



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Deputy Ministers' Task Team on

Values and Ethics Report to the Clerk of the Privy Council

Deputy Ministers' Task Team on Values and Ethics Report to the Clerk of the Privy Council

Information contained in this publication or product may be reproduced, in part or in whole, and by any means, for personal or public non-commercial purposes without charge or further permission, unless otherwise specified. Commercial reproduction and distribution are prohibited except with written permission from the Privy Council Office.

For more information, contact:

Privy Council Office
85 Sparks Street, Room 1000
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A3
Canada

info@pco-bcp.gc.ca

© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, 2023.

Cette publication est également disponible en français :

Rapport de l'équipe spéciale de sous-ministres sur les valeurs et l'éthique adressé au greffier du Conseil privé

CP22-208/2023E-PDF

978-0-660-68988-3

This report is dedicated to the Honourable Senator Ian Shugart, a lifelong public servant, mentor, colleague and dear friend who devoted his life to the service of Canadians. His integrity, wisdom and compassion made him a role model to all public servants and an inspiration to all who had the privilege to know him.

“ Public servants are responsible for keeping up with the speed and pace of things as they change. We are at a time of significant change right now, and we’ve got to keep up with it. We don’t always know what that looks like, that’s why reflecting on our values and ethics is so important. We are stewards of the public trust. ”

— The Honourable Senator Ian Shugart, October 2023

Acknowledgement

The Deputy Ministers' Task Team is sincerely grateful to the individuals who supported our work, who contributed to broad conversations, and who made invaluable contributions to the outcome of our work.

Message from the Task Team

We are honoured to have been asked by the Clerk of the Privy Council to design and animate an initial conversation on our public service values and ethics against the backdrop of a dynamic environment.

This is an important mandate. There has not been a systematic conversation on this issue since the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector (<https://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=25049>) was updated in 2012. The post-pandemic context is a critical juncture for reflection and offers an opportunity to reinvigorate this dialogue. The interest in and importance of a renewed conversation has been evident through the course of our work.

Respect for democracy, respect for people, integrity, stewardship and excellence are the core values and ethics that underpin Canada’s public service. The significance of these enduring values cannot be overstated — they have far-reaching implications for governance, public trust and the well-being of our society and ultimately of the Canadians we serve.

We would like to be explicit on one point up front. A reinvigorated values and ethics conversation is intended to be complementary to ongoing efforts in the public service to make substantive progress on other consequential priorities such as improving workplace wellness, advancing accessibility, reconciliation, and addressing anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion.

Reflections on our people values support the important steps that we have taken as a public service, including progress made under the Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service (<https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/clerk/call-to-action-anti-racism-equity-inclusion-federal-public-service.html>), reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, the *Accessible Canada Act*, the implementation of recommendations from the Emerging from the Purge Report to support Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual + (2SLGBTQIA+) people, support for official languages commitments and our efforts to meaningfully include the many equity deserving groups that enrich the public service.

The work on values and ethics is not intended to be “the next new thing” that moves the institution off initiatives already underway. Quite the opposite. We hope this broader values conversation lifts up and amplifies our people values and the relationships we are working hard to build, with a view to creating a more enduring impact.

Our report to the Clerk is the beginning of the conversation, not the end. This engagement is intended to be an iterative, reflective and honest process. The report is intended to serve as a **prologue** to a broader dialogue on values and ethics in the public service, and we begin by sharing what we have heard, frankly and without filters.

Deputy Ministers’ Task Team on Values and Ethics

Catherine Blewett (she/her)
Deputy Minister, Economic Development and President of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (Chair)

Christiane Fox (she/her)
Deputy Minister, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Stephen Lucas (he/him)
Deputy Minister, Health Canada

Donnalyn McClymont (she/her)
Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet (ex-officio member)

Caroline Xavier (she/her)
Chief, Communications Security Establishment

A Strong Foundation: Report of the Task Force on Public Service Values and Ethics

In 1995, then Clerk of the Privy Council, Jocelyne Bourgon, established nine task forces led by deputy ministers to explore core issues facing the public service. This included the Task Force on Public Service Values and Ethics chaired by John Tait, former Deputy Minister of Justice.

