

2010



Report of the
**Commissioner of the
Environment and
Sustainable Development**
to the House of Commons

FALL

The Commissioner's Perspective
Main Points—Chapters 1 to 3
Appendix



Office of the Auditor General of Canada

The Fall 2010 Report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development comprises The Commissioner's Perspective, Main Points—Chapters 1 to 3, an appendix, and four chapters. The main table of contents for the Report is found at the end of this publication.

The Report is available on our website at www.oag-bvg.gc.ca.

For copies of the Report or other Office of the Auditor General publications, contact

Office of the Auditor General of Canada
240 Sparks Street, Stop 10-1
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0G6

Telephone: 613-952-0213, ext. 5000, or 1-888-761-5953
Fax: 613-943-5485
Hearing impaired only TTY: 613-954-8042
Email: distribution@oag-bvg.gc.ca

Ce document est également publié en français.

© Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada 2010
Cat. No. FA1-2/2010-0E-PDF
ISBN 978-1-100-17243-9
ISSN 1495-0782



Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development of Canada
Commissaire à l'environnement et au développement durable du Canada

Office of the Auditor General of Canada • Bureau du vérificateur général du Canada

To the Honourable Speaker of the House of Commons:

On behalf of the Auditor General of Canada, I have the honour to transmit herewith this 2010 Fall Report to the House of Commons, which is to be laid before the House in accordance with subsection 23(5) of the *Auditor General Act*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Vaughan'.

Scott Vaughan
Commissioner of the Environment
and Sustainable Development

OTTAWA, 7 December 2010

To the reader:

I welcome your comments and suggestions on this Report and other issues related to the environment and sustainable development. I can be reached at the following address:

Scott Vaughan
Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development
240 Sparks Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0G6

For general questions or comments, please contact Communications at 613-995-3708 or 1-888-761-5953 (toll free).

Table of Contents

The Commissioner's Perspective	1
Main Points—Chapters 1 to 3	
Chapter 1 Oil Spills from Ships	9
Chapter 2 Monitoring Water Resources	12
Chapter 3 Adapting to Climate Impacts	14
Appendix	
<i>Auditor General Act—Excerpts</i>	19



The Commissioner's Perspective

The Commissioner's Perspective

Introduction



© Photo: Courrette/Ottawa

Scott Vaughan
Commissioner of the Environment
and Sustainable Development

Over the past two years, the world's attention has been largely focused on the turbulence in the global economy. At the same time, evidence of the rapid deterioration of the planet's environmental quality has continued to mount.

Two examples illustrate the worrying global environmental trends. First, in this, the International Year of Biodiversity, several scientific assessments have painted a bleak picture of our impacts on the animals and plants around us. Globally, we have failed to meet the 2010 United Nations target of slowing the rate of biodiversity loss. Second, the evidence about the speed and nature of human-caused climate change has grown steadily. Earlier this year, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released a report—to which Canada contributed—that contained compelling evidence that climate change is well under way. The report reinforces the conclusions of numerous comprehensive scientific assessments, including that of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which found that “Warming of the climate system is unequivocal. . . .”

My job, as Commissioner, is to provide objective reports to Parliament on how well the federal government is managing environmental and sustainable development issues such as these, and to provide members of Parliament with the information they need to hold the federal government to account.

This year, our report covers the following three topics in detail:

- How the federal government responds to oil spills from ships
- How it monitors the quantity and quality of our fresh water
- How it supports adaptation to climate change impacts

In addition, the report summarizes the environmental petitions that my Office received between 1 July 2009 and 30 June 2010.

Identifying common weaknesses

The chapters in this report point to some common weaknesses in how the federal government is managing environmental and sustainability issues. Specifically, this report identifies a pattern of unclear and uncoordinated actions. This has been aggravated by the overriding problem of a lack of sustained leadership.

