

National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy

**2002-2003
Estimates**

Report on Plans and Priorities

The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien
Prime Minister of Canada

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MESSAGE

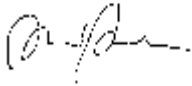
The vision is one of opportunity and balance. The approach is one of innovative, interdisciplinary thinking and practical solutions. The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) responds to the challenge of achieving environmental protection and economic progress.

The NRTEE pursues its mandate by creating the intellectual conditions and multi-stakeholder support for sustainable development. A broad-based consultative body, it promotes debate and fosters awareness by bringing experts and interest groups to the table from all parts of Canadian society. Working with cutting edge research and case studies and through purpose-built task forces, the NRTEE strives to articulate the state of the debate on issues. It then identifies barriers to progress and seeks practical recommendations to advance the debate.

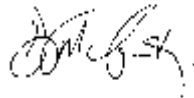
With thinking on sustainable development constantly evolving, the NRTEE is always looking forward. Its priorities change from year to year, depending on what new challenges and useful opportunities have been identified. In 2002, the major questions that will engage the organization's attention are:

- What kinds of measures or indicators should be developed to help Canadians understand whether current economic development is occurring in such a way that is compromising the environment and hence future economic development?
- Can taxation and expenditure and incentive measures be altered to increase synergy between achievement of economic and environmental goals?
- Can we enhance the stewardship of Canadian nature by ensuring our network of parks and other protected areas is properly buffered and connected, within the context of economically and environmentally vibrant working landscapes and cities?
- What economic policy instruments can lead to environmental and economic improvements in cities across the country?
- What should be the key elements of a national strategy to seize the economic and environmental potential of urban brownfields?

The NRTEE is proud of what has been achieved in the past, and it will continue during this planning period to take on difficult but important assignments, to build broad-based support, and to put forward concrete recommendations for change.



Stuart L. Smith, M.D.
Chair



David J. McGuinty
President and CEO

MANAGEMENT PRESENTATION STATEMENT

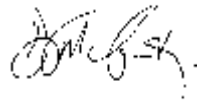
I submit, for tabling in Parliament, the 2002-2003 Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP) for the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

To the best of my knowledge, the information in this report:

- Accurately portrays the mandate, plans, priorities, strategies and expected key results of the organization.
- Is consistent with the disclosure principles contained in the *Guide to the preparation of the 2002-2003 Report on Plans and Priorities*.
- Is comprehensive and accurate.
- 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 production.

The Planning, Reporting and Accountability Structure (PRAS) on which this document is based has been approved by Treasury Board Ministers and is the basis for accountability for the results achieved with the resources and authorities provided.



David J. McGuinty
President and CEO
February 21, 2002

SECTION 1: RAISON D'ETRE

1.1 Mandate

The mandate of the NRTEE, which was established in 1994 under the auspices of the *National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy Act*, 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.”

1.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The NRTEE is a multi-stakeholder body that advises the federal government and other sectors on issues that lie along the interface of the environment and the economy. Since its formation some eight years ago, it has operated as a mechanism that allows a diversity of stakeholders to enter into balanced and objective discussion of issues that are complex and contentious. The goal of the NRTEE is not to force consensus, but rather to provide decision-makers with the information they need to make reasoned choices in building an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable future for Canada.

The round table, multi-stakeholder approach enables participants from a variety of regions and sectors—including business, labour, academe, First Nations and environmental groups—to share information, to analyze sustainable development issues from a national perspective, and to debate varying points of view. Round Table members and stakeholders strive to define the relationship between the environment and the economy, to determine where consensus exists in relation to particular issues, and to identify issues that remain unresolved and the reasons why. This information—with corresponding recommendations—is then consolidated, assessed and communicated to stakeholders, relevant decision-makers and the media.

SECTION 2: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2.1 Business Line

The NRTEE has a single business line and one that is identical to its mandate, namely to identify, explain and promote the principles and practices of sustainable development in all parts of Canada.

2.2 Strategic Outcomes

Sustainable development rests conceptually on the interdependence of human beings and the global natural environment. At the broadest level, such development 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” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Sustainable development is complex and difficult to achieve and is premised on broad-based cooperation from all parts of society and the economy.

