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Chair

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault

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• (0845)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP)): Good morning and welcome to the 30th meeting of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

This morning the Privy Council Office will speak to its most recent report on the Public Service of Canada for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2014. I have the pleasure of welcoming Mr. Wouters, who is Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet, as well as Ms. Charette who is Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council and Associate Secretary to the Cabinet.

You have 10 to 15 minutes for your opening remarks. Committee members will then ask questions until 9:45 a.m.

Thank you for being with us this morning. Without further ado, you have the floor.

Mr. Wayne Wouters (Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet, Privy Council Office): Thank you.

[English]

I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to meet with the committee to discuss my annual report to the Prime Minister on the public service of Canada.

As noted, I am the Clerk of the Privy Council. I'm also the secretary to the cabinet and head of the federal public service. Joining me today is my teammate at PCO, Janice Charette, who is the deputy clerk.

Before I begin, I want to say that my thoughts and prayers go out to the families of the RCMP members who lost their lives in the line of duty last night in Moncton, New Brunswick. As many of you know, the RCMP are part of the public service family. Our hearts and prayers go to the families in this terrible tragedy, and we hope the perpetrator will be apprehended without more violence.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to say that, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

As the committee is aware, the Privy Council Office has a wide mandate that falls within three broad categories. First, we provide professional, non-partisan advice and support to the Prime Minister, the ministers within the Prime Minister's portfolio and cabinet. Second, we support the functioning of the cabinet's decision-making process and facilitate the implementation of the government's agenda.

[English]

Today I would like to focus on the third element of my responsibilities. As head of the public service of Canada, it is a privilege and an honour to lead the women and men of Canada's public service. I work with senior leadership of the federal public service to ensure that the Government of Canada has the people, the systems, and the processes to design and to deliver high-quality policy, programs, and services to and for Canadians. This responsibility also includes making sure that the public service can deliver for Canadians today and, more importantly, in the future.

To that end, we are in the process of transformation and renewal throughout the public service. Last month, we presented two documents that are central to this process. The first is the "Twenty-First Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada", the fifth such report that I have tabled since becoming clerk. How time flies.

The federal public service is the largest employer in the country, with approximately 262,000 employees located in 1,600 locations across Canada. We are in essentially every major community across this great country and have staff in over 180 countries around the world. It is also the country's most diverse workforce, spanning a multitude of professions and lines of business. This includes, among others, scientists, engineers, medical personnel, lawyers, economists, and, of course, enforcement professionals, just to name a few.

This year's report highlights some of the notable achievements of the federal public service over the last year, from responding to the Lac-Mégantic disaster and the floods in Alberta, to the drawdown of Canada's mission in Afghanistan. Public service employees conducted negotiations on free trade agreements with the European Union and with Korea. Also, we've introduced a single government website: www.canada.ca.

[Translation]

Over the past year, we have made important progress in improving the way we manage the public service, such as launching a new performance management system and modernizing our Government of Canada pension and compensation systems.

Also, we have sought to significantly reduce cost and streamline operations; for example, the consolidation of email and other technologies.

• (0850)

[English]

The report outlines how the federal public service is moving on many different fronts, including improving performance and productivity across departments and agencies, and addressing the wellness of federal employees by bringing disability and sick leave in line with leading practices.

But the report also emphasizes the challenges the public service faces. This is a pivotal time for the public service of Canada, and the environment in which we operate continues to change in fundamental ways. This is a challenge that public service institutions around the world are facing. In a world connected by technology and reshaped by globalization, issues move across borders and around the world in a nanosecond. Canadians increasingly expect seamless integrated services and they want these services delivered in a convenient way, whether across traditional channels or through new technology. In such a complex and involving environment, positioning the public service to be responsive and of course, agile, well equipped to serve Canadians and the government, requires a commitment to transforming how we operate.

Public service modernization has been an ongoing process characterized by steady incremental changes to how we do business. This is not going to be sufficient for the kinds of challenges we are facing. These are the challenges that brought us to an initiative called Blueprint 2020. Mr. Chairman, all successful organizations need to regularly reflect on the changing environment—what I've just talked about—and how they need to do business differently and ensure that they can meet the expectations of those they serve. Canada's public service is no different. It evolves with Canadians, and it has a successful history of responding and adapting to meeting Canada's needs, all the while remaining dedicated to the values and ethics code, which serves to maintain public confidence in the integrity of the public service.

• (0855)

[Translation]

The world in which the public service operates is continuing to change in fundamental ways, and our institution must keep pace to serve Canada and Canadians now and into the future.

