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Statistics Canada's 2011 User Outreach Campaign

**Presentation to the Second Meeting of the
UN Expert Group on the Framework for
Environment Statistics**

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May 4-6, 2011

Overview of presentation

- Rationale for Statistics Canada's consultation campaign
- Who did we consult and how
- What did we learn
 - About the framework
 - About the need for statistics in general
- Conclusions



Rationale for the campaign

- Statistics Canada has identified environment statistics as a priority for the organization
- As part of our planning for the future development of the program, a decision was made to undertake a broad public consultation
 - Had not undertaken a significant outreach activity for some years
 - Lots of work done on environmental issues in recent years
 - Seeking to engage a broader range of users than in the past – particularly, provinces and cities

Who did we consult and how?

- Very broad, multi-mode consultation with individuals, businesses, governments and NGOs
 - e-mail advertising campaign
 - internet survey
 - telephone interviews
 - face-to-face meetings
- Focus was on consulting both actual and potential users of our statistics

What did we learn?

- About half those we spoke to had heard of us and about half of those had used our statistics
- All would potentially make more use in the future, though cost and geographic detail are impediments
- There is a clear interest in measures of ecosystems and the associated goods and services, including biodiversity
- There is widespread comfort with monetary measures of the environment where these make sense
- The notion that the environment is an important source of wealth comprised of a suite of distinctly measurable assets is widely accepted

What did we learn specifically about the framework for environment statistics?

- The question of what framework to use for environment statistics was discussed only during the face-to-face meetings
 - It was considered too complex for the other consultation modes
 - And even during the face-to-face meetings, we were careful to use language that non-statisticians would be familiar with: “roadmap” rather than “framework”
- Face-to-face meetings were held with:
 - Officials from provincial and municipal government departments
 - Key environmental NGOs (David Suzuki Foundation, International Institute for Sustainable Development, Pembina Institute)
 - Academics from leading universities (Toronto, York, UBC, McMaster, Victoria)
 - Environmental consultants
 - Industry associations

What did we learn specifically about the framework for environment statistics?

- About half of those we met with had an explicit opinion on what the framework should be
- Of those who offered their thoughts, the majority suggested that a framework based on the theory of natural capital would be appropriate
 - There is a clear desire for environment statistics that are coherent with other statistical domains, both economic and social
 - A capital framework is seen to offer this opportunity
 - The framework can be used to argue for environmental conservation by making the link between natural capital and ecological goods and services that are essential for human well-being



What other frameworks were mentioned?

- The pressure-state-response framework was noted as a preference by two individuals
- The materials balance framework was noted by one individual
- About half those we interviewed did not express a preference for any framework
 - When prompted about their comfort with the natural capital framework, one user expressed discomfort (on ethical grounds related to the commodification of nature)
 - Other users were either silent or supportive of the framework

What else did we learn?

- Statistics on biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services were mentioned as a need by many
 - Both monetary and physical data sought
- “Place-based” data are needed, especially by those with local responsibilities (e.g., city planners)
- Data linking health and the environment are needed
- Data linking economic growth to environment are needed (green jobs, green exports, etc.)
- Data linking environmental quality to human well-being are needed
- More frequent and timely data are needed
- Data need to be more easily accessible

Conclusions

- We are still completing the the consultation (it was interrupted during the federal election campaign)
- Once complete, we will evaluate what we heard and proceed with finalization of the Canadian framework
 - At the moment, there is reason to believe that pursuing a natural capital framework will be well aligned with the views of Canadian users of environment statistics
 - Once our current framework paper is revised to reflect what we learned during the consultations, we will circulate it broadly within Canada for final approval