

## Canada earns low grade for belching pollution

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OTTAWA -- Canada is ranked as one of the least environmentally friendly countries, placing 17th in a new survey of 21 of the world's richest nations.

The poor showing on the environmental front left Canada in the middle of the pack overall in the survey, released Sunday by the Washington-based Center for Global Development, that attempts to rate how the policies of rich countries help improve the lives of the world's poorest people, the Earth's 2.7 billion inhabitants that live on less than \$2 a day.

Overall, Canada ranked 10th out of 21 countries surveyed in the "Commitment to Development Index" compiled by the centre in conjunction with Foreign Policy magazine.

The complicated index cross-references data by seven categories, including foreign aid, trade, investment abroad, security and technology, in addition to the environment.

In the investment category, Canada got high marks for policies that allow companies to invest in developing countries, particularly in South Asia, where the government has provided incentives for many Canadian joint ventures in manufacturing, said David Roodman, the architect of the index.

But Canada's high levels of greenhouse gas emissions and its inability to implement policies to reduce them helped drag down its overall ranking.

The survey data also appears to lend credence to claims made by Prime Minister Stephen Harper that inaction by the former Liberal governments has made it impossible to live up to its climate change commitments under the Kyoto protocol, a treaty that Canada has ratified.

Since taking power in February, Harper has enraged environmentalists by saying that Canada cannot meet its Kyoto commitments, and has opened the door to participation in other climate change protocols, as he has touted a new made-in-Canada approach.

"This new government is probably being realistic because past governments haven't done much," Roodman said in an interview from Washington.

But he added: "I do think the Kyoto protocol has to be taken seriously because

it was an internationally agreed treaty. Maybe it's not perfect, but it's pretty good. If you junk that, then you're sending a pretty strong signal to poorer countries that they shouldn't worry about this either."

One the indicators that hampered Canada's poor standing was the fact that it produces 23.4 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per person per year.

Only the United States, at 24.5 tonnes, and Australia, at 28.5 tonnes, rated lower than Canada.

The average among the 21 countries surveyed was 14 tonnes, said Roodman.

Overall, Canada ranked 17th among the 21 countries on the environmental-indicator list, ahead of Japan, Australia, Spain and the United States.

In terms of foreign aid, Canada also got low marks because it has a high percentage of "tied aid," a practice that forces aid agencies to buy Canadian products -- especially food -- direct from Canada rather than purchasing cheaper local alternatives.

But Roodman said he is optimistic that Canada has already made strides that could improve its ranking in future studies.

That is because the current index is based on data to the end of 2004. The Liberal government in 2005 drastically cut the level of tied aid on food to poor countries when it raised the ceiling on how much aid agencies can buy from local suppliers to 50 per cent from 10 per cent.

"I think that's admirable," said Roodman. "It will reduce the tying penalty."

Overall, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Norway topped the list in that order, based mainly on the fact they significantly outspend other western nations on foreign aid. Japan ranked last.

The Netherlands has topped the index on the two previous occasions it has been issued, in 2003 and 2004.

Canada's performance has fluctuated, placing 13th and sixth respectively those two years.

(OTTAWA CITIZEN)

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