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Health Canada   **Santé Canada**

Final Audit Report

Audit of the Management of External Communications

March 2011

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the *Communication Policy for the Government of Canada* is to ensure that communications across the Government of Canada are well coordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the diverse information needs of the public. External communications are expected to provide the public with timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information about its policies, programs, services and initiatives. Communications is a shared responsibility within all departments, and its success at Health Canada requires the integration and coordination of both information and activities across the Department.

The objective of the audit was to assess the management control framework for external communications in regard to certain elements of the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada* to provide assurances that the controls are in place at Health Canada to support timely, accurate and reliable communication with the public.

In the professional judgement of the Chief Audit Executive, sufficient and appropriate procedures were performed and evidence gathered to support the accuracy of the audit conclusion. The audit findings and conclusion are based on a comparison of the conditions that existed as of the date of the audit, against established criteria that were agreed upon with management. Further, the evidence was gathered in accordance with the *Internal Auditing Standards for the Government of Canada* and the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.*

Health Canada has garnered a strong reputation for providing timely, evidence-based information on health and safety issues so that Canadians can make informed health and safety decisions. In an effort to further strengthen the Department's capacity in communications and consultations, Health Canada created the Public Affairs, Consultations and Communications Branch (PACCB) in 2008. Since its creation, much progress has been made to strengthen the function of external communications departmentally. However, the audit notes the following specific areas where the PACCB would benefit from strengthening its management practices:

- Document decisions, action items and accountability for delivery;
- Work with the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of Regions and Programs Branch to strengthen the management of communications across Health Canada;
- Continue to develop policies and/or strategies that support strengthened external communications within Health Canada;
- Develop a Branch risk profile;
- Review the approval processes in order to streamline the activity;

- Work with the other ADMs to develop a corporate approach related to the delivery of communications products and services within Health Canada to help ensure both consistency of messaging and avoid duplication of services;

- Work with other ADMs to streamline and update the website; and

- Develop procedures for monitoring and reporting on External Communications.

Management has agreed with the eight recommendations and has developed an action plan which will serve to further strengthen the management of external communications at Health Canada.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The purpose of the *Communication Policy for the Government of Canada* is to ensure that communications across the Government of Canada are well coordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the diverse information needs of the public. External communications are expected to provide the public with timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information about its policies, programs, services and initiatives. Communications is a shared responsibility within all departments, and its success at Health Canada requires the integration and coordination of both information and activities across the Department.

On July 14, 2008, Health Canada was realigned to allow the Department to better serve Canadians. To improve the Department's outreach to Canadians, the Public Affairs, Consultation and Communications Branch (PACCB) was created and both internal and external communications capacity were realigned. The mandate of the Branch is to "provide strategic advice, services, and intelligence that enable effective communications, outreach and engagement of Canadians."

**Strategic Communications Directorate
Activities 2009-2010**

- Received over 2,800 media calls
- Wrote over 108 speeches
- Created 451 sets of media lines
- Prepared 80 Advisories, Warnings and Recalls

PACCB has an expanded communications mandate that includes the oversight of communications services that were previously managed by various Branches. Its responsibilities include the integration of national and regional perspectives into its policies and strategies, communications and consultation functions. Notwithstanding PACCB's lead for external communications, the successful delivery of the function is highly dependent on the support and timely efforts from all players involved.

Guided by the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada,* PACCB's goals are to ensure: well-coordinated and integrated consultation and communications functions supporting departmental priorities; contribution to informed and engaged citizens; and promotion of a cohesive, knowledgeable workforce within Health Canada. Success in meeting these goals

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**Marketing and Communications
Services Directorate Activities
2009-2010**

- Launched two major national marketing campaigns
- Distributed over seven million publications
- Responded to 50,760 public enquiries

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depends on coordinated efforts within PACCB, and with the Regional Directors of Communication.

Within PACCB there are three Directorates. The Strategic Communications Directorate provides communications advice and issues management support.

Consultation and Management Services Directorate Activities 2009-2010

- Developed issue-specific public environmental intelligence reports
- Provided public and stakeholder consultations advice
- Developed a new Management Advisory Bodies policy
- Incorporated communications and consultations in the Department Integrated Planning Process

The Marketing and Communications Services Directorate provides a Departmental focal point for social marketing, advertising, public opinion research, internal communications, Intranet, social media, website and creative services.

