



# Highlights



## Audit of Health Canada

October 2009

*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 PSC conduct this audit?

Health Canada is the federal department responsible for helping Canadians maintain and improve their health. It is a science-based department with a diversified and specialized work force.

The objectives of this audit were to determine whether Health Canada has in place an appropriate framework, systems and practices to manage its appointment activities and whether its appointments and appointment processes complied with the *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA), the instrument of delegation signed with the Public Service Commission (PSC), and other governing authorities.

### What did the PSC find?

The audit covered the period from April 2006 to December 2008. We examined a sample of 51 appointments drawn from across Canada.

We found that Health Canada has in place most of the elements of a framework to manage its appointment activities. At the time of the audit, human resources planning was increasingly being integrated with business planning, mandatory policies and criteria had been developed,

and most sub-delegated managers had access to human resources advisors who were being given the requisite training to carry out their role.

We are concerned about the fact that most of the appointments and appointment processes reviewed did not comply with the PSEA, the guiding values of fairness, access, transparency and representativeness, PSC policies, or with the Appointment Delegation and Accountability Instrument signed with the PSC.

We found 28 appointments in which merit was not demonstrated because there was no clear link between the qualifications and the assessment or because no documented assessment was found in the appointment file.

We found four appointments in which merit was not met. Merit is not met when the person to be appointed does not meet all the essential qualifications in the statement of merit criteria.

Health Canada does not track or monitor the overall performance of its appointment-related authorities, despite having established a monitoring plan. There is a lack of leadership and accountability for the integrity of appointments and the core and guiding values. Human resources advisors are told to be flexible and client-oriented. They are not fulfilling their responsibilities to provide an effective challenge function to sub-delegated managers concerning their appointments and appointment-related

decisions. The high levels of non-compliance that we found were not identified by Health Canada. Sub-delegated managers are not being held accountable for not meeting the conditions of their staffing sub-delegation.

The Deputy Head of Health Canada accepted the findings and is committed to addressing the issues raised in the audit.

## What action is the PSC taking?

We have referred appointments and appointment processes in which merit was not met or not demonstrated either to Health Canada's Deputy Head to investigate and take appropriate action, as required, or to our Investigations Directorate to determine whether an investigation is warranted. The PSC will monitor the department to ensure that corrective action is properly carried out.

As a result of its audit findings, the PSC has imposed conditions on Health Canada's delegated authorities. The Deputy Head has provided the PSC with an action plan that outlines how he intends to respond to the audit recommendations. The Deputy Head will also be required to provide the PSC with semi-annual progress reports regarding this action plan.

