

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy

2001-2002 Estimates

Report on Plans and Priorities



The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien
Prime Minister of Canada

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Section I: Messages

A. Chair's Message

Humankind continues to place ever-increasing demands upon the planet's ecosystems, with results that are evident from the local to international levels. Indeed, it is now virtually impossible to open a newspaper without reading reports that relate directly to the environmental impacts of human activity. It is evident that to accommodate the effects linked to these activities over the long term will require that the principles embodied by the concept of sustainable development be both understood and applied. In effect, all decision making must integrate a 'triple bottom line' of concern for the economy, the environment and society. Achieving this ambitious objective depends upon a broad understanding among Canadians that our socio-economic aspirations and the preservation of nature are interdependent. Over the next three years the NRTEE will be closely involved in several initiatives that will help enable this understanding to occur. We believe that, in turn, this understanding will facilitate the establishment of priorities for further action in support of sustainable development by policy and decision makers in government, industry, labour and the environmental movement.

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) is the multistakeholder body that advises the federal government on environment-economy issues. Since 1988 it has offered balanced venues enabling open discussion by a range of stakeholders on issues that are often contentious and difficult. The goal of the NRTEE is to promote sustainable development, not by forcing consensus, but by providing decision makers and opinion leaders with reliable and current information and objective views on the "state of the debate" surrounding these issues.

In 2000-2001 the Aboriginal Communities and Non-renewable Resource Development in the North, Environment and Health, Eco-efficiency, and Millennium programs will come to a conclusion. Several new or expanded programs for the current planning period will take their place, including:

- the Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators Initiative
- Conservation of Nature
- Ecological Fiscal Reform (EFR)
- Greening of the Federal Budget
- Promoting the Millennium Statement *Achieving a Balance: Four Challenges for Canada and the Next Decade* and the results of the other programs that have completed their consultation and reporting phases.

I am pleased to submit the NRTEE's *Report on Plans and Priorities* for 2001-2002, outlining the major results that will be achieved in these and other areas over the coming year as we try to help Canadians progress toward the goal of sustainable development.



Stuart L. Smith, M.D., Chair
National Round Table on the Environment
and the Economy

B. Management Representation Statement

I submit, for tabling in Parliament, the 2001-2002 *Report on Plans and Priorities* (RPP) for the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

To the best of my knowledge the information:

- accurately portrays the mandate, plans, priorities, strategies and expected key results of the organization;
- is consistent with the disclosure principles contained in the *Guidelines for the Preparation of the 2001-2002 Report on Plans and Priorities*;
- is comprehensive and accurate; and
- is based on sound underlying departmental information and management systems.

I am satisfied as to the quality assurance processes and procedures used for the RPP's production.

The planning and reporting structure on which this document is based has been approved by Treasury Board ministers and is the basis of accountability for the results achieved with the resources and authorities provided.



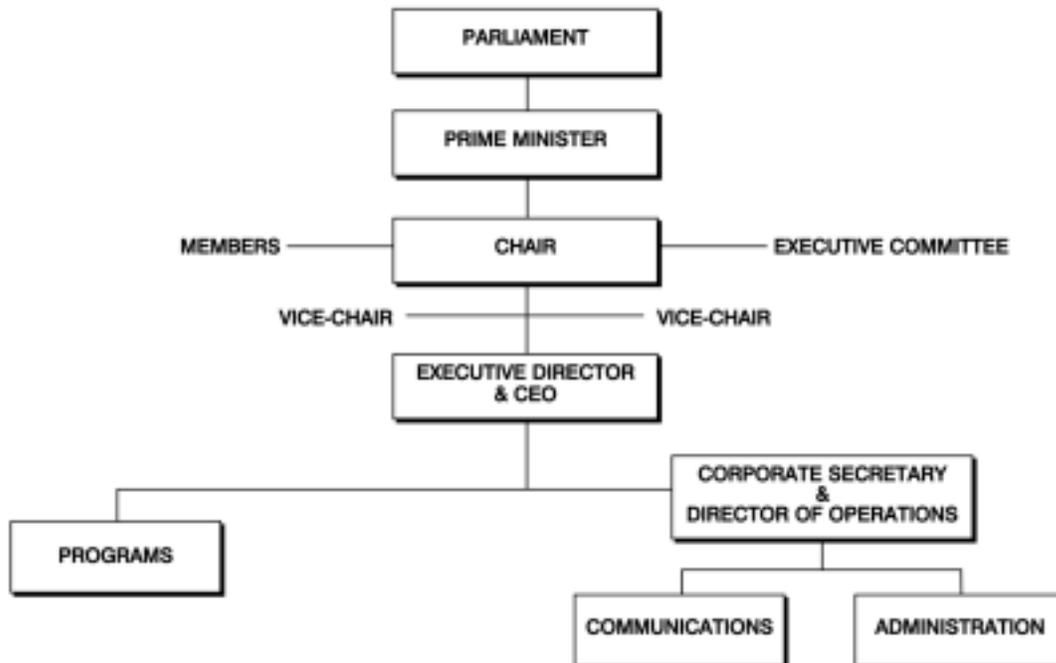
David J. McGuinty
Executive Director and CEO

