

Statement by the Delegation of Canada to the Sixteenth Session of
the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

**Tuesday May 6th, 2008, 10:00 am – Rural Development Intervention on
Poverty and Access to Services**

Mr./Madame Chairperson,

Poverty reduction and the protection and management of the natural resource base for economic and social development are essential requirements for sustainable development. The Government of Canada is working through a number of avenues to advance the objectives of Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

The reduction of poverty in both rural and urban Canada is a long-term, multi-dimensional challenge faced by all levels of government. At the federal level, strategies have been developed to improve economic and employment opportunities for all Canadians and reduce poverty through income support measures, the tax system, and a variety of economic and social programs and services that work together to improve self-sufficiency. National level strategies are complemented by broad-based social assistance and income support measures at the provincial/territorial and local levels.

Promoting and supporting the investment and infrastructure required for sustainable economic growth and diversification on an environmentally sound basis is critical. Despite the fact that improving access to basic services and infrastructure is a challenge in many parts of rural Canada due to distance and cost, the Government of Canada, through successive programs since 1994, has made significant investments aimed at improving access to infrastructure in rural areas, including projects in the areas of water/wastewater systems, local roads and bridges, solid waste management, community energy systems, broadband access, and cultural, tourism and sport infrastructure.

The Government of Canada has also worked with the private sector to bring broadband to unserved rural, remote and Aboriginal communities. From 2002 to 2007, the Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program provided broadband internet access to 900 communities.

The Government of Canada supports First Nations' water management by providing funding to First Nations and First Nation technical organizations to support the Circuit Rider Training Program, which is the main vehicle by which most First Nations operators receive the required training to operate their water systems. Through programs such as this one, Canada is working to advance the CSD-13 decision to build capacity of local communities in operation and maintenance of water systems, and training educators, managers and technicians in different aspect of water management.

In support of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation energy objectives, the Government of Canada continues to explore, develop and disseminate information

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regarding renewable and affordable energy sources. Recognizing that access to energy is one of the key pre-requisites for achieving sustainable development, Canada has developed innovative tools such as the RETScreen Clean Energy Project Analysis software, a unique decision-support tool for assessing energy projects. The software, which can be downloaded free-of-charge, is being used worldwide to evaluate the energy production, life-cycle costs and GHG emission reductions for various types of proposed energy efficient and renewable energy technologies. The software has been translated into 21 languages, covering roughly two thirds of the world's population.

Since last reporting on the theme of rural development and sustainable agriculture at CSD-8, Canada has continued to build and enhance a national cross-government approach to domestic rural challenges, guided by priorities identified by rural citizens. Canada's actions to address the concerns of rural Canadians and communities have supported the three pillars of sustainable development.

Thank you