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Veterans Affairs / Anciens Combattants

Sustainable Development Strategy 2004-2006



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Minister's Message

As recently appointed Minister of Veterans Affairs (MVA), it is with both honour and commitment that I proffer to serve the courageous men and women who so willingly gave of themselves in our country's hour of need. With the brave and selfless service so strongly embodied by our traditional War Service Veterans, Canadian Forces Veterans and still-serving members, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Canada has much to sustain indeed.

It is therefore with the utmost commitment and sense of responsibility that I submit to Parliament and Canadians our *Sustainable Development Strategy 2004 -2006*. Reporting to the *Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development*, our Department has developed clear objectives and action plans that include a full range of economic, environmental and social considerations aimed at sustaining the long-term health of our clients, and our organization.



At Veterans Affairs, sustainable development is about more than achieving a sustainable balance at the crossroads of our environment and economy. It is about ensuring that we sustain the vital programs and services our clients rely on every day. Clients whose needs continue to evolve in complex and diverse ways, due in part to the aging of our traditional War Service Veterans and the addition of benefits and services for the RCMP, but also in recognition of the enhanced role many of our Canadian Forces members have taken on in peacekeeping and peacemaking operations.

Our third *Sustainable Development Strategy* advances and further develops four previous themes: **Sustaining the Health and Well-Being of Our Clients, Sustaining the Health and Well-Being of Our Staff, Sustaining Knowledge and Information, and Sustaining Government Operations**. While progress has been made since my Portfolio's last Sustainable Development Strategy, it is fair to say that work remains to be done. The management of long-term horizontal initiatives which cut across discipline, sectoral and program lines, requires an ongoing and concerted effort. Progress in implementing this strategy will be incremental, and will be carefully measured through planned results, rigorous stewardship, clear accountability, and improved reporting to Parliament.

Veterans Affairs Canada's 2003 *National Client Satisfaction Survey* has told us that we are on the right track, with 87% of respondents indicating that they were satisfied with our programs and services. However, there is little time to rest upon our laurels, and we will continue to maximize the quality of life and care provisions for our traditional War Service Veterans, improve our services for retired and still-serving Canadian Forces members, and

enhance our benefits and services for the RCMP. We also seek new ways to sustain and improve the health and well-being of our staff, and strengthen our research and public information capacity so Canadians continue to receive quality information and programming about Canada's remembrance activities and events.

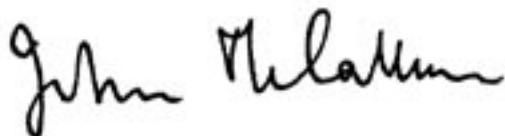
“At VA, sustainable development is about more than achieving a sustainable balance at the crossroads of our environment and economy. It is about ensuring that we sustain the vital programs and services our clients rely on every day.”

Government operations have a considerable impact on Canada's sustainable development prospects. The environmental performance of Government of Canada buildings, facilities and operations is subject to increased scrutiny. Measures that reduce solid waste, improve fleet management, conserve energy and water, and encourage the purchase of responsible and safe products make good economic and environmental sense. My Portfolio has

recently adopted a pollution prevention approach for the sustainable consumption of goods and services; we have developed a protocol to use alternatives to hazardous materials aimed at the reduction of hazardous wastes; and we will continue to promote and encourage green procurement practices while striving to increase energy efficiency in all sectors.

Progress toward sustainable development is a priority for the Government of Canada. Sustainable development is not a fixed state, but rather a process of change in which the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, the exploitation of resources and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs. Our approach is a balanced one that strives to embody the visions and expectations of our clients and all Canadians, but we will need the commitment, resources and creativity of all sectors of society to make sustainable development a practical reality.

Our level of dedication to sustainable development throughout the Veterans Affairs Portfolio is a reflection of our deep respect and admiration for those that served us so well in times of conflict and peace. Canada's service men and women have given all Canadians much to sustain. As temporary stewards, our duty must be to sustain the wealth and heritage they have bestowed upon us, for the benefit of those today, and generations yet to come.



**The Honourable John McCallum, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Veterans Affairs**

Overview

Definition

What is Sustainable Development? The World Commission on Environment and Development, (the Brundtland Commission), defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” In other words, development is essential to satisfy human needs and improve the quality of human life, yet, development must be based on the efficient and environmentally responsible use of all of society’s scarce resources – natural, human, and economic.

At first blush one likely would not associate Veterans Affairs with sustainable development. Yet, the manner in which we deliver our programs and services is all about sustainability. Our programs and services are focussed on sustaining the health and wellness of our Veterans, and on increasing and sustaining the knowledge Canadians have of the significant contribution Veterans continue to make to Canada’s development and security. In serving our Veterans and other clients, we also are focussed on initiatives to sustain the health and well-being of our staff and further “green” their workplaces.

VA’s Commitment to Sustainable Development

Veterans Affairs remains committed to doing its part to ensure sustainable development. Our Portfolio first took action by responding to the federal government’s framework, *A Guide to Green Government* in 1995. Two years later, in 1997, our first *Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS)* was tabled in Parliament. Building on the lessons learned from the first round, a second strategy was tabled in 2001.

Today Veterans Affairs turns its attention to gauging the success of its first two strategies and creating its third. In Chapter 5 of her October 2002 report to the House of Commons, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development states that, in order to ensure that the strategies fill their strategic role, departments need to show a commitment to change by focussing more on what they intend to do differently to achieve sustainable development.

Veterans Affairs accepts this challenge. To accommodate sustainable development planning that is more change oriented, we have adopted a seven year planning time frame and focussed on long term outcomes rather than operational processes and inputs. To this end, our objectives will be realized over the period 2004-2010. To facilitate linkages to our previous sustainable development efforts, we have put together a companion document, *Our Sustainable Development Journey*, which brings together our Sustainable

Development achievements to March 31, 2003. We plan to update this information on an annual basis and use it in the Department's annual planning cycle. As well, this annual update will form the basis for future revisions of our sustainable development strategies in 2007 and 2010.

A further means we have adopted to achieve linkages to our previous sustainable development efforts is to write this Sustainable Development Strategy using the same four themes contained in our previous Strategy. In doing so we have expanded two of our themes to include "well-being." ***Sustaining the Health and Well-Being of Our Clients, Sustaining the Health and Well-Being of Our Staff, Sustaining Knowledge and Information, and Sustaining Government Operations*** have stood the test of time. These provide us with an excellent framework within which to describe VA's challenges and how we intend to incorporate sustainability as a key component of our work.

The combination of a seven-year time frame for this strategy and the adoption of these existing themes will contribute to the achievement of VA's Sustainable Development Vision which, by 2010, will demonstrate that:

- the health and well-being of Veterans Affairs' family of clients has been sustained as demonstrated by their satisfaction with the benefits and health services they receive from Veterans Affairs;
- their contributions to and sacrifices on behalf of Canada are widely recognized by their fellow citizens; and,
- they receive exemplary service from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) staff who work in a safe, healthy and supportive environment that balances work and family life.

Let us now turn our attention to each of these four themes.



Sustainable Development Strategy Themes

Theme 1: Sustaining the Health and Well-Being of Our Clients

Historical Context

Prior to the **FIRST WORLD WAR** (1914-1918), there was no government department or agency responsible for Canada's Veterans. Canada expressed its gratitude to the Veterans who served this country by awarding medals. No concerted effort was made to care for the families of those who had fallen, or to help returned Veterans repair the unravelled threads of their civil lives. The immense human toll of the First World War changed everything. Out of a population of eight million, Canada had sent about 620,000 men and women to war. Of these, 66,655 gave their lives, and another 172,950 were wounded.

In 1915, a **Military Hospitals Commission** was established to provide treatment to Veterans. Within less than five years, the government would be offering free, all-embracing medical care to some 100,000 Veterans through 104 hospitals (44 of them directly controlled by the government) and through additional Unit Medical Centres distributed across Canada. By the end of the war, Veteran's rehabilitation programs had been consolidated within a **Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment**, with a mandate to tend to the needs of Veterans and their families.

