

enforcement of Aboriginal laws; and other matters. Under this framework, the Government of Canada, in partnership with provincial and territorial governments and Indigenous communities, has undertaken processes to negotiate practical arrangements to make self-government for Indigenous communities a reality. Capacity building is central to these treaty-making, legislative, and policy initiatives. Canada is building institutions and governance models in the Arctic that will be responsive to the values of the region's Indigenous communities and other inhabitants.

Taken together, land claims and self-government agreements allow Indigenous communities the ability to decide on matters that affect their own lives and lands and to participate in co-management processes. Led by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the federal government consulted extensively with Aboriginal leaders at the national, regional, and local levels to develop the process for these negotiations. The land claims process has led to legislative and regulatory amendments, policy changes, and new land ownership regimes. The Inuit of Nunavut, for example, now collectively own over 350 000 square kilometres of land.

Canada's Domestic Efforts Towards Sustainable Development

As northern land claims and self-government arrangements have been evolving, the Government of Canada has embarked on the journey towards meeting its Rio commitments on sustainable development. Following Rio, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and the *Projet de société* were established. Government, industry, civil society, and Aboriginal organizations were brought together to review Canada's commitment to Agenda 21 and to canvass the range of options Canadians must confront in making the transition to a more sustainable lifestyle.

Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development

As early as 1989, Indigenous, environmental, and conservation groups had called for the Government of Canada to strengthen performance and accountability on environmental and sustainable development issues. In 1995, an environmental equivalent to the Auditor General was created through important amendments to the Auditor General Act, establishing a Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development within the Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development is independent of government and has responsibility for reviewing the performance of government policies, programs, and spending in relation to achieving its sustainable development agenda and for encouraging government, parliamentarians, and the public to support moves toward realizing sustainable development objectives.

The Commissioner monitors progress toward sustainable development and reports to the House of Commons each year. By providing parliamentarians with objective, independent analysis and recommendations, the Commissioner assists in overseeing the federal government's efforts to protect the environment and foster sustainable development. The Commissioner also helps make the Government of Canada accountable for its policies, operations, and programs related to the environment and sustainable development.