The concerns we have raised in this report are hardly new. About 20 years ago, the federal government acknowledged that the impacts of climate change would pose significant, long-term challenges throughout Canada, from more frequent and severe storms in Atlantic Canada to changes in the amount of rain available to farmers. And today, the federal government still lacks an overarching federal strategy that identifies clear, concrete actions supported by coordination among federal departments.

Also 20 years ago, the federal government recognized the need for a national strategy to respond to the risks of spills from vessels transporting all kinds of hazardous and noxious substances. The volume of such substances—from industrial chemicals to solvents and pesticides—transported in Canadian waters continues to increase. Yet Canada still does not have a national plan to ensure the federal government is ready to respond to major incidents.

Environment Canada has been running the federal water quantity and water quality monitoring programs for about 40 years without knowing who—if anyone—is monitoring the quality of fresh water on federal lands. As a consequence, there are unacceptable gaps in the federal monitoring of fresh water—notably, that Environment Canada has water quality monitoring stations on only 12 of some 3,000 First Nation reserves. Federal leadership for water monitoring needs to be revisited, and Environment Canada needs to set out clearly how it will meet its responsibilities. In my view, this is long overdue.

Sustained leadership begins by knowing what the major environmental problems are, setting out a concrete plan with sufficient resources to tackle them consistently over time, and having the management systems needed to direct the work and monitor the achievement of those goals. Acquiring reliable environmental data and information is the first step in addressing the most pressing environmental priorities.

Solid, objective, and accessible information is essential to identify and respond to the quickening pace and complexity of environmental change, in Canada and globally. Managing Canada's environment

without scientifically sound environmental information is akin to trying to steer the country's economy without using indicators such as the gross domestic product, unemployment rates, and trade balances. As noted in previous reports to Parliament, critical gaps in the federal government's environmental information hinder both its capacity to inform Canadians about key environmental conditions, and its ability to know if the billions of dollars it spends each year on environmental protection are making a difference. This year, I was encouraged by the government's commitments to expand the suite of federal environmental indicators and to use those indicators to track federal programs intended to make progress on what matters most: improving Canada's environmental quality.

The chapters in this report describe additional gaps and document the consequences of those gaps for the federal government's ability to manage several critical environmental issues. For example, we found that the Canadian Coast Guard has unclear, incomplete, and unreliable data about oil spill responses. This means that the government cannot accurately determine the actual size of spills, how many spills required onsite responses, how many spills required the use of Canadian Coast Guard equipment, and the results of the cleanup efforts.

In her 2010 Spring Report, Chapter 4—Sustaining Development in the Northwest Territories, the Auditor General of Canada documented other gaps. She noted weaknesses in how the cumulative effects of project development are monitored. For example, the basic environmental baseline information needed to understand Canada's fragile northern ecosystems is incomplete. Northern communities, co-management boards, and the territorial government need to have a full picture of the environmental consequences of their economic development decisions.

The Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development will soon begin its examination of environmental assessments, which are an important instrument for obtaining and using environmental information. The Committee is scheduled to complete its review of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* in the spring of 2011. I hope that our recent chapters, including the audits of the implementation of the Act and of the Policy for the Management of Fish Habitat, will be useful during the Committee's review.

Planning for sustainable development

It has been almost 25 years since the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development outlined the key aspects of sustainable development in its report, *Our Common Future*. The value of sustainable development lies in its ability to reform decision making that isolates the economic, environmental, and social dimensions. In August 2010, the Secretary General of the United Nations formed a senior panel to review and renew sustainable development, particularly given the accelerating threats posed by climate change. The panel's mandate underscores both the relevance of the idea of sustainable development, as well as the need to ensure it remains pertinent to new challenges.

In March 2010, my Office released a study on sustainable development. The study provides practical, concrete examples aimed at the federal government to help it move sustainable development from an idea to everyday practice (Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1 Managing Sustainable Development: A Discussion Paper by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development

In the spring of 2010, we released a discussion paper that outlines some of the core management practices used daily to advance sustainable development. We focused on the following two specific challenges:

- How can managers assess and compare the environmental, economic, and social effects of government policies, programs, and plans?
- How can they take into account effects that may last for decades?

