



Canadian  
Intergovernmental  
Conference  
Secretariat

Secrétariat  
des conférences  
intergouvernementales  
canadiennes

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2013-2018

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## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

The Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat (CICS) is fully committed to evolving alongside the changing needs of our clients and we are dedicated to supporting F/P/T tables in their efforts to modernize and transform how intergovernmental business is conducted.

In an effort to ensure our agency is properly aligned to deliver on these outcomes, the senior management team conducted a strategic retreat in late January 2013. The theme of this one-day meeting was “achieving stability”. We discussed the current environment, the multitude of changes affecting CICS and strategized on how to maintain our mission of *helping governments by delivering impartial and professional conference services, with innovative solutions*. Subsequent workshops with the operations committee took place throughout the month of February in order to refine our plan and also establish a series of initiatives needed to achieve the objectives outlined under each priority.



The Secretariat’s strategic priorities will continue to be that of: enhancing and expanding strategic partnerships; transforming our service delivery model; reviewing and adapting management practices to increase efficiencies; and creating an environment that encourages innovation and fosters employee commitment to the transformation of the organization.

The following strategic plan gives an overview of the Secretariat and its mandate, analyses our current environment and establishes our strategic priorities and objectives over the next five years.

André M. McArdle,  
Secretary



## ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

### *Who We Are*

The Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat (CICS) is an impartial agency whose mandate is to provide administrative support and planning services for intergovernmental conferences of first ministers, ministers and deputy ministers, throughout Canada.

Even though CICS was designated as a department of the federal government a few months after it was established, pursuant to an agreement reached at the May 1973 First Ministers' Conference, its intergovernmental character and impartiality are guaranteed by the fact that it is funded by the federal and provincial governments. CICS staff also includes public servants from federal, provincial and territorial governments.

The Secretary reports to all governments annually. The operations are reviewed by federal and provincial senior officials designated by their respective First Ministers. CICS reports to Parliament through the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada.

### *Vision and Mission*



**Vision:**  
**Working together to make it happen**

**Mission:**  
**We thrive on helping governments  
by delivering impartial and professional conference services,  
with innovative solutions.**

### *Our Values*

The background of the 'Our Values' section is a collage of various national flags, including the Canadian flag, the United States flag, and others, creating a multicultural and international feel.

<p>Value #1</p> <p><b>EXCELLENCE</b></p> <p><i>We strive to fulfill the requirements of our mandate through teamwork</i></p>	<p>Value #2</p> <p><b>RESPECT</b></p> <p><i>We offer a collegial and rewarding work environment that fosters trust, civility, dignity and fairness</i></p>	<p>Value #3</p> <p><b>INTEGRITY</b></p> <p><i>We conduct ourselves in an ethical, honest and transparent manner and with financial probity</i></p>
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## OUR WORK ENVIRONMENT

### *Federal Government*

In 2011, Canada elected its first majority government in seven years. Although this signified a stable political environment for CICS it also led to an era of budget reductions as part of a public sector wide effort to reduce spending. One of the government's four priorities was (and continues to be) a return to a balanced budget by 2014-2015 through exercises such as the Strategic and Operating Review and the Deficit Reduction Action Plan. CICS participated in these exercises and is in the midst of applying \$610K worth of budget cuts. In anticipation of further budget cuts and in an effort to work more efficiently, CICS has placed great emphasis on modernizing and transforming its service delivery model.

The current government has also increased requirements regarding transparent and accountable management reporting. Over the last several years, we have experienced a significant increase in workload stemming from a growing number of reporting and corporate requirements emanating from Central Agencies. As a micro-agency, there are a large number of tasks to be performed and a multitude of reports to be filled by a very small number of staff. We find ourselves increasingly relying on partnerships and shared services agreements to deliver key services.

### *Provincial, Territorial Governments*

In 2011-2012, there were eight elections among the provincial and territorial governments. This high volume contributed to a temporary decline in intergovernmental activity. However, now that things have settled and governments are working on achieving their platform objectives, we find ourselves serving a steady amount of conferences, on average 70 per year and anticipate levels to maintain throughout the upcoming years. As new governments come in to power and others are re-elected, it is important for us to actively market CICS as a neutral intergovernmental agency. There have been gaps in the past where our role wasn't quite understood. This has shed light on the fact that marketing and communications efforts should be ongoing in order to sustain and even increase the amount of intergovernmental conferences we serve.

