NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE REVIEW AGENCY STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2027

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Shaping the Future of the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA)

Introduction

Without specialized national security review, much security service conduct would be immunized from scrutiny by reason of national security secrecy. NSIRA's raison d'être is to ensure that there is no such immunity. NSIRA's statute gives it two core mandates: conducting national security "reviews" of activities in the security and intelligence area; and conducting "investigations" of complaints brought against a subset of national security and intelligence services.

The review and investigation process serves to guard values essential to the Canadian project, including (especially) the rule of law: the notion that no one is above the law, and that a public official (including in the security and intelligence services) can only exercise powers found in the law. At the same time, NSIRA's work "stress tests" the national security and intelligence community aiming to make them better as institutions at meeting their mandates.

The Strategic Plan lays out the NSIRA's strategic goals and objectives in the further pursuit of excellence in national security review and complaints investigations. This roadmap comprises four key areas and reflects NSIRA's unwavering commitment to independence, professionalism, transparency and inclusiveness. The Agency's dedication to adapting to evolving challenges and innovate is demonstrated by its focus on technological advancement, robust security protocols, continuous learning, and streamlined internal services.

This strategic plan is not a fixed document but a living blueprint, guiding NSIRA in enhancing its existing commitment to accountability, and effectiveness. Each goal and objective stems from NSIRA's mission to remain the trusted eyes and ears of Canadians in the evolving landscape of security and intelligence activities.

Vision, Mission, Values

NSIRA

VISION

An accountable, transparent and effective national security and intelligence community that upholds the rule of law.

MISSION

To serve as the trusted eyes and ears of Canadians - through independent, expert review and investigation of the Government of Canada's national security and intelligence activities.

VALUES

INDEPENDENCE

We are fair and impartial - the trusted eyes and ears of Canadians.

PROFESSIONALISM

We are a highly trained, skilled and experienced workforce, producing rigorous and impactful work.

TRANSPARENCY

We shed light on national security accountability and contribute to the public conversation.

INCLUSIVENESS

We are a diverse workforce that values and benefits from a broad range of perspectives.

Strategic Goals

1. Rigorous Reviews

NSIRA recognizes its pivotal role in conducting thorough and impactful national security and intelligence activities reviews. By focusing on contemporary and evolving topical issues, and employing relevant methodologies and rigorous analysis, NSIRA ensures that its reviews, in aggregate, comprehensively assess these critical activities' legality, reasonability, and necessity. The commitment to maintaining the highest review standards is a prerequisite to serving as a trusted institution for Canadians. NSIRA's reviews offer valuable findings and recommendations to stakeholders and decision-makers and inform Canadian society in a transparent manner that supports effective democracy and government accountability.

2. Efficient Complaint Investigations

The focus on fair and efficient investigations underscores the agency's commitment to procedural fairness and impartiality, but also to access to justice principles that meaningfully empower complainants to be heard in a timely way and to see their matter investigated without delay. NSIRA diligently gathers and analyzes evidence, adhering to established investigative protocols and quasi-judicial best practices. The result is enhanced public trust and a robust contribution to upholding the rule of law.

3. Sustainable Corporate Infrastructure

Recognizing that rigorous reviews and effective investigations depend on mission support in the form of robust corporate and institutional infrastructure, NSIRA invests in cutting-edge technologies, specialized expertise, continuous learning, and a culture of collaboration. This ensures that information management and technology systems are optimized, that security postures reflect the highest standards, that human resources recruit and retain a workforce that is highly skilled, and that compliance to standard and financial management of the agency is efficient and agile. By providing a workplace that meets the highest expectations, NSIRA positions itself as capable of adapting to evolving challenges and making sustainable contributions to national security accountability.

4. Engaged Domestic and International Communities of Practice

NSIRA acknowledges the complexity of national security review challenges and the need for a collaborative approach. The emphasis on cooperation and engagement with domestic and international partners strengthens the effectiveness of reviews and investigations. In addition, by actively seeking opportunities to collaborate with Canadian and international accountability institutions, NSIRA contributes to developing global national security and intelligence review standards. The Agency becomes a vital participant in shaping the discourse on security, both at home and on the international stage. It becomes a recognized global centre of excellence in national security accountability and a global and national hub for a "community of review professionals". NSIRA also continues to be a "learning organization", drawing best practices from other bodies and jurisdictions into its own processes and procedures.