During the **SECOND WORLD WAR** (1939-1945), out of Canada's fighting force of over one million men and women, more than 45,000 members of the Canadian navy, army, air force and merchant navy made the ultimate sacrifice. Approximately 55,000 of their comrades returned home wounded. To meet the needs of Canadian Veterans returning to civilian life, a set of comprehensive programs – **The Veterans Charter** – was established to provide returning Veterans with various benefits and services. By 1946, Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) was operating 36 hospitals and treatment centres, providing care to about 25,000 in-patients. Through these facilities and a large body of associated health care professionals, distinguished services were rendered to Canadian Veterans.

Between 1950 and 1953 Canadian Forces personnel again found themselves in a theatre of war, this time in **KOREA**, serving under an United Nations mandate. Their participation in that war resulted in 314 killed and 1,204 wounded. Benefits and services that were essentially similar to those provided to Second World War Veterans were extended to over 25,000 Korean War Veterans.

Beginning in 1949 Canada became a leading contributor to global peacekeeping missions, most conducted under the mandate of the United Nations. Recently, the frequency and intensity of these operations have increased, thereby extracting an increasing toll on the physical and mental well-being of personnel involved in these peacekeeping missions.



Challenges Associated with Sustaining the Health and Well-Being of Our Clients

The greatest challenge facing VAC at the beginning of this century is our need to adapt to the diversity of the people we serve and to respond to the complexity of their evolving needs. While the Department has developed solid programs and services for its War Service Veterans, we currently are examining how well these same programs and services meet the needs of our younger Veterans and other clients, including members and former members of the Canadian Forces and their families, the RCMP and eligible civilians.

The initial outcome of our examination has pointed to the need to sustain our current programs and services for War Service Veterans while at the same time evolving our

programs and services targeted at Canadian Forces clients, RCMP clients and their survivors. In the past, rehabilitation and vocational programs were the cornerstone of the Department's basket of services. Over time these fell in abeyance due to the advancing age of the traditional war service group. There appears now to be a need to revisit these types of programs as we respond to the broad range of needs shared by CF Veterans. Some of these needs relate to environmental illness, traditional and non-traditional

medical conditions and treatment options, disability management, and support in the areas of income, long-term disability insurance and mental and family health. In addition, VAC is working closely with the RCMP to address the particular transition needs of discharging RCMP members. Over the coming years we are committed to tackling this challenge. As a department we are broadening the scope of our programs and services so that we continue to treat our clients' physical wounds and needs but also position ourselves to better meet their mental

and emotional health and well-being as an integral part of their transition from service to civilian life. We are aware of the importance of designing our programs and services so that whenever possible, they promote wellness rather than long-term dependence.

In 1999 the new DND-VAC Centre for the Support of Injured and Retired Members and Their Families was established in Ottawa, as one of many initiatives designed to improve

“The initial outcome of our examination has pointed to the need for VAC to sustain its current programs and services for our War Service Veterans while at the same time evolving our programs and services targeted at Canadian Forces clients, RCMP clients and their survivors.”

VAC's service to members and former members of Canadian Forces Veterans. The **Ste. Anne's Centre** in Ste. Anne's Hospital in Ste. Anne-de-Bellevue, Quebec, specializes in the assessment and treatment of operational stress injuries. This Centre is one element of the joint approach which includes a partnership of networks of treatment facilities, forums to share the best practices in assessment and treatment, collaborative research and continuing education opportunities for health care professionals. The Centre is providing mental health clinical services to still-serving and released Canadian Forces members, as well as leadership to clinics which will be established at selected VAC contract facilities across the country. In addition, the hospital continues to be a leader in the field of dementia care. Other areas of research are focussed on the clinical fields of dysphagia and pain management. Work is also being carried out to reduce the use of physical restraints, and to decrease the number, and seriousness of injuries resulting from falls by older Veterans.



More recently, legislative amendments to the *Pension Act* and *RCMP Superannuation Act (Bill C-31)* have ensured more comprehensive coverage for members of the Canadian Forces and for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who are deployed to designated operations involving exposure, both inside Canada and abroad, to conditions of elevated risk, up to and including armed conflict. Also in the autumn of 2003, the government passed **Bill C-50** and associated regulatory changes to address the most urgent needs of Canada's Veterans, enhancing compensation for former prisoners of war, providing eligible Overseas Service Veterans with benefits and health services, re-establishing educational assistance for the eligible children of deceased Veterans, and extending lifetime Veterans Independence Program benefits to qualifying surviving spouses of Veterans.

The process of service improvement in the modification of our programs and services to meet the divergent needs of our family of clients cannot be done in isolation. It involves indirect consultations with our many stakeholders, and direct consultations with our clients. The key instrument we use to listen to our clients and measure our progress and outcomes are client surveys. The principal survey used to guide VAC's program and service delivery efforts is its bi-annual National Client Satisfaction Survey. In May 2003, VAC conducted its second National Client Satisfaction Survey in which a cross section of 1,447 clients were polled on 24 separate service elements.

The survey revealed that 90% of War Service Veterans were **satisfied** with the **benefits and services** provided by VAC, a 1% increase from the 2001 survey. VAC's continued proactive approach to meeting the complex needs of its Canadian Forces clients was validated in the 80% level of satisfaction that this group gave to the Department's programs and services.



This was an increase of 8% from the 2001 survey. Particularly large gains were reported by Canadian Forces participants in the areas of “Information on Applying for a Benefit or Service” (up from 64% to 72%) and “Ease in Finding Information on Programs and Services” (up from 56% to 71%).

In the 2003 survey, 77% of all respondents also agreed that our programs and services **met their needs**, either entirely or for the most part. This figure is up by 5% over the 2001 figure (72%), indicating that VAC is moving in the right direction in ensuring that our programs and services meet the complex needs of our clients.

Action Plan to Sustain the Health and Well-Being of Our Clients

The following sets out the objectives, targets and milestones to achieve the outcome of sustaining our clients’ health and well-being over the next seven years. The overall outcome of these efforts will be measured through the results of VAC’s 2005 and 2007 client satisfaction surveys.



OBJECTIVE	TARGET	MILESTONE
<p>Maximizing the independence and improved quality of life for Veterans, their caregivers and other clients.</p>	<p>Continue to deliver a falls prevention program in partnership with the Health Canada Division of Aging and Seniors.</p>	<p>Renewed partnership agreement with Health Canada by December 31, 2003.</p> <p>Evidence and base line data available through Final Evaluation of Falls Prevention Initiative - Spring 2004.</p> <p>Acquire and distribute, to VAC offices for clients' use, promotional material (pamphlets and videos) on falls prevention and use of assistive devices by March 31, 2004.</p> <p>Incorporate falls prevention in the VAC screening tool by March 31, 2005.</p> <p>The formation and sustainment of coalitions or other groups for the purpose of promoting falls prevention by March 31, 2006.</p> <p>Enhanced awareness and use of falls prevention aids and devices among retailers, hoteliers and the construction industry by March 31, 2006.</p> <p>National Falls Prevention Strategy in place by 2008.</p> <p>Decreasing numbers of falls-related injuries in the senior population by 2008.</p>

OBJECTIVE	TARGET	MILESTONE
<p>Maximizing the independence and improved quality of life for Veterans, their caregivers and other clients.</p>	<p>Develop and initiate telehealth initiatives in partnership with the Province of PEI and with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.</p>	<p>Award and co-manage an external contract with the PEI government to develop a three year operational plan to expand telehome care across the province by December 31, 2003.</p> <p>Implementation of a three year operational plan, including analysis of relevance of technology for service delivery within VAC provincially and nationally by December 31, 2006.</p> <p>Comparative analysis of video and computer monitoring equipment used for homecare, service delivery relating to chronic disease management, wound management and medication management by March 31, 2007.</p> <p>Initiate and develop a project with Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to test other telehealth possibilities, such as telemental health and telerehabilitation by March 31, 2006.</p> <p>Pending successful evaluation of telehealth initiatives in PEI and Manitoba, develop telehealth initiatives on a national basis by March 31, 2008.</p> <p>Create a bench marking data base by 2008 that will consolidate evaluation information and issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in which area of service can this technology be most effective • is video equipment more effective than simple monitoring equipment • which types of clients achieve the greater successes with this technology • what are the cost benefit and cost avoidance issues with respect to scarce health care resources • what are the jurisdictional issues associated with this type of service delivery model • how do we deal with standards and ethics within this home-care service delivery model <p>Determine if telehomecare is a viable contribution to the efficient utilization of and maximization of scarce health care resources by 2008.</p>

