

proposed for the label are re-refined motor oil, insulation made from recycled paper, and some products made from recycled plastic.

This is just the starting point. The advice of groups such as the World Commission on Environment and Development — the Brundtland Commission — points to fundamental reforms to many business and government practices if people are going to prevent more ecological damage. It called for a move to environmentally sustainable forms of development to replace those that emit a lot of pollution and use up natural resources too fast.

The Brundtland Commission, with its cabinet ministers and business experts, legitimized many of the pleas for environmental responsibility that had been coming from environment groups for years.

For decades some of the strongest environmental leadership has come from public-interest groups. They kept alive the flame of interest even when governments, business and the public at large showed little concern. They provided a steady flow of information on the environment to the news media and the public, and some even mounted recycling and energy-efficiency projects.

A secure environment requires the active participation of a much wider range of groups than has been the case until now. Non-governmental environmental organizations have played an important role in promoting knowledge and awareness on the environmental consequences of poorly thought-out economic planning. As a result, individual and collective values and attitudes are being made more sensitive to environmental concerns.



Environnement Canada

Consumer groups have paid special attention to the potential long-term health effects of certain food additives and have urged more-widespread product labelling so that individual buyers can be better informed about what they are consuming.

Now members of these groups in Canada are being asked to sit at the same table as government and business officials.

For example, they were involved with Canada's strong response to the Brundtland Report. In 1986 the country's environment ministers formed a 17-member National Task Force on Environment and Economy to spell out what sustainable development means for Canada. There were cabinet ministers, business executives and environment group leaders on the special body.

A year later the task force issued a tersely worded but sweeping report summed up in the phrase: "Change is

**Destroying the forests increases the amount of greenhouse gases, thus reducing the world's oxygen supply.**

necessary and it must occur now." The team of environment and business experts said that "long-term economic growth depends on a healthy environment." It added that "environmental considerations. . . must be made integral to economic policy-making and planning."

The task force report triggered a major debate about sustainable development among environment and government experts in Canada. The Prime Minister and the heads of the provincial and territorial governments have endorsed its recommendations.

By this spring, a national and seven provincial round tables had been created by governments. In addition two major

business groups, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Business Council on National Issues, had created special groups to recommend how environmental protection could be integrated with business practices.

These round tables and task forces include senior decision-makers from government, industry, environment organizations, labour, academia and aboriginal peoples. One of their most important tasks will be to act as a clearing house for ideas about the priorities and techniques for change.

The members of round tables are expected to lead public opinion and to implement change within their own government departments, business corporations and other organizations.

Even as the round tables are preparing to issue advice, a number of governments and businesses are starting to make changes. For example, more governments are demanding tough environmental assessments of projects before giving approval or funding. A number of companies are reducing their production of hazardous chemicals and are getting into recycling and waste reduction.

The Canadian Chemical Producers Association has set up a Responsible Care Program which encourages chemical companies to work with communities to develop emergency plans and to inform citizens about chemicals in their local industries. This program is being considered by chemical industries in other countries.

Canadians are looking for better ways of putting development on an environmentally sustainable basis. There is a long way to go and the job will take a lot of work at home, as well as global co-operation.