



Management Review of Environment Canada's Youth Round Table on the Environment

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FINAL REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	v
1. Background.....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 The Youth Round Table on the Environment	3
1.3 Management Review Issues and Objectives	8
1.4 Organization of the Report	9
2. Methodology	11
2.1 Overview of Approach.....	11
2.2 Literature/Document Review	11
2.3 Key Informant Interviews.....	12
2.4 Working Session with EC Managers.....	14
2.5 Analysis and Reporting.....	14
3. Findings	15
3.1 Role and Importance of Youth Consultation.....	15
3.2 Impact of Having No Youth Consultation.....	16
3.3 Perceived Relevance, Benefits and Effectiveness of YRTE	16
3.4 Strengths and Weaknesses of YRTE.....	19
3.5 Suggested Improvements to YRTE	21
3.6 Management of YRTE	23
3.7 Future of YRTE.....	24
3.8 Benefits and Challenges in Consulting Youth	25
3.9 Best Practices and Features of an Ideal Youth Consultation Mechanism	28
3.10 Alternative Youth Consultation Mechanisms	32
4. Conclusions and Recommendations	37
4.1 Effectiveness of the YRTE	37
4.2 Improvements to the YRTE.....	38
4.3 Role of the YRTE	39
4.4 Recommendations.....	40

APPENDIX A: Interview Guides

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) was created in 1997 by former Federal Environment Minister Sergio Marchi. The mandate of the YRTE at its establishment was “to bring a youth perspective to environmental policy making and to advise the Department and the Minister on ways to involve more young people in environmental action at the community, national and international levels”¹. It is an active and non-partisan advisory body that brings together young Canadians of diverse regional, cultural, educational and linguistic backgrounds to learn more about the priority issues and the current initiatives at Environment Canada, provides an opportunity for youth from across the country to share ideas and experiences from their respective regions, and provides Environment Canada (EC) the opportunity to obtain input from Canadian youth into EC programs and policies and to get advice on ways to make these programs more accessible to youth. Members also recommend ways to reach out to the broader youth community, and provide recommendations to EC on environmental issues that are of concern to them and their peers. The Round Table operates via consensus and strives to positively contribute to Environment Canada’s mandate of improving environmental quality for all Canadians. The YRTE is an EC Program with a mandate that evolves to fill the needs of the Department. As such, updated Terms of Reference for the YRTE have been developed and will be revised and finalized based on input from this review.

Management Review Issues and Objectives

This study had three key objectives. First, the management review assessed the YRTE’s effectiveness; that is to say, whether it still contributes to the Department’s overall goals. More specifically, the issue is whether the YRTE contributes to the Competitiveness and Environmental Sustainability Framework (CESF). A key component for the CESF is the Education and Engagement Pillar, which is one tool for delivering CESF results. The purpose of this pillar is to harness the power of education for influencing individual behaviour as well as to increase Canadians’ environmental literacy leading to more sustainable decision-making.²

Secondly, the study identified possible improvements to YRTE management in order to achieve the Department’s youth awareness and engagement objectives. Alternatively, the option of replacing the YRTE with a more effective mechanism for reaching Canadian youth was given significant consideration.

¹ News Release, Youth Round Table on the Environment Announced, April 22 1997.

² The Canadian Environmental Network (2005). *The Education and Engagement Pillar of the CESF*. Online: http://www.cen-rce.org/eng/projects/Desd/relevant_documents/Education_engagement_pillar_cesf.pdf

Finally, the Department is currently preparing an Education and Engagement Strategy that includes a youth component. Therefore, possible roles that the YRTE could take on as part of this strategy were investigated during the working session with EC managers conducted as part of this review.

Methodology

The methodology to review the YRTE was comprised of three key qualitative lines of evidence, as follows:

- a literature/document review;
- 40 key informant interviews with five respondent groups, including EC employees, former YRTE members, previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, representatives of other federal government departments and non-governmental organizations that work with or are led by youth; and
- a working session with eight EC managers.

The lines of evidence enabled the gathering of information needed to address the study objectives. The literature/document review provided background information on the Round Table (which assisted with the interpretation of results) as well as information on other youth consultation/engagement initiatives. The key informant interviews provided a thorough understanding of the views of individuals involved in the delivery, administration and governance of the YRTE, as well as the views of outside experts. The working session gave EC managers who are involved/interested in youth consultation an opportunity to discuss refinements and future directions for the YRTE and other youth consultation/engagement approaches and also to hear about new ideas emerging from this review.

Findings and Conclusions

Effectiveness of the YRTE

Evidence from the management review indicates that the YRTE has made progress in achieving its mandate; however, low awareness and under-utilization of the Round Table within EC has limited its effectiveness. The YRTE has been successful at increasing youth involvement in and input into EC program development processes. Also, the Round Table has been successful as a venue to identify youth participants for Departmental and Ministerial events and activities, and a number of members have participated in national and international events. There is limited evidence to assess the extent to which the YRTE keeps the Department up-to-date on youth action regarding environmental and sustainability issues and provides advice on ways to reach a broader youth audience.

Evidence from this review indicates that the YRTE is supporting the work of the Education and Engagement Pillar, which is a key component of the Department's CESF. Specifically, findings indicate that the work of the Round Table has increased members' awareness of and involvement in environmental

issues. This evidence suggests that the YRTE is supporting the Education and Engagement Pillar's work to increase Canadians' environmental literacy leading to more sustainable decision-making.

Findings from the management review indicate that low awareness and utilization of the YRTE within EC and some operational weaknesses have limited the effectiveness of the Round Table. A majority of interviewees agree that awareness of the YRTE is low within EC; however, there is disagreement among key informant groups with regard to how the YRTE is perceived within the Department and whether EC received value for the time and money invested in the Round Table. In addition to the low awareness and under-utilization, a number of weaknesses with the operation of the YRTE have limited its effectiveness, including: lack of clarity surrounding the role of the YRTE within EC; insufficient feedback by EC staff to inform members of how their input was used; and a lack of knowledge among YRTE members regarding the operations of EC. The combined effect of these factors suggests that the YRTE has not been used as often or as effectively as it could have been by the Department.

Improvements to the YRTE

Evidence from the management review indicates that the YRTE should be continued, but improvements to the design and operations of the Round Table need to be made in order for it to better contribute to the Department's youth awareness and engagement activities.

In terms of improvements to the design of the Round Table, evidence suggests a need to revise and clarify the role and objectives of the YRTE. For instance, participants in the working session with EC managers indicate that the focus should be on educating and engaging members, so the work of the YRTE can feed into EC's Education and Engagement Strategy by providing input on the Department's key policy directions. In terms of the objectives, previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers indicate a need to revise the objectives to ensure a set of realistic, achievable objectives based on the capacity of the YRTE and to balance the need for the YRTE to pursue its own goals with the importance of having the YRTE work on priority issues for the Department. Evidence indicates that the role of the YRTE within the Department needs to be carefully defined in order to develop a role and set of objectives that are realistic both in terms of what the Round Table can contribute to the Education and Engagement Strategy and the opportunities it can provide for members.

A number of improvements to the operations of the YRTE were identified in the management review. The improvements focus on ensuring that the YRTE has sufficient resources and information to effectively meet the needs of the Department, and necessary processes are in place for the Department to effectively utilize the Round Table. Findings from the working session held with EC managers indicate that the management of the YRTE should be enhanced to better meet the needs of members and should feature experienced coordinators who would liaise between the YRTE and Departmental policy makers. Other improvements related to the Department's utilization of the Round Table include: increased awareness of and commitment to use the YRTE by EC staff; a "champion" for the YRTE within EC; increased opportunities for EC staff to interact with and mentor members of the Round Table; and improved feedback from staff who consult the YRTE on the degree to which and how the information was used.

Role of the YRTE

As indicated in the previous section, despite broad agreement on the continuation of the YRTE as well as the need to clarify its role, there is little consensus among key informants with regard to the ideal role for the YRTE. There is consensus across key informants relating to certain aspects of the YRTE that provides some insight into the future role of the Round Table. First, there is agreement by most key informants that the YRTE should be managed within the Department as opposed to reporting directly to the Minister's Office. Second, the ongoing nature of the YRTE was identified by key informants as an important benefit; however, the role of the YRTE will need to be integrated and complementary with other periodic youth consultation and engagement activities undertaken by the Department (e.g., surveys, focus groups and youth conferences). Third, a majority of interviewees representing former YRTE members and NGOs feel that EC would benefit from the use of other youth consultation and engagement mechanisms in Canada. On the whole, this evidence indicates that the YRTE should be managed within the Department as an ongoing mechanism that works in concert with other EC youth consultation and engagement initiatives and, where appropriate, works in parallel with other youth consultation mechanisms outside of the Department.

The working session with EC managers provides further insight into the role of the YRTE. Working session participants suggest that the focus of the YRTE should be on educating and engaging members of the Round Table, so the YRTE can support EC's Education and Engagement Strategy. Also, the YRTE should place more emphasis on providing input on key policy directions of the Department as opposed to program-specific issues. To support this education/engagement role, participants indicate the YRTE members will need to be given clearer direction and structure, and asked to provide input on specific, carefully chosen issues rather than the former "carte blanche" approach, which has not proven useful for the Department.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the management review of the YRTE, the following recommendations are made to the management of EC's Environmental Education and Youth Programs Division. It should be noted that these recommendations are not mutually exclusive; instead they are intended to be taken together in order to help determine both the substantive role of the YRTE and the Departmental culture and processes necessary to support this role.

1. **Clarify the role and objectives of the YRTE going forward.** Evidence from the management review indicates that the role and objectives of the YRTE within EC are perceived to be unclear by key informants. Further, there is little consensus across key informants as to what the ideal role of the Round Table should be. Findings from the working session with EC managers indicate that the YRTE should play a more definitive and strategic role within the Department that works in concert with EC's other youth engagement and consultation activities. Specifically, the YRTE should focus on providing input on key specific policy issues and directions of the Department, instead of program-specific issues. On this point, an open, in-depth discussion involving YRTE members and EC managers would facilitate a common understanding of a role for the YRTE that is desirable and possible, and would help set the

stage for a productive relationship. Given the importance of consulting youth on environmental issues, it will be important for EC to ensure that the role of the YRTE is broad, inspirational and engages youth in achieving the primary vision of the Department.

2. **Ensure the design of the YRTE supports its role and objectives.** The evidence from the review indicates that the Environmental Education and Youth Programs Division should ensure that the design of the Round Table supports its role and objectives and takes into consideration the suggested improvements and best practices identified. For example, evidence from the working session with EC managers indicates that the membership of the YRTE should focus on post-secondary youth (approximately 18 to 29 years old) who are not only environmental leaders but also leaders in other fields and who are making major consumer decisions that may have an impact on the environment. In addition, it will be important to consider the resources available to, and the capacity and expectations of, the members of the YRTE in designing the Round Table. For example, research with youth indicates that they want to be involved in activities that make a concrete contribution to society, allow them to learn and take action, and encourage the action of others.³ The design of the YRTE, therefore, will need to incorporate these types of activities.
3. **Increase awareness and utilization of the YRTE by the Department.** The management review found that the effectiveness of the YRTE is limited by the low awareness and under-utilization of the Round Table by the Department. It is suggested that the Environmental Education and Youth Programs Division take steps to increase the awareness of, and popularize, the YRTE within EC to ensure that there is commitment to use the Round Table. To this end, it is suggested that the Environmental Education and Youth Programs Division pursue various communication activities (e.g., articles in the Departmental newsletter, email updates, posters) as well as the participation of the YRTE in Departmental activities (e.g., staff retreats, committee meetings, strategic planning exercises) to increase its awareness within EC. In addition, the Division should ensure that a process is established to enable EC staff, especially senior staff, to consult the YRTE in an efficient and effective manner because the more the input of the YRTE is sought by senior managers within EC, the more aware employees across the Department will become of the YRTE. Here, the Division responsible for the YRTE will need to act as a liaison to facilitate this process.
4. **Enhance communications among YRTE members and between the YRTE and EC.** Evidence from the management review indicates that the Environmental Education and Youth Programs Division should consider improving communications with the YRTE. Specifically, the background information available to the YRTE should be improved to enhance members' ability to provide relevant and informed advice. Related to this, resources for the YRTE should be increased to better enable communication among members between face-to-face meetings and conference calls, which would maintain momentum and support collaborative projects. Also, the Division should consider taking steps to increase the number of opportunities for YRTE members to communicate and interact with EC staff. For example, a regular opportunity for two-way feedback between the YRTE and EC, in the form of an assessment and reporting cycle, represents a key process to enhance communications (as well as monitor the degree of utilization of YRTE input and effectiveness of YRTE operations). In addition, EC could consider creating a "champion" or role model for the YRTE within EC or a mentorship program could be developed to increase interaction between the YRTE and EC staff.

³ Canadian Policy Research Networks. *CPRN's Focus on Youth – Synthesis of Key Findings of Environmental Scan*. July 2004.

1. BACKGROUND

Established to gain input from youth on Environment Canada's programs and policies and on how to make them more accessible to youth, the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) is an active and non-partisan forum that brings together young Canadians of diverse regional, cultural, educational, and linguistic backgrounds. Concerns have been raised that the YRTE Program is not currently attaining all the objectives identified in its Terms of Reference. In order to discover why this may be the case and to help ensure that the Program is aligned with the Competitiveness and Environmental Sustainability Framework (CESF), Environment Canada (also known as EC) undertook this management review of the YRTE.

1.1 BACKGROUND

a) Youth and the Environment

There is much evidence indicating that Canada's youth are concerned about the environment, thus justifying efforts such as the YRTE to engage youth in addressing environmental issues. In recent years, EKOS has conducted a number of studies that have examined the views of Canadian youth on the environment. In the Wave 1 Report of EKOS 2005 *Rethinking Government* study, for example, results revealed that young Canadians are concerned about environmental issues. A strong majority of Canadian youth (84 per cent) feel that a clean environment is a very important goal for shaping federal government direction, while 85 per cent believe the federal government should place a high priority on the environment. In the same survey, two-thirds of Canadian youth also said they would like to see the federal government increase their involvement in the area of environment.

In the Wave 2 Report of EKOS 2005 *Rethinking North America* study, Canadians were asked a general question about the trade-off between environmental protection and economic development. Results revealed that young people are notably more likely than older Canadians to support environmental protection over economic development: 85 per cent of youth surveyed said the Canada should focus on the preservation and conservation of wildlife and the environment, even at the expense of economic development (compared to 76 per cent of Canadians overall who said this).

