



British Columbia
Environmental Assessment Office

SERVICE PLAN
2003/04 – 2005/06



National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data

British Columbia. Environmental Assessment Office.

Service plan. — 2002/03/2004/05 —

Annual.

Also available on the Internet.

Continues: British Columbia. Environmental Assessment Office. Performance plan.

ISSN 1705-1061 = Service plan — British Columbia. Environmental Assessment Office.

1. British Columbia. Environmental Assessment Office —
Periodicals. 2. Environmental policy — British Columbia —
Periodicals. 3. Environmental impact analysis — British Columbia —
Periodicals. I. Title. II. Title: Environmental Assessment Office service plan.

TD194.68.C32B74

354.3'28'0971105

C2002-960245-9

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Published by the Environmental Assessment Office

2353-2

Accountability Statement

The 2003/04 – 2005/06 Environmental Assessment Office Service Plan was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared. The plan was developed in the context of the government's *New Era* commitments, which are to be addressed by May 17, 2005. All material fiscal assumptions and policy decisions as of January 28, 2003 have been considered in preparing the plan. I am accountable for achieving the specific objectives in the plan.



Honourable Stanley B. Hagen
Minister of Sustainable Resource Management
and Minister Responsible for
the Environmental Assessment Office

February 5, 2003



Ministry of Environmental Assessment Office



I am pleased to present the *Environmental Assessment Office Service Plan 2003/04 to 2005/06*. The purpose of this plan is to facilitate the public's understanding of the core business of the Environmental Assessment Office, the resources it employs, and its expected results.

The Environmental Assessment Office plays an important role in British Columbia by delivering a thorough, timely and integrated environmental assessment process. It promotes the provincial goal of sustainability by protecting the environment and fostering a strong and vibrant economy.

Recent changes to the environmental assessment process will provide greater flexibility to customize review procedures on a project-by-project basis. I look forward to reporting on the benefits of these changes and to working with the Environmental Assessment Office towards a sustainable future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stan Hagen".

Honourable Stanley B. Hagen
Minister of Sustainable Resource Management
and Minister Responsible for
the Environmental Assessment Office

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Strategic Context

Agency Overview

The Environmental Assessment Office leads reviews of large-scale projects being proposed for development in British Columbia. Environmental assessment is a process for identifying, predicting, evaluating and mitigating potentially adverse impacts of major projects. The process examines a broad range of possible effects — environmental, economic, social, health and cultural/heritage — and supports balanced decision-making.

Environmental assessment serves the public interest by:

- ensuring that major projects will not threaten public health/safety or adversely affect local communities and the environment, and by instilling public confidence that this is the case;
- supporting sustainable development that improves the provincial economy;
- forestalling project planning errors which could be costly to both private and public interests;
- protecting British Columbia's reputation for environmental integrity in external markets;
- satisfying public expectations for political accountability for project approval decisions; and
- ensuring that decisions on major projects are linked to government's larger responsibility for the management of provincial land and resources.

Vision

Sustainable economic development that reflects the social, cultural and environmental values of British Columbians.

Mission

Provide British Columbians with a well-designed and well-delivered environmental assessment process that reflects the government's objectives for economic growth, strong communities and sustainable resource management, based on maintaining high environmental standards.

Principles

The Environmental Assessment Office is committed to the following principles which guide our work:

- Neutrality The environmental assessment process is neutrally and centrally administered.
- Fairness The environmental assessment process is fair and open.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ■ Balance | Issues receive integrated consideration and decisions are based on impartial, balanced and informed recommendations. |
| ■ Science-based decision-making | Best available information, knowledge and technologies are considered and utilized. |
| ■ Consultative | The environmental assessment process is participatory and transparent, ensuring meaningful opportunities for public and First Nations input. |
| ■ Inter-jurisdictional coordination | A streamlined process is accomplished by minimizing duplication and overlap. |

Organizational Values

The Environmental Assessment Office is guided in its organizational behaviour by the following values:

- cooperation and teamwork;
- respect for the values and opinions of others;
- continuous improvement to ensure quality service;
- a professional and high-performance culture, encouraging innovation and creativity;
- accountability to the people of British Columbia; and
- a healthy workplace supporting staff development, recognition, and opportunity.

