



Canadian Environmental
Assessment Agency

Agence canadienne
d'évaluation environnementale

A decorative graphic consisting of four wavy lines, alternating in color between dark blue and green, positioned above the main title.

Canadian **Environmental** **Assessment** *Agency*

Working for Canada's Environment
2001

A large, stylized graphic of a green leaf with a white outline, positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page. The leaf has a serrated edge and a central vein.

Canada



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Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency



Working for Canada's Environment

Message From the President

Each spring at the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, we take a look back, to reflect on our accomplishments, and to establish goals for the future. And while every year presents its own unique challenges, it is fair to say that the past dozen or so months were some of the most ambitious in the Agency's short history.

Over the past 18 months, the Agency has undertaken a formal review of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (the Act) and associated regulations, five years after the Act became law. The goal of the review was to measure the performance of the Act, to determine what worked, and where improvements could be made.

The review included public consultations held in 19 cities across Canada. The Agency also consulted with its many stakeholders to draw from their collective experience in implementing or participating in the environmental assessment process. The review culminated in the Minister's tabling in March 2001, Bill C-19, with proposed amendments to the Act.

In the coming months, much of the Agency's focus will be on getting ready to carry out changes to the Act; but that is not to say our work begins and ends with the development of legislative changes.



Every year, the federal government conducts close to 6,000 environmental assessments under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. The Agency will continue in its role as administrator of the Act, providing assistance to departments and agencies as they conduct their own reviews. We will continue to forge collaborative agreements with other jurisdictions to maximize the efficiency of environmental assessments. We will continue to develop training and guidance material to ensure all of our stakeholders are well prepared to participate in the environmental assessment process.

The next few pages outline our accomplishments and our commitments for the year ahead. We have grouped them under three broad headings: promoting high-quality environmental assessments; building partnerships; and, improving the consistency and predictability of environmental assessments.

The following information is a snapshot only, and is by no means comprehensive. You can find more information on federal environmental assessment, the Agency's role and the Five Year Review on the Agency's web site:
<http://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca>.

By all accounts, the Agency has enjoyed a highly successful and productive year. I look forward to the many challenges in the year ahead.



Sid Gershberg
President
Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency

Serving Canadians: Recent Agency Accomplishments



Promoting High-Quality Environmental Assessments

The past year was a pivotal one for the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. Keeping an eye on the ever changing challenges that development projects could present to our natural environment, we worked hard on building the foundation for more effective, more timely and more accurate environmental assessments.

These are just some of the Agency's accomplishments.

- With the input of stakeholders from all facets of society and all regions of Canada, the Agency embarked upon an intensive review of the five-year-old *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (the Act). Launched in December 1999 by Environment Minister David Anderson, the review culminated in the Minister's Report to Parliament and a bill of proposed amendments – which were tabled in March 2001.

The Act turns five

In 1995 when the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* was drawn up, its architects foresaw the need to be responsive to changes, new discoveries and new information. They wrote a requirement for a five-year review into the Act.

The proposed changes to the Act aim to:

- Refine the environmental assessment process to make it more predictable, consistent and timely
- Improve the quality of environmental assessments
- Strengthen opportunities for public participation, and expand access to environmental assessment information

Although much of the Agency's attention and energy was devoted to the review, we still continued to deliver our core programs and services — fulfilling our mission of providing Canadians with high-quality environmental assessments.

- A class screening model was established for routine fish habitat restoration and enhancement projects in British Columbia and the Yukon. There are now three class screening models, with several others in the works. These models streamline the assessment process for projects of a similar nature.
- We provided advisory, coordination, public comment and ministerial support services for the completion of seven comprehensive studies; a further 19 are in progress. Comprehensive studies are a form of assessment examining a broader range of issues and involving large-scale, complex projects.
- Over the past 18 months we completed one environmental assessment review panel. Two more review panels are active or on hold and one other was terminated when the proponent withdrew its proposal. These independent panels assessed the potential environmental effects

of large-scale development projects – ranging from the construction of an offshore pipeline to the establishment of a diversion canal and storage reservoir in the Highwood River basin.

- Over the past year, nearly 50 training sessions and workshops have been delivered to approximately 1,500 individuals across Canada. Participants included Aboriginal groups, federal and provincial authorities, private industry, environmental non-government organizations, and academics.

Orientation sessions bring results

Following a recent three-day pilot workshop on Environmental Assessment Fundamentals, Julie Gregoire of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency had this to say about our training program, “Thank you for the productive and overall well organized pilot workshop last week. I am already using my new knowledge! I will certainly recommend this course to my colleagues.”

- New operational policy statements were developed on preparing project descriptions and on the class screening process.
- We have improved the performance of the web-based Federal Environmental Assessment Index, resulting in enhanced public access to information.
- The Agency launched a new research and development (R&D) program in 2000. The program will encourage innovation and excellence in the practice of environmental assessment.

Research and development

“This R&D program is filling a huge void. It will play a significant role in helping Canada become a leader in environmental assessment,” says Bob Gibson of the University of Waterloo. He and his colleague, John Robinson of the University of British Columbia, received a funding award to study the concept of sustainability-based criteria in determining significance in environmental assessment.

Building Partnerships

Building partnerships creates the level of committed buy-in that ensures all stakeholders, at all levels of government and in all sectors, make effective and realistic contributions to the environmental assessment process.

We worked with a number of organizations, agencies and groups to build those working partnerships.

- In the true spirit of Canadian co-operation, harmonization agreements have been reached with the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia. We have also begun discussions for similar agreements with Ontario, New Brunswick and Newfoundland. These agreements will improve the collaboration of environmental assessment processes for future projects.
- Harmonization opportunities were also initiated with other federal departments, regulatory agencies and territorial governments. We were

actively involved in preliminary discussions for the co-operative environmental assessment of potential gas development, production and transmission projects in the North, particularly in the Alaska North Slope and the Mackenzie Delta regions.