Findings from the EKOS 2004 *Rethinking Energy and Sustainable Development* study further revealed that the majority of Canadian youth surveyed believe the protection of the environment and public health should be a top priority for governments in Canada, rather than keeping consumer prices low or ensuring uninterrupted supplies of oil, gas and electricity. Respondents in the same study were also asked if they believed the quality of the environment has improved, deteriorated, or stayed the same over the last

10, 20 and 50 years. According to results, respondents under the age of 25 are considerably more likely than older Canadians to feel the quality of the environment has deteriorated over time.

Evidence that Canada's youth are both interested in and concerned about the environment can also be found in other Canadian publications. According to EnviroZine, EC's online news magazine, the environment is, along with health care and education, among the top three concerns voiced by youth in Canada⁴. Also, the 2004-2005 report on plans and priorities states that the federal government is generally seen to have a large role to play across all environmental issues, and this provides Environment Canada and its partner departments with a receptive public eager to see action taken on the environment, as well as being open to playing an active role themselves⁵.

b) Environment Canada

The Department's vision is a Canada where people make responsible decisions about the environment for the benefit of present and future generations. Its mission is to make sustainable development a reality in Canada by helping Canadians live and prosper in an environment that needs to be respected, protected and conserved. To this end, the Department undertakes and promotes Programs to:

- Protect Canadians from domestic and global sources of pollution;
- Conserve biodiversity and the ecosystems that support it; and
- Enable Canadians to adapt to weather and related environmental influences and impacts on human health and safety, economic prosperity and environmental quality⁶.

The most recent report on plans and priorities indicates that all of the Department's activities are aligned to the following key priorities:

- Environmental Sustainability Assessment;
- Environmental Conservation and Protection;
- Climate Change;
- Weather and Environmental Services; and
- Departmental Transformation.⁷

⁴ See website: http://www.ec.gc.ca/envirozine/english/home_e.cfm

⁵ Environment Canada (2004). *2005-2006 Report on Plans and Priorities*. Online: <http://www.ec.gc.ca/rpp/2004/en/toc.cfm>

⁶ Environment Canada (2003). *Environment Canada Performance Report for the Period Ending March 31, 2003*. Online: <http://www.ec.gc.ca/dpr/2003/en/c2.htm>

⁷ Environment Canada (2005). *2005-2006 Report on Plans and Priorities*. Online: http://www.ec.gc.ca/rpp/2005/en/Final_English_RPP.pdf

The YRTE is one of a number of initiatives carried out by Environment Canada in which youth can benefit. Others include EcoAction, the Atlantic Coastal Action Program, and the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species At Risk. As well the EnviroYouth pages on the Environment Canada website points out youth-directed promotional activities identified in EnviroZine⁸. These activities include: Scavenger Hunt, Energy Ambassadors, CO₂zilla, and the Climate Change for Youth web page⁹.

1.2 THE YOUTH ROUND TABLE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

a) Mandate, Role and Objectives

The YRTE was created in 1997 by former Federal Environment Minister Sergio Marchi. The mandate of the YRTE at its establishment was “to bring a youth perspective to environmental policy making and to advise the Department and the Minister on ways to involve more young people in environmental action at the community, national and international levels”¹⁰. During its first year of operation, members contributed their views on reaching youth via the Action 21 Plan and on the selection of Northern Star award winners. Additionally, they expressed their thoughts on issues of their own personal interest, including the Kyoto Accord and the status of caribou herds in the Yukon. The YRTE is an EC Program with a mandate that evolves to fill the needs of the Department.

The YRTE is an active and non-partisan advisory body that brings together young Canadians of diverse regional, cultural, educational and linguistic backgrounds to learn more about the priority issues and the current initiatives at Environment Canada, provides an opportunity for youth from across the country to share ideas and experiences from their respective regions, and provides Environment Canada the opportunity to obtain input from Canadian youth into EC programs and policies and to get advice on ways to make these programs more accessible to youth. Members also recommend ways to reach out to the broader youth community, and provide recommendations to EC on environmental issues that are of concern to them and their peers. The YRTE operates via consensus and strives to positively contribute to Environment Canada’s mandate of improving environmental quality for all Canadians. Note that updated Terms of Reference for the YRTE have been developed but will be revised and finalized based on input from this review.

⁸ http://www.ec.gc.ca/EnviroZine/english/issues/59/enviroyouth_e.cfm

⁹ <http://www.co2zilla.ca/home.html>

¹⁰ News Release, Youth Round Table on the Environment Announced, April 22 1997.

The Round Table's objectives are as follows¹¹:

- To increase youth involvement in Environment Canada program and policy development processes;
- To increase youth access to the Environment Minister;
- To increase youth interaction with Environment Canada staff;
- To support the ongoing relationship between Canadian youth and government;
- To create networking opportunities for youth and youth organizations; and
- To provide Round Table members the opportunity to have input into Environment Canada's priority issues.

Further, the Round Table's Terms of Reference outline that the mandate of the YRTE is to:

- Work with Environment Canada to provide input on issues of concern to the Minister;
- Keep the Department up-to-date on youth action on environmental and sustainability issues;
- Provide advice on the design and implementation of programs targeted to youth;
- Act as a venue to identify youth participants in departmental/ministerial events and activities; and
- Provide advice to Environment Canada on ways to reach out to a broader youth audience to engage them in issues.

Over the course of a one-year term, from September to August, the group meets up to three times a year in various locations across the country (e.g., Cantley, Que. and Edmonton, Alta in 2004-2005) to provide input on Environment Canada's Programs and policies and to advise on ways to make these Programs more accessible to youth. The group adheres to the following representation guidelines¹²:

- Reflect the diversity of Canadian society and be inclusive of aboriginal groups, under-represented youth, and minority groups, with a focus on the reality of young Canadians;
- Have participants aged 14 - 26, but this must remain culturally relevant, inclusive and flexible;
- Include diverse perspectives, values, interests in addition to gender, ability, regional, urban/rural, ethnicity, and language balance;
- Not exceed a total membership of 18 people, with the duration of each term lasting one year;

¹¹ Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) Terms of Reference, 2002.

¹² YRTE Terms of Reference, 2002.

- Have up to 5 members continue to sit on the Round Table for a second term to ensure continuity; and
- Have each member act as a conduit for information reporting back to their community and home organizations whenever possible.

The role and responsibilities of YRTE members (as outlined in the YRTE Terms of Reference) are to:

- Share information with their networks and/or communities;
- Represent themselves at all Round Table meetings, bringing forward relevant perspectives from their experiences, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, etc;
- Meet up to three times per year, with a minimum of two formal meetings. If a need arises for Environment Canada to consult on issues of national or regional interest however, another meeting may be set up;
- Participate in conference calls, with a maximum of one formal conference call per month. If a need arises, other conference calls may be set up;
- Attend all face-to-face meetings of the Round Table and devote a minimum of 3 hours a week for the YRTE;
- Focus on issues related to the work of Environment Canada;
- Keep Environment Canada aware of environmental issues that are important and relevant to Canada's youth; and
- Provide input into departmental initiatives and consultations.

b) Management and Operation of the YRTE

According to the currently proposed (though not yet approved) approach for operation of the Program, the YRTE is managed by the Education and Youth Programs Division of EC and members report to this same Division. The Division is the communication vehicle between the YRTE and the Department as well as between the YRTE and the Minister. Advice, recommendations and comments put forward by members of the YRTE are analyzed by the Education and Youth Programs Division staff and integrated where possible. As an advisory committee, the YRTE has no decision-making authority and is not responsible for the implementation of its advice, recommendations or comments. The Education and Youth Programs Division coordinates and manages the YRTE process including the logistics of meetings, communications between meetings, relations with the Department and the selection process, and covers all costs associated with meetings (including the travel costs of participants). Note that previously, for the time

frame of this management review, YRTE members sent documents (letters of opinions, reports) directly to the Minister's office. They did not go through the approval process described above.

The currently proposed YRTE selection process is impartial and members are selected based on their experience and on diversity requirements. The selection process is as follows:

- Call for applications via EC's youth web site and in collaboration with youth organizations from across Canada representing interest in the environment, economy and social sciences;
- Screening of applicants for mandatory requirements;
- Creation of a selection committee composed of two representatives from youth organizations, two former members and three EC staff involved with youth;
- The selection is performed with an evaluation grid that allows an impartial and objective evaluation; and
- Selection is based on gender, visible minority, ability, regional, urban/rural and language equity.

A total of 200 applications were received for the 2004-2005 term, of which approximately 40 were pre-selected for consideration. These candidates were then rated by members of the selection committee. Candidates were generally evaluated based on the following criteria¹³:

- Geographic location;
- Linguistic distribution;
- Cultural diversity;
- Connection to other youth, including participation in groups that are part of the Youth Environmental Network;
- Urban/rural distribution;
- Interest/understanding of environmental issues, relation to economic and social/health issues;
- Age distribution; and
- Eligibility (willingness to work, availability).

Each selection committee member then created a list of 13 candidates (given that five former members were selected to return for a second term) and classified the candidates from one to 13, where 13 indicates that the candidate would contribute most to the diversity and richness of the discussion. Environment Canada then tallied each candidate's numerical score. A final selection meeting was held by conference call with all selection committee members to develop a final list of candidates.

¹³ Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) Selection Process Guidelines, 2004-2005.

Each candidate selected is provided with an orientation package. The 2004-2005 orientation package provided members with the Terms of Reference for the YRTE, a list of their responsibilities as member, and contact information for other members. A “buddy system” was established whereby each new member was matched to at least one renewing member and each member was directed to contact the members in their “buddy” group by e-mail to break the ice before their first meeting.

Each year, YRTE members work within smaller groups to research issues in greater detail. The topics of these working groups are selected at the first YRTE meeting. For example, in 2004-2005, the YRTE chose to focus on Ecological Economics, Sustainable Living, Natural Resource Management, and Urban Spaces. Position papers are written on these subjects, and YRTE recommendations provided. The areas selected by the 2003-2004 YRTE were: Social and Environmental Justice, Green Economics, Urban and Rural Living Spaces, Climate Change, and Environmental Stewardship.

For the time frame of this review, the YRTE operated from September to September and had three face-to-face meetings per year — a meeting in October to form working groups, a meeting in March to develop ideas and a meeting in June to write the final report. These meetings are also generally supplemented by e-mail exchanges between members, conference calls (up to one per month as needed), and exchanges (by e-mail or phone) with the Round Table coordinator.

c) Obstacles and Future Direction

In 2004, the funding for the YRTE Program was reconsidered. As part of MAP's Long-Term Financial Strategy process, YRTE was identified as a potential Program for budget reduction. In an internal briefing note, four options were outlined as potential paths forward for the Program: 1) maintain the current Program for 2004-2005 with a view of refocusing the Program for next term; 2) postponing the decision on the YRTE Program and running it with only the five returning members; 3) reducing the number of face-to-face meetings to two (from three); and 4) cancelling potential reinvestment in the YRTE Program. The first option was selected and the YRTE continued to function for the 2004-2005 year, but was not renewed by EC for a 2005-2006 term.

At the second YRTE meeting in 2004-2005 (held in Edmonton in March of 2005), YRTE members also identified five obstacles they felt faced the YRTE¹⁴: 1) a lack of high-level information on EC decisions; 2) members are asked for reaction instead of input, and feel that they would like to be more involved in the design of EC policies and projects; 3) members are unclear on the role of YRTE, given changes in the Department and the coordination/management structure of the YRTE; 4) members believe that EC staff have low awareness or understanding of the YRTE; and 5) insufficient time is provided to share information and opinions to respond to requests.

The 2004-2005 Annual Report on the YRTE reinforces and builds on the obstacles identified in the second meeting, indicating that 2004-2005 was a difficult year for the Round Table, due to budget

¹⁴ Meeting Report, Second YRTE Meeting, Edmonton Alberta, March 11-15, 2005.

concerns, a late start, and staff changes. In the 2004-2005 Annual Report, the YRTE outlined recommendations to EC and the Government of Canada to ensure that Canadian youth continue to have a say in policies affecting them. These recommendations included¹⁵:

- That the YRTE be renewed;
- That knowledge of the YRTE, its role and capacity be increased among decision-makers within Environment Canada;
- That the YRTE be considered a serious body capable of advising on all issues within the EC mandate (and not only on youth-oriented issues);
- That YRTE be asked for input before decisions are made rather than reactions to decisions taken;
- Increase and improve the information flow from EC to the YRTE, including granting members access to the EC Intranet;
- Have EC decision-makers and senior management show leadership in their willingness to seriously consider YRTE advice through such actions as pairing YRTE members with decision-makers within EC, and ensuring regular updates on EC developments be sent to YRTE members; and
- Increase the autonomy of the YRTE.

1.3 MANAGEMENT REVIEW ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

This study had three key objectives. First, the management review assessed the YRTE's effectiveness; that is to say, whether it still contributes to the Department's overall goals. More specifically, the issue is whether the YRTE contributes to the Competitiveness and Environmental Sustainability Framework (CESF). The Framework's overarching objective is to attain the highest level of environmental quality as a means to enhance the health and well-being of Canadians, preserve the natural environment, and advance long-term competitiveness. The CESF is a national approach to facilitate transformational change in Canada to create a world-leading sustainable economy – an economy that recognizes that economic and environmental success go hand-in-hand.¹⁶ A key component for the CESF is the Education and Engagement Pillar, which is one tool for delivering CESF results. The purpose of this pillar is to harness

¹⁵ 2004-2005 Annual Report, YRTE, Section 4.

¹⁶ Environment Canada (2005). *2005-2006 Report on Plans and Priorities*. Online: http://www.ec.gc.ca/rpp/2005/en/Final_English_RPP.pdf

the power of education for influencing individual behaviour as well as to increase Canadians' environmental literacy leading to more sustainable decision-making.¹⁷

Secondly, the study identified possible improvements to YRTE management in order to achieve the Department's youth awareness and engagement objectives. Alternatively, the option of replacing the YRTE with a more effective mechanism for reaching Canadian youth was given significant consideration. Learning what other organizations have been doing in this regard contributed to addressing this issue.

Finally, the Department is currently preparing an Education and Engagement Strategy that includes a youth component. Therefore, possible roles that the YRTE could take on as part of this strategy were investigated during the working session with EC managers conducted as part of this review.

