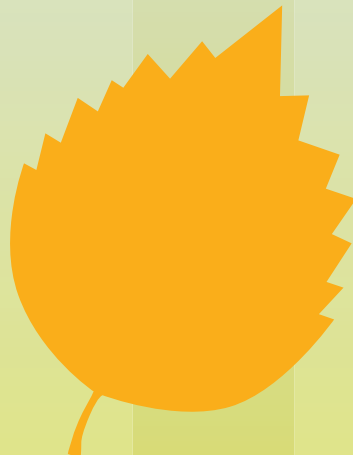
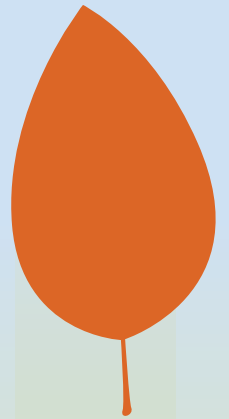
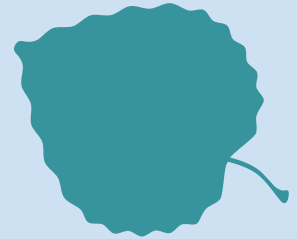


National Capital Commission  
Environmental Strategy

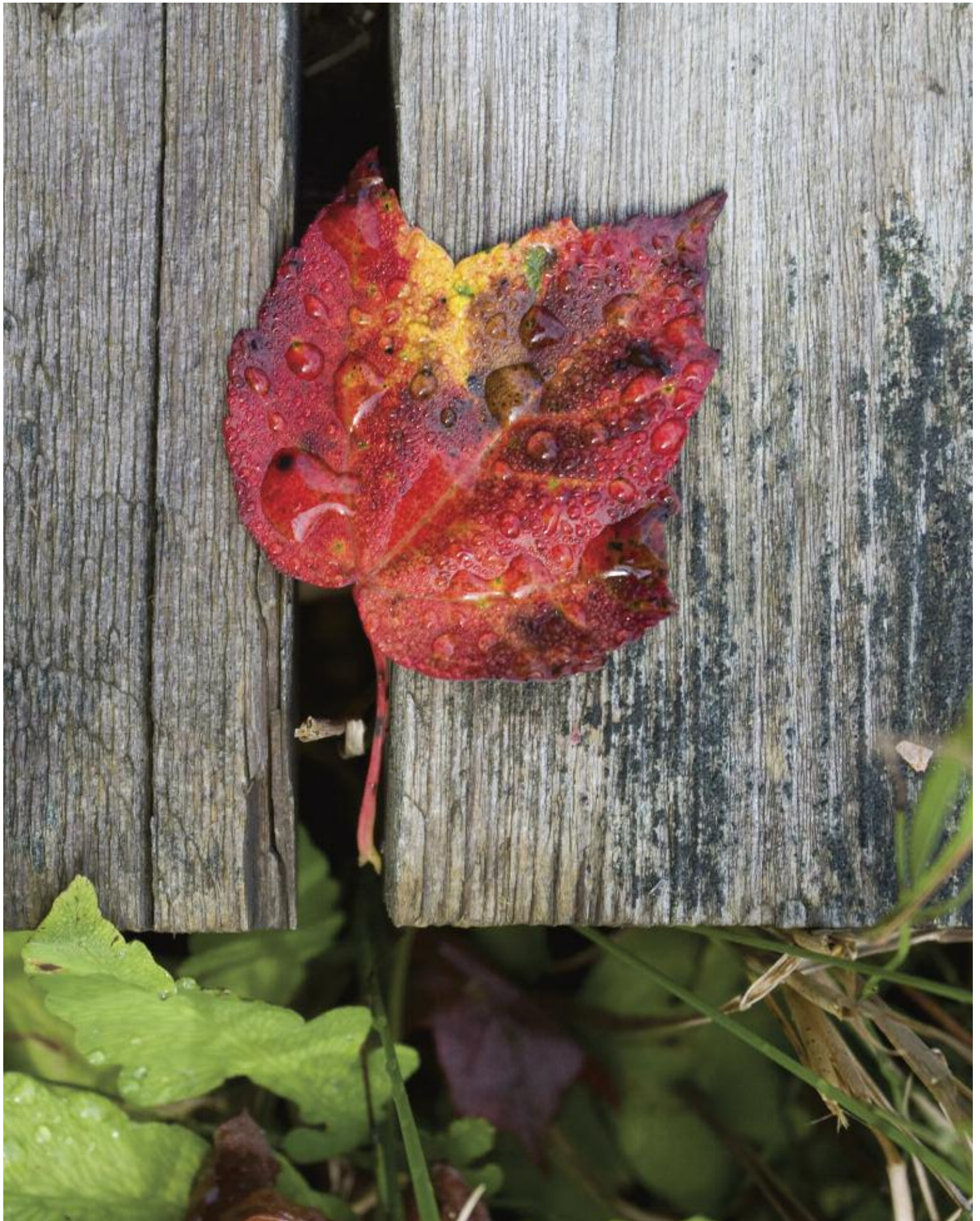
# BUILDING A GREENER CAPITAL



The mission of the  
National Capital Commission  
is to create national  
pride and unity through  
Canada's Capital Region.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
The National Capital Commission .....	3
Development of the Environmental Strategy .....	4
Guiding principles.....	4
Action areas.....	5
Reducing waste .....	6
Enhancing biodiversity.....	8
Preventing pollution.....	11
Leading in environmental practices.....	12
Combatting climate change.....	14
Environmental milestones.....	16
A history of environmental action.....	18
Conclusion.....	20
Glossary of terms.....	21



## INTRODUCTION

The National Capital Commission's (NCC) Environmental Strategy provides a focused agenda for environmental leadership in Canada's Capital Region. The strategy builds on the corporation's strong tradition of environmental stewardship and reflects its core mission to build a great capital and create national pride and unity among all Canadians.

Canadians consistently rank the environment as a top priority for public policy-makers. A 2008 poll within Canada's Capital Region revealed that the large majority of residents believe that it is important for the NCC to work to protect the environment.<sup>1</sup> The Environmental Strategy responds to the public's concern for the environment and provides an initial blueprint for action that will have a lasting impact.

The Environmental Strategy is built on a solid framework with clear goals. However, the initiatives that the NCC undertakes to achieve these goals will evolve over time. Implementation of the strategy will be an iterative process — as the NCC gains more experience, or as new information comes to light, it will adjust and adapt its approach accordingly.

## THE NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION

The NCC is a federal Crown corporation that was created by Parliament in 1959 as the steward of federal lands and buildings in Canada's Capital Region. Its mandate and mission are to build the Capital Region into a source of pride and unity for Canadians. Beginning in 1899 with its two predecessor organizations — the Federal District Commission and the Ottawa Improvement Commission — the NCC's work is to make the Capital an expression of the Canadian identity. Canada's Capital is today a model of natural shorelines, scenic parkways and boulevards, preserved heritage, monuments, and expansive parks. Just as importantly, the Capital has become a place for national gatherings, celebrations, commemorations and learning.

“My hope is that, as we take this important step, others will join us.”

— Marie Lemay, Chief Executive Officer, NCC

1. Environics Research Group, The National Capital Commission: 2008 Public Awareness Survey