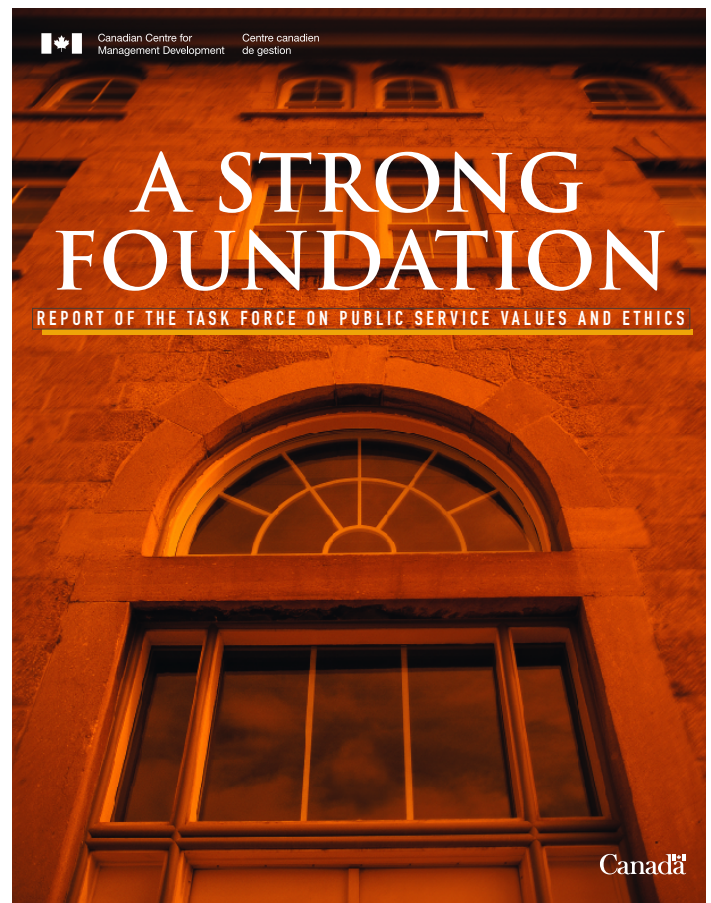
This task force was struck during a tumultuous time in the federal public service, following program review and political scandals that raised concerns related to ministerial responsibility and accountability. Tait examined these issues, including tensions with our democratic values, ethical challenges emerging from new service and management approaches, and what was needed and expected of leadership and people management in a time of change.

The task force produced a report titled *A Strong Foundation: Report of the Task Force on Public Service Values and Ethics* (<https://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/SC94-72-1996E.pdf>) that provides important historical context we would encourage all public servants to familiarize themselves with. Importantly, Tait concluded that both the process of the dialogue itself and the report that followed contributed to an “honest dialogue” on the importance of a professional public service in Canada’s parliamentary democracy and of democratic values such as the rule of law, accountability and political neutrality.

A Strong Foundation was intended to help public servants think about and, in some cases, rediscover and understand the basic values of public service and to recommit to, and act on, those values. It stressed that the key defining factor for the role and values of the public service of Canada is its democratic mission, rooted firmly in public trust: helping ministers, under law and the constitution, to serve the common good.

Tait outlined key principles that would form the foundation of our current public service values and ethics: integrity, impartiality, transparency, accountability and respect for diversity. He recommended that organizations embed these principles into their policies, practices and decision-making processes.

The Tait report identified four overlapping categories of values that they believed constituted a set of core values for the public service: democratic values, professional values, ethical values, and people values. The report also called on public-sector organizations to strengthen their ethical frameworks and codes of conduct, provide clear guidelines and expectations for ethical behaviour, and recommended comprehensive ethics training and education programs.



A Strong Foundation: Report of the Task Force on Public Service Values and Ethics (December 1996)

Values and Ethics Code for the Federal Public Service

In response to the Tait report, the Values and Ethics Code for the Federal Public Service (the Code) was released in 2003. In 2012, the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector was updated pursuant to subsection 5(1) of the *Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act* (PSDPA), which also required the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat to establish a code of conduct applicable to the entire federal public sector.

The 2012 Code was intended to clarify the role and expectations of federal public servants within the framework of Canadian parliamentary democracy, as laid out in the constitution and the basic principle of responsible government, which is that the powers of the Crown are exercised by ministers, who are in turn accountable to Parliament. It reflects the duties and responsibilities set out in *Accountable Government: A Guide for Ministers and Ministers of State*, the *Conflict of Interest Act*, the *Lobbying Act*, and the PSDPA.

The 2012 Code outlines five enduring core values that guide the public service: respect for democracy, respect for people, integrity, stewardship and excellence. The Code also outlines expected behaviours that guide public servants in all activities related to their professional duties. By committing to these values and adhering to the expected behaviours, public servants strengthen the ethical culture of the public sector and contribute to public confidence in the integrity of all public institutions.

