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**Report on Integrated Reporting Initiative**  
**February-March, 2004**

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**PSE**  
**March 26, 2004**





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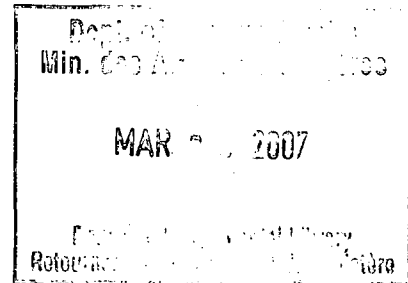


**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Reporting by missions, to be effective and relevant, needs to be constantly evaluated in terms of topics presented and readership. Simple questions need to be asked: "who is reading the reporting, and what are they doing with it?"

In February and March, 2004, PSE conducted a pilot reporting project involving a number of OGD's and Canadian missions in Southeast Asia. The essential objective of the project was to identify ways in which geographic divisions can better integrate their ongoing reporting with the needs of the wider government community. The trial project, which involved coordination efforts with five other government departments, identified a number of niche reporting areas where geographics and their missions overseas could, through a modest refocusing of their reporting efforts, generate valuable reporting for OGDs, and accordingly, adopt a more "whole of government" approach to their efforts.

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## **OBJECTIVES:**

In an increasingly complex environment, with more Federal government departments involved in international issues, there is growing emphasis on a whole of government approach to our international relations. Foreign Affairs Canada (FAC) /International Trade Canada (ITCan) have a global network of overseas missions with unique access to information and contacts in other governments, the private sector, and other specialised institutions. With regards to providing reporting to OGDs, many *already* receive substantial reporting from our departments. This is especially the case for specialised divisions dealing in areas of trade, environmental and other policy areas that touch upon the interests of a number of government departments. As well, some OGDs (Agriculture, Heritage, etc.) also already have their own overseas representation in some of the larger missions. Although a significant amount of Departmental reporting is shared with such departments as DND, CIDA, and CIC, these departments also have, to varying degrees, representation in overseas missions. In contrast, this pilot project focussed on other government departments that are involved in international issues but do not have overseas representatives in Canadian missions. As well, some of these departments receive few, if any, form of regular reporting from FAC and ITCan.

## **BACKGROUND:**

This pilot project was developed in the context of geographics and missions developing annual “reporting contracts.” These were developed to bring greater focus to the reporting generated by its missions, the Southeast Asia Division (PSE) of the Asia-Pacific Branch. The model contracts outline specific types of reports and reporting themes that the geographic headquarters division expect to receive during the year. The contracts were established to provide the missions with clear expectations of what headquarters believes is of value in reporting. This is especially important given that missions appreciate constructive feedback on their reporting. One of the frequent complaints by posts is that they are not clear who in Ottawa is reading their reports. On the other side of the coin, headquarters divisions may wonder why they receive certain reports from missions. The annual reporting contracts attempt to provide better two-way communication which will help the post concentrate its reporting resources on those subjects that have an audience and an impact.

As well, resources, both in terms of personnel and time at missions and headquarters are limited. Reporting is one of many functions undertaken by missions, and time spent on

reporting may be at the expense of other activities providing greater value. As well, personnel at missions, because of deep involvement in local issues, may get “carried away” in the detail provided on, for example, local politics, reports of which may be seldom read by anyone other than the desk officer at headquarters.

It was in this context that a pilot project that could feed into the next round of reporting contracts for Southeast Asia was launched. One of the long-term objectives was to identify processes by which OGDs could benefit from periodic reporting from some overseas missions, and how these reporting themes might be developed and included into the next cycle of reporting contracts. There is also the question of how some of our missions’ reporting can be modestly “reprofiled” to better reflect broader government interests and priorities, rather than narrow desk interests.

One of the current constraints on reporting is that not all reporting subjects of interest fall neatly into the traditional divide of “political” or “trade” related reporting. There is a clear interest in PCO, for example, to receive more analysis of pertinent national social and economic trends in key countries, rather than statistics and static “descriptions” of events, ie. elections, trade statistics, etc. This requires some new thinking in the kind of reporting missions undertake.

As well, much of our political reporting is descriptive in nature, and the “Canadian interest angle,” even if mentioned, can be tenuous. Neither does most traditional political reporting always feed into the true value added of our missions, their advocacy and public diplomacy work.

There has been substantial work through the e3 and New Approach initiatives to refine reporting tasking and formatting to minimize many of the ad hoc and irregular reporting demands that are placed upon missions, and it is hoped that the PSE pilot project build on these initiatives. In essence, the pilot project hopes to be a small first step to better identify potential client needs and seek feedback on those needs. It is hoped that this analysis can also contribute to current discussions of what are the broader government of Canada “interests” on the international scene.