Section II: Departmental Overview

A. Mandate, Roles and Responsibilities

The formal mandate of the NRTEE is derived from the *National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy Act*. The stated purpose of the Round Table is ... *to play the role of catalyst in identifying, explaining and promoting, in all sectors of Canadian society and in all regions of Canada, principles and practices of sustainable development*. Sustainable development is all-encompassing and complex. At the broadest level, it is defined as ... *a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs* (1987 World Commission on Environment and Development). The concept of sustainable development is based on a recognition of the interdependence of human beings and the global natural environment. Efforts to resolve sustainable development problems rely on co-operation among individuals, industry and governments both within Canada and between nations.

National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE)



B. Agency Objective

To play the role of catalyst in identifying, explaining and promoting, in all sectors of Canadian society and in all regions of Canada, principles and practices of sustainable development

At the heart of the NRTEE's work is a commitment to improve the quality of economic and environmental policy development by providing decision makers and opinion leaders with the information necessary to make reasoned choices on an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable future for Canada.

The NRTEE promotes a roundtable and multistakeholder approach to analysing sustainable development issues and acts as a forum in which all points of view can be freely expressed and debated. Round Table members and stakeholders involved in NRTEE programs strive to define the relationship between the environment and the economy, to determine where consensus exists on resolving particular issues, to identify clearly the nature of the issues that remain unresolved, and to make recommendations accordingly.

Having representatives at the Round Table from a variety of regions and sectors - business, labour, academe, First Nations and environmental groups - provides a significant opportunity to investigate sustainable development issues from a national perspective.

C. Planning Context

The following are the key factors that, directly or indirectly, will influence the NRTEE in the design and delivery of its programs for the next three years.

Domestic Commitments

- The NRTEE is cognizant of the broad policy priorities of the federal government with respect to the environment and economy and shapes its programs and activities accordingly. This entails contributing to current policy development as well as attempting to influence the course of future policy direction. The top priority areas on which the National Round Table has chosen to focus over the next three years are environment and sustainable development indicators; ecological fiscal reform; recommendations for inclusion in federal budgets; nature conservation; and health and the environment. As well, other potential new

subject areas will be explored and assessed to determine their viability for inclusion as new program areas.

Findings, conclusions and recommendations from the National Round Table are acknowledged as being either directly useful in the articulation of federal policies or at least helpful in providing a context or reference point for analysis and debate.

International

Most major environmental problems are now international in scope, and solutions require cross-boundary co-operation at an unprecedented level. Examples include climate change, transboundary pollution, and biodiversity protection. These challenges are well understood by the NRTEE and factored into the design of program activities.

Public Expectations and Concerns

Issues addressed by the NRTEE tend to be complex, multidimensional and divisive. Policy and decision makers, in determining appropriate action on sustainable development issues, typically are required to make difficult choices and trade-offs in a context of uncertainty. The challenge for the NRTEE, therefore, in playing a catalytic role among stakeholders, is to be trusted by all sides, and to be seen as providing a neutral and productive meeting ground for the discussion of contentious issues. In the end, the ultimate objective is for the National Round Table to be seen as a credible, respected and balanced source of information.

D. Agency Planned Spending

The NRTEE comprises one business line:

The provision of objective views and information regarding the state of the debate on the environment and the economy.

| (\$ thousands) | Forecast Spending 2000-2001 ⁽¹⁾ | Planned Spending 2001-2002 | Planned Spending 2002-2003 | Planned Spending 2003-2004 |
|--|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Gross Program Spending | 4,487 | 5,380 | 4,880 | 4,880 |
| Net Program Spending | 4,487 | 5,380 | 4,880 | 4,880 |
| <i>Less:</i> Non-responsible Revenue ⁽²⁾ | (20) | (20) | (20) | (20) |
| <i>Plus:</i> Estimated Costs of Services by Other Departments ⁽³⁾ | 182 | 188 | 188 | 188 |
| Total Plan Spending | 4,649 | 5,548 | 5,048 | 5,048 |
| Full Time Equivalents | 21 | 28 | 28 | 28 |

⁽¹⁾ Reflects best forecast of total planned spending to the end of the fiscal year and includes approvals obtained since the Main Estimates, Budget initiatives, Supplementary Estimates.