The Consultation and Management Services Directorate provides expert consultation services and strategic advice to Branches to ensure that the public and stakeholders are effectively engaged in the work of the Department.

1.2   Audit Objective

The objective of the audit was to assess the management control framework for external communications as it relates to elements of the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada* to provide assurances that the controls are in place at Health Canada to support timely, accurate and reliable communication with the public.

1.3   Scope and Approach

The audit was undertaken by the Audit and Accountability Bureau in accordance with the Health Canada Risk-Based Audit Plan for 2009-2010 to 2011-2012 which was tabled at the Departmental Audit Committee on May 22, 2009, and subsequently approved by the Deputy Minister.

The audit criteria were developed from the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada* and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's *Core Management Controls: A Guide for Internal Auditors*. The criteria were reviewed and approved by PACCB. (See Appendix A)

The audit was conducted primarily within the National Capital Region; however regional staff who are responsible for communications, were interviewed via phone. The audit scope did not include Health Canada's internal communications and communications with other government departments and agencies. Also excluded were copyrighting, public opinion research, and ombudsman and ethics services.

Given the recent creation of the Branch, the audit did not include criteria related to the quality of the advice, support and products related to external communications, but focused on the management of the function (i.e. operational requirements and organizational effectiveness). As PACCB progresses in its efforts to ensure the right

policies and processes are in place to effectively deliver external communications services, it will be important to reflect on the quality of services being provided in its ongoing evaluation efforts.

1.4 Statement of Assurance

In the professional judgement of the Chief Audit Executive, sufficient and appropriate procedures were performed and evidence gathered to support the accuracy of the audit conclusion. The audit findings and conclusion are based on a comparison of the conditions that existed as of the date of the audit, against established criteria that were agreed upon with management. Further, the evidence was gathered in accordance with the *Internal Auditing Standards for the Government of Canada* and the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*.

2. Findings, Recommendations and Management Responses

2.1 Governance

2.1.1 Governance Structure

Audit Criteria: A formal governance structure for External Communication should be in place which includes oversight by senior management.

The Public Affairs, Consultations and Communications Branch was created in 2008 to develop a stronger communications and consultation capacity within Health Canada. Since its creation, a new governance structure has been evolving to provide oversight as well as to meet Government of Canada communication requirements.

Treasury Board policy holds Deputy Heads responsible for departmental communications. Policy decision-making and corporate initiatives regarding communications are tabled at the Executive Committee which is Health Canada's highest level of governance. The Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Affairs, Consultation and Communications Branch (PACCB) is a member of this committee.

PACCB's Branch Executive Committee governs the activities of the Branch. Chaired by the Assistant Deputy Minister, membership includes all Branch Directors General, Directors, and representatives from Finance and Human Resources. This committee meets bi-monthly, with meetings alternating focus between Program Priorities (Finance, Human Resources and Departmental issues) and Program Business (operational issues). As a part of the Branch Executive Committee's work, there is an annual planning retreat to develop and monitor progress against the long term vision and strategic objectives. In addition, each Directorate has its own regular management meetings and the Assistant Deputy Minister has hosted an all-staff meeting to discuss priorities and provide updates on current activities.

Recently, a national Communications Management Committee (CMC) was established by PACCB to address Regional communications activities and relationships with PACCB. The objectives of this committee include: strengthening horizontal relationships between Regional and National functions; enhancing strategic planning and management; and establishing clear service expectations, roles and responsibilities, and the appropriate governance.

The new Committee includes all Regional Communications Directors, PACCB Branch Executive Committee members, Senior Advisor for the Assistant Deputy Minister, PACCB, Communications Executive Regions and Program Branch and the Regional Director General Liaison, and others as required. This committee intends to meet semi-annually in person, as well as hold weekly conference calls chaired by the Director of Strategic Communications and Ministerial Services.

A review of agendas and minutes indicates that the Branch Executive Committee is provided timely and accurate information to support the decision-making process. However, the Branch recognizes the need to become more transparent and integrated and is beginning to apply more rigour to its meetings by developing strategic agendas directed at specific attendees.   While documentation from meetings has recently improved, there remains a need to better document decisions, action items and accountabilities to round out the governance process.