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report contains three additional chapters. Chapter Two describes the methodologies that were employed for the YRTE management review, including: literature/document review; key informant interviews; and a working session with EC managers. Chapter Three presents the findings of the management review, organized by the issues that were assessed. Finally, conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter Four.

¹⁷ The Canadian Environmental Network (2005). *The Education and Engagement Pillar of the CESF*. Online: http://www.cen-rce.org/eng/projects/Desd/relevant_documents/Education_engagement_pillar_cesf.pdf

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 OVERVIEW OF APPROACH

The methodology to review the YRTE was comprised of three key qualitative lines of evidence, as follows (described in the next sections of this chapter):

- a literature/document review;
- 40 key informant interviews with various respondent groups, including EC employees, former YRTE members, previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, representatives of other federal government departments and non-governmental organizations that work with or are led by youth; and
- a working session with eight EC managers.

The lines of evidence enabled the gathering of information needed to address the study objectives.

- The literature/document review provided background information on the Round Table (which assisted with the interpretation of results) as well as information on other youth consultation/engagement initiatives.
- The key informant interviews provided a thorough understanding of the views of individuals involved in the delivery, administration and governance of the YRTE, as well as the views of outside experts.
- The working session gave EC managers who are involved/interested in youth consultation an opportunity to discuss refinements and future directions for the YRTE and other youth consultation/engagement approaches and also to hear about new ideas emerging from this review.

In the remainder of this chapter, we describe the three individual lines of evidence that were employed in this review, along with the analysis and reporting stage.

2.2 LITERATURE/DOCUMENT REVIEW

The purpose of the literature/document review component of the study was to review existing EC-based sources of evidence in order to partially address various study issues. A brief review of internal documentation was completed in order to contribute to the development of the workplan and interview

guides for the management review. A more detailed review of documentation was also used to confirm and supplement information gathered through the interviews.

A large number of Program documents were reviewed for this study, including:

- Annual reports;
- Minutes of the three annual meetings;
- Reports, letters and documents written by YRTE members;
- Multi-year records;
- Departmental correspondence;
- Annual evaluations;
- Lists of members;
- Terms of Reference;
- Financial information; and
- Description of the YRTE selection process.

In addition to internal documents we conducted a scan to identify approaches used by other government and non-governmental organizations to engage youth in various social issues. An example of such an initiative is the Public Health Agency of Canada's Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, which brings youth together to discuss health and other issues of the day. In particular, the website features a case study examining the effectiveness of the YRTE to involve youth in public decision-making. The review, conducted by the Canadian Association for School Health, represents an important additional document to be reviewed.¹⁸ This scan was focused on uncovering descriptions of alternative approaches and (if available) evaluations of their effectiveness. This contributed to addressing the issue of lessons learned and best practices in youth engagement.

2.3 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Information gathered through key informant interviews helped to meet most of the objectives of the study. Both internal stakeholders and external “experts” were consulted. Interviews with stakeholders (i.e., EC employees, former members and coordinators) were focused mainly on perceived effectiveness of the YRTE mechanism in engaging youth and meeting EC needs, while interviews with individuals who do not have a vested interest in the Program (i.e., representatives of other federal departments and non-profit

¹⁸ *Selected Case Studies of Youth Involvement in Public Decision-Making*. Douglas S. McCall. Online: http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/7-18yrs-ans/participation_e.html.

organizations) were focused on how to better understand alternative/best youth education and engagement practices.

Interviews were conducted by telephone with 40 key informants representing key groups. The groups, along with the number interviewed and the major issues addressed, were as follows:

- **Environment Canada employees** (n=15) who have used the YRTE in the past or may have to use it in their work in the future, to address issues such as: knowledge of the YRTE; realized or potential benefits of the YRTE for EC Programs; perception of its role in the Department; and suggestions for improving the YRTE.
- **Former YRTE members** (n=10) to address such issues as: whether or not the YRTE had a positive impact on Round Table members in terms of community involvement, educational choices, and career decisions; perceived strengths and weaknesses of the YRTE; perceived contribution made to the Department, and suggestions for improvement.
- **Previous YRTE coordinators and managers** (n=3) to obtain their views on the appropriateness of YRTE's objectives when it was created and its potential for making a difference within the Department.
- **Representatives of other federal departments** (n=4) to gain an understanding of methods used by other federal departments to educate and engage youth as a means of identifying best youth engagement practices.
- **Representatives of non-governmental organizations** (n=8), comprising:
 - ◇ three organizations that work with youth, to obtain the views of experienced individuals representing non-governmental organizations on how best to educate and engage youth; and
 - ◇ five youth-led organizations active in environment, health and social involvement to obtain the youth perspective on how best to involve them in social issues such as the environment and health.

Semi-structured interview guides (see Appendix A) comprised of open-ended questions were developed for these interviews, based on the issues identified, an initial review of Program documents and input from EC Program staff. The guides were tailored to each respondent group, to ensure the best use of the knowledge and experience of each key informant.

An introductory letter was sent by EC to respondents to increase participation in the key informant interviews. The letter was sent to all key informants in advance of the interviews in order to inform them about the up-coming interview and the importance of their feedback to making the YRTE more relevant to future needs. The applicable interview guide was also sent in advance in order to allow each key informant an opportunity to prepare for the interview.

On average, each interview was 30-45 minutes in duration and all key informants were interviewed in their preferred official language. During the interview, EKOS representatives prompted interviewees to provide concrete examples corroborating the statements that they made. This increased the rigour of this methodology. Once interviews were completed, the evidence gathered was analyzed qualitatively and synthesized in a Technical Report.¹⁹

2.4 WORKING SESSION WITH EC MANAGERS

We facilitated a two-hour working session with eight EC managers, which was held at the Department's offices in Gatineau on July 13, 2006. Participants included two members of the YRTE management team as well as six other EC managers with some involvement, expertise or interest in youth consultation/engagement. The purpose of this session was to present highlights of the key informant interview findings to participants (so they could benefit from some new ideas) and then explore possible refinements to and future directions for the YRTE as well as other youth consultation/engagement approaches at Environment Canada. In particular, the potential role of the YRTE in the Department's Education and Engagement Strategy was addressed. The discussion was tape-recorded and summary notes were prepared for internal purposes. The key views expressed in the working session are included in the present report.

2.5 ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

Qualitative analysis was used to analyze the data from all methodological components of the review. Following the analysis of data from each line of evidence (review of literature/documents, key informant interviews, and the working session with EC managers), the evidence was integrated into the present report. A separate Technical Report on the detailed interview findings was also prepared.

¹⁹ The detailed interview findings are provided in *Management Review of Environment Canada's Youth Round Table on the Environment: Technical Report on Key Informant Interviews*. Submitted by EKOS Research Associates to Environment Canada, June 30, 2006.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH CONSULTATION

The majority of key informants representing previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, former YRTE members, EC employees, and NGOs feel it is very important for EC to consult Canadian youth on key Departmental issues and initiatives. Interviewees provide a variety of reasons for why it is important for EC to consult youth. The most frequently cited reasons include: cross-generational issues (i.e., youth are the leaders, decision makers and consumers of tomorrow and should have a say in decisions that will affect them); youth provide fresh, innovative ideas that are not constrained by conventional thinking; and youth are an important target group that are interested in the environment and tend to be under-represented in stakeholder consultations. Participants in the working session with EC managers agree that it is crucial for EC to consult with and engage youth, for reasons similar to those noted by key informants. A small minority of interviewees representing EC employees feel that it is only moderately important for EC to consult youth.

While interviewees feel it is important for EC to consult youth on key Departmental issues and initiatives, there is little consensus among interviewees with regard to the role of youth consultation within EC. A minority of interviewees, representing NGOs, indicate that youth should be consulted on issues such as their opinions and concerns, feedback on proposed programs, suggestions on how to reach youth, and policy decisions. A few interviewees representing former YRTE members indicate that youth should be consulted in the capacity of advisors, while a few representing EC employees indicate that youth should be consulted in their role as future decision makers and leaders.

Evidence from the document review indicates that EC's expectations regarding the YRTE are twofold: first, the YRTE is expected to contribute a youthful perspective to the Department²⁰; and second, it is expected to liaise with other youth as EC ambassadors.²¹ The document review suggests that the YRTE has been more successful at providing a youthful perspective to the Department; however, it has been less successful at liaising with other youth. For example, the YRTE has advised and consulted with a number of branches within EC (e.g., Climate Change Bureau Youth Outreach, National Office of Pollution Prevention (NOPP), and the Sustainable Development and Sector Relations Branch)²² providing feedback and advice on such issues as pollution prevention, climate change and sustainable development.²³ Although YRTE

²⁰ Final Report, 2003, p.1.

²¹ Backgrounder, 1998, p.1.

²² YRTE Summary of Activities, Members of the YRTE, 2000, p. 1.

²³ August Backgrounder, 2000, p.1.

members express an interest in liaising with other youth as an EC ambassador, they feel that this role is only feasible with the proper support from the Department.²⁴

3.2 IMPACT OF HAVING NO YOUTH CONSULTATION

Key informants identify a number of important benefits that would be lost in the absence of the YRTE or some other youth consultation mechanism. Interviewees representing previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, former YRTE members and EC employees indicate that the following would be lost:

- valuable, unique ideas and feedback of youth on environmental issues;
- point of contact for reaching youth, “taking the pulse” and increasing the awareness of youth and youth leaders;
- privileged, regular and ongoing access to youth to learn about youth awareness of and views on the environment;
- confidence of youth in EC and the positive image/reputation of EC among youth;
- credibility with youth as well as with partners (both nationally and internationally);
- ability to reach youth effectively through its programs; and
- opportunity to build the skills and capacity of youth and youth leaders.

Interviewees from NGOs indicate that the loss of the YRTE or some other consultation mechanism would negatively impact the future sustainability of EC policy decisions, programs and initiatives. Also, these interviewees indicate that loss of a youth consultation mechanism would result in adults speaking and making decisions on behalf of youth, which they regard as problematic because the decisions may not be made with the best interests of youth in mind and, ultimately, youth will face the outcomes of these decisions.

3.3 PERCEIVED RELEVANCE, BENEFITS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF YRTE

While the majority of interviewees representing previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, former YRTE members and EC employees agree that awareness of the YRTE is low within EC, there is disagreement among these key informant groups with regard to how the YRTE is perceived within EC. A

²⁴ Anderson 2, 2000, p.1.

majority of interviewees representing previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, and former YRTE members feel that the YRTE is positively perceived within EC; however, most interviewees representing EC employees believe that the YRTE is not well regarded within the Department. In particular, a number of EC employees report that the YRTE is viewed as a photo opportunity for the Minister rather than a serious consultation mechanism. Interviewees representing previous Coordinators and Managers and former members indicate that the YRTE is well perceived by those who have consulted with the Round Table.

Interviewees from across all key informant groups identify a number of benefits of the YRTE that accrue to both EC and YRTE members. Two former Coordinators and Managers of YRTE indicate that the benefits of the YRTE to the members outweigh the benefits to EC. While the YRTE provides EC with a youth-friendly reputation and enhanced credibility, these interviewees feel that this benefit is surpassed by the benefits to members, including: skill and capacity development; opportunity for international experience; a chance to meet scientists and program managers who are passionate about the environment; privileged access to senior officials; and the ability to provide input and feedback on policy and programs.

Interviewees representing former YRTE members and EC employees who were involved with the YRTE identify the following benefits of the YRTE to EC:

- valuable feedback and input on EC initiatives (e.g., One Tonne Challenge, Canadian Water Network, UN Conference in Montreal and World Summit on Sustainable Development);
- feedback, input and ideas on EC policies, positions and documents;
- guidance and feedback regarding changes to EC's website;
- pool of youth representatives to participate in consultation activities and events; and
- photo opportunity for the Minister.

While former YRTE members identify a number of benefits that accrue to EC from the YRTE, a minority of interviewees feel it is difficult to assess the impact of the YRTE due to a lack of feedback from those who consulted with them.

In addition to these benefits, former YRTE members identify a number of positive impacts resulting from their involvement in the Round Table. A majority of interviewees indicate that their involvement positively affected their knowledge and understanding of EC. On this point, interviewees report the following impacts from their involvement: increased their knowledge of EC, gave them a better understanding of EC's operations and programs, and increased their awareness of the policy making process. Moreover, a majority of interviewees feel their involvement in the YRTE positively affected their involvement in environmental issues in the following ways: helped to focus interests on specific environmental issues (e.g., urban sustainability); broadened interests in environmental issues (e.g., Northern issues, water and air quality and environmental education); increased awareness of other youth environmental organizations (e.g., Youth Environmental Network and Young Environmental Professionals); altered their perspective of the important environmental issues both nationally and internationally; and

learned a lot from other members about environmental issues in other parts of Canada. Related to this, a majority of interviewees indicate that their involvement in the YRTE has positively affected their education citing the following impacts: directed studies towards environmental issues; increased interest in environmental studies; focused interest for subsequent education at the graduate level; “re-invigorated” interest in the environment; provided impetus to pursue a degree in environmental studies; and assisted with academic pursuits at the time.

The findings of the document review corroborate the benefits of the YRTE identified by former members. In particular, the review of documentation indicates that members report the following benefits from their involvement: meet and network with environmentally-conscious youth from across Canada; learn about the environmental issues from various regions across Canada; have input into the policy process and learn about how government works; and, have opportunities to take part in interesting projects, conferences, and events.²⁵ In addition, the uncertainty by members with regard to the impact of the YRTE is supported by evidence from the document review, which indicates that expectations of members relating to the capacity of the YRTE to influence the Department vary according to their experience with the Round Table.²⁶

There is disagreement between key informant groups regarding whether EC received value for the time and money invested in the YRTE. A majority of interviewees representing previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, and former members feel that EC received good value for its investment in the YRTE. In particular, previous Coordinators and Managers indicate that the benefits to members were worth the time and money invested in the YRTE. A majority of respondents representing EC employees, however, indicate that EC did not receive value for the time and money invested in the Round Table given the lack of widespread use of the YRTE by the Department.

While interviewees representing other federal departments and NGOs were not asked to comment on the effectiveness of the YRTE, they identify a number of benefits that result from youth consultation. A majority of respondents representing NGOs feel that it is relevant and useful for EC to have a permanent youth advisory committee; however, a minority indicate that it is important to ensure that youth are involved in meaningful work. A majority of respondents from other federal departments feel that a permanent youth advisory committee akin to the YRTE would be beneficial to their programs and department. Interviewees identify the following benefits of a permanent youth advisory committee:

- increases department’s understanding of youth and youth issues;
- ensures that programs address issues and concerns of youth;
- benefits the public because youth, as future decision makers, have a role in shaping policy and programs;

²⁵ YRTE Take 2 Assessment, 2003, p.1.