As required under the PSDPA, departments and agencies created their own complementary internal codes, including function-specific codes of conduct. Over the course of time, these departmental codes have been reviewed and updated to reflect important changes, such as those around inclusion and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

A key milestone was the release of *Open and Accountable Government* in 2015, which serves as an update to *Accountable Government: A Guide for Ministers and Ministers of State* (2008). This guide serves as an important touchstone for federal public servants, elected officials and their offices. In essence it is a code of conduct for ministers and other reporting public office holders.

Respect for democracy

The system of Canadian parliamentary democracy and its institutions are fundamental to serving the public interest. Public servants recognize that elected officials are accountable to Parliament, and ultimately to the Canadian people, and that a non-partisan public sector is essential to our democratic system.

Respect for people

Treating all people with respect, dignity and fairness is fundamental to our relationship with the Canadian public and contributes to a safe and healthy work environment that promotes engagement, openness and transparency. The diversity of our people and the ideas they generate are the source of our innovation.

Integrity

Integrity is the cornerstone of good governance and democracy. By upholding the highest ethical standards, public servants conserve and enhance public confidence in the honesty, fairness and impartiality of the federal public sector.

Stewardship

Federal public servants are entrusted to use and care for public resources responsibly, for both the short term and long term.

Excellence

Excellence in the design and delivery of public sector policy, programs and services is beneficial to every aspect of Canadian public life. Engagement, collaboration, effective teamwork and professional development are all essential to a high-performing organization.

Why the Renewed Focus on Values and Ethics in 2023?

It has been more than a quarter of a century since the publication of *A Strong Foundation* and 20 years since the publication of the first Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service (see Appendix A: From Tait to Today). Since then, multi-dimensional global challenges have grown exponentially, and the public sector faces a level of complexity not previously experienced by public servants.

The post-pandemic geopolitical context is unpredictable and brings consequential risks. The pandemic dramatically changed how the public service works, impacted citizens' trust in public institutions, increased their expectations and diminished their overall satisfaction with government services.

Finally, with many new public servants onboarded during the global pandemic and joining hybrid work environments, there are fewer conventional opportunities for ongoing dialogue on the core values and ethics of the institution in the way that physical presence previously facilitated. In short, the cumulative effect of change has led to questions on the soundness of our public service foundation, overall awareness, and the consistent application of values and ethics in decisions, actions and behaviours of public servants.

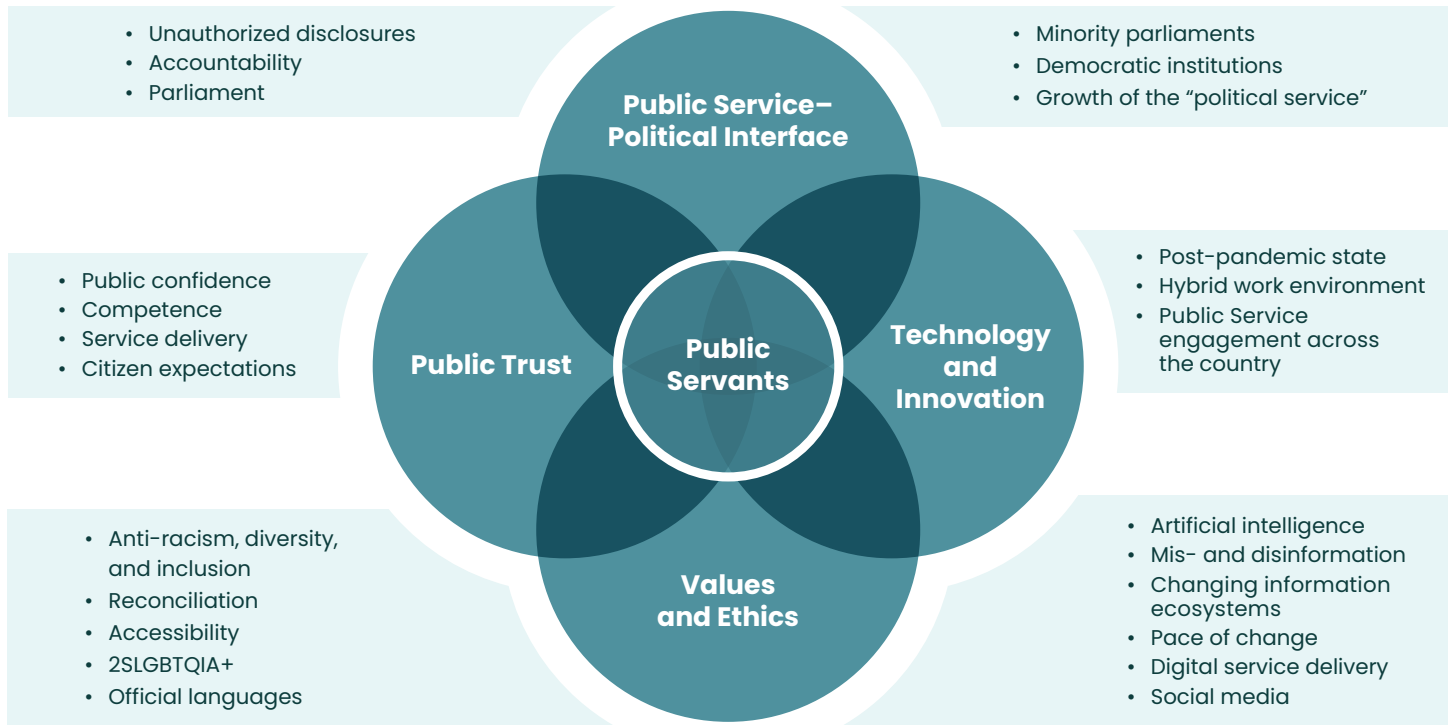
The Enduring Importance of Democracy, Democratic Institutions and the Public Service

