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Sustainability

The oil sands continue to develop rapidly and are an important contributor to Canada's economy. The Canadian Energy Research Institute (CERI) has predicted that the oil sands and related activities will make up 3% of Canada's GDP by 2020 (SCNR 2007). The following policies and initiatives were designed to promote sustainability at the federal and provincial levels.

Federal – Environment Canada's Sustainable Development Strategy (2007–2009)

In the fourth round of Sustainable Development Strategies, the 2007–2009 Strategy focuses on building Environment Canada's capacity to: support sustainable development; provide Canadians with the tools to support sustainable development; and exercise leadership in the coordination of inter-governmental department strategies to enable sustainable processes (Environment Canada, 2006b). In the last two years, Environment Canada has developed an integrated policy approach and with this, a management framework: the Results Management Structure. [The Sustainable Development Strategy](#) has been an important reference document for the Results Management Structure, integrating sustainability into its objectives, goals and outcomes.



Squirrel
Source: George Brinson
(click to enlarge)

At the federal level, a coordinated effort has been made to increase accountability and coherence of departmental SDSs. The Environment Canada SDS has been informed by, and developed in support of, this federal initiative.

Federal – Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators

The 2007 report on [Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators](#) provides information on three important environmental indicators: Air Quality, Freshwater Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Government of Canada, 2007). These three indicators were chosen because they contain useful environmental information but can be displayed in an accessible, simple form. The report is a joint effort between Statistics Canada, Environment Canada, Health Canada and various contributors from individual provinces and territories.

Federal – Advancing Sustainable Development in Canada

In November 2003, the [Policy Research Initiative](#), in collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development, identified policy issues and research needs around sustainability issues in Canada (Policy Research Initiative, 2003). Among these were: Urban Redesign, Impact of Globalization on Canada, Signals and Incentives, Freshwater Management, Eco-Region Sustainability, International Engagement (Poverty and Sustainable Development), and Unsustainable Lifestyles.

This research initiative also identified three further needs:

- To develop indicators to determine sustainable development progress and policy options – this led to the creation of the [Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators](#);
- To determine which crosscutting sustainable development strategies work; and
- To identify governance and institutional frameworks that can be used by the federal government to integrate sustainable development objectives in laws, policies and initiatives across Canada.

Provincial Policies and Initiatives

Alberta's Commitment to [Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management](#) serves as an umbrella for initiatives such as the Water Management Policy and Legislation, the Forest Legacy, and Special Places (SREM 1999).

The provincial [Land-Use Framework](#) was released in late 2008. The Framework seeks to create a balance between economic, social, and environmental interests in the land, and will ensure that future land development will consider cumulative environmental impacts as well as social and economic factors (Government of Alberta 2008).

Regional/Sub-Regional Policies and Initiatives

The [Regional Sustainable Development Strategy for the Athabasca Oil Sands Area](#) was developed in consultation with regional stakeholders. The Strategy provides a framework and process for addressing the growing number of environmental issues in the area, and for ensuring that development in the area is environmentally sustainable (Government of Alberta 2006).

The [Fort McMurray-Athabasca Oil Sands Subregional Integrated Resource Plan](#) contains the Government of Alberta's resource management policy for public lands and resources in the area. The Plan provides guidance and direction for resource managers, industry, and the public, and identifies resource potentials and opportunities for development.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Integrated Community Sustainability Plan was initiated in 2007, with the intent to create an integrated and comprehensive plan to proactively manage population growth, municipal service delivery, and other aspects of community development and change that are associated with industrial development in the region. The Terms of Reference for the Plan are found [here](#).

Other regional/sub-regional policies and initiatives are described under [Water Management](#).

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