⁽²⁾ During 1996-97, the NRTEE commenced cost recovery for the organization's publications. Under the *NRTEE Act*, and Section 29.1 of the *Financial Administration Act*, the NRTEE has authority to spend any revenues received.

⁽³⁾ The estimated costs of services provided by other departments consist of:

| | (\$000) |
|---|---------|
| X accommodation received without charge from Public Works and Government Services Canada (\$186,000 in 2001-2002) | 180 |
| X pay and benefit services received without charge from Environment Canada | 2 |

Section III: Plans, Results and Resources

A. Business Line Objective

The business line objective is the same as the Agency objective, which is *to play the role of catalyst in identifying, explaining and promoting, in all sectors of Canadian society and in all regions of Canada, principles and practices of sustainable development.*

B. Business Line Description

The provision of objective views and information regarding the state of the debate on the environment and the economy. The NRTEE is a multistakeholder body comprising a Chair and a maximum of 24 members who are opinion leaders from a variety of regions and sectors of Canadian society including business, labour, academe, environmental organizations and First Nations. The NRTEE actively promotes a round table and multistakeholder approach to analysing sustainable development issues and acts as a forum in which all points of view can be freely expressed and debated. The NRTEE members and stakeholders involved in its programs strive to define the relationship between the environment and the economy, to determine where consensus exists on particular issues, and to identify any barriers that prevent consensus. This information is consolidated, assessed and communicated to stakeholders, relevant decision makers, and the media.

Within the NRTEE business line, activities are organized according to a number of program areas. Each potential program area is scoped and defined, and a task force is assigned to oversee the associated activities. Emerging issues are continually explored, and, if determined to be a priority, are established as new program areas as funds become available.

C. Key Results, Commitments, Planned Results, Related Activities and Resources

Following the conclusion of the Millennium program and investigations into a number of different issue areas, including consultations with stakeholders and experts involved in these areas, the NRTEE has decided to focus its efforts primarily on the following programs:

- (i) Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators
- (ii) Ecological Fiscal Reform

- (iii) Greening of the Budget (recommendations for inclusion in budgets)
- (iv) Conservation of Nature
- (v) Other Initiatives

These programs will be priority areas for the next one to two years. Also, exploration into (1) the interactive and cumulative effects of low level toxins on health, and (2) urban sustainability will continue to determine if there are meaningful roles for the National Round Table in these areas.

i. Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators

Key Results Commitments

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy's Sustainable Development Indicators Initiative is a three-year program that will develop and promote feasible and nationally accepted indicators. The indicators will be derived from a model that starts with the assumption that sustainability is based on capital preservation. As such, capital is segregated into human, natural and produced components, each of which must be linked with the others and managed to support long-term economic sustainability.

These indicators will:

- be suitable for adoption and mainstream use by the federal government;
- be readily understood by the general public, yet be credible and useful to specialized users;
- have long-term robustness as our understanding of sustainable development matures; and
- be realistically applicable in the short term based on available data.

Planned Results

- A determination of the approach to be used for measuring progress toward sustainable development
- Specific indicators
- Testing of indicators
- Recommendations on specific, tested indicators
- Options for next steps in indicator promotion, implementation and use

Related Activities

The NRTEE will communicate the results of its efforts as widely as possible, and will attempt to build a large constituency of support for these indicators in government, the private sector and non-governmental groups.

Resources

The federal government committed \$4.5 million over three years in the 2000 federal budget to the NRTEE to develop, in collaboration with Statistics Canada and Environment Canada, indicators that are feasible, credible and easily understood. The estimated budget for FY 2001-2002 is \$1.6 million, not including staff costs.

ii. Conservation of Nature

Key Results Commitments

The goal of this program is to conserve ecosystems by encouraging the creation of more integrated systems of land management that will include core protected areas (such as national parks), buffers and corridors connecting the protected areas. The program will engage scientists, policy makers from all levels of government, resource industries, non-governmental groups, rural and aboriginal groups.

Planned Results

- *Scientific review:* A review of recent conservation science in the North American context, with particular reference to conservation biology, will provide the scientific argument for a new approach to conservation in Canada.
- *Examination of existing models of conservation and best practices:* Examples of stewardship, land use planning, and partnerships for conservation in Canada, North America and internationally will be analyzed for best practices and lessons.
- *Report on best practices and lessons from science and innovative models of conservation:* Building on the above efforts, this report will also include a vision statement and recommendations.
- *Identification of key barriers to progress:* Building further on the preceding, the key barriers to progress and change will be identified.
- *Policy instruments:* The suite of potential policy measures that could address barriers will be examined.
- *Communications campaign:* A comprehensive communications campaign will be put in place to build awareness and support for the program and the final recommendations.
- *Implementation of recommendations:* Support will be actively sought for their implementation.

