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Planning for a Sustainable Future

PROJET DE SOCIÉTÉ

VOLUME 1 : OVERVIEW OF THE PROJET DE SOCIÉTÉ

TOWARD A NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR CANADA

VOLUME 1 : APERÇU DU PROJET DE SOCIÉTÉ

VERS UNE STRATÉGIE NATIONALE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE AU CANADA

THIRD NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS ASSEMBLY
DECEMBER 16-17, 1993, OTTAWA, CANADA

TROISIÈME ASSEMBLÉE DES INTERVENANTS NATIONAUX
LES 16 ET 17 DÉCEMBRE 1993 À OTTAWA, CANADA

Volume 1 :
Overview of the Projet de Société
Aperçu du Projet de Société

Volume 2 :
Report of the Vision and Process Committee
Rapport du Comité de la vision et du processus

Volume 3 :
Report of the Document and Information Committee
Rapport du Comité de la documentation et de l'information

Volume 4 :
Progress Report June - December, 1993
Rapport progressif, Juin - décembre, 1993

Planning for a Sustainable Future

PROJET DE SOCIÉTÉ

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJET DE SOCIÉTÉ

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

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.

Box 1

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.*

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.

Box 2

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."

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.

Box 3

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

SECURING TOMORROW

The Approach Taken

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

Box 4

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

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 Projet'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 projet, 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 Projet 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 communications 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.

REPRESENTATIVES FROM OVER 50 SECTORS OF CANADIAN SOCIETY PARTICIPATED IN THE FIRST AND SECOND NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER ASSEMBLIES. THESE INCLUDED: Sierra Club • Canadian Council on International Cooperation (CCIC) • Pollution Probe • B.C. Environment and Development Working Group • Canadian Peace Alliance • Canada World Youth • Inuit Tapirisat of Canada • Friends of the Earth (FOE) • Women and Environment, Education and Development • United Native Nations • Canadian Pulp and Paper Association • Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers • Mining Association of Canada • Business Council on National Issues (BCNI) • Assembly of First Nations • Indigenous Survival International • Fallsbrooke Centre • Federation of Canadian Municipalities • Oceans Institute of Canada • Canadian Participatory Committee for UNCED • Canadian Environment Network • Cultural Survival • United Nations Association of Canada • Transport 2000 • Union québecoise pour la conservation de la nature • Council of Forest Industries in B.C. • Canadian Chemical Producers • Native Women's Association of Canada • Canadian Petroleum Association • Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) • Canadian Manufacturer's Association • B.C. Round Table on Environment and Economy (BCRT) • Canadian Chamber of Commerce • Native Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA) • Canadian International Development Agency • Fisheries Council of Canada • Canadian Nature Federation • Canadian Healthy Communities Network • Greenprint • Canadian Environmental Industry Association • Shell Canada • Canadian Ecology Advocates • Ecology Action Centre • Toronto Board of Education • Canadian Bankers Association • National Anti-Poverty Association • Forum for Sustainability • seven federal government departments • six provincial government ministers • the five funding partners: The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) • Environment Canada (DOE) • the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) • the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) • the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE).

DES REPRÉSENTANTS DE PLUS DE 50 SECTEURS DE LA SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE ONT PARTICIPÉ À LA PREMIÈRE ET LA DEUXIÈME ASSEMBLÉE DES INTERVENANTS NATIONAUX : Sierra Club • Conseil canadien pour la coopération internationale (CCIC) • Pollution Probe • Groupe de travail sur l'environnement et le développement de la C.-B. • Alliance canadienne pour la paix • Jeunesse Canada Monde • Inuit Tapirisat du Canada • Les Ami(e)s de la Terre (FOE) • Women and Environment, Education and Development • United Native Nations • Association canadienne des producteurs de pâtes et papiers • Association canadienne des producteurs pétroliers • Association minière du Canada • Conseil canadien des chefs d'entreprises (BCNI) • Assemblée des premières nations • Indigenous Survival International • Fallsbrooke Centre • Fédération canadienne des municipalités • Institut canadien des océans • Comité de participation du Canada à la CNUED (CPCU) • Réseau canadien de l'environnement • Survie Culturelle (Canada) • Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies • Transport 2000 Canada • Union québécoise pour la conservation de la nature • Council of Forest Industries (C.-B.) • Association canadienne des fabricants de produits chimiques • Native Women's Association of Canada • Association pétrolière du Canada • Conférence circumpolaire inuit (ICC) • Association des manufacturiers canadiens • Table ronde sur l'environnement et l'économie de la C.-B. (BCRT) • Chambre de commerce du Canada • Association nationale de foresterie autochtone (NAFA) • Agence canadienne de développement international (CIDA) • Conseil canadien des pêches • Fédération canadienne de la nature • Réseau canadien des communautés en santé • Greenprint • Association canadienne des industries de l'environnement • Shell Canada • Citoyens pour l'amélioration de l'environnement • Ecology Action Centre • Toronto Board of Education • Association des banquiers canadiens • Organisation nationale d'anti-pauvreté • Forum pour un développement viable • sept ministères fédéraux • six ministres provinciaux et cinq partenaires de financement : Conseil canadien des ministres de l'environnement (CCME) • Environnement Canada (DOE) • Institut international du développement durable (IIDD) • Centre de recherches pour le développement international (CRDI) • Table ronde nationale sur l'environnement et l'économie (TRNEE).

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