

1.6 The environment

The federal environment department has the responsibility to initiate government-wide programs and co-ordinate efforts related to environmental protection. It provides specialist advisory services to other departments in setting up programs and in developing regulations under federal acts assigned to other ministries.

The federal environmental protection program deals with treatment and disposal of waste water, solid waste management, air pollution, noise pollution and other threats to environmental quality.

In water pollution control, main objectives are: reduction of existing pollution and prevention of new problems; achievement of regional water quality objectives; and development of technologies to solve water pollution control problems more economically.

Broad objectives of air pollution control are to preserve, restore or enhance the quality of air in Canada. The department evaluates information on pollution sources; develops abatement programs for stationary and mobile air pollution sources; prepares regulations on the amount of lead in leaded gases and defines the limits of lead and phosphorus in unleaded grades of gasoline; defines national emission standards for smelters, industrial plants, mines and mills; and maintains a mobile motor vehicle emission testing facility.

The environmental contaminants program is responsible for managing hazardous materials and developing codes of good practice and guidelines for identifying, transporting, storing and disposing of hazardous materials. Under the Environmental Contaminants Act the federal government may provide for control of chemicals that may be disseminated, are persistent and harmful to health or environment.

The federal government is committed to cleaning up pollution at federal facilities within a reasonable time. Clean-up projects have dealt with water, air, noise, dust and solid waste pollution problems at airports, government offices, laboratories, grain elevators, defence bases, parks, ships and harbours.

An interdepartmental committee on the environment is the primary forum for interdepartmental consultation on environmental and related resource issues.

1.6.1 Federal-provincial programs

To develop co-operative action, the environment department is developing, with the provinces, federal-provincial accords for protection and enhancement of environmental quality. These are viewed as umbrella agreements under which specific agreements on environmental action may be signed. Some federal-provincial programs follow:

Assessments of potential environmental impact of major projects in which the federal government has an interest are carried out by federal departments in co-operation with provincial and territorial governments.

A national air pollution surveillance network established under the Clean Air Act consists, with certain exceptions, of monitoring stations operated by provincial governments using equipment loaned by the federal government.

Federal-provincial agreements under the Canada Water Act provide for water basin management programs and include agreements for joint studies in specific areas.

Many other formal and informal federal-provincial programs are related to specific aspects of renewable resources and the environment such as fisheries, forest and wildlife management, hydrometric data gathering, flood damage assistance and flood control, forest pest control and weather forecasting.

Non-recurring joint programs are developed from time to time. An example is the Canada/Ontario study to determine Great Lakes shoreline damage resulting from high water levels and to provide the basis for recommendations on long-term remedial and protective measures.

1.6.2 International programs

Canada belongs to a 17-member international council for exploration of the sea which encourages and co-ordinates studies of marine environment with particular reference to