

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to evaluate to what extent Canada and Alberta have been fulfilling the principles of sustainable development as they have adopted in the 1990s from the essential U.N. documents – the Brundtland Report and the Rio Declaration- and to what extent both governments failed in providing and enforcing efficient environmental law protection as it is the basic premise for achieving sustainability. I assessed this level of sustainability in Canada and Alberta on the basis of a stronger and weaker sustainability theoretical framework.

Author's presumption was that Canada, as it defined sustainable development in its legislation, acted according to stronger sustainability, which emphasizes stronger protective environmental measures. Given a very large scope of environmental impacts of oil extraction on different ecosystems, the sector of water resources was selected to serve as a case study to compare and analyze government and alternative reports assessing the sustainability of water management. Thus, the author follows how the oil industry in Alberta affects the water resources and how both governments of Canada and Alberta provide environmental protection to the water resources. In this respect the author illustrates how the government is reluctant towards the implementation of stronger environmentally protective measures in the case study of the Athabasca River.

The conclusion of this thesis suggests that Canada and Alberta have been acting according to weaker sustainability that implies lower environmental protection. There is significant evidence from independent scientists that the oil related industry in Alberta is heavily polluting the water resources, which contradicts the well-received image of Canada as a leader in sustainable development