

sustainable development. The industry has been active in finding nonregulatory approaches to address mineral-related environmental issues and engaging multistakeholder groups. An example of this latter approach is the Whitehorse Mining Initiative, which in 1994 sought to define a vision "of a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable and prosperous mining industry".

The **energy sector** is important to Canada's economic well-being, contributing significantly to jobs and the gross domestic product. Its contribution to the economy and the fact that it is the largest contributor to Canada's emissions of carbon dioxide necessitate that it be managed in a sustainable manner. Strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from this sector include green procurement practices, environmental management systems, and proposed changes to federal tax laws to promote investments in energy efficiency.

Fisheries provide important social and economic benefits to coastal provinces and northern communities. The need to pursue sustainable development practices in using this resource is critical, both domestically and internationally. Coastal communities, where many economic and social benefits derive from access to the fisheries resources, are particularly dependent on a sustainable approach. The closure of the groundfish fishery, including northern cod, due to a number of factors, such as unsustainable harvesting practices and changing oceans conditions, is an example of the severe economic and social impacts coastal communities can suffer when the fisheries resource declines. Governments, the fishing industry, and communities are taking part in many initiatives designed to bring about more sustainable fisheries. Initiatives such as the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing and the Oceans Act are key ingredients to pursuing a sustainable approach to oceans resources. The Oceans Act, for example, is built upon the principles of pursuing the precautionary approach, sustainable development, and an integrated approach to oceans activities.

Trends in Governance

As our understanding of the environment has changed, so have our approaches to governance. Across Canada, we have seen a shift to more integrated approaches to decision making. Our processes are beginning to reflect the value that we place on our natural capital. We have broadened our approach to environmental protection and developed a wider range of tools to achieve our objectives. We have recognized the importance of partnerships to bring about change, nationally and internationally.

In 1971, Canada became the second country to create a distinct environment ministry. Provincial and territorial governments followed suit. The activities of these departments have varied over time in response to evolving policy priorities and fiscal restraint. Canadian environment ministers and departments have worked together through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) to develop common approaches to environmental priorities. A recent focus of work for the CCME has been to harmonize environmental protection regimes in Canada to achieve the highest level of environmental quality for all Canadians.

Within governments, there has been an improvement in the integration of economic, environmental, and social considerations into broader decision making. For example, the federal government has established a Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development and introduced a requirement in law for federal government departments to create and pursue sustainable development strategies that include reports to Parliament. The inaugural report of the Commissioner noted that in many areas the federal government's performance falls short of its stated environmental and sustainable development objectives and that there is an implementation gap—a failure to translate policy direction into effective action.

Environmental legislation and management practices have also evolved. Where laws once