OBJECTIVE	TARGET	MILESTONE
<p>Successful integration into civilian life of CF members and their families.</p>	<p>Build organizational and community capacity to identify and respond to the rehabilitation needs of CF members and their families.</p>	<p>Formation of National Rehabilitation Team by December 31, 2003.</p> <p>Staffing of Regional Rehabilitation Specialists by March 31, 2004.</p> <p>Integration of rehabilitation case management, as well as other services, into VAC processes by March 31, 2005.</p> <p>Development and distribution of knowledge products - eg. PTSD Booklet, PTSD - A Guide for Families, and a Wellness Kit by September 30, 2005.</p> <p>Development and implementation of Vocational Counselling Policy by March 31, 2004.</p>
<p>Sustain health and wellness for transitioning clients within the context of their functional limitations.</p>	<p>Less utilization of health care services, more successful vocational placements and overall increased client satisfaction.</p>	<p>Implementation of Rehabilitation Services Pilot Project in 2004 in two regions.</p> <p>Development of an evaluation framework to evaluate the pilot that focusses on client outcomes, service gaps, training needs and policy enhancements by December 31, 2003.</p> <p>A responsive rehabilitation policy that adequately meets the needs of releasing military members and their families by 2006.</p> <p>A seamless transition for releasing military members that integrates all players and all policies which have an impact on a comprehensive rehabilitation process by 2008.</p>
<p>Improve the overall well-being of still-serving CF members, CF Veterans and their families in support of their transition from military to civilian life.</p>	<p>To enhance and, where appropriate, develop new VAC policies, programs and services to meet the needs of CF clients and their families.</p>	<p>The ongoing provision of advice to VAC on policy, program content/direction and service delivery models and approaches throughout the year including semi-annual meetings of the VAC-Canadian Forces Advisory Council. An annual update will be provided on progress achieved beginning March 31, 2004.</p>

OBJECTIVE	TARGET	MILESTONE
<p>Improve the overall well-being of still-serving CF members, CF Veterans and their families in support of their transition from military to civilian life.</p>	<p>Raise awareness within the CF community of VAC programs, benefits and services.</p>	<p>Conduct of regular briefing sessions with CF members during orientation sessions with new recruits, at pre- and post-deployment seminars, Second Career Assistance Network seminars, through multi-media communication vehicles as well as other opportunities, when and where they present themselves. Information provided on an annual basis of the types of briefings beginning March 31, 2004.</p>
	<p>Provide ongoing support system for eligible still-serving CF members, CF Veterans and their families.</p>	<p>In concert with the Department of National Defence (DND), ongoing operation of The DND-VAC Centre for the Support of Injured and Retired Members and their Families. Updates from the Centre provided each year in December.</p> <p>Provision of an Assistance Service that provides professional counselling services to former members of the CF and their families. This service is accessed initially via a toll-free telephone line. Numbers of calls are tracked and will be reported every two years beginning March 31, 2005.</p> <p>In collaboration with DND, a Joint VAC/DND Release Transition Project has been launched to effect a smooth transition for releasing CF members from military to civilian life. Once fully implemented at key CF locations across Canada, VAC services will be provided in a timely and highly accessible manner to some 80% of regular CF members. An annual report at the end of each fiscal year, beginning March 31, 2004, will provide the status of implementation.</p> <p>In partnership with DND, an Operational Stress Injury Social Support Program (OSISS) has been launched to increase the level of social support available to CF members, CF Veterans and their families affected by operational stress injuries (OSI).</p>

OBJECTIVE	TARGET	MILESTONE
<p>Improve the overall well-being of still-serving CF members, CF Veterans and their families in support of their transition from military to civilian life.</p>	<p>Provide ongoing support system for eligible still-serving CF members, CF Veterans and their families.</p>	<p>The formal evaluation of the OSISS Peer Support Network, which consists of Peer Support Coordinators at 13 sites across Canada, is scheduled to begin December 2003 to review the funding, staffing and governance model for this program, for completion by March 2004.</p> <p>Within the OSISS program, a family needs analysis of the impact of OSIs on the family is currently underway, for which the final report will be available by March 2004.</p>
<p>Improve the overall well-being of RCMP clients and their families in support of their transition from the Force to civilian life.</p>	<p>To enhance and, where appropriate, develop new VAC policies, programs and services to meet the needs of RCMP clients and their families.</p>	<p>Conduct a needs analysis of issues related to the care and support of VAC RCMP clients and families in order to determine whether existing departmental programs and services are relevant and appropriate to client needs.</p>
<p>Ensure residents at Ste. Anne's Hospital are able to maintain their dignity and autonomy through the provision of exemplary care and services.</p>	<p>Improve the quality of life of residents through continued development, implementation and evaluation of initiatives in fields of dysphagia, dementia, and pain control.</p>	<p>The three programs below are reported annually beginning March 2004.</p> <p>Monitor the Dementia Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rate of aggressive episodes: reduce the number of aggressive episodes involving residents to five per psychogeriatric unit <p>Monitor the Dysphagia Program by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rate of residents who show improvement in their Body Mass Index (BMI) within the first six months of being on the program • maintain current levels (under revision) <p>Monitor Pain Control through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rate of resident satisfaction with our pain control approach. • increase by 10% the number of residents who are satisfied with their pain control

Theme 2: Sustaining the Health and Well-Being of Our Staff

Historical Context

VA's historical interest in the health and well-being of its staff is based on its understanding that our clients are best served by a healthy public service workforce. But the health and well-being of our staff is much more than the absence of illness. Health is an essential life ingredient that is influenced daily by personal circumstances, attitudes, beliefs and actions, and by the cultural, social, economic, and physical environments in which an individual lives.

A healthy workplace provides mutual benefits for employers and employees within a common belief that good health practices by both will lead to individual and organizational self-fulfilment and productivity. Health promotion is the process of enabling employees to increase control over and to improve their physical, emotional and social health.

At Veterans Affairs we take the pulse of our staff through their participation in Public Service Employee Surveys. In our most recent survey we learned that there are areas in which we have improved and others where we can continue to make things better. We have reason to celebrate: 93% of our staff are proud of the work carried out by their unit, and 94% are committed to making our organization successful.

“A healthy workplace provides mutual benefits for employers and employees within a common belief that good health practices by both will lead to individual and organizational self-fulfilment and productivity.”

Veterans Affairs' employees occupy positions across the country, at Head Offices in Charlottetown and Ottawa, Regional Offices, District Offices and at Ste. Anne's Hospital. As of March 31, 2003, the total number of employees of the Veterans Affairs Portfolio was 3,985. This consists of indeterminate and term employees as well as "as required" employees at Ste. Anne's Hospital.¹ The Atlantic and Prairie Regions both have about 7% of the total employee

population, while Quebec comprises 5% and Ontario 12%. Approximately 6% of the employee population is in the Pacific Region, while Ste. Anne's Hospital makes up 33%. The Head Offices in Charlottetown and Ottawa make up another 30% of total employees. The overall average age for Veterans Affairs employees is relatively consistent across the country at 44 years as of March 2003. The average age for men is 46 while for women it is 44 years. The average years of service for the Portfolio overall is 16 years. Both average age and average years of service vary across regions, occupational groups and categories.

¹ In actuality, as of March 31, 2003, the Portfolio had 3,501 full-time equivalents.

