

*[C]learly, when we're looking at issues such as global warming or the loss of bio-diversity or acid rain, any action we take has be based on sound, credible research. This is an area where the federal government should continue to play a leadership role.*²⁴

3.18 The witness from the public opinion survey The Environmental Monitor also emphasized the need for the federal government to increase its activity in regard to public information and education on the environment. He pointed to the great gap between concern and understanding that exists.

In terms of specific understanding of what issues are priorities, let alone what factors will improve those issues, that's where Canadians are some of the first to say they don't understand that. Our data shows very graphically when we ask, in open-ended kinds of ways, what is the primary cause of global warming, that ozone depletion is identified as the prime reason for global warming. . . Only 14% identify the use of fossil fuels.

*How can you go forward with good public policy with gaping perceptual problems like that? Hence, that is a good example why our data suggests, very strongly, that the federal government has probably a unique and certainly justifiable role in adult public education in Canada around these issues.*²⁵

3.19 The Committee welcomes the statement, in *Shaping Canada's Future Together*, that "The government is committed to ensuring the preservation of Canada's existing research and development capacity".²⁶ We note, however, that this has not prevented several witnesses from expressing concern on just this point, since the statement appears in the context of Government proposals to withdraw from fields in which research, data collection and monitoring are at present the principal fields of federal government activity.²⁷ If the concern arises solely from incorrect interpretation of a section of the Government's proposals that has been ambiguously drafted, the Committee believes that clarification on this point would be widely welcomed.

3.20 More fundamentally, however, the Committee believes strongly that readily-available environmental data and information, and better public access to the policy development and action by governments on environment and sustainable development are essential. These become even more crucial if, as recommended earlier in this report, concurrent jurisdiction and partnerships are to be the basis of environmental policy and action in Canada. It seems clear to the Committee that adequate data and information are not available, to governments or to the public. Similarly, the activities of bodies, such as the CCME and the national and provincial Round Tables on Environment and Economy that have actual or potential roles in building cooperation and partnerships, are little known to the public or, indeed, to anyone other than those directly involved in them. The mechanisms of environmental management in Canada need to be much more transparent than they are at present.

²⁴ Issue 12, p. 25.

²⁵ Issue 6, p. 19.

²⁶ p. 37.

²⁷ See for example, the submission from the Mining Association of Canada, pp. 3-4.