Planning Context

Various internal and external factors are expected to influence the ability of the Environmental Assessment Office to achieve its mission, goals and objectives.

Provincial Economy — Downward trends in prices for, and revenues from, many of British Columbia's natural resources are currently constraining economic growth, although prices for some products (e.g., energy) are expected to increase. Many resource-based communities, particularly those which have experienced workforce dislocations, are anxious for new economic opportunities.

Market Expectations — Environmental assessment is an integral component of broader environmental management systems worldwide. Consumer demands for assurances regarding environmental sustainability and consumer health increasingly affect both global and domestic markets. An environmental assessment approval can be an important marketing and financing asset.

Potential Project Effects — Major projects may raise significant health and safety, community and environmental issues with the public. The public will continue to expect opportunities for substantial involvement in environmental assessments, especially for controversial projects. Decision-making will need to be transparent, based on best available technical information, and reflective of government's broader objectives for the management of provincial land and resources.

Federal Government's Role — More than 70% of projects which are subject to the provincial environmental assessment process must also satisfy federal environmental assessment requirements. Over the past decade, federal interpretation of their jurisdiction has resulted in more federal involvement in areas of traditionally provincial resource and land use jurisdiction. This trend is expected to continue with new federal initiatives, as well as with evolving interpretation of and changes to the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. An improved agreement for federal/provincial cooperation in environmental assessment continues to be a priority.

First Nations — Court decisions have provided direction to government on their obligations to consider aboriginal interests. These obligations will be fulfilled through the environmental assessment process consistent with the approach to First Nations consultation on aboriginal rights and/or title outlined in the Provincial Consultation Policy (2002). Besides agreements negotiated by proponents, federal and provincial governments have established several programs designed to address First Nation interests, including economic measures (Province of British Columbia) and resource access negotiations (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada).

Requests for funding to develop the capacity of First Nations to participate in project reviews are anticipated. Consultation and accommodations required by these court decisions may cause delays and contribute to economic uncertainty, especially given the limited resources devoted to these processes. Ongoing challenges are anticipated where First Nations land claims are unresolved or provincial land use-planning is incomplete.

Increased Regulatory Efficiency — Government has made considerable progress towards reducing regulatory burden that hampers sustainable economic investment and impacts productivity in British Columbia. This is leading to a greater emphasis on delivering services more efficiently and effectively to increase certainty. Continued effort is needed to coordinate environmental assessment with permitting and tenuring processes.

Provincial Fiscal Goals — The provincial government is committed to sound fiscal management, and is reducing its costs and programming responsibilities as part of its overall strategy to balance the budget. Major projects may entail large commitments of government's administrative and technical resources at a time when internal government financial and human resources are being reduced. Additional resources will likely be required to conduct special procedures, such as public hearings. Innovative approaches and procedural adjustments will be required to adapt to current fiscal and resource constraints, and to accommodate future changes in the government's corporate strategic direction.

Highlights of Changes from the Previous Plan

A new *Environmental Assessment Act* has been enacted to comply with the direction received from the Government of British Columbia in late 2001, following completion of the Core Services Review. The primary objective of the new legislation, which came into force on December 30, 2002, is to provide greater flexibility to customize review procedures on a project-by-project basis. The increased flexibility is intended to contribute to the government's strategic priorities for an improved investment climate while preserving high environmental standards. Additional objectives of the legislative reform are clearer process management accountabilities, increased procedural choice, greater certainty and credibility for proponents, reduced agency workloads and government program delivery costs, and improved federal/provincial harmonization.

The Environmental Assessment Office's three-year Service Plan has been updated to reflect the legislative reform of the past twelve months. In addition to the development of new legislation, other reform activities have included:

- the development of supporting regulations and operational procedures;
- the development of a new Guide to the British Columbia Environmental Assessment Process, including guidelines for public and First Nations consultation and for environmental management planning;
- the development and implementation of a new organizational plan and structure (see Appendix A);
- the development and implementation of an electronic Project Information Centre; and
- the completion of an interim extension to the Canada-British Columbia Agreement on Environmental Assessment Cooperation.

