



Future Directions for the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency – Individuals

More Ways to Serve You!

Pour vous servir encore mieux !



Canada Customs
and Revenue Agency

Agence des douanes
et du revenu du Canada

Canada

The mission of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) is to promote compliance with tax, trade, and border legislation and regulations through effective communication, quality service, and responsible enforcement, thereby contributing to the economic and social well-being of Canadians.

Future Directions was launched in April 2001 to help identify the essential elements that must be in place to ensure good performance in the future and thereby allow us to remain a recognized leader in responsible and fair customs and revenue administration.

It is a fundamental stocktaking of our relationship with key client groups to ensure that we provide effective programs and services, both now and in the foreseeable future, in order to promote compliance, achieve client satisfaction, and secure public confidence in the integrity of customs and revenue administration in Canada.

We deliberately set out, through Future Directions, to look at our services and activities through the eyes of our clients. To do this, we organized our efforts around client groups rather than our traditional functions such as audit, customs, and collections.



Our approach

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) provides services to over 23 million individual taxfilers and benefit recipients. Annually, we handle more than 30 million enquiries, deliver 70 million benefit cheques, and provide a broad range of information products through many channels. We have more interaction with Canadians than any other public- or private-sector organization in Canada, and we take our commitment to service and integrity very seriously.

To help ensure that we become more client-centred, we have looked at the services we provide from the unique perspective of individual Canadians. To identify and better understand the interests and service needs of Canadians, we sought feedback from CCRA employees about the views of the thousands of Canadians they serve every day. As well, we collected information through surveys, various consultative committees, and discussions with tax professionals and community volunteers.

Canadians have demonstrated that they are ready to deal with the CCRA through a variety of channels. While many Canadians still prefer to use the telephone to deal with their government, growing numbers are turning to the Internet. In some circumstances, they want to visit an office or get an answer in writing. We need to better understand which channels are most important to Canadians, and why, so that we can tailor our approaches and develop new services that will better meet their future needs. Our aim is to reduce our clients' need to call by simplifying processes, where possible, and by providing faster access to answers on the Internet.

Over the past several years, the CCRA has made important changes to the way it delivers programs and services. Our dialogue through Future Directions has confirmed that these changes are consistent with the needs and interests of individual Canadians. The individual income tax and benefit process has changed to allow the provinces greater flexibility in setting their tax rates, credits, and the indexing of

these amounts. The CCRA has taken on new responsibilities and now delivers 17 different benefit and credit programs for the provinces and territories. As well, we have worked to reduce the need for clients to call us, and we have made it much easier for some 30 million callers to reach us by managing telephone enquiries through a national program that takes advantage of Canada's time zones. To ensure that all taxpayers pay their fair share, we have made our collections processes more effective through state-of-the-art telephone technology and better workload management.

Most importantly, we have moved quickly to take advantage of the Internet. Since launching our Web site in 1996, we have steadily added information and provided new, secure electronic services. Last year, Canadians showed their enthusiasm for electronic service by filing more than 2 million individual tax returns over the Internet. The CCRA's Web site now allows individuals to change their address instantly, or to search for specific, detailed answers to their questions using our innovative Interactive Information Service.

Our commitments

Future Directions will build on these past improvements. Based on feedback from clients, we will focus on **electronic services, partnerships, outreach, and compliance.**

Electronic services

We will place more emphasis on responding to Canadians' interest in electronic options.

- ◆ This year we are **redesigning the CCRA Web site** around the client so that, for example, it will be easy to find answers to specific questions online.
- ◆ In 2003, we will launch a **My Account** page, which will provide information on individual tax accounts or benefit entitlements and eventually allow clients or their authorized representative to make adjustments and changes.

- ◆ We will aggressively promote and support the growth in **electronic filing** by individuals. Last year, Canadians and their tax professionals filed nearly 9 million tax returns electronically (40% of all returns). We aim to have 50% of all returns filed electronically next year. While we recognize that the take-up rates for our electronic services are dependent on the quality of our offerings and peoples' attitudes toward Internet transactions, we are **building the capability to process 75% of tax returns electronically** in the next few years.
- ◆ We will provide CCRA employees with client-oriented, **Web-based tools** that will improve the speed and accuracy of our 1-800 enquiries service.

Partnerships

- ◆ We will simplify and streamline access to services for Canadians by **working with other departments** and levels of government. One example of this is our work with Human Resources Development Canada to simplify the transition to retirement.
- ◆ We will **work with the private sector and tax professionals** to identify opportunities for collaboration that would further simplify tax administration and filing for Canadians.

Outreach

Canadians indicated that more **outreach and education activities** would enable them to better understand their rights and obligations, help them “get it right” the first time, and reduce errors. Ultimately, this will contribute to greater overall compliance. To advance our efforts in this area, we will undertake the following:

- ◆ Working with the provinces and other organizations, and building on successes like our Volunteers Program, we will **develop courses** and other outreach activities to provide a much broader understanding of the tax system and the contribution it makes to Canada.

- ◆ We will work with our partners to ensure that there is a better understanding of how paying their **fair share of taxes** relates to the benefits that Canadians receive as a central part of their citizenship.
- ◆ We will continue to make improvements in our written material to ensure that our explanations are simple, clear, and use **plain language**.
- ◆ We will **strengthen our consultative activities** and **expand our outreach activities** for groups of Canadians with particular interests, such as seniors, youth, Canadians with disabilities, and new Canadians.

Compliance

Ensuring compliance is a vital part of a fair system, and the precise targeting of enforcement actions is one critical aspect. Focused enforcement directly reduces the burden on compliant Canadians, as well as ensuring that the same rules apply to all and that everyone pays their fair share.

- ◆ By using sophisticated risk management techniques, we will further **improve our verification and collection processes**.
- ◆ We will **identify complex cases** of non-compliance more quickly and assign them to units specifically established for that purpose.



Successfully implementing Future Directions means continuing to work together. We would like to hear what you think about our vision and our future directions, and what they mean to you. Your comments and suggestions are important to us.

You may reach us at
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or by writing to the Future Directions Secretariat, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, 410 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, ON K1A 0L5.