²⁶ Public Health Agency Canada Report on the Environment Canada Youth Roundtable, 2005, p.3.

- encourages youth to participate as a key partner in environmental initiatives; and
- assists youth skill and capacity development.

3.4 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF YRTE

a) Strengths

Key informants identify a number of strengths of the YRTE associated with its membership and operation. Interviewees representing previous Coordinators and Managers, former members, EC employees and NGOs attribute many of the strengths of the YRTE to its membership, including:

- skills, experience and expertise of members;
- diversity of membership (i.e., region, age, ethnicity, background);
- commitment and energy of members;
- members are able to learn quickly and ask challenging questions;
- youth are creative, provide fresh ideas, take a holistic approach to political action and tend to think long-term; and
- evolution, growth and skill development of members.

Previous Coordinators and Managers, former members and EC employees also identify a number of strengths relating to the operation of the YRTE:

- “carte blanche” approach of the YRTE whereby the members choose which issues to pursue and how;
- opportunity to discuss key environmental issues with senior EC officials;
- serves as a reminder to EC of the importance of the environment to youth;
- organized opportunity for informed and interested people to comment on EC policy;
- well-managed by EC staff, who made it easy to consult with YRTE; and
- YRTE plays a “pollination” role within the broader youth community, with members serving as EC champions.

b) Weaknesses

Respondents representing previous Coordinators and Managers, former members and EC employees identify a number of common weaknesses:

- lack of awareness of the YRTE within EC;
- lack of clarity surrounding the role of the YRTE within EC;
- no feedback by EC staff to inform members of how their input was used; and
- YRTE members lacked knowledge regarding the operations of EC.

Other weaknesses, identified by previous Coordinators and Managers and former members, include: the YRTE was not consulted as much as it could have been; poor communications between EC and the YRTE; disconnect between the work of the YRTE and the work of the Department; current objectives unrealistic given limited resources of the YRTE; and a lack of continuity year-to-year which prevents issues from being moved forward. In addition, interviewees representing NGOs identify two main weaknesses of the YRTE: it is not representative of the broader base of youth that EC is attempting to engage; and it is not readily apparent to what degree youth are included in the development of Departmental policy or programs.

Some of the weaknesses identified by key informants are corroborated by findings from the review of program documentation. Evidence from the document review indicates that both YRTE members and management have struggled to understand their role in the Round Table.²⁷ In terms of communication, the review of program documentation indicates that ineffective communication has posed a barrier to the YRTE's progress from year-to-year; members complain about feeling "out of the loop" and requiring a stronger sense of connectedness with the group and the Department.²⁸ In particular, the document review indicates that members feel like outsiders when consulted by EC officials and report the following weaknesses: insufficient information on EC officials and their activities; information provided too late; lack of knowledge by EC staff on how to consult youth (i.e., they end up talking "at" members and do not appear to be truly interested in the youth perspective); and a need for one-on-one meetings between the YRTE and other EC officials (e.g., Deputy Ministers, Assistant Deputy Ministers and Directors from interesting divisions in the regions).²⁹ Related to this, members at YRTE's third face-to-face meeting in 2002 expressed a need for some returning members to take a more active role in Round Table discussions in order to provide input based on their previous experience with the YRTE.³⁰

²⁷ Public Health Agency Canada Report on the Environment Canada Youth Roundtable, 2005.

²⁸ YRTE Take 2 Assessment, 2003, p.2.

²⁹ Returning Members, 2000, p. 1.

³⁰ June 13 Strategic Discussion 1, 2002, p. 2.

3.5 SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS TO YRTE

Interviewees suggest a number of improvements to the YRTE, which differ according to their involvement with the Round Table. Previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers indicate a need to revise the objectives to ensure a set of honest, achievable objectives based on the capacity of the YRTE and to balance the need for the YRTE to pursue its own goals with the importance of having the YRTE work on priority issues for the Department. Interviewees representing former YRTE members and EC employees indicate that communications relating to the YRTE need to be improved. EC employees feel there is a need for more effective communications to raise awareness of, and ensure there is commitment to effectively use, the YRTE within the Department. Former YRTE members indicate a need to popularize the YRTE with EC staff members and ensure that EC staff members who use the YRTE provide feedback on how the advice was used. A majority of respondents representing NGOs suggest that EC should operate the YRTE in parallel with existing organizations that function to engage youth.

Other improvements suggested by interviewees include:

- a well-qualified instructor who has experience working with and motivating youth, and an interest in environmental issues;
- an information session for members at the beginning of the term to learn how the YRTE, EC and the federal government function;
- a broader recruitment of members to include youth leaders from sectors other than the environment;
- a “champion” for the YRTE within EC;
- regional liaisons for the YRTE to increase awareness in the regions; and
- opportunities for EC staff to interact with and mentor YRTE members.

In terms of improvements to communication, the review of program documentation indicates a perceived need by YRTE members for the following improvements to the YRTE's internal communications:

- more frequent and improved communication between YRTE members (e.g., bi-weekly updates, more frequent conference calls and face-to-face meetings);
- need to stress open and honest communication; and
- increased feedback regarding YRTE progress.³¹

³¹ YRTE Take 2 Assessment, 2003, p. 2.

On this point, it should be noted that EC made an attempt to rectify the YRTE's communication issues in 2002³²; however, documentation also reveals that members of the Round Table continued to voice concern over ineffective communication in 2005.³³ In addition, two case studies conducted on the YRTE indicate that members of the Round Table perceive a need to clarify the role of the YRTE within the Department.^{34,35}

The consensus among the participants in the working session with EC managers is that the YRTE is in need of major refinements if it is to be retained as EC's primary, ongoing youth consultation/engagement mechanism, and that it definitely would need to be used in conjunction with other periodic consultation and engagement approaches. The improvements suggested by working session participants correspond to those identified by the key informant interviews and document review, including:

- **Membership:** The Round Table should be composed of “young adults” aged 18 to 29 (or an age range approximating this) – youth who are at least at a post-secondary level and are making major life decisions and purchases (e.g., car, home). Members also need to have leadership abilities, but they should include not only environmental leaders but leaders in other areas as well (e.g., business, science). Younger youth at a high school age are also crucial for EC to educate, engage and consult (e.g., to influence their major lifestyle choices that may have an impact on the environment), but this is not the most suitable role for the Round Table.
- **Role and Objectives:** The role and objectives for the YRTE need to be clarified. The focus should be on educating/engaging members, so the YRTE can feed into strategies and policies. They should be invited to provide input on key policy directions of the Department, but not so much on program-specific issues because each program area conducts its own consultations and public opinion research when designing and evaluating/reviewing programs. (There is no need to duplicate these efforts with the non-representative sample of YRTE members.) Members need to be given clearer direction and structure, and asked to provide input on specific, carefully chosen issues; the former “carte blanche” approach, whereby members had a lot of flexibility in selecting issues and how to address them, has not proven useful for the Department.
- **Communications:** EC needs to do a better job at educating YRTE members and providing them with the necessary background information and clear questions on specific issues (as well as time to review this material), so that they can provide informed, relevant views that are linked to policy decisions being made by the Department.

³² Environment Canada's Youth Round Table on the Environment: Communications Report, 2002.

³³ Evaluation, 2005, p.1

³⁴ Public Health Agency Canada Report on the Environment Canada Youth Roundtable, 2005.

³⁵ Re-focusing the Lens: Assessing the Challenge of Youth Involvement in Public Policy. A joint project of: The Ontario Secondary School Students' Association and the Institute on Governance, June 1999.

- **Feedback and Engagement by EC Staff:** EC has to devote effort toward better engaging policy makers in the youth consultation/engagement process (which will likely require some cultural change in organizational policy units). Policy makers need to help select issues on which YRTE members are consulted, need to understand and appreciate the value of youth input, and need to provide feedback to youth members as to how their input was used in the policy process.

3.6 MANAGEMENT OF YRTE

Most interviewees representing previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, and EC employees indicate that the YRTE should be managed within the Department instead of having it report directly to the Minister's Office. An interviewee representing previous Coordinators and Managers indicates that EC might consider making the entire Department responsible for the initiative, with each of the 14 Departmental groups, including regional offices, acting as a "sponsor" for a member of the YRTE. Each Departmental group would be involved in the selection and evaluation process, but would transfer their "sponsor" funds to the Environmental Education and Youth Programs Division for the operation, maintenance and infrastructure of the YRTE. Interviewees representing EC employees feel that having the YRTE managed within the Department would: strengthen the link between the YRTE and Department staff, policy and programs; make it easier to create awareness, and encourage use, of the YRTE; and better serve the Department. A few regional EC employees indicate that, regardless of the approach taken, it is extremely important to create awareness of and access to the YRTE within the regions. On the other hand, a few EC employees believe that the YRTE should remain attached to the Minister's Office because it is more effective at the political level and is still able to serve the needs of the Department. Two previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, who support having the YRTE managed within the Department, feel that it is very important to continue to have the Minister meet with YRTE members and use the YRTE or its members in international fora. Interestingly, these two interviewees perceive that the YRTE is already managed within the Department.

Likewise, participants in the working session with EC managers feel that the YRTE would be best managed within the Department, which will help link the Round Table to EC's Education and Engagement Strategy. The Partnerships and Consultations Division can play a supporting role to assist the Public Education and Outreach Directorate as well as program areas with their consultation efforts. Also, participants in the working session with EC managers indicate that the approach to managing the YRTE should be fine tuned in order to cater more effectively to the needs of its members and ensure the future success of this mechanism. Simply put, management of the YRTE should facilitate the role they expect to be played by members and actively assist these young adults to meet the predetermined set of objectives. For example, experienced youth coordinators should liaise between the members of the YRTE and policy makers in the Department.

The document review indicates that the accountability of members and a lack of structure have been ongoing problems for both YRTE members and the management team. Significant problems relating

to the accountability of members were encountered by the YRTE in 1999, which resulted in a letter from the Coordinator to remind members of their commitment to the Round Table.³⁶ Further, YRTE members reported a need for better guidelines regarding the accountability of members and the ability of members to hold other members to account for inaction or lack of participation.^{37,38} With respect to the structure of the Round Table, evidence from the document review indicates that concerns relating to the YRTE's lack of structure have been ongoing since 1999.³⁹ In 2002, members voiced a need for more structure for YRTE activities⁴⁰, which was reiterated in 2005 when members reported a shortcoming with the facilitation of the meetings and a lack of guidance from management.⁴¹

3.7 FUTURE OF YRTE

The majority of previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, former Round Table members and EC employees suggest that the YRTE should be continued, as opposed to abandoning it to pursue an alternative approach. EC employees stress that discontinuing the Round Table would send a negative message to youth and force EC to start over. Several also note the value of a permanent, ongoing mechanism if youth are to be consulted. A permanent mechanism institutionalizes youth consultation as part of the Departmental culture, ensures that a mechanism is available when needed, and enables greater continuity in membership which in turn provides greater depth of knowledge and engagement.

Consistent with the views of key informants, the majority of participants in the working session with EC managers agree that the YRTE should probably be maintained, but only with significant improvements, as noted in Section 3.5. They also stress that, in addition to this ongoing mechanism, EC should use other complementary approaches on a periodic basis. Other useful consultation and engagement approaches include consultations on program-specific issues, public opinion research (e.g., surveys and focus groups), and a “youth conference” on specific key issues of concern to EC – ideally every couple of years or so and in each region (if feasible). Participants note that the Canadian Policy Research Networks recently conducted this type of youth conference.

Most interviewees supporting the YRTE also suggest that refinements need to be made to the current Round Table mechanism. Major suggestions include the following:

- Previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers indicate a need for improvements to the consultation and communication aspects of the YRTE.

³⁶ Letter to YRTE Members, April 17, 2000.

³⁷ Returning Members, 2000, p.1.

³⁸ YRTE Take 2 Assessment, 2003, p.2.

³⁹ Evaluation of Meeting, September 16-20th, 1999, p.2.

⁴⁰ June 13 Strategic Discussion 1, 2002, p.2.

⁴¹ Evaluation, 2005, p.1.

- Former YRTE members see a need to involve more youth from various regions around Canada; branch out to other Canadian youth by working in parallel with environmental NGOs; include fewer total members, but more members who are part of other environmental networks (e.g., Sierra Youth Coalition); and utilize a more concrete and established structure from year-to-year.
- EC employees feel there is a need for greater Departmental commitment to using this mechanism and consulting youth. In addition, they suggest that: the YRTE should connect to other youth processes nationally and internationally for broader input/consultation; the Round Table could benefit from an examination of best practices in youth consultation nationally and internationally; and the YRTE should encompass other federal departments that deal with environmental issues, in particular, Natural Resources Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. It is also suggested that a virtual network of youth via the Internet could be used in combination with or as an alternative to the YRTE, as long as this virtual network includes an annual event or summit to focus energy and address a key issue.

A minority of EC employees are uncertain or do not believe that the YRTE should be continued. For example, one interviewee argues that the YRTE should be discontinued because it has not been used effectively by the Department. Others suggest that public opinion surveys of youth or reliance on existing youth networks would be sufficient, rather than maintaining a permanent EC-specific mechanism. Finally, one employee feels that the general approach to youth consultation should better reflect the resources invested and methods used by EC in consulting other key audiences.

3.8 BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES IN CONSULTING YOUTH

a) Benefits

The major benefits of youth consultation in general noted by previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, former YRTE members and EC employees are as follows:

- provides insights to help build awareness of environmental issues and change consumer behaviour;
- provides a new perspective and inspiration to EC because youth bring passion, enthusiasm and realism to environmental issues;
- highlights inter-generational differences and helps to resolve these differences;
- contributes original and novel ideas not influenced by conventional thinking;

- ensures that citizens who will be impacted in the future by current decisions are able to participate in the decision making process;
- connects EC with an important segment of the Canadian public and increases the scope of the Department's consultation activities;
- enhances EC's credibility and image;
- plays an important role in the development of programs and materials aimed at youth, ensuring that educational and informative materials are relevant to this audience;
- provides youth input, perspectives and a "reality check" on Departmental strategic goals, policies, and programs, which helps to ensure that EC remains relevant and its programs and policies are accountable to future generations; and
- helps to develop "environmental stewards" for the future and encourage behaviour supportive of environmental sustainability.