A professional, non-partisan public service continues to be critical to Canada's parliamentary democracy. Serving Canadians and upholding our democracy is the *raison d'être* for our public service. Public servants make a broad range of contributions every day, from delivering essential services, developing and implementing policies, advancing research, supporting economic growth, social cohesion, environmental protection and our global interests, and ensuring the health and safety of our citizens. The common denominator among those functions is that the work is done in service of citizens and must be exercised in a manner that is transparent, ethical and guided by the rule of law.

A basic tenet of our system is that a democratically elected government will be aided by the public service to "advance loyally and efficiently the agenda of the government of the day without compromising the non-partisan status that is needed to provide continuity and service to successive governments with differing priorities."¹ In other words, to effectively contribute, public servants must provide candid, professional advice that is free of both partisan considerations and fear of political criticism or retribution.

1 Meeting the Expectations of Canadians: Review of the Responsibilities and Accountabilities of Ministers and Senior Officials (<https://www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/report/rev-exa/ar-er-eng.pdf>). Treasury Board Secretariat, 2005.

Digging into the current context: The post-pandemic state



This figure illustrates the complex post-pandemic context that public servants are operating in and the many environmental factors that may influence their daily work.

Declining trust in institutions is occurring globally and measures of decreasing confidence in Canada’s democracy are cause for concern.² Citizens rightfully expect publicly funded institutions to deliver services effectively and efficiently and are vocal when those institutions fail to meet those standards. The public service has struggled to adapt, to innovate and to meet expectations, resulting in a growing deficit of trust and negative perception of legitimacy.

The public discourse around government policy, service delivery and regulation have also been impacted by the polarization of views, and how citizens participate in that discourse is often shaped by loyalties, affinities, and social media algorithms and echo chambers. There is a wide range of misinformation and disinformation circulating in the public sphere, which further erode confidence. This is not only a Canadian or North American trend but a global phenomenon.

2 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer: Navigating a Polarized World (<https://www.edelman.com/trust/2023/trust-barometer>)

What We Have Heard

Since September 2023, we participated in over 90 conversations across the public service, as well as some with external stakeholders and civil society. These discussions have encompassed functional communities, employee networks, bargaining agents, and departments and agencies across the country, and deliberately included a variety of voices, including new and young public servants and members of equity-deserving communities. Just like the Tait report noted in 1996, we consider the dialogue to be an important outcome in and of itself. Indeed it is clear from the conversations we had that there is a strong appetite for the discussion.

Our sessions have been largely unscripted and have yielded valuable insights. We have facilitated these discussions using a toolkit of materials designed to guide conversations while maintaining respect, accommodating context and creating explicitly safe spaces.

We are profoundly grateful to those individuals who bravely shared honest views and personal experiences with us.

When we had an opportunity to discuss our approach with Senator Shugart, he encouraged us to “make sure the audience sees themselves in this report.” For those we have spoken with so far, we believe we have accurately portrayed what has been shared with us and we thank you.