Recommendation 1

> It is recommended that the Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs, Consultation and Communications Branch incorporate other "good governance" practices by further documenting decisions, action items, and accountability for delivery.

Management Response

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Tabled at its Branch Executive Committee meeting on April 7, 2010, PACCB has revised the governance structure for its Management meetings, including processes related to record-keeping, documentation, and actions requiring follow-up. PACCB plans to draft guidelines and templates to ensure both consistency in application and transparency of decision-making and have them implemented by March 2011.

2.1.2 Strategic Communications Planning

Audit Criteria: *Strategic direction planning and priorities for External Communication should be clearly defined and communicated and aligned with Health Canada's mandate.*

Effective August 2006, Federal Government Departments were required to comply with the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada* which has a requirement for departments to have a Corporate Strategic Plan. The Corporate Plan should integrate communication planning into annual business planning, integrate Government of Canada and departmental priorities, identify target audiences, and delineate strategies, tools, messages and responsibilities for communicating with target audiences. Lastly, the plans should set out operational needs and resource allocations.

To address the Government's expectation, PACCB has developed a Strategic Plan to identify and integrate management priorities of the Branch. In addition, the priorities are linked to the departmental strategic outcomes and mandate. Each priority has a set of basic strategies and associated deliverables. Feeding into the Strategic Plan are the following: Report on Plans and Priorities; the Departmental Operational Plan; Departmental Performance Report; 2009-2010 Issues and Lessons Report; input from the Branch Executive Committees, as well as initiatives such as the Improving Together Initiative and the PACCB Organizational Assessment.

The PACCB Strategic Plan was used at the April 2010 planning workshop for middle management. The management team worked to refine the Branch's long term priorities for 2010-13 as part of the Branch's renewal agenda. Five key areas were identified for discussion in an effort to move the Branch forward: environmental intelligence and analysis; digital engagement and social media; measurement and evaluation; media relations, monitoring and analysis; and, planning and financial management.

2.1.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Audit Criteria: Roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities for the function and related processes are clearly articulated.

In an effort to clarify roles and responsibilities around the communications function, the Branch has initiated a National Communications Model. The goal is to assist the Branch with delivery of its function; delineating, roles and responsibilities for headquarter communications, regional communications, and Program and Policy Branches. In addition, the model will be used as a tool to communicate activities and services with other Branches, health partners, and stakeholders in a consistent manner.

Each Branch at Health Canada is assigned a Communications Executive as the single point of contact for PACCB and each of these Communications Executives are supported by a team of communications advisors. The Communications Executive team provides Branch clients with a full range of communication related services and activities.

In addition, there are communications resources located in each Region that report on a line basis to the Regional Director General and functionally to PACCB. The challenge is to facilitate a common and coordinated implementation of the *Communications Policy.* As such, each Region must collaborate with colleagues in the Regions and Programs Branch, PACCB, and other branches across the Department.

Recommendation 2
> *It is recommended that the Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs, Consultation and Communications Branch work with the Assistant Deputy Minister, Regions and Programs Branch to strengthen the management of communications across the Regions.*

Management Response

Management agrees with this recommendation.

PACCB has been working with RAPB on the development of a National Communications Model that will articulate the roles, responsibilities, and governance of headquarters, regions and branches with respect to the function of communications and consultations.

Once this model and related documents have been finalized, PACCB will hold discussions with Program Branches and Health Portfolio Partners to ensure a common understanding of the services and activities delivered by PACCB and RAPB with respect to communications and consultations.

2.1.4 Policies and Practices

Audit Criteria: A communication management framework should include policies, practices, and procedures that comply with the Communication Policy of the Government of Canada.

As mentioned, Treasury Board policy holds Deputy Heads responsible for having a communication management framework which should include policies, practices, and procedures that comply with federal legislation. The *Communication Policy of the Government of Canada* lists thirteen important pieces of legislation and eighteen administrative policies.

PACCB continues to follow the Government of Canada's policy. By complying with the government's policy, the Branch has been able to focus on the right processes and approaches to deliver on the communications and consultations function. However, the Branch has identified areas where additional policies, strategies, and guidance are required, such as for consultations and advisory bodies, the website, publishing, and social media.