The NRTEE defines potential programs in light of their overall strategic importance and assigns task forces to oversee activities. Emerging issues are continually explored, and those that are recognized as priorities, if the resources are available, form the basis of new programs. The strategic outcomes for the current planning period are:

Strategic Outcome 1: To develop meaningful, capital-based economic and environmental indicators to support the public policy process.

Strategic Outcome 2: To recommend strategies to help governments create an integrated set of taxation and expenditure incentives to support a shift to sustainable development.

Strategic Outcome 3: To encourage Canadians at all levels to undertake the stewardship of lands and waters, both public and private, and to shape new tools to conserve, restore and maintain the long-term health of ecosystems.

Strategic Outcome 4: To clarify the link between environmental degradation and economic health in urban communities and to identify a federal role in addressing these related issues.

2.3 Horizontal Programs

By definition, the NRTEE is trans-disciplinary. It looks at all issues in an integrative and horizontal way and brings a range of environmental, economic and other interests to the table to address those issues.

2.4 Challenges and Risks

The task of building engagement entails careful design and management, and that is certainly true in the area of sustainable development. The practices that the NRTEE promotes represent a departure from the normal way of doing business. It is critical to obtain the participation of key stakeholders and specialists and to maintain their trust and confidence. In almost all areas of inquiry, there is a lack of critical mass among experts and policy analysts, although that is beginning to change as organizations like the NRTEE help to build capacity and provide opportunities for discussion. Most significantly, at a broad level it continues to be a challenge to bridge solitudes such as those that exist between academic disciplines, interest groups, sectors of the economy and regions of the country.

2.5 Performance Measurement

The National Round Table's overriding objective is to provide advice and to encourage changes in public policy and public and private decision making. It strives to measure the effectiveness of its efforts in each program area (that is, the degree to which it has been successful in influencing decision-making). To that end, it is now in the final stages of developing an enhanced evaluation framework that will enable it to measure impacts through the application of both hard measures (quantifiable survey statistics) and soft measures (interviews). Using this framework, the NRTEE will soon launch a continual review that will help it determine: 1) whether it is focusing on the right issues; and 2) whether its recommendations are sound and useful in the context of public policy. The NRTEE is working to identify measures that are valid, reliable, simple and affordable.

Activities are currently monitored and assessed by the multi-stakeholder task forces that oversee programs. The organization needs to improve its ability to discern and track impacts after findings and recommendations have been communicated. This will require careful planning and implementation, since there is an inevitable lag between the time that the NRTEE finishes its work and the eventual reactions by decision-makers and opinion leaders.

SECTION 3: PLANS AND PRIORITIES

Program 1: Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators (ESDI)

Strategic Outcome: To develop meaningful environmental and sustainable development indicators to support public policy.

A. Objectives and Benefits to Canadians

The environmental and other impacts of economic activity—both positive and negative—are long-term and difficult to measure. The ability of Canadians and their governments to assess those impacts accurately and to plan appropriately hinges on the existence of meaningful and credible indicators. In response to a request from the Minister of Finance, the National Round Table is developing a set of indicators, primarily having to do with environmental impacts, that would complement traditional indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP).

B. Plans and Priorities

The NRTEE is currently overseeing the efforts of multi-disciplinary groups of experts to identify environment and sustainable development indicators in the following areas:

- water resources;
- human capital;
- non-renewable resources;
- land and soils;
- air quality; and
- renewable resources.

This is a three-year program, now in its third year. Over the past year, research groups have proposed preliminary recommendations for specific indicators in the identified areas. The final phase of work in 2002-2003 will attempt to establish the credibility and usefulness of those indicators by subjecting them to expert and stakeholder scrutiny and validation.

In particular, close cooperation with Statistics Canada will continue to be maintained to ensure that the indicators that are ultimately put forward are realistic, credible and likely to be acted upon.

C. Lessons Learned

The program was planned to allow for the constant refinement of proposed indicators. It is, by its nature, an iterative undertaking, designed to allow for broad-based feedback and constant adjustment. As a result valuable and necessary inputs to the development of a framework and potential indicators have been received.

D. Challenges and Risks

The challenge is daunting—to define a small set of indicators that will measure the environmental sustainability of economic activity. The conceptual framework for this program is built on the concept of capital—produced, natural and human capital. The NRTEE recognizes that such measures are incomplete, that important work will have to be deferred to another stage, and that these indicators cast only imperfect light on the sustainability of the economy. However, the short-term challenge is to develop indicators that will be simple, useful and available to guide policy-making in the immediate future. For that reason, the NRTEE has chosen to adopt a fairly narrow perspective at this stage.

