

**Implementing Sustainable Development
For
For Future Generations:
Manitoba's Sustainable Development Strategy**

Submitted by:

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Background

The term “Sustainable Development” became popular when it was first coined in the report “Our Common Future”, the product of the Brundtland Commission in the mid-1980s. The term was accomplished by the fairly vague definition of “meeting our needs without compromising the needs of future generations” and has been the subject of ongoing debate. Since the time of the Brundtland Commission, much work has gone into better defining what Sustainable Development means in the daily lives of Manitobans.

Throughout the 1990s, Manitoba’s Round Table for Sustainable Development, has been refining Sustainable Development policy. Through the Round Table, Manitoba developed a series of resource and sector specific Sustainable Development Strategies to guide decision-making. While these strategies have provided some general guidelines for government, they have yet to be implemented in a comprehensive way, through government operations.

At the same time, in the mid-1990s, the previous government brought forward a White Paper on Sustainable Development. The intent of the paper was to implement sweeping legislative changes to environmental licensing in Manitoba. The White Paper was drafted with little public consultation and proved to be unsuccessful in garnering public support. Instead, The Sustainable Development Act, without contentious decision making components, was brought forward as a first step towards legislative change and as such, embedded the principles and guidelines of sustainable development into legislation.

In 1997, Manitoba then initiated a multi-stakeholder consultation process, the Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation (COSDI), to address those components of the White Paper that were not reflected in the Sustainable Development Act. The many stakeholders involved in COSDI were asked to bring forward recommendations on how to implement the principles and guidelines of sustainable development in land use and environmental decision-making.

The result was a comprehensive report (the COSDI Report) that recommended that there be comprehensive sustainable development planning based on natural areas, such as water-sheds or other eco-regions. It also recommended that there be effective public involvement throughout the planning, development, assessment and decision-making processes. In addition, the report recommended the development of a protocol to establish an effective working relationship between Aboriginal communities and the Province for the purpose of these decisions. Finally, the report recommended the review of the Round Table for Sustainable Development strategies with a view to implementation. This report was not formally accepted when it was released in May 1999 and has been the subject of review by the current government.

Implementing Sustainable Development – A Strategy to Protect our Future

The years of strategy development during the 1990s, both through the Round Table and the COSDI process, have set the stage for implementing sustainable development in the daily workings of government and in the daily lives of Manitobans. The COSDI report suggested that to develop wide-area plans based on natural areas for all Manitoba could take up to 20 years. Today, in the year 2000, it is incumbent on us to ensure that this work is not left to collect dust while the need for sustainable development grows ever greater. Now is the time to begin work immediately to implement the strategies that have been developed by Manitobans from across the province.

Manitoba's Strategies for the Implementation of Sustainable Development

- The Government has accepted the COSDI Report and has begun the process of implementation of the recommendations. This will place Manitoba on the cutting edge of land-use, resource and environmental decision making.
- The Government has announced the amalgamation of the departments of Natural Resources, Environment and Energy into a single Department of Conservation that will be the lead agency in the implementation of sustainable development.
- The Government has announced the creation of a new Environmental Stewardship Division within Manitoba Conservation to ensure the integration of Sustainable Development strategies into the day to day operations of the department. In addition, this Division will work in partnership with the new Intergovernmental Affairs Department and liaise with a newly constituted Round Table to guide the implementation of the COSDI Report recommendations.
- The Government will be introducing legislative changes to enhance the functions of the Manitoba Round Table in order to provide one effective advisory body to advise government in all matters related to sustainable development. The newly constituted Round Table will contain representation from a broad spectrum of Manitoba society and will include Ministerial level representation from several departments. The Round Table will play a key role in the implementation of the recommendations in the COSDI report, including resource and sector specific Sustainable Development Strategies.
- The Government will announce the establishment of an Aboriginal Resources Council to ensure the development of the necessary partnerships with the Aboriginal community, especially related to resource and environmental issues. This Council will also provide assistance in the implementation of the recommendations in the COSDI report.
- As the first concrete action in implementing the COSDI report, the government will announce the details of wide-area planning for the East Side of Lake Winnipeg. This initiative will be seen as a "pilot" for wide-area plans in other regions of the Province.

We know that we can no longer afford to wait to put sustainable development into action. To do so would subject future generations to the risk of losing the benefits of clean water, air and soil that we continue to enjoy in Manitoba. We must ensure that our decisions are truly guided by what is best for the future. Through this implementation plan, Manitobans can look forward to seeing many positive policy and legislative changes that will enhance our environment and support sustainable development as a part of our daily lives.