introductory guide for sectors, communities, and organizations, to assist them in developing their own sustainability strategies.

- **Endorse the action plan:** To start laying the groundwork for the Projet, a working group or groups would be established to:
 - continue to build the database and information tracking co-ordinated by IISD;
 - mobilize the latent network of sustainability thinkers and doers across Canada to undertake the work necessary for setting the research agenda for sustainability in Canada;
 - assist in developing the sustainability tool kit of best practices;
 - identify high-priority environmental goals that are instrumental to making the transition to sustainability.

- Endorse the catalytic and convening role of the Projet: Practical short-term results are essential to advancing the long-term goals and objectives of the Projet. We urge the National Stakeholders to establish task groups and to initiate short-term action in the following areas, which are particularly important at this time:
 - streamline the inter-jurisdictional patchwork of environmental regulations, processes, and institutions that inhibit economic efficiency and the ability to reach environmental objectives;
 - increase public awareness and participation, particularly among Canadian youth and their parents on the issue of sustainability
 - search for, assess, and document creative efforts on the part of individuals, communities and organizations that further sustainability
 - develop Canadian capacity to take advantage of the market opportunities stemming from the transition to sustainability.

- Endorse continuing resources and support for the Projet by:
 - giving the original agencies -- The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, the International Development Research Centre, Environment Canada, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, and the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment -- the mandate to ensure that funding and infrastructure are available to support the Projet;
 - encouraging additional stakeholders to contribute staff, time, financial support, and contributions in kind to the Projet;
 - continuing support for NGO participation in decision-making and in the substantive work of the Projet.

- Endorse the continuation of a small secretariat to support the Projet; it could be housed in an existing institution or in the National Round Table, and would be a fluid, decentralized, and cross-sectoral "institution without walls." It would play a co-ordinating role with respect to working and task groups, and assist participants in initiating work related to the processes and draft framework, carrying out the activities of the Projet, and maintaining and expanding networks.

- As well, the Projet will require new resources from existing participating institutions and from others concerned about this process. We suggest that, to successfully implement the action plan, the first task undertaken after our June Assembly be to identify resources and commitments.

ONLY A LITTLE PLANET

The planet you're standing on
looking out at the stars
is the earth, the third planet from the sun

and the mildest
and softest
of the nine....

If you can stop, and let yourself look,
let your eyes do
what they do best,
stop and let yourself see and see
that everything is doing things
to you
as you do things to everything.

Then you know
that although it is only a little planet
it is hugely beautiful
and surely the finest place in the world
to be.

So watch it, look at it
see what it's like
to walk around on it.

It's small but it's beautiful
it's small but it's fine
like a rainbow,

like a bubble.

Lawrence Collins

Annex II

Members of the Vision and Process Committee

Peter Padbury, CCIC

George Connell, NRTEE

Beatrice Olivastri, IISD

Theodora Carroll-Foster, IDRC

Sandy Scott, CCME

John Dillon, BCNI

Janine Ferretti, Pollution Probe

George Greene, CIDA

George Kowalski, DOE

Chester Reimer, ICC

Susan Tanner, FOE

Kathy Thompson, FCM

Zonny Woods, IISD

Myriam Wyman, WEED