Objectives

Strategic Goal 1: Rigorous Reviews (R)

R1	Maintain independence, strong ethical standards and professionalism.
R2	Enhance review relevance through objective selection and prioritization criteria.
R3	Enhance review quality, in terms of depth, clarity, drafting and conciseness, including through key performance indicators.
R4	Enhance review production levels, including by developing processes that sustain a yearly production of 12 reviews.
R5	Develop mechanisms promoting reviewee's responsiveness to review requirements, including through communications with agencies and escalation of issues up to ministerial level.
R6	Maintain transparency and pursue accessibility to the review work.
R7	Increase accountability through tracking, dissemination and follow-up of NSIRA's findings and recommendations.
R8	Innovate review methodology through the development of new review tools with an emphasis on technology and sustainability.
R9	Maintain an evergreen review process which guides all aspects of NSIRA review.
R10	Employ appropriately skilled review teams.

Strategic Goal 2: Efficient Complaints Investigations (I)

I1	Enhance procedures and investigative protocols to maximize efficient and expeditious investigations while adhering to principles of procedural fairness and independence and the highest standards of professionalism.
I2	Maintain protocols for triaging investigations and establish key performance indicators for the efficient and prompt conduct of investigations.
I3	Implement advanced case management solutions that leverage automation and data analytics to enhance the efficiency of investigative workflows and track key performance indicators.
I4	Develop and implement standardized protocols for handling, analyzing, and storing digital evidence, ensuring a consistent and technologically advanced approach.
I5	Ensure accessibility of the rules of procedure and of the important legal precedents in a manner that enables “equity of arms” between the government and potential complainants and enhances access to justice.
I6	Increase accountability through tracking, dissemination and follow-up of NSIRA’s findings and recommendations.
I7	Move to integrate new streams of complaints into the investigation process in a fair and efficient manner, including by adopting novel approaches enabling investigation of high-volume complaints.

Strategic Goal 3: Sustainable Corporate Infrastructure (C)

C1	Explore best avenues to optimize NSIRA's legislative governance structure and prepare for such change.
C2	Establish strategic planning process to guide institutional priorities, use of resources and deployment of activities.
C3	Implement mechanisms promoting innovation, personnel development, retention and wellbeing and demonstrating personnel diversity and expertise in recruitment, training and retention.
C4	Develop and implement means for insights and ideas generated through domestic and international stakeholders to be shared and internalized within NSIRA, ensuring that NSIRA remains a "learning organization".
C5	Ensure the implementation of, and reliance on, the communication strategy.
C6	Develop and implement holistic information management infrastructure that supports current activities and allows for collecting, storing, retrieving and deleting information.
C7	Continue to strengthen security measures, including access controls, cyber security, surveillance systems, and facility security, to safeguard NSIRA's premises, assets and employees.
C8	Implement measures to streamline administrative processes, reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies and enhancing the speed and accuracy of internal operations.
C9	Invest in technology upgrades and innovations to modernize internal systems, ensuring that NSIRA leverages cutting-edge tools for improved operational efficiency.
C10	Optimize and implement technologies that facilitate secure and efficient remote work options, and regional access, ensuring flexibility and inclusiveness in NSIRA's workforce.

Strategic Goal 4: Engaged Domestic and International Communities of Practice (E)

E1	Formulate and implement a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy with domestic review bodies and agents of Parliament, international review community, media and academic community.
E2	Formulate and implement a comprehensive media relations and communications strategy that assists media in reporting meaningfully and accurately on NSIRA's work.
E3	Play an active role in developing global, national security and intelligence review standards by participating in international forums and collaborative initiatives.
E4	Develop and implement initiatives to enhance awareness and understanding of NSIRA's role, objectives, and impact among external stakeholders, including the public, government officials, and other review/oversight bodies.
E5	Continue to enhance staff-level expertise building through training and education initiatives, both internal and external, and ensure that these opportunities are broadly shared.