

RESULTS AT A GLANCE



Evaluation of Parks Canada's Townsite Management Sub-program

Approved by the CEO on May 12, 2017

Evaluation Objective and Scope

Consistent with the requirements of the Treasury Board *Policy on Evaluation* (2009) and Treasury Board *Policy on Results* (2016), the evaluation addressed the Townsite Management sub-program's:

- **Relevance:** continued need and alignment with government priorities and federal roles and responsibilities.
- **Performance:** achievement of outcomes for provision of municipal services and infrastructure; effectiveness and efficiency of townsite service delivery; and effectiveness and clarity of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

This evaluation covered the period from 2009-10 to 2014-15. Details on specific evaluation questions, expectations, methods and limitations are found in the full report.

What We Found

Relevance

- The Townsite Management sub-program is relevant and consistent with the priorities, roles and responsibilities of both the Parks Canada Agency and the Government of Canada.
- While municipal services are not core to Parks Canada's mandate, townsites require basic municipal services to be provided to support the health and safety of both townsite residents and visitors.

Effectiveness

- **Community plans have been developed and are consistent with legislated requirements.** However, the extent to which they remain relevant is difficult to determine. The Agency has recognized a need to reassess its process for reviewing community plans but has yet to take related actions.
- **The Agency needs to clarify its expectations for 'no net negative environmental impact' (NNNEI).** While Parks Canada's townsites regularly undertake numerous activities in support of this principle, a lack of consolidated monitoring data makes it unclear how townsites are able to assess its application.
- **Management of commercial growth is effectively controlled.** No townsites currently exceed their legislated commercial footprint.
- **Data suggests the overall condition of townsite assets has been maintained or improved since 2010.** This is the result of numerous infrastructure projects undertaken in the period. However, about 30% of contemporary townsite assets and at least 12% of relevant cultural assets are reported in poor condition. It is too soon to determine the extent to which the Agency is on track to address all deferred infrastructure work by March 2020.
- **Municipal services are effectively designed to service the needs of residents and visitors.** Parks Canada has consistently met drinking water quality standards. While sewage effluent from townsites' wastewater systems also generally complies with required limits, specific targeted thresholds are not always clear.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

- There are seven townsites located in Canada's national parks. Five of these townsites are directly managed by Parks Canada, i.e., Lake Louise (Banff NP), Field (Yoho NP), Wasagaming (Riding Mountain NP), Waskesiu (Prince Albert NP), and Waterton (Waterton Lakes NP). The townsites of Banff (Banff NP) and Jasper (Jasper NP) are incorporated, self-governed municipalities.
- The Townsite Management sub-program involves community planning and management of commercial growth in all seven townsites, and provision of municipal services and related infrastructure (e.g., water, sewage, garbage, and roads) in the five townsites directly managed by Parks Canada.

Efficiency and Economy

- **Parks Canada may not be consistently achieving its targets for cost-recovery of municipal services.** A lack of clarity surrounding cost-recovery targets and weaknesses in accounting practices prevented the evaluation from estimating the extent of the gap. While there are some barriers to cost-recovery that are outside the direct control of the Agency (e.g., amendments to fee structures), there may be opportunities to make greater use of available management flexibilities to increase efficiency of the Townsite Management sub-program.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **The Townsite Management sub-program lacks identity and central direction.** The nature of townsites, their various roles and obligations, and their potential value to the Agency are not clearly understood or appreciated. The result has been a lack of coordination that would ensure consistency in the delivery and costing of townsite services. In some cases, this has also created friction with residents.



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Recommendations and Management Response

Recommendation 1. The Vice-President, Strategic Policy and Investment should assess its process to review community plans to ensure that it is efficient and meets the needs of Parks Canada's townsites and the national parks in which they are located.



Management Response. Agreed. A discussion regarding vision and objectives for townsites including the processes for reviewing and updating community plans to align with the vision and with the Directive on Management planning will be completed by March 31, 2018.

Recommendation 2. The Vice-President, Protected Area Establishment and Conservation should review and update its direction on the no net negative environmental impact principle, including for the development and implementation of townsites' no net negative environmental impact frameworks.



Management Response. Agreed. The Protected Areas Establishment and Conservation Directorate will work with townsites to clarify the no net negative environmental impact principle and develop a pragmatic approach to implementation, monitoring and reporting. Target: 2019-2020.

Recommendation 3. The Vice-President, Strategic Policy and Investment should review corporate performance targets with respect to wastewater systems to ensure that they are clear and measurable for each townsite. Revised metrics should be integrated as relevant into the development of Parks Canada's new Agency Results Framework (expected to be approved by November 2017).



Management Response. Agreed. Corporate performance targets with respect to wastewater systems will be clarified and integrated into the new Agency Results Framework, where appropriate, by November 1, 2017.

Recommendation 4. The Senior Vice-President, Operations should review and formalize the governance and accountability structure for the Townsite Management sub-program to ensure consistency in the delivery of townsite services across the Agency.



Management Response. Agreed. The new Agency governance structure places responsibility for the sub-program with the Senior Vice-President, Operations. The Townsites Executive Board terms of reference will be approved by March 31, 2018.

Recommendation 5. The Senior Vice-President, Operations should review existing accounting practices for cost allocation and recovery and develop a clear and consistent approach to costing of municipal services delivered by Parks Canada to enable the Agency to better quantify expected cost-recovery related to municipal services in townsites.



Management Response. Agreed. In consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, the Senior Vice-President will engage a consultant to develop a costing framework. The costing framework will be developed by December 31, 2018.

