



Highlights



2009-2010 Annual Report

October 2010

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is an independent agency reporting to Parliament, mandated to safeguard the integrity of the public service staffing system and the political impartiality of the public service. In addition, the PSC recruits qualified Canadians from across the country.

Context

In 2009-2010, the public service continued to experience growth, as it has over the past decade. However, the pace of growth slowed to 3.4%, compared to 4.5% in 2008-2009.

As of March 2010, there were 216 045 individuals in organizations for which the Public Service Commission (PSC) has delegated to deputy heads its authority to make staffing appointments. As of that date, 4 939 individuals occupied permanent or specified term positions in the Executive Group (EX-1 to EX-5), an increase of 4.7% from March 2009.

The most significant growth in the public service population occurred in five organizations, namely, Correctional Service Canada, Environment Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Public Works and Government Services Canada. Organizations with roles in delivering Canada's Economic Action Plan, announced in Budget 2009, accounted for half of the total growth in the population between March 2009 and March 2010.

Overall staffing and hiring activities

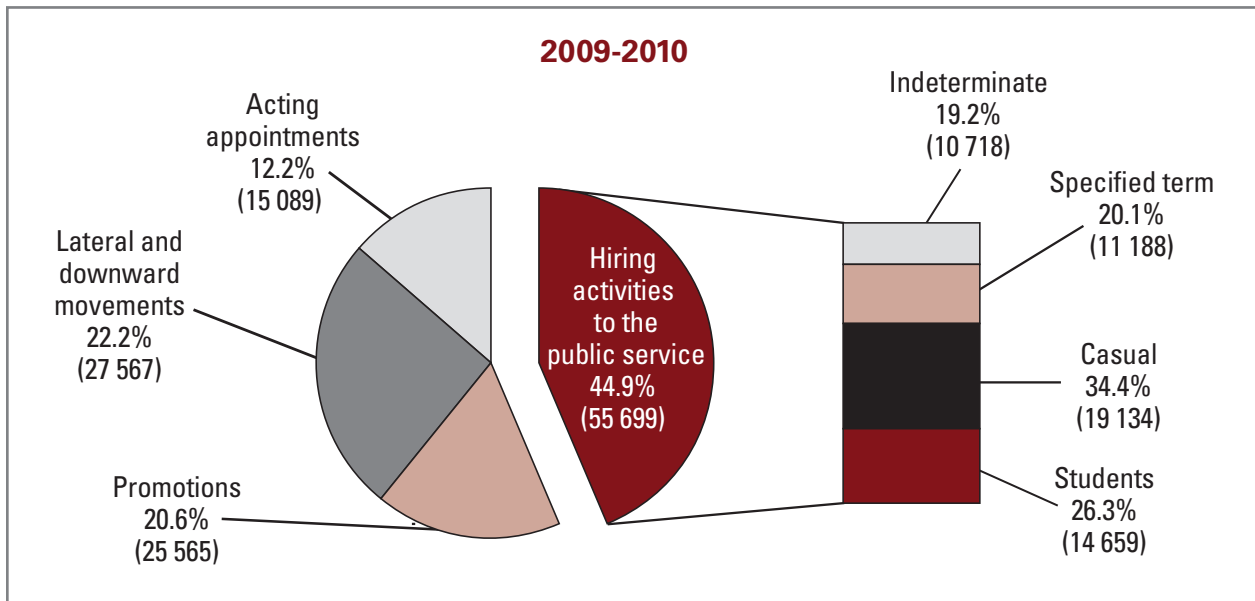
In 2009-2010, staffing and hiring activities within the public service showed signs of decreasing, as did hiring from outside the public service.

Organizations under the *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA) conducted 123 920 hiring and staffing activities in 2009-2010, a decrease of 2.2% over the previous fiscal year. Hiring activities to the public service totaled 55 699 during 2009-2010, a decrease of 1.7% from the previous fiscal year. Staffing activities within the public service decreased by 2.5%.

The number of new permanent (indeterminate) hires from outside the public service decreased from 12 705 appointments in 2008-2009 to 10 718 appointments in 2009-2010. New permanent hires represented 19.2% of all new hires, a decrease from 2008-2009, when new permanent hires represented 22.4% of all new hires.