Key strategic elements (vision, mission, and organizational principles and values), core business areas, and goals of the organization remain unchanged. Objectives, operational strategies and measures of performance have been refined to better express the desired results of significant strategic shifts and organizational adjustments. Performance targets have been confirmed, and in some cases adjusted upwards to be more in line with past performance and to better guide and challenge the continual improvement of both the organization and the environmental assessment process. Specific changes to measures and targets are specified in footnotes (see Objectives, Strategies, Performance Measures and Targets).

Goals and Core Business Areas

Core Business Areas

The core functions of the Environmental Assessment Office form the basis for fulfilling its mandated responsibilities. These core functions are delivered through two business areas:

Major Project Environmental Assessments

The Environmental Assessment Office oversees and manages the province's major project environmental assessment process. The environmental assessment process examines environmental, economic, social and other aspects of proposed projects in the following sectors: industrial, mining, energy, water management (dams, dykes, reservoirs), waste disposal, food processing, transportation and tourism (destination resorts).

Corporate Operations

Many of the Environmental Assessment Office's corporate operations are shared with the Ministries of Sustainable Resource Management and Water, Land and Air Protection. Corporate operations which are the responsibility of the Environmental Assessment Office include service planning, budgeting, staff development, policy and legislation, records management, and management of the Project Information Centre and website.

Goals

The core business areas support two broadly-stated organizational goals, four key objectives, and a series of specific strategies designed to achieve the mission of the Environmental Assessment Office.

Goal 1: Efficient and Effective Delivery of Environmental Assessment

This goal will be met by achieving two objectives — continual improvement of provincial environmental assessment and greater timeliness and procedural certainty where both the provincial and federal review processes are triggered.

This goal also supports the government's commitment to enhance the alignment between environmental assessment and permitting/licensing and to fulfill government's legal obligations to First Nations.

Since a large majority of proposed major projects trigger both a federal and provincial environmental assessment, operational processes (including work plans and dispute resolution mechanisms) will be implemented to enhance federal/provincial cooperation and minimize overlap and duplication.

Goal 2: Organizational Excellence

This goal is achieved by ensuring that the Environmental Assessment Office supports organizational development to optimize its ability to provide efficient and effective delivery of environmental assessment. It also entails ensuring effective communication with all those involved in environmental assessment.

Objectives, Strategies, Performance Measures and Targets

Performance measures and targets, outlined below, track progress towards achieving stated goals and objectives of the organization. Performance measures indicate overall performance with regard to key objectives and not to individual strategies for achieving those objectives. Each year, annual Service Plan Reports will compare actual performance with these targets. Performance measures and targets will be examined annually to ensure they remain relevant and reflect operational experience.

The objectives, strategies and targets outlined in this section are based on planned expenditures and staffing levels. Achievement of the objectives and targets may be affected by unpredictable external factors. Some will depend on the direct, constructive engagement of proponents, the public and First Nations.

Goal 1: Efficient and Effective Delivery of Environmental Assessment

| Objective 1. Continual improvement of provincial environmental assessment. | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| Strategies | Performance Measures | 2002/03 Base Data | 2003/04 Target | 2004/05 Target | 2005/06 Target |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timely and cost-efficient delivery of the provincial environmental assessment process. | Duration of government application review. ¹ | New measure. Base data collection in progress. | 90% of application reviews completed in 180 days. | Maintain or improve. | Maintain or improve. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the environmental assessment process, and refine based on implementation experience. | Participants' perceptions of a professional, expert, fair, and open review process. | Proponent, First Nations, and review participant surveys in progress. | Proponents: continual improvement. Others: maintain or improve. | Proponents: continual improvement. Others: maintain or improve. | Proponents: continual improvement. Others: maintain or improve. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align environmental assessment and permitting/licensing. Fulfill government's legal obligations towards First Nations. | Average annual government costs per project for environmental assessment. | Estimated to be \$317K. To be finalized in 2002/03 Service Plan Report. | Reduce 2002/03 level by 5%. | Reduce 2002/03 level by 10%. | Maintain or reduce. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating proponents' and review participants' understanding of relationship-building with First Nations. | Deregulation: reducing unnecessary red tape and regulation. | 56% reduction in regulatory requirements of provincial environmental assessment. ² | Maintain or reduce regulatory requirements of provincial environmental assessment. | Maintain or reduce regulatory requirements of provincial environmental assessment. | Maintain or reduce regulatory requirements of provincial environmental assessment. |

