

National Security and Intelligence Review Agency

2020–21

Departmental Plan

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada

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Message from the Chair

It is an honour and a privilege to be named the inaugural Chair of the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA).

NSIRA is comprised of seven appointed members, working with a Secretariat with expertise in review, law, national security and policy. NSIRA has a mandate to review any Government of Canada national security and intelligence activities to ensure that they are lawful, reasonable and necessary. NSIRA also investigates complaints from members of the public regarding national security agencies and activities. Its recent creation fills a longstanding gap in Canada's national security architecture and significantly strengthens our framework for national security accountability.

NSIRA will report on its work through a variety of mechanisms. It is required to produce an unclassified annual report summarizing the full range of its activities, findings, and recommendations. This annual report is to be submitted to the Prime Minister and tabled in both Houses of Parliament. NSIRA is also required to submit annual reports to the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of National Defence regarding the activities of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE), respectively, as well as an additional annual report to the Minister of Public Safety regarding disclosures under the *Security of Canada Information Disclosure Act (SCIDA)*. As the Chair of NSIRA, I am required on an annual basis to brief the Minister of Public Safety on CSIS' exercise of its powers, duties and functions, and to do the same for the Minister of National Defence with respect to CSE.

NSIRA will also work with the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) and the Privacy Commissioner on issues of common interest, to maximize both the effectiveness and the efficiency of national security review activities.

I am grateful for the support that I have received thus far in my new role, and I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues in the year ahead in fulfilling NSIRA's important new mandate.

Murray Rankin, Q.C.

Chair, National Security and Intelligence Review Agency

Message from the Executive Director

It is my pleasure to submit the first Departmental Plan for the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, for 2020-21.

During our first full year of operation, we will focus on transitioning to a much broader mandate, which now includes review of national security and intelligence activities across the Government of Canada, as well as the investigation of complaints related to CSIS, CSE, and national security complaints related to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

We will focus on building a strong network of partnerships to help us define our research priorities and deliver on our mandate in an increasingly complex national security environment. In doing so, we also want to be more transparent with Canadians. A longer term vision is being developed and will be articulated in greater detail in our forthcoming annual report. Ensuring a healthy work environment so that all employees feel valued and included is key to attaining this vision.

I hope that you find the information below useful in detailing how NSIRA is resourced and intends to fulfill its mandate in the year ahead.

John Davies

Executive Director

Plans at a glance

Established in July 2019, NSIRA represents a significant enhancement for national security accountability in Canada. NSIRA has a statutory mandate to review the activities of CSIS and CSE, as well as the national security and intelligence activities of all other federal departments and agencies. To fulfill its review mandate, NSIRA has unfettered access to classified information other than Cabinet confidences. In addition, NSIRA inherited the complaints investigation functions of the Security Intelligence Review Committee (SIRC), which was responsible for hearing complaints from members of the public regarding the actions of CSIS, as well as those related to the revocation or denial of security clearances. Going forward, it will also hear complaints regarding the CSE, as well as national security-related complaints regarding the RCMP.

In its first full year of operations, NSIRA will focus on ensuring it transitions effectively to a much larger organization with a much broader mandate. This includes: securing new accommodations; effective staffing and knowledge development; establishing strong working relations with review partners and other Canadian review bodies; and, delivering on mandatory reporting requirements as noted in the *National Security and Intelligence Review Agency Act*. Going forward, as NSIRA’s institutional capacity adapts, reviews will grow in complexity and sophistication, with an increasing focus on inter-agency activities. A key planning tool to be developed is a three-year research plan. This plan will guide resource allocation and staffing decisions over the medium term.

NSIRA is committed to: openness and transparency to connect better with Canadians; methodological excellence to ensure the quality of our work; and, forward thinking and innovation, including how we consider the impacts of new technology and an ever-changing national security environment. NSIRA understands the importance of organizational health and wellness as fundamental to our success. As we act on these values, NSIRA expects to be well positioned to deliver on our mandate.

For more information on the NSIRA’s plans, priorities and planned results, see the “Core responsibilities: planned results and resources, and key risks” section of this report.

Core responsibilities: planned results and resources, and key risks

This section contains detailed information on the department's planned results and resources for each of its core responsibilities. It also contains information on key risks related to achieving those results.