Similarly, interviewees representing other federal departments identify the following benefits to program and departmental objectives from youth consultation and engagement:

- helped the department to design a better website that appeals to youth;
- enabled the department to learn how to better adapt and develop programs to meet the needs of youth; and
- influenced departmental decision making in the development of policies, programs and services.

b) Challenges

The key challenges associated with youth consultation identified by previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, former YRTE members and EC employees include the following:

- limited time/capacity of youth to participate and difficulty in getting their one- or two-year commitment, as youth tend to move around a lot and are busy with school, work and other engagements;
- youth can lack experience, knowledge and appreciation for the complex nature of both environmental issues and government processes, so they need to be provided with the necessary background information on the issue/program of concern in order to overcome any misconceptions they may have and ensure that their feedback is informed and relevant;
- difficulty in maintaining good communications with members and arriving at a consensus via phone or online, so it is necessary to have some face-to-face meetings;

- using and incorporating youth ideas into decision making – there is a need to be clear about how the information will be used and to develop a mechanism to obtain and use youth input;
- managing the expectations of youth – there is a need for alignment between the interests of youth and EC priorities, and youth must be given clear expectations of how their input will be used otherwise they may become frustrated;
- the difficulty in establishing a relationship between the Department and youth in which each feels confident and understands their respective role;
- ensuring widespread knowledge and take-up of any consultation mechanism throughout the Department;
- youth input/expertise may not always be recognized, appreciated and valued (e.g., given the scientific culture of EC);
- the need for “true” consultation (i.e., ongoing dialogue whereby youth input and feedback informs an issue or decision) versus “token” consultation (i.e., whereby youth are only asked for reaction or feedback on a decision/position that has already been taken);
- ensuring adequate representation of the population of Canadian youth (e.g., deciding upon the age range of members and whether to include only environmental leaders or a greater diversity of youth);
- knowing how to use the input of a mechanism like the YRTE because, unlike other specific stakeholder groups, Round Table members have a variety of views on environmental issues;
- the fact that it is impossible to consult all stakeholders in making strategic decisions, and youth are only one stakeholder group and not necessarily a top priority; and
- the time and expense involved in consulting youth.

Interviewees representing other federal departments identify some similar challenges posed by youth consultation:

- maintaining the interest of members – youth mature, move on and become interested in other activities;
- turnover among membership – there is a need to replenish membership due to turnover;
- scheduling activities – this can be a challenge because youth have busy schedules (i.e., school, sports, and work) and competing interests; and
- communication with members – geographic separation of members, different time zones and reliance on the Internet and telephone for communication and collaboration mean that it is difficult to develop relationships and complete collaborative projects.

The review of literature on youth consultation identifies a number of common barriers to effective youth participation, which correspond to those identified by key informants and participants in the working session with EC managers:

- false and negative assumptions about the abilities and insights of youth;
- youth inexperience with successful participation in decision making;
- resistance of organizations and individuals to change;
- attempts to fit young people into adult structures;
- tendency to identify youth participation with one person in the agency rather than recognizing it as a collective responsibility;
- the slow pace of change;
- turnover among young people; and
- the location and times of meetings.⁴²

3.9 BEST PRACTICES AND FEATURES OF AN IDEAL YOUTH CONSULTATION MECHANISM

a) Best Practices

Interviewees identify a number of best practices that pertain to all aspects of youth consultation mechanisms. The following are the major best practices identified:

- One interviewee representing previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers suggests the following best practices for coordinators: be a strong leader; know what he or she is talking about and be able to keep the group on task; actively involve members and do not waste their time; and do not be afraid to be frank with members about the objectives of the consultation and how their input or feedback will be used.
- Former YRTE members identify the following best practices for youth consultation mechanisms: actively engage and involve youth in activities; regular conference calls to maintain momentum and address issues as they emerge; access to resources (i.e., financial and expertise) to enhance the capacity of youth; toolkits for youth entering consultation programs to prepare them for the position; and merit-based selection of members for consultation to ensure that informed youth are consulted.

⁴² Working with Young People: A Guide to Youth Participation, Canadian Mental Health Association, 1995.

- A number of EC employees indicate that it is important to ensure that consultations are meaningful and that youth do not feel that they are political pawns or being consulted as a token measure. Related to this, several employees also note that it is important to identify specific issues on which to consult, and that youth should be consulted on topics where they can actually have an impact. One respondent identifies the importance of establishing clear roles and responsibilities for EC and youth involved in consultation as another best practice. A few respondents identify a need to prepare youth for consultation on an issue, by providing them with necessary background information. Several employees also suggest optimizing the use of information technology to increase communication among youth members and decrease the costs involved in meeting in person. A few interviewees emphasize the importance of ensuring diversity in representation (involving participants with different backgrounds and values).
- Interviewees from other federal departments identify a number of best practices relating to the operation of youth consultation mechanisms including: consultations should be held at appropriate times for youth and feature informal discussion and fun activities; it is important to engage youth in a dialogue; allow youth to develop priorities and support what youth deem to be important; events organized by youth for youth seem to work best; and ensure that the mandate and expectations of the consultation exercise are clear.
- The majority of NGO interviewees agree that providing youth with the proper tools required to produce expected results is an important best practice. Most NGO interviewees suggest that it is efficient and cost-effective to use existing youth-led organizations and organizations that work with youth to recruit members rather than “reinvent the wheel.” The majority of interviewees indicate that there is no “ideal participant”; instead it is important to have a variety of youth with different profiles. In terms of the role for youth, most respondents suggest that youth prefer a hands-on approach that appeals to their creativity and yields tangible results. In addition, several interviewees note that youth need to feel that they are involved and making a difference.

b) Features of an Ideal Youth Consultation Mechanism

As mentioned above, the majority of interviewees support the continuation of the YRTE, therefore their comments regarding the ideal youth consultation mechanism tend to be in the form of improvements on the YRTE. Interviewees representing previous Coordinators and Managers, former YRTE members, and EC employees indicate that the YRTE must have a clear role and set of objectives. As already noted, one previous Coordinator/Manager expresses a need to refocus the YRTE’s objectives to arrive at a set of honest, achievable objectives for both the YRTE and EC that takes into consideration the capacity of the YRTE. Employees note that the YRTE should have clear objectives on what it will accomplish each year, what consultations will occur, and what outputs will be produced and communicated to EC staff. Interviewees representing previous Coordinators and Managers and former YRTE members

indicate a need for coordination between the YRTE and EC to ensure that the Round Table has goals and objectives that meet both the interests of the members and the priorities of EC.

In terms of the role and services of the YRTE, some EC employees suggest that the Round Table be utilized to develop or improve programs and materials targeted at youth, as well as to obtain youth input on broader Departmental priorities and policies. In addition, a couple of respondents suggest that the role of the YRTE be expanded to focus on engagement as well as consultation. A couple of EC employees also suggest strengthening the networking aspect of the YRTE. Half of the interviewees representing former YRTE members indicate that the role of the YRTE should be to bring together youth to discuss and debate environmental issues and provide EC with ideas, input, feedback and criticism relating to current programs, policies and strategies.

Interviewees representing previous Coordinators and Managers, and EC employees provide a variety of perspectives on how the YRTE could be managed within the Department. The major points are as follows:

- Two Coordinators and Managers indicate that the YRTE should be managed as a non-political mechanism based on a neutral selection process that aims to create a diverse, representative and interested group of youth. They feel that the face-to-face meetings of the YRTE are essential to its operation as a youth consultation mechanism because this approach produces higher quality information and feedback, and better enables group interaction. On this point, one interviewee indicates that the EC staff members who consult the YRTE should be required to report back to the Round Table on how and to what extent the input was used.
- EC employees identify a number of key components to effectively manage the YRTE, including: use of information technology; clear feedback loops; and greater exposure of YRTE members to operations, roles and responsibilities of the Department. In addition, several employees feel there is a strong need to increase awareness of the youth consultation mechanism within the Department, and to ensure the communication of any results or outputs from this process.
- EC employees provide a number suggestions regarding how and where to manage the YRTE within the Department. Two respondents suggest that the YRTE should be managed out of the Public Education and Outreach Directorate, whereas one employee suggests the dual management of the YRTE by the Partnerships and Consultations Division and the Public Education and Outreach Directorate. Other options identified by interviewees include: operating out of an interdepartmental working group, which would involve cost-sharing between the departments involved; connecting EC's youth consultation mechanism to other youth organizations nationally; or aligning the management of the YRTE to the Young Employee Network.

The majority of previous Coordinators and Managers, former YRTE members and EC employees regard diversity as a key element of the membership profile of an ideal youth consultation

mechanism. For example, most EC employees agree that there is a need to engage a more diverse cross-section of youth within the YRTE. In addition to diversity, interviewees identify the following aspects of youth membership:

- Previous Coordinators and Managers stress the need to develop a representative group of youth (i.e., diversity, age, background, geography, and language) based on a neutral selection process. Here, one interviewee indicates that merit and expertise should be included among the selection criteria; however, they should not be the overriding criteria.
- A minority of former YRTE members indicate that an interest in the environment is a key characteristic for membership in the YRTE. A few interviewees feel it is also important to select members with leadership skills, especially in relation to the environment.
- A minority of EC employees emphasize that members should be drawn more broadly from youth leaders, and not just from among environmental youth leaders. For example, they recommend recruiting leaders from different backgrounds, including arts, commerce, politics, and economics. On the other hand, a few interviewees recommend including a combination of leaders and mainstream youth. A few respondents emphasize the continued need to ensure that membership reflects the Canadian population (e.g., drawing from different regions, urban and rural youth, different educational levels, and Aboriginal youth). One respondent also suggests using survey research (i.e., surveys of a representative sample of Canadian youth) to validate the views expressed by youth membership.

A minority of former YRTE members feel that youth should be consulted on a combination of issues that address EC needs for youth consultation as well as the interests of the members. A few interviewees indicate that youth should be consulted on “big picture” issues for EC rather than program-specific issues. Similarly, most EC employees feel that it is important to consult youth on youth programs and issues, and broader Departmental priorities and policies. On this point, respondents generally feel that it is important to consult youth on programs that target youth, to ensure that programs are well designed to meet that audience and respond to their interests. A few respondents argue that youth should be engaged earlier in the policy process and not just be asked to react to policies that have already been decided upon. A couple of respondents also recommend that issues for consultation be more closely linked to EC priorities to make the consultation more meaningful. In addition, one respondent recommends that youth have some input on the consultation agenda in which they will participate.

There is some indication that interviewees would make use of their ideal youth consultation mechanism within EC. A majority of EC employees indicate that they would make use of a consultation mechanism that incorporates their recommendations. As for specific consultation issues, one previous Coordinator/Manager would consult the YRTE to help determine the future of a strategy designed to address toxins in the environment. A few employees add that if Environment Canada is to continue to have a youth consultation mechanism, it is important to ensure that it is used effectively.

3.10 ALTERNATIVE YOUTH CONSULTATION MECHANISMS

a) Government of Canada Mechanisms

Interviewees across key informant groups are able to identify a number of Government of Canada mechanisms which they perceive to involve youth consultation; however, interviewees tend to have limited knowledge of the operational aspects of these mechanisms. Also, interviewees representing EC employees and other federal government departments identify some youth consultation mechanisms used by EC and other departments, respectively.

Interviewees representing previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, former YRTE members, EC employees, and NGOs identify the following Government of Canada mechanisms:

- Human Resources and Social Development Canada: Service Vision for Canadians (Youth Segment), Youth Connection and Youth Employment Strategy;
- Health Canada: Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (led by The Students Commission) and Youth Action Network;
- Canadian International Development Agency: World Youth Congress, butterfly208 and International Youth Internship Program;
- Governor General: On-Line Youth Network;
- Natural Resources Canada: Energy Ambassadors Program;
- Service Canada: Youth Advisory Committee;
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada: Rural Youth Network and Youth Environmental Network (YEN) Farmers Association;
- Environment Canada: One Tonne Challenge, International Branch and Biosphere;
- Canadian Heritage: Exchange Canada, Youth Participation Directorate and Youth Action Program;
- youth consultations held in conjunction with public consultation regarding changes to regulations (e.g., Canadian Environmental Protection Act registry); and
- unspecified youth initiatives at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT).

Interviewees indicate the following strengths associated with these mechanisms: the ability to capture and integrate youth feedback into program design, delivery and decision making; they improve service delivery to youth and the public; enable creative and innovative solutions to policy and programs; feature bigger budgets; and offer youth access to decision makers and leaders within government. On the other hand, interviewees identify several weaknesses associated with these mechanisms: programs fail to provide opportunities for youth to participate to their full potential; youth can be misrepresented and undervalued by federal departments, which mistakenly perceive youth as a homogenous group; programs do not allow youth to provide input on overarching departmental policies or programs; and these mechanisms lack the capacity and leadership building aspects of the YRTE.

While most EC employees interviewed are not aware of any other formal mechanisms or approaches within Environment Canada that involve Canadian youth, a number of respondents indicate that specific Departmental projects and programs have been involved in youth outreach and consultation activities, including the youth delegation that attended the UN International Summit on Climate Change. In addition, a few interviewees identify EC's Young Employee Network, which brings together EC employees who are 29 years old or younger, as a Departmental youth initiative.

Interviewees from other federal government departments indicate that they use the following external youth consultation mechanisms: public opinion research (which tends to focus on policy issues rather than programming); consultations with other international, national and regional youth organizations and networks (e.g., National 4H Council, Canada25 and HeartWood); consultations with other federal government departments; and funded research studies and consultations that target youth (e.g., questions in the Reconnect Youth to Government study and work by D-Code and Canadian Policy Research Networks).

b) Other Canadian Mechanisms

Awareness and knowledge of other mechanisms in place in Canada to involve youth varies across the key informant groups, with interviewees representing former YRTE members and NGOs demonstrating the highest levels of awareness. Interviewees representing previous Coordinators and Managers, former YRTE members, EC employees and NGOs identify the following mechanisms that involve youth in Canada:

- Canadian Youth Network (CYN);
- Canada25;
- Youth Parliament Associations;
- The Otesha Project;
- Sierra Club and Sierra Youth Coalition;
- Young Environmental Professionals;

- Amnesty International;
- Youth Environmental Network (YEN);
- Environmental Youth Alliance;
- Taking IT Global;
- Vision globale; and
- Youth Canada Association (YOUCAN).

