

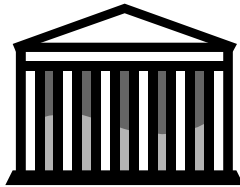
COMMISSIONER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CESD)

Background

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD) is a relatively new position within the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. The creation of this position is one of the important changes resulting from the 1995 amendments to the *Auditor General Act*. These amendments were enacted to encourage stronger performance by the federal government in the areas of environment and sustainable development.

Amendments to the *Auditor General Act* :

- established a CESD within the Office of the Auditor General of Canada;
- formally included the environmental element among the considerations the Auditor General takes into account when determining what to report to the House of Commons;
- required Ministers to table Sustainable Development Strategies in the House of Commons by December 15, 1997 and to update them every three years; and
- authorized the Auditor General to receive petitions on environmental and sustainable development matters, and require Ministers to respond to them within 120 days.



CESD's Mandate

The CESD has responsibilities in four main areas:

- *Monitoring Sustainable Development Strategies (SDSs)*
 - The CESD is responsible for monitoring the extent to which departments have implemented the action plans and met the objectives of their SDSs.
- *Audits and Special Studies*
 - "Environment" is integrated into the value-for-money audits performed by the Office of the Auditor General, which have traditionally focused on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of government activities.
 - The Office of the CESD conducts studies on "cutting edge" environmental and sustainable development issues.
- *Public Petitions*
 - Amendments to the *Auditor General Act* created a formal vehicle for channelling public input and concern about environment and sustainable development issues to federal departments. They provided a statutory public petition process.
- *Green Report to the House of Commons*
 - On a yearly basis, the CESD reports to the House of Commons on matters related to the environment and sustainable development.

Selected Audits and Special Studies

The CESD reports on the federal government's efforts in key areas like:

- climate change, biodiversity, and environmental assessment (1998);
- management of toxic substances and federal-provincial environmental agreements (1999).