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# 2023 to 2027 Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy

Veterans Review and Appeal Board

Cat. No.: V97-2E-PDF

ISSN: 2817-7347

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# Executive Summary

The Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB, the Board) is committed to supporting the [2022 to 2026 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy](#) (FSDS) as required by the [Federal Sustainable Development Act](#) (the Act). The Board will do so through delivering on its mandate to provide a fair and independent appeal process for Veterans, Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) members, and their families who are dissatisfied with their disability decisions they have received from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC).

New provisions of the of the Act extended specific legislated requirements to further federal entities, leading to VRAB developing its first Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy (DSDS). This DSDS describes the organization's objectives and plans for sustainable development and articulates the Board's contributions to the goals and targets of the FSDS.

SECTION 1

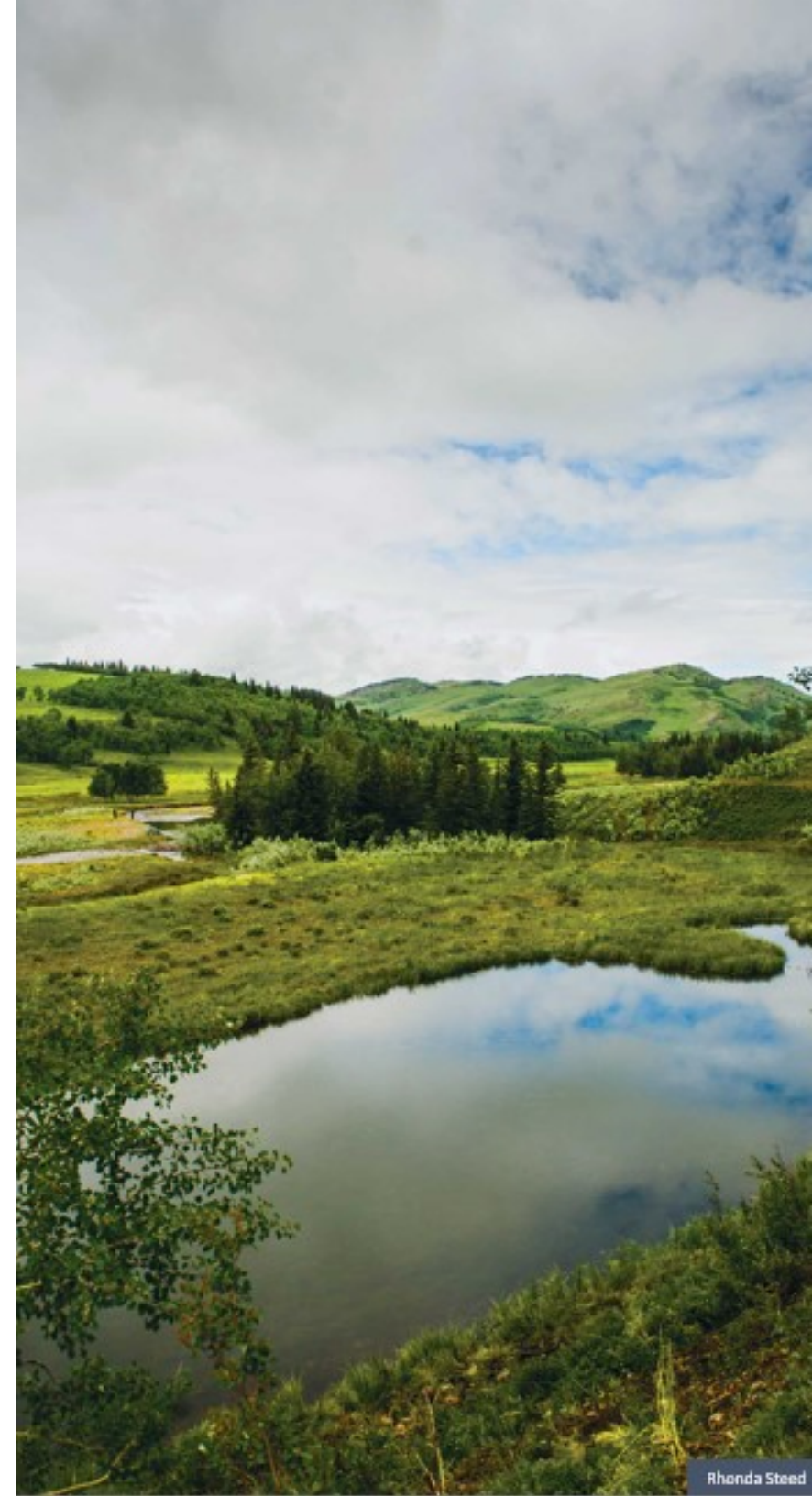
# Introduction to the Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy

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 Board supports the goals laid out in the FSDS through the activities described in this Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy (DSDS).

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.

In order to promote coordinated action on sustainable development across the Government of Canada, this departmental



strategy integrates efforts to advance Canada's implementation of the 2030 Agenda National Strategy, supported by the Global Indicator Framework (GIF) and Canadian Indicator Framework (CIF) targets and indicators. The strategy also now captures SDG initiatives that fall outside the scope of the FSDS to inform the development of the Canada's Annual Report on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

SECTION 2

# Veterans Review and Appeal Board's Sustainable Development Vision

The Board is a small organization that exists to provide Veterans and their families with access to an independent appeal process for disability matters that directly affect their health and well-being. Veterans and their families are at the centre of everything we do. Sustainable development is pursued within the context of the Board's mandate.