Of those who were able to comment, a majority of interviewees representing former YRTE members and NGOs indicate that EC would benefit from the use of these mechanisms. Specifically, interviewees feel that EC would benefit from working in parallel with these organizations. All interviewees representing NGOs feel that EC would benefit from working alongside youth in youth-led organizations and with adults who have extensive experience working with young people, with a majority indicating that collaboration between the Department and these organizations is the key to richer youth consultation.

The views of former members are corroborated by evidence from the document review. In 2003, members expressed a desire to work with other grassroots youth environmental organizations.⁴³ Specifically, members indicated that the YRTE should be as concerned with meeting its obligations to other youth as it is to meeting its obligations to EC; they perceived a need for the YRTE to increase its contact with and inputs from other youth organizations across Canada, and bring the ideas and concerns of youth to EC.⁴⁴

In addition to reviewing internal documents, our research team conducted a scan to identify approaches used by other government and non-governmental organizations to engage youth in various social issues. The review of studies conducted and an Internet search discovered a wide range of local, provincial and national examples of youth consultation approaches in addition to those identified by key informants. It is beyond the scope of this management review to fully describe all of the consultation approaches, but selected examples of approaches at the municipal, provincial and national level are listed below.

- **Municipal Level Initiatives:** The Nepean Youth Committee; Town of Port Hope: Youth Steering Committee; Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa (CAYFO); The Toronto Youth Cabinet (TYC); Vancouver Youth Voices; Port Coquitlam Youth Advisory Committee; and Brandon Manitoba: Youth Council.
- **Provincial Level Initiatives:** Nova Scotia Youth Secretariat and Youth Advisory Council (Government of Nova Scotia); MB4Youth Advisory Council (Minister of Education, Citizenship

⁴³ YRTE Take 2 Assessment, 2003, p.2.

⁴⁴ YRTE Letter 1, 2003, p.1.

and Youth) and Manitoba Youth Round Table for Sustainable Development (Government of Manitoba); Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Advisory Committee (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Ministry of Human Resources); The Ontario Secondary School Students' Association (OSSSA); Conseil permanent de la jeunesse (CPJ) (Government of Quebec); and McCreary's Youth Advisory Committee (British Columbia NGO).

- **National Level Initiatives:** Health Canada's Youth Advisory Committee on Tobacco Issues and The Aboriginal Youth Council.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE YRTE

Evidence from the management review indicates that the YRTE has made progress in achieving its mandate; however, low awareness and under-utilization of the Round Table within EC has limited its effectiveness. The YRTE has been successful at increasing youth involvement in and input into EC program development processes. In particular, the Round Table has been successful at providing input on issues of concern to the Minister as well as advice on the design and implementation of programs or program components targeted at youth. For example, the YRTE has provided valuable feedback and input on a number of EC initiatives and programs (e.g., One Tonne Challenge, RésEAU program, guidance and feedback regarding changes to EC's website). Also, the Round Table has been successful as a venue to identify youth participants for Departmental and Ministerial events and activities, and a number of members have participated in national and international events (e.g., UN Conference in Montreal and World Summit on Sustainable Development). There is limited evidence to assess the extent to which the YRTE keeps the Department up-to-date on youth action regarding environmental and sustainability issues and provides advice on ways to reach a broader youth audience.

Evidence from this review indicates that the YRTE is supporting the work of the Education and Engagement Pillar, which is a key component of the Department's Competitiveness and Environmental Sustainability Framework (CESF). Specifically, findings indicate that the work of the Round Table has increased members' awareness of and involvement in environmental issues. For example, a majority of former members feel their participation in the YRTE has positively affected their involvement in environmental issues by increasing their awareness of and interest in environmental issues, and influencing their views regarding the important environment issues both nationally and internationally. Further, a majority of interviewees indicate that their involvement in the YRTE has had a positive impact on their education, for example, by increasing their interest in environmental studies. This evidence suggests that the YRTE is supporting the Education and Engagement Pillar's work to increase Canadians' environmental literacy leading to more sustainable decision-making.

Findings from the management review indicate that low awareness and utilization of the YRTE within EC and some operational weaknesses have limited the effectiveness of the Round Table. A majority of interviewees representing previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers, former YRTE members and EC employees agree that awareness of the YRTE is low within EC. Related to this, there is disagreement among key informant groups with regard to how the YRTE is perceived within the Department and whether EC received value for the time and money invested in the Round Table. While a majority of previous Coordinators and Managers and former members feel the YRTE is well perceived and good value for EC, a

majority of EC employees feel the Round Table is not well regarded within the Department and does not provide good value, given the lack of widespread use of the YRTE by EC. In addition to the low awareness and under-utilization, a number of weaknesses with the operation of the YRTE have limited its effectiveness, including: lack of clarity surrounding the role of the YRTE within EC; insufficient feedback by EC staff to inform members of how their input was used; and lack of knowledge among YRTE members regarding the operations of EC. The combined effect of these factors suggests that the YRTE has not been used as often or as effectively as it could have been by the Department.

4.2 IMPROVEMENTS TO THE YRTE

Evidence from the management review indicates that the YRTE should be continued, but improvements to the design and operations of the Round Table need to be made in order for it to better contribute to the Department's youth awareness and engagement activities.

In terms of improvements to the design of the Round Table, evidence suggests a need to revise and clarify the role and objectives of the YRTE. For instance, participants in the working session with EC managers indicate that the focus should be on educating and engaging members, so the work of the YRTE can feed into EC's Education and Engagement Strategy by providing input on the Department's key policy directions. In terms of the objectives, previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers indicate a need to revise the objectives to ensure a set of realistic, achievable objectives based on the capacity of the YRTE and to balance the need for the YRTE to pursue its own goals with the importance of having the YRTE work on priority issues for the Department. Evidence indicates that the role of the YRTE within the Department needs to be carefully defined in order to develop a role and set of objectives that are realistic both in terms of what the Round Table can contribute to the Education and Engagement Strategy and the opportunities it can provide for members.

A number of improvements to the operations of the YRTE were identified in the management review. The improvements focus on ensuring that the YRTE has sufficient resources and information to effectively meet the needs of the Department, and necessary processes are in place for the Department to effectively utilize the Round Table. Findings from the working session held with EC managers indicate that the management of the YRTE should be enhanced to better meet the needs of members and should feature experienced youth coordinators who would liaise between the YRTE and Departmental policy makers. Specific improvements to the operation of the YRTE include: a well-qualified instructor with experience working with youth and an interest in environmental issues; an information session for members at the beginning of the term so they can learn how the YRTE, EC and the federal government function; necessary background information so members can provide informed, relevant views that are linked to Departmental policy decisions; improved communications among members between face-to-face meetings and conference calls; and a more established structure from year-to-year. In addition, working session participants suggest that the membership of the YRTE should focus on post-secondary youth and young adults who have leadership skills in the environment but also other fields and who are facing major consumer decisions (e.g., buying a house or car). Other improvements related to the Department's

utilization of the Round Table include: increased awareness of and commitment to use the YRTE by EC staff; a “champion” for the YRTE within EC; increased opportunities for EC staff to interact with and mentor members of the Round Table; and improved feedback from staff who consult the YRTE on the degree to which and how the information was used.

4.3 ROLE OF THE YRTE

As indicated in the previous section, despite broad agreement on the continuation of the YRTE as well as the need to clarify its role, there is little consensus among key informants with regard to the ideal role for the YRTE. A minority of interviewees, representing NGOs, indicate that youth should be consulted on issues such as their opinions and concerns, feedback on proposed programs, suggestions on how to reach youth, and policy decisions. A few interviewees representing former YRTE members suggest that youth should be consulted in the capacity of advisors, while a few representing EC employees feel that youth should be consulted in their role as future decision makers and leaders.

Despite the disagreement among key informants, there is consensus across key informants relating to certain aspects of the YRTE that provide some insight into the future role of the Round Table. First, there is agreement by most key informants that the YRTE should be managed within the Department as opposed to reporting directly to the Minister’s Office. In particular, interviewees representing EC employees feel that having the YRTE managed within the Department would: strengthen the link between the YRTE and Department staff, policy and programs; make it easier to create awareness, and encourage use, of the YRTE; and better serve the Department. Second, the ongoing nature of the YRTE was identified by key informants as an important benefit. As an ongoing mechanism, however, the role of the YRTE will need to be integrated and complementary with other periodic youth consultation and engagement activities undertaken by the Department (e.g., surveys, focus groups and youth conferences). Third, a majority of interviewees representing former YRTE members and NGOs feel that EC would benefit from the use of other youth consultation and engagement mechanisms in Canada, indicating that the Department should work in parallel with these other mechanisms. As both the interview and document review findings illustrate, there are numerous youth consultation mechanisms at the municipal, provincial and national levels, which could potentially be utilized by the Round Table. On the whole, this evidence indicates that the YRTE should be managed within the Department as an ongoing mechanism that works in concert with other EC youth consultation and engagement initiatives and, where appropriate, works in parallel with other youth consultation mechanisms outside of the Department.

The working session with EC managers provides further insight into the role of the YRTE. Working session participants suggest that the role of the YRTE should be on educating and engaging members of the Round Table, so the YRTE can support EC’s Education and Engagement Strategy. Specifically, the YRTE should place more emphasis on providing input on key policy directions of the Department as opposed to program-specific issues. Working session participants indicate that each program area conducts its own consultations and public opinion research when designing, reviewing or evaluating programs; therefore, there is no need to duplicate these efforts with the non-representative

sample of YRTE members. To support this education/engagement role, participants indicate the YRTE members will need to be given clearer direction and structure, and asked to provide input on specific, carefully chosen issues rather than the former “carte blanche” approach, whereby members had a lot of flexibility in selecting issues and how to address them. This latter approach has not proven useful for the Department.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the management review of the YRTE, the following recommendations are made to the management of EC’s Environmental Education and Youth Programs Division. It should be noted that these recommendations are not mutually exclusive; instead they are intended to be taken together in order to help determine both the substantive role of the YRTE and the Departmental culture and processes necessary to support this role.

1. **Clarify the role and objectives of the YRTE going forward.** Evidence from the management review indicates that the role and objectives of the YRTE within EC are perceived to be unclear by key informants. Further, there is little consensus across key informants as to what the ideal role of the Round Table should be. Findings from the working session with EC managers indicate that the YRTE should play a more definitive and strategic role within the Department that works in concert with EC’s other youth engagement and consultation activities. Specifically, the YRTE should focus on providing input on key specific policy issues and directions of the Department, instead of program-specific issues. On this point, an open, in-depth discussion involving YRTE members and EC managers would facilitate a common understanding of a role for the YRTE that is desirable and possible, and would help set the stage for a productive relationship. Given the importance of consulting youth on environmental issues, it will be important for EC to ensure that the role of the YRTE is broad, inspirational and engages youth in achieving the primary vision of the Department.
2. **Ensure the design of the YRTE supports its role and objectives.** The evidence from the review indicates that the Environmental Education and Youth Programs Division should ensure that the design of the Round Table supports its role and objectives and takes into consideration the suggested improvements and best practices identified. For example, evidence from the working session with EC managers indicates that the membership of the YRTE should focus on post-secondary youth (approximately 18 to 29 years old) who are not only environmental leaders but also leaders in other fields and who are making major consumer decisions that may have an impact on the environment. In addition, it will be important to consider the resources available to, and the capacity and expectations of, the members of the YRTE in designing the Round Table. For example, research with youth indicates that they want to be involved in activities that make a concrete contribution to society, allow them to learn and take action, and encourage the action of others.⁴⁵ The design of the YRTE, therefore, will need to incorporate these types of activities.

⁴⁵ Canadian Policy Research Networks. *CPRN’s Focus on Youth – Synthesis of Key Findings of Environmental Scan*. July 2004.

3. ***Increase awareness and utilization of the YRTE by the Department.*** The management review found that the effectiveness of the YRTE is limited by the low awareness and under-utilization of the Round Table by the Department. It is suggested that the Environmental Education and Youth Programs Division take steps to increase the awareness of, and popularize, the YRTE within EC to ensure that there is commitment to use the Round Table. To this end, it is suggested that the Environmental Education and Youth Programs Division pursue various communication activities (e.g., articles in the Departmental newsletter, email updates, posters) as well as the participation of the YRTE in Departmental activities (e.g., staff retreats, committee meetings, strategic planning exercises) to increase its awareness within EC. In addition, the Division should ensure that a process is established to enable EC staff, especially senior staff, to consult the YRTE in an efficient and effective manner because the more the input of the YRTE is sought by senior managers within EC, the more aware employees across the Department will become of the YRTE. Here, the Division responsible for the YRTE will need to act as a liaison to facilitate this process.

4. ***Enhance communications among YRTE members and between the YRTE and EC.*** Evidence from the management review indicates that the Environmental Education and Youth Programs Division should consider improving communications with the YRTE. Specifically, the background information available to the YRTE should be improved to enhance members' ability to provide relevant and informed advice. Related to this, resources for the YRTE should be increased to better enable communication among members between face-to-face meetings and conference calls, which would maintain momentum and support collaborative projects. Also, the Division should consider taking steps to increase the number of opportunities for YRTE members to communicate and interact with EC staff. For example, a regular opportunity for two-way feedback between the YRTE and EC, in the form of an assessment and reporting cycle, represents a key process to enhance communications (as well as monitor the degree of utilization of YRTE input and effectiveness of YRTE operations). In addition, EC could consider creating a "champion" or role model for the YRTE within EC or a mentorship program could be developed to increase interaction between the YRTE and EC staff.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDES

Management Review of The Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE)

Interview Guide Environment Canada Employees

Environment Canada has commissioned EKOS Research Associates Inc. to conduct a management review of the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE). The review examines a range of issues, including the effectiveness of the YRTE in contributing to the Department's overall goals, how the management of the YRTE could be improved to achieve the Department's youth awareness and engagement objectives, and potential alternative mechanisms for reaching Canadian youth. We'd like to get your feedback on the YRTE based on your experience.

A brief overview of the YRTE is appended to this interview guide. (More information about the YRTE can be found on EC's youth website at: http://www.ec.gc.ca/youth/yrte_e.html.)

This interview should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept confidential by EKOS. The final report will present findings in aggregate form only.

Please feel free to tell the interviewer if you do not feel you can answer specific questions; you are not required to respond to all questions.

1. First, briefly describe your role in or relationship to the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) and any involvement to date (if any).

