

China's immense population is placing considerable pressure on its natural resources. Water shortages are becoming increasingly frequent and serious. The beds bearing underground water are gradually deteriorating. The pollution of China's lakes and rivers is staggering; and erosion, salinization and urbanization are decreasing agricultural land.

China is also the world's largest consumer of coal. Coal-fed electricity generators are the engines of its growing economy, and their emissions of greenhouse gases are increasing exponentially.

Because of the important contribution China can make to resolving global environmental issues, Canada is working with China on a range of environmental management issues. This is being achieved through economic ties and through Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) assistance programs, which are giving China access to Canadian technologies and services including technical training, management expertise and applied research.

On the bilateral front, Canada-China environmental co-operation has largely taken place in the area of pollution control. Environment Canada and China's National Environment Protection Agency signed a memorandum of understanding on environmental co-operation in April 1993. The agreement provides a framework for co-operation in a number of areas including water pollution, water basin management, hazardous and solid waste management, training and analysis of samples for toxic pollutants, and ozone depletion and the application of the Montreal Protocol.

A joint study of greenhouse gas emissions, with a control strategy for Beijing, was conducted by Environment Canada's Atmospheric Environment Service and China's State Science and Technology Commission. The purpose of the study was to help China prepare a national report on greenhouse gas emissions and possible control strategies, which was presented at the Symposium on China's Climate Change Strategy in Beijing last December. Over the long term, the study will help China build its own capacity to deal with climate change.

Important links have been established in the environmental impact assessment and public awareness sectors. Canada has also been instrumental in helping China develop a national environmental plan. Last year, Canada hosted an Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Workshop on National Plans, which China attended. Canada's own Green Plan has been translated into Chinese and China intends to distribute copies to its provinces.