Assist the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency

Description

The Secretariat will assist NSIRA members in fulfilling the agency's mandate. The Secretariat will conduct a range of activities to support the agency, including accessing relevant information and providing strategic and expert advice in the conduct of reviews, quasi-judicial investigation of complaints and the development of reports. It will also provide administrative support in arranging for briefings, hearings and consultations with stakeholders and international counterparts, and support to ensure compliance with security requirements.

Planning highlights

NSIRA will directly contribute to enhancing scrutiny of, and accountability for, national security and intelligence activities undertaken by Government of Canada institutions. This will increase public confidence that these activities are thoroughly reviewed and assessed as to whether they are lawful, reasonable and necessary.

Work in the year ahead will focus on adapting to NSIRA's broad new mandate. This will involve building knowledge of the national security and intelligence activities of departments and agencies across the Government of Canada, in support of both the review and complaints investigations functions. Staffing new positions with high-quality candidates who can bring specialized knowledge and expertise to the organization will be a key priority.

NSIRA will carry out a number of activities in 2020-21 in support of its new mandate, including:

- Supporting the development of reports, including on specific annual mandatory reviews and the NSIRA's annual public report, which will be submitted to the Prime Minister;
- Developing a medium-term research plan that reflects the broad scope of NSIRA's new review mandate and the modern realities of inter-agency cooperation in the field of national security;
- Working actively with its counterparts at the NSICOP, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, and the Office of the Intelligence Commissioner to foster productive collaboration within the Canadian review community;
- Undertaking the investigation of complaints, updating procedures and establishing protocols in relation to the newly expanded aspects of this function;

- Exploring ways to continue to build relationships with like-mandated international review bodies to participate in the exchange of best practices; and,
- Enhancing NSIRA’s engagement with Canadians on matters of national security and intelligence in order to build public trust.

Gender-based analysis plus

NSIRA is committed to developing a diverse and inclusive workforce comprised of individuals with a broad range of backgrounds and perspectives. The NSIRA Secretariat recently issued its first employee survey to establish baselines on employee demographics as well as on matters related to workplace wellness. In the year ahead, a number of steps will be taken to follow up on this initiative and to foster an inclusive and positive work environment. Greater diversity in the workforce is an important staffing objective for the organization.

NSIRA is also mindful of the potential impact that national security and intelligence activities can have on diverse communities in Canada. This and related issues can arise in the context of reviews as well as complaints, and NSIRA has the authority to scrutinize national security and intelligence activities for signs of bias and discrimination.

In the year ahead, NSIRA will engage Canadians to discuss research planning and priorities, as well as findings and recommendations of interest, and to better understand concerns regarding differential impacts of national security and intelligence activities. This engagement will include a diverse range of stakeholder groups.

NSIRA is also aware of concerns about bias and unfair targeting in the context of new and emerging technologies. In the year ahead, we will work to better understand this issue and the implications that it entails for Canadians. We are also exploring training tools for NSIRA staff to ensure that considerations related to Gender-based analysis plus are incorporated into our review methodology.

Key risks

The ability to hire a sufficient number of qualified personnel within relevant timelines remains a short- and medium-term risk for NSIRA, particularly given the specialized knowledge and skillsets required for many positions. This is further compounded by the requirement for candidates to obtain a Top Secret security clearance, which can incur significant delays.

The ability to expand into additional secure accommodations in a timely manner is also a significant risk for NSIRA, given that its mandate requires it to operate within a high security zone. A lack of secure accommodations would negatively impact the ability of NSIRA to hire large numbers of staff, impeding its ability to deliver on its mandate.

The ability to ensure that NSIRA’s work is conducted in accordance with the highest security standards remains top-of-mind for the organization. In the year ahead, we will work to ensure that employees are aware of and abide by all relevant security protocols, while ensuring that our accommodations and information systems are fit-for-purpose. In this regard, we will work with the national security community to ensure that they have confidence in our approach.

The ability of NSIRA to access the information it needs to do its work and speak to the relevant internal stakeholders to understand policies, operations and ongoing issues is closely tied to the reviewed departments’ capacity to respond to the demands of NSIRA. The resource constraints of the reviewed departments could delay NSIRA’s ability to deliver on its mandate in a timely way.

Mitigation measures for the risks outlined above will be developed and factored into NSIRA’s work throughout the year ahead.

Planned results for assisting the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency

NSIRA’s Departmental Results Framework, with accompanying results and indicators, is under development. Additional information on key performance measures will be included in the 2021-22 Departmental Plan.