[English]

In my annual report to the Prime Minister last year I called for a clear and shared vision of what Canada's public service should be and for ideas about how to achieve this vision. I asked deputies to launch a conversation on the future of the public service and I invited all public servants across the country to take part in this important dialogue about our shared future. As many of you know, about 60% of our public servants live outside Ottawa and the national capital region. This led us to the official launch of Blueprint 2020 on June 7, 2013, where I shared with public servants across the country live via webcast an outline of this initiative.

Blueprint 2020 is a vision developed by and for public servants, which promotes a whole-of-government approach to ensure we are serving Canadians with a capable and a high-performing workforce that embraces both innovation and transformation, and it was guided by four principles. Let me go through those quickly.

First is an open and networked environment that engages citizens and partners for the public good. This would be delivered through the second principle, a whole-of-government approach that enhances service delivery and value for money that in turn would be enabled by number three, a modern workplace that makes smart use of new technologies to improve networking, access to data, and customer service, and combined with number four, a capable, competent, and high-performing workforce that embraces new ways of working and mobilizing the diversity of talent to serve Canada's evolving needs.

For Blueprint 2020 I want to ensure the engagement, the active involvement, and contribution of all public servants, public servants at all levels in all those regions I talked about, since it is through their work realities and their experiences that we can find the necessary ingredients to ensure the public service remains a forward-looking and world-class institution.

[Translation]

For that reason, the Blueprint 2020 initiative has been different in significant ways.

[English]

It is the largest engagement exercise ever undertaken in the public service, the first of course to use social media to connect and engage with public servants directly.

It was bottom-up, with public servants offering their opinions, their views, their ideas, their solutions to improve their own workplaces and to work better to serve Canadians. Executives and managers were required to listen and to learn from these views.

Finally, it is transparent, with departments, agencies, and functional communities posting their reports on internal social media for all public servants to see in a way that couldn't be done in the past.

We made unprecedented use of web 2.0 tools, including social media platforms, so that we received input from a very wide cross-section of public service employees at all levels. We used such collaborative tools as GCpedia, our government-wide wiki; GCconnex, our government-wide professional social networking platform; and GCForums, our government-wide web page created to enable teams of employees working on similar projects to interact and engage files on the web, all in order to share ideas and best practices across departments and agencies and, of course, among our functional network communities.

Mr. Chairman, more than 110,000 public servants in over 100 departments and agencies participated directly in Blueprint 2020 activities. This is why we say it was the largest engagement we have ever had in the public service. We also heard from public service communities. We have a federal youth network. They reported in and gave their views. We have the communications community and the national managers community.

Through this input, employees overwhelmingly embraced the vision and came forward with their ideas, suggestions, and best practices. Employees helped prioritize the ideas and they identified concrete ways we could achieve the vision. Departments and agencies developed plans to make changes in their own organizations.

Mr. Chairman, just last month we released “Destination 2020”, a key report that highlights the ideas that have come out of the Blueprint 2020 dialogue from employees across the country. We set out the initial government-wide actions. We looked at all the ideas and all the views, and we were able to determine that, based on all of those suggestions, there were basically five areas of key interest: first, innovative practices and networking; second, processes and empowerment; third, technology; fourth, people management; and fifth, fundamentals of the public service.

[*Translation*]

The report focuses on implementation and outcomes, and confirms that continued engagement will be key as we move forward. In fact, it launches the next phase of the Blueprint 2020 process.

[*English*]

The vast majority of ideas can be acted upon within organizations and local offices. These are ideas from public servants coming to us that we think they can actually implement themselves, wherever they are in the country. Many public servants are already acting upon those ideas.

But complementing these actions, “Destination 2020” announces initiatives that will be undertaken across the public service. Under the theme of innovative practices and networking, for for example, initiatives under way include “Dragon’s Den” events allowing employees to bring forward creative solutions to policy and operational challenges. Many departments are actually doing this. We did this in PCO. Great ideas came out of it, because it went directly to employees, who essentially know the workplace as well as anyone.

Moving forward, departments and agencies will bring diverse resources together into “tiger teams” to speed up adoption of good ideas. For example, the Treasury Board Secretariat has a multi-disciplinary team that will engage public servants and various departments to identify and address end-users’ internal red tape irritants, which really came out in our collaboration with public servants, and pilot solutions with the potential to be replicated across government.

At my department, the Privy Council Office, we’re going to lead the creation of a central innovation hub to provide expertise and advice to support departments and apply new approaches to address policy, program, and service challenges.

Under the second theme, process and empowerment, we will cut the red tape that ties up internal processes and makes it hard for public servants to do their jobs. We will also identify ways in which employees can connect more directly with senior managers. This is an issue that came up in our collaborations.

Under the theme of technology, we are in a connected world. New public servants particularly are interested in what we are doing in this whole area of technology. We’re going to develop a new version of the government electronic directory service to post detailed employee profiles and a competency-based search function. We will make better use of video conferencing, Wi-Fi access, and other tools to support a mobile workforce.