One of the best examples where the Department would benefit from having a policy and practices in place is in the area of consultations. The consultation function has changed considerably since the 2008 departmental realignment. Prior to the realignment of consultations, services were decentralized within the individual branches. Delivery of the consultation service was corporately disjointed which also made it difficult for the Department to meet the expectations of the Government of Canada.

Consultations Activities:
• Face-to-face events
• E-consultations
• Public forums
• Interviews
• Advisory bodies
• Technical briefings
• Mass mailings
• Consensus building
• Town hall meetings

Since the realignment, the Division has started to create departmental wide policies and practices in order to develop a framework around corporate consultations.   In addition, since the Health Products and Food Branch had the largest consultations team, part of it was moved to the Public Affairs, Consultation and Communications Branch to create a new centre of expertise on consultation services.   While there has been effort to develop the corporate consultation activity, an up-to-date policy with tools and processes to engage Canadians is still required.

In other policy areas (extranet, publishing and social media) PACCB has started some work, but the policies have yet to be finalized or approved. An additional challenge for

the Branch will be getting Health Canada, as an organization, to take ownership to implement the policies and to monitor their usage.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that the Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs, Consultation and Communications Branch continue to develop policies and/or strategies that support strengthened external communications within Health Canada.

Management Response

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Standard consultation planning and reporting templates are being developed and the current Consultation Tracking System is being upgraded so that it is both user-friendly and more accurately captures information on all departmental public involvement and consultations activities.

Further to a senior management directive in 2009 to identify ways to improve the management of external advisory bodies, PACCB conducted a comprehensive analysis of best practices and areas for improvement, the findings reflected in a draft "Management of External Advisory Bodies" Policy that was tabled at the Executive Committee Policy on June 22, 2010.

Once tools and practices are finalized, PACCB will share them with Program Branches. In addition, once the departmental "Management of External Advisory Bodies" Policy is finalized, practices identified in the policy will be implemented.

2.2   Risk Management

Audit Criteria: The External Communication program activity and related processes are included in Health Canada's risk management activities as required by Treasury Board policies.

The *Communications Policy* requires departments to anticipate and assess potential risks to public health and safety, to the environment, and to policy and program administration. As part of this, strategies and plans for communicating risks to the public must be developed.

As a result of the 2008 and 2009 Health Canada integrated risk management process several risks were identified which can be directly influenced by the work of PACCB and most are recognized and addressed by PACCB in the branch mandate and planning processes.

Some of the other risks identified in the Corporate Risk Profile require PACCB's attention in terms of developing mitigating strategies. For example, one of the risks identified is the departmental process for decision-making and approval of

communications documents. Currently this process is administratively burdensome. Another risk identified is the use of alternate information sources. Having a risk mitigating strategy around new forms of social media would be beneficial.

At this time, PACCB does not have a branch risk profile to assist the Branch in managing its functional activities. Considering Branch resource allocation pressures combined with an expanded mandate, the management team would benefit from undertaking a risk analysis to prioritize risks and to develop mitigating strategies for implementation. This work should lend itself to better overall management of activities.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that the Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs, Consultation and Communications Branch develop a Branch risk profile.

Management Response

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Recognizing that risk management is fundamental to good management and decision-making, PACCB supported the updating of Health Canada's Integrated Risk Management Framework this spring 2010 and actively provided feedback and input into the Department's Corporate Risk Profile for 2010.

Building on this work, PACCB plans to develop its own Risk Branch Profile by March 2011 to assist in the management of its functional areas.

2.3 Management of Operations

Good business processes and procedures help to improve operations through streamlining in order to optimize the "best process and/or procedure" for a given activity. This type of practice enables organizations to be more efficient, effective, and capable of change.

The audit examined the external communication business lines within the scope of the audit and determined that many had business processes and procedures in place to manage and support external communications. However, there were two areas where overall management of operations could be strengthened. These two areas relate to the streamlining of the approval processes and continued effort towards establishing more of a corporate approach.

2.3.1 Processes and procedures

Audit Criteria: Health Canada has business processes and procedures in place to manage and support external communications.

PACCB develops communications messages and products in consultation with programs.

Within PACCB, there are several unique approval processes, each which are synchronized through coordination teams. For example, the Strategic Communications Directorate approves risk communications such as; public advisories, public warnings, recalls, information updates; and foreign product alerts. Given the comprehensive approval process that currently exists, there is an opportunity to build on PACCB's efforts to streamline processes.

