

2023 to 2024 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy Report

Veterans Review and Appeal Board

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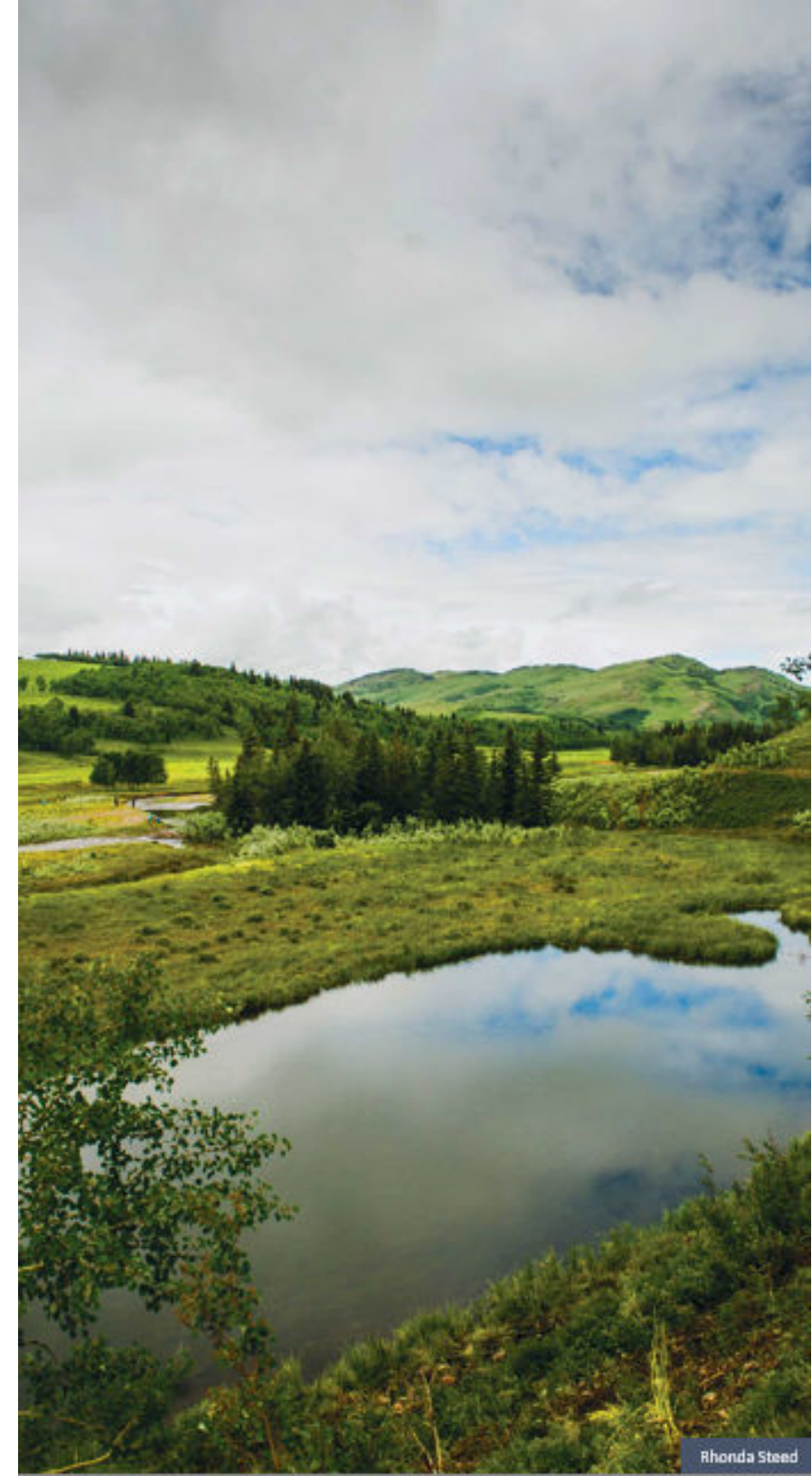
Introduction to the 2023 to 2024 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy Report

The [2022 to 2026 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy \(FSDS\)](#) presents the Government of Canada's sustainable development goals and targets, as required by the [Federal Sustainable Development Act](#). This is the first FSDS to be framed using the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and provides a balanced view of the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainable development.

