



Canadian Environmental  
Assessment Agency

Agence canadienne  
d'évaluation environnementale

# Strategic and Regional Environmental Assessment



Ontario Association of Impact  
Assessment (OAIA)

November 19th, 2008



Canada



## *SEA at the federal level in Canada*

---

- Two pronged process of EA at federal level: project level EA and SEA
- *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals* issued in 1990, revised in 1999 and 2004
- SEA is a systematic, comprehensive process of evaluating the environmental effects of a policy, plan or program and its alternatives.
- Conducted on proposals to Ministers and Cabinet
- Directive-driven
  - Flexible
  - Self-assessment model
  - Early integration
  - Accountability





## *Rationale for SEA*

---

- Good Public Policy and good business practice
- Risk Management Tool
- Addresses Public Concerns related to policy decisions
- Guides government priorities and decisions





## *Limitations of existing SEA process*

---

- Benefits of SEA under Cabinet Directive questioned
  - Lack of appropriate and timely integration of SEA in policy development process leads to ineffectiveness
  - Lack of a prescribed approach or lack of understanding results in weak motivation and implementation
  
- SEA/Planning/Project EA linkages
  - Limited tiering of formal SEA processes
  - Parallel application of SEA complicates alignment with planning
  - Little evidence of SEA informing project-level assessment and decision making





## *Auditing the process: What we've learned*

---

- CESD Performance Audit in 2004:
  - Commitment to apply SEA is lacking
  - Several departments have not implemented basic management systems for SEA (tracking, roles and accountabilities, training and guidance)
  - No quality assurance within government to ensure compliance
  - Lack of transparency and accountability
  
- CESD Follow up audit released March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008:
  - No central authority to hold departments accountable for implementing SEA
  - Transparency remains weak
  - Improvements in management systems, but deficiencies persist





## *Evaluation of the Cabinet Directive*

---

- Evaluation of the Cabinet Directive is the result of a federal government commitment made in response to CESD 2004 report
- Purpose is to make recommendations on improving the performance of strategic environmental assessment (SEA)
- The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency is leading the evaluation on behalf of the Privy Council Office
- Evaluation will be both process and outcomes focused
- Evaluation Design Core Questions: relevance, success, and efficiency.





## *Policy drivers in SEA*

---

- Audit results & evaluation of the Cabinet Directive
- Results of multi-stakeholder report that explores ways in which to improve SEA
- Regulatory improvement and reform agenda
- Results-based management
- Legislative review of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*
- Need for better integrated management





## *Regionally-based EA approaches*

---

### Main Drivers:

- Intensified interest in resource development
- Cumulative effects of multiple projects and induced development
- Crown duty to consult Aboriginal groups
- Fragmentation of the environmental management framework
- Identified EA institutional “gaps”





## *What can be achieved with regional- scale EA?*

---

- A flexible EA process that can be applied where appropriate
- Stronger foundation for cumulative effects assessment
- Alternative forum to debate broader policy issues in a regional or sectoral context
- Useful construct for bridging strategic planning and project/regulatory decision making
- More streamlined and better informed project-level assessments and decisions





## *Characteristics of regional-scale EA*

---

- Common principles
  - Objectives-led and issues-driven (regional VECs)
  - Multi-stakeholder and collaborative
  - Multi-scale and multi-tiered
  - Cumulative-effects oriented
  - Adaptive
- Regional SEA
  - Alternatives-focused and futures-oriented
- Regional EA
  - Extension of project-based EA techniques to multiple activities





## *Moving towards REA frameworks*

---

- Further policy research & multi-stakeholder collaboration
  - Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment working toward common national understanding of regional SEA
  
- Framework development and regional approaches in practice
  - Pilot regional EAs in Beaufort Basin and Scotian Shelf
  
- Integrated approaches to information management
  - Regional assessments and proper cumulative effects assessment will require quality data that support varying spatial and temporal scales





## Conclusion & Next Steps

---

- Addressing recommendations from the Cabinet Directive Evaluation
- Report on SEA by the Regulatory Advisory Committee (RAC) Subcommittee on SEA
- 2010 Legislative Review
- Completing work of CCME Task Force
- Beaufort Regional Environmental Assessment (BREA) and Offshore Nova Scotia REA Pilot