### *Our Strengths*

- *We employ an experienced and professional workforce comprising of federal, provincial and territorial employees;*
- *We maintain stability among our management team;*
- *We uphold a strong and positive reputation as being the service provider of choice;*
- *We maintain a tradition of excellence;*
- *We have a solid corporate system;*
- *We uphold a unique collection of documents in our archives;*
- *We offer a broad array of IT tools/services to our clients;*
- *We offer cost-efficiencies (shared services);*
- *We serve virtually all sectors of intergovernmental activity;*
- *We are flexible. As a small agency we have the ability to make decisions, adapt and implement change quickly;*
- *We are well connected with other small agencies and the Central Agencies;*
- *We are in line with government priorities (transformation taking place).*





## Our Challenges

- *Upholding our intergovernmental impartial focus;*
- *Maintaining current client base;*
- *Sustaining a secure environment (physical threats, internal and external hacking, ensuring employees opt for security over convenience);*
- *Maintaining our arm's length relationship with central agencies (linked to governance);*
- *Adapting to current political climate;*
- *Increasing requirements from central agencies (reporting burden, changing policies, additional demands) and lack of resources;*
- *Anticipating further Budget cuts;*
- *Implementing an integrated risk management plan;*
- *Managing change and the paradigm shift (implementing, prioritizing, dealing with resistance);*
- *The possibility of a high number of key personnel departures; and*
- *The possibility of office relocation (Workplace 2.0).*

## Intergovernmental Environment

Governments are currently reviewing the way they go about intergovernmental collaboration, seeking new and innovative approaches that will facilitate timely collaboration and cooperation among F/P/T sector tables. The timing is right for CICS to seize the opportunity. Our efforts regarding offering on-line tools and videoconferencing have been recognized as important strides in modernizing intergovernmental business. The Clerk of the Privy Council has encouraged us to continue to align our efforts to modernize and transform how intergovernmental business is done.

## Our Employees

In the next few years, 6 of the Secretariat's federal public servants will become eligible to retire. These retirements and also the turnover of key personnel may affect CICS's ability to sustain an experienced and professional workforce. Developing meaningful succession and transition plans which include conserving corporate memory will be a critical strategic priority. In addition, CICS will take the opportunity to enhance and modernize archival holdings, have experienced personnel mentor new employees and offer departing employees alternative work arrangements to help stagger departure dates and lessen the impact of staff turnover.

Retention of young, ambitious and newer staff creates a unique challenge for a micro agency such as CICS due to its limited upward mobility. Sustained efforts will be exerted to keep employees for a reasonable period of time by creating an environment conducive to career development and job satisfaction.



## ***Internal Restructuring***

The current period of fiscal restraint, the changing intergovernmental environment and the government's priority to modernize and transform led to the restructuring of our Conference Services division. With implementation taking place throughout 2013 and ultimate completion to be achieved through attrition, CICS is positioning itself strategically in order to remain pertinent and relevant in the public sector.

The transformation agenda and internal restructuring will not be fully implemented in the short term. To ensure a smooth transition, there must be open communication with our employees and partners. Management will need to ensure that the organization is able to adapt its structure while preserving high quality service levels to clients.

## **STRATEGIC POSITIONING**

### ***Human Resources Strategies***

CICS' human resources strategies for 2013-2018 are the following:

1. Employ at least six provincial, territorial positions, as they represent an integral part of our organization.
2. Identify a core staff to be filled on a permanent basis and complement human resource requirements by using short-term appointments (student, casual or any other form as permitted).
3. Train and utilize employees from other divisions of the organization in order to meet demands during peak periods.
4. Seek external expertise to advance new initiatives, when effective.
5. Develop and maintain a pool of qualified candidates for permanent and short-term employment.

### ***Investing in our Employees***

CICS's employees – not just federal, but provincial and territorial as well – constitute the organization's greatest asset in terms of accomplishing its primary mission.

What's more, their commitment is absolutely essential when it comes to successfully navigating certain changes.

Learning, training and development are important priorities for CICS and we will continue to invest in compulsory as well as corporate training sessions to assist employees build their capacities.

In conjunction with the restructuring project, individual learning maps for all positions will be reviewed in order to remain up to date.





## ***Servicing Conferences***

The mandate at CICS has been interpreted over the years in such a way as to ensure consistency across all sectors we serve, to guarantee the quality of our service, to control costs and to ensure the long-term functioning of the Secretariat as a key partner at intergovernmental meetings. These interpretations consisted of offering a minimum “package” deal of services with a series of standards such as defining a meeting as “face-to-face” with at least a quorum of Ministers or Deputy Ministers in attendance, limiting translation to official conference documents, and obtaining rooms 24 hours in advance for set-up, among other things.

With the changing nature of intergovernmental meetings, the introduction of facilitating technologies, the initiative put forward by the Clerk to find more efficient ways to meet and the fiscal pressures experienced by all levels of government, CICS has decided to refine the interpretation of its mandate.

Service offerings will be expanded, opening the door to a variety of models and types of services to support the transformation of intergovernmental collaboration.

## ***Information Management***

CICS is a neutral federal agency that is subject to the FAA and therefore must adhere to the Policy on Information Management and the Library Act. Although CICS is exempt from the Access to Information Act, we respect to the spirit of the act in our practices. The requirements of the policy are complex while stringent for a small organization especially considering our resources and the diversity of our collection.

CICS recognizes the importance of proper information management throughout the organization for both its corporate holdings and its intergovernmental conference documents. Efforts and resources will be focused to ensure electronic systems are the preferred means of creating, using and managing information.

## ***Security***

Although CICS manages its security in an acceptable manner, there is a need to enhance current practices and requirements in order to be in line with the government’s direction and meet current and future threats.

Security is embedded into CICS policy frameworks, culture, day-to-day operations and employee behaviours.