The development of reliable indicators, the identification of high-quality data streams to support those indicators, and the generation of support among varied interest groups is extremely challenging. The NRTEE is striving to ensure success by engaging recognized experts and recruiting Statistics Canada as central participants. Moreover, by submitting the results to a long and careful process of consultation and refinement, it intends to maximize broad-based buy-in.

E. Resources

\$1.5 million for 2002-2003.

F. Performance Targets

If successful, the program will result in a set of indicators that is viewed by the federal government as valid, useful and suitable for application. This would be acknowledged through a formal response by the government to the NRTEE's recommendations, which would also include reference to further investments that will have to be made over the long run to increase the number and enhance the quality of indicators improve environmental information systems and thereby.

Time Frame: This program has a three-year time frame, with completion scheduled for the end of fiscal year 2002-2003. The final report will be delivered in May 2003.

Program 2: Ecological Fiscal Reform (EFR)

Strategic Outcome: To explore strategies to help governments create an integrated set of taxation and expenditure measures to support a shift to sustainable development.

A. Objectives and Benefits to Canadians

Progress towards sustainable development calls for a profound alteration in behaviours across the board and especially in economic activity. Canadian governments can foster change by reshaping their taxation and expenditure programs and by adopting an integrated set of incentives. The National Round Table's goals in this area are to:

- gain insight into the key challenges and opportunities related to EFR;
- devise guiding principles that can be applied to a broad range of sustainable development issues; and
- make recommendations, primarily to the federal government, on how to implement EFR in Canada.

B. Plans and Priorities

Phase I of this program has been completed, having consisted of two case studies and a final report. The findings and lessons learned in this initial phase provide a road map for how to proceed with the program, which will concentrate on outreach and engagement, as well as continuation of research, analysis and case studies.

The Phase I report will be discussed with senior policy-makers and will stress that a strong leadership signal is required from them. As well, the conclusions reached in the agricultural landscapes case study will be communicated to federal officials, who will be encouraged to reorient their policy thinking accordingly.

Further consultations will be held to determine the feasibility of proceeding with case studies on substances of concern under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* and on reducing sulphur levels in heavy fuel oil. As a mechanism for outreach and engagement, the first in what will likely be an annual series of conferences will be organized. These consultations should assist in building intellectual capacity in this area among other organizations and sectors.

As well, an attempt will be made to fill in important research gaps in vital areas such as cost-benefit analyses, competitiveness and innovation, and distributional consequences of EFR initiatives.

Most other NRTEE programs have EFR components to them, and a concerted effort will be made to harmonize approaches so that outcomes are coherent and synergies are realized.

C. Lessons Learned

As noted, preliminary findings indicate that capacity is an important issue, but that progress also requires a clear leadership signal or signs of explicit support from senior government decision-makers. The NRTEE is looking for ways to obtain those signals. In the meantime, it continues to bring stakeholders together to examine the applications of EFR and to design programs that are consistent with EFR principles.

D. Challenges and Risks

The major difficulty with any new approach to policy is that there is inertia or a natural resistance to change. As well, over time, elements of Canadian society have become dependent upon prevailing policy approaches, and any changes could threaten their well-being. Whole new sets of winners and losers are likely to be created with the introduction of EFR, and ways will have to be found to ease the transition to new arrangements.

E. Resources

\$650,000 for fiscal year 2002-2003.

F. Performance Targets

The NRTEE is encouraging governments (federal and provincial) to adopt a new approach to taxation and expenditures. As the first phase of this project comes to a close, the NRTEE will be seeking reactions from Finance Canada and other federal departments. It will engage in dialogue with senior government officials in order to gauge the usefulness and relevance of recommendations to date. In the meantime:

1. The Phase I report will be communicated to senior policy levels in the federal government, and reactions to it will assist in shaping the next stages of the program.
2. A case study on substances of concern under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* will be developed.
3. A further case study in the area of cleaner transportation will be initiated on sulphur in heavy fuel oil.
4. A national conference will be organized for the fall of 2002 as a mechanism to stimulate discussion and interest in the application of EFR. This will be the first of what will likely be a series of annual events.
5. A related activity is the provision of advice to the Minister of Finance in advance of each year's federal budget. This practice will continue, and the recommendations will draw upon the results from the EFR program as well as other programs such as Urban Sustainability and Conservation of Natural Heritage.