As of March 2003 about 32% of the total Portfolio were 50 years of age or older. This group strives to balance work with increasing demands in the home, including care of small children and elder care issues. This influences decisions around workplace health and safety measures to sustain a healthy workforce.

A survey carried out by Dr. Linda Duxbury, School of Business, Carleton University revealed some key findings with respect to work-life balance. It was discovered that respondents from VAC are:

- more likely to report high role overload in balancing work and family life, (due largely to higher family demands); and
- less likely to feel that work has a negative impact on family.

This means that the majority of employees at VAC are overloaded, work takes priority over family for one in four, and family rarely takes priority over work.

These indicators point to the importance of implementing initiatives that contribute to a healthy work-life balance.

Challenges Associated with Sustaining the Health and Well-Being of Our Staff

The promotion of wellness initiatives is an investment in human capital and productivity. Employees in optimal physical and psychological health are more likely to be on the job and more productive. They are more likely to remain with the organization as they value working for an organization that values them. By sustaining the health of our staff, we are also investing in the health of our organization in the years to come. But most importantly, investing in the health of our staff is the right thing to do as responsible corporate citizens. Consultations with staff will also ensure that our approach will deal with the underlying issues facing staff, as well as those issues identified in the Public Service Employee Survey.

Key areas for improvements identified by VAC staff in the *2002 Public Service Employee Survey* included:

- Career development and learning
- Harassment
- Workload
- Changing priorities

These issues facing the workforce will be considered in the development and implementation of a national departmental workplace well-being strategy. This strategy will enable employees to have a greater influence over their personal work situation and their own health.



While VA will continue to use the results of public service employee surveys to identify major issues of concern to our staff, we also will use three indicators in an effort to measure the outcome of our efforts to sustain the health and well-being of our staff. These are:

- average utilization of available annual leave;
- time lost annually due to injuries reported under Workers' Compensation; and
- Employee Assistance Program utilization.

Action Plan to Sustain the Health and Well-Being of Our Staff

OBJECTIVE	TARGET	MILESTONE
Sustaining the health of our staff in the workplace.	Implement <i>Work Place Well-Being Strategy</i> .	<p>Establish a framework in best practices among Well-Being Initiatives in the Department by March 31, 2004.</p> <p>Establish contact with National Workplace Well-Being Network by December 31, 2003.</p> <p>Establish link between Workplace Well-Being and Pride and Recognition by December 31, 2003.</p> <p>Report to senior managers on progress in pilot sites by June 30, 2005.</p> <p>Evaluate success of Work Place Well-Being Strategy at the pilot sites by December 31, 2005.</p> <p>Report to senior management by March 31, 2006 to discuss feasibility of rolling out department-wide.</p> <p>Roll out Workplace Well-Being department-wide by March 31, 2009.</p>
	Educate staff on benefits of workplace well-being.	<p>Brief key Senior Managers by December 31, 2003.</p> <p>Sponsor a booth at Head Office during Public Service Week 2004.</p> <p>Present to Human Resources Representatives in the Regions at their bi-annual conference in 2004.</p> <p>Develop Workplace Well-Being Web site and make available to staff by March 31, 2007.</p>

Theme 3: Sustaining Knowledge and Information

Historical Context

VAC has legislative authority under PC 1965-688 which, "Assigns to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, the primary responsibility for all matters relating to the commemoration of the war dead and recognition of the achievements of former members of the Canadian Armed Forces..." To meet this remembrance mandate, VAC has established the Canada Remembers Program which endeavours to keep alive the achievements and sacrifices made by those who served Canada in times of war and peace; to engage communities in remembrance of these achievements and sacrifices; and, to promote an understanding of their significance in Canadian life as we know it today. The delivery of the Canada Remembers Program is carried out through three components: National and International Memorials, Public Information and Research, and Community Engagement.

The **National and International Memorials** component of the Canada Remembers Program is responsible for the provision of funeral and burial assistance, burials, grave and cemetery maintenance, and preserving and presenting Canada's international battlefield sites and monuments, including the Canadian National Vimy Memorial and the Newfoundland Beaumont-Hamel Memorial.

Public Information and Research supports the remembrance mandate through the development and distribution of national learning materials and publications to Canadians, as well as the updating of commemorative information on our Web site. These efforts result in an increased awareness of the sacrifices and achievements of those who served Canada in times of war and peace.

The goal of **Community Engagement** is to have Canadians participate in, and lead events that recognize Canada's role in conflict and how this role has contributed to the nation's development. Local remembrance ceremonies, overseas pilgrimages, learning events and activities associated with Veterans' Week are ways in which this is achieved.

In VAC's 2003 *National Client Satisfaction Survey* 76% of respondents indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with VAC's commemoration programs and activities. When asked what we can do to better promote remembrance, the top response was "Better Promotion in Schools", followed by "Publicity on Television", "More Reports and Documentaries on Television", "Promoting Awareness of Achievements", "More Commemoration of Veterans Accomplishments", and "More Newspaper and Magazine Advertising".



National War Memorial - Ottawa

“In VAC’s 2003 National Client Satisfaction Survey 76% of respondents indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with VAC’s commemoration programs and activities.”

Reaching out to Canadians in their communities helps to promote an understanding and appreciation of the achievements and sacrifices of those who have served Canada. Priorities for remembrance activities, in order of importance, (as determined by survey respondents) are the following: Maintaining and restoring Veterans’ graves; providing remembrance materials; educating youth; holding ceremonies and

events in Canada; and, conducting pilgrimages to overseas battlefields. Over the next few years, many significant anniversaries and celebrations will take place including: the 60th Anniversary of D-Day in 2004, and the 60th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 2005. These will be opportune times to encourage community participation in the Act of Remembrance.

Challenges Associated with Sustaining Knowledge and Information

As our older Veteran population diminishes, it is difficult to keep the legacy alive, particularly in the minds of youth. With each passing generation, the Canadian culture becomes more distant from the realities of war and armed conflict, thus the pressing need to educate our youth about the contributions of Veterans to Canada’s growth as a nation.

Instilling the significance of our memorials in Europe to the Canadian population is a challenge for the Canada Remembers Program. Canada Remembers must utilize modern technological methods such as Web sites and virtual learning tours to bring to Canadians the significance of these memorials.

Veterans continue to be perceived as those who served in the First World War, the Second World War and the Korean War. VAC faces the challenge of instilling in the minds of the Canadian public that former Canadian Forces members are also Veterans. Updates to the Web site and education through community engagement and the youth strategy will increase awareness of this element of the Veteran population.



Action Plan to Sustain Knowledge and Information

Progress in many of these areas will be measured through feedback forms distributed with education kits, the number of hits on the VAC Web site, and results of the Ipsos-Reid Poll which is conducted each year following Veterans' Week in November.

OBJECTIVE	TARGET	MILESTONE
<p>To strengthen VAC's research and public information capacity, including its Web site, to further develop the capacity to provide Canadians with information about Canada's remembrance activities and events as well as information on historical events which helped shape Canada as a nation.</p>	<p>With the support of Communications Division, the Web site will become an integral part and major delivery mechanism of the Canada Remembers Program.</p>	<p>Develop an on-line strategy by March 31, 2004.</p> <p>Provide on-line capability for students to obtain information about the student guide program at VAC's overseas memorials by September 2004.</p> <p>Provide access to an on-line calendar of commemorative events by March 31, 2005.</p> <p>By March 31, 2005, provide on-line capability for educators to receive educational materials.</p> <p>By March 2008, have a searchable database for Veterans' burial sites within VAC's responsibility.</p>