At VRAB, sustainable development means managing the Board's program and operations in a way that is environmentally, economically and socially responsible. The Board's success towards sustainability goals relies on its employees. Their contribution is valuable in helping the Board reduce its environmental footprint. The Board continues to promote a greener mindset among employees and encourage environmentally conscious choices through awareness, information sharing, and opportunities for engagement in green activities.

The Board continues to look for ways to incorporate sustainable practices into its operations. Significant progress has already been made by redesigning the Board's hearing process to reduce its reliance on paper and incorporating more technology. The Board continues to explore opportunities to use electronic documents in place of paper documents.

To achieve its sustainable development vision, VRAB will continue to invest in creating a culture of inclusion, fairness and sustainable practices: one in which the physical, operational and social environments work together to encourage employees at all levels to make sustainable choices. Through this DSDS, VRAB contributes to 3 of the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals: Reduced Inequality, Responsible Consumption and Production, and Climate Action.

## SECTION 3

# Listening to Canadians

As required by the Federal Sustainable Development Act, the Board has considered comments on the draft 2022-2026 FSDS made during the public consultation held from March 11 to July 9, 2022. During the public consultation, more than 700 comments were received from a broad range of stakeholders, including governments, Indigenous organizations, non-governmental organizations, academics, businesses, and individual Canadians in different age groups and of various backgrounds. The draft FSDS was also shared with the appropriate committee of each House of Parliament, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, and the Sustainable Development Advisory Council for their review and comment.

## What We Heard

Across the submissions received, the Board identified sustainable development priorities and issues that affect us. Participants emphasized the FSDS should support reconciliation and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Comments also urged the Government of Canada to include additional perspectives from equity-seeking groups such as racialized and 2SLGBTQI+ communities. Other comments centered on climate action, the importance of waste reduction and increased energy efficiency through smart technology.

## What We Did

We took the above-mentioned key priorities and issues into consideration in this DSDS. The Board continues its commitment to raising awareness and understanding of Indigenous and minority perspectives. As part of the Board's mandatory training for new staff, we have added courses to help increase cultural skills and awareness of issues related to Indigenous Peoples. We also built in Gender Based Analysis (GBA) Plus training, providing an opportunity for new staff to learn more about GBA Plus and how this process is used to explore the changing realities and inequalities of diverse groups of people.

The Board is committed to socially conscious product usage, recycling and waste reduction. We continue to develop a culture where workplace practices integrate sustainable practices. We established an end-to-end cassette tape digitization process, combining old and new technology, to achieve the goal of archiving more than 75,000 hearing recordings. Once digitized, the cassettes are incinerated at an energy plant that converts solid waste to generate electricity and thermal heating energy.

Please find more information on the FSDS public consultation and its results in the [FSDS Consultation Report](#)



SECTION 4

# Veterans Review and Appeal Board's Commitments





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

### **FSDS Context:**

Goal 10 contains the implementation strategy:

- ▶ 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
<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><b>Program:</b> UN Declaration Act Implementation Secretariat</p>	<p><b>Performance indicator:</b> Percentage of Board staff and Members who have completed Indigenous cultural competency training (internal or external)</p> <p><b>Starting point:</b> Percentage of staff trained [24% as of August 2023]</p> <p><b>Target:</b> 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><b>Relevant targets or ambitions:</b></p> <p><b>Global Indicator Framework (GIF) Target:</b> <a href="#">10.3</a> 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>



## 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

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
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><b>Program:</b> Internal Services</p>	<p><b>Performance Indicator:</b> Percentage of acquisition cardholders that take green procurement training within two months of receiving their acquisition card</p> <p><b>Starting point:</b> In 2022-23, 100% of acquisition cardholders were trained in green procurement</p> <p><b>Target:</b> 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><b>Relevant targets or ambitions:</b></p> <p><b>Canadian Indicator Framework (CIF) Ambition:</b> <a href="#">12.1</a> Canadians consume in a sustainable manner</p> <p><b>CIF Indicator:</b> <a href="#">12.2.1</a> Proportion of businesses that adopted selected environmental protection activities and management practices</p> <p><b>GIF Target:</b> <a href="#">12.7</a> Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities</p>



## 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

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

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
Implement the Greening Government Strategy through measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve climate resilience, and green the government’s overall operations	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  <b>Program:</b> Internal Services	<p><b>Performance Indicator:</b> 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><b>Starting point:</b> 0% in 2023-24 trained</p> <p><b>Target:</b> 100% trained by March 31, 2024</p>	Trained staff can identify risk to critical program delivery, and develop responses to increase the resilience of operations to impacts of climate change  <b>Relevant targets or ambitions:</b>  <b>CIF Ambition:</b> <a href="#">13.3</a> Canadians are well-equipped and resilient to face the effects of Climate change  <b>CIF Indicator:</b> <a href="#">13.3.1</a> Proportion of municipal organizations who factored climate change adaptation into their decision-making process

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
			<p><b>GIF Targets:</b> <a href="#">13.1</a> Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries</p> <p><a href="#">13.3</a> Improve education, awareness and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning</p>



SECTION 5

# 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 will continue to prioritize energy efficiency and integrate climate considerations into our decision-making processes.

Specifically, the Board's DSDS incorporates three goals, three targets and three implementation strategies designed to incorporate sustainable practices into our standard operations.

The Board will continue to ensure that its decision-making process includes consideration of FSDS goals and targets and will incorporate a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process when appropriate. 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 will be posted to the Board's website 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 the proposal development and as part of the decision-making process.