● (0900)

Also, we will build upon those collaborative tools that we used in Blueprint 2020, GCpedia and GCconnex, so they work better together in serving Canadians.

On the people management side, we will simplify the approaches to job descriptions. We will speed up staffing based on best practices, and there are best practices. Indeed, a number of departments have come up with risk-based staffing that we think we can apply across the public service. Also, we’ll provide new opportunities for continuous learning, including in the area of second languages.

Finally, under the fifth theme, fundamentals of the public service, we will enable our employees to help shape the public service image: who we are and what we do in our communities for Canadians. I believe we have one of the best public services in the world, but many Canadians are not aware of what we can do and what we do, even though the work done by public servants affects the lives of Canadians each and every day.

Those are examples of some of the initiatives we will undertake as a result of the “Destination 2020” report. An agile, nimble, and effective public service is essential to the well-being of Canadians. It fuels productivity and supports high-quality service delivery.

Building the public service of tomorrow won’t happen overnight. Transformational change takes time, but I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that I am fully committed to seeing this change take place, as are senior executives across the public service.

[*Translation*]

Our goal is to ensure that the public service of Canada remains a world-class institution that is professional, non-partisan and respects its code of values and ethics.

The dialogue will continue as we build the public service of the future, positioning Canada to have a well-functioning and high-performing public service for years to come.

[*English*]

Blueprint 2020 has reminded us that public service employees are very proud of the many roles they play in the daily lives of Canadians. From agents protecting our borders, to Service Canada staff answering Canadians’ questions, analysts shaping policy, and our diplomats carrying Canadian values around the world, public servants care passionately about the future of the public service, and they care passionately about this great country.

They responded with enthusiasm to the Blueprint 2020 process and they demonstrated their pride and commitment by contributing thousands of forward-looking ideas to improve our institution. The level of engagement shown by them during this initiative I think is a celebration of the public service resolve to continuously seek ways to better serve Canadians.

Merci. We'd be open for questions.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation and for the time you have given us this morning.

Without further ado, I will now give the floor to committee members, starting with Mr. Ravnignat, for five minutes.

Mr. Mathieu Ravnignat (Pontiac, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you, Mr. Wouters, for your presence and for making yourself available.

[English]

I'd like to start on something that I think is fundamentally important in having this conversation. I can hear your sincere admiration for the public service. I've followed your career, and I know that it's there and it's honest, but you're in a difficult situation, because you're functioning under a government that doesn't actually respect the public service.

In fact, we've seen this time and time again from the President of the Treasury Board. Whether we're talking about pensions, or about the way *affectation* went forward, or sick leave, or the increased amount of psychological distress in the public service, time and time again, the government and the President of the Treasury Board have attacked the reputation of the public service.

What I find distressing about your report is how it glosses over some of these challenges. It seems to me that you do have a role to speak truth to power and to tell the President of the Treasury Board and this government that not all is rosy in the public service. I think public servants who are listening now would probably like to hear from you with regard to the day-to-day challenges they face under this government.

• (0905)

Mr. Wayne Wouters: I thank the honourable member for his question, Mr. Chairman.

I think the only way I could respond to that is to come back this collaboration that we just completed with over 110,000 public servants. The nature of the response across the country, whether it was in Halifax, Nova Scotia, or in Prince George, British Columbia, was very much about "what are the tools and the technology that I need to do my job?" Their concern is how they can ensure, as they go forward as public servants, that they have the competencies and the tools to be able to deliver the programs and services they do each and every day.

Mr. Mathieu Ravnignat: And they're not concerned about the future of their jobs?

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Let me complete my response. They are very much concerned about the things they raised with us. I've

outlined many of those. As I said, tools and technology were their major concerns. This issue of respect and trust—

Mr. Mathieu Ravnignat: Mr. Wouters, thank you. They must have raised some fundamental questions with regard to the environment in which they're working, as well as the way they have been treated by this government.

I'm sure they didn't just tell you that it's about technology and innovation. I'm sure they told you things, and those things are just not reflected in your report. I think it's a fair question to ask you why.

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Mr. Chairman, I am only reporting what we heard through our collaborative efforts with the 110,000 public servants. From coast to coast, the rank and file's major concern was, "I want to do a good job. I think I'm doing a good job. I need to continue to do a good job. What do I need to do that?"

This issue of trust came up, but it did not come up very much in our whole collaboration. What was most important to them, as I said, is that they are bothered by the time it takes to staff positions. They're concerned about some of the processes we have in place.

Mr. Mathieu Ravnignat: Okay. Let's talk about staffing then, because when we deal with staffing we have to deal with collective agreements. So you're talking about a new model for staffing called risk-based staffing. At this point where are you with your consultations with the public service unions on this question? Is this something you have buy-in on? Your entire project is predicated on buy-in. You have to have a public servant who believes in the project.