Program 3: Conservation of Natural Heritage

Strategic Outcome: To encourage in Canada better stewardship of lands and waters, both public and private, and to shape new tools to conserve, restore and maintain the long-term health of ecosystems.

A. Objectives and Benefits to Canadians

Although the drive towards nature “preservation” has created hundreds of parks and nature reserves in Canada, a much broader “conservation” movement is needed in surrounding areas to ensure the ecological survival of those parks. Canadians expect our parks and conservation areas to function effectively in protecting Canada’s vast natural heritage. Under the present circumstances, they cannot do this. Even when key areas have been protected, most are too small to conserve biodiversity in the long term unless they are buffered and connected to form a complete system. That means introducing a degree of protection to the connecting spaces, both publicly and privately owned, that lie around and between parks and conservation areas. In order to succeed, conservation plans must take the legitimate economic and social needs of people living in affected areas into account.

B. Plans and Priorities

The NRTEE has established a Nature Conservation Task Force to take the lead in articulating policy proposals that would lead to the establishment of a natural network of protected areas within a larger, sustainably managed “working” landscape. Partnerships between governments and the community are the essential underpinning of a landscape-scale approach to conservation. The NRTEE will encourage the federal government to engage with other levels of government, as well as with members of First Nations, environmental organizations, industry, rural communities and others, to help shape a natural conservation agenda, design new policy instruments, and identify opportunities for investment in nature conservation. In studying the issue, the task force will reach out through the medium of workshops and consultations and will draw on the collective wisdom of as many stakeholders as possible.

C. Lessons Learned

Many lessons have already been learned. When the NRTEE convened planning meetings with expert stakeholders in the area of conservation, it concluded that it could usefully contribute to the evolution of a new vision for conservation in Canada by, among other things, analyzing existing models of conservation, especially regional models, in search of lessons learned and information on best practices. Also, by integrating those lessons into planning on conservation goals and by ensuring the inclusiveness of its process, the NRTEE hopes to bolster the natural legacy agenda of the federal government.

D. Challenges and Risks

In seeking to introduce new notions of land “stewardship,” the NRTEE has to contend with a large and complex system of jurisdictions, including private landowners, and many vested interests. Landowners in the agricultural economy, for example, already feel under siege economically in an industry that is typically subject to severe cycles. To achieve intersectoral agreement requires working creatively with all stakeholders and finding ways to protect their interests even as new environmental protections are introduced. The building of support in this area is an enormous challenge, and the stakes are large. If efforts to create a new and broader kind of stewardship fail, the momentum towards environmental degradation will certainly build in years to come.

E. Resources

\$450,000 for fiscal year 2002-2003.

F. Performance Targets

The NRTEE will encourage governments (federal and provincial) and leaders in sectors such as mining, forestry and agriculture to participate in new land management practices. The NRTEE is one of the many players in this crucial debate, and direct results will be difficult to measure. However, through the development of an evaluation framework, it is shaping tools that will soon enable it to measure progress in concrete terms. In the final analysis, interviews with stakeholders will be a key source of information on changes in practices and the implications of those changes.

Time Frame: The analysis, consultation and report-writing phases will be completed by the fall of 2002. From there, an extensive communications strategy will be devised to disseminate the report’s findings and recommendations across the country and to encourage opinion leaders to act on them.

Program 4: Urban Sustainability

Strategic Outcome: To clarify the link between environmental and economic health in urban communities and to identify a federal role in addressing these related issues.

A. Objectives and Benefits to Canadians

Canada today is highly urbanized. Whereas 90 percent of Canadians in 1900 lived in the country or in small towns, today more than 80 percent live in cities. Moreover, those cities are now major economic drivers, with quality of life emerging as an increasingly important locational factor for business and people. If our cities are to remain competitive economically, urban spaces must be managed as healthy and sustainable environments. What role do governments play in promoting environmental health in Canadian cities? Despite the emergence of several new federal initiatives to address urban problems, no federal initiative clearly connects the environmental performance of cities with their significant role in the national and international economies. The NRTEE will work with the federal government and with stakeholders in all parts of the urban community to develop an alternative, coherent strategy for Canadian cities.