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

The NCC's Environmental Strategy was formulated primarily through a combined process of research, analysis and consultation within the NCC. Staff teamed up with an experienced sustainability consulting firm to conduct a detailed analysis to help determine priorities for action, taking into consideration stakeholder interests, as well as the potential impact of environmental issues on the NCC. The team also examined advanced environmental and sustainability plans developed by private and public sector organizations from Canada and elsewhere, to harvest the best ideas from around the world for this strategy.

The NCC's environmental strengths and weaknesses were assessed, and priorities and objectives were set on the basis that they be environmentally meaningful, strongly relevant to the NCC's mandate and activities, challenging but achievable, measurable, and likely to capture the public's interest and engagement.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The NCC's Environmental Strategy is founded on four core principles.

### ***Transparency***

The NCC will clearly articulate its environmental priorities and objectives and will provide ongoing public reporting on key indicators to measure progress and help adjust the strategy's aim, as needed.

### ***Collaboration***

The NCC knows that it cannot achieve all of its objectives alone, and will work with stakeholders and partners on environmental improvements, while encouraging a culture of sharing ideas, solutions and best practices.

### ***Leadership by example***

The NCC believes that a key aspect of environmental leadership is for staff throughout the organization to be fully engaged in greening the NCC's own policies, practices and activities, and to encourage other parties within its sphere of influence to do the same.

### ***Continuous improvement***

The NCC will learn from its experiences and constantly strive for greater positive environmental impact.



## ACTION AREAS

The Environmental Strategy centres around five key areas for action that are highly relevant to what the NCC does and where we know can make an important difference to the quality of the environment. The areas for action are *reducing waste*, *enhancing biodiversity*, *preventing pollution*, *leading in environmental practices* and *combatting climate change*. Each area for action has one priority objective and a focused set of secondary objectives. The priority objectives are corporate commitments to firm, measurable targets. The secondary objectives support the overall goals in each area for action. Some actions are already under way to meet many of the secondary objectives, while others require further analysis and testing before they will be ready to be implemented.



# 1 **REDUCING WASTE**

The NCC will reduce the waste going to landfills from all aspects of its business, through more aggressive use of the “3 Rs” — reducing, reusing and recycling.

