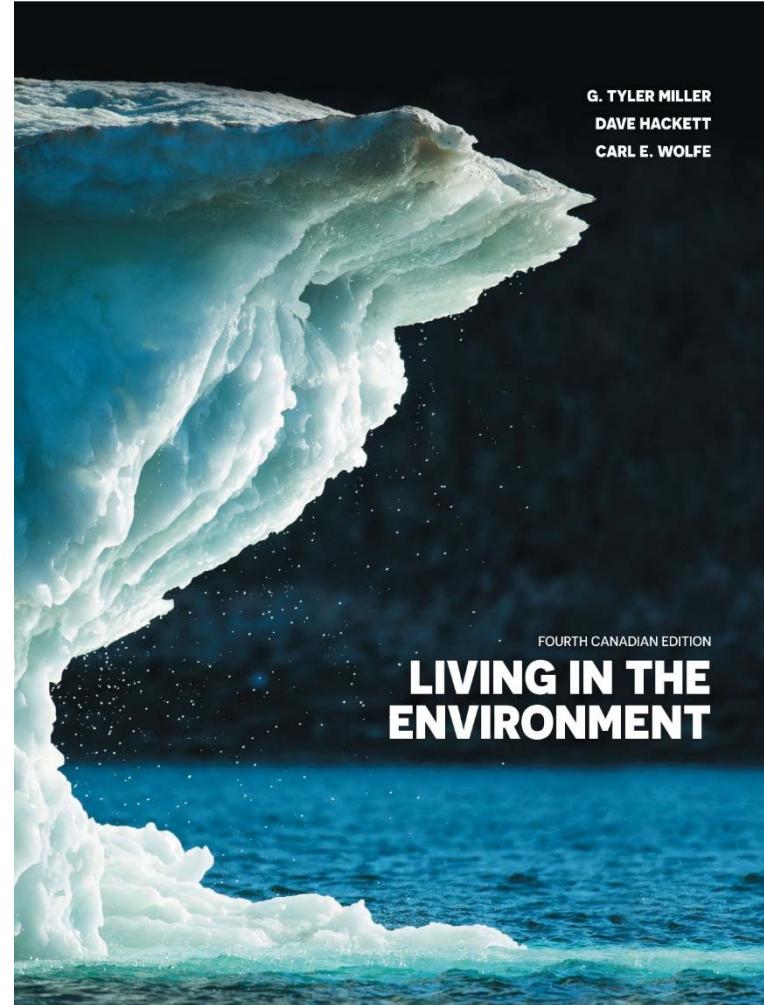


Chapter 27

Politics, Environment, and Sustainability



Key Concepts

- ◆ Major environmental and political challenges
- ◆ How democracies work
- ◆ How do we influence, develop, and implement environmental policy?
- ◆ Role of environmental law
- ◆ Types and roles of environmental groups
- ◆ Global environmental policies and treaties

Environmental and Political Challenges For This Century

♦ Major shifts in environmental concerns

- Human impact on biodiversity or natural capital
- From local to regional and global
- Climate change
- Pollution in developing nations
- Poverty
- Synthetic organic chemicals
- Globalization of problems and solutions

What Is a Democracy?

- ◆ Representation by elected officials
- ◆ Constitutional democracy
 - Constitution defines government authority, power limits, guarantees free speech
- ◆ Branches of government
 - Legislative, executive, judicial
- ◆ Stakeholders
 - Special-interest groups
 - Both profit-making and not-for-profit (NGO)

Factors Hindering Democracies in Dealing with Environmental Problems

- ❖ Short time between elections shifts the focus to short-term issues.
- ❖ Politicians often lack ecological literacy.

Principles to Guide Environmental Policy Decisions

- ❖ Humility
- ❖ Reversibility
- ❖ Precautionary
- ❖ Prevention
- ❖ Polluter pays
- ❖ Integrative
- ❖ Public participation
- ❖ Human rights
- ❖ Environmental justice

How Can Individuals Affect Environmental Policy?

