

information they need quickly. The department will also distribute its own information products on EKN, for example, a national pollutant release inventory.

Challenges and Next Steps

Much of the information that would help decision making for sustainable development still exists under other titles, collected for other purposes. It will continue to be a challenge to link sources more effectively and to assist potential users in navigating the immense amount of data that already exists.

Another challenge is to ensure that access to information and networks is as broad as possible and available at a low cost. This reflects one of the consistent principles of sustainable development policies—an emphasis on empowering individuals and communities. Efforts are being made to ensure accessibility. In a country such as Canada with many small, isolated communities, this is an important direction. A related challenge is to find effective and affordable methods of bringing together scientific and traditional knowledge for policy making, project development, and land and resource management. This knowledge needs to be linked to indicators, indices, and environmental quality guidelines that allow decision makers to assess progress in the achievement of sustainable development.

"Governments have to provide an empowering policy framework—but even then, it is only 5 percent of the solution, the rest must be done by all of society."

—an NGO official