B. Plans and Priorities

During extensive scoping exercises, two areas of interest emerged: 1) exploring the relevance of ecological fiscal reform in support of urban sustainability; and 2) defining indicators to measure urban sustainability. A multi-stakeholder task force has been set up with a mission to engage a wide range of experts and interested parties through a series of workshops and other meetings. Priority activities will include the confirmation of a work plan for the program and the scheduling of meetings to take place over the span of the program. The task force will undertake case study analyses and research as precursors to broad-based consultation.

Further down the road, the NRTEE will collaborate with experts and stakeholders to identify and encourage the adoption of best practices in urban environmental management. It will develop new fiscal tools in support of urban sustainability and will recommend these to the federal government in particular. Finally, it will attempt to raise public awareness and encourage broad-based engagement in urban sustainability issues. One of the mechanisms for achieving these goals will be a national conference to be held in the fall of 2002.

C. Resources

\$600,000 for fiscal year 2002-2003.

D. Performance Targets

The goal is to identify opportunities for the federal government to contribute to the sustainable development of Canada's urban communities and to generate more awareness of the connection between environmental and economic well-being. Through the development of an evaluation framework (currently under way), the NRTEE is shaping evaluation tools that will allow it to measure progress towards that goal. In the meantime, the NRTEE will:

1. Release a State of the Debate Report containing policy recommendations in early 2003 and will promote these recommendations with the federal government and other relevant target audiences;
2. Hold a conference in the fall of 2002, geared to a large, diversified audience, and use this conference to raise awareness of problems and potential solutions; and
3. Collaborate with popular media outlets to draw attention to the environmental condition of Canadian cities.

Time Frame: The program will last approximately 16 months and is set to conclude by the spring or summer of 2003.

New Program: Urban Brownfields

Strategic Outcome: To propose a national strategy for urban brownfields (mildly or moderately contaminated lands with potential economic value in Canadian cities).

A. Objectives and Benefits to Canadians

The unexploited economic potential of brownfields represents a great loss to the economy. Reclaiming these areas could unlock economic benefits and, by making use of scarce inner city land, help to reduce urban sprawl. At present, however, there are many disincentives for business to make use of brownfields. The NRTEE will look for ways in which the federal government can work with other levels of government and the private sector to overcome those disincentives. In particular, standards for environmental clean-up are lacking, as is an appropriate regulatory framework. Liability is also a thorny issue, as businesses are loath to take financial responsibility for decontamination and an ownership interest in these sites. The federal government has asked the NRTEE to work with experts and stakeholders to examine the issue and propose a national strategy for urban brownfields.

B. Plans and Priorities

This program is still at an early stage, and a firm work plan has yet to be finalized.

C. Resources

To be determined.

D. Performance Targets

The ultimate measure of success would be the adoption of a national strategy and recommendations as put forward by the NRTEE.

Time Frame: This will be a short-term undertaking, with completion scheduled for the fall of 2002 so that recommendations can be provided for the next federal budget.

New Programs: Water Resources and Capital Markets

The NRTEE is constantly scanning the horizon in order to identify new priorities. It also responds to requests and assignments from the federal government. Two potential new programs have been recently identified for consideration in 2002. These programs, on water resources and on capital markets, are in the very first stage of planning, and desired strategic outcomes are still being analyzed. If and when these outcomes are satisfactorily defined, these potential programs will translate into new programs.

A. Water Resources

Water may emerge as one of the most serious and contentious economic and environmental issues of the 21st century. While many countries are already approaching a crisis in water supply, Canada still has considerable resources; however, they are not limitless. Once considered inexhaustible, Canada's water can no longer be taken for granted. As a result, the NRTEE will determine whether it has a role in exploring the feasibility of modifying price signals to encourage conservation and to improve water quality.

B. Capital Markets

The central question here is whether there is a relationship between corporate profitability and environmental performance. If no such relationship exists, why not? What policies are needed to create or strengthen such a relationship and to stimulate new practices. How can companies be rewarded for adopting sustainable practices? The NRTEE is currently endeavouring to identify a role for itself in this area.

SECTION 4: ORGANIZATION AND BUDGET

The NRTEE is a multi-stakeholder body composed of a chair and a maximum of 24 members who are opinion leaders from all regions and a variety of sectors of Canadian society, including business, labour, academe, environmental organizations and First Nations.