The paper describes some useful concepts and tools for measuring and reporting on sustainable development. In addition, we note that federal frameworks and directives already exist to guide managers as they work toward their sustainable development objectives. I hope that the study, together with some outreach activities with senior officials and future work, will contribute to putting Canada on a sustainable footing.

In Canada, this year marked a significant milestone. After receiving repeated criticism from my predecessors, the government released a single, overarching federal sustainable development strategy. In my view, this is an excellent opportunity to correct a long-standing weakness in the federal government's approach to sustainable development, by providing a set of coherent objectives and a clear vision to help put Canada on a path toward long-term sustainability.

As required by the *Federal Sustainable Development Act*, we reviewed the draft strategy that was released on 15 March 2010. We noted several concerns, including its failure to explain how it would enhance

transparency and accountability of environmental decision making for Parliament. Instead, the draft strategy listed environmental protection goals and hundreds of existing environmental programs and strategies, grouped into four themes:

- addressing climate change and air quality,
- maintaining water quality and availability,
- protecting nature, and
- shrinking the government's environmental footprint.

These issues are clearly critical in tackling Canada's environmental challenges. However, the draft strategy did not identify how the four themes are linked or how they integrate economic and social factors. Moreover, the strategy did not explain how it would advance the long-term challenges of sustainability.

The final strategy was released on 6 October 2010. We noted that several adjustments were made in the final version, including

- added details on the plans for several key federal departments, notably the Department of Finance Canada and Industry Canada;
- pledges to strengthen strategic environmental assessments, to better assess the environmental implications of economic and social policies; and
- plans to expand the set of environmental indicators used to measure progress.

Using petitions to promote accountability

Chapter 4 summarizes the status of one of my other areas of responsibility: the federal environmental petitions process. The process, which was established in 1995 through amendments to the *Auditor General Act*, remains a unique and valuable way for Canadians to inform federal ministers directly about their environmental questions and related concerns about federal policies, programs, and actions to safeguard the environment. Since 1995, we have received more than 350 petitions, and each one has represented a significant statement of interest by individuals and groups. Over the years, petitioners have obtained information and, in some cases, a commitment to action.

My Office received 18 petitions last year; each raised substantive and timely issues. For example, petitioners asked questions about the federal government's management of salmon fisheries, the expansion

of the ski area in Jasper National Park and its potential impact on biodiversity, and the health risks associated with using sewage sludge on agricultural land.

The Act requires federal ministers to respond directly to each petitioner within 120 days—an important step in democratic accountability. This year, federal departments and agencies improved their performance in meeting the legislated deadlines.

Conclusion

The chapters in this report highlight several areas where, unfortunately, the federal government is not doing what it said it would do to protect the environment and move toward sustainable development. There is little in our findings to offset a discouraging picture, as most suggest underlying problems in how these federal programs are being managed. In short, the two fundamental problems we identified are a lack of effective and sustained leadership, especially when responsibilities are shared, and inadequate information.

I look forward to continuing to support Parliament in its work.



Main Points—Chapters 1 to 3



Oil Spills from Ships

Chapter 1 Main Points

What we examined

Under federal legislation and international agreements, the federal government is responsible for implementing measures to prevent, detect, prepare for, and respond to spills from ships in Canada's marine environment. Transport Canada sets guidelines and establishes the regulatory framework for preparedness and response to ship-source spills. Transport Canada also certifies private sector response organizations. The Canadian Coast Guard is the lead federal agency for responding to spills and is responsible for ensuring an appropriate response takes place. Environment Canada is the federal authority for providing environmental advice when a spill happens.

Between 2007 and 2009, a total of about 4,160 pollution incidents involving spills of oil, chemicals, or other pollutants into Canadian waters were reported to the Canadian Coast Guard. About 2,000 of these incidents involved vessels ranging from pleasure craft and fishing boats to barges, cargo vessels, and tankers.

