2006 CESD Report – Climate Change –

Presentation by
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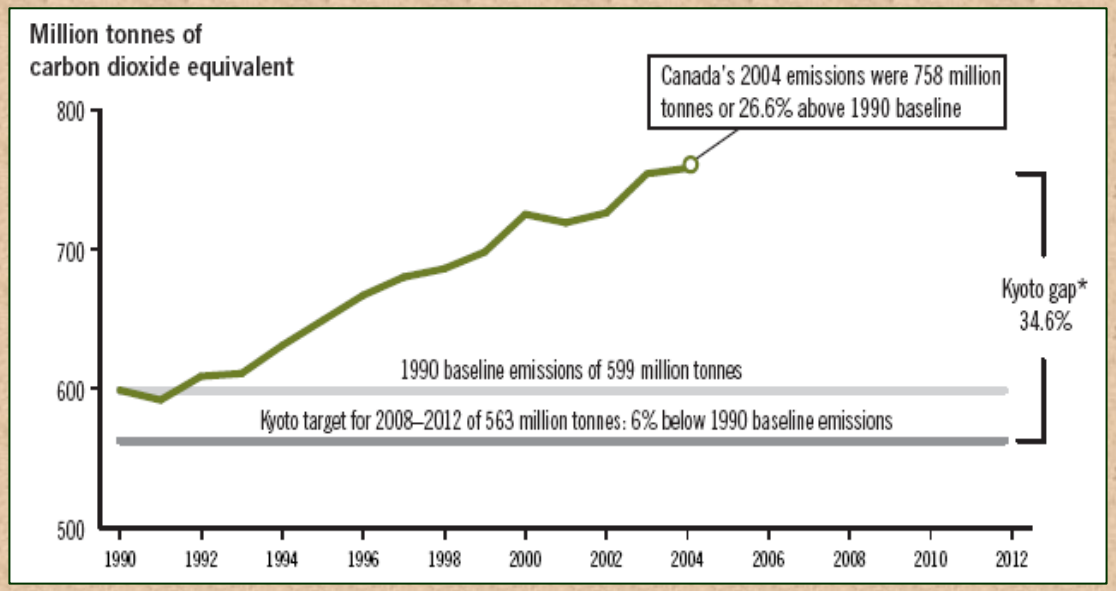
The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development
Office of the Auditor General of Canada

Context for the Report

- Climate change an important concern for Canadians
- The stakes are high – we suffer from consequences and are a source of the problem
- Politically charged debate
- Change in government mid-course during the audit

Context for the Report

- International commitments to address climate change – UNFCCC (1992) and Kyoto (1997)
- Three federal climate change plans since 2000
- $6.36 billion in announced spending
- Canada's emissions continue to grow:



Focus of the 2006 Report

- Entire report devoted to climate change
- Five separate audit Chapters, each with specific objectives and criteria
- Commissioner's Perspectives, plus Overview
- Three high level questions:
  - Is Canada on track to meet its emission reduction obligations?
  - Is Canada ready to adapt to the impact of climate change?
  - Is the government organized and managing well?

High Level Findings

- “Canada is not on track to meet its obligations to reduce GHG emissions”
- “Canada is not ready – nor adequately preparing – to adapt to the effects of climate change”
- “The federal government’s efforts are neither well organized nor well managed”

Ch. 1: Managing the Federal Approach
Audit Objectives

- Does the federal government have a suitable management framework?
- Can the federal government report reliably and fairly on its spending?
- Are GHG emission reduction strategies based on sound data and analysis?
- Will the planned domestic emissions trading system be effective?

Ch. 1: Managing the Federal Approach Findings

- The government has yet to create an effective governance structure
- The government has no system to track or report spending and results
- In some cases, analyses to support targets and policy tools are insufficient
- Government lacks credible GHG emission reduction strategy for key sectors (transport) and Canada's largest emitters
- The domestic emissions trading system is complex and progress slow

Ch. 2: Adapting to Climate Change Audit Objectives

- Has the federal government developed an adaptation strategy and action plans to manage identified risks?
- Is it implementing this strategy?
- Has the federal government organized itself to obtain, analyze and disseminate sufficient and appropriate information?

Ch. 2: Adapting to Climate Change Findings

- While commitments have been made to develop an adaptation strategy, efforts have stalled
  - Some departments have begun to develop their own strategy; none has been approved
  - Progress on working with provinces and territories is limited
- Canadians need access to data on future conditions
  - Federal research is yielding results, but significant gaps in the knowledge base remain
  - Planning of climate science activities for adaptation is on hold

Five High Level Expectations for Action

- Report identified five crucial areas for action:
  - Provide sustained leadership
  - Integrate energy and climate change
  - Develop a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
  - Push ahead with adaptation
  - Assure governance and accountability

Specific Recommendations and Responses

- Each chapter made specific recommendations
- The government has
  - accepted all of our recommendations (in principle)
  - not stated how it plans to implement our recommendations
  - stated that it will take our recommendations into account in developing its new plan

Impact and results

- Substantial media coverage – still ongoing
- Significant attention by Parliamentarians. Hearings held by
  - Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development
  - Standing Committee on Natural Resources
  - Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources
- Government has released its new climate change plan

Some Lessons Learned

- Auditing a “horizontal” issue such a climate change requires attention to both line departments and central agencies
- Avoid the politics and don’t comment on policy
- Scoping to manageable level was essential – we consulted experts
- Several chapters at once helped expand coverage but required considerable coordination
- Communicating audit results requires that we set the context – the Overview helped to clarify the science in an objective way

More Information

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