In the past, Program Branches had their own practices and used a variety of formats for presenting health information to the public. In order to have a department-wide approach in addressing "health risk" communications, the Strategic Communications Directorate has developed standard operating procedures. It should be noted, however, that the Branch does not yet track the time it takes to develop and publish risk communications products. As a result, the Department is not able to evaluate the effectiveness of the dissemination of information in terms of timeliness.

Currently, there is a separate but similarly burdensome process for approving media inquiries. The approval process is monitored via a database that tracks the time and date of every approval, as well as the corresponding comments from Department managers. In order to be more efficient with urgent requests, the Strategic Communications Directorate developed a "Fast-track" approval process in February 2010 which was approved by the Executive Committee; however, the process has yet to be implemented.

Recommendation 5

> *It is recommended that the Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs, Consultation and Communications Branch review the approval processes in order to streamline the activity.*

Management Response

Management agrees with this recommendation.

PACCB has taken a number of steps to improve approval processes within Health Canada for external communications products and will continue to look for opportunities to streamline this activity. In addition, PACCB has developed a risk-based approach for the approval of all communications products to streamline the approval process and has been introducing it to Program Branches and Senior Management.

2.3.2 Corporate Approach

Audit Criteria: *Operational control processes and practices are in place to ensure that all operational activities are conducted appropriately and in compliance with stated directives and established standards.*

The *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada* sets out requirements for departments to have a unified corporate identity throughout the government. The policy instructs departments to have common elements in all communications products. With all

these requirements set out by the *Policy*, it is vital that the Department has the proper systems in place to ensure consistency of messaging.

Video Process

There is a video production team within the Strategic Communications Directorate. The Directorate, together with the Branch's in-house production resources, produces short videos designed to inform Canadians of ongoing health issues. Even though video production is done by PACCB, other branches also produce videos which typically cost more and sometimes cannot be used because they do not comply with the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada*.

Publications

Thousands of Health Canada publications are shipped out every week by Marketing and Communications Services Directorate's Distribution and Enquiries Centre. Last year, more than seven million publications were distributed in response to more than 65,000 requests. The Centre's costs include warehousing storage, and postage. The Distribution and Enquiries Centre maintains a database of these requests. They track and report on the number distributed by publication, the amount of time to get an order mailed, and the type of request. They monitor the number of publications on hand and what ones are being requested. Based on the data, they are able to identify publications that are no longer requested, however, the Programs may continue to request more copies be printed.

Public Enquiries

The Distribution and Enquiries Team, within the Marketing and Communications Services Directorate, responded to an average of 250 e-mails and phone calls daily, answering diverse questions on a variety of health related topics such as product safety, food and nutrition, and health cards.

The team implemented an operating system that monitors telephone calls and passes them to the next available agent. Response times are tracked and the standard is to answer them the same day. Similarly, e-mail response time is tracked and the same standard has been set. However, there are numerous potential contacts which can increase the difficulty in measuring the volume of requests for information, understanding the types of calls and measuring the volume of work. Moreover, having many toll free telephone numbers and email addresses is confusing to the public.

Recently, the Public Enquiries phone number was put on the Health Canada Web site as the general number to call. Preliminary discussions have started to get the Team to manage a centralized call centre for the Department, in order to eliminate individual call centers. In addition, the Department has begun to reduce the number of toll free telephone numbers it owns as there are many numbers listed on the Health Canada Web site as well as some that are no longer in existence.

Recommendation 6

> *It is recommended that the Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs, Consultation and Communications Branch work with the other Assistant Deputy Ministers to develop a corporate approach related to the delivery of communications products and services within Health Canada to help ensure both the consistency of messaging and avoid duplication of services.*

Management Response

Management agrees with this recommendation.

The Branch is committed to working with departmental colleagues to ensure the delivery of communications products and services within Health Canada is both efficient and consistent – PACCB will continue to identify further opportunities for efficiencies.

The Assistant Deputy Minister, PACCB is going to the Executive Committee this fall to present a Business Model for the delivery of communications and consultations services within Health Canada. This will be an opportunity to look at whether the Branch has got the right service mix and confirm the corporate approach the Department wants to take with respect to communications and consultations activities.