A president, appointed by Governor-in-Council, serves as the chief executive officer of the NRTEE. The president supervises and directs the work and staff of the Round Table. The secretariat in Ottawa provides analytical, communications and administrative support to Round Table members, and the organization reports to the Prime Minister.

NRTEE activities are organized in a series of programs, each of which is overseen by a task force made up of one or more NRTEE members and selected representatives from relevant stakeholder groups. The responsible task force commissions research, conducts national consultations, reports on areas of agreement and disagreement, and puts forward reasoned recommendations for steps to be taken that promote balancing and integrating concern for the environment and the economy. The full Round Table then reviews these reports and recommendations prior to approving and releasing them to the public. The members of the National Round Table meet in plenary sessions four times a year to review the progress of programs under way, to approve the publication of findings, conclusions and recommendations emanating from programs, to establish priorities and to initiate new programs.

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

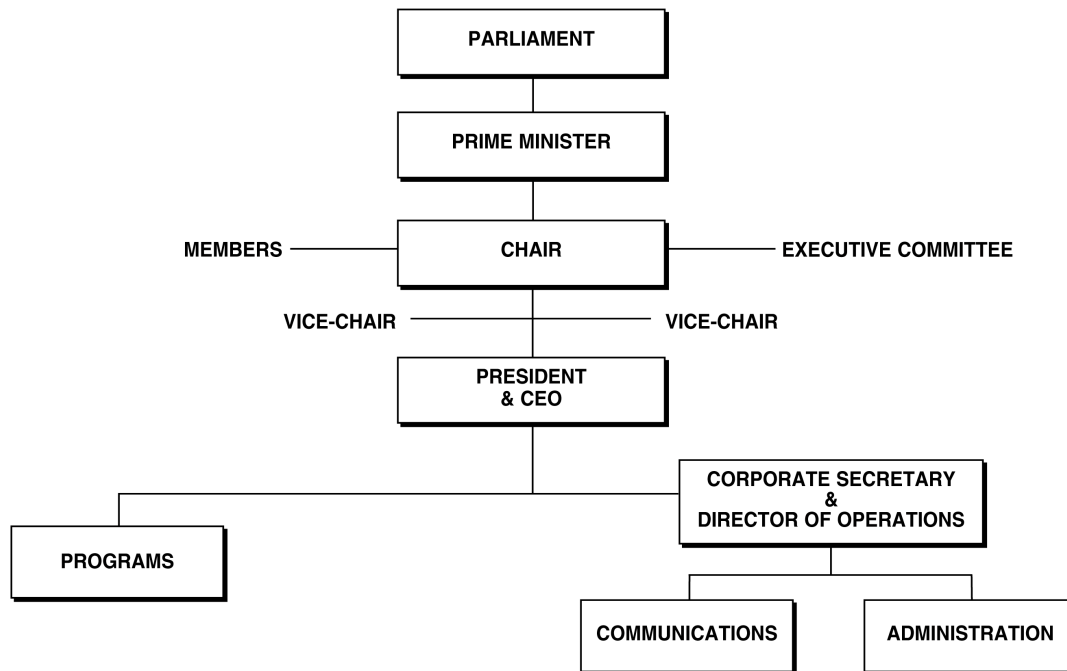


Table 1: Agency Planned Spending

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 2001-2002 ⁽¹⁾	Planned Spending 2002-2003	Planned Spending 2003-2004	Planned Spending 2004-2005
Gross Program Spending	5,380	4,912	4,912	4,912
Plus: Adjustments	156	-	-	-
Net Program Spending	5,536	4,912	4,912	4,912
<i>Less: Non-responsible Revenue</i> ⁽²⁾	(20)	(20)	(20)	(20)
<i>Plus: Estimated Costs of Services by Other Departments</i> ⁽³⁾	188	188	188	188
Total Plan Spending	5,704	5,080	5,080	5,080
Full Time Equivalents	28	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 1996-1997, 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
X pay and benefit services received without charge from Environment Canada	2

Table 2: Net Cost of Program for the Estimates Year

(\$ thousands)	Expenditures
Planned spending (Budgetary and Non-budgetary Main Estimates plus adjustments)	4,912
A. Plus: Services Received without Charge	
Accommodation provided by Public Works and Government Services Canada	186
Pay and benefit services received without charge from Environment Canada	2
<i>Less: Non-responsible Revenue</i>	20
2002-2003 Net Cost of Program	5,080