We examined how the federal government has managed spills of oil and chemicals from ships in Canada's Arctic, Pacific, and Atlantic Ocean waters and the Gulf of the St. Lawrence. Specifically, we looked at whether Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard, and Environment Canada are prepared to respond to such spills. We also looked at how the three organizations monitor and assess responses to these spills. We focused on oil and chemical spills from ships and did not address other land-based and marine-based sources of pollutants.

Audit work for this chapter was substantially completed on 30 June 2010.

Why it's important

Bordered by three major oceans and home to the world's longest coastline, Canada is the steward of ocean regions that cover more than 7.1 million km², an area equivalent to about 78 percent of its landmass. Canada's ocean regions are a vital part of the country's economy, providing employment and a way of life for about seven million people. Oceans support activities such as aquaculture

and fisheries, tourism and recreation, shipping and transportation, offshore oil and gas development, and offshore mining.

Oceans also provide habitat for a variety of wildlife, including numerous species of fish, shellfish, seabirds, and mammals, all of which contribute to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of Canadians. Ship-source spills of pollutants such as oil and other hazardous substances are one of several sources of marine pollution.

What we found

- While Transport Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard have carried out risk assessments related to oil spills from ships, they have not used a consistent or systematic approach, nor are there formal processes for ensuring that risks are reassessed on an ongoing basis. As a result, knowledge of risks in Canada to spills from ships, which is important for effective emergency planning, is not complete or up to date. Furthermore, the emergency management plans of the Canadian Coast Guard and Environment Canada—both important players in the federal oil spill response system—are not all up to date.
- Transport Canada reviews private sector certified response organizations to verify that they remain ready to respond to spills. This includes ensuring that these organizations have up-to-date emergency management plans, conduct adequate training and exercises, and have the equipment necessary to respond to ship-source oil spills up to 10,000 tonnes. Similar procedures are not in place to verify the Canadian Coast Guard's readiness. In other words, there is currently no process for providing assurance that the federal component of the oil spill response system is ready to respond effectively.
- The Coast Guard has not conducted a comprehensive assessment of its response capacity since 2000. Given the lack of any recent capacity analysis and current information on risks, the Coast Guard is unable to determine how much oil spill response equipment it should have and whether it has appropriate capacity to address the risks.
- The results of the Coast Guard's response efforts—which range from identifying the source of pollution to full cleanup—are poorly documented. There are also limitations with the Coast Guard's system for tracking oil spills and other marine pollution incidents. These gaps affect its ability to conduct reliable analysis of trends in spills and know how well it is achieving its objectives of minimizing the environmental, economic, and public safety impacts of marine pollution incidents.

- A public review panel recommended 20 years ago that the federal government establish a national regime to deal with ship-source chemical spills. Such a regime is not yet in place, and none is expected before 2013. In the meantime, Canada lacks a formal framework with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for responding to chemical spills.

The entities have responded. The entities agree with all of our recommendations. Their detailed responses follow the recommendations throughout the chapter.



Monitoring Water Resources

Chapter 2 Main Points

What we examined

Canada is home to roughly seven percent of the Earth's renewable fresh water. From the Gander River in the east to Campbell River in the west, to the Mackenzie River in the north, and thousands of other rivers and lakes in between, water defines our landscape. Environment Canada maintains two programs to monitor the long-term quality and quantity of surface fresh water resources in Canada.

The Department's Fresh Water Quality Monitoring program monitors long-term water quality at 456 sites across the country to assess and report on the status of Canada's rivers and lakes and on changes to the health of aquatic ecosystems. The data and information produced by the program are intended to serve various water management activities and needs, such as establishing baseline conditions, determining trends in aquatic ecosystem health, and detecting emerging water quality issues. The data and information provided by the program are also intended to inform regulatory activities.