In addition, PACCB is developing a Publications Policy that will provide overarching direction and set the stage for the review Health Canada's distribution and storage practices for print publications, as well as the development of an annual departmental publishing plan.

PACCB is also conducting a review of departmental 1-800 numbers and generic e-mail addresses for the public on the Department's website to determine if further reductions can be achieved.

Social Media Vehicles

Health Canada has been involved with several initiatives that include analyzing and using social media tools. In addition, online partnerships are being explored so that the traditional media of print and air waves are not the only methods the Department uses to distribute information.

Social media is a type of Web-based media that expedites conversation as opposed to traditional media, which delivers content but doesn't allow viewers to participate in the creation or development of the content.

Health Canada **Social Media Applications**
RSS Feeds- Subscribe to updates
Bookmarking -Share web pages
Twitter- Follow latest updates
Widgets- Add to your own website, blog or social networking page
YouTube- Watch Departmental produced videos.
Facebook – Advertising campaign

Health Canada uses a variety of social media tools to share its content and provide access to reliable and timely health information. PACCB is developing a strategy on how Health Canada can incorporate the use of social media into its communications and consultations activities.

External Website

The *Communications Policy* assigns the Head of Communications with the oversight accountability to manage the Department's Web content to meet communications standards. The website is a key tool for the public to access information in a timely manner.

Within the Marketing and Communications Services Directorate, is the Web and E-Communications Division. It provides leadership and management of all departmental online e-communications. The Division develops departmental Web policies, guidelines, processes, tools, and best practices.

Key Web statistics 2009/10
• 63,819,302 pages viewed • 17,894,583 visits • 11,844,745 unique visitors

Originally, Health Canada had many external websites that were managed and maintained by the individual branches each requiring technical resources. Different Web tools and technologies were used and in some cases the content did not comply with Treasury Board policies and standards. In 2005, Health Canada decided to amalgamate the websites into one site that would use the same tools and technology. All content was transferred over without review.

Currently, the Health Canada's website contains approximately *45,000* Web pages. By any standard, this is considered a large website making it difficult to manage, maintain, and costly. Being so large also makes it challenging to navigate information on the site for the "average public user" unfamiliar with Health Canada's mandate and programs.

Currently, other government regulatory and science departments and agencies, have started or completed projects focused on reducing the Web content/pages and identifying more cost effective ways to distribute information. All recognize that it is expensive and very time consuming to maintain large websites.

There is a project underway to review the website content at Health Canada. The intended result would be a leaner, more efficient departmental website with accessible, current, and relevant information which addresses user needs. The goal is to: improve the quality and integrity of the Health Canada website; ensure the website remains relevant and addresses user needs and expectations; and, ensure the Web content is strategic, focused and aligned to priorities.

Recently, there were technical problems that resulted in the inability to generate Health Canada's website statistics for several months. This information is important for measuring the results of programs.

PACCB has several initiatives underway with respect to the external website. These include the development and approval of a Departmental Extranet Policy which would help reduce the size of the website and the acquisition and implementation of Web content management tools. Health Canada funding of these major projects has been an issue and will require continued department-wide support and effort.

Recommendation 7

> *It is recommended that the Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs, Consultation and Communications Branch, work with other Assistant Deputy Ministers to streamline and update the website.*

Management Response

Management agrees with this recommendation.

PACCB is leading a Web Presence Renewal Initiative within Health Canada that has four components: Web Governance Policy; Web Information Architecture; Web Content Renewal; (including an extranet pilot project) and Performance Management. PACCB will be launching this initiative this fall 2010 and consulting with Program Branches on steps for implementation.

In addition, PACCB is developing a social media strategy that will guide the Department on how to use this new tool. Once finalized, this strategy and related guidelines will be shared with branches (including Regions) as part of targeted training.

2.4   Monitoring and Reporting

Audit Criteria: Processes and procedures should be in place for monitoring and reporting on External Communications activities and performance objectives and indicators should be measured against targets.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the Branch's external communications products and processes, regular monitoring should occur. Monitoring and reporting procedures should include identifying performance objectives that are measured against appropriate targets as well as using performance information to demonstrate that results are aligned with business needs.