## **PRIORITY OBJECTIVE**

**By 2013, the NCC will reduce the waste going to landfills from the activities associated with Canada Day, Winterlude and the Rideau Canal Skateway, by 50 percent against a 2009–2010 baseline.**

Sending garbage to a landfill truly is a waste — of materials, energy and sometimes even money. Diverting waste — or, even better, reducing the amount of waste generated — has several benefits. It reduces the generation of greenhouse gases, reduces demand for natural resources and may even generate revenue through the sale of recycled materials. It also extends landfill capacity, deferring the costs of constructing and operating additional landfill capacity.



One of the areas where the NCC can make the biggest impact is by significantly reducing waste at its signature events and programs, including Canada Day, Winterlude and the Rideau Canal Skateway. Celebrating Canada's Capital through these signature events is a central and visible expression of the NCC's mandate. However, despite significant waste diversion programs implemented by the NCC for these events, like all major public activities, they generate a large amount of waste.

To achieve its goal, the NCC will work with suppliers, partners, and event and program participants to reduce waste related to NCC operations, NCC-run events, and other events that take place on NCC land, but are hosted by other organizations.

As a first step, the NCC will measure the amount and types of waste generated, diverted and sent to landfill by both the public and the commercial sides of Canada Day 2009, Winterlude 2010 and the Rideau Canal Skateway during the 2009–2010 skating season. This will help set the baseline against which to measure progress. Based on this information, the NCC will develop an extensive and rigorous waste diversion program, and continue to measure waste trends on an annual basis. The NCC will also apply its learning to its full scope of operations, with the aim of achieving 70 percent waste diversion from all its business areas by 2017.

#### **SECONDARY OBJECTIVE**

- **The NCC will achieve 70 percent waste diversion (through reducing, reusing, recycling) from all NCC business areas by 2017.**
- **The NCC will challenge partners hosting events on NCC lands to achieve a 50 percent waste diversion target.**
- **The NCC will develop green procurement guidelines for implementation in 2010, which will include low waste as an important criteria.**
- **The NCC will implement green demolition practices by 2010, which place a strong emphasis on waste diversion.**



## 2 **ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY**

The NCC will work with local municipalities and the provinces to make Canada's Capital Region a model of biodiversity conservation.

### **PRIORITY OBJECTIVE**

**The NCC will ensure that all 28 high-value ecosystems and habitats found within the Greenbelt and Gatineau Park and on urban lands in the region are designated as conservation lands by 2012.**

Conserving biodiversity improves the quality of life in the region and is an essential element of a green capital. Habitat change and fragmentation, climate change, pollution, over-exploitation by people and rapid expansion of non-native species are the main threats to biodiversity in the region and around the world. The NCC recognizes both the importance and the necessity of protecting the ecosystems, natural processes, and plant and animal species found on its lands, in order that they will be preserved for future generations of Canadians.

As the owner of 10 percent of land in the region, which straddles the Quebec–Ontario border, the NCC is the chief steward of federal lands in Canada’s Capital Region. Its rural, urban and wilderness lands are characterized by a high level of biodiversity. The NCC will show leadership in working with local municipalities and the provinces of Ontario and Quebec toward making Canada’s Capital Region a model of biodiversity conservation.

Building on its many years of experience in managing lands and protected areas in Canada’s Capital Region, the NCC will intensify its efforts to understand biodiversity on its lands and share its findings with partners in the region. The NCC will also implement plans to preserve and protect biodiversity on its lands.

According to a 2007 study commissioned by the NCC, there are 28 high-value ecosystems and natural habitats on NCC lands on both sides of the Ottawa River. These sites constitute rare ecosystems in the region, and contain more than 100 plant and 50 animal species at risk.

<b>Distribution of high-value ecosystems and habitats across NCC lands</b>		
<b>Urban lands: 11</b>	<b>Greenbelt: 9</b>	<b>Gatineau Park: 8</b>

The NCC will ensure that all 28 of these high-value ecosystems and habitats are designated as conservation lands by 2012, based on internationally recognized conservation designation and management standards. Not only will protecting these sites make an important contribution to the long-term conservation of biological diversity, it will also provide an opportunity for education and interpretation about biodiversity in the region.

#### **SECONDARY OBJECTIVES**

- **The NCC will implement new recovery plans for federally and provincially listed species at risk on NCC lands, within one year of finalization.**
- **The NCC will protect all critical habitats identified on NCC lands under federal or provincial law for species at risk, within one year of designation.**
- **The NCC will develop a thorough understanding of the biodiversity on NCC lands, through the NCC’s Natural Resources Research Program.**
- **The NCC will reduce the amount of NCC urban land infested by aggressive invasive plant species by 10 percent against a baseline by 2014.**



“I go to nature every day  
for inspiration in the day’s  
work. I follow in building  
the principles which nature  
has used in its domain.”