I. THE ROLE OF YOUTH CONSULTATION WITHIN ENVIRONMENT CANADA

2. How important is it, in your opinion, for Environment Canada to consult Canadian youth on key Departmental issues and initiatives? Why?
 - Have youth consultations been useful to your work at EC? Why or why not?
 - In what capacity, and on what issues, should youth be consulted? What type of role should youth play?
 - Should consultation be limited to youth issues only, or should youth be consulted more broadly on Departmental policy and initiatives?

- To what extent do you think it is relevant and useful for Environment Canada to have a permanent advisory committee composed of youth leaders from across Canada? Why?
3. In what ways can youth consultation help achieve the objectives of a) your Program(s); and b) the Department? Can youth consultation contribute to the Department's overall strategic goals? How? Please explain, providing examples where possible.
- What key benefits can youth consultation offer a) your Program(s); and b) the Department?
 - What are the key challenges to youth consultation for a) your Program(s); and b) the Department?

II. THE YOUTH ROUND TABLE ON THE ENVIRONMENT (YRTE)

4. The YRTE was operational from 1997 to 2005 within EC. Some background information on this Program is appended to this interview guide. Prior to this interview, had you heard of the YRTE? **(If yes, proceed with 4a); no, proceed with 4b)**
- a) What exposure or experience did you personally have with this Round Table when it was functional? In what capacity? Please describe.
- How did you first learn of the YRTE?
 - How, in your opinion, was this initiative perceived by staff and management within EC? What was the level of awareness of this initiative?
 - What benefits to EC, in your opinion, resulted from the operation of the YRTE? Please provide examples.
 - What would you identify as the key strengths and weaknesses of the YRTE?
 - In your opinion, did EC get value for the time and money it invested in the YRTE?
 - Given your knowledge and experience, would you make any recommendations for improvement to the management and the operation of the YRTE? Please explain.
- b) Based on the background information provided, does the YRTE seem like a sound approach or investment in youth consultation?
- Would you be able to describe areas or programs within EC which you feel could benefit from the YRTE? Please explain, providing examples where possible.
 - How do you find out about new departmental initiatives? How should the YRTE have been communicated to ensure broad awareness within EC?
 - Based on the information provided, can you think of the advantages and disadvantages (strengths and weaknesses) of having a permanent youth advisory committee in the Department?

5. Are you aware of any other mechanisms or initiatives within Environment Canada which involve Canadian youth? Please describe these. Are you aware of any other mechanisms or initiatives within the Government of Canada which involve youth consultation?
 - How do these function? What role do they play?
 - How do these compare to the YRTE?
 - What are their key strengths and weaknesses? What benefits do they provide to their Department?
 - What would you identify as best practices in terms of youth consultation undertaken by Government? What rules should government adhere to when consulting youth?
6. Can you think of any other mechanisms in place in Canada to involve youth?
 - Do you think Environment Canada would benefit from the use of these mechanisms?
 - Do you think these mechanisms should be used in parallel to a permanent youth advisory committee at EC or should they replace it?

III. THE FUTURE ROLE OF YOUTH CONSULTATION WITHIN ENVIRONMENT CANADA

An objective of this management review is to re-examine the role the YRTE can or should play within EC, and to assess whether alternative mechanisms or approaches would be more effective in helping the Department reach its youth awareness and engagement objectives, and in contributing to the Department's overall strategic objectives.

7. What would be lost for Environment Canada in the absence of the YRTE or some other consultation mechanism to obtain input and involvement from Canadian youth leaders? What would be the loss or impact for your own Program? Please explain.
8. If you could design an ideal youth consultation mechanism within Environment Canada, what form would it take?
 - Should the YRTE be pursued, or an alternative approach developed?
 - What should be the objectives, role of an EC youth consultation mechanism?
 - Where or how should this Program be managed within the Department?
 - What services should be offered?
 - What type of youth should be involved? What should be the profile of membership?
 - On what types of issues should youth be consulted?
 - Would you make use of such a mechanism? If yes, how? If not, why?

- Based on the information provided, can you think of the advantages and disadvantages (strengths and weaknesses) of having a permanent youth advisory committee in the Department?
9. One possible change to the YRTE that is being considered would be to have the Round Table managed within the Department instead of having it report directly to the Minister's Office. Would this approach be more effective in enabling the Department to create a relationship with youth members?
- Do you think this approach would result in greater involvement of youth YRTE members in Departmental Programs and policies? Why?
 - Would you be interested in or supportive of this approach? Why?
10. Do you have any other comments or suggestions to make on the YRTE?

Thank you for your participation.

Annex

Background on the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE)

Created in 1997 by the Federal Environment Minister, the YRTE is an active and non-partisan advisory body composed of 18 youth leaders from across the country.

The Round Table's objectives are as follows⁴⁶:

- To increase youth involvement in Environment Canada program and policy development processes;
- To increase youth access to the Environment Minister;
- To increase youth interaction with Environment Canada staff;
- To support the ongoing relationship between Canadian youth and government;
- To create networking opportunities for youth and youth organizations; and
- To provide Round Table members the opportunity to have input into Environment Canada's priority issues.

Further, the mandate of the YRTE is to:

- Work with Environment Canada to provide input on issues of concern to the Minister;
- Keep the Department up-to-date on youth action on environmental and sustainability issues;
- Provide advice on the design and implementation of programs targeted to youth;
- Act as a venue to identify youth participants in departmental/ministerial events and activities; and
- Provide advice to Environment Canada on ways to reach out to a broader youth audience to engage them in issues.

Over the course of a one-year term, from September to August, the group meets up to three times a year in various locations across the country (e.g., Cantley, Que. and Edmonton, Alta in 2004-2005). The YRTE brings together young Canadians of diverse regional, cultural, educational and linguistic backgrounds to learn more about the priority issues and the current initiatives at Environment Canada, provides an opportunity for youth from across the country to share ideas and experiences from their respective regions, and provides Environment Canada the opportunity to obtain input from Canadian youth

⁴⁶ Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) Terms of Reference, 2002.

into EC programs and policies and to get advice on ways to make these programs more accessible to youth. Members also recommend ways to reach out to the broader youth community, and provide recommendations to EC on environmental issues that are of concern to them and their peers. The YRTE operates via consensus and strives to positively contribute to Environment Canada's mandate of improving environmental quality for all Canadians.

Management Review of The Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE)

Interview Guide Previous YRTE Coordinators and Managers

Environment Canada has commissioned EKOS Research Associates Inc. to conduct a management review of the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE). The review examines a range of issues, including the effectiveness of the YRTE in contributing to the Department's overall goals, how the management of the YRTE could be improved to achieve the Department's youth awareness and engagement objectives, and potential alternative mechanisms for reaching Canadian youth. We'd like to get your feedback on the YRTE based on your experience.

A brief overview of the YRTE is appended to this interview guide. (More information about the YRTE can be found on EC's youth website at: http://www.ec.gc.ca/youth/yrte_e.html.)

This interview should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept confidential by EKOS. The final report will present findings in aggregate form only.

Please feel free to tell the interviewer if you do not feel you can answer specific questions; you are not required to respond to all questions.

1. Over what period were you responsible for the YRTE? How did you come to get involved in this initiative?

I. THE ROLE OF YOUTH CONSULTATION WITHIN ENVIRONMENT CANADA

2. How important is it, in your opinion, for Environment Canada to consult Canadian youth on key Departmental issues and initiatives? Why?
 - What role can/should youth consultation play within EC?
 - In what capacity, and on what issues, should youth be consulted? What type of role should youth play?
 - Should consultation be limited to youth issues only, or should youth be consulted more broadly on Departmental policy and initiatives?

- To what extent do you think it is relevant and useful for Environment Canada to have a permanent advisory committee composed of youth leaders from across Canada? Why?
3. In what ways can youth consultation help achieve the objectives of the Department? Can youth consultation contribute to the Department's overall strategic goals? How? Please explain, providing examples where possible.
- What key benefits can youth consultation offer the Department?
 - What are the key challenges to youth consultation for the Department?

II. THE YOUTH ROUND TABLE ON THE ENVIRONMENT (YRTE)

4. How have the objectives of the YRTE changed over time?
- What were the objectives of the YRTE when you were involved in its management? What were the objectives when it was first created (if applicable)? How have these changed over time?
5. Thinking back to your involvement with the YRTE, what benefits did this initiative bring to Environment Canada? To members of the Round Table?
- How, in your opinion, was this initiative perceived by staff and management within EC? What was the level of awareness of this initiative?
 - What benefits to EC, in your opinion, accrued from the operation of the YRTE? Please provide examples.
 - In your opinion, did EC get value for the time and money it invested in the YRTE?
6. What would you identify as the key strengths and weaknesses of the YRTE, based on your involvement and experience?
- What improvements, if any, would you suggest to the management and operation of the YRTE based on your knowledge and experience? Please explain.
7. Are you aware of any other mechanisms or initiatives within the Government of Canada which involve youth consultation?
- How do these function? What role do they play?
 - How do these compare to the YRTE?
 - What are their key strengths and weaknesses? What benefits do they provide to their Department?
 - What would you identify as best practices in terms of youth consultation undertaken by Government? What rules should government adhere to when consulting youth?

8. Can you think of any other mechanisms in place in Canada to involve youth?
 - Do you think Environment Canada would benefit from the use of these mechanisms?
 - Do you think these mechanisms should be used in parallel to a permanent youth advisory committee at EC or should they replace it?

III. THE FUTURE ROLE OF YOUTH CONSULTATION WITHIN ENVIRONMENT CANADA

An objective of this management review is to re-examine the role the YRTE can or should play within EC, and to assess whether alternative mechanisms or approaches would be more effective in helping the Department reach its youth awareness and engagement objectives, and in contributing to the Department's overall strategic objectives.

9. What would be lost for Environment Canada in the absence of the YRTE or some other consultation mechanism to obtain input and involvement from Canadian youth leaders? Please explain.
10. If you could design an ideal youth consultation mechanism within Environment Canada, what form would this take?
 - Should the YRTE be pursued, or an alternative approach developed?
 - What should be the objectives, role of an EC youth consultation mechanism?
 - Where or how should this Program be managed within the Department?
 - What services should be offered?
 - What type of youth should be involved? What should be the profile of membership?
 - On what types of issues should youth be consulted?
 - Would you make use of such a mechanism? If yes, how? If not, why?
11. One possible change to the YRTE that is being considered would be to have the Round Table managed within the Department instead of having it report directly to the Minister's Office. Would this approach be more effective in enabling the Department to create a relationship with youth members?
 - Do you think this approach would result in greater involvement of youth YRTE members in Departmental Programs and policies? Why?
 - Would you be interested in or supportive of this approach? Why?
12. Do you have any other comments or suggestions to make on the YRTE?

Thank you for your participation.

Annex

Background on the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE)

Created in 1997 by the Federal Environment Minister, the YRTE is an active and non-partisan advisory body composed of 18 youth leaders from across the country.

The Round Table's objectives are as follows⁴⁷:

- To increase youth involvement in Environment Canada program and policy development processes;
- To increase youth access to the Environment Minister;
- To increase youth interaction with Environment Canada staff;
- To support the ongoing relationship between Canadian youth and government;
- To create networking opportunities for youth and youth organizations; and
- To provide Round Table members the opportunity to have input into Environment Canada's priority issues.

Further, the mandate of the YRTE is to:

- Work with Environment Canada to provide input on issues of concern to the Minister;
- Keep the Department up-to-date on youth action on environmental and sustainability issues;
- Provide advice on the design and implementation of programs targeted to youth;
- Act as a venue to identify youth participants in departmental/ministerial events and activities; and
- Provide advice to Environment Canada on ways to reach out to a broader youth audience to engage them in issues.

Over the course of a one-year term, from September to August, the group meets up to three times a year in various locations across the country (e.g., Cantley, Que. and Edmonton, Alta in 2004-2005). The YRTE brings together young Canadians of diverse regional, cultural, educational and linguistic backgrounds to learn more about the priority issues and the current initiatives at Environment Canada, provides an opportunity for youth from across the country to share ideas and experiences from their respective regions, and provides Environment Canada the opportunity to obtain input from Canadian youth

⁴⁷ Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) Terms of Reference, 2002.

into EC programs and policies and to get advice on ways to make these programs more accessible to youth. Members also recommend ways to reach out to the broader youth community, and provide recommendations to EC on environmental issues that are of concern to them and their peers. The YRTE operates via consensus and strives to positively contribute to Environment Canada's mandate of improving environmental quality for all Canadians.

Management Review of The Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE)

Interview Guide Former YRTE Members

Environment Canada has commissioned EKOS Research Associates Inc. to conduct a management review of the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE). The review examines a range of issues, including the effectiveness of the YRTE in contributing to the Department's overall goals, how the management of the YRTE could be improved to achieve the Department's youth awareness and engagement objectives, and potential alternative mechanisms for reaching Canadian youth. We'd like to get your feedback on the YRTE based on your experience.

A brief overview of the YRTE is appended to this interview guide. (More information about the YRTE can be found on EC's youth website at: http://www.ec.gc.ca/youth/yрте_e.html.)

This interview should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept confidential by EKOS. The final report will present findings in aggregate form only.

Please feel free to tell the interviewer if you do not feel you can answer specific questions; you are not required to respond to all questions.

I. THE YOUTH ROUND TABLE ON THE ENVIRONMENT (YRTE)

1. Please describe your involvement in the YRTE.
 - How did you first hear of the YRTE?
 - What prompted you to apply to become a member?
 - When and how long were you involved?
 - What would you identify as the most positive, and the most negative, aspects of involvement in the YRTE, based on your experience?
 - If you had to make the decision over, would you do it again? Why?

2. What was the impact of your involvement in the YRTE on you, personally?
 - How did your involvement affect your knowledge and understanding of Environment Canada?
 - What was the impact on your involvement in environmental issues? Your community involvement?
 - Did your involvement have any impact on your education? Subsequent work or career?
 - Were there any other personal impacts that resulted from your involvement in the YRTE?
3. What impacts did the YRTE have within Environment Canada during your own involvement, based on your experience and observation? What benefits to EC, in your opinion, accrued from the operation of the YRTE during the time you were a member? Please provide examples.
 - How was the YRTE consulted by the Department? What use was made of the knowledge and skills of YRTE membership?
 - How, in your opinion, was this initiative perceived by staff and management within EC? What was the level of awareness of this initiative?
 - In your opinion, did EC get value for the time and money it invested in YRTE?
4. What would you identify as the key strengths and weaknesses of the YRTE?
 - Can you identify any instances where EC did not take full advantage of the YRTE?
 - What improvements, if any, would you suggest to the management and operation of the YRTE based on your knowledge and experience? What improvements could be made to increase the impact or benefits of the YRTE for Environment Canada? For members in the YRTE?