¹ Replaces “% of reviews completed on time” as the measure of achieving a timely review process. This change was made to reflect the new legislated requirement for government review of project applications to be completed in 180 days or less.

² Three-year target (i.e., by end of 2004/05) of reducing regulatory requirements of provincial environmental assessment by 33% achieved in year one (2002/03).

| Objective 2. Enhance federal/provincial cooperation to increase timeliness and certainty, and minimize overlap and duplication. | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| Strategies | Performance Measures | 2002/03 Base Data | 2003/04 Target | 2004/05 Target | 2005/06 Target |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement operational processes (work plans, dispute resolution mechanisms, etc.) to facilitate federal/provincial cooperation. • Negotiate a new federal/provincial agreement for environmental assessment cooperation. | Participants' perceptions of efforts made to achieve a harmonized intergovernmental review. ³ | Proponent, First Nations, and review participant surveys in progress. | Proponents: continual improvement. Others: maintain or improve. | Proponents: continual improvement. Others: maintain or improve. | Proponents: continual improvement. Others: maintain or improve. |

³ Replaces the development of an “approved plan for cooperative federal/provincial relationship to guide joint reviews” as the measure of enhanced federal/provincial cooperation.

Goal 2: Organizational Excellence

| Objective 3. Support organizational development to optimize ability to deliver environmental assessment. | | | | | |
|---|--|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strategies | Performance Measures | 2002/03 Base Data | 2003/04 Target | 2004/05 Target | 2005/06 Target |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update and implement a <i>Human Resource Management Plan</i> that includes strategies for fair workforce adjustment, staff training, development, and succession. • Implement performance management process. • Support efficient utilization of public funds through shared services delivery. • Staff training on fulfilling government legal obligations towards First Nations. | Percent of staff with <i>Performance and Development Plans</i> in place. | In progress. All staff will have plans in place by March 31, 2003. | 100% ⁴ | 100% | 100% |

⁴ Performance target increased from 90% to 100% for 2003/2004.

| Objective 4. Communicate effectively with all stakeholders. | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| Strategies | Performance Measures | 2002/03 Base Data | 2003/04 Target | 2004/05 Target | 2005/06 Target |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate access to information about project reviews and the environmental assessment process. • Improve web-based access to key review documents. | Number of website visits per year. | 328,426 in 2001/02. 2002/03 base data collection in progress. | Continual improvement (increase 2001/02 level by 20%). | Continual improvement (increase 2001/02 level by 30%). | Continual improvement. |
| | Participants' perceptions of accessibility of project review information. | Proponent, First Nations, and review participant surveys in progress. | Proponents: continual improvement. Others: maintain or improve. | Proponents: continual improvement. Others: maintain or improve. | Proponents: continual improvement. Others: maintain or improve. |

Consistency with Government Strategic Plan

The *Environmental Assessment Office Service Plan 2003/04 to 2005/06* supports the Government of British Columbia's long-term goals of:

- a strong and vibrant provincial economy; and
- safe, healthy communities and a sustainable environment.

The Environmental Assessment Office's principles and organizational values support the government's core values. The goals, objectives, and strategies of the Environmental Assessment Office reflect government's commitment to operate in an innovative, results-oriented, and accountable manner consistent with the following managerial principles:

- high standards of accountability, consultation and ethics;
- focused and efficient delivery of government services;
- social and fiscal responsibility;
- open and transparent government; and
- an innovative and goal-oriented public service.

