

Canada's Green Plan and the National Pollutant Release Inventory

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ABSTRACT

In August of 1990, Canada adopted the Green Plan, which is a governmentwide initiative aimed at solving our environmental challenges effectively. This plan commits \$3 billion in new funds over six years — in addition to the \$1.3 billion the government of Canada already spends annually on the environment. One section in the Green Plan states that the government will develop a national database for hazardous pollutants being released from industrial and transportation sources. Reporting requirements for industry will be established by 1992, with the first reports scheduled for public release no later than 1994. Environment Canada has decided to use the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Toxics Release Inventory as a model, making the necessary changes to adapt it to a Canadian context. The design of this National Pollutant Release Inventory and the reporting criteria will be determined by consulting with the provinces, territories, and other stakeholders.

We have a picture on the wall at Environment Canada that shows a young girl holding the world globe, and although it has few words, it says a great deal. It represents the two most important things in our lives: our children and our environment. There is no question at all that, if we continue contaminating our planet at the same rate as the past couple of decades, we will not only destroy the quality of life, but most likely life itself. Pollution prevention has to be a top priority, and it must transcend all political barriers, cultural differences, and economic constraints.

Every day we wait in taking preventative measures, we are getting two days further away from the cure. Metaphorically speaking, we're on a runaway train speeding downhill toward certain environmental destruction. Not only are we polluting our air, land, and water with very dangerous, persistent chemicals, but also by clear-cutting our forests, destroying the protective ozone layer, causing global warming, and using

the ocean as garbage dumps, we are destroying the earth's natural ability to cleanse itself. We must deter the industrial nations from their irresponsible polluting activities, and we must help the developing nations jump into the 21st century by supplying aid in the form of state-of-the-art, pollution-eliminating technologies. Instead of tearing around wildly, spending the taxpayers' money on random bits of pollution control to appease the most prominent and noisiest environmentalists, we must first provide some benchmarks from which to establish meaningful controls and measure the effectiveness of our work. A release database similar to the United States' Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) can provide these benchmarks.

Canadian Environmental Protection Act

Canada recognized that the issue of pollution prevention was of prime importance and, on June