A number of key themes have emerged:

There is strong recognition of the importance of values and ethics and of continued dialogue

Participants have welcomed these discussions and regard them as timely and important. We heard from many who possess a strong understanding of the Code and its importance. However, we also heard from some public servants who noted their own lack of awareness of the Code and shared that they had not had a conversation about how it can be consistently and practically applied in their daily work.

“ This is a timely exercise, especially in a world of increased polarization and partisanship... It is time for a re-anchoring and reinforcement of our values and ethics. ”

.....

“ To prepare for this conversation, I spoke with many of my peers in the network to try and understand their level of awareness of the Code. Many had very little awareness of its existence and even fewer had an understanding of how they were supposed to apply it in their jobs... ”

.....

“ We should start right at the beginning so people know that this is part of our organizational culture and then continue that conversation through onboarding, ongoing training and dialogue. ”

.....

“ People look to the Code as a guide for how to avoid wrong-doing. But can it instead be a guide for right-doing? ”

What We Have Heard

Over the past five years, the number of federal public servants has grown and many of these individuals were recruited virtually and work primarily in a hybrid environment. While this expansion was necessary to deliver vital services to Canadians, we heard that it may have created a gap in the awareness and understanding of the Code among new employees who joined the public service during the pandemic.

“ ...[During the pandemic] people were onboarded from their basements and kitchen tables. They didn't have the opportunities to meet their managers or their teams and to establish those key relationships. The pressure to deliver in that time may mean that they didn't receive the necessary information about public sector values and ethics. Having these conversations is critical for these groups... ”

.....

“ [Values and ethics] only become a topic of discussion when an issue arises. It is very hard for new employees who have only ever worked virtually to pick up on natural cues from other employees. ”

.....

“ To what extent should we be more explicit with people, especially newcomers to the public service regarding the expectations vis-à-vis values and ethics and official languages. How do we integrate it into our core values so it is something that people want to do versus something they have to do? ”

Participants also stressed the importance of continuing to create safe spaces for dialogue on this topic.

“ I think it is difficult to address some issues around values and ethics when we have so many casual and term contracts. How do we make people feel comfortable addressing issues that come up without fear of reprisal? Honest conversations are only effective when people feel comfortable talking about them. ”

Additionally, there was acknowledgement of the importance of including diverse voices in these dialogues, including public servants who serve outside of Ottawa and those who work in a range of environments and operational realities (for example coast guards, border services officers, meat inspectors, nurses, doctors and military personnel), as well as people who are external to the public service.

What We Have Heard

We have also heard that a critical aspect for public servants is the need to “make it real” and to help public servants understand how to practically apply the Code when facing ethical issues and challenges in their daily work.

“ [Values and ethics] can be an abstract concept for people and depending on your role, the ethical challenges can be very different from one person to the next. For example, my commitment to scientific integrity may clash with the Code, depending on how it’s interpreted, particularly as it relates to loyal implementation. We need to have regular discussions in our branches and teams and ongoing training, using real-life case studies, to help guide public servants through difficult situations...” ”

Discussions on values and ethics are opportunities to affirm the role and purpose of the public service and recognize contributions

These open and robust discussions with the Task Team have been an opportunity to affirm our role as public servants.

“ Every action we do is to support Canadians. Our roles as public servants give us a helpful sense of freedom in giving our best advice and implementation. It serves as armour to have clarity around who we are and what we stand for. ”

.....

“ Values and ethics are both an anchor and a platform for change. What people really want is clarity. What behaviours are needed to succeed as a public servant? When you know, it’s empowering. This is about helping public servants achieve their goals, the department’s goals and the overarching goals for the entire public service. ”

.....

“ ...Looking at our values and ethics has encouraged me to revisit and reaffirm the mission and goals [of my department]. When I am feeling conflicted, it helps me to find the centre, that true north. I think it would be beneficial to revisit these concepts more regularly and more officially to keep ourselves on track and remember our actual goals as public servants. There is a lot of top-down pressure sometimes... the values and ethics ground us. ”

.....

“ Public servants delivered an incredible amount to Canadians during the pandemic. Many people worked day and night for months to keep people safe, deliver benefits and programs, approve vaccines. That work was grounded in our values and ethics, even if we didn’t actively realize it. When I think about the Code, I think about how it lines up with all the work we have done over the past three years, and I feel a lot of pride. ”

What We Have Heard

This has also been an opportunity for positive affirmation of the public service and the need to cultivate respectful relationships with colleagues, ministers, parliamentarians, political staff, media, non-governmental organizations, private-sector entities and other levels of government. These discussions have also recognized the many positive contributions of public servants working across Canada and globally, yet, participants also raised how the negative perceptions of the public service can impact their ability to feel pride in their work.