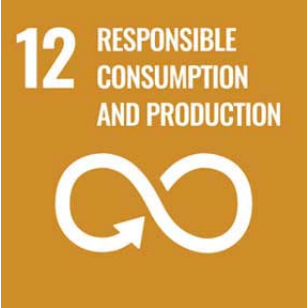
In keeping with the purpose of the Act, to make decision-making related to sustainable development more transparent and accountable to Parliament, the Veterans Review and Appeal Board (Board) supports the goals laid out in the FSDS through the activities described in the Board's 2023 to 2027 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy (DSDS). This Report provides a report on progress related to the Board's DSDS in the fiscal year 2023 to 2024.

The [Federal Sustainable Development Act](#) also sets out [7 principles](#) that must be considered in the development of the FSDS as well as DSDSs. These basic principles have been considered and incorporated in the Board's DSDS and 2023 to 2024 DSDS Report.

To promote coordinated action on sustainable development across the Government of Canada, the Board's departmental strategy reports on Canada's progress towards implementing the 2030 Agenda and advancing the SDGs, supported by the Global Indicator Framework (GIF) and Canadian Indicator Framework (CIF) targets and indicators. The Report also now captures progress on SDG initiatives that fall outside the scope of the FSDS.



Commitments for the Veterans Review and Appeal Board





GOAL 10: ADVANCE RECONCILIATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND TAKE ACTION ON INEQUALITY

FSDS Context:

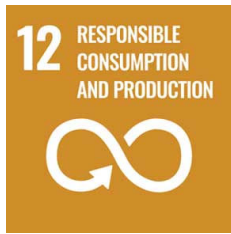
Implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

The United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act requires the Minister of Justice, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, to report annually to Parliament on progress made to align federal laws with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration) and on the development and implementation of the action plan. Organizations are asked to provide updates on departmental initiatives that align with the Declaration and/or contribute to its implementation.

Target theme: Advancing reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis communities

Target: Between 2023 and 2026, and every year on an ongoing basis, develop and table annual progress reports on implementing *the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada)

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	DEPARTMENTAL ACTION	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR STARTING POINT TARGET	HOW THE DEPARTMENTAL ACTION CONTRIBUTES TO THE FSDS GOAL AND TARGET AND, WHERE APPLICABLE, TO CANADA'S 2030 AGENDA NATIONAL STRATEGY AND SDGS	RESULTS ACHIEVED
<p>Implement the <i>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act</i></p>	<p>Provide staff and Members with Indigenous cultural competency training and/or training on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</p> <p>Program: UN Declaration Act Implementation Secretariat</p>	<p>Performance indicator: Percentage of Board staff and Members who have completed Indigenous cultural competency training (internal or external)</p> <p>Starting point: Percentage of staff trained [24% as of August 2023]</p> <p>Target: 100% by March 31, 2024</p>	<p>Public servants are in a unique position to help build respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples in Canada. This action encourages public service employees to increase their cultural competency skills and awareness of issues related to First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada, and their knowledge of the UN Declaration. This action contributes to the development of necessary cultural competency knowledge and skills to implement the UN Declaration</p> <p>Relevant targets or ambitions: Global Indicator Framework (GIF) Target: 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard</p>	<p>Indicator result: 69% in 2023-24</p> <p>Notes: The Board has successfully integrated Indigenous cultural competency training into its mandatory onboarding program for all new employees, ensuring that all new hires are completing the training as part of their onboarding process. A significant portion of our more tenured staff have not yet completed the training, contributing to the lower completion rate overall. The focus moving forward will be providing the necessary support and opportunities for all remaining staff and Board Members to complete the training.</p> <p>In 2023-24, the Board continued its commitment to raising awareness and understanding of Indigenous and minority perspectives by hosting cultural education sessions for staff and Members, such as an Indigenous beading workshop led by Experience Lennox Island. These events reflect our dedication to fostering cultural awareness and supporting meaningful conversations within our organization.</p>