Some of them would say that we've been through this all before, this kind of visioning exercise. But if you don't have a public service that has a buy-in, that doesn't feel respected, it's going to be very difficult to go forward with this.

So with regard to staffing, what have you done to get that buy-in?

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Again, on the staffing side I think what we heard, as I noted, was about the time it takes to staff—and staffing is a responsibility of management. Many public servants feel that the process is simply too long.

Mr. Mathieu Ravnignat: Actually, it's a shared responsibility, Mr. Wouters. Staffing is not just a question of management. There are practices and standards that are in place. Some of that is governed by agreements with bargaining units.

As you know, and you very well know how complex staffing issues can be, if this is going to work it's predicated on a good relationship with the public service unions. Are you going to tell the government that that relationship has to improve?

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Again, on the staffing side we do feel that there are many ways that we can improve staffing. Of course, what's most important for us is to continue to have a merit based, non-partisan public service, and so we have to respect those fundamental values of the public service. Therefore, having positions subject to competition is still very much a part of it, but there are many other ways that we can staff. We can transfer people in. We can do other things like that.

So we are going to continue to respect the fundamental values of our staffing system, but find ways where we can to speed it up. What we heard from public servants is that's what they want us to do and we're trying to respond to that.

● (0910)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Trottier has the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank Mr. Wouters and Ms. Charette for being here with us this morning.

[English]

In a prior life before getting into politics I worked for and on behalf of large global organizations, sometimes with hundreds of thousands of employees, in the private sector. I see some similarities in the language in Blueprint 2020, the idea of painting a vision, trying to highly mobilize hundreds of thousands of people to work towards a common set of objectives and a goal.

I see you've borrowed language from private organizations, when you say things like tiger teams and so on. These things are proven ways of mobilizing people.

The one big difference I suppose with the public sector is that you're not talking about taking on new markets and increasing market share and increasing the size of the organization and expanding into new countries and taking over competitors. It's a whole different set of objectives.

I'm wondering how you drive the culture as a leader of this organization. Absent those kinds of incentives, you can't offer stock options. You can't offer other things. There are things you can do in terms of performance measures and objectives, and I know there's more of an incentive-based rewards system now in the public sector. Could you talk about how the culture within the Canadian public service has changed, incorporating some of these methods to motivate and to mobilize people?

Mr. Wayne Wouters: I think culture is a very complex thing, and I would say that we have many cultures in the public service. Every department has its own history. My first deputyship was in Fisheries and Oceans, which had preceded Confederation. The culture there is different from the culture at PCO. I think that's just the nature of our business.

But I do think there are many ways in which we can create the incentives. Clearly public servants aren't necessarily there for huge financial incentives, but I think what they feel strongly about is that they can make a difference in the lives of Canadians. I think that's why most public servants do come to work every day. Our job as senior leaders is to recognize that and celebrate when we do kind of neat things for Canadians. You know, we're doing that every day.

Examples keep coming back my way. For instance, the border agency has just recently come up with a new program so that if you are travelling to the United States you can basically find out wait times through their website. So you can make a determination, if you

are a trucker, as to which border point you want to go across. They are also very much trying to speed up individuals going through airports by automating some of the work there.

We have many things to celebrate. We have Public Service Week coming up, in which we're going to recognize over 120 public servants for the great work they've done. The other thing we felt we needed to do, which perhaps we weren't doing as well as we should have been, was to ensure that we have a solid performance management system in place for the public service. This idea is now being implemented.

There are three key aspects to that.

First, at the start of every year, the manager is to sit down with his employees and basically lay out and write up the objectives for the year.

The second component is that at the end of the year, another conversation takes place, which is an assessment of that particular employee's performance. Through that, we celebrate our high performers. We work with those who perhaps need training or need other support, and, of course, there are those whom we call our "non-performers". We try to figure out if they are in the wrong job, whether we need to move them, or whether we need to deal with them differently.

Performance management is a key aspect of how we continue to drive the cultural changes we want. We can then look in each organization at the changes we want to make. Those can be in the performance agreements of each of our employees. That's one way of doing it. You know that is done in the private sector as well.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: If I have some time, Mr. Chair, that leads me to my next question about annex B.

[Translation]

The Chair: You have 15 seconds.

[English]

Mr. Bernard Trottier: I have a really quick question about the profile of the public sector and some significant changes and how those tie in with the performance management system.

Annex B is showing the profile changing, not only in the total numbers in the public sector.

● (0915)

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Do you have a specific...?

Mr. Bernard Trottier: I just notice there are far fewer senior executives and there is some growth within the middle ranks. So there is a re-profiling of the public service.

