



Canadian
Intergovernmental
Conference
Secretariat

Secrétariat
des conférences
intergouvernementales
canadiennes

STRATEGIC PLAN

2014-2019

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MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

The intergovernmental environment in which the Secretariat operates is in a continual state of evolution and transformation. Consequently, the challenge for the agency becomes the necessity to adapt to the increasingly complex demands of governments in the field of senior level intergovernmental conferences.

In an effort to ensure our agency is properly aligned, the senior management team conducted a strategic planning session in December 2013. 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.*

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 continuing to build a capable, confident and high performing workforce.

The following strategic plan gives an overview of the Secretariat and its mandate, analyzes 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 a hybrid and 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 (F/P/T) governments.

The Secretary reports to all governments annually. As well, 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

Value #1
EXCELLENCE

We strive to fulfill the requirements of our mandate through teamwork

Value #2
RESPECT

We offer a collegial and rewarding work environment that fosters trust, civility, dignity and fairness

Value #3
INTEGRITY

We conduct ourselves in an ethical, honest and transparent manner and with financial probity



OUR WORK ENVIRONMENT

Federal Government

The current federal administration has placed great emphasis on the priority of returning to a balanced budget by 2015. CICS participated in exercises such as the Strategic and Operating Review as well as the Deficit Reduction Action Plan and is in the midst of applying \$610K worth of budget cuts. More recently, the government announced additional cost containment measures through the [Directive on Travel, Hospitality, Conference and Event Expenditures](#). All travel must be approved at the Assistant Deputy Minister level, as such, we are seeing an increase of meetings in central areas such as Ottawa and Toronto. There is also the Operational Budget Freeze which will apply for two years beginning in 2014-15. In preparation for further cuts, CICS has been working diligently to increase efficiencies in its operations.

Other federal government-wide initiatives are also influencing changes within CICS. In June 2013, the Clerk of the Privy Council launched [Blueprint 2020](#), a dialogue about the future of the Public Service with the goal of ensuring that it remains a world-class institution. Since then, an unprecedented number of public servants - in all regions and at all levels across Canada have eagerly contributed to the discussion. CICS employees continue to do their part through engagement initiatives and the Clerk's final report entitled 'Destination 2020' will be made public in the spring of 2014 – this report will lay the foundation for changes...more to come!

Tied into Blueprint 2020 is the [Workplace 2.0](#) initiative. Workplace 2.0 was introduced by Public Works and Government Services Canada to support the Clerk's commitment to workplace renewal. The objective is to create a modern workplace that will attract, retain and enable public servants to work smarter, greener and healthier to better serve Canadians. In support of the initiative, CICS has introduced flexible work arrangements for employees and is in the planning stage for its relocation in the fall of 2014. The new offices will be fitted to Workplace 2.0 standards.

There are 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 meet our management requirements.

Our Strengths

- *We employ a dedicated and professional workforce comprising of F/P/T employees;*
- *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

- *Maintaining current client base;*
- *Sustaining a secure environment both in the office and on conference site (physical threats, internal and external hacking);*
- *Maintaining our arm's length relationship with central agencies (linked to governance);*
- *Increasing requirements from central agencies (reporting burden, changing policies, additional demands) and insufficient resources;*
- *Anticipating further Budget constraints;*
- *Implementing an integrated risk management plan;*
- *Managing the change process in light of the high number of priorities (implementing, prioritizing, dealing with obstacles);*
- *Managing a number of key personnel departures due to retirements;*
- *Obtaining services in a shared services environment.*

Provincial, Territorial (P/T) Governments

The decline in intergovernmental activity is a thing of the past. P/T governments are working diligently to achieve their platform objectives and are therefore meeting more regularly across all sectors. The number of conferences remain on the rise, CICS was up by 13 conferences from the previous year in 2012-13 and 2013-14 is scheduled to close with a further increase of 9 conferences.

Regardless of the increased conference activity, it continues to be a time of fiscal restraint for the provinces and territories and these realities do have an impact on CICS. For example, the current hiring freeze in British Columbia resulted in the province opting out of CICS's current assignment opportunities.

We've also seen an increase in the number and type of requests for simultaneous interpretation.

P/T election dates are staggered over the next five years, New Brunswick will be the first with an anticipated election in November 2014, followed by seven jurisdictions in 2015, three in 2016 and the final two in 2018. 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. Communications efforts should be ongoing in order to sustain and even increase the number of intergovernmental conferences we serve.





Intergovernmental Environment

When F/P/T sector tables were reviewing the way they collaborate, CICS seized the opportunity by modernizing its service delivery model to offer more on-line tools, introduce videoconferencing and most recently offer clients the option of a la carte instead of a fixed package of services. As such, we began receiving different types of service requests, for example:

1. set-up of teleconference meetings with interpretation;
2. providing services to teleconference meetings, such as translation;
3. support services for main meeting room (no onsite CICS office);
4. guidance in planning and supply of technical equipment (no team on site).

