

belief may be philosophical—the fundamental importance of environmental concerns to the future of Canada—but they may also reflect practical concern over what is perceived as a confused and conflicting pattern of actions by federal, provincial and other governments, in the absence of a clearly-defined allocation of responsibilities. Other witnesses have argued that there are good reasons why an explicit division or allocation of powers on environmental issues should not be attempted at this time. As will be seen below, the Committee generally agrees with this latter view.

1.6 Nevertheless, it seems clear that this is an appropriate time to consider the relevance of Canada's constitution, present and future, to environmental protection and environmental quality. To do this, we must begin by asking what the term "environment" now connotes, since this is central to our recommendations on how environmental concerns should be included in current constitutional reform.

1.7 At the risk of over-simplification, we suggest that 1972 marked a major change in perception, both in Canada and in the world as a whole. In Canada, 1972 saw the creation of Environment Canada, and, around that time, of environment ministries in all provinces. In a wider world, 1972 was the year of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden. These national and international events, however, reflected a deeper change in political philosophy and popular thinking. As Barbara Ward later observed,

Before Stockholm, people saw the environment. . . as something totally divorced from humanity. . . Stockholm recorded a fundamental shift in the emphasis of our environmental thinking. . .

In the 1970s, after Stockholm, there was a growing realization of the basic and indestructible links between what humans do in one part of the world and what they do in another. This interconnectedness was one of the great insights of Stockholm, neatly summed up in the conference slogan "Only One Earth." There was a beginning of a sense of shared stewardship for our common planetary home.²

1.8 One significant expression of this sense of interconnectedness was the adoption of the ecosystem principle in the U.S.A.-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1978. The object of that Agreement is "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the waters of the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem", and in the Agreement that ecosystem is defined as "the interacting components of air, land, water and living organisms, including humans" within the Great Lakes drainage basin.³

1.9 During the 1980s, a further significant step was taken, with the recognition that interconnectedness exists in time as well as in space: human actions may not merely have a global effect, they may alter irreversibly the environment that is inherited by future generations. This had long been recognized in terms of the depletion of non-renewable resources; in the 1980s it took on a new meaning in terms of global warming and the thinning

² Foreword by Barbara Ward, in Eckholm, Erik P., *Down To Earth: Environment and Human Needs*, Toronto, MacLeod, 1982.

³ 1978 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (as amended by protocol in 1987), Articles II and I(f).