The Department's National Hydrometric Program monitors the quantity of surface water resources at 2,107 sites across the country and is intended to provide Canadians with the data, information, and knowledge they need to make water management decisions. Water quantity data and information are used to determine how much water is available for various uses such as irrigation and industrial and domestic uses, to make trans-boundary water allocation decisions, and for flood forecasting.

We examined how Environment Canada manages each of these programs and how it measures and reports on the programs' performance.

Audit work for this chapter was substantially completed on 30 June 2010.

Why it's important

According to recent public opinion polls, Canadians regard fresh water as the country's most important natural resource, more important than oil and gas and forestry. Fresh water is a critical factor in most economic and industrial activities, from the production of goods and

services, including food, to recreation and tourism. Canadians count on fresh water for just about every aspect of their lives. Water is also essential to the health of ecosystems and, in turn, to the well-being of Canadians.

Understanding the status and long-term trends in the quality and quantity of the country's fresh water resources is of vital importance to Canada's future prosperity.

What we found

- Environment Canada is not adequately monitoring the quality and quantity of Canada's surface water resources. Although it has run the Fresh Water Quality Monitoring program and the National Hydrometric Program since the 1970s, the Department has not fully defined the extent of its water monitoring responsibilities, particularly on federal lands such as First Nations reserves, Canadian Forces bases, national parks, and national wildlife areas. The Department is not monitoring water quality on the majority of federal lands and does not know whether other federal departments are doing so. As a result, there may be vast areas under federal jurisdiction where fresh water quality and quantity conditions are not being monitored.
- Environment Canada has not located its monitoring stations based on an assessment of risks to water quality and quantity. As a result, it may not be focussing its monitoring efforts on the activities and substances that pose the greatest risks.
- Both of the water monitoring programs we audited developed quality control procedures intended to ensure that the data they disseminate is fit for their intended uses. The National Hydrometric Program has consistently applied its quality control procedures to validate the data from the stations we examined. The Fresh Water Quality Monitoring program has not. As a result, Environment Canada cannot assure users that its water quality data is fit for their intended uses.
- The Department has not established many of the essential management practices needed to plan, implement, assess, and improve its long-term monitoring programs. It has not taken the initial steps to clearly establish the extent of each program's monitoring responsibilities, risk-based priorities, and client needs. As a consequence, the Department has no objective basis on which to identify opportunities for improvement or take corrective actions to improve these programs.

The Department has responded. The Department agrees with all of our recommendations. Its detailed responses follow the recommendations throughout the chapter.



Adapting to Climate Impacts

Chapter 3 Main Points

What we examined

Government reports have demonstrated that climate change affects all regions of the country and a wide range of economic sectors. These impacts and the need to adapt to them touch on virtually all federal government portfolios, with significant implications for policies and programs related to Canadians' health and the country's industry, infrastructure, and ecosystems. The federal government is well positioned to help Canadians reduce their exposure to risks from climate change by providing them with information on impacts and adaptive measures.

We examined five key federal departments whose mandates are affected significantly by climate change—Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Health Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. We looked at whether the departments are identifying and assessing the risks posed by climate change in their areas of responsibility. We also looked at whether they are taking steps to adapt to the risks by considering them in their planning and decision making.

We looked at four climate change adaptation programs in these departments to determine whether they have collected and disseminated information in a usable way to those who need the information—for example, other federal departments, provinces and territories, Aboriginal communities, municipalities, industry sectors, non-governmental organizations, and academics.

Audit work for this chapter was substantially completed on 8 June 2010.

Why it's important

The health of Canadians and Canada's natural environment, communities, and economy are vulnerable to the impacts of a changing climate. Some of these impacts are already occurring from coast to coast. They are most evident in Canada's North where, for example, the thawing of permafrost as a result of temperature increases is affecting the stability of roads, buildings, pipelines, and other infrastructure.

Adapting to actual or expected changes in climate involves adjusting our decisions, activities, and thinking. These adjustments are essential both to minimize adverse effects and to take advantage of new and beneficial opportunities. The government acknowledges that climate change is inevitable and that we must adapt to its impacts in order to reduce their severity.