Management will ensure that security mechanisms and resources are efficient and effective, in line with government policies.





## *Corporate Management*

Budget pressures and cost containment measures will be ever present in the managing of CICS. The Secretariat will maintain its leadership role with other small agencies in order to achieve our goal of reducing back office costs.

Over the last two years our agency has made tremendous progress in managing and controlling resources. Momentum must not be lost as we have the responsibility to continuously respect the Finance and Human Resources cap.

Keeping in mind the intergovernmental nature of the agency, CICS Management will fulfill its obligation as an agency of the federal government by:

- aligning to common business processes and practices;
- aligning with government priorities;
- exploring shared services opportunities; and
- continuing to seek further efficiencies.

## *Technology*

As an integral partner in facilitating F/P/T meetings, we have the responsibility to respond to client and environmental demands. The current transformation of intergovernmental business is concentrating on investments in technology in order to be more modern, efficient and outcome driven.

CICS will make its technology decisions based on the needs of a mobile workforce and aligned with government-wide initiatives.

In addition, CICS will proactively keep abreast of new technologies and their potential application in the workplace.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2013-2018

Following a recent strategic retreat conducted by senior management, it was decided to continue applying the following four strategic priorities over the next five years:

- Priority 1 – Enhance and expand strategic partnerships
- Priority 2 – Transform our service delivery model
- Priority 3 – Review and adapt management practices to increase efficiencies
- Priority 4 – Create an environment that encourages innovation and fosters employee commitment to the transformation of the organization

### Priority 1 Enhance and expand strategic partnerships

Since its creation, CICS has been able to rely on a well-established clientele made up of the various governments. In the interest of validating its mandate, CICS plans to enhance current partnerships by improving dialogue, assessing service offerings and evaluating client feedback. CICS is also planning on developing new and existing strategic partnerships by implementing new marketing initiatives

#### Objectives are as follows:

- A. Contribute to the government wide initiative for transformation and efficiencies;
- B. Recognition among governments of the essential, constructive role played by the Secretariat in intergovernmental machinery through improved dialogue and greater collaboration;
- C. Market CICS and its services effectively; and
- D. Maintain the existing clientele and explore new partnerships to attain maximum capacity under our mandate.



## Priority 2 Transform our service delivery model

To become more efficient and find alternatives in order to maintain quality services at a time of fiscal restraint, the organization will continue to invest in new technologies, not only for its day-to-day management, but also for the delivery of its services.



One of the digital cameras CICS uses for providing on-demand, high-definition videoconferencing services.

### Objectives are as follows:

- A. Embrace innovation by aligning people, processes and technologies to reflect the current realities, the demands of the future and the changing needs of clients;
- B. Assume a key role in the government transformation initiative by seeking and implementing modern and efficient service delivery tools;
- C. Continuous improvement in the service delivery model to achieve the highest standards of quality;
- D. Efficient information management of conference records (i.e. preservation, digitization, de-classification, and disposal).

## Priority 3 Review and adapt management practices to increase efficiencies

Although legally CICS is a federal agency, it is funded by the two levels of government (federal and provincial). The current context of fiscal austerity and budget reductions means that, much like last year, CICS will need to pay special attention to its management practices. It will need to identify measures offering a better cost/benefit ratio in everyday operations, such as the organization of conferences and the allocation of our resources internally. There will also be a need to measure the estimated costs of the changes that CICS wants to make, particularly in terms of the greater reliance on technology.

Moving ahead with sound management practices require not only the cooperation of all the employees but also their adherence to these practices, hence the need to maintain and even strengthen their commitment to the organization.

### Objectives are as follows:

- A. Streamline organizational structure and internal processes to be end-to-end, integrated and efficient;
- B. Maintain overhead costs at an acceptable and sustainable level;
- C. Ensure that CICS's processes conform to government policy requirements;
- D. Transform the organization's structure and distribution of responsibilities to achieve flexibility and efficiency;
- E. To effectively implement the cost-reduction and efficiency improvement initiatives identified in DRAP and other government-wide initiatives;
- F. Achieve efficiencies by maintaining and establishing further partnerships and shared services initiatives;
- G. Efficient information management of corporate records (i.e. preservation, digitization, de-classification, and disposal).



## Priority 4

**Create an environment that encourages innovation and fosters employee commitment to the transformation of the organization**

At a time when our workload is on the rise, due to the need for greater accountability and transparency, and available financial resources are on the decline, the organization's greatest asset remains its personnel. It is important to ensure their commitment in order for the organization-wide transformation to be successful.

CICS will continue to invest in the well-being of its employees as well as in their training, on both an individual and corporate level.

### **Objectives are as follows:**

- A. Collectively be proud of the place CICS has within Canada's federation, and of the value and benefit of the work we do;
- B. Everyone works collaboratively toward the same vision for CICS;
- C. Workplace culture is values-based, positive, healthy environment that makes CICS a good career choice;
- D. Employee engagement in initiatives;
- E. Communication is ongoing and open;
- F. Recognition of employee efforts;
- G. A culture of continual improvement and innovation where employees acquire new competencies and skills for an ever changing environment.

