



Highlights



Casual Employment: Sources and Practices

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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 neutrality of the public service. In addition, the PSC recruits qualified Canadians from across the country.

Why did the Public Service Commission conduct this study?

In 1993, an amendment to the *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA) introduced casual employment as a temporary staffing option, used as needed to support and sustain ongoing services to Canadians.

Casual workers do not have employee status under the PSEA and, in general, may only be hired for a limited period, not to exceed 90 working days in one calendar year, in the same organization.

In 2007, the Public Service Commission (PSC) published a study that found that a high proportion of casual workers are subsequently appointed to term or indeterminate positions under the PSEA.

Our study covered the period from April 1, 2007, to March 31, 2008. The study had the following objectives:

- To identify and describe sources of casual workers;
- To determine the influencing factors and underlying reasons for reliance on casual workers; and
- To describe any noteworthy practices associated with casual hiring.

The study included a review of four federal public service organizations involved in hiring casual workers during the period, two being large-sized (2 000 or more employees) and two medium-sized (350 – 1 999 employees).

What did the Public Service Commission find?

Part of the study involved a review of documentation in other public service jurisdictions, which found various definitions used to describe casual workers. Common factors, however, were that casual workers are hired on a temporary basis and with limited job protection, and they are usually not entitled to employment benefits.

Our study identified three main sources of candidates for casual work:

- Past employees of temporary help services agencies, particularly in the National Capital Region;
- Former public service employees, including retirees; and
- Former students who no longer meet the requirements of a student employment program.

The overarching factor among the sources cited was that the person hired for casual employment had previous experience working in the public service.

Of the four organizations studied, we found that sub-delegated managers hired casual workers primarily as a quick means of securing temporary staff to meet short-term and unexpected operational requirements.

Hiring managers cited the creation of a pool of qualified candidates as a noteworthy solution to providing broader and quicker access to casual employment.

What action is the Public Service Commission taking?

The PSC has used a national, external advertised process conducted via its on-line Post-Secondary Recruitment site to establish a partially assessed general inventory accessible to all hiring managers in the federal public service. This inventory, which currently contains over 8 700 candidates, is intended to be used for filling casual, as well as determinate and indeterminate, positions. The PSC is also leveraging the use of its other pools and inventories for various tenures, including casual employment. In doing so, there will be greater assurance of upholding the integrity of the staffing system, while at the same time realizing efficiencies.