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Through our DRAP exercise, we saw a reduction in all levels of the rank and file but also some significant reductions at the executive level over the last three to four years.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Trottier.

Mr. Ravignat now has the floor.

[English]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Your report describes new performance agreements that have been in place since April 1, 2014. I'd like to know what these performance agreements contain.

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Mr. Chair, I just went through the overall approach. Let me run through this again. Under the director of performance management, we are introducing for the first time overall systematic mandatory performance assessments of all our employees. So essentially the key element of this is that every employee will have a clear understanding of their performance objectives and expectations at the start of the year.

By the way, when I started in the public service of Canada, this was common practice. We kind of lost our way in this area. It's very helpful to know exactly what the expectations of the employer are at the start of the year.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Could you be a little bit more specific about what they'll contain?

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Essentially what each department will determine first are what are the priorities of the department. So as the deputy of PCO, I will lay out what I think are three or four key priorities and I would expect some of those priorities to be cascaded down to the employees in my department.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: One of the things that these will contain is a grade from one to five. I think you've confirmed that. I wonder what are the potential consequences if an employee receives low ratings?

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Again, it depends on the individual. We expect that the bell curve will be achieved, whereby essentially most of the individuals will get threes. If it's a high performer, we will want to focus on the high performer for purposes of succession planning, and determine if the individual perhaps needs even broader experience to be promoted. If the individual is below average, below a successful level, then we'll want to find—

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Traditionally this evaluation process has been a personal process between the employee and the employer. There have been meetings to negotiate that performance and how that performance is worded. Does that kind of collaboration cease?

Mr. Wayne Wouters: No, in fact that's an important aspect of this particular system. Collaboration must begin with a dialogue at the start of the year on those expectations to ensure that the employee fully understands what those expectations are. Often best practices have a conversation halfway through the year where the manager will sit down with the employee, again in a dialogue, to say—

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Thanks for the confirmation. I don't have a lot of time. Five minutes is really short and I have quite a few questions, so sorry about interrupting you.

I'm a little bit worried about who will have access to these performance evaluations. Can you tell me how they're going to be accessed, who can access them, and whether or not employees will have a say in who accesses them?

Ms. Janice Charette (Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council and Associate Secretary to the Cabinet, Privy Council Office): Perhaps, Mr. Chair, I can try to get into some of the detail of how we're rolling it out. This is a brand new directive that came into place as of April 1 of this year. I think we're in our first year, our pilot year, of how this is going to go with a standardized approach across the

whole public service. I think, as the clerk said, that for us the most important part of this is the conversation between employees and their managers.

In terms of the actual documentation, and the forms, and who can have access to them—

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: You can understand how people get worried about this being a pilot project and some of the criteria seeming, a little bit, to have been invented on the side of a table. I wonder what front-end consultation has gone on with the public service unions on this new process. Have you sat with the public service union partners around a table to talk about how this is going to fold out?

• (0920)

Ms. Janice Charette: In our system we have a deputy minister who's known as the chief human resources officer. That position is within the Treasury Board Secretariat portfolio and the chief human resources officer is really our lead in our relationship with the bargaining agents. So the CHRO, our acronym, has been having these consultations with the bargaining agents, but I'd add in addition to that—

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: On this specific issue?

Ms. Janice Charette: —in terms of the role of the performance management regime, and in addition within individual departments. For example in the Privy Council Office, I co-chair with the bargaining agent our National Labour Management Consultation Committee. We had a session at one of our recent meetings, which are held two or three times a year, where we actually had a conversation about how this is going to roll out in PCO and what the process was going to be, and what individual employees can expect, because I think your point is that we have to make sure that employees feel comfortable in this new regime.

There have been training workshops held for employees as well as for managers so that they know what to expect. It is being done in a standardized way. It isn't being invented, it is actually being done in a very highly professional way, which I think is reinforcing the kind of good behaviour and good performance that all public servants want to give in their jobs.

[Translation]

The Chair: I am sorry, but I must interrupt you. Thank you.

Mr. O'Connor now has the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Wouters, and Ms. Charette.

I'm going to get down to a more specific issue. The crossing at Windsor-Detroit, I think, is the biggest crossing that we have between ourselves and the United States. I understand that we're investing in a bridge there and I've heard of other problems from the federal government. I wonder if you could just clarify for me what the situation is with that crossing.

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Mr. Chairman, I'm happy to be here to talk about my report to the public service.

This was not a subject that I was asked to comment on, but if the committee is willing, we're prepared to follow up on it and see if we can find a response to that point.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you for the reminder.

I would ask committee members to focus as much as possible on the report, as that is what our witnesses are prepared to speak to.

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: That's fine.

From 2006 upward, we increased the public service by I think 31,000 or 32,000. In the last few years there have been reductions of the public service.