Related Activities

The public, through the media, and key stakeholders such as business and agricultural interests and landowners will be encouraged to support and take their own initiatives to conserve ecosystems.

Resources

The annual budget required to conduct this program in FY 2001-2002 has not been finalized, but is estimated to range between \$250,000 and \$350,000 not including staff requirements.

iii. Ecological Fiscal Reform (EFR)

Key Results Commitments

The goal of the NRTEE's EFR program is to explore how a co-ordinated and deliberate strategy to redirect government taxation and expenditure programs would support the goal of sustainable development in Canada. Designing and testing discrete, practical economic instruments to achieve this goal will be the primary focus of the program. An integrated set of economic instruments will be developed for three areas: Ecological Landscapes (wetlands and marginal agricultural lands); Smog Precursors (focusing on vehicle fuels); and Management of Track II Toxic Substances (substances that are not of first-priority concern).

Planned Results

- Guiding principles that should be applied when considering fiscal policy measures directed at environmental problems.
- Specific fiscal policy measures directed at the three instruments areas – ecological landscapes, smog precursors and toxic substances.

Related Activities

This program has a duration of two years. A multistakeholder expert group has been convened to explore the benefits and costs and the technical feasibility of ecological tax shifting as well as the potential designs for reformed systems. The program will help inform the debate on ecological tax reform and advance the use of market-based approaches for environmental and economic improvement in Canada.

Resources

The program budget, not including staff costs, for 2001-2002 is \$350,000.

iv. Greening of the Budget

Key Results Commitments

The objective here is to encourage the inclusion of measures directed at environmental improvements in each year's federal budget. To this end, for the 2001 or 2002 Budget, the NRTEE will call for federal action in five key areas:

- encouraging sustainable opportunities for Northern Aboriginal communities;
- promoting more sustainable energy consumption;
- promoting a better understanding of the links between environmental regulation and human health;
- preserving and enhancing Canada's rich natural legacy; and
- developing a strategy for remediating contaminated sites.

Planned Results

Recommendations for the 2001 or 2002 federal budget will be announced and presented to the Minister of Finance and the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. It is expected that some of the measures will be incorporated into the budget.

Related Activities

N/A

Resources

The program budget, not including staff costs, for 2001-2002 is \$150,000.

v. Other Initiatives

- The NRTEE is concluding an extended eco-efficiency program to test energy, material and water intensity indicators. Early in the new fiscal year, a final report and a workbook will be published, and a communication program for rolling out the program's findings will be launched. This will include organizing a series of briefings or educational sessions for businesses across the country.
- Similarly, extensive communications campaigns for the Aboriginal Communities and Non-renewable Resource Development in the North; Environment and Health (regulatory and scientific capacity issues); and the Millennium programs will be undertaken.
- Exploration of potential new program areas will continue in the areas of health and

environment, and urban sustainability. The focus of the first will be the policy responses that should be considered because of new scientific evidence that traces problems with neurological and immunological function, especially in children and the elderly, to low-level exposure to combinations of chemicals in the environment. As for urban sustainability, the issues that will be assessed are the relationship between environment and quality of life and economic competitiveness in cities and the federal role in promoting progress on these fronts.

Section IV: Joint Initiatives

A. Horizontal Initiatives

In fulfilling its mandate as catalyst, the NRTEE ensures that its program activities and multistakeholder events have a broad application for the benefit of all Canadians. The NRTEE's initiatives are, therefore, horizontal by definition.

B. Collective Initiatives

All NRTEE programs are conducted in partnership with other organizations, but the Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators Initiative stands out as the best illustration of this approach.

| Collective Initiative | Key Result Commitment | List of Major Partners | Money allocation (\$millions) | Planned Results |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| Sustainable Development Indicators Initiative | Develop and promote feasible and nationally accepted environment and sustainable development indicators. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Statistics Canada - Environment Canada - Finance Canada - Pembina Institute - International Institute for Sustainable Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Canadian Policy Research Networks - Centre for the Study of Living Standards | \$4.5 over three years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine approach for measuring progress toward sustainable development - Develop specific indicators - Test proposed indicators |

Section V: Financial Information

Table 5.1: Net Cost of Program for the Estimates Year

| (\$ thousands) | Expenditures |
|--|--------------|
| Planned spending (Budgetary and Non-budgetary Main Estimates plus adjustments) | 5,380 |
| <i>Plus: Services Received without Charge</i> | |
| Accommodation provided by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) | 186 |
| Pay and benefit services received without charge from Environment Canada | 2 |
| <i>Less: Non-respendable Revenue</i> | 20 |
| 2001-2002 Net Cost of Program | 5,548 |