— Frank Lloyd Wright



# 3 **PREVENTING POLLUTION**

**The NCC will show leadership in preventing the pollution of lands, groundwater and surface water by implementing leading environmental standards in its operations and practices.**

## **PRIORITY OBJECTIVE**

**All contaminated sites on NCC lands will be secured by 2017.**

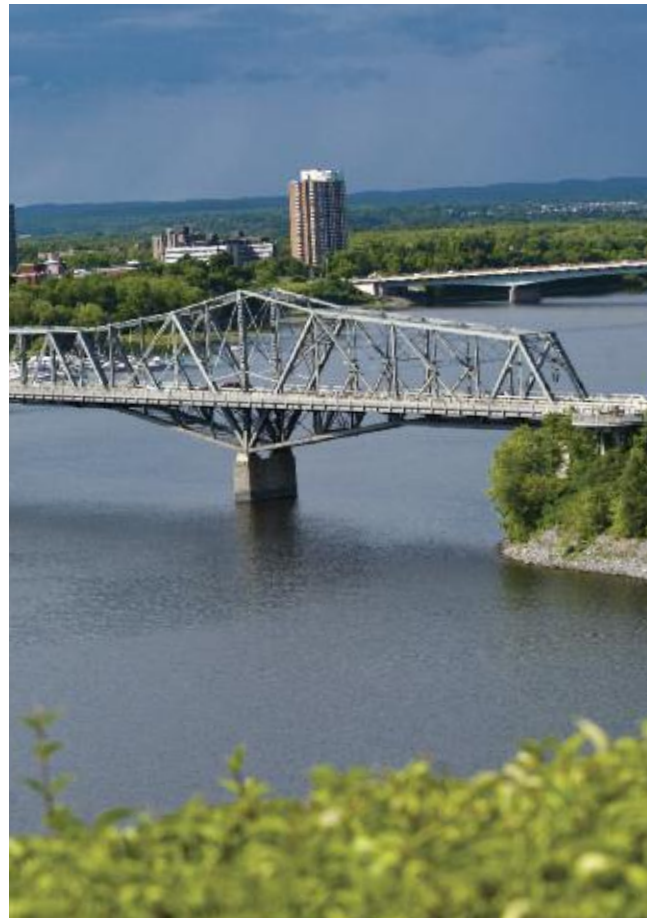
The NCC is committed to protecting human health and the environment from the impacts of pollution. As such, the NCC is showing continued leadership to prevent the pollution of lands, ground water and surface water by applying advanced environmental standards to its operations and practices on its lands and properties.

The NCC has made it a priority to ensure that its contaminated sites do not pose a risk to human health or the environment. The NCC currently has more than 200 contaminated sites on its lands, owing mainly to its acquisition many years ago of former industrial lands along the Ottawa and Rideau rivers and in the urban cores of Ottawa and Gatineau. Contaminated sites are areas of land where elevated levels of substances such as heavy metals and petroleum products can be found. Unless properly managed, these sites could pose a risk to human health or the environment.

Using a risk management approach to prioritize its work, the NCC will build on and accelerate its current plans for the management of contaminated sites in order to secure all contaminated sites on its lands by 2017. Securing a site involves studying it and taking all necessary remediation or other risk management actions consistent with the designated use of the site. By 2017, all NCC contaminated sites will be at the point where only routine monitoring and maintenance are needed.

## **SECONDARY OBJECTIVES**

- **The NCC will identify and remove or repair all problem underground storage tanks on NCC property by 2011.**
- **The NCC will adopt a policy to confirm the elimination of the cosmetic use of pesticides on NCC lands by 2010.**



# 4

## **LEADING IN ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES**

The NCC will use leading environmental practices in visible areas of high environmental importance, including planning, transportation, buildings and the management of watersheds.

### **PRIORITY OBJECTIVE**

All new building construction on NCC lands, for buildings over 250 square metres, will be certified LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold by 2013, and all major building renovations will meet LEED® certification standards.

The NCC believes that it is important to look at ways to green all aspects of its business, from green procurement and transportation policies to workplace guidelines. This includes not only areas where the NCC may have direct control over outcomes, but also areas where the NCC and its staff have influence, through working with partners, suppliers and stakeholders.

One of the NCC's major functions is the care and maintenance of a variety of buildings, ranging from functional buildings, like barns and sheds, to prestigious heritage buildings, such as Canada's official residences. The way buildings are built and managed has an important impact on the environment. For example, in Canada, buildings account for 37 percent of all primary energy use and are responsible for 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. Higher standards of construction will help conserve energy, reduce the carbon footprint, and enable more efficient use of water and other resources.