Can you tell me where we are now in the reduction process? How many jobs have been reduced through attrition or whatever?

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Actually, what we did as a result of the last deficit reduction exercise, which we call DRAP, was to reduce the number of positions by over 19,000. I believe the number is 19,200.

We're well on track to achieve that. We're probably around 3,000 short of our target, so it's around 16,000. I have to say that we've been able to deal with about 9,000 of those positions through attrition. For many others, we've been able to find other employment for the public servants.

Overall, I think we've managed this very, very well by directly dealing with those affected, either allowing them to retire or leave the public service, or find other jobs within the public service.

So that's where we are right now.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: When I was in the military, I think we went through three management systems while I was there. It always seemed that every few years we'd come up with a new management system.

Essentially you've come up with a new management system, and I'm wondering, what's the likelihood that it's actually going to be implemented?

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Thank you for that comment.

Yes, we are coming up with a new management system. I think it's been evolving over the last three to four years.

I guess would make a few comments on this. If you look at the public service of Canada, the structure of the Government of Canada, we have been essentially built up department by department over the last 50 years. We adopted technology in each department, in each agency, and through that, everyone developed their own system. We had separate HR systems, separate finance systems, and separate procurement systems, with 65 different e-mail systems. Not only did we build them up in each department, but because of the vast geography of this country, we had to build that out across the country.

You know, that all worked; technology was the adapter, the enabler. But I think what we see now in organizations, in the private sector and in other governments, is that it's not as efficient as it can be. Many of these functions are repetitive functions. Take accounts payable as an example. Do we need every department to have an

accounts payable shop when you can actually bring this together? Technology allows us to do this.

I think the overall management objective here is to begin to consolidate. First, standardize so that we don't have all these different IT systems. We should have one HR IT system. We should have one finance IT system. We are now standardizing so that we will have one.

Once you can standardize, then you can consolidate those repetitive functions. Your strategic HR people always have to stay in the departments. You need those strategic people. But pay, for example, has already been consolidated. We've modernized our pay system. It was a 40-year-old system. We now have a new pay system, because you know what? When people don't get paid, they're not happy. That was beginning to happen with our old system.

Not only did we change the system, but we also consolidated all of the pay advisory functions in New Brunswick. They're in New Brunswick, in Miramichi. We did the same with pensions. We now have a new pension system, and we've brought the pension advisers into Shediac, New Brunswick. Those are great jobs in that part of the region. We have people who want to work there and who stay there.

And guess what? It creates economies of scale in providing advice to employees who want advice on their pensions. By consolidating, you take advantage of economies of scale. It's more effective, it's more efficient, and I think that is the model we're driving at.

Yes, we are implementing it. We've completed our pay modernization. We've completed pension and we've pretty well completed pay. The other area is Shared Services Canada, which is bringing together all our e-mail and our data centres. Do you know that we have over 400 data centres, as we call them? I probably have a data centre; I have a server in my office. We think we can get down to six or seven. Again, it's consolidation and standardization of some of that back office, which will allow us to be more effective and efficient.

I could talk about the management structure around the front office as well, delivering services to Canadians and making it less complicated for them to deal with their government.

● (0925)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Wouters: So, yes, it is a different management model.

The other point I would make is that this is not rocket science. Many organizations have done it before. It's not that we're breaking new ground in every area. We're learning a lot as we do it, but we think we can manage the risks. When you were in the Treasury Board, you heard a lot about IT projects going wrong. Let me tell you that we learned a lot about that. I think we can manage major IT projects as well as any organization in Canada. We know where to put the off-ramps, we know how to look at this, because a lot of this is IT-enabled. You've got to have that capacity and knowledge to manage IT to make this happen, and we feel we're pretty good at that now.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wouters.

[Translation]

Mr. Byrne now has the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

An issue of integrity of the staffing function within the public service was recently put under the microscope at a partner set of federal agencies, ACOA and ECBC. This situation dates back to as early as 2010, and potentially even earlier. Certain staffing decisions came up seriously wanting and short—clearly short of the integrity function of the public service. This determination was not made by me, but by the Public Service Commission and the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner working independently of each other.

What makes the situation particularly troublesome is that the situation was not a single isolated event, by the evidence, but a serial one, and one with clear political overtones. In 2011, ACOA P.E.I. was investigated by the Public Service Commission. In the longest investigation ever conducted by the Public Service Commission, it was found that a regional director general and a director general for ACOA P.E.I., Kevin MacAdam and Shawn Masterson, were hired through failings in the hiring process.

The Public Service Commission issued reports that called for the revoking of their appointments. As a result, reprimands were issued to Pat Dorsey and Kent Estabrooks, and I understand that even the president of ACOA lost his ability to hire for three years. Kevin MacAdam and Kent Estabrooks and Pat Dorsey filed judicial reviews of the situation and lost.