## **THE PILOT PROJECT:**

Five federal departments with significant international interests but little or no representation in our missions were identified and approached for interest in the project; these were: Health Canada, Human Resources Development Canada - Labour Program, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Natural Resources Canada and Transport Canada.

In an initial meeting with their international affairs divisions, discussions were held to identify topics of reporting interest. The reporting topics varied from national regulation of reproductive technology, tobacco use and regulation, airport and port security, relations with indigenous peoples, among others. The tasking for the reports were then divided among the missions of the Southeast Asia geographic region reporting to PSE. In some cases, the OGDs provided PSE with detailed reporting objectives, guidelines and detailed questions related to the requested topics. Upon receipt of the mission's reports, these were then forwarded back to the requesting Department and follow-up discussions were held to review the usefulness and quality of the new reports.

## **FEEDBACK FROM OGDs:**

Feedback from the OGDs indicated that:

*There are new reporting topics or "strands" relevant to the broader government community that are not being reflected in traditional reporting, and that many of these strands can be integrated into FAC/ITCan reporting activities and contracts.* This is especially important in the area of national social and economic trends. Many of these topics do not readily fit into the traditional "trade" or "political" reporting categories. For example, health and health policy issues are one example. Labour-related issues represent another emerging topic. Issues such as "off-shoring" of jobs from North America to Asia have emerged as an important political and media subject. As such, it has a range of trade, political and social policy dimensions.

*Some of the OGD reporting interests can be integrated into ongoing FAC/ITCan reporting activities through modification of existing reporting templates.* For example, Labour Canada would like more background on implementation of the four core labour principles, and indicated that this topic can be easily added to the annual human rights report that must be submitted by most missions. If this route is followed, a relatively minor change to an annual reporting template means that the results from the annual report gain a wider inter-governmental

audience. INAC also suggested an expanded Indigenous Rights section of the human rights reports would be helpful.

*In many cases, special reports for OGDs at Canadian missions can be divided among the different embassy sections and can draw upon non-DFAIT resources.* In many developing-country missions, CIDA has a significant number of Canada-based staff that can be drawn upon. As well, the reporting can also draw upon the capabilities and contacts of locally-engaged staff. This can make better use of LES, many of whom have high levels of university education, expert understanding of issues, and would see opportunities to do reporting as a form of job enrichment.

*Developing a dialogue with other government departments is a worthwhile effort for geographic divisions regardless of the topics chosen for reporting.* Simply put, it is in the departmental corporate interest to demonstrate our ability to align a key dimension of on-going work (reporting) to the needs and interest of the broader government community. Some of the OGD officials commented that the pilot project represented the first time that FAC officials had contacted them to learn their interests.

*In developing their requests for reporting from our department, it is essential that OGDs be as specific as possible in the information they are seeking.* In many cases this involves the OGD developing up a detailed list of questions, with technical background to help the embassy staff in developing their reports.

*Some of the OGDs contacted indicated that they did not seek a regular stream of reporting on their subject interests.* Rather, they see the role of the mission as providing an initial report and identifying a contact. Once an initial contact is made by the mission, the OGD could do their own liaison electronically and through other means. This would greatly reduce the long-term burden on the missions and allow it to focus on “new” topics as they emerge.

#### **DETAILED COMMENTS FROM THE OGD'S:**

INAC had requested information on major indigenous communities in Asia, and their feedback is revealing: “*good exercise, good information and well laid out....relations with Asia are in their infancy, these reports provide us with the background we need to strengthen our knowledge of the area .... believe multilateral consultations on indigenous issues such as the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples have created trust which translates into greater credibility in the bilateral context.*”

It is interesting to point out the INAC has discovered through its experience in the Americas that exchanges on indigenous-peoples issues has become a very useful foreign policy tool - they have found bilateral cooperation on indigenous related issues or interest has built trust and contacts that have had a positive impact on discussions within multilateral fora such as the UN or OAS.

Health Canada was enthusiastic about the reporting it received from the pilot project. During last year's SARS crisis, DFAIT was critical in coordinating accurate and timely international reporting of vital importance to Health Canada. However, in the context of the pilot reporting project, Health Canada expressed an interest in gathering information on on-going policy priorities, and specifically, the wide topic of Assisted Human Reproduction, which covers such areas as in vitro fertilisation, stem-cell research, and cloning. The reporting is particularly timely as the federal government is currently developing legislation on Assisted Human Reproduction. This is a fast-changing and complex social policy issue influenced by medical and scientific research that is now going on in a number of countries.

The Health Canada contact indicated that much of their international focus has been on Europe. However, recently Asia has seen a number of unexpected breakthroughs in Assisted Human Reproduction, yet the Canadian network of contacts has been limited in the region. The pilot work resulted in reports from Bangkok, Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur (the latter still to come). Health Canada found the report from Singapore particularly valuable, as the Department had not been aware that Singapore was so advanced in this field. Although South Korea was not part of the pilot project, it has also recently been the site of major and unexpected research advances related to human cloning.