The NCC has more than 1,300 buildings on its lands and, of these, more than 150 are larger than 250 square metres, excluding barns. Furthermore, the NCC builds one to two new buildings on its lands each year and undertakes about 10 to 15 major renovations annually. Buildings not owned by the NCC, but built or renovated by other agencies on NCC lands, would also be required to meet the same standards that NCC projects are required to meet.

All new building construction on NCC lands, for buildings over 250 square metres, will be certified LEED® Gold by 2013, and all major building renovations will meet LEED® certification standards. LEED® is a third-party certification program administered by the Canada Green Building Council for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings. There are four levels of LEED® standards: certified, silver, gold and platinum. Buildings are assessed for their environmental and energy performance in five areas: sustainable site development, water efficiency, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor air quality.

#### **SECONDARY OBJECTIVES**

- **The NCC will use green building practices for the construction of all buildings under 250 square metres.**
- **The NCC will integrate environmental education into all NCC activities, where appropriate.**
- **The NCC will introduce environmentally sensitive practices into all maintenance contracts.**
- **The NCC will provide and promote environmentally sustainable transportation alternatives.**
- **The NCC will lead the effort to engage partners in improving the water quality of key watersheds in Canada's Capital Region, with the Ottawa River as the first priority.**
- **The NCC will integrate a green urbanism approach into the 2013 Plan for Canada's Capital.**



## **5** **COMBATTING CLIMATE CHANGE**

The NCC will reduce the carbon footprint of all aspects of its business.

### **PRIORITY OBJECTIVE**

**The NCC's signature events and programs will become carbon neutral, starting with Canada Day 2010.**

Climate change is real, and it is affecting the environment and health of Canadians. Emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses associated with human activities are increasingly understood to be the main cause of climate change. The NCC is committed to reducing carbon dioxide emissions from all aspects of its business and has made it a priority to render its signature events and programs carbon neutral (i.e. having a net zero carbon footprint).



Activities and celebrations organized by the NCC draw hundreds of thousands of visitors from within and outside of Canada's Capital Region each year and help to promote the region as a place where Canadians can meet, express themselves and celebrate what it is to be Canadian. However, large events and festivals can be significant sources of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). These emissions are released from burning fossil fuels like oil, coal and natural gas, which are associated with electricity used during the events, as well as with generators, vehicle fleets, artist and visitor travel and accommodations, and event organizers' activities.

#### **Timeline for carbon neutral NCC events and programs**

- **Canada Day: 2010**
- **Christmas Lights Across Canada: 2010–2011 holiday season**
- **Rideau Canada Skateway: December 2011 to March 2012 skating season**
- **Winterlude: 2012**
- **Fall Rhapsody: 2012**
- **Sunday Bikedays: 2013 biking season**

The NCC will achieve carbon neutrality in two ways. First, it will work toward increased efficiency and a reduction of carbon emissions wherever possible. Aggressive emission reduction measures will be taken with careful consideration to retain the essential character of NCC events and programs. Second, it will develop strategies to counterbalance the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that cannot be eliminated.

The initial carbon neutral focus will be aimed at the NCC's own operations, over which it has direct control. In subsequent years, the NCC may expand its targets to include reducing the footprint related to event partners and sponsors. Over the long term, the NCC hopes to influence emission levels associated with visitors to the Capital as well.