Financial, human resources and performance information for NSIRA’s program inventory is available in the [GC InfoBase](#).ⁱ

Planned budgetary financial resources for assisting the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency

2020–21 budgetary spending (as indicated in Main Estimates)	2020–21 planned spending	2021–22 planned spending	2022–23 planned spending
11,309,411	11,309,411	12,107,192	13,842,015

Financial, human resources and performance information for NSIRA’s program inventory is available in the [GC InfoBase](#).ⁱⁱ

Planned human resources for assisting the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency

2020–21 planned full-time equivalents	2021–22 planned full-time equivalents	2022–23 planned full-time equivalents
48	75	75

Financial, human resources and performance information for NSIRA’s program inventory is available in the [GC InfoBase](#).ⁱⁱⁱ

Internal Services: planned results

Description

Internal Services are those groups of related activities and resources that the federal government considers to be services in support of Programs and/or required to meet corporate obligations of an organization. Internal Services refers to the activities and resources of the 10 distinct services that support Program delivery in the organization, regardless of the Internal Services delivery model in a department. These services are:

- ▶ Management and Oversight Services
- ▶ Communications Services
- ▶ Legal Services
- ▶ Human Resources Management Services
- ▶ Financial Management Services
- ▶ Information Management Services
- ▶ Information Technology Services
- ▶ Real Property Management Services
- ▶ Materiel Management Services
- ▶ Acquisition Management Services

Planning highlights

In this first full year of operations, NSIRA will focus on expanding into additional secure facilities and on staffing vacant positions. The Secretariat is working with officials from the Privy Council Office and Public Services and Procurement Canada to identify opportunities for expansion into an additional high security zone, as well as opportunities to retrofit existing spaces for eventual occupation. On the issue of human resources, the Secretariat is recruiting with a view to ensuring that new staff are diverse and have the necessary skills and core competencies that will provide NSIRA with high-quality support it requires over the long term.

The Secretariat will also work to ensure that staff are equipped with the necessary Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) systems, equipment and support services to perform their work, as the organization grows.

Planned budgetary financial resources for Internal Services

2020–21 budgetary spending (as indicated in Main Estimates)	2020–21 planned spending	2021–22 planned spending	2022–23 planned spending
12,975,559	12,975,559	12,107,192	4,614,005

Funding for 2020-21 and 2021-22 is higher than ongoing funding figures due to plans for funds being used for the building and refurbishing of additional office space.

Planned human resources for Internal Services

2020–21 planned full-time equivalents	2021–22 planned full-time equivalents	2022–23 planned full-time equivalents
22	25	25

Spending and human resources

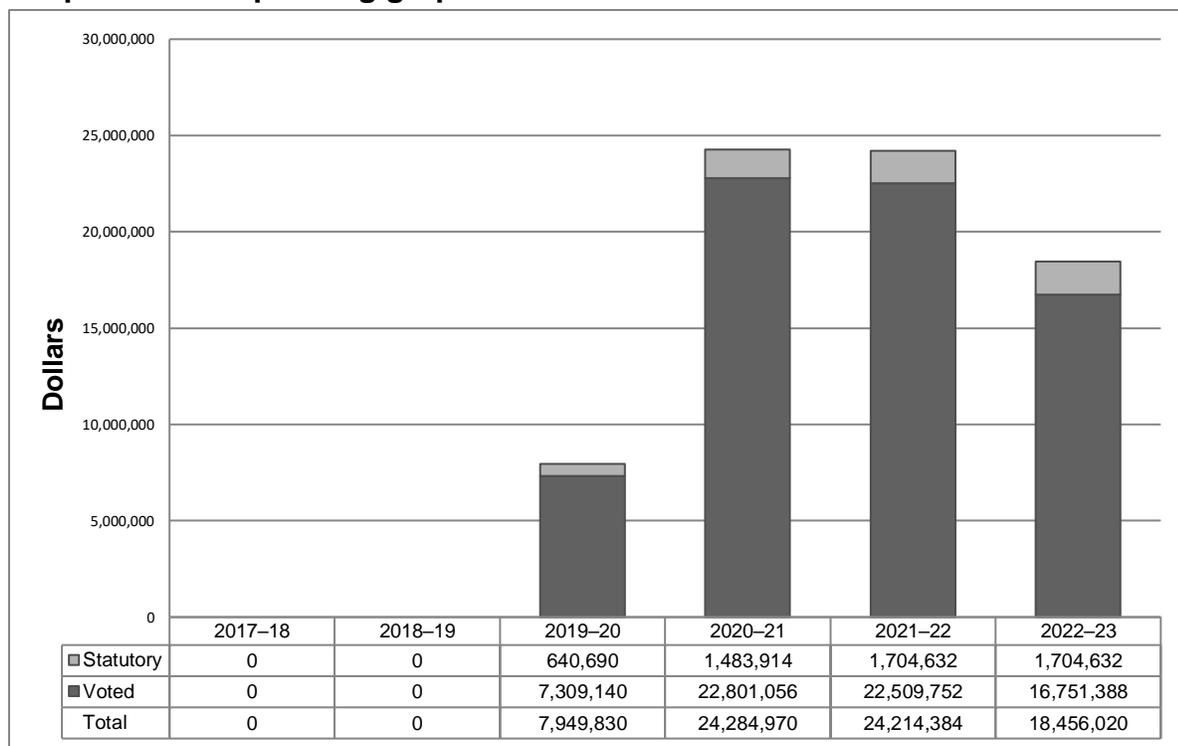
This section provides an overview of the department’s planned spending and human resources for the next three consecutive fiscal years, and compares planned spending for the upcoming year with the current year’s spending.