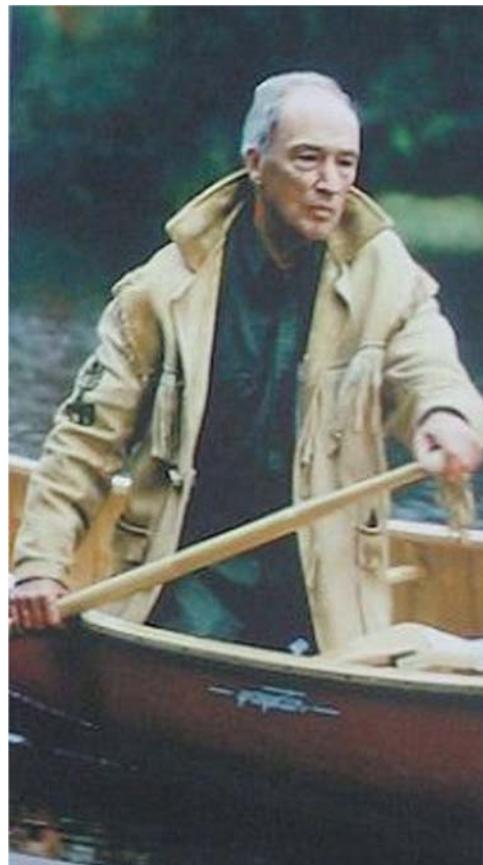
- Become informed on issues.
- Run for office (especially at local level).
- Make your views known at public hearings.
- Make your views known to elected representatives.
- Contribute money and time to candidates for office.
- Vote.
- Form or join nongovernment organizations (NGOs) seeking change.
- Submit an article or a letter to a newspaper.

What Is Environmental Leadership?

Vision, focus, resources, and support to people wanting to have positive environmental impact

How have political leaders compared?

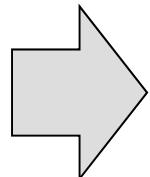
- Trudeau (Sr.) loved nature but had a patchy record on the issues.
- Mulroney negotiated major international agreements.
- Harper weakened regulations and science.
- Trudeau (Jr.) pledged to make the environment a priority.



By Jean Demers, Still Photographer on the TV series
Pierre Elliott Trudeau Mémoirs © Éditions La Fête Inc.

How Can Organizations Change to Foster Better Policy Making?

Hierarchy



Network

- Rigid structure
- Lack of information at top
- Minimal innovation

- Open information flow
- Adaptive management
- Leaders provide vision

What Is Environmental Law?

Defines reasonable environmental behaviour, balancing competing interests

♦ **Statutory Laws**

- Developed and passed by legislative bodies

♦ **Administrative Laws**

- Rules about the implementation/interpretation of statutes

♦ **Common Law**

- Unwritten rules based on past cases and practice

Key Terms in Environmental Law

♦ Civil Suits

- Between private parties
- Plaintiff *vs.* defendant

♦ Nuisance

- Property use causing annoyance or injury

♦ Class Action Suit

- Civil suit on behalf of a collection of citizens

♦ Negligence

- Knowingly acting in an unlawful or unreasonable manner

What Factors Hinder the Effectiveness of Environmental Lawsuits?

1. Challenging to establish legal right or **legal standing**
2. Expensive, especially for individuals
 - Legal fees may be tax-deductible for corporations but not for public-interest firms
3. Must establish that the defendant caused the harm

What Factors Hinder the Effectiveness of Environmental Lawsuits?

4. Statute of limitations
5. Court decisions may take years
6. Countersuits by corporations

Mediation provides a faster, less costly alternative.

Case Study: What Are Some Major Environmental Laws in Canada?

- ❖ Standards for pollution levels
 - **Canada Water Act (1970)**
- ❖ Screen new substances for safety
 - **Canada Environmental Protection Act (1999)**
- ❖ Encourage resource conservation
 - **Fisheries Act (1985)**

Case Study: What Are Some Major Environmental Laws in Canada?

- ❖ Protect an ecosystem, resource, or species
 - **Species at Risk Act (2002)**
- ❖ Evaluate environmental impact of a proposal
 - **Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (1992)**
 - Harper government repealed and revised this with much-restricted powers

What Are the Roles of Major Environmental Groups?