Health Canada observed that building understanding and contacts on Asian work on Assisted Human Reproduction is of value because it can facilitate building of alliances for international agreements. In general, Health Canada saw future collaboration with FAC as symbiotic in nature, as our overseas missions can also be used to disseminate Canadian information on Assisted Human Reproduction as Health Canada is currently preparing an information kit on the proposed Canadian legislation. Given Canada's multicultural and multi-faith social demographics, the Canadian approach to this sensitive legislation is of relevance to countries in Southeast Asia countries with similar multicultural and religious social environments.

An interesting element about reporting on Assisted Human Reproduction, and the building of contact networks in the process, is that this reporting can help brand Canada as a world leader in science and technology. A related "branding" of Canada is our leadership in the health field of anti-tobacco policies. As part of the pilot project, reports were received from some of the Southeast Asian missions on tobacco usage, production and government policies. Health Canada indicated that Canadian approach to curbing tobacco



usage and anti-smoking campaigns is seen by many countries as a world-leader and has been used by other countries as a basis for its own domestic legislation.

In the course of the pilot exercise, reports were also completed for Natural Resources Canada and Transport Canada. Both Departments indicated that they already received considerable reporting from FA Canada and IT Canada across a range of issues. In the case of Transport, some of their important international activity took place in the context of APEC and other multilateral organisations, with international transportation security and safety being two priority issues. The status of major regional airlines is of particular interest in the Asian context.

Human Resources Development Canada - Labour Program - expressed a strong interest in the issue of child labour. International negotiations on this issue are focussed at the ILO. However, one of the key concerns is the gap between national policies on child labour and actual enforcement. This is especially important in the poorer countries of Asia, where industries such as textiles and clothing are expanding to take advantage of low labour costs. Another issue of interest to the HRDC's Labour Program is the impact of a highly-competitive China on local labour conditions.

*Timely information on official policies of host governments appears to be a key value added element of reporting from our Departments to OGDs.* These sources can provide up to date information on policy developments that may not yet be in the public domain or media. Simply put, with their official status, in many instances Canadian missions have access where others do not. As well, reporting on policy developments from the missions which have direct access to government authorities provides OGD'S with intelligence that is extremely useful in presentations at, and negotiations with, multilateral agencies and fora. By gathering this information, Canadian delegations can demonstrate a greater awareness of conditions in other countries, adding depth to their interventions and enhancing their credibility

#### **OTHER OBSERVATIONS:**

*FAC and ITCan, as per New Approach and other reporting guidelines, must be careful to "push back" on reports seeking information that may be readily available from open sources (trade and policy publications, the internet, etc.).* In general, *data* of various sorts is readily available on the internet, specialised journals, or in the press, however, as mentioned, present or future policies of the host government may not.

*An important potential benefit of targeted and periodic reporting on specialised topics for OGDs is that missions can build up networks of contents on issues such as health and health policies which can be useful during times of crisis.* The fact that the missions have developed a relationship with host government specialised *prior* to calling on them during a crisis situation can provide Canada with special access and a greater degree of cooperation that would otherwise be the case. This is especially important in regions such as Asia where personal relationships built up over time are particularly valued over one-off “transactional” encounters.

*As much as possible, reporting for OGDs should be results driven, ie. feeding into a specific purpose or process.* There is clear need for greater coordination among the geographic and specialised divisions on reporting with OGDs. As mentioned, there is already a significant volume of shared reporting, especially in narrow, technical areas (air transport regulation, areas of trade policy, for example). For our Departments, this new orientation to reporting would mean doing slightly less traditional political reporting, and more reporting on specialised topics.

*It is important also to liaise closely with missions early in the planning process.* In some cases, there should also be a direct dialogue between the mission and the OGD in identification of topics and clarification of the reports’ parameters

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

This report should be circulated among missions in the region to solicit their feedback. A conference call with heads of mission to obtain their feedback and input into next steps would follow. Within geographic branches, divisions could select representatives to attend a planning meeting at the beginning of the autumn work cycle to identify OGDs with whom to partner.

Over the medium-term, also at the beginning of departmental “work cycles,” ie. early autumn, the new year, etc. It would be useful to have brief coordination meetings involving representatives of geographics, specialised policy divisions and OGDs to provide input into reporting priorities and interests. On a selective basis, based also upon feedback from posts and post resources, the specialised topics would be included into the post reporting contracts. In many respects, this work is one of managing expectations of OGDs, headquarters, and missions. An essential point is that our two departments need to take the initiative in contacting other departments and build relationships that will contribute to a wider audience for our reporting efforts.

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