There were 2 408 staffing activities to and within the EX Group — a decrease of 3.3% from the previous year.

Overall hiring and staffing activities under the *Public Service Employment Act* by fiscal year



Source: Public Service Commission hiring and staffing activities files

Areas of progress

The current Commission's first Annual Report, in 2003-2004, observed that the PSEA presented an opportunity to address a number of long-standing areas of concern: organizational human resources planning and capacity; the continuing increase in the use of short-term hires as a source of recruitment; the small number of university graduates recruited into the public service; and the need to broaden access to public service positions.

Progress has been made in the following areas:

- Planning for staffing priorities and strategies has continued to improve, with 63% of departments and agencies demonstrating "acceptable" or "strong" performance in this area in 2009-2010, compared to 15% in 2007-2008, based on PSC monitoring.
- The proportion of new permanent hires with no prior experience in the public service has increased from 15.9% in 2004-2005 to 37.0% in 2009-2010.
- The duration of acting appointments has become shorter, with an average duration for the 2007-2009 period of 13.5 months if the acting ended in a promotion and 12.5 months if it ended without a promotion (compared to 15 and 13 months, respectively, in 2002-2004).
- The total proportion of students participating in the Federal Student Work Experience Program and the Co-operative Education and Internship program with subsequent employment in the public service (term or permanent) rose from 22.5% in 1997-2005 to 26.2% in 2006-2007, a slight drop from 27.9% in 2005-2006.
- In 2009-2010, a total of 1 643 graduates were hired into term and permanent positions under the Post-Secondary Recruitment program.
- All externally advertised appointment processes for permanent and long-term positions (greater than six months) are now open to Canadians across the country.
- Three of the four employment equity groups — women, visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples — are now being appointed to the public service at a proportion exceeding their respective workforce availability.

Overall assessment

Based on the PSC's various oversight activities in 2009-2010, significant progress has been made in implementing the PSEA over the past four years. The essential elements of the Act are in place and advances continue to be made in achieving the objectives of the Act as they relate to the regime for staffing and political activities.

The core values of the system, merit and non-partisanship, are being respected overall and the guiding values of fairness, access, transparency and representativeness are generally being respected in staffing decisions across the public service. However, public servants at all levels are still not consistently demonstrating that they understand how to apply and operationalize the core and guiding values in their decisions.

The focus of all stakeholders must now shift from implementing the system to ensuring its sustainability for the future. This means addressing the outstanding issues where further effort is still required. It also means ensuring that the system is able to respond and adapt to new challenges as they arise so that Canadians continue to benefit from a professional, merit-based, non-partisan public service in the coming decades.

Ensuring sustainability

Almost five years after the coming into force of the PSEA, the goal must now be to address outstanding areas of concern to ensure the sustainability of the current system. This includes the inappropriate use of a non-permanent workforce and temporary help services, lengthy time to staff and the safeguarding of non-partisanship. One of the concerns that has proved more intractable than anticipated has been making the shift to a mainly values-based approach.

Based on the PSC's oversight activities this year and over the previous three years, the behaviour of managers and employees suggests that the guiding values and their interconnections are not yet sufficiently understood, and that decision making is not yet sufficiently values-based. Also noted are persistent inconsistencies in the implementation of a values-based approach across organizations, for instance, in the use of advertised versus non-advertised appointment processes and in the documentation of decisions.

The PSC is committed in 2010-2011 to strengthening its understanding of how a values-based system should work and communicating its expectations to public servants. The PSC will also develop new ways of raising employee awareness of the implications that their participating in political activities would have on the non-partisanship of the public service.

Refinements in the PSC policy suite will also play an important role in helping to root more deeply the values and a values-based system. The Appointment Policy Framework will be amended in 2010-2011 to place greater emphasis on the core and guiding values. In addition, the PSC will clarify its expectations with respect to advertised processes.

Temporary help services

In response to a request from Parliament in April 2009, the PSC undertook a study of the use of temporary help services. There is a role for temporary help services to address short-term needs. The study found improper use of these services in meeting long-term staffing needs that should be addressed through mechanisms under the PSEA.

The PSC is committed to consulting with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and Public Works and Government Services Canada to identify solutions to issues raised in the study, and to provide guidance on how to use temporary help services while respecting the values of the PSEA.

