
Report 3—Departmental Progress in Implementing
Sustainable Development Strategies

For the 2010–2013 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, ministers and Cabinet committed to strengthen their use of the strategic environmental assessment process by considering the government's environmental goals when pursuing social and economic objectives. This commitment was reaffirmed in the 2016–2019 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. The Cabinet directive states that each minister must ensure that departmental policies, plans, and programs are consistent with the government's broad environmental objectives and sustainable development goals.

This audit focused on whether the organizations we examined adequately applied the Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals, and whether they met their commitments to strengthening their strategic environmental assessment practices.

This audit is important because Cabinet ministers need to consider potential environmental effects, both positive and negative, to make informed decisions about the policies, plans, and programs that affect Canadians.

Since 1990, the Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals has required federal organizations to perform strategic environmental assessments to inform Cabinet of the important positive or negative environmental effects of proposed policies, plans, and programs. The Government of Canada, through its Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, supported the application of the directive by requiring 26 participating federal organizations to strengthen their strategic environmental assessment practices.

Between 2013 and 2017, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada audited the progress of selected federal organizations in implementing the Cabinet directive. This work showed that on the whole, most organizations had not made satisfactory progress. As a result, in 2018, the Office decided to examine all 26 organizations to assess whether they had improved their practices since our initial audits.

Overall, we found that the federal organizations had applied the Cabinet directive to 93% of policy, plan, and program proposals submitted to Cabinet in 2017. This is a marked improvement over the findings of our initial audits.

We also found that these organizations were working to strengthen their environmental assessment practices. For example, since our initial audits, all organizations had developed or updated their internal guidance and tools to apply the Cabinet directive.

These findings are important because to make informed decisions that support sustainable development, Cabinet ministers must receive complete information about the potential environmental effects of the proposals they consider.

- **The Cabinet directive had been applied to most of the proposals submitted to Cabinet in 2017**

- **Preliminary scans met the requirements of the Cabinet directive**
- **Detailed strategic environmental assessments met the requirements of the Cabinet directive**
- **All of the organizations we examined had made satisfactory progress in strengthening their strategic environmental assessment practices**

	Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development
	Performance audit
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada • Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency • Canada Border Services Agency • Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions • Canada Revenue Agency • Canadian Heritage • Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada • Employment and Social Development Canada • Environment and Climate Change Canada • Finance Canada, Department of • Fisheries and Oceans Canada • Global Affairs Canada • Health Canada • Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada • Indigenous Services Canada • Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada • Justice Canada, Department of • National Defence • Natural Resources Canada • Parks Canada • Public Health Agency of Canada • Public Safety Canada • Public Services and Procurement Canada • Transport Canada • Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat • Veterans Affairs Canada • Western Economic Diversification Canada
	12 June 2018
	2 October 2018
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2017—Departmental Progress in Implementing Sustainable Development Strategies • Fall 2016—Departmental Progress in Implementing Sustainable Development Strategies • Fall 2015—Departmental Progress in Implementing Sustainable Development Strategies • Fall 2014—Departmental Progress in Implementing Sustainable Development Strategies • Fall 2013—Review of Departmental Progress in Implementing Sustainable Development Strategies