OBJECTIVE	TARGET	MILESTONE
<p>To encourage ways to “bring the message home” from the memorials in Europe to all Canadians, by creating mechanisms for citizens to participate, within Canada, in marking the achievements and sacrifices made by those who served Canada.</p>	<p>Utilize technological instruments to educate, inform, and stimulate interest from the Canadian public on the Memorials in Europe.</p>	<p>Develop an interpretive plan for the overseas sites by March 31, 2006.</p> <p>Improve upon the on-line interpretation of the overseas memorials by March 31, 2007.</p> <p>By March 31, 2008, develop the on-line capability for promotion of the “Maple Leaf Trail” as well as provide a virtual tour capability.</p>
<p>To continue promoting the Canada Remembers Youth Strategy. This strategy is based on the principles of respect, recognition and remembrance, and focuses on three areas for action: youth learning, youth engagement and community support.</p>	<p>Engage Canadian youth to participate in activities and events designed to recognize and commemorate the sacrifices and achievements made by Canadian Veterans during times of war, conflict and peace.</p>	<p>Continue to provide young Canadians with the opportunity to participate in overseas learning events, ceremonies and pilgrimages, and to serve as guides at overseas memorials. While this is ongoing, progress will be reported bi-annually commencing September 2004.</p> <p>Increase youth learning and knowledge of Canada Remembers activities through the production and distribution of learning resources and continued promotion of the VAC Web site. While this is ongoing, progress will be measured through demand for, and the level of satisfaction with learning resources. This will be reported bi-annually commencing September 2004.</p> <p>Partner with organizations to increase youth participation in remembrance activities. On an annual basis new opportunities for partnering will be explored and previous partnerships will be reviewed for effectiveness based on pre-determined deliverables commencing April 1, 2004.</p>

Theme 4: Sustaining Government Operations

Historical Context

Prior to 1997, no concerted effort was made in the area of sustainable development. The 1995 *Guide to Green Government* formed the basis of the present day sustainable development strategies. The emphasis in the *Guide to Green Government* was focussed on reducing the impact of government operations on the environment. One of the cornerstones of this guide was staff participation in the recycling and reuse of government assets. Since 1997, our greatest achievement has been the success of our training and awareness efforts. Staff awareness was enhanced with our Environment Week and Earth Day initiatives. We also have worked diligently across the Portfolio to bring increased awareness to staff on many sustainability issues. These awareness efforts have been key in moving the markers, but, more importantly, have given our staff a much greater appreciation of this whole initiative. This, along with our environmental efforts, were key in reaching most of the targets we set out for this Portfolio.

In both our 1997 and 2001 Sustainable Development Strategies we continued our efforts in greening government operations in our Portfolio while continuing to place more emphasis on increasing awareness of sustainable development principles through education and awareness initiatives. Reusing and Recycling have been very important aspects of our program here at Veterans Affairs but **reduction is the key to our ultimate success**. We will continue, over the course of this next SDS, to see substantial reductions in the amount of products, such as paper, that we use. We are now in a position to compare as well as monitor our performance. We feel it is fundamental to be able to compare our performance rather than just monitor our milestones.

As an example of our efforts, the Daniel J. MacDonald building in Charlottetown has achieved an "Outstanding 90% Diversion Recycling Performance." Out of 200 buildings across Canada, only 13 have obtained such a stunning performance record! This is just one of VA's sustaining government operations achievements since the early 1990's.

Challenges Associated with Sustaining Government Operations

Waste Management: Waste reduction and energy conservation are essential to the future sustainability of Canada. At Veterans Affairs we realize that it is essential that we play our part in these two very important issues. Reducing the amount of waste entering our facilities is key to managing and reducing the volume being discarded. We will continue to work with our suppliers to identify areas where we can reduce the volume of packaging of our goods.

We continue to reduce our energy consumption through the incorporation of systems changes and other initiatives. As an example, the water monitoring system at Ste. Anne's Hospital was able to identify and eliminate the loss of millions of litres of water. We strive to continuously improve these systems and reduce our energy usage in real terms. Ste. Anne's Hospital is about to embark upon some substantial renovations. This will provide us an additional opportunity to incorporate some of the most advanced technologies in energy conservation monitoring which we know will lead to further reduction in energy usage.

In all of our facilities across Canada we will partner with PWGSC and private contractors to continue our efforts in the reduction of energy consumption.

Fleet Management: Veterans Affairs continues to be compliant with the Alternative Fuels Act and other regulations that govern the management of our vehicles. While our fleet of vehicles is small in comparison to other departments, we feel it is necessary to do our fair share. Therefore, we plan to advance the issue of fleet management to our car rentals

guidelines and we will strive to implement, where reasonable, the Executive Vehicles Policy throughout the Portfolio. Using Q-Tools we continue to look for opportunities to purchase hybrid vehicles in Charlottetown and at Ste. Anne's Hospital. We will also continue to share vehicle usage with other government departments whenever possible.

Veterans Affairs continues to take these small steps to move forward on an ever improving basis to accomplish these very important goals. We hope to form more partnerships

and develop plans that will see further reductions in many of those elements that will assist this Government in reaching the goals and responsibilities within the Kyoto Accord.

We accept the Leadership Challenge of the federal government and we will work closely with PWGSC in our leased and rented facilities to ensure that greenhouse gas reduction and energy efficiency commitments are met.

“In both our 1997 and 2001 Sustainable Development Strategies we continued our efforts in greening government operations in our Portfolio while continuing to place more emphasis on increasing awareness of sustainable development principles through education and awareness initiatives.”

War Memorials and Battlefield Management: Canada's 13 First World War memorials were erected to honour and remember the achievements and sacrifices of Canadians and Newfoundlanders during the Great War. Eight of these sites stand on notable Canadian battlefields and the other five mark places of historical significance to the then Dominion of Newfoundland.

Veterans Affairs Canada has taken on the task of repairing, restoring and rehabilitating these sites. The work required to rehabilitate these sites, which now average 75 years old, is beyond the scope of routine maintenance. Utmost consideration will be given to the sustainability of these sites and the restoration work will respect the integrity of the memorials as well as Canada's and the host country's environmental standards. There will also be a 50-year forestry plan designed to ensure that future maintenance activities at these sites will respect their environmental and historical integrity. The work began in the Fall of 2001 and is expected

to be completed in 2006. For further information on the restoration initiative, please visit the Memorials section on the Web site at: www.vac-acc.gc.ca.



Action Plan to Sustain Government Operations

OBJECTIVE	TARGET	MILESTONE
Adoption of pollution prevention approach in the consumption of goods and services	Reduce paper utilization	Duplexing of all printing of documents, and correspondence to clients where feasible by March 2004.
	Reduce waste	Divert 5.6% of solid waste from landfill per year until March 2006
	Manage the fleet in an eco-efficient manner.	Continue to use the "Q" Tools program in assessing all of our vehicles while considering the purchase of electric or hybrid vehicles. Vehicles must conform to all fleet regulations including the amendments to the Executive Vehicle Policy by May 2006.
	Reduce vehicle emissions by requiring that all vehicles rented meet reduced gas consumption and emission standards.	Incorporate into Vehicle Rental Policy by March 31, 2005.
Maintenance and preservation of those physical reminders of Canada's wartime experience as important Canadian cultural resources	Develop management plans and implement best practices which ensure the enduring preservation and presentation of commemorative resources.	The inclusion of all environmental and sustainable issues in all assessments done on these sites. Development of a 50-year forestry plan by September 2004. Development of a complete maintenance schedule for all of these sites by November 2006. Repairs to be carried out at Vimy and completed by July 2006.
To ensure that all sustainable development and environmental issues are considered prior to the signing of any lease agreements	Include all environmental and sustainable development issues such as waste management, energy usage, in any lease arrangements that might affect the health and well-being of our family of clients or staff.	Develop a set of standards in conjunction with PWGSC to be used in assessing and agreeing to every lease - October 2004. Have these standards in place and used in all rental and purchasing agreements by October 2005.