Planned spending

Departmental spending 2017–18 to 2022–23

The following graph presents planned (voted and statutory) spending over time.

Departmental spending graph



The figures in the graph above reflect the fact that NSIRA was established part-way through the 2019-20 fiscal year, with a coming-into-force date of July 12, 2019. Fiscal Year 2019-20 presents forecast spending for the current fiscal year. Fiscal years 2020-21 to 2022-23 present planned spending based on approved authorities. The planned spending for 2020-21 and 2021-22 includes funding for construction and fit-up of secure office space required by NSIRA for its activities.

Budgetary planning summary for core responsibilities and Internal Services (dollars)

The following table shows actual, forecast and planned spending for NSIRA’s core responsibility and for Internal Services for the years relevant to the current planning year.

Core responsibilities and Internal Services	2017–18 expenditures	2018–19 expenditures	2019–20 forecast spending	2020–21 budgetary spending (as indicated in Main Estimates)	2020–21 planned spending	2021–22 planned spending	2022–23 planned spending
Assist the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency	N/A	N/A	2,964,990	11,309,411	11,309,411	12,107,192	13,842,015
Subtotal	N/A	N/A	2,964,990	11,309,411	11,309,411	12,107,192	13,842,015
Internal Services	N/A	N/A	4,984,840	12,975,559	12,975,559	12,107,192	4,614,005
Total	N/A	N/A	7,949,830	24,284,970	24,284,970	24,214,384	18,456,020

As NSIRA was created on July 12, 2019, there is no comparative information to provide for prior years. Numbers for 2019-20 are for the reporting period July 12, 2019 – March 31, 2020.

Due to delays in acquiring and fitting up a second office site for the growing organization, NSIRA is expected to lapse funds, allocated for construction and equipping office space in 2019-20. Planned spending for 2022-23 shows the ongoing financial authorities after completion of the office expansion project.

Planned human resources

The following table shows actual, forecast and planned full-time equivalents (FTEs) for the core responsibility in NSIRA’s departmental results framework and for Internal Services for the years relevant to the current planning year.

Human resources planning summary for core responsibilities and Internal Services

Core responsibilities and Internal Services	2017–18 actual full-time equivalents	2018–19 actual full-time equivalents	2019–20 forecast full-time equivalents	2020–21 planned full-time equivalents	2021–22 planned full-time equivalents	2022–23 planned full-time equivalents
Assist the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency	N/A	N/A	24	48	75	75
Subtotal	N/A	N/A	24	48	75	75
Internal Services	N/A	N/A	15	22	25	25
Total	N/A	N/A	39	70	100	100

Accommodations challenges as well as security clearance requirements pushed anticipated staffing actions to future reporting periods. As NSIRA evolves, it will need to prioritize staffing efforts in order to fulfill its expanded mandate.

Estimates by vote

Information on NSIRA’s organizational appropriations is available in the [2020–21 Main Estimates](#).^{iv}

Condensed future-oriented statement of operations

The condensed future-oriented statement of operations provides an overview of NSIRA’s operations for 2019–20 to 2020–21.

