



RÉSEAU CANADIEN DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT  
CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

## **The Canadian Environmental Network**

The Canadian Environmental Network (RCEN) is the largest and oldest network of environmental organizations in Canada. RCEN's work facilitates and promotes sharing of knowledge, resources and collaborative efforts to inform domestic and international practices, policies and agreements affecting the environment. It is the most critical environmental constituency of the Government of Canada. As the signature voice for environmental concerns in Canada, it is a precious resource to our country.

Created in 1977 and officially incorporated in 1987, the RCEN is an umbrella organization that is bilingual, transparent, non-partisan, democratic, national and diverse in its representation. It has affiliate networks in each of the provinces and in the Yukon Territory. In total, it has over 647 member groups.

The RCEN membership accounts for at least 630 000 individuals directly involved through their groups. Additionally, considering outreach through newsletters, conferences, workshops, and, other communication means the reach would easily be in the range of 2 million Canadians. The RCEN is the means through which environmental organizations across Canada have direct access and input into the development of policy and legislation in our country. Conversely, it is the means through which the Government of Canada is able to genuinely reflect the interests and views of Canadians.

The network was originally formed to:

- Integrate the voices of all stakeholders
- Consolidate Environmental NGO (ENGO) positions
- Provide needed consultative expertise to Environment Canada
- Create a bridge between ENGOs and government

It is significant to note that most of the larger environmental groups are members of the RCEN. These include such well-known groups as: The David Suzuki Foundation, Nature Canada, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, and the Sierra Club of Canada. While the work of these larger urban-based groups is critically important, it is the RCEN which delivers the voice of the hundreds of groups which come from small communities across the country.

The work of the RCEN is done through National Caucuses, which are: Agriculture, Atmosphere and Energy, Biodiversity (which includes wilderness preservation and forests), Environmental Planning and Assessment, Health, Toxics, Water, Fisheries and Oceans, Youth, and the International Program.

Some of the numerous current issues that the caucuses are working on include: the Chemicals Management Plan, Criteria Air Contaminants and industrial pollutant reduction strategies, completion of the 12% preservation of representative ecosystems nationwide, international mercury standards, the international Convention on Biological Diversity, energy conservation strategies, and the myriad challenges of Climate Change, to name a few.

Through its unique delegate selection process, the RCEN has selected over 3000 delegates (and alternates) to take part in various policy development initiatives sponsored by Environment Canada as well as other federal agencies over the past 33 years.

The RCEN has local, national, and international reach, and is one of the best environmental networks in the world. The model of Multi-Stakeholder Decision-Making Processes (MSDMPs) that the RCEN and Environment Canada have developed in partnership is the envy of countries around the world. Through this process the RCEN guarantees a transparent and democratic selection of delegates who participate in the federal consultations hosted by Environment Canada.

<b>Benefits to Government:</b>	<b>Benefits to ENGOs and public:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valuable input from the ENGO sector to Environment Canada’s plans and policies, and that of other Federal Departments</li> <li>• Improved environmental monitoring at the community level</li> <li>• Greater credibility nationally and internationally</li> <li>• Valuable and timely expertise from the participation of ENGOs in consultations</li> <li>• A transparent and reliable way to ensure representative participation of Canadians in democratic consultations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparent, inclusive, geographically diverse process for delegate selection</li> <li>• Reliable contribution to environmental policies</li> <li>• Improved communications with other groups locally and across the country</li> <li>• Greater (and encouraged) opportunities for smaller groups to participate</li> <li>• Better understanding of Environment Canada programs and policies</li> <li>• Improved ability of ENGOs to provide results in communities</li> </ul>

The RCEN operates mostly through the work of volunteers, who over the last three and a half decades have contributed many millions of dollars in terms of volunteer hours. Had the government contracted this work out it would obviously have cost significantly more than the equivalent of the modest amounts contributed to our core funding. Over the past decades, the Network has refined its services and expanded its reach, and operating costs have risen. However, there has been no benefit of increase in RCEN’s core funding. In recent years we have continued to operate on a budget of just under 1M\$ per year, and in the current fiscal year, that amount has decreased to a critically low amount of 550,000\$. Clearly this amount of support extremely under represents the vast volume of work that we do. A core contribution of 10M\$ would be more in keeping with the delivery of services, which include:

- Stakeholder Consultation Management
- Networking and Outreach
- Education, Information and News Clearinghouse
- Human Resource Capacity Building and Personnel Training
- Process-oriented engagement between environmental groups and government

The value of the core contribution received through Environment Canada is the provision of a stable, reliable base of core funding for the Network. An immediate increase in this allocation is far overdue, and an absolute necessity to encourage and preserve this precious resource.

Over the past three and a half decades, the environmental groups of the RCEN have been responsible for the lion’s share of environmental education and stewardship delivered to both large and small communities across the country. As such it is essential to the good of our country that this Network becomes even more robust in its ability to serve our nation.

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