Recent accomplishments of the Branch in the area of monitoring and reporting include in-year review documents for the Strategic Communications Directorate and Marketing and Communications Services Directorate. These reports highlight key activities, give examples of completed projects and are an important initiative in terms of reporting. However, further work could be done as the documents do not report on the effectiveness of the activities delivered and do not compare information from year to year.

In addition, the Branch routinely conducts a Performance Survey to ascertain the Canadian public's opinion about Health Canada program delivery. The surveys have been conducted bi-annually since 2005, and provide the Department with valuable information on the public's perception on Health Canada.

Within the Strategic Communications Directorate there is the Crisis Communication Team that is involved with providing guidelines, information-sharing networks, and strategic approaches that allow the Department to respond to the communications demands of a crisis or emergency situation. The Crisis Communication Team facilitates and coordinates the Department's responses to a crisis or emergency situation. As a follow up to all significant crisis events, a detailed After Action Report - Lessons Learned is produced and distributed across the Branch. An evaluation process begins immediately after the conclusion of the crisis which comprises surveys and interviews. The evaluation report acknowledges actions that worked well from a communications standpoint, highlights areas where improvements are required and related recommendations.

This type of reporting is a good example of monitoring and learning. Lessons learned are implemented informally on an ongoing basis and therefore it is difficult to determine if all the recommendations are implemented. The process could be improved if an action plan was developed with recommendations and accountabilities and follow-up was conducted.

Despite good progress in certain areas, a comparative analysis of the various communications products and processes showed that the level of reporting and monitoring varies throughout the Branch. The evaluation or measuring of results is not

always completed therefore it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of the product and process.

Recommendation 8

It is recommended that the Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Affairs, Consultation and Communications Branch develop procedures for monitoring and reporting on External Communications.

Management Response

Management agrees with this recommendation.

PACCB has been working to strengthen planning, monitoring, and reporting in the Branch.

Work has begun to develop Branch reporting tools to support departmental and branch planning processes and PACCB has developed new reporting requirements as part of the Department's Integrated Functional Operational Planning.

In addition, PACCB is developing a Performance Measurement Framework that will outline procedures for monitoring and reporting activities within the Branch, including external communications.

3. Conclusion

The reputation of Health Canada with the public and key stakeholders is vital to the Department's success – effective external communications plays a key role in maintaining the Department's strong reputation for listening to Canadians and providing timely, accessible and relevant information on health and safety issues. Health Canada created the Public Affairs, Consultations and Communications Branch (PACCB) in 2008 to further strengthen the Department's capacity in communications and consultations. Proper governance, policies, procedures, risk management, monitoring, and reporting of external communications are essential elements of a successful external communications function.

Since PACCB's creation, much has been accomplished in a short time frame to strengthen this function. While the audit findings suggest that PACCB is well-positioned to provide the necessary strategic oversight and direction to the function of external communications, there are areas where additional action would further strengthen the management practices.

As PACCB progresses in its efforts to ensure the right policies and processes are in place to effectively deliver external communications services, the Branch would benefit from evaluating its activities in order to assess the quality of service, advice and products being provided.

Appendix A- Lines of Enquiry and Audit Criteria

Lines Of Enquiry	Audit Criteria
Governance: Governance and accountability structures are in place for the management of External Communication.	1.1 A formal governance structure for External Communication is in place which includes oversight by senior management. 1.2 Strategic direction planning and priorities for External Communication are clearly defined and communicated and are aligned with Health Canada's organization mandate. 1.3 Roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities over the function and related processes are clearly articulated and in place. 1.4 A communication management framework should include policies, practices, and procedures that comply with federal legislation, as described in the *Communication Policy of the Government of Canada.*
Risk Management: Formal risk management practices are in place.	2.1 The External Communication Function and related processes are included in Health Canada's risk management activities as required in Treasury Board policies.
Management of Operations: Business processes are in place to manage and implement the External Communication function as per the Treasury Board (TB) policies.	3.1 Health Canada has processes and procedures in place to support the External Communications. 3.2 Operational control processes and practices are in place to ensure that all operational activities are conducted appropriately and in compliance with stated directives and established standards.
Monitoring and Reporting: Results/performance information on the External Communication function is comprehensive, accurate, and reliable.	4.1 Processes and procedures are in place for monitoring and reporting External Communications on an on going basis. 4.2 Performance objectives and indicators are measured against targets.