The amounts for forecast and planned results in this statement of operations were prepared on an accrual basis. The amounts for forecast and planned spending presented in other sections of the Departmental Plan were prepared on an expenditure basis. Amounts may therefore differ.

A more detailed future-oriented statement of operations and associated notes, including a reconciliation of the net cost of operations to the requested authorities, are available on NSIRA’s [website](#).^y

Condensed future-oriented statement of operations for the year ending March 31, 2021 (dollars)

Financial information	2019–20 forecast results	2020–21 planned results	Difference (2020–21 planned results minus 2019–20 forecast results)
Total expenses	8,924,002	25,780,059	16,856,058
Total revenues	248	248	0
Net cost of operations before government funding and transfers	8,923,754	25,779,811	16,856,058

The large increase between planned results for 2020-21 and forecasted results for 2019-20 is due to the later-than-expected royal assent of the *National Security and Intelligence Review Agency Act* and the coming-into-force of the NSIRA. The difference has been further compounded by the challenge of finding suitable highly secure accommodations and the resulting inability to complete planned hiring in 2019-20.

Corporate information

Organizational profile

Appropriate minister: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

Institutional head: John Davies

Ministerial portfolio: Privy Council Office

Enabling instrument(s): *National Security and Intelligence Review Agency Act*

Year of incorporation / commencement: 2019

Raison d'être, mandate and role: who we are and what we do

“Raison d'être, mandate and role: who we are and what we do” is available on NSIRA’s [website](#).^{vi}

Operating context

Information on the operating context is available on NSIRA’s [website](#).^{vii}

Reporting framework

NSIRA’s Departmental Results Framework, with accompanying results and indicators, is under development. Additional information on key performance measures will be included in the 2021-22 Departmental Plan.

Supporting information on the program inventory

Supporting information on planned expenditures, human resources, and results related to NSIRA’s program inventory is available in the [GC InfoBase](#).^{viii}

Supplementary information tables

The following supplementary information tables are available on NSIRA’s [website](#):^{ix}

- ▶ [Departmental Sustainable Development Strategy](#)
- ▶ [Gender-based analysis plus](#)

Federal tax expenditures

NSIRA’s Departmental Plan does not include information on tax expenditures that relate to its planned results for 2020–21.

Tax expenditures are the responsibility of the Minister of Finance, and the Department of Finance Canada publishes cost estimates and projections for government-wide tax expenditures each year in the [Report on Federal Tax Expenditures](#).^x This report provides detailed information on tax expenditures, including objectives, historical background and references to related federal spending programs, as well as evaluations, research papers and gender-based analysis. The tax measures presented in this report are solely the responsibility of the Minister of Finance.

Organizational contact information

Mailing address

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Website(s): <http://www.nsira-ossnr.gc.ca>

Appendix: definitions

appropriation (crédit)

Any authority of Parliament to pay money out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

budgetary expenditures (dépenses budgétaires)

Operating and capital expenditures; transfer payments to other levels of government, organizations or individuals; and payments to Crown corporations.

core responsibility (responsabilité essentielle)

An enduring function or role performed by a department. The intentions of the department with respect to a core responsibility are reflected in one or more related departmental results that the department seeks to contribute to or influence.

Departmental Plan (plan ministériel)

A report on the plans and expected performance of a department over a 3-year period. Departmental Plans are tabled in Parliament each spring.

departmental priority (priorité ministérielle)

A plan or project that a department has chosen to focus and report on during the planning period. Departmental priorities represent the things that are most important or what must be done first to support the achievement of the desired departmental results.

departmental result (résultat ministériel)

A consequence or outcome that a department seeks to achieve. A departmental result is often outside departments' immediate control, but it should be influenced by program-level outcomes.

departmental result indicator (indicateur de résultat ministériel)

A factor or variable that provides a valid and reliable means to measure or describe progress on a departmental result.

departmental results framework (cadre ministériel des résultats)

A framework that consists of the department's core responsibilities, departmental results and departmental result indicators.