“ It’s frustrating to see how public servants are sometimes portrayed in the media or by people outside of the public service. We are sometimes characterized as disengaged or ineffective. I work with incredibly passionate and driven people, who work very hard to serve Canadians. The stereotype is harmful and has a negative impact on our ability to feel pride in our accomplishments. ”

.....

“ It’s more difficult now to be proud to be a public servant, because of people’s perceptions of the institution and because of Canada’s role on the global stage. It’s not what it used to be. ”

Discussions on values and ethics need to link to the future of the public service

Many participants, especially new public servants, youth and students, expressed the importance of discussions on values and ethics leading to actionable changes that will help to shape the future of the public service.

“ In my view, the values are connected directly to why the public service exists. This is an important conversation, but we need to focus on what we are going to do about it. How can we substantively change their experience for the better? It’s not just about outward-facing action, it’s what we actually do internally, our ability to be solid citizens, colleagues and managers. ”

.....

“ The Values and Ethics Code helps to reinforce a sense of belonging for public servants, that sense of inclusion. All jobs are big jobs in the government; there are no small jobs, they all have value. It’s important for us to value each other as well. The job needs to be an integral part of who we are, and we need to foster that sense of belonging and purpose in new public servants. ”

What We Have Heard

A common theme that was raised by young public servants was the desire to see the impact and change realized through their work.

Many participants discussed the importance of “having impact” as one of the key factors that initially drew them to the public service. However, some participants noted that they feel as though they have lost agency in their positions and that this, in turn, affects their ability to feel impactful, as well as to feel purpose, meaning and pride in their work. Participants discussed how this can lead to a feeling of disconnection from their commitment to the organization, including in the embodiment of values and ethics principles.

“ I am not sure people feel like they can be an individual in the public service, that they can have an impact, grab something and do something with it. Will they have agency? Can they come to the public service and have an impact as a person? These are important questions and important factors in attracting and retaining talented staff... ”

.....

“ The internal workplace culture really impacts our values and ethics. If you are feeling disconnected and you don't have those relationships, this impacts you. We are seeing a lot of young people who just feel disconnected from their work and their overall impact to Canadians. ”

.....

“ I think that some people have lost their way and may feel like they don't really have impact. I think that focusing on values and ethics is grounding and can help people return to a sense of collective commitment. ”

.....

“ It's important to have objectivity in the role that we play, but there are times when government decisions have challenged people's personal beliefs so strongly they choose to no longer work for government. We need to individually figure out how to manage our responsibilities vis-à-vis our beliefs. ”

.....

“ Many of us joined and remain in the public service because we feel we have the ability to service our communities. We want to feel pride in our work and like we are making a difference. ”

Participants discussed the challenges of working in a rapidly evolving landscape, including the need to be more nimble, agile and digital in how we work and serve Canadians.

What We Have Heard

For example, many participants raised the need for adequate tools and technology to be effective stewards of public resources and services. They expressed concern regarding aging infrastructure and the public service's ability to keep up with the rapid pace of technological change and be effective data stewards now and into the future.

“ Data is one of our biggest assets, but the public service is not well equipped to provide appropriate stewardship of that data due to lack of investment in resources, technology and training... ”

.....

“ I don't feel like the public service is equipped to deal with the massive amount of technological change that will happen in the next 10 years. We can barely get desk-top computers. Where are the tools for the science community to have access to high-speed computing, for collaboration, to ensure open data, to properly manage massive data sets? ”

Respect for people as a value is centrally important

Across the board, participants agreed that respect for people is a critically important value, but many acknowledged there has been significant evolution in the public service and the world context since the Tait report led to the initial conception of the Code.

Respect for people is at the centre of the Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service, and to advancing reconciliation and a renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples that is based on recognition of rights, respect and partnership. It is also central to efforts to foster a more diverse workplace that is equitable and inclusive of people with disabilities and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, while supporting everyone's ability to work in the official language of their choice. However, many participants stressed the importance of recognizing the ongoing racism, discrimination and harassment faced by public servants, the impacts of colonialism and systemic barriers, and the need for continued action and leadership.

“ To move forward, we must recognize the racism and discrimination that exists in the public service. Many of us struggle to come to work every day in a system that is built on colonial policies designed to oppress our people... ”

.....