What we found

- The government has not established clear priorities for addressing the need to adapt to a changing climate. Although the government committed in 2007 to produce a federal adaptation policy to assist it in establishing priorities for future action, there is still no federal adaptation policy, strategy, or action plan in place. Departments therefore lack the necessary central direction for prioritizing and coordinating their efforts to develop more effective and efficient ways of managing climate change risks.
- Overall, the departments we examined have not taken concrete actions to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate. With few exceptions, they have yet to adjust or develop policies and practices to better respond to the risks. However, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Health Canada, and Environment Canada have taken the first steps of risk management by completing assessments of the risks to their mandate areas from climate change, and they have prioritized the risks. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has initiated but not yet completed a department-wide assessment of climate change risks it must manage.
- The four programs we examined have shared information on climate impacts and adaptation in a manner that responds to the needs of their specific clients, stakeholders, and partners. However, the programs cannot meet the increasing demand for information. Funding for adaptation programs under the Clean Air Agenda is scheduled to end in March 2011, and there is no plan in place to address ongoing needs after that date.

The departments have responded. The departments agree with all of the recommendations addressed to them. Their detailed responses follow the recommendations throughout the chapter.



Appendix

Appendix *Auditor General Act*—Excerpts

An Act respecting the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and sustainable development monitoring and reporting

INTERPRETATION

Definitions	2. In this Act,
“appropriate Minister”	“appropriate Minister” has the meaning assigned by section 2 of the <i>Financial Administration Act</i> ;
	...
“category I department”	“category I department” means <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) any department named in Schedule I to the <i>Financial Administration Act</i>; (b) any department in respect of which a direction has been made under subsection 11(3) of the <i>Federal Sustainable Development Act</i>; and (c) any agency set out in the schedule to the <i>Federal Sustainable Development Act</i>.
“Commissioner”	“Commissioner” means the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development appointed under subsection 15.1(1);
	...
“sustainable development”	“sustainable development” means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs;

POWERS AND DUTIES

Examination	5. The Auditor General is the auditor of the accounts of Canada, including those relating to the Consolidated Revenue Fund and as such shall make such examinations and inquiries as he considers necessary to enable him to report as required by this Act.
Annual and additional reports to the House of Commons	7. (1) The Auditor General shall report annually to the House of Commons and may make, in addition to any special report made under subsection 8(1) or 19(2) and the Commissioner’s report under subsection 23(2), not more than three additional reports in any year to the House of Commons <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) on the work of his office; and, (b) on whether, in carrying on the work of his office, he received all the information and explanations he required.

- Idem** (2) Each report of the Auditor General under subsection (1) shall call attention to anything that he considers to be of significance and of a nature that should be brought to the attention of the House of Commons, including any cases in which he has observed that
- (a) accounts have not been faithfully and properly maintained or public money has not been fully accounted for or paid, where so required by law, into the Consolidated Revenue Fund;
 - (b) essential records have not been maintained or the rules and procedures applied have been insufficient to safeguard and control public property, to secure an effective check on the assessment, collection and proper allocation of the revenue and to ensure that expenditures have been made only as authorized;
 - (c) money has been expended other than for purposes for which it was appropriated by Parliament;
 - (d) money has been expended without due regard to economy or efficiency;
 - (e) satisfactory procedures have not been established to measure and report the effectiveness of programs, where such procedures could appropriately and reasonably be implemented; or
 - (f) money has been expended without due regard to the environmental effects of those expenditures in the context of sustainable development.