Departmental Results Report (rapport sur les résultats ministériels)

A report on a department's actual accomplishments against the plans, priorities and expected results set out in the corresponding Departmental Plan.

experimentation (expérimentation)

The conducting of activities that seek to first explore, then test and compare, the effects and impacts of policies and interventions in order to inform evidence-based decision-making, and

improve outcomes for Canadians, by learning what works and what doesn't. Experimentation is related to, but distinct from innovation (the trying of new things), because it involves a rigorous comparison of results. For example, using a new website to communicate with Canadians can be an innovation; systematically testing the new website against existing outreach tools or an old website to see which one leads to more engagement, is experimentation.

full-time equivalent (équivalent temps plein)

A measure of the extent to which an employee represents a full person-year charge against a departmental budget. Full-time equivalents are calculated as a ratio of assigned hours of work to scheduled hours of work. Scheduled hours of work are set out in collective agreements.

gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) (analyse comparative entre les sexes plus [ACS+])

An analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse people experience policies, programs and services based on multiple factors including race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability.

government-wide priorities (priorités pangouvernementales)

For the purpose of the 2020–21 Departmental Plan, government-wide priorities refers to those high-level themes outlining the government's agenda in the 2015 Speech from the Throne, namely: Growth for the Middle Class; Open and Transparent Government; A Clean Environment and a Strong Economy; Diversity is Canada's Strength; and Security and Opportunity.

horizontal initiative (initiative horizontale)

An initiative in which two or more federal organizations are given funding to pursue a shared outcome, often linked to a government priority.

non-budgetary expenditures (dépenses non budgétaires)

Net outlays and receipts related to loans, investments and advances, which change the composition of the financial assets of the Government of Canada.

performance (rendement)

What an organization did with its resources to achieve its results, how well those results compare to what the organization intended to achieve, and how well lessons learned have been identified.

performance indicator (indicateur de rendement)

A qualitative or quantitative means of measuring an output or outcome, with the intention of gauging the performance of an organization, program, policy or initiative respecting expected results.

performance reporting (production de rapports sur le rendement)

The process of communicating evidence-based performance information. Performance reporting supports decision-making, accountability and transparency.

plan (plan)

The articulation of strategic choices, which provides information on how an organization intends to achieve its priorities and associated results. Generally a plan will explain the logic behind the strategies chosen and tend to focus on actions that lead up to the expected result.

planned spending (dépenses prévues)

For Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports, planned spending refers to those amounts presented in the Main Estimates.

A department is expected to be aware of the authorities that it has sought and received. The determination of planned spending is a departmental responsibility, and departments must be able to defend the expenditure and accrual numbers presented in their Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports.

program (programme)

Individual or groups of services, activities or combinations thereof that are managed together within the department and focus on a specific set of outputs, outcomes or service levels.

program inventory (répertoire des programmes)

Identifies all of the department's programs and describes how resources are organized to contribute to the department's core responsibilities and results.

result (résultat)

An external consequence attributed, in part, to an organization, policy, program or initiative. Results are not within the control of a single organization, policy, program or initiative; instead they are within the area of the organization's influence.

statutory expenditures (dépenses législatives)

Expenditures that Parliament has approved through legislation other than appropriation acts. The legislation sets out the purpose of the expenditures and the terms and conditions under which they may be made.

strategic outcome (résultat stratégique)

A long-term and enduring benefit to Canadians that is linked to the organization's mandate, vision and core functions.

target (cible)

A measurable performance or success level that an organization, program or initiative plans to achieve within a specified time period. Targets can be either quantitative or qualitative.

voted expenditures (dépenses votées)

Expenditures that Parliament approves annually through an Appropriation Act. The vote wording becomes the governing conditions under which these expenditures may be made.

Endnotes

- i. GC InfoBase, <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ems-sgd/edb-bdd/index-eng.html#start>
- ii. GC InfoBase, <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ems-sgd/edb-bdd/index-eng.html#start>
- iii. GC InfoBase, <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ems-sgd/edb-bdd/index-eng.html#start>
- iv. 2018–19 Main Estimates, <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/planned-government-spending/government-expenditure-plan-main-estimates.html>
- v. NSIRA website, <http://www.nsira-ossnr.gc.ca/>
- vi. NSIRA website, <http://www.nsira-ossnr.gc.ca/>
- vii. NSIRA website, <http://www.nsira-ossnr.gc.ca/>
- viii. GC InfoBase, <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/ems-sgd/edb-bdd/index-eng.html#start>
- ix. NSIRA website, <http://www.nsira-ossnr.gc.ca/>
- x. Report on Federal Tax Expenditures, <http://www.fin.gc.ca/purl/taxexp-eng.asp>