

(Transcript of the video)

Sixth Annual Report to The Prime Minister on The Public Service of Canada

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Jocelyne Bourgon
Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet

December 7, 1998

Dear Prime Minister:

I am pleased to submit to you the sixth annual report on the Public Service of Canada, pursuant to the Public Service Employment Act.

Every year for the past five years, as Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Public Service, I have sent you a report on the state of the Public Service. In my previous reports, I have talked about the importance of the Public Service as a national institution and its contribution to the prosperity, the quality of life and the well-being of all Canadians.

I have described the challenges facing the men and women in the Public Service. I have discussed the need to modernize the delivery of service to Canadians, to strengthen the capacity to provide policy advice to ministers and to build a modern and vibrant institution that is well adapted to serve the needs of Canadians now and in the future. Each year, I have told you about our progress, and each year I told you that more could be done.

The best way to understand the breadth and depth of the change that has been taking place in the Public Service in recent years is to see it through the eyes and hear it from the voices of public servants themselves. They will tell you first hand about their efforts, their struggles, their dreams and their accomplishments. It is an honour to submit this report on their behalf.

Message by Madame Jocelyne Bourgon

Prime Minister, every year for the past five years I have sent you a report on the state of the Public Service of Canada. I told you about our efforts to modernize the way we serve Canadians by encouraging partnership and teamwork, by knocking down the barriers among us or by using the power of new technology. I told you of our resolve to strengthen our policy capacity by looking at the big picture well beyond the boundaries of our departments or even of governments by reaching out to others and building on their strengths. I told you of our commitment to provide for a modern and vibrant organization, one which would be the pride of all public servants and deserving of the respect of all Canadians.

Prime Minister, it has not been easy but a great chapter has been written in the life of the Public Service of Canada in recent years. It is about proudly serving Canadians and those they elect and no one can tell you the story better than the men and the women that have given shape to each and every one of these reforms. Let's listen to them.

Opening Sequence

The way we organize society is up to us, there is no one right model

Basically, what Canadians want out of life is changing

We want a prosperous society, we want an environmentally healthy society.

I think we're living in such a fast-paced global society now that all of our issues are interrelated and complex.

Canadians want to be major players on the world stage and they want to take control of their own futures, and it's ideas that will help them to do that.

We are in a very exciting moment of change.

The challenge for the public service is to understand the changes and to try to figure out creative ways of responding to those changes.

It is important to me to serve Canadians, particularly as I think of the future, particularly as I think of the evolving face of Canada and it is important to me to create or to be able to contribute to a Public Service where my children will be getting the kind of service that they deserve from this country.

Theme 1: Building Partnerships

I think there's a fundamental culture change happening in government. Partnerships are the new way of doing the business of government.

Canadians don't necessarily feel that government should do everything.

We tend to use the word partnerships perhaps too loosely. We need to have a better understanding of the expectations of others when we enter into a partnership.

But it is the kind of thing that does take a lot of time and a lot of effort. Coordination with other people is not easy and it's not cheap. You just have to spend time at it.

We are understanding that the government's role is to help facilitate, to help steer the boat rather than row and that there's many other participants in the economy that can take different roles on.

The Knowledge Economy Partnership

The Knowledge Economy Partnership is really a totally unique opportunity to focus our attention on the creation of knowledge and the movement into a knowledge economy for a province like Prince Edward Island. Right now there's a total of something like 36 different provincial government departments, federal departments and agencies, university, college, and even private sector businesses. So when the four partners got around the table if they decided that they wanted to provide a service to a certain client group or they wanted to try a different way of delivering a service, the only thing they had to think about was how they would make it work from the public's perspective.

We're a place where innovation can be tried in a small way, there can be pilot projects here.

Instead of being a hierarchy it becomes a network, and a network is a world in which people are interconnected.

Theme 2: Breaking Down Barriers

We've discovered that Canadians don't really care whether it's the provincial or the federal government providing the service, they want to know that a service is there when they need it.

It's very important to build those partnerships across government, between levels of government. If we don't do it then I don't think we'll live up to the expectations that we have set ourselves.

Geoconnections

Geoconnections is about building the geographic information part of the information highway.

It's been built pretty much from the ground up as a grassroots thing. So what we've done is we've gotten together in a consortium arrangement with the provinces. We've decided to share information with each other. We've decided to cost share the actual collection and maintenance

of this information. Something that Canadians might not realize is that this kind of geographic information is used extensively in 911 operations. The thing that guides the ambulance to your house and lets the people driving the ambulance know where the street location is is generally a digital map.

Geoconnections is about serving people through a single window. Government has information assets and Geoconnections is about making those assets accessible for all Canadians.