STAFF OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

- Appointment of Commissioner** 15.1 (1) The Auditor General shall, in accordance with the *Public Service Employment Act*, appoint a senior officer to be called the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development who shall report directly to the Auditor General.
- Commissioner's duties** (2) The Commissioner shall assist the Auditor General in performing the duties of the Auditor General set out in this Act that relate to the environment and sustainable development.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Purpose** 21.1 In addition to carrying out the functions referred to in subsections 23(3) and (4), the purpose of the Commissioner is to provide sustainable development monitoring and reporting on the progress of category I departments towards sustainable development, which is a continually evolving concept based on the integration of social, economic and environmental concerns, and which may be achieved by, among other things,
- (a) the integration of the environment and the economy;
 - (b) protecting the health of Canadians;
 - (c) protecting ecosystems;
 - (d) meeting international obligations;

- (e) promoting equity;
- (f) an integrated approach to planning and making decisions that takes into account the environmental and natural resource costs of different economic options and the economic costs of different environmental and natural resource options;
- (g) preventing pollution; and
- (h) respect for nature and the needs of future generations.
- Petitions received** 22. (1) Where the Auditor General receives a petition in writing from a resident of Canada about an environmental matter in the context of sustainable development that is the responsibility of a category I department, the Auditor General shall make a record of the petition and forward the petition within fifteen days after the day on which it is received to the appropriate Minister for the department.
- Acknowledgement to be sent** (2) Within fifteen days after the day on which the Minister receives the petition from the Auditor General, the Minister shall send to the person who made the petition an acknowledgement of receipt of the petition and shall send a copy of the acknowledgement to the Auditor General.
- Minister to respond** (3) The Minister shall consider the petition and send to the person who made it a reply that responds to it, and shall send a copy of the reply to the Auditor General, within
- (a) one hundred and twenty days after the day on which the Minister receives the petition from the Auditor General; or
- (b) any longer time, where the Minister personally, within those one hundred and twenty days, notifies the person who made the petition that it is not possible to reply within those one hundred and twenty days and sends a copy of that notification to the Auditor General.
- Multiple petitioners** (4) Where the petition is from more than one person, it is sufficient for the Minister to send the acknowledgement and reply, and the notification, if any, to one or more of the petitioners rather than to all of them.
- Duty to monitor** 23. (1) The Commissioner shall make any examinations and inquiries that the Commissioner considers necessary in order to monitor
- (a) the extent to which category I departments have contributed to meeting the targets set out in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and have met the objectives, and implemented the plans, set out in their own sustainable development strategies laid before the House of Commons under section 11 of the *Federal Sustainable Development Act*; and
- (b) the replies by Ministers required by subsection 22(3).

- Commissioner's report** (2) The Commissioner shall, on behalf of the Auditor General, report annually to the House of Commons concerning anything that the Commissioner considers should be brought to the attention of that House in relation to environmental and other aspects of sustainable development, including
- (a) the extent to which category I departments have contributed to meeting the targets set out in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and have met the objectives, and implemented the plans, set out in their own sustainable development strategies laid before that House under section 11 of the *Federal Sustainable Development Act*;
 - (b) the number of petitions recorded as required by subsection 22(1), the subject-matter of the petitions and their status; and
 - (c) the exercising of the authority of the Governor in Council under subsections 11(3) and (4) of the *Federal Sustainable Development Act*.
- Duty to examine** (3) The Commissioner shall examine the report required under subsection 7(2) of the *Federal Sustainable Development Act* in order to assess the fairness of the information contained in the report with respect to the progress of the federal government in implementing the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and meeting its targets.
- Duty to report** (4) The Commissioner shall include in the report referred to in subsection (2) the results of any assessment conducted under subsection (3) since the last report was laid before the House of Commons under subsection (5).
- Submission and tabling of report** (5) The report required by subsection (2) shall be submitted to the Speaker of the House of Commons and shall be laid before that House by the Speaker on any of the next 15 days on which that House is sitting after the Speaker receives it.

Report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the House of Commons—Fall 2010

Main Table of Contents

	The Commissioner's Perspective
	Main Points—Chapters 1 to 3
	Appendix
Chapter 1	Oil Spills from Ships
Chapter 2	Monitoring Water Resources
Chapter 3	Adapting to Climate Impacts
Chapter 4	Environmental Petitions

