

This legislation required federal ministers to prepare sustainable development strategies for their departments and agencies, to table them in the House of Commons by December 1997, and to provide updates every three years. The amendments to the act adopted the definition of sustainable development set out in the Brundtland Report: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The amendments to the act also created a statutory public petition process to allow for public input into environmental and sustainable development issues.

In 1995, the Government of Canada issued *A Guide to Green Government* to be used by federal departments and agencies in the preparation of their sustainable development strategies. The guide identified three main elements of sustainable development: quality of life, integrated decision making, and equity.

While most federal departments have some responsibilities for the North, there are several departments whose domestic and international mandates more directly impact on northern life. These include the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Health Canada, Transport Canada, Canadian Heritage, and Fisheries and Oceans.

## **WORKING TOGETHER: STRENGTHENING GLOBAL AND CIRCUMPOLAR COOPERATION**

Experiences from the Canadian Arctic have much to contribute to international processes. Global and regional cooperation are key features in developing global and circumpolar strategies for protecting or promoting sustainable development in the Canadian Arctic.

Like other regions of the world, the North is affected by the activities of its many neighbours. Transboundary pollutants accumulate in northern waters, flora, and fauna, becoming more concentrated higher in the food chain. Some Inuit in the Canadian Arctic, for example, have elevated and worrying levels of certain persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and heavy metals that have accumulated in their bodies due to their dependence on marine mammals as a dietary staple. Many of these pollutants originate from sources outside of the Arctic region, therefore, cooperation between countries globally is required to develop long-term solutions. The Government of Canada

*The Arctic accounts for almost two thirds of Canada's coastline — a coastline that is one of the longest in the world. Fisheries and Oceans (F&O) is committed to implementing its sustainable development strategy through shared stewardship and finding innovative ways to develop this approach. F&O enters into arrangements with Indigenous communities in the North to manage resources consistent with their treaty rights. The 1992 launch of the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy is an important example. Under the Oceans Act (1997), F&O has undertaken to develop a coordinated framework to protect the integrity of ocean ecosystems and engage the public, particularly Indigenous peoples, in the development of policies relating to the sustainable development of coastal resources. This is the first federal legislation to explicitly mandate a federal department or agency to consider and use the traditional ecological knowledge held by Indigenous peoples.*