Performance Audits on Climate Change in Canada

Presentation to the INTOSAI Working Group on Environmental Auditing in Moscow

28 October 2005

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development

Office of the Auditor General of Canada

Climate Change Audits in Canada

- 1998: initial performance audit
  - Responding to Climate Change—Time to Rethink Canada's Implementation Strategy
  - Focus on period prior to Canada's signing of the Kyoto Protocol
- 2001: follow-up to 1998 audit
- 2006: audit in progress

1998 and 2001 Audit Objectives

- 1998 audit:
  - To assess the adequacy of the federal government's management of Canada's [then] domestic policy commitment on climate change – re: Canada's stabilization goal
- 2001 audit:
  - To determine whether the federal government had made substantial progress on rethinking its climate change implementation strategy

Key Findings of 1998 audit

- Federal government had not applied sound management principles to implement Canada's policy commitments on climate change
  - No implementation plan in place,
  - Limited provision for regular, results-based monitoring of progress, and
  - No consolidated summary-level reporting to Parliament

Key Recommendations of 1998 audit

- Need to develop an effective management structure to ensure a co-ordinated effort amongst all stakeholders
- Need to develop a federal and national portfolio of measures to address climate change
- Need to develop a results-based implementation plan
- Need to enhance reporting to Parliament on climate change

Key Findings of 2001 follow-up audit

- Federal government had made some important progress in rethinking its implementation strategy on climate change
- However, it still needed to do a great deal of work to engage partners to take action on climate change – given the fact that Canadian GHG emissions were still rising (from 9% to 15%)

Challenges faced in the audits

- Keeping in mind that, in Canada, jurisdiction in environmental matters is a shared jurisdiction between the federal government and other levels of government and, thus, avoid crossing the line into non-federal jurisdiction
- Understanding the federal roles and responsibilities for dealing with climate change
  - The two co-lead departments have limited authority and capability to ensure that action is taken by other federal entities, other jurisdictions, industry, etc.

Lessons Learned

- Important to talk to a broad spectrum of stakeholders to understand the issues and to gain credibility
- Cannot address all issues in one audit. Some issues were addressed in subsequent work by the OAG/CESD

2006 Audit Coverage

- Federal management of climate change
- Impacts of climate change on Canada and Canadians
- Measures being taken to adapt to significant impacts
- Selected federal government programs for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, during energy production and consumption