#### **SECONDARY OBJECTIVES**

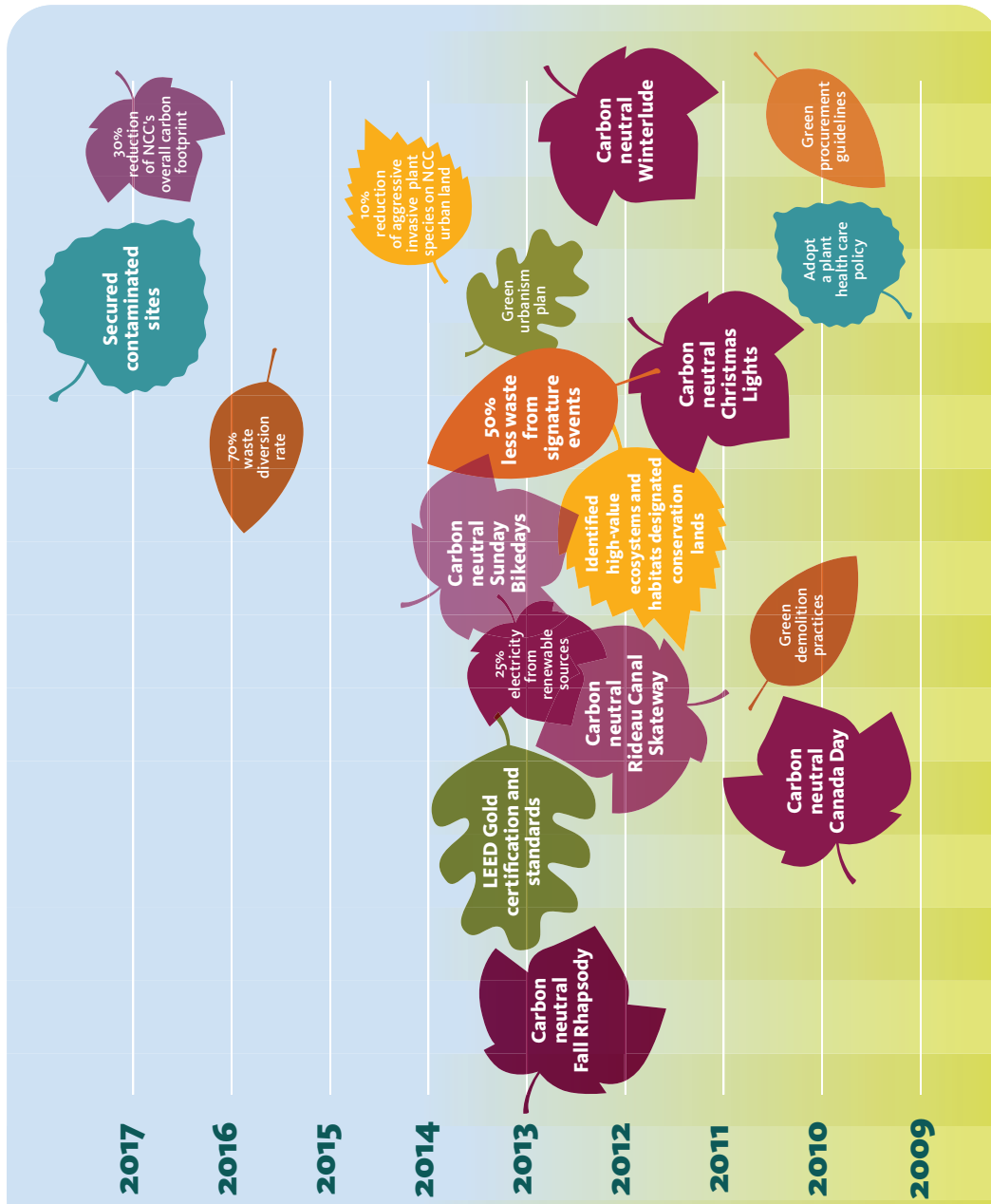
- **The NCC will reduce its overall carbon footprint by 30 percent by 2017, based on a 2011–2012 baseline.**
- **The NCC will seek renewable sources of electricity. By 2013, 25 percent of all NCC electricity purchases will be from renewable sources.**
- **The NCC will advance an understanding of climate change impacts on Canada's Capital Region.**