- ◆ Monitor environmental activities
- ◆ Lobby for new or stronger environmental laws
- ◆ Collaborate with companies on environmental solutions
- ◆ Raise awareness of issues
- ◆ Includes grassroots, global, and issue-based groups

Setbacks Faced by Environmental Groups

- ◆ Organized movement against environmental groups
- ◆ Bearers of bad news are not received well.
- ◆ Many citizens support environmental laws but do not prioritize them.
- ◆ Focus has shifted from visible problems to difficult-to-understand underlying issues
- ◆ Different environmentalists have been in conflict with each other.

Spotlight: What Can You Do?

- ❖ Vote wisely.
- ❖ Keep pressure on politicians.
- ❖ Convince your neighbours.
- ❖ Join an organization.
- ❖ Take legal action.
- ❖ Seek media coverage.
- ❖ Take economic action.



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Global Environmental Policy

National or global security generally focuses on **economic + military** security.

Should we expand the definition to include **environmental** security?

Global Efforts on Environmental Problems: Trade-offs

Good News

- Environmental protection agencies in 150 nations
- Over 500 international environmental treaties and agreements
- UN Environment Programme (UNEP)
- The 1992 Rio Earth Summit adopted key principles for dealing with global environmental problems.

Bad News

- Most international environmental treaties lack criteria for monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness.
- The 1992 Rio Earth Summit led to nonbinding agreements without enough funding to implement them.

Global Efforts on Environmental Problems: Trade-offs

Good News

- 2002 Johannesburg Earth Summit
- 2012 Rio+20 Summit
- The eight Millennium Development Goals, designed to achieve specified goals by 2015, showed how rapid progress could be made through organized global cooperation.

Bad News

- The 2002 Johannesburg Earth Summit failed to provide adequate goals, deadlines, and funding.
- The 2009 Copenhagen Conference failed to make concrete progress toward dealing with climate change.

Spotlight: Rio+20—Two Decades After the Rio Earth Summit

❖Focus

- Develop green economies for sustainable development and poverty eradication.
- Create institutional frameworks to advance sustainable development.

Spotlight: Rio+20—Two Decades After the Rio Earth Summit

★Successes

- Largest UN conference ever held
 - 40,000 participants
 - 100 government heads-of-state represented
- \$513 billion USD committed to sustainable development
- 700 voluntary commitments to action

Role of International Environmental Organizations

- ❖ Gather and evaluate environmental data.
- ❖ Develop environmental treaties.
- ❖ Provide funds and loans for sustainable economic development.

For example, UNEP, WHO, UNDP, FAO, World Bank, GEF, IUCN

International Environmental Treaties: Solutions

Problems	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="242 584 1022 789">□ Take a long time to develop and are weakened by requiring full consensus<li data-bbox="242 822 1022 953">□ Poorly monitored and enforced<li data-bbox="242 985 1022 1197">□ Lack of funding for monitoring and enforcement<li data-bbox="242 1230 1022 1352">□ Treaties are not integrated with one another.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="1043 584 1822 757">□ Do not require full consensus among regulating parties<li data-bbox="1043 789 1822 969">□ Establish procedures for monitoring and enforcement.<li data-bbox="1043 1002 1822 1181">□ Increase funding for monitoring and enforcement.<li data-bbox="1043 1214 1822 1352">□ Harmonize or integrate existing agreements.

Developing and Measuring Environmental Progress

❖Goals

- Creative solutions at a local level
- Cooperation between citizens, businesses, officials

❖Measures

- Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI)
- Environmental Performance Index (EPI)
 - Canada ranked #24 out of 142 countries in 2014 (sharp decline from 2006)

Guidelines for Cooperative Environmental Problem Solving

- ❖ Recognize that business is not the enemy.
- ❖ Emphasis on prevention or minimization
- ❖ Use marketplace solutions rather than laws.
- ❖ Find win-win solutions.
- ❖ Stop exaggerating (i.e., reduce using dramatic rhetoric)

Conclusion

- ❖ Governments have an important role to play in protecting the environment.
- ❖ International agreements need to be binding and enforced.
- ❖ In democratic societies, there are challenges to how much governments can do in the long-term.
- ❖ You can get involved and make a difference.