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STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT INFOBASE

The State of Canada's Environment '1996



Part I

Chapter 1

Chapter 2



Part II



Part III



Part IV



Part V

Screen resolution

- 640 x 480
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- 1024 x 768

- o [Chapter 1 ' Understanding Connections](#)
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Highlights

People are waking up to the fact that humans are an integral part of the Earth's interconnected [ecosystems](#), not separate from them. Our success in maintaining the quality and productivity of the [environment](#) will depend on acknowledging this relationship and acting accordingly.

In the comparatively short time that humans have been on Earth, we have had a dramatic impact on the planet's [ecosystems](#). Changes in the quantity of global resources have become obvious only in the last few decades. Before then, few people even thought about the supply of trees, soil, fish, or clean water. Trees were to be harvested, soils were to be ploughed, fish were to be caught, and rivers were to be dammed. Now actions that were once thought to be isolated are seen as having a web of wide-ranging consequences.

The human role in [ecosystems](#) differs from that of any other [species](#) in two ways. First, humans have the ability to drastically alter the ecosystems upon which they depend; secondly, humans are capable of greatly reducing or eliminating many of the factors that formerly limited their numbers. These capabilities can result in an intolerable pressure on natural resources and life support systems.

For development to be ecologically sustainable, its benefits must continue to be maintained indefinitely. The principle of [sustainability](#) must be widely applied if Canadians as well as people in other countries are to enjoy an acceptable quality of life in the future.

Environmental protection cannot be successfully accomplished in isolation from social and economic development. Regular [monitoring](#) and evaluation of all development activities and policies are essential to the achievement of sustainability.

Sustainable development deals with interrelationships and linkages. It means looking at decisions in a holistic way where there is a parallel care and respect for people and for the enveloping ecosystem of which everyone is a part.

' Hodge et al. (1995)

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