- We supported federal negotiators as they worked to incorporate environmental assessment provisions into several comprehensive land-claim and self-government agreements, including the Yukon Development Assessment Process legislation.
- To strengthen the incorporation of sustainable development into federal decision-making, we promoted the 1999 Cabinet Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment across government. This involved conducting more than 30 presentations on using the Cabinet Directive to a variety of federal government departments and agencies.
- Our regional offices, by expanding their networks, strengthened the role of the Regional Environmental Assessment Committees. These committees focussed on the exchange of information and on enhancing the coordination of environmental assessment processes among their various jurisdictions, including provincial partners.

Improving Consistency and Predictability of Environmental Assessments

Clearly, development projects are becoming more numerous and complex, and that trend is likely to continue. Consequently, our assessment tools will have to keep pace. In 2000, we

advanced the environment assessment process in several ways:

- We completed a compliance-monitoring framework that 11 federal departments and agencies used to gauge how well their environmental assessment activities complied with the Act.
- We developed a new government-wide Quality Assurance Program in which 20 federal departments and agencies are now participating. Not only will this program reaffirm the government's commitment to monitor the quality of environmental assessments, it will also provide a way to promote the continual improvement of all types of environment assessment activities conducted under the Act.
- The Agency negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding with 13 other departments and agencies that ensures that all federal authorities will undertake environmental assessments before they fund projects on reserve lands.
- We received final approval for regulations designating the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board as a federal authority under the Act.
- On the international front, we contributed to discussions at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to develop an agreement on common approaches on the environment and export credits.

Looking Forward— Our Commitments for the Future



Promoting High Quality Environmental Assessments

We are proud of our accomplishments, but there is still more to do. Here are just some of our commitments and goals for the year ahead.

- Acting on the results of the review of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, we will prepare to implement changes to the Act to improve the overall quality of federal environmental assessments.
- Building on the success of already established class screening models, we will promote the development of new models, through our guides, training modules and cross-Canada awareness sessions.
- We will explore ways to integrate traditional ecological knowledge—the knowledge rooted in the culture and lifestyles of traditional resource users—into the federal environmental assessment process.
- The Agency will launch innovative communications tools that will increase the transfer of knowledge. We're committed to improving access to information on the Agency and its work through our Internet presence. Our new web site, which rolled-out in March 2001, is more user and search friendly and conforms to new government standards.

New Agency web site

We invite you to visit and bookmark our new Web site at www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca

Serving your needs is important to us. Send us your comments on the site and join our growing e-mail list by contacting info@ceaa.gc.ca

- The data capacity of the Federal Environmental Assessment Index will be expanded to include more information, including how to access screening reports.
- We will examine the feasibility of creating a trainee program to give university graduates the opportunity to become environmental assessment practitioners within the federal government.
- The Agency will promote a good practice approach to federal screenings by making instructional materials available to environmental assessment trainers both within and outside of government.

Building Partnerships

When groups and organizations work together, good things happen. We've built solid, lasting relationships with a number of groups, organizations and agencies that have resulted in tangible benefits for the environmental assessment process and thereby for all Canadians. Throughout 2001, building those partnerships will be an Agency priority.

- Based on the successes and lessons learned from previous agreements, the Agency will seek to conclude harmonization agreements with the provinces of Ontario, New Brunswick and Newfoundland. The Agency will also work with British Columbia to update the agreement on environmental assessment which is scheduled for renewal in 2002.
- The Agency will assist federal negotiators to ensure environmental management considerations are built into Aboriginal land-claims and self-government agreements. We want to establish sound environmental assessment regimes that meet or exceed the requirements of the Act within these agreements.
- All of our partners value the results of face-to-face meetings. So we will continue to meet regularly with our regional and federal partners, and with various interest groups through the Minister's Regulatory Advisory Committee, which is made up of stakeholders from across Canada. The outcome will be coordinated, informed and sound environmental assessment practices.
- We are also working on communications materials targeted at specific stakeholder groups, such as industry associations. These materials will outline how the Act affects them, and illustrate the relationship of the Act to sustainable development.
- Developing and expanding relationships with Canadian research institutes and universities, and various stakeholders to support research and development in environmental assessment is key for the Agency in 2001.

- In response to client demand, we will continue to design and develop training that incorporates the expertise and capacity of the Agency's training partners within and outside of government.
- We will be working with partners from the federal policy community to develop additional material to support the implementation of the strategic environmental assessment Cabinet Directive. The Directive ensures that policy, plan and program proposals of federal departments and agencies consider, when appropriate, potential environmental effects.

Improving Consistency and Predictability of Environmental Assessments

Quality assurance, awareness and training, new regulations and communications are just some of the key areas we'll be looking at in the coming year to improve the consistency and predictability of environmental assessments.

- We are now actively developing new elements of the Quality Assurance Program to monitor compliance, consistency and the overall quality of federal environmental assessments. The program will also promote continual improvement of all types of environmental assessments conducted under the Act.
- The Agency will continue to monitor the incorporation of strategic environmental assessments (SEA) into programs, plans and policy proposals and strengthen its efforts to support the use of SEA as a decision-making tool.

- The Agency will participate in the development of options for establishing environmental assessment statutory instruments for Canadian Crown corporations.
- And finally, we will begin discussions with Aboriginal groups with the aim of developing several models for regulations to govern environmental assessments on reserve lands established under the *Indian Act*.

For more information on the federal environmental assessment process and the activities of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, bookmark our web site at www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca. Also, become a member of our growing e-mail list by sending us a message at info@ceaa.gc.ca.