“ I am still finding a lack of cultural competency when it comes to engaging with Indigenous Peoples. I was recently in a conversation with an HR specialist who couldn't or wouldn't understand that Indigenous People traditionally do not make or maintain eye contact in various settings, which can often work against us, particularly in interview settings, which can impede hiring and/or advancement opportunities within the public service. ”

.....

“ Right now we talk a lot about accessibility as the goal. But it shouldn't be the end goal. The real end goal is to change mind sets and for people to understand the impact of systemic ableism. ”

.....

What We Have Heard

“ The notion of respect for people may have been very different 30 years ago. We need to ensure and foster a positive and inclusive workplace. An example of this is providing accommodations for trans or non-binary people, such as gender-neutral bathrooms. ”

.....

“ It’s not just about personal interactions; it’s also about the systems within the workplace. For example, I am non-binary and trans. When I did my security clearance, I couldn’t use “X” as a gender marker. I was told I needed to choose “F” or “M”. This was very insulting and goes counter to the values we are talking about. The IT systems do not account for someone like me. ”

.....

“ We need to promote language inclusivity; we have people who don’t feel like they can work in their first official language. ”

.....

“ Respect for people is a core value. Is there a way we can also be more explicit about respect for official languages and Indigenous languages? ”

Many participants discussed significant issues and personal experiences with racism and discrimination that they had faced from colleagues within the public service and the lack of an appropriate response from management, at any level, to deal with aggressors in a substantive way. Participants discussed how these experiences demonstrate a lack of respect for people from both the offending party and management.

Participants also noted the need to embed respect for people values into public service processes. For example, they cited the shortcomings of the performance management system when it comes to addressing incidents of discrimination, harassment or racism. They noted that in many cases, problematic employees can be promoted or deployed without the behaviour having been addressed.

“ ...We promote bad people, and we deploy bad people. We need to figure out how to address this. [We] need to improve the performance management system to address this. If people are problems, it creates extra work and managers don’t want to deal with it. As a result we get repeated behaviours that further victimize others... ”

.....

“ The issue is systemic, and it’s the processes. We don’t need more consultations; we need you to review all of the processes and the policies, one-by-one, and change them. ”

.....

What We Have Heard

“ One of the values is excellence... this value means different things to different people. In the disability community, this value is used as a sword or a wedge. It’s used to marginalize people with disabilities instead of seeing the inclusion of the disabled community as its own form of excellence. ”

Some participants noted that public servants defer to hierarchy and rules because of compliance culture, but that culture creates problematic outcomes, including lower-level staff feeling they can not bring forward issues of harassment, racism or discrimination because they think it will not be given serious consideration.

Support for ongoing dialogue on values and ethics was described as complementary to, and supportive of, the Call to Action, reconciliation, and commitments on equity, diversity and inclusion. However, participants shared their concern that progress made on these important issues could lose leadership focus and momentum over time, as the working context or governmental priorities shift. Some participants expressed their desire for values related to reconciliation, equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility to be enshrined into the Code to safeguard commitments and progress made on building inclusive environments.

“ Ongoing dialogue on values and ethics is another avenue to sustain the work we are doing under the Call to Action. ”

.....

“ ...We’ve done so much work on equity, diversity and inclusion. And it’s not that they weren’t values before, but now we are much more upfront about it. Is there a way to embed these values into the Code? ”

.....

“ In the Code, we talk about discrimination, not racism. In my opinion there are important words missing from the Code. ”

Participants noted the importance of recognizing that a diversity of viewpoints, even dissenting ones, can lead to better-informed, more robust decisions. However, when asked if they considered their work environment to be a safe place to share those different perspectives or dissenting opinions, many participants said that it was not.

“ ...this is not a safe space, no. In [Indigenous discussions], we don’t have this hierarchy. It’s more of a circle – youth, adult, elder – they all have something they bring to the table. The government is a triangle. We don’t feel like we fit. ”

There was strong agreement regarding the importance of continuing to build a diverse and inclusive public service, one that represents the citizens of Canada, but also acknowledgement that a more diverse public service means that people’s individual and cultural values may differ.

What We Have Heard

We heard that, at times, public servants may find themselves at the intersection of their personal and cultural beliefs and the ethical standards expected of them in their roles, and that this requires a thoughtful balance. Participants discussed how personal and cultural values are deeply ingrained and can significantly influence individual decision-making. These values are shaped by one's upbringing, beliefs and societal norms, and while they can be a source of moral guidance, there must also be a harmonization to our common values and ethics.