OBJECTIVE	TARGET	MILESTONE
<p>To continue to pursue paper reductions whenever and wherever possible.</p>	<p>To reduce the paper consumption across the Portfolio by the usage of technology and training and awareness campaigns aimed at educating staff in reduction methods.</p>	<p>Development of a paper usage reduction awareness plan to consider ways of reducing paper documents thus reducing storage and handling - November 2004.</p> <p>Implementation of this paper reduction plan - January 2005.</p> <p>To consider and test the possibilities of enhancement of the Corporate Information System to digitize paper documents to reduce storage and handling requirements - March 2005.</p> <p>Implementation of these paper reduction plans - October 2005.</p>
<p>To continue awareness and training sessions to ensure staff are aware of SD expectations and their responsibilities.</p>	<p>Undertake a strategic review of Portfolio training programs with HR Staff to ensure that all staff are knowledgeable regarding sustainable operations, particularly in the areas of facility management, procurement policy development, and environmental issues.</p>	<p>Set up a review committee of HR and Environmental Management (EM) Staff to review all current and planned training with a mandate to add more training and EMS/SDS items into this training - September 2004.</p>
<p>Maintain cemeteries and memorials to a standard befitting the respect due to Canada's war dead.</p>	<p>Maintaining the highest standards possible for every grave site we are responsible for in and outside Canada while maintaining those same graves in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner.</p>	<p>ID all of the graves we are responsible for in or outside Canada - March 2005.</p> <p>To ensure that all cleaning, maintenance and other products used at these sites are approved products and in accordance with Canadian regulations inside Canada and with the regulations of the host country when that grave site is outside this country - May 2006.</p> <p>To ensure all of these sites are maintained properly and are environmentally safe - May 2007.</p>

OBJECTIVE	TARGET	MILESTONE
<p>To reduce waste at all VA facilities by reducing the amount of packaging on all equipment and materials shipped into these buildings.</p>	<p>Implement an awareness campaign to reduce packaging. Develop a packaging policy.</p>	<p>Procurement to send out information package on this to all suppliers asking for their input by September 2004. Begin development of a packaging policy based on input from suppliers, Procurement and other informed sources - May 2005. Promulgate and policy approval - May 2006. Begin implementing new packaging regulations - March 2008.</p>
<p>To inform all staff with purchasing responsibilities about the Green Procurement Policy and their responsibilities regarding Green Procurement.</p>	<p>Deliver regular awareness green procurement training to those responsible for purchasing goods and services.</p>	<p>VA Procurement Branch in conjunction with the EMG to develop a training package for this by November 2004. Training to begin April 2005 and to be run yearly after this date.</p>
<p>VA to continue to support PWGSC in all of its efforts to reduce energy costs and consumption in both Government owned and leased premises.</p>	<p>Work with PWGSC to help reduce energy consumption over the next five years in federally owned buildings.</p>	<p>Review and update baseline information on energy with PWGSC - March 2004. Identify opportunities for improvements - December 2004. Document and present areas of opportunities to improve energy efficiency to VA Senior management - May 2005.</p>

The Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB) will work closely with VAC to achieve the objectives for Sustaining the Health and Well-Being of Staff, and Sustaining Government Operations. Our strategic plan will address the objectives of sustaining knowledge and information through the development of a strategic communications framework as well as modernization of the appeal processes.

It is through the sustaining of the health and well-being of our clients and staff, sustaining the knowledge and information regarding the sacrifices and accomplishments of our special clients, and continuing our efforts to improve the ways in which we conduct our government operations that the Veterans Affairs Portfolio will do its part to support the principles of sustainable development. These small but important measures will enable us to continue to function in a healthy manner indefinitely.

Portfolio Profile

Our Mission:

To provide exemplary, client-centred services and benefits that respond to the needs of Veterans, our other clients and their families, in recognition of their services to Canada; and to keep the memory of their achievements and sacrifices alive for all Canadians.

Our Vision:

To provide exemplary service which honours the sacrifice and achievements of our Veterans and clients.

VAC Values and Ethics Statements

Our Values

At Veterans Affairs Canada we value our clients' contributions to the development of Canada as a nation and honour the sacrifices they have made in the defence of freedom and the pursuit of world peace. In expressing Canada's gratitude to them, we strive to exemplify the high principles which they have defended.

INTEGRITY	We act with honesty and fairness and always strive to do the right thing.
RESPECT	We treat everyone with respect. We recognize the dignity that is inherent in all people and celebrate the strength that comes from the diversity of people and ideas.
SERVICE	We take pride in our role as public servants and are dedicated to service excellence. We are committed to responsive, quality service, delivered with timeliness, courtesy and fairness.
ACCOUNTABILITY	We are accountable and responsible for our actions and accept the consequences of our decisions.
TEAMWORK	We value teamwork, and promote the principles of partnership, consultation and open communication.
BALANCE	We encourage the achievement of a healthy balance in the working and personal lives of employees, believing that this contributes to the vitality of individuals, our organization and our communities.

Strategic Priorities and Outcomes

In order to keep focused on the needs of our Veterans and our other clients today and in the future, Veterans Affairs has defined how we will provide benefits and services. This is demonstrated through our strategic outcomes and priorities. Veterans Affairs' strategic outcomes are as follows:



- **Benefits and Services Programs:** The delivery of benefits and services that contribute to the independence, quality of life and standard of living of Canada's war Veterans, eligible still-serving Canadian Forces members, and CF Veterans and still-serving members, RCMP clients, qualified civilians and their families in recognition of their sacrifice to the nation;
- **Pension Advocacy Program:** Protection of the rights of Veterans Affairs Canada clients through professional, legal representation in appealing decisions related to disability pensions and allowances;
- **Canada Remembers Program:** A knowledgeable Canadian public that recognizes the achievements and sacrifices of Canada's citizens in the defence of freedom and appreciates the historical significance of these accomplishments in the development of Canada as a nation;
- **Corporate Administration:** Activities focus on service improvement and organizational effectiveness through the strategic management of our staff, improved communications, expanded use of technologies and a greater contribution to national policy development in areas that are directly related to the well-being and recognition of our Veterans and other clients; and
- **Veterans Review and Appeal Board Program:** Fairness in the Disability Pension and War Veterans Allowance Program. The Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB) is an arm's length quasi-judicial tribunal that reports to Parliament through the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Its Head Office is co-located with the Head Office of Veterans Affairs Canada and contributes to many of the Government's objectives and priorities through concerted and cooperative efforts with Veterans Affairs Canada.

The overarching priority of Veterans Affairs Canada is to serve all Veterans as they have served their country and to sustain their memory. Veterans Affairs Canada has adopted two strategic objectives and eight priorities:

Strategic Objective 1:

Integrity of our programs and service improvement

- transforming **service delivery** and promoting **innovation** in our policies and practices
- improving and expanding services for **Canadian Forces** Veterans and still-serving members
- partnering to serve the **RCMP** and eligible civilians
- evaluating the effectiveness of the **disability pension process** and its flexibility to adapt to the emerging and changing needs of our Veterans and other clients
- providing strong leadership in **remembrance** programming through effective partnerships

Strategic Objective 2:

Organizational effectiveness

- aligning our strategic **human resources** plan to support the goals of the organization and aspirations of our people
- advancing the development of our **information management & information technology** capacity in support of service improvement, organizational effectiveness and Government-On-Line
- enhancing our **policy capacity** to ensure more effective use of information and analysis in support of evidence-based decision-making and better public accountability

Accountability and Performance Measurement

Accountability

The following information outlines the accountability framework for Sustainable Development at Veterans Affairs.

The Minister, Veterans Affairs, is responsible for:

- presenting a Sustainable Development Strategy in the House of Commons; and
- providing updates to the strategy every three years.

The Departmental Executive Board is responsible for:

- approving the Sustainable Development Strategy for tabling in the House of Commons;
- ensuring the Sustainable Development Policy is implemented throughout the Portfolio and that resources are assigned to implement this policy;
- receiving and reviewing reports on the Portfolio's overall environmental performance and providing guidance on required adjustments to the Environmental Management Framework;
- ensuring adequate and appropriate communications strategies are in place to effectively communicate sustainable development and environmental stewardship initiatives; and
- ensuring rulings and determinations of the Legal Services Unit are made available to managers and staff as required.

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services Branch is responsible for:

- assuming the role and associated responsibilities of Chief Environmental Officer for the Portfolio;
- accounting for overall environmental performance by the Portfolio;
- reporting environmental performance to the Departmental Executive Board at least once per year; and
- recommending approval of the Portfolio Sustainable Development Strategy to the Departmental Executive Board.

