

5.8 In the evidence given to us, the Committee heard much about the prospects for alternative energy sources that was visionary, exciting, and potentially very relevant. It is clear to us that most of these sources are unlikely to make a significant contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions before the turn of the century. But vigorous pursuit of such options is essential if Canada is to be ready for the next phase of emissions reductions. As noted in para. 4.69 we learned from Mr. Haites that in order to achieve the Toronto target of a 20% reduction from 1988 levels by 2005, energy efficiency and conservation could get us three-quarters of the way, and alternative fuels the rest. After 2005, however, to achieve a 50% reduction from 1988 levels, more than half the task may need to be accomplished by alternative fuels.⁶

5.9 What we do during the next decade to research, evaluate and develop new and sustainable energy technologies will be crucial for Canada's future. In view of the anticipated growth in global energy demand, they may also be crucial for developing countries' needs, and in the achievement of sustainable development throughout the world.

5.10 As stated in our interim report

The Committee recommends, for the purpose of attaining integrated environmental and economic objectives, that the federal government considerably increase its support for research, development and demonstration directed to:

- (a) the more efficient and conserving use of energy;**
- (b) fuel substitution leading to reduced greenhouse gas emissions; and**
- (c) technologies for producing and using fossil fuels in less environmentally-damaging ways. (Interim recommendation no. 6.)**

5.11 This clearly involves a reversal of the trend during the last ten years. As our witness Mr. Passmore reminded us, the signals given by declining expenditures, termination of programs, research centres and delivery mechanisms, and similar actions may be as important as the loss of research funding:

Basically the signal to official Ottawa was that efficiency and renewable energy is an area that this government is not interested in...

[S]ignals are important, and basically that signal to the Canadian private sector is this: well, okay, this is not an area we should be doing R & D in, this is not an area the private sector should be actively involved in....

The level of contribution of efficiency, renewables... it does not matter what technology you choose — fossil fuels, nuclear — the level of contribution of these sources is not policy independent. In fact, policy is far more important than programs, and indeed, far less expensive for governments.⁷

The signals that were given by government policy and research expenditures during the last decade need to be changed, for the sake of the global environment, global sustainable development, and Canada's own economic self-interest.