While no *New Era* commitments refer specifically to environmental assessment, or the Environmental Assessment Office, the environmental assessment process contributes to the achievement of government commitments for:

- a thriving private sector economy and enhanced competitive business climate;
- cutting red tape and providing faster approvals and greater access to Crown land and resources;
- effective and sustainable use of provincial land and resources;
- a scientifically-based, balanced and principled approach to environmental management;
- protecting human health;
- eliminating federal/provincial overlaps that increase costs, and frustrate economic development;
- improving the regulatory regime and reducing the number of regulations by one-third within three years;
- increased focus on customer service and leadership in electronic government;

- open and accountable government; and
 - responsible fiscal management of tax dollars.
-

Deregulation

The Government of British Columbia is committed to reducing unnecessary red tape and regulation by one-third by the end of fiscal year 2004/05. All of the legislative changes needed to meet the Environmental Assessment Office's contribution to this one-third deregulation target have been developed and put into force. The new *Environmental Assessment Act* provides for a streamlined review process and allows more procedural flexibility to accommodate project-specific circumstances. Legislative and policy changes made in fiscal year 2002/03 have resulted in a 56% reduction in the regulatory burden associated with the environmental assessment process in British Columbia.

Resource Summary

The table below shows the budgeted resources for the Environmental Assessment Office's two core business areas.

| Core Businesses | 2002/03 Restated Estimates | 2003/04 Estimates ¹ | 2004/05 Plan | 2005/06 Plan |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Operating Expenses (\$000) | | | | |
| 1. Major project environmental assessments | 3,542 | 2,897 | 2,450 | 2,450 |
| 2. Corporate operations..... | Rolled into core business item 1. | | | |
| Totals | 3,542 | 2,897 | 2,450 | 2,450 |
| Full-time Equivalents (FTE) | | | | |
| FTEs | 35 | 29 | 27 | 27 |
| Capital Expenditures (\$000) | | | | |
| 1. Major project environmental assessments | — | — | — | — |
| 2. Corporate operations | 101 | 103 | 103 | 53 |
| Totals | 101 | 103 | 103 | 53 |

¹ In 2003/04, the Ministry of Transportation has provided \$371,800 to fund the review of new transportation initiatives, including the Sea-to-Sky Highway Project.

Summary of Related Planning Processes

Information Resource Management Plan

An initiative critical to the success of the reformed environmental assessment process is the use of new technology for electronic service delivery. The electronic Project Information Centre (ePIC, also called the e-Registry) is the primary means of providing review participants with web-based access to environmental assessment information. The e-Registry is essential for providing efficient and effective environmental assessment, and for ensuring open government and accountable decision-making.

The Environmental Assessment Office will monitor the effectiveness of the e-Registry and develop system updates and enhancements as necessary. The Environmental Assessment Office will rely on the Chief Information Office and the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management for leadership in the area of standards for electronic service delivery, records management, and the protection of information and privacy.

Human Resource Management Plan

The Human Resource vision for the Environmental Assessment Office is:

The Environmental Assessment Office is a high-performance, learning organization that supports a healthy and flexible workplace and that fosters innovation, creativity and continual improvement to deliver service excellence.

The Environmental Assessment Office plans to achieve this vision through the realization of two broad goals:

1. To achieve organizational excellence; and
2. To empower staff to achieve individual excellence

The Environmental Assessment Office will receive human resource services and assistance from a shared services model. The following objectives will guide the development of our human resources, to ensure that the Environmental Assessment Office has staff with the necessary skills and knowledge, working in a healthy and attractive workplace:

- ensuring fair workforce adjustment;
- ensuring that the organization has the structure, staff resources and performance and succession plans to achieve its Service Plan goals and objectives;
- acquiring, developing, retaining and sharing critical knowledge and skills;

- recognizing employee contributions and enhancing employee and workplace wellness;
- delivering excellent human resources services and governance;
- supporting diversity; and
- enhancing communications.

Performance measures and targets have been established to track the effectiveness of the Environmental Assessment Office's strategies for meeting these goals and objectives.

Appendix A: Organizational Structure