Theme 3: Using Technology

I think Canadians have changed their ideas about the way that government should serve people as well. The expectations are higher, luckily we have technology at our fingertips to help us serve people better.

Technology does definitely scare some people I think, but nothing is ever happening overnight. So it is usually a gradual integration of the new technology.

It's the technology that allows us to do a lot of these things that we could never really do before.

Schoolnet

Schoolnet is a major national endeavour to link all the schools and libraries to the information highway by the end of this year.

Schoolnet offers a place where educators can meet in a virtual way.

We are trying to get to the student, to the young Canadians who are our future.'

One of the biggest values is that the kids have a sense that there are other kids out there in the world.

Theme 4: Integrated Policy Advice

Decision making is increasingly complex and research can help us identify emerging issues and it can also guide the improvement of current policies.

Creative linkages means building bridges between the policy community, the federal government, the academic and business community and it means trying to forge a closer and more productive relationship between these groups.

There's been a lot of interaction over the years with think tanks and academics and so on but this is really the first time that we're doing this at the level where you can pull together a lot of perspectives and yes, that's unleashing a lot of energy.

The Policy Research Initiative has given us the opportunity to engage researchers from across the country in studying the issues of importance to Canadians.

Government is very effective at asking the right questions and turning that into advice that ministers can use. Delivering the right advice at the right time is still a very valuable part of the overall democratic process.

Rural Dialogue

The Rural Dialogue is a new approach. We're consulting people in a dialogue. Our commitment is to keep them informed as to what we're doing, and we've invited back people who have already participated.

In the past government developed policy options and consulted with Canadians as to which are the preferable options. This process is more like a citizen engagement than a traditional consultations process because we are talking to citizens at an earlier stage in the policy development area.

The Canadian Rural Partnership is what we call in the federal government a horizontal file. We don't own the issues. Every department has something that impacts rural Canada. The objective is to try and bring a coherence to all that's going on.

I think we're learning to become better connected with Canadians, to be more responsive, to deliver the types of services that people need when they need them, but I think that there's a long way to go.

To be able to advise ministers on those issues when they're facing those challenges and Canadians are expecting good decision making has been a tremendous opportunity for me.

Theme 5: Putting People First

La Relève is about renewal throughout the Public Service of Canada and an awful lot is happening. Every department, every region and indeed a good number of functional groups are implementing really practical plans of action. What they're trying to do is renew the workplace. The key to action is effective leadership.

I don't think you'll find a better example of leadership in action than we've had last year during three natural disasters. Thousands of public servants worked day and night to help Canadians through the hardships.

One of the paradoxes of the public service is that the better it does its job the more invisible it is and sometimes the more it's taken for granted. You trust the weights and measures are accurate. You trust that the food and drugs that you consume are safe. You trust that the transportation you use is safe.

We don't make widgets, we manage knowledge, that's what government people, public sector people do and when you are managing knowledge your number one tool is learning.

Learning is harder for some than others - to say I'm going to let go of this power, I'm going to share this power with my employees, with my colleagues and I'm going to assume that that's going to work better.

Managers and senior people have got to learn to carry a larger vision at the same time they've got to learn how to tap the intelligence, the raw intelligence of their people.

I think that one of the developments in the public service over the last few years is a greater tendency to see ourselves as a public service, the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

I want people to stop thinking that solutions in organizations cost thousands of dollars and needs somebody from out there. I believe the real change happens at a much more fundamental level. The only response to real change is - is it working for me, does it change my life, does it make me more effective, does it get the job done all of those old fashioned questions - common sense.

Proudly Serving Canadians

My hope in the end is that we achieve our goal and change the mindset, the culture of the public service.

I'm proud to be part of the change that's going on in the public service. To be part of defining how we'll do things better and be more responsive to Canadians.

I enjoy helping people and that's part of my job everyday. I just like being a representative of our government. I like the fact that when people come into this country and maybe the first dealing they have with our government it's a face like mine they're seeing and someone who's trying their best to help them.

While developing and enforcing regulation doesn't always make you popular but those of us who do it know we're helping to keep Canadians safe.

People don't join the Public Service of Canada to get rich or to become famous. They quietly work away at making the country a better place.

I guess I really believe there are opportunities there for public servants to serve the public. And it's not just words. As levels of government and as educational institutions, we can really make a difference and to me that's what public service is all about.

I think we are becoming a new public service that can be proud of what we are.

Closing Message - Madame Jocelyne Bourgon

Prime Minister, on behalf of all of the public servants whose careers are dedicated to serving the public interest it is an honour to sign and send you this annual report on the Public Service of Canada.