

NETA PowerPoint® Slides

to accompany

prepared by
Ian Dawe

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Chapter 27**Politics, Environment, and
Sustainability**

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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

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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

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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)

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Factors Hindering Democracies in Dealing with Environmental Problems

Short time between elections shifts the focus to short-term issues.

Politicians often lack ecological literacy.

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Principles to Guide Environmental Policy Decisions

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

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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.

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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 Memoirs © Editions La Fête Inc.

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How Can Organizations Change to Foster Better Policy Making?

Hierarchy



Network

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| – Rigid structure | – Open information flow |
| – Lack of information at top | – Adaptive management |
| – Minimal innovation | – Leaders provide vision |

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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

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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

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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

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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.

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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)**

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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

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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

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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.

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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?

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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*

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International Environmental Treaties: Solutions

Problems

- Take a long time to develop and are weakened by requiring full consensus
- Poorly monitored and enforced
- Lack of funding for monitoring and enforcement
- Treaties are not integrated with one another.

Solutions

- Do not require full consensus among regulating parties
- Establish procedures for monitoring and enforcement.
- Increase funding for monitoring and enforcement.
- Harmonize or integrate existing agreements.

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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)

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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)

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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.