II. THE ROLE OF YOUTH CONSULTATION WITHIN ENVIRONMENT CANADA

5. How important is it, in your opinion, for Environment Canada to consult Canadian youth on key Departmental issues and initiatives? Why?
 - In what capacity, and on what issues, should youth be consulted? What type of role should youth play?
 - In what way can youth consultation help achieve the objectives of Environment Canada? How? Please explain, providing examples where possible.
 - What key benefits can youth consultation offer EC? What are the key challenges to youth consultation for the Department?
 - To what extent do you think it is relevant and useful for Environment Canada to have a permanent advisory committee composed of youth leaders from across Canada? Why?

6. Are you aware of any other mechanisms or initiatives within the Government of Canada which involve youth consultation?
 - How do these function? What role do they play?
 - How do these compare to the YRTE?
 - Have you been personally involved in any other government youth consultation mechanisms? If yes, please describe.
 - What would you identify as best practices in terms of youth consultation undertaken by Government?

7. Can you think of any other mechanisms in place in Canada to involve youth?
 - Do you think Environment Canada would benefit from the use of these mechanisms?
 - Do you think these mechanisms should be used in parallel to a permanent youth advisory committee at EC or should they replace it?

III. THE FUTURE ROLE OF YOUTH CONSULTATION WITHIN ENVIRONMENT CANADA

An objective of this management review is to re-examine the role the YRTE can or should play within EC, and to assess whether alternative mechanisms or approaches would be more effective in helping the Department reach its youth awareness and engagement objectives, and in contributing to the Department's overall strategic objectives.

8. What would be lost for Environment Canada in the absence of the YRTE or some other consultation mechanism to obtain input and involvement from Canadian youth leaders? Please explain.

9. If you could design an ideal mechanism for youth consultation within Environment Canada, what form would this take?
 - Should the YRTE be pursued, or an alternative approach developed?
 - What should be the objectives, role of an EC youth consultation mechanism?
 - What services should be offered?
 - What type of youth should be involved? What should be the profile of membership?
 - On what types of issues should youth be consulted?

10. Do you have any other comments or suggestions to make on the YRTE?

Thank you for your participation.

Annex

Background on the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE)

Created in 1997 by the Federal Environment Minister, the YRTE is an active and non-partisan advisory body composed of 18 youth leaders from across the country.

The Round Table's objectives are as follows⁴⁸:

- To increase youth involvement in Environment Canada program and policy development processes;
- To increase youth access to the Environment Minister;
- To increase youth interaction with Environment Canada staff;
- To support the ongoing relationship between Canadian youth and government;
- To create networking opportunities for youth and youth organizations; and
- To provide Round Table members the opportunity to have input into Environment Canada's priority issues.

Further, the mandate of the YRTE is to:

- Work with Environment Canada to provide input on issues of concern to the Minister;
- Keep the Department up-to-date on youth action on environmental and sustainability issues;
- Provide advice on the design and implementation of programs targeted to youth;
- Act as a venue to identify youth participants in departmental/ministerial events and activities; and
- Provide advice to Environment Canada on ways to reach out to a broader youth audience to engage them in issues.

Over the course of a one-year term, from September to August, the group meets up to three times a year in various locations across the country (e.g., Cantley, Que. and Edmonton, Alta in 2004-2005). The YRTE brings together young Canadians of diverse regional, cultural, educational and linguistic backgrounds to learn more about the priority issues and the current initiatives at Environment Canada, provides an opportunity for youth from across the country to share ideas and experiences from their respective regions, and provides Environment Canada the opportunity to obtain input from Canadian youth

⁴⁸ Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) Terms of Reference, 2002.

into EC programs and policies and to get advice on ways to make these programs more accessible to youth. Members also recommend ways to reach out to the broader youth community, and provide recommendations to EC on environmental issues that are of concern to them and their peers. The YRTE operates via consensus and strives to positively contribute to Environment Canada's mandate of improving environmental quality for all Canadians.

Management Review of The Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE)

Interview Guide Other Federal Departments

Environment Canada has commissioned EKOS Research Associates Inc. to conduct a management review of the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE). The review examines a range of issues, including the effectiveness of the YRTE in contributing to the Department's overall goals, how the management of the YRTE could be improved to achieve the Department's youth awareness and engagement objectives, and potential alternative mechanisms for reaching Canadian youth. As part of this review, we are conducting interviews with representatives of other federal departments to gain an understanding of methods used by other departments to engage or consult youth, and to identify any lessons learned or best practices in terms of youth engagement.

A brief overview of the YRTE is appended to this interview guide. (More information about the YRTE can be found on EC's youth website at: http://www.ec.gc.ca/youth/yrte_e.html.)

This interview should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept confidential by EKOS. The final report will present findings in aggregate form only.

Please feel free to tell the interviewer if you do not feel you can answer specific questions; you are not required to respond to all questions.

1. Please describe your own Department's or Program's approach to engage or consult youth. (Please indicate if any background material is available which describes your Department's or Program's approach).
 - What role does this approach play within your Program or Department? How is it used?
 - On what types of issues or initiatives are youth consulted? Is this limited to youth issues or are youth consulted more broadly on issues or policies?
 - How are youth selected for involvement or consultation (e.g., recruitment criteria, process of recruitment)? What is the process or approach to consultation (e.g., format for meetings or consultations, reporting or communication of results)?
 - What is the interest and motivation for youth involved? What are the benefits to youth?
 - If your Department has more than one youth consultation initiative, to what extent and how are they coordinated? Do you feel that your Department has a coherent approach for engaging youth? Can you provide an approximate total budget for your youth consultation initiatives?

2. Does your Department have an overall strategy for youth consultation or engagement? If yes, please describe and explain the role this plays within the Department, providing examples where possible.
3. In what way does youth consultation or engagement help achieve the objectives of a) your Program(s); and b) your Department? How? Please explain, providing examples where possible.
 - What are the impacts and benefits of youth consultation or engagement for your Program? Your Department? Please explain.
 - Has youth consultation been useful to your work? Please explain.
 - What are the key challenges to youth consultation for your Program? Your Department?
 - Is youth engagement and consultation a sound investment for government Programs or Departments? Why?
4. Based on your experience, what would you identify as best practices or lessons learned in terms of youth engagement or consultation by government Programs or Departments?
 - What rules should government adhere to when consulting youth?
 - What would you identify as the primary strengths and weaknesses of your Program's or Department's approach to youth engagement or consultation?
 - What improvements would you make, if any?
5. Does your Department use any other external mechanisms to consult youth? If yes, what are they?
 - Are they effective and efficient approaches?
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses of these mechanisms?
6. Are you aware of any other mechanisms or initiatives within the Government of Canada which involve youth consultation? If yes, please describe.
 - How do these function? What role do they play?
 - How do these compare?
 - What are their key strengths and weaknesses? What benefits do they provide to their Department?

7. The Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) is an Environment Canada initiative which was initiated in 1997. Each year, the YRTE brings together 18 Canadians between the ages of 14 and 26 of diverse regional, cultural, educational and linguistic backgrounds. The YRTE provides Canadian youth with an opportunity to be involved, by offering their views and opinions, in Environment Canada's Programs, policies and priority issues (see Annex for additional details). In your opinion, what are the key advantages and disadvantages of a permanent youth advisory committee such as this?
- Do you think that this type of approach would be beneficial for your own Program or Department? Why?
 - What barriers exist to the creation of this type of approach?
 - What other approaches would you suggest?
8. Do you have any other comments or suggestions to make?

Thank you for your participation.

Annex

Background on the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE)

Created in 1997 by the Federal Environment Minister, the YRTE is an active and non-partisan advisory body composed of 18 youth leaders from across the country.

The Round Table's objectives are as follows⁴⁹:

- To increase youth involvement in Environment Canada program and policy development processes;
- To increase youth access to the Environment Minister;
- To increase youth interaction with Environment Canada staff;
- To support the ongoing relationship between Canadian youth and government;
- To create networking opportunities for youth and youth organizations; and
- To provide Round Table members the opportunity to have input into Environment Canada's priority issues.

Further, the mandate of the YRTE is to:

- Work with Environment Canada to provide input on issues of concern to the Minister;
- Keep the Department up-to-date on youth action on environmental and sustainability issues;
- Provide advice on the design and implementation of programs targeted to youth;
- Act as a venue to identify youth participants in departmental/ministerial events and activities; and
- Provide advice to Environment Canada on ways to reach out to a broader youth audience to engage them in issues.

Over the course of a one-year term, from September to August, the group meets up to three times a year in various locations across the country (e.g., Cantley, Que. and Edmonton, Alta in 2004-2005). The YRTE brings together young Canadians of diverse regional, cultural, educational and linguistic backgrounds to learn more about the priority issues and the current initiatives at Environment Canada, provides an opportunity for youth from across the country to share ideas and experiences from their respective regions, and provides Environment Canada the opportunity to obtain input from Canadian youth

⁴⁹ Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) Terms of Reference, 2002.

into EC programs and policies and to get advice on ways to make these programs more accessible to youth. Members also recommend ways to reach out to the broader youth community, and provide recommendations to EC on environmental issues that are of concern to them and their peers. The YRTE operates via consensus and strives to positively contribute to Environment Canada's mandate of improving environmental quality for all Canadians.

Management Review of The Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE)

Interview Guide Non-Governmental Organizations

Environment Canada has commissioned EKOS Research Associates Inc. to conduct a management review of the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE). The review examines a range of issues, including the effectiveness of the YRTE in contributing to the Department's overall goals, how the management of the YRTE could be improved to achieve the Department's youth awareness and engagement objectives, and potential alternative mechanisms for reaching Canadian youth.

A brief overview of the YRTE is appended to this interview guide. (More information about the YRTE can be found on EC's youth website at: http://www.ec.gc.ca/youth/yrte_e.html.)

This interview should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept confidential by EKOS. The final report will present findings in aggregate form only.

Please feel free to tell the interviewer if you do not feel you can answer specific questions; you are not required to respond to all questions.

1. First, briefly describe your organization and your approach to reaching youth.
 - What are your organization's main objectives?
 - How do you go about engaging youth?
 - *For youth led-organizations:* How do you go about engaging your peers?
 - What role do youth play in your organization?
 - What are the 'typical' youth involved with your organization? Youth leaders? Youth in general?
2. Are you aware of any mechanisms or initiatives within the federal government which aim to engage or consult youth?
 - How do these function? What role do they play?
 - How do these compare?
 - What are their key strengths and weaknesses?
 - What are the key benefits of involving or consulting youth? What are the advantages to youth consultation for government departments?

- What are the key challenges to youth consultation for government departments?
3. Can you think of any other mechanisms in place in Canada to involve youth?
- Do you think Environment Canada would benefit from the use of these mechanisms?
 - Do you think these mechanisms should be used in parallel to a permanent youth advisory committee at EC or should they replace it?
4. Based on your knowledge and experience, what would you identify as best practices to be followed in engaging and consulting with youth?
- How should youth be recruited?
 - What would you consider to be the ideal young participant in a youth consultation? What kinds of people are most helpful?
 - What role should they play within the government Program or organization?
 - What type of issues should they be consulted on?
 - How do youth prefer to be approached/involved?
 - What do youth prefer to do?
5. Are you aware of Environment Canada's Youth Round Table on the Environment (see Annex for description)? **(If yes, proceed with 5a); no, proceed with 5b)**
- a) To what extent do you think it is relevant and useful for Environment Canada to have a permanent advisory committee composed of youth leaders from across Canada? Why?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of a permanent advisory committee of this type for obtaining youth engagement and consultation within EC?
 - What changes or improvements would you suggest to the YRTE?
- b) Based on the background information provided, does the YRTE seem like a sound approach or investment in youth consultation? If not, what would you suggest?
6. How important is it, in your opinion, for Environment Canada to consult Canadian youth on key Departmental issues and initiatives? Why?
- What role can/should youth consultation play within EC?
 - In what capacity, and on what issues, should youth be consulted? What type of role should youth play?
 - Should consultation be limited to youth issues only, or should youth be consulted more broadly on Departmental policy and initiatives?
 - Should youth leaders be consulted versus youth in general? Why?

7. What would be lost for Environment Canada in the absence of the YRTE or some other mechanism to obtain input and involvement from Canadian youth leaders? Please explain.
 - What do you think Environment Canada or the Government of Canada should do to better involve youth?
8. Do you have any other comments or suggestions to make on the YRTE?

Thank you for your participation.

Annex

Background on the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE)

Created in 1997 by the Federal Environment Minister, the YRTE is an active and non-partisan advisory body composed of 18 youth leaders from across the country.

The Round Table's objectives are as follows⁵⁰:

- To increase youth involvement in Environment Canada program and policy development processes;
- To increase youth access to the Environment Minister;
- To increase youth interaction with Environment Canada staff;
- To support the ongoing relationship between Canadian youth and government;
- To create networking opportunities for youth and youth organizations; and
- To provide Round Table members the opportunity to have input into Environment Canada's priority issues.

Further, the mandate of the YRTE is to:

- Work with Environment Canada to provide input on issues of concern to the Minister;
- Keep the Department up-to-date on youth action on environmental and sustainability issues;
- Provide advice on the design and implementation of programs targeted to youth;
- Act as a venue to identify youth participants in departmental/ministerial events and activities; and
- Provide advice to Environment Canada on ways to reach out to a broader youth audience to engage them in issues.

Over the course of a one-year term, from September to August, the group meets up to three times a year in various locations across the country (e.g., Cantley, Que. and Edmonton, Alta in 2004-2005). The YRTE brings together young Canadians of diverse regional, cultural, educational and linguistic backgrounds to learn more about the priority issues and the current initiatives at Environment Canada, provides an opportunity for youth from across the country to share ideas and experiences from their respective regions, and provides Environment Canada the opportunity to obtain input from Canadian youth

⁵⁰ Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) Terms of Reference, 2002.

into EC programs and policies and to get advice on ways to make these programs more accessible to youth. Members also recommend ways to reach out to the broader youth community, and provide recommendations to EC on environmental issues that are of concern to them and their peers. The YRTE operates via consensus and strives to positively contribute to Environment Canada's mandate of improving environmental quality for all Canadians.