

*If Canada is to meet successfully the environmental challenges it confronts, industry and the public must co-operate, not litigate, to find ecologically sound approaches. Turf wars among the myriad federal, provincial and municipal agencies concerned with the environment must cease. Partnerships among agencies and the public to meet shared environmental objectives must begin.*¹⁰

C. The Committee's Approach to the Issue

1.20 This report is not limited to a review, from an environmental standpoint, of the Government's proposals in *Shaping Canada's Future Together*. Nor, however, is it a fundamental examination of how, in an ideal world, the Canadian constitution could best accommodate environmental and sustainable development needs. The Committee's recommendations take an evolutionary, not a revolutionary, approach to constitutional reform in regard to the environment, for three main reasons.

1.21 First, we believe that this reflects the present political reality. The environment is regarded as a major priority for action by both experts and the public. But the ability to act does not depend primarily on constitutional reform. In the context of the present constitutional debate, the environment does not have the same degree of urgency as issues such as the "distinct society" of Quebec, Senate reform, or aboriginal self-government.

1.22 Second, as suggested already (paras. 1.7 - 1.10), scientific and public understanding of the environment has changed and expanded considerably in recent decades, and there seems little reason to doubt that further change is inevitable. This point was made emphatically by Mr MacMillan (Minister of the Environment 1985-88):

*[T]hings are so fast-changing and they are so complex that I doubt that in September 1991 we could take everything sufficiently into account to come up with a formula that will serve us well forever and a day. If things could change so much from when I left the portfolio to the present . . . can you imagine the changes that lie ahead? I venture to say that in the year 2000 somebody will be sitting here and reflecting on what was happening in 1991 and he or she will not be able to recognize what we are doing, so different will the world be at that point in the context of the environment.*¹¹

1.23 Lastly, there is good reason to believe that the existing constitutional situation has much to recommend it. This view was expressed by the present Minister of the Environment, who is in a good position to evaluate both the opportunities and the frustrations:

I believe the Canadian federal system has offered the single best system with the greatest possible flexibility for achieving our regional and individual goals. We will not, as a society, achieve sustainable development as a top-down, government-driven exercise. . . We must share responsibility for our environment.

¹⁰ Issue 12, p. 8.

¹¹ Issue 6, pp. 44-45.