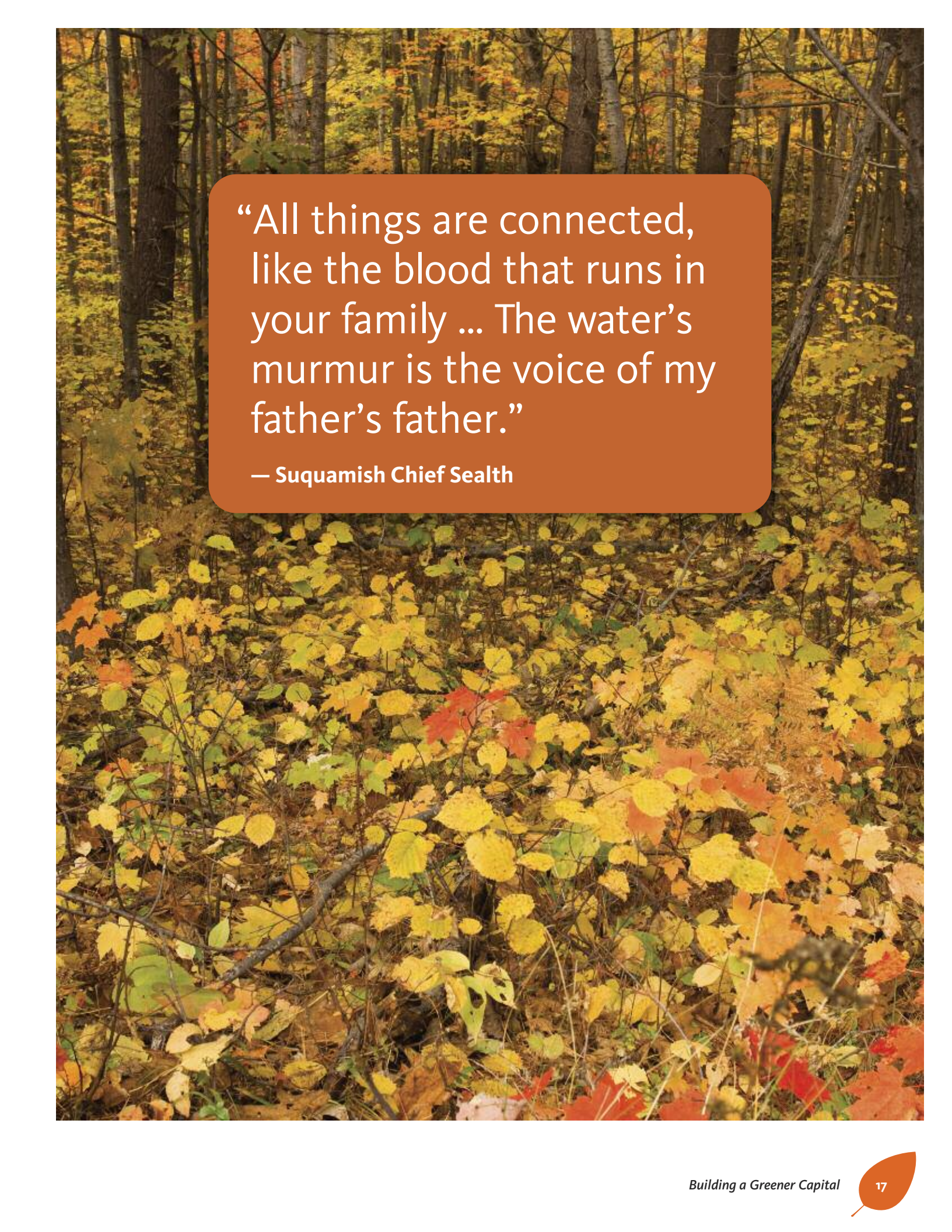
## ENVIRONMENTAL MILESTONES

# BUILDING A GREENER CAPITAL

### 5 AREAS FOR ACTION:

-  Reducing Waste
-  Enhancing Biodiversity
-  Preventing Pollution
-  Leading in Environmental Practices
-  Combatting Climate Change





“All things are connected,  
like the blood that runs in  
your family ... The water’s  
murmur is the voice of my  
father’s father.”

— Suquamish Chief Sealth

## A HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

The environment has been an ever-growing commitment of the NCC and its predecessors for more than 100 years.

- 1899** The Ottawa Improvement Commission, a predecessor of the NCC, begins to manage a network of parks in the region, starting with Rockcliffe Park.
- 1938** Gatineau Park is born, through the purchase of patches of land by the Federal District Commission. The intention is to preserve some of the great Canadian wilderness as part of the Capital.
- 1950** A first Plan for the National Capital (known as the Gréber Plan, after French urban planner Jacques Gréber, who devised the plan at the behest of Prime Minister Mackenzie King) includes measures to create a “greenbelt” around Ottawa, enlarge Gatineau Park, acquire riverfronts and green corridors for public access and recreation, restore polluted parts of the Ottawa River, and develop parks and parkways. The plan is largely implemented over the subsequent three decades.
- 1970s** The NCC expands programs that grant public access to and build understanding of natural spaces in Canada’s Capital Region. Nature interpretation programs are initiated, and panoramic parkways and recreational pathways are completed.
- 1980s** The NCC transfers key lands for the creation of important new sections of the Ottawa Transitway, an exclusive rapid transit link spanning much of the city’s urban area.
- 1990** The NCC’s Office of Environmental Stewardship is created. Its role is to contribute to the development of Canada’s Capital Region in such a way that the quality of the natural environment is sustained and enhanced for the benefit of present and future generations.
- 1995** The Environmental Assessment Program formally begins at the NCC, with a policy committing the corporation to integrating environmental considerations into all plans, activities and decisions.
- 1997** A first comprehensive NCC environmental audit is performed internally. It finds that the NCC has in place many of the key components of an effective environmental management system, and identifies a number of areas where the NCC should make improvements on environmental issues.
- 1998** The NCC introduces environmental guidelines for its contractors and lease managers.
- 1998** Onset of the NCC’s contaminated sites investigation and management program.