GOAL 12: REDUCE WASTE AND TRANSITION TO ZERO-EMISSION VEHICLES

FSDS Context:

Goal 12 has three targets:

- By 2030, the Government of Canada will divert from landfill at least 75% by weight of non-hazardous operational waste
- By 2030, the Government of Canada will divert from landfill at least 90% by weight of all construction and demolition waste
- The Government of Canada's procurement of goods and services will be net-zero emissions by 2050, to aid the transition to a net-zero, circular economy

The targets are supported by the following three implementation strategies:

- Transform the federal light-duty fleet (all federal organizations owning conventional fleets)
- **Strengthen green procurement criteria**
- Maximize diversion of waste from landfills (all federal organizations owning real property)

At a minimum, the implementation strategy regarding strengthening green procurement criteria applies to all organizations. For this goal, this is the only one that applies to the Board.

Target theme: Federal Leadership on Responsible Consumption

Target: The Government of Canada’s procurement of goods and services will be net-zero emissions by 2050, to aid the transition to a net-zero, circular economy

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Strengthen green procurement criteria	<p>Enhance capacity to incorporate environmental performance consideration into procurement decisions by requiring that all new acquisition cardholders take green procurement training</p> <p>Program: Internal Services</p>	<p>Performance indicator: Percentage of acquisition cardholders that take green procurement training within two months of receiving their acquisition card</p> <p>Starting point: In 2022-23, 100% of acquisition cardholders were trained in green procurement</p> <p>Target: Will maintain that 100% of acquisition cardholders receive green procurement training within two months of receiving their acquisition card</p>	<p>Green procurement incorporates environmental considerations into purchasing decisions and is expected to motivate suppliers to reduce the environmental impact of the goods and services they deliver, and their supply chains</p> <p>Relevant targets or ambitions: Canadian Indicator Framework (CIF) Ambition: 12.1 Canadians consume in a sustainable manner</p> <p>CIF Indicator: 12.2.1 Proportion of businesses that adopted selected environmental protection activities and management practices</p> <p>GIF Target: 12.7 Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities</p>	<p>Indicator result: 50% in 2023-24</p> <p>Notes: While the Board does only a small portion of its own procurement, most of which is managed by Veterans Affairs Canada under a Memorandum of Understanding, we are fully committed to supporting and strengthening green procurement within our organization.</p> <p>The Board has four employees with acquisition cards. All employees completed green procurement training; however, only 50% completed it within the first two months of receiving their card.</p> <p>The Board recognizes that this training equips our team with the knowledge to make informed procurement decisions that contribute to low-carbon operations. By ensuring that our procurement processes are aligned with green standards, we are helping to reduce</p>

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				greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, further supporting the federal target of net-zero emissions.



GOAL 13: TAKE ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS

FSDS Context:

Goal 13 has two targets:

- The Government of Canada will transition to net-zero carbon operations for facilities and conventional fleets by 2050
- The Government of Canada will transition to climate resilient operations by 2050

The targets are supported by the following four implementation strategies:

- Apply a greenhouse gas reduction life-cycle cost analysis for major building retrofits (all federal organizations owning real property)
- **Implement the Greening Government Strategy through measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve climate resilience, and green the government's overall operations**
- Modernize through net-zero carbon buildings (all federal organizations owning real property)
- Reduce risks posed by climate change impacts to federal assets, services and operations (owning real property)

All organizations should assess the current and future risks posed by climate change on the assets they own (buildings, fleets, bridges, roads, wharves, etc.) and their services or operations (programs). Actions taken to reduce the highest risks should also be reported.

