

The National Capital Commission (NCC) protects and preserves Canada's national treasures; creates a meeting-place for Canadians; and presents the unique features of Canada's National Capital Region to Canadians and to the world. The NCC organizes national celebrations such as Canada Day, New Year's Eve on Parliament Hill, Christmas Lights Across Canada and the 10-day winter festival, Winterlude. With the help of municipal, regional, provincial and federal partners in the region, the NCC preserves the heritage and presents the unique treasures of Canada's capital.

Gatineau Park is a forest and wildlife reserve which lies north of the capital. With 40 km of parkway, magnificent lookouts, hundreds of lakes and beaches, picnic areas and historic treasures such as the Mackenzie King Estate, the park is enjoyed by over one million visitors a year.

1.8 Environment

Environment Canada has a mandate to foster harmony between society and the environment for the economic, social and cultural benefits of present and future generations of Canadians.

1.8.1 Environmental quality

In its strategic planning, the department has identified the following priorities.

Toxic substances released into the environment, especially if persistent, can have a cumulative effect on all living things, including humans. The department is undertaking to identify threats as early as feasible. It has proposed that responsibility should be shared among governments and actual or potential polluters, that action should be taken to prevent or mitigate adverse consequences, and that public consultations should be held on the environmental and socio-economic trade-offs in using polluting substances. The Canadian Environmental Protection Act which received Royal Assent and proclamation on June 28, 1988, consolidates the Environmental Contaminants Act, the Canada Water Act, Part III, the Clean Air Act, the Ocean Dumping Control Act, and Section 6(2) of the Department of the Environment Act (1979). The new act upgrades the penalties for a breach of the toxic chemicals provisions. The Minister is endowed with powers to recall chemicals, products, etc., which he deems to be unsafe. These and other provisions make the act one of the most advanced of its kind in the world.

Acid rain is caused by emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide in Canada and the United States. To solve Canada's acid rain problem, deposition of wet sulphate in all vulnerable areas

in Eastern Canada must be reduced to less than 20 kilograms per hectare a year. Achieving this environmental objective requires that total sulphur dioxide emissions east of the Saskatchewan/Manitoba border be reduced to 2.3 million tonnes (50% of the 1980 level) and that the transboundary flow of sulphur dioxide from the US into Canada be reduced to about 2 million tonnes a year (50% of the 1980 level). The federal government and the seven eastern provinces have agreed to cut emissions by 50% by 1994 at the latest. At the March 1986 summit meeting of President Reagan and Prime Minister Mulroney, the President endorsed the findings and conclusions of the Special Envoys on Acid Rain. These included implementation of a five-year \$5 billion program in the US to develop control technology and the establishment of a bilateral, advisory and consultative group on transboundary air pollution.

Water resources management may become as significant an issue in the 1990s as energy has been in recent years. Elements of concern include: growing imbalances between water supply and demand especially on the Prairies; inadequate water quality in various parts of the country; proposals for major diversions in Canada and export to the United States; and conflicts in water use plans among provinces and territories. The final report of the Inquiry on Federal Water Policy — the first comprehensive assessment of the government's role in managing water resources — was published in 1985. Following extensive consultations on the report's recommendations, a new federal water policy was released in 1987, with emphasis placed on the role of realistic pricing to regulate growing demands and wasteful uses of water. In 1988, the federal Minister of Environment tabled in Parliament Bill C-156, the Canada Water Preservation Act, to prohibit large-scale export of water from Canada.

Land resources. Increased demands for renewable resources including forestry and agricultural products make it necessary to maintain land productivity and the related resource base. Issues are multiple land use, possible degradation of soil quality and loss of wildlife habitat, increasing soil erosion and water supply considerations, and land-use demands from urbanization.

Climate change. The burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, land-use changes and industrial processes are causing increases in the concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The most abundant of these climate controlling gases, carbon dioxide, has increased by about 25% over the past several centuries and is now rising at 4% per decade.