The Director General, Corporate Planning Division (CPD) is responsible for:

- developing and updating the Sustainable Development Strategy in consultation with managers in the Portfolio;
- recommending approval of the Sustainable Development Strategy to the Departmental Executive Board;

- ensuring that the principles of sustainability and environmental concerns have been given consideration in all new policies, programs, legislation and in Memoranda to Cabinet; and
- internal evaluation and feedback on the performance of the SDS.

The Director General, Communications is responsible for:

- ensuring the development and implementation of an effective communications strategy to promulgate the policy and related responsibilities; and
- assisting in enhancing the level of awareness of sustainable development and environmental management to Portfolio management and staff.

“VA Staff are responsible for integrating sustainable development principles and environmental stewardship best practices into operational, financial, safety, health and other relevant concerns in their job duties and decision-making processes.”

The Senior Counsel, Legal Services is responsible for:

- determining the degree of legal liability of the Portfolio in areas of environmental management relevant to departmental facilities and clients under the *Veterans Land Act*;
- identifying legislative or regulatory changes that impact on environmental management in the Portfolio; and
- ensuring compliance with all applicable legal requirements and policy.

The Director, Information Access and Support Services is responsible for:

- developing and maintaining the Portfolio Environmental Management System;
- providing support and guidance to the Environmental Stewardship Committee;
- assisting in the preparation of the Portfolio Sustainable Development Strategy;
- developing and operating a compliance assurance program;
- ensuring the conduct of environmental audits to verify compliance with environmental laws and regulations and good environmental management practices; and
- providing a leadership role to ensure the development of an effective Environmental Management System for dealing with the environmental impacts of the Portfolio’s physical operations.

Regional Offices and Ste. Anne’s Hospital are responsible for:

- developing a facility-based EMS, which is based on the Portfolio EMS and which addresses specific environmental risks;
- determining and representing their unit interests in the development of policy and procedure and in the formulation of departmental positions on a wide range of environmental policy issues;
- maintaining membership on the Veterans Affairs Environmental Stewardship Committee;
- appointing an environmental coordinator; and
- providing regular reports on environmental performance to Corporate Services Branch.

Environmental Stewardship Committee is responsible for:

- providing a forum for departmental representatives to exchange ideas and discuss strategies/approaches for implementing environmental stewardship “best practices” in their respective organizations;
- contributing to the development of overall departmental goals and objectives for preparation of the Sustainable Development Strategy and Environmental Management System; and
- coordinating the planning of environmental stewardship events and activities, such as National Environment Week.

Responsibility Centre Managers are responsible for:

- implementing environmental policy within their respective units;
- ensuring that management systems are in place for environmental compliance and reporting systems are established for any instance of non-compliance;
- maintaining records pertaining to environmental matters and making them available when requested by persons carrying out environmental audits or reporting on environmental stewardship; and
- providing input to Portfolio stewardship plans.

VA staff are responsible for integrating sustainable development principles and environmental stewardship best practices into operational, financial, safety, health and other relevant concerns in their job duties and decision-making processes.

Measuring and Evaluating Performance

Monitoring and evaluating performance of the SDS is done in the following ways:

1. Performance of the *Sustainable Development Strategy* is measured semi-annually in the Portfolio. At each six-month period, April and October, a call letter is issued to Responsibility Centre Managers (also referred to as Office of Primary Interest or OPI's) requesting performance information on milestones due in the previous six-month period. A table of information accompanies the call letter indicating the objectives, targets and milestones due to be reported on. Follow-ups are done as required. The information is analysed and assessed and the Director General, Corporate Planning Division is briefed on the results. Once each fiscal year, after March 31, reports for the whole year are combined into one report card. An electronic version of this information is found on Veterans Affairs Canada's Web site under "*Our Sustainable Development Journey*."
2. Corporate Planning Division also conducts an internal review on the performance of each of the strategies. This is done in the final year of the current strategy and prior to writing the new strategy. The timing is such that the formal evaluation of each strategy is carried out after the internal performance is conducted thereby allowing the audit division access to the results. Corporate Planning Division's report can be found on Veterans Affairs Canada's Web site under "*Our Sustainable Development Journey*."

The Audit and Evaluation Division at Veterans Affairs also conducts a more formal assessment of each strategy at a time that is pre-determined during the writing of each strategy. The latest assessment included a review of the performance information reporting against the objectives established in our Sustainable Development Strategy 2001-2004 Action Plan. A full report of the most recent review is found in Appendix B of this report.

3. Sustainable Development Strategies are reported in the Report on Plans and Priorities and Departmental Performance Reports annually by Corporate Planning Division.

4. Evaluation Schedule

<p style="text-align: center;">Spring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Stewardship Committee (ESC) Best Practices • SDS Activity Report to ESC Annual Meeting • Review of Strategic Plan / SDS 	<p style="text-align: center;">Fall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDS input into Portfolio Performance Report
<p style="text-align: center;">Summer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of SDS Action Plan 	<p style="text-align: center;">Winter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDS input into Report on Plans and Priorities

In early Spring, 2007, Audit and Evaluation Division will conduct an internal audit of the SDS on behalf of the Office of the Auditor General.



Ste. Anne's Hospital - Ste. Anne de Bellevue

Appendix A: Communications Plan

Sustainable Development and VAC Communications

Communications Division will continue to support VAC's Sustainable Development Strategy by Sustaining Knowledge and Information.

Communications at VAC will play a vital role in the move toward sustainable development within our organization, among our diverse client groups, and throughout the broader Canadian public.

As outlined in VAC's Corporate Communication Plan, the three main objectives to support this role are:

- *To communicate with clients, and all Canadians, about VA services and benefits for CF, RCMP and aging Veterans;*
- *To communicate with Canadians about remembrance; and*
- *To communicate with VA staff concerning the objectives of supporting the goals of the organization, and the aspirations of our people.*

VAC's Communications Division recognizes that the move toward sustainable development requires leadership. Our commitment is to provide that leadership in new and innovative ways, to incorporate the message of sustainable development within our products and services, while beginning the process of implementation on the ground, within our division. Our efforts will remain focussed on improving the quality of life of our clients and personnel, enhancing opportunities for equity, and ensuring our decisions are integrated with key departmental objectives and priorities.

Research, Measurement and Evaluation

VAC communications will measure the effectiveness of our efforts to sustain Knowledge and Information by actively monitoring the public environment. Communications continues to identify relevant issues through a combination of in-house electronic media monitoring and contracted services for media tapes and transcripts. Analysis and planning capacity includes monitoring publicly available polls, subscriptions to national polls, focus testing and public opinion research of communications products, and focussed omnibus polling.

Appendix B: Review of the Performance Information Reporting 2001-2004 Sustainable Development Strategy

Executive Summary

To fulfill part of the requirements of the 2001-2004 Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS), the Audit and Evaluation Division (AED) conducted a review of performance information reporting against the objectives established in the SDS 2001-2004 action plan. This review provides an assessment of the Department's reporting on its environmental performance and covers the SDS action plan as well as the communication objectives. It does not, however, include an assessment of the actual performance of the Department in meeting its objectives.

In summary, the SDS team is making progress towards addressing the evolving central agencies reporting requirements by continuously improving the departmental performance measurement framework reporting structure. However, the Audit and Evaluation team has concluded that the Department's reporting on its performance relating to SDS activities requires improvement in the following areas:

- results-based strategic reporting, thus enhancing the transparency of performance information;
- development of operational/business plans resulting in the costing of the SDS initiatives;
- strengthening performance reporting to provide a more comprehensive and meaningful picture on progress and to ensure compliance with central agencies; and
- continuing efforts on SDS awareness.

Review Findings

AED was guided by the characteristics of good performance developed by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG). The characteristics are outlined in Chapter 6 of the OAG's April 2002 report *A Model for Rating Departmental Performance Reports*:

- organizational context and strategic outcomes are clear;
- performance expectations are clear and concrete;
- key results are reported against expectations;
- reliability of performance information is supported; and
- use of performance information is demonstrated.