Similar to Goal 12, many of the implementation strategies listed do not apply to the Board as it does not own real property. The bolded strategy is applicable as it pertains to assessing climate change risk and improving climate resilience.

Target theme: Federal Leadership on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions and Climate Resilience

Target: The Government of Canada will transition to net-zero carbon operations for facilities and conventional fleets by 2050 (All Ministers)

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<p>Implement the Greening Government Strategy through measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve climate resilience, and green the government's overall operations</p>	<p>Ensure all relevant employees are trained on assessing climate change impacts, undertaking climate change risk assessments, and developing adaptation actions within one year of being identified</p> <p>Program: Internal Services</p>	<p>Performance indicator: Percentage of relevant employees trained on assessing climate change impacts, undertaking climate change risk assessments, and developing adaptation actions within one year of being identified</p> <p>Starting point: 0% in 2023-24 trained</p> <p>Target: 100% trained by March 31, 2024</p>	<p>Trained staff can identify risk to critical program delivery, and develop responses to increase the resilience of operations to impacts of climate change</p> <p>Relevant targets or ambitions: CIF Ambition: 13.3 Canadians are well-equipped and resilient to face the effects of Climate change</p> <p>CIF Indicator: 13.3.1 Proportion of municipal organizations who factored climate change adaptation into their decision-making process</p> <p>GIF Targets: 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries</p>	<p>Indicator result: 100% in 2023-24</p> <p>Notes: By actively working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adopt more sustainable practices across its operations, the Board contributes to the reduction of climate change impacts. By ensuring business continuity planning and communication, the Board's operations are better equipped to handle the impacts of natural disasters (storms, floods, wildfires, etc.) resulting from climate change, minimizing disruptions and maintaining service to Veterans.</p> <p>Moving forward, the Board will continue to identify other employees to be trained on assessing climate change impacts, undertaking climate change risk assessments, and developing adaptation actions. This will help strengthen our organization's resilience in the face of evolving climate risks.</p>

Integrating Sustainable Development

For the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, sustainable development means managing our operations in a way that is environmentally, economically and socially responsible. It is also about encouraging our employees to consider and apply the principles of sustainable development in their work. We continue to prioritize energy efficiency and integrate climate considerations into our decision-making processes.

In 2023-24, we continued to integrate sustainable development into our operations, including by:

- Working to meet the Government of Canada's commitment to award at least 5% of the total value of contracts to Indigenous businesses annually. In 2023-24, 36% of the Board's contracts were awarded to Indigenous businesses.
- Advancing the Board's end-to-end cassette tape digitization process. This initiative, which merges old and new technologies, aims to archive over 75,000 hearing recordings. Once digitized, the cassettes are incinerated at an energy plant that converts solid waste into electricity and thermal heating energy. By the end of the fiscal year, more than 20,000 tapes had been processed, demonstrating our dedication to recycling and waste reduction.
- Exploring more opportunities to use electronic documents in place of paper documents. Significant progress has already been made by redesigning the Board's hearing process to reduce its reliance on paper and incorporate more technology.
- Offering Veterans the option of attending their hearing virtually, ensuring access to justice for Veterans while also reducing negative environmental impacts of travel.

The Board will continue to ensure that its decision-making process includes consideration of FSDS goals and targets through its Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process. An SEA for a



policy, plan or program proposal includes an analysis of the impacts of the given proposal on the environment, including on relevant FSDS goals and targets.

Public statements on the results of the Board's assessments are made public when an initiative has undergone a detailed SEA. The purpose of the public statement is to demonstrate that the environmental effects, including the impacts on achieving the FSDS goals and targets, of the approved policy, plan or program have been considered during proposal development and decision making.

During the 2023-24 reporting cycle, the Board had no proposals that required a SEA, and no public statements were produced.