In 2013, CICS began co-hosting a semi-annual ‘Knowledge Exchange Forum on F/P/T Meeting Logistics’. The goal of these informal gatherings is to offer CICS’s contacts the opportunity to network and exchange information as everyone deals with the new realities surrounding the organization of senior level F/P/T meetings. The two sessions in 2013 were at the federal level. Efforts will be made in 2014 to seek ways to involve the provinces and territories as well.

Since last year’s plan, CICS has provided its services to several new conferences including:

- Consultations on the Victims Bill of Rights;
- Lobbyists Registrars and Commissioners Conference;
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) - Canadian Regional Seminar;
- P/T Deputy Ministers’ Forum on Skills;
- P/T Meeting of Ministers responsible for Securities Regulation.

We recognize that there may be other groups out there that fit within our mandate but are simply unaware of our services. We are forging ties with provincial departments of intergovernmental affairs to identify new client groups.

Our Employees

In the next few years, nine of the Secretariat’s federal public servants will be eligible to retire. These retirements, the P/T secondment rotations and the departures of key personnel may affect CICS’s ability to sustain an adequate workforce with the appropriate competencies. Developing meaningful succession and transition plans which include conserving corporate memory will continue to 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.



Figure 1 Michel Daigle, Conference Manager arriving in Iqaluit for a conference.



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.

The Conference Services division is in the process of fine-tuning the restructuring project by finalizing the number of positions that will be staffed on a part time basis during peak periods.

Lastly, the Workplace 2.0 initiative is bringing greater flexibility to the workplace. Many employees are taking advantage of compressed work weeks, telework arrangements and leave with income averaging. Feedback thus far has been positive as it allows employees to achieve better work-life balance. The relocation in 2014 will provide further opportunities as far as technology, collaboration and flexibility are concerned.



Figure 2 Angela Donatucci, Conference Administrative Officer during set-up day at a conference in Whitehorse.



Figure 3 Some internal services employees at the CICS office in Ottawa. From left to right: Janie Renaud, Simon Lévesque, Diana Gervais, Sébastien Huard, Charlyne Thauvette.

STRATEGIC POSITIONING

Human Resources Priorities

CICS' human resources priorities for 2014-2019 are the following:

1. Have a permanent core workforce to meet the CICS vision, mandate and strategic priorities.
2. Conserve at least six provincial/territorial positions, as they represent an integral part of our organization.
3. To meet the cyclical demand for conference services, complement human resource requirements by using 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.

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 to build their capacities.



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 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 effectively, there is a constant need to review and refine internal practices in order to be in line with the government’s direction. By doing so, the agency will be better positioned to deal with 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, as well as in line with government policies.



Corporate Management

Budget pressures and cost containment measures will be ever present in the management 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 improve upon efficiencies.

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 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 2014-19

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 – Continue to build a capable, confident and high performing workforce

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. Recognition among governments of the essential, constructive role played by the Secretariat through improved dialogue and greater collaboration;
- B. Market CICS and its services effectively; and
- C. Maintain the existing clientele and explore new partnerships to attain maximum capacity.



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.

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 government transformation initiatives by seeking and implementing modern and efficient service delivery tools;
- C. Continuous improvement in the service delivery model to maintain professional and successful conference delivery;
- D. Efficient information management of conference records (i.e. preservation, digitization, de-classification, and disposal); and
- E. Expand service offerings by exploring and adopting a variety of models.

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 CICS will continue 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 is also 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 requires employee cooperation and engagement in order 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 level;
- C. Review and improve CICS processes in accordance with government policy requirements;
- D. Implement government-wide cost-reduction and efficiency initiatives;
- E. Maintain and establish further partnerships and shared services initiatives;
- F. Efficient information management of corporate records (i.e. preservation, digitization, de-classification, and disposal); and
- G. Contribute to government-wide initiatives for transformation and efficiencies.



Priority 4 Continue to build a capable, confident and high performing workforce



The Secretariat's greatest asset remains its personnel. This priority focuses on seeking ways to empower and motivate employees, build internal capacity, and provide flexible means of working.

It also includes modern workplaces that support teamwork and encourage productivity in a supportive environment, to meet and exceed performance expectations without compromising personal lives or health outcomes.

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 plays within the Canadian federation, and of the value and benefit of the work we do;
- B. Work collaboratively toward the same vision for CICS;
- C. Promote a values-based, positive and healthy working environment;
- D. Foster employee engagement in initiatives;
- E. Ensure open and ongoing communications;
- F. Recognize employee efforts; and
- G. Foster a culture of continual improvement and innovation.