In assessing the performance information for the activities identified in the SDS action plan it is evident that there are two types of activities. The first relates to the “green/environmental” activities considered to be the more “concrete” sustainable activities which are included under the SDS theme: Sustaining our Government Operations. The second type involves “softer”, cause and effect linkages between activities and outcomes. The remaining themes: Sustaining Knowledge and Information; Sustaining the Health of Our Clients; and Sustaining the Health of Our Staff relate to the second type of activities and do not have direct environmental impact, thus rendering them more difficult to measure. The majority of the activities are qualitative and subjective in nature, thus difficult for an auditor or anyone else to exercise total impartiality in determining the extent to which progress has been made.

It became evident that while much has been accomplished there remain a number of areas for improvement that could serve to strengthen Veterans Affairs’ capacity in advancing the SDS agenda.

Results-based Strategic Reporting

The Department needs to report performance information in an integrated manner to ensure that relevant information on results is gathered and effectively communicated in order to provide transparency of information.

There are really two uses of performance information. The first is internal to the Department for employee awareness and decision-making purposes and is used by management, staff and clients. The second, which is used to communicate the Department’s effort in advancing the SDS agenda, is used by parliamentarians, central agencies, other levels of government and the general public.

Veterans Affairs is to report annually on progress toward sustainable development through the Departmental Performance Report, and ultimately to the Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, who is responsible for monitoring and reporting on progress made toward sustainable development by federal departments and agencies.

Corporate Planning Division and the Department’s Environmental Management Group designed a departmental performance measurement framework as a tracking system for monitoring progress and reporting on the status of the milestones identified in the action plan of the 2001-2004 SDS. This SDS performance measurement report is coordinated by the Corporate Planning Division and is updated every six months. The status of the overall performance of the SDS is discussed at the Departmental Executive Board (DEB).

The information included in this performance status report is provided by the managers who are required to update their progress in achieving their respective milestones. This process captures the progress and the status of milestones as the key performance indicator of results achieved and is consistent with the tracking system. The characteristics of good performance as recently outlined by the OAG emphasizes reporting on results against planned strategic outcomes or objectives and targets instead of progress on milestones. This approach relates results to strategic outcomes and is in line with the government's commitment to improved parliamentary reporting.

The current departmental performance measurement framework does not clearly and logically link all milestones with their respective targets and objectives and as a consequence it is difficult to relate the extent to which results have been achieved. Without proper mechanisms in place to provide feedback on the progress of its objectives, Veterans Affairs runs the risk of not providing the reader with an accurate understanding of the extent to which the objectives of the SDS have been met.

Improvements to the reporting structure to relate results to objectives/targets will provide for a better linkage between activities and objectives, a better picture of overall progress and will be in line with OAG's characteristics of good performance information.

This review revealed that some milestones are not being achieved for a variety of reasons: lack of funding, competing priorities, milestones no longer valid, and requires third party involvement.



Preparation of a summary report would assist management in assessing the implications of not completing these milestones and determining what, if any, impact they may have on the overall advancement of the SDS agenda, and provide information on the status of the planned strategic outcomes. This information would provide management with substantiation for decisions that impact on the planned SDS objectives and targets.

Improvements on reporting results achieved are essential in order to mitigate the risk of DEB not fulfilling its mandate which requires it to review periodic status reports and approve annual performance reports and other internal decision-making documents.

Operational/Business Planning

It has been determined that due to a lack of funding and/or a shift in priorities, some milestones identified in the action plan will not be achieved within the set target dates or even within the time frame of this SDS.

In order to effectively implement the SDS, operational/business plans must be developed that address each of the Department's sustainable development objectives and assign responsibility and resources for managing, monitoring, answering for and reporting progress. Such a process would allow for better accountability for the overall progress of the Department's SDS.

Strengthening Performance Reporting

Improvements are necessary to the current departmental performance measurement framework in order to provide a more comprehensive and meaningful picture on progress toward sustainable development and ensure compliance with central agencies requirements.



Improvement #1: Criteria for reporting on progress

There are inconsistencies between the departmental performance measurement framework and the recently developed guidelines provided by the Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development's "*Sustainable Development Strategies - Making a Difference*." These inconsistencies relate to reporting on progress towards targets in the sustainable development strategy.

The criteria developed by the OAG allow for reporting on the progress toward targets set in the SDS (*i.e. target has been achieved, progress toward target is on schedule, target has not been met, progress toward target has been delayed, target has been revised, or target is no longer valid*). The criteria being applied in the framework document relate more to the status of the milestones (*i.e. completed, started/ongoing, new target date/not started*).

A preliminary review conducted by Corporate Planning Division comparing the criteria used in the current performance measurement framework report with the suggested criteria of the Office of the Commissioner indicate some similarities between the two sets of criteria.

The Department needs to consider amending its reporting structure to be more consistent with the central agencies guidelines, thus resulting in compatible reporting on SDS with other departments and agencies.

Improvement #2: Include all of the milestones

A review of the most recent performance measurement framework report for the period ending March 31, 2003 revealed that not all milestones are being reported on. Of the 86 milestones included in the SDS, only 62 were reported on. The remaining 24 not included in the report were for the following reasons: 17 with target dates after March 31, 2003, and 7 with no target date. Even though some milestones are not targeted for completion before the last year of the current SDS, it does not mean that there are no activities being

undertaken on these milestones. It is essential that all milestones be identified. However, the extent of the performance measurement information will be directly related to the time frame for completion for any individual targets/milestones.

Reporting on performance must include a complete inventory of commitments to give an accurate representation of what it intended to measure. As stipulated by the Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, reporting on all commitments in the strategy is essential for a complete picture of progress on the SDS agenda.

Improvement #3: Completing the annual performance report

Departments are required to report annually to Parliament on SDS implementation. The Department currently includes plans on the SDS in the Departmental Report on Plans and Priorities, as well as progress in the Departmental Performance Report. In the Department's Performance Report for the fiscal year 2001-2002, a commitment was made to an annual report on SDS; a hyperlink was also included. The 2001-2002 annual report was not finalized. The Corporate Planning Division in association with the Department's Environmental Management Group is currently working on an annual performance report (being referred to as Our Sustainable Development Journey) using the information compiled in the performance measurement framework ending March 31, 2003. This will be placed on a Web site and updated annually as the reporting mechanism for past, present and future SDS reports.

The Department must ensure that an annual performance report for the 2002-2003 fiscal year is released in final form within the suggested time frames. Veterans Affairs has the option of amending the current departmental performance measurement framework or utilizing the Office of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development's inventory of SDS commitments.

Communication/Awareness/Education

Efforts over the past few years have been undertaken to enhance communication and awareness of the SDS. The Department has developed Environment Management System manuals touching on the various elements of SDS; some general information on SDS is available to departmental employees on Acrobat Reader; there have been activities organized nationally for Earth Day and for the government's Environment Week, as well as the work undertaken by the Portfolio's Environmental Stewardship Committee, etc. The Environment Management Group recently developed a communication action plan for the creation of an internal Web site. This site will provide information on the overall performance of the SDS activities and communicate to employees the extent to which management is committed to this initiative.

These awareness efforts must communicate that the SDS has not only environmental aspects, there are socioeconomic aspects as well.

These past efforts and planned initiatives relating to communication must be continued in order to continuously enhance the awareness of the SDS agenda within Veterans Affairs.

Appendix C: Portfolio Environmental Management System

A Portfolio Environmental Management Manual has been written and can be found at <http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/general/sub.cfm?source=Department/reports>. This manual will be updated as required.

Appendix D: Summary of Consultations

Informal consultations were conducted throughout the time line of the previous SDS to garner feedback to the Action Plan that was set out. Messages that were given, either verbally or in writing, indicated that although commitments were made and sign-off obtained from managers, many of the players had changed. This resulted in the need for another round of consultations before this strategy could be completed.



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