More recently—and this is where the serial component comes in—the VP of the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, John Lynn, was part of the hiring of Nancy Baker, Ken Langley, Rob MacLean, and Allan Murphy.

Mr. Wouters, Nancy Baker and Ken Langley have since retired or are now in joint political staff within the current government, but Rob MacLean and Allan Murphy are rolled into the public service. They maintain their roles within ECBC because they were investigated by the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner not by the Public Service Commission, because the Public Service Commission had no power over ECBC, as a crown corporation. They're still there and they're about to become part of the public service because ECBC is about to be dismantled and rolled into ACOA.

Do you have any thoughts as to how the hiring process related to two public servants, who would otherwise be dismissed or their appointments revoked? Should Rob MacLean and Allan Murphy now be rolled into the public service?

• (0930)

Mr. Wayne Wouters: First, the Public Service Integrity Commissioner undertook an investigation of Mr. Lynn, and as you know, the appointment of Mr. Lynn was terminated by the minister on May 27. As far as other employees are concerned, I'm not prepared to comment on that for privacy reasons.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Generally, and notwithstanding these two individuals, if someone were knowingly hired under a tainted process, as found by the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner or by the Public Service Commission, should they still be given a pass to be rolled into the public service, or are actions being planned or undertaken at the moment to prevent such an occurrence in the future?

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Again, I'm not prepared to comment on individual cases. I will only say that overall, as I noted earlier, one of the fundamental values of the public service is our merit-based system, that when individuals come into the public service, of course we will ensure that it's non-partisan, that it's merit-based, and that there is good performance by every individual, which will be measured as we go forward.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Thank you, Mr. Wouters.

There is concern that this is not an isolated event but a serial event. There were clear political overtones, as noted not only by the Public Service commissioner but also by the Integrity Commissioner and by a Federal Court judge who reviewed some of the files in the P.E.I. case. The decision that was written clearly demonstrated that there were political overtones.

Can you assure this committee and parliamentarians that this is an isolated event, that this is not systemic under the direction of other ministers of this government, and that it is totally isolated to ACOA and ECBC? How can you assure us that is the case? Have you conducted investigations on staffing decisions at a senior level in other organizations?

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Wouters: I think, Mr. Chairman, just for clarification, that the Public Service Commission concluded on the ACOA cases raised by the honourable member that the appointment process was free of political influence. So I think there is a distinction there between the report from the Public Service Commission and the one from the Office of the Public Service Integrity Commission.

Again, I can only comment that as we look at staffing and as we staff in the public service, I'm very comfortable that our staffing is merit-based and non-partisan, and that the case of Mr. Lynn is a very isolated case.

This has been, I think, the history of our institution. It separates our institution from many others in the world. At all levels, we appoint and we promote on the basis of merit and on the basis of performance. That has basically been the system since I've been in the public service. I'm very comfortable and confident that that is the system that is now in place.

• (0935)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wouters.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Aspin, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I welcome both of you to our committee.

Unlike some of our honourable members opposite, I am positively encouraged by what's happening in the public service and certainly by the environment that has been created. Your Blueprint 2020 initiative seems to be a bottom-up initiative that is creating positive results. You're looking at technology, innovative practices, and people management, which are all very positive indeed.

Mr. Wouters, you mentioned that time flies and that you've almost completed your fifth year. I wonder if you could take the opportunity to outline some of the positive changes that have happened throughout your tenure as clerk, as well as some of the improvements that have been made in the public service to enhance the public service for Canadians over the last number of years.

Mr. Wayne Wouters: Well, thank you very much for the question.

I have to say it has been a fascinating five years for me as Clerk of the Privy Council. I think it is one of the best jobs in Canada, if not the best job in Canada, though nobody really knows me across the country, which is also a good thing, at least when I get out of Ottawa. It has been a fascinating time for me, and followed up by my time as Secretary to the Treasury Board, I've seen the world from the centre for a long period of time. I was a line deputy for many years

I guess I've focused a lot on how to ensure that the public service will continue to be relevant for many, many years to come. I am biased. I do believe we have one of the best, if not the best, public services in the world. But we need to continue to adapt, adjust, and modernize how we do our business in order for us to continue to be relevant, both to Canadians, and of course to the government.

You know, there are many areas. For example, one area I've talked a lot about is the service side and internal services. I guess another area that we're looking at very seriously is our overall policy advice, the advice we give to ministers every day—and for me, the Prime Minister. How do we do that in a world where we're so connected?

There are so many experts out there. We have think tanks in Canada. We have academics. We have many experts out there. As I often like to say, when I came to government, I kind of had a monopoly. I had the best data in Canada. We've always had great data, through StatsCan and other means. I had the expertise. I had a

master's degree in economics, so I felt I was well qualified. Also, I had a monopoly, which was my minister.

