

way that recognizes its social, economic, and environmental benefits. Governments, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and individual Canadians all have roles to play.

Partnerships Are Essential

Federal-Provincial

Under the Canadian Constitution, responsibility for most natural resources, including water, is vested in the provinces. Municipalities share responsibility for water supply and wastewater treatment programs. The federal government has overall responsibility for navigation and fisheries and for water resources crossing international boundaries, on First Nations' lands, and in the northern territories.

The layering of constitutional jurisdictions, regional interests, and competing demands has led to the development of a pattern of water management based on partnerships. Continuing progress depends on

- the coordinated use of best practices based on natural geographic boundaries rather than political boundaries and
- the integration of environmental, social, and economic considerations into water management programs.

Federal and provincial governments have built partnerships for water management. The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment is made up of environment ministers from the federal, provincial, and territorial governments. The Council meets regularly to discuss national environmental priorities. However, federal-provincial coordination of water resource management requires strengthening to rebuild cooperative mechanisms following budget cuts and realignments of roles and responsibilities.

The Federal-Provincial Subcommittee on Drinking Water, part of the Federal-Provincial Committee on Environmental and Occupational Health, has been an effective partnership for the protection of drinking water quality for over 20 years. Consisting of representatives from the federal health department and provincial/territorial health and environment ministries, the Subcommittee develops and maintains guidelines for Canadian drinking water quality. These national guidelines consist of maximum acceptable concentrations for microbiological, chemical, and radiological contaminants and are used by federal, provincial, and territorial governments in establishing their own measures of drinking water quality.

Water Policy

Federal and provincial governments are adopting policies for sustainable water management that reflect the need to balance water uses. The overall objective of the Federal Water Policy (1987), currently under review, is to encourage the use of freshwater in an efficient and equitable manner consistent with the social, economic, and environmental needs of present and future generations. The policy stresses that government action is not enough and that Canadians at large must become aware of the true value of water in their lives and use it wisely.

Canadian Water Resources Association

Individuals and organizations interested in the management of Canada's water resources belong to the Canadian Water Resources Association. The Association promotes the sustainable development of water resources through conferences that provide a forum for discussion of regional and national issues such as floods and floodplain management, watershed restoration, and water export.