- 1999** The NCC's Plan for Canada's Capital articulates a renewed long-term vision for the Capital as it enters the 21st century. Sustainable land stewardship, natural resource management and the protection of ecosystems are key features of the plan.
- 2001** A follow-up environmental audit is performed by an external environmental consultancy. The report concludes that the NCC has taken a systematic approach to addressing the findings and recommendations from previous environmental audits. It recommends new action for the NCC to focus on including species at risk, water quality, lease property and the management of fuel storage tanks.
- 2004** The NCC launches a biodiversity monitoring program for Gatineau Park, the Greenbelt and its urban lands, with a view to preserving and protecting the fragile ecosystems and endangered plant and animal species on its lands.
- 2005** The NCC begins to "green" its major events and programs, including Canada Day and Winterlude. A primary focus is on waste management and recycling. The same year, another broad-ranging environmental audit is completed.
- 2007** A study is conducted on the valued ecosystems and habitats found on NCC lands. It identifies 28 such ecosystems and habitats that are in need of protection.
- 2008** As a delegate to the Capitals Alliance 2008: Greening the World's Capital Cities international conference, the NCC signs a declaration pledging its commitment to do its part to build and promote sustainable communities.
- 2008** The NCC begins to actively acquire private lands within Gatineau Park boundaries in order to ensure the integrity of this important natural area in Canada's Capital Region and to safeguard its ecological value.
- 2009** The NCC launches an ambitious and comprehensive environmental strategy that cuts across all of its business lines. The strategy identifies key action areas and measurable objectives geared at reducing waste, enhancing biodiversity, combatting climate change, preventing pollution and leading in environmental practices.

“...people have been working on solutions for years and have developed concrete steps to massively reduce our energy use, while stimulating whole new industries and technologies that are more efficient and affordable.”

— **David Suzuki**



## CONCLUSION

At the heart of its Environmental Strategy, the NCC is changing the way it does things by integrating environmental considerations into its broad scope of activities, practices and policies. The intent of the strategy is not to change the basic character of “what” the NCC delivers — whether programs or services — but rather “how” these are delivered.

Meeting the ambitious targets set out in the strategy will require rapid action. The NCC is currently developing a series of action plans, which will continue to evolve and be tested over the coming year. Understanding the impact of NCC’s current activities is an essential first step and, as the NCC continues to identify areas for improvement, it will act on them.

As the NCC is taking immediate steps, additional actions will also be taken over the next several years, with regular reports to the public on progress and the achievement of major milestones. A cycle of ongoing action, measuring and reporting will allow the NCC to learn from experience, review its objectives, develop new objectives and plans if needed, and take new actions. In short, the NCC will constantly strive for greater positive environmental impact.

The NCC welcomes public participation and input in helping to achieve its environmental goals.

### CONTACT THE NCC

Members of the public are encouraged to call the NCC at 613-239-5000, 1-800-465-1867 (toll-free) or 1-866-661-3530 (toll-free TTY), or visit the website at [www.canadascapital.gc.ca](http://www.canadascapital.gc.ca) for more detailed information about the Environmental Strategy and to provide comments.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Biodiversity** The full range of animals, plants and other living things and the places where they live on the planet.

**Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)** A greenhouse gas produced in part by human activities, whose emissions are largely responsible for climate change.

**Carbon footprint** The total set of carbon-containing emissions (mainly CO<sub>2</sub>) caused directly and indirectly by an individual, organization, event or product.

**Carbon neutral** Having a net zero carbon footprint by balancing the greenhouse gas emissions created with an equivalent amount sequestered or offset.

**Carbon offset** An investment in a project or activity elsewhere that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, or sequesters carbon from the atmosphere, that is used to compensate for unavoidable greenhouse gas emissions created by one's own activities.

**Conservation land** Land specially designated by federal, provincial/territorial or local bodies to protect fragile ecosystems, habitats and species at risk.

**Contaminated site** Areas of land that contain chemical substances (e.g. heavy metals or petroleum products) that may pose a hazard to human health or the environment, or that exceed the levels set out in policies and regulations.

**Ecosystem** A unit of interdependent organisms that share the same habitat.

**Energy efficiency** Refers to how effectively energy is being used for a given purpose. For example, performing a similar function or providing a similar (or better) level of service with less energy consumption on a per unit basis is considered an improvement in energy efficiency.

**Greenhouse gas** Emissions of gases such as nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), and especially carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) that accumulate in the atmosphere and act to retain atmospheric heat, thus contributing to climate change.

**LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)** A third-party certification program administered by the Canada Green Building Council for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings.

**Secured site** A contaminated site where all necessary study, remediation and other risk management actions have been taken, consistent with the designated use of the site.

**Waste diversion** The reduction, reuse and recycling of waste leading to a reduction of waste being sent to the landfill.

**NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION**

202-40 Elgin Street, Ottawa, Canada K1P 1C7  
Telephone: 613-239-5000 • Toll-free: 1-800-465-1867  
TTY: 613-239-5090 • Toll-free TTY: 1-866-661-3530  
Fax: 613-239-5063  
Email: [info@ncc-ccn.ca](mailto:info@ncc-ccn.ca)  
[www.canadascapital.gc.ca](http://www.canadascapital.gc.ca)

Unless noted otherwise, all imagery is the property of the National Capital Commission.

*Ce rapport est aussi offert en français.*

National Capital Commission  
Environmental Strategy: Building a Greener Capital  
Catalogue number: W93-26/2010E-PDF  
ISBN: 978-1-100-17250-7