In the coming year, the PSC will examine approaches for addressing policy and legislative or regulatory gaps and improving alignment between non-permanent PSEA staffing mechanisms and temporary help services.

Use of casual workers

The PSC recognizes the need to hire casual workers to meet short-term requirements and bring in special expertise. However, inappropriate use of casual employment has negative implications on the guiding values of fairness, access, transparency and representativeness.

As noted in last year's annual report, the advantages that casual workers have in subsequent appointments to the public service and the increasing use of casual employment as a source of permanent hires are areas of concern.

The proportion of new permanent hires with no prior experience in the public service increased to 37% in 2009-2010, from 15.9% in 2004-2005. However, the PSC found that the proportion of casuals with subsequent employment under the PSEA continued to increase, to 54% in 2008-2009, compared to 41% in the 1997-2005 reference period.

Time to staff

There has been a reduction in the time required to staff using collective advertised processes. The average time to staff positions using these processes has dropped from 27.4 weeks in 2007-2008 to 24.7 weeks in 2008-2009. Overall, the average time to staff permanent positions has remained relatively stable, at 23.5 weeks in 2007-2008 and 23.0 weeks in 2008-2009.

The PSC believes that organizations must become more aggressive in reducing time to staff. In 2010-2011, the PSC will encourage departments and agencies to establish benchmarks for time to staff.

Employment equity

The PSC's focus in 2009-2010 has been on an array of initiatives that are expected to pave the way for continuous improvement of employment equity (EE) representation across the public service, including taking steps towards achieving more reliable EE data; adopting a streamlined approach to the collection and use of EE information; implementing an approach for affirming Aboriginal affiliation; and identifying effective strategies and noteworthy practices from departments and agencies.

Three of the four designated groups, with the exception of persons with disabilities, were appointed to the public service in 2009-2010 at a proportion exceeding their respective workforce availability.

The PSC remains concerned that persons with disabilities comprise the only group whose share of appointments has been below their workforce availability for the past few years. Although persons with disabilities are not under-represented in the public service, the percentage of applicants in this group remained stable at 3.0% in 2009-2010, while their share of appointments to the public service decreased from 3.3% in 2008-2009 to 3.1% in 2009-2010.

Both the number and proportion of external appointments for visible minorities increased in 2009-2010. As visible minorities are currently under-represented, this trend will help to address current and future gaps for this group in the public service.

Safeguarding non-partisanship

Over the past year, the PSC has paid special attention to the issue of safeguarding a non-partisanship public service. The PSC reviewed the results of its investigations, undertook new research and data analysis and held a series of consultations with top-level experts.

In 2010-2011, the PSC is committed to building on the results of its dialogue with experts and other activities over the past year in order to outline its position on a renewed vision for a non-partisan public service, as part of its assessment of the PSEA. This dialogue will be expanded to include Parliamentarians and Canadians.

Political candidacy

In 2009-2010, the PSC received 99 new requests for permission to seek nomination as, or to be, a candidate in an election. This was the highest number of requests received in one year and represented an 83% increase from last year. Municipal election requests again represented the majority of new candidacy requests.

The PSC introduced a streamlined process in 2009-2010 for employees seeking permission to be a candidate in a municipal election; this facilitates timely review while ensuring that the PSC continues to fulfill its mandate to safeguard the political impartiality of the public service.

Assessment of the Public Service Employment Act

With more than four years of data, it is timely for the PSC to complete an independent, preliminary assessment of the *Public Service Employment Act* that recognizes the magnitude of the effort required to implement the letter and spirit of the Act. The PSC will provide Parliamentarians with a report in the spring of 2011 for their consideration.

Looking forward

Early signs indicate that the rate of growth of the public service will slow further in the year ahead, as will the level of staffing activity. Ensuring sustainability for the future depends on addressing outstanding issues, such as the inappropriate use of a non-permanent workforce and the improper use of temporary help services. Most fundamentally, all stakeholders, including the PSC, must work together to ensure that public servants fully understand how to implement the core and guiding values and how to make the values-based approach at the core of the current Act a reality.

As the current Commissioners' mandate ends in May 2011, the PSC looks forward to a smooth transition and to providing seamless service to Parliament, Canadians and departments and agencies.

