

# INFORMATION FOR DECISION MAKING IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

Realizing sustainable development is everyone's responsibility. In a sustainable society built on good decision making, everyone is a user and sharer of information. At the grassroots level, individuals, businesses, and communities need reliable information to help them make decisions that better mesh social, economic, and environmental considerations. Governments need information to formulate sustainable development policy and practice and to satisfy the demands of the many information users they serve, from citizens and small organizations to multinational trade and regulatory organizations. And international bodies need information to measure the world's progress toward environmental stewardship, fair trade, and acceptable living standards for all.

Canada takes a vital interest in the production and dissemination of information that promotes sustainable development at all levels—in our homes and businesses, in our government operations, and through our international relations. This monograph provides an overview of Canada's work to meet the two main information objectives identified in Chapter 40 of Agenda 21—bridging the data gap and improving the availability of information for decision making related to sustainable development. It begins by describing Canada's commitment to sustainable development and the kind of information we need as we work toward sustainable development. It then goes on to demonstrate Canada's national progress in the areas of bringing information together, building information systems and tools, improving public access to and use of information, recognizing weaknesses in infrastructure and information, supporting new technologies, and striking partnerships to finance and share information for sustainable development at home and abroad.

## CANADA'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Governments—through their policies, legislation, and regulations, as well as through their taxes, subsidies, and spending—establish the context in which Canadians make their decisions. By developing