

Country report – Canada

London Group Meeting 5-7 November 2003

Publishing of environmental accounts, indicators and detailed statistics (1997, 2000, 2003/04):

- Asset accounts for oil, gas, minerals and timber
- Energy use
- Water extraction and use
- Land cover and use
- GHG emissions
- Environmental protection expenditures

Ten summary indicators are produced with the objective to convey clear and concise information on specific environment–economy variables. Five themes are used to organize the 10 indicators into groups: natural resource stocks; use of land resources; consumption of materials and energy; waste production; and environmental protection expenditures. A database containing the detailed statistics that lie behind the indicators is also published.

Recent projects

Statistics for Recycling – This project has helped characterize the flows of metal in the economy and provide estimates of the potential availability of metal scrap for the period 1961-1996. These statistics will be useful for estimating recycling rates and for analyzing the fate of metals after their incorporation into commodities.

New digital framework for drainage basin boundaries – The technology and data employed in creating the new framework allowed the inclusion of attributes that will improve analysis of surface-water distribution and flow.

Projection of the data on the value of subsoil assets – A methodology has been developed to project the data on the value of subsoil assets for inclusion in the National Balance Sheet Accounts. These data were lagging two years behind the reference period of the balance sheet accounts.

Fisheries resource accounts – Work is well underway for the production of fisheries accounts. Conceptual development is almost done and accounts will be first produced for three species (cod, herring and snow crab).

Timber use accounts – Work is just starting on the development of timber use accounts. The first assessment of the available data indicates the feasibility of the project. As for the other flow accounts (energy use, water use and GHG emissions), the accounts will make use of the input-output accounts allowing calculation of the direct and indirect intensity of timber use.

Other important activities

National Round Table on Economy and the Environment's (NRTEE) Initiative on Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators – A three-year initiative to develop a small set of national-level indicators that take account of those assets that are necessary to sustain a healthy economy, society and environment for Canadians. One of the main recommendations of the final report is that Statistics Canada expands the System of National Accounts to track all forms of capital (natural, human and, over time, social) that will contribute to future growth, and to link this information to existing economic data.

User consultation of the environment accounts – The main users of the environment accounts are making extensive use of the accounts for different purposes (e.g., economy-environment modeling, general research on sustainable development, new measures of national wealth). Their number is however relatively low. Users would like more timely and detailed data, and an increase in the assets covered by the accounts.

Supreme Court of Canada to rule on value of Canada's natural resources – The full economic value of natural resources, particularly the non-market value of trees, has not been adequately recognized by Canadian courts when damages are awarded for destroyed forest. The two environmental NGOs behind the case argue that natural resources are undervalued in the market system because nature provides ecological goods and services at no monetary cost. A decision is expected in early 2004.