

Ottawa's green policies fail the grade in auditor's report

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OTTAWA—The federal government's environmental policies are falling short when it comes to protecting people, plants, animals and habitat, the environment commissioner reported yesterday.

Ron Thompson gave the government a grade of unsatisfactory in nine of 14 areas, including protection of endangered species, Great Lakes cleanup, control of invasive species such as zebra mussels and keeping its own operations green.

Thompson monitors the environment and sustainable development for Auditor General Sheila Fraser.

His report to the Commons says the government has promised for years to protect wildlife and habitat, but hasn't followed through.

"We don't think that's a very good track record," the commissioner said.

Auditors recommended six years ago that the government develop an inventory of species at risk, but there is still no comprehensive list.

"The government has broken its own law, and that's not an inconsequential thing," Thompson said. Environment Minister John Baird laid the blame squarely on the former Liberal government.

"They did little or nothing to fix those problems," Baird said. "We're taking real action; action to clean up our Great Lakes, action to protect species at risk, action to protect habitat."

The report did give satisfactory grades to National Defence for its efforts to locate and assess the risks of ocean dump sites littered with unexploded ammunition.

And Thompson said there was satisfactory progress managing pesticide safety and identifying and cleaning up contaminated sites.

<http://www.thestar.com/Article/310367> - see video