

Polar Bears and their Habitat and the Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America on the Conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd) and transboundary pollution (the UNECE Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants, not yet in force).

The wildlife management agreements demonstrate the importance of sustainable use of wildlife to the residents of the Arctic, particularly Indigenous communities. The agreements and programs addressing transboundary pollutants are of particular concern to a region whose ecosystems are vulnerable to the effects of contaminants transported from distant sources.

In relation to the Arctic, the Commissioner concluded that the Government of Canada has made a major contribution in the international efforts to enhance the understanding of the Arctic's unique environment and the actions needed to protect it.

To meet the commitments of the Government of Canada, Canadian scientists and program managers have been struggling with challenges that are not unique to the Arctic: the need for more and better scientific research and monitoring; better ways to manage jurisdictional complexity; and how best to develop a strong domestic regime for implementing agreements in the face of scarce resources and budget cuts.

In response to the Commissioner's report of 1999, the Government of Canada began the development of a coordinated Northern Sustainable Development Strategy. It will guide the ongoing efforts of federal departments and agencies in carrying out scientific research, monitoring, and other responsibilities in the Canadian North. Consultations on this new strategy began in November 1999.

"There has been a growing realization internationally that human activities, both in the Arctic and elsewhere in the world, affect the future sustainability of Arctic ecosystems. In turn, changes in the Arctic environment and ecosystems have an effect on other parts of the world. This awareness is reflected in an increasing number of environmental agreements and other arrangements to protect the Arctic, which Canada has signed or endorsed. It has also led Canada and the other circumpolar nations to collaborate in programs of extensive scientific research and monitoring in the North."

—Commissioner of the Environment
and Sustainable Development,
1999 Report, para. 6.4

CONCLUSION

There are issues that the Government of Canada and the Indigenous communities of Canada's Arctic will be facing in the near future as they implement sustainable development strategies. Following are some of these issues.

- The Indigenous population in Arctic Canada is much younger than the Canadian average. Generally, 50 percent of the population is under the age of 15 years. There will be tremendous pressure to create jobs in a region that also has a very high unemployment rate.