Well, today you can do good policy work, develop the policy options, and present that to the minister. Then he or she can go home, get on the Internet, and find a study from Berkeley on the subject I briefed him on in the morning, and say, "Why didn't you think of this?" That is a real challenge for us as we look ahead. How do we begin to be more adapters and integrators of knowledge? And it's not only the knowledge that we have, because we will always develop policy, but we also have to be able to reach out to our think tanks, again, to be more collaborative, and use the web 2.0 tools to begin to integrate and connect the dots. We're doing that a lot more.

The one advantage we will always have as the public service is that regardless of the policy, we can put the Canadian context on it. We live in almost every community in this country. We understand Canada. Canada is our Canada. We know it. We can therefore take whatever public policy issue we have and whatever advice is out there, not only in Canada, but in best practices around the world—which we must do—then bring it back to the Canadian context and provide that advice. That is a really wonderful challenge for us.

I've often said in speeches that as I come to the end of my career in the public service, I wish I were just starting. I think it's an exciting time for Canada, and it's going to be a tremendously exciting time for the public service of Canada.

• (0940)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Aspin.

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Aspin: Do I have more time, Chair?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I am sorry, but your time is up.

Ms. Day, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Allow me to express my sympathy to the people of Moncton, and especially to the RCMP members and their families who were affected by last night's terrible events. I hope that the situation will return to normal as soon as possible.

My questions are for Mr. Wouters.

We can see that the public service is feeling destabilized and insecure. Many public servants have received letters informing them that their job will be cut. This has led to panic. Others have received letters telling them to keep quiet, to avoid making comments or speaking to Canadians. For example, Sylvie Therrien was fired after speaking publicly about employment insurance.

Evaluations, expectations and performance evaluations have existed since the 1990s, probably under other names.

How can you say that everything is fine when this is clearly not the case and when the situation on the ground is completely different? Public servants are currently being told not to speak out and to keep quiet. Researchers are being told not to speak out and to keep quiet. The current regime does not look anything like what we can read in the Blueprint 2020 document. There is a double standard here.

I would like to hear your comments on this situation.

Ms. Janice Charette: Mr. Chair, the member has brought up several points. I can try to answer some of her questions.

Concerning the new performance management system, which I described earlier, it is true that this is not the first time that we have attempted to manage the performance of public servants. You are correct in saying that a wide range of systems are used in the various departments to evaluate employees' performance and give them feedback on their performance.

The changes made on April 1 will apply a systemic performance management model that will be used in all departments. The idea is to give all employees the same kind of explanations when they receive feedback from their managers about expectations, on a yearly basis. This is not new, but for us it is a new approach. This is the first year that we will implement this system.

As for the other questions you raised, I believe that the clerk has already provided some information. In our opinion, the best way to know what is happening in the public service is to follow the Blueprint 2020 process that we launched last year. We have had feedback from more than 110,000 members of the public service. They answered Blueprint 2020...

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: How many of these 110,000 people answered?

Ms. Janice Charette: I am referring to the 110,000 members of the public service...

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Was there a survey?

Ms. Janice Charette: ... who participated. I used the word "survey", but in fact it was not a survey as such. It was the Blueprint

2020 process. We invited public servants to share their perspectives on the public service and tell us how to move forward.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: I am going to interrupt you there. I would like to ask you for more details.

Did you consult with employees or with managers? Did all of these people answer the questions? If not, what percentage of those who participated gave answers?

Ms. Janice Charette: As I have said, more than 110,000 people participated in this process by sharing their perspectives and their comments on the future of the public service.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: So you received 110,000 answers.

Ms. Janice Charette: 110,000 members of the public service participated in the process.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Could you please tell me what you mean by the word "participated"? Does this mean bringing a number of people together in a room and holding a meeting?

Ms. Janice Charette: I believe that the clerk said at the beginning of the meeting that we used a number of tools to engage public servants from across the country in the Blueprint 2020 process. For example, there were round table discussions in the departments. We used a new tool, Web 2.0, as well as Twitter and our Intranet site. We have a sort of wiki that allows public servants to participate internally. A number of workshops were held to discuss the future of the public service. These brought together various communities, including new professionals, managers, and those responsible for managing budgets, for example. The goal was to find common points of view and to determine what we can do together in each department, agency or office to implement these new perspectives. For us, this was truly an exercise in listening to the comments and opinions of public servants.

● (0945)

The Chair: Thank you. I will have to stop you there. That is all the time we have for this morning.

Many thanks for having been here with us this morning and for answering committee members' questions on your 21st report. I hope that we will have the opportunity to speak to you again. I wish you the best of luck in your work moving forward.

The meeting is adjourned.

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