“ We need to understand that people come with different values, but we need to find a common ground and move away from binary views. We need bright people who aren't afraid to speak their mind and are open to hearing things they don't agree with. ”

We heard that this balance necessitates self-awareness, a commitment to impartiality, and a willingness to set aside personal biases when making decisions while also enabling public servants to appreciate and respect diverse perspectives, maintain ethical integrity and feel like they can be “a whole person” at work.

We have also heard that some individuals are drawn to public service by a strong sense of duty and a genuine desire to contribute to the betterment of society. For some, it is unquestionably a calling. On the other hand, some people enter public service for practical reasons, such as job stability, benefits or financial security. As a related point, participants also discussed how it is now more common for public servants to hold multiple jobs or to be vocal advocates for specific social justice causes, and that challenges can arise when trying to align outside interests with public service values and ethics.

“ Many people have more than one job now – they have to, to be able to afford to live. We have to acknowledge the gig economy and also that people are struggling. Everyone's situation is different, but I think we need to be practical and accept that having outside interests or even jobs doesn't mean that someone isn't upholding their values and ethics. I can still deliver excellent service but be passionate about a totally different cause. ”

There is a perceived lack of accountability or a “double standard” between senior leadership and employees when it comes to compliance and enforcement of the Code

Closely linked to the importance of respect for people, we heard that some public servants feel there is a double standard or unequal application of the Code when it comes to employees versus senior leadership.

Participants expressed that there appear to be few, if any, consequences for senior leaders who act in contravention of values and ethics, as compared to consequences imposed upon employees, particularly those who are members of racialized groups. This perceived double standard diminishes trust, accountability and transparency in the work environment.

“ There is selective enforcement of values and ethics within the public service. The higher up the food chain you go, the less accountability seems to exist. Leaders embodying and putting the values and ethics and their associated key competencies into practice every day will go a long way... ”

.....

What We Have Heard

“ The perceived ethical behaviour at the senior leadership level sets the tone for the organization. This is the most important factor. How they behave, how they are perceived. The responsibility for values and ethics is shared by all employees, but the influence on the culture is not the same across all levels. Even though the expected behaviours are outlined in the Code, the daily culture is really due to the senior leadership... ”

.....

“ We need to hold people accountable. We know the playbook. If an executive gets their hand slapped, they are moved into a special project, promoted or moved. We see this so often. It’s well understood. ”

The concept of accountability and the need for demonstrable and transparent consequences for employees at all levels, including senior leadership, touches all values, but in particular includes stewardship and integrity. For example, the Phoenix pay system was raised as an area where accountability and recourse has not been demonstrated, despite wide-ranging negative impacts.

“ [The ongoing issues related to] the Phoenix pay system is a perfect example of lack of consequences and accountability. Employees have been dealing with the fallout from Phoenix-related problems for years. Some people had no pay or the wrong pay for years, and it causes a massive amount of stress and financial hardship. Where are the consequences for senior leaders? We keep showing up for work every day and wondering if this will ever be fixed. ”

Participants also raised the importance of exploring possible avenues to ensure that individuals and institutions (including Governor in Council appointees, collective bargaining units, advisory committees, provincial and territorial counterparts and other stakeholders) who work alongside public servants in serving Canadians are aware of the Code and strive to respect it in their conduct.

Public trust is at the core of values and ethics

Public trust goes to the core of the value of respect for democracy. This value, and the responsibility of public servants as stewards of public trust, is unique to the public service. Tied closely to this were discussions of the role that public servants play in providing honest and fearless advice that is developed in the best interest of Canadians.

“ **Providing advice isn’t optional; it is a responsibility.** ”
| — The Honourable Senator Ian Shugart

.....

“ Trust must be a central value. This is demonstrated by non-partisanship, fairness, openness. ”

.....

What We Have Heard

“ What is special about the public service is that we have and hold the public trust. We exercise the mandate of the duly elected government and have privileged access to elected officials. ”

.....

“ Upholding public trust and public stewardship is a unique responsibility that public servants carry and demonstrating a respect for democracy, and acting in accordance with the Code is a way for us to protect and maintain the trust that Canadians have put in us. ”

.....

“ Public servants must be impartial and must be perceived as impartial as well. ”

There was strong agreement among participants on the need to bring in diverse perspectives when forming advice, and an emphasis on the importance of really listening to and encouraging honest or difficult discussions. However, it was noted that there also needs to be clarity on how to bridge the gap between hearing from and welcoming diverse voices, and the distillation and integration of these views into formal, considered advice.

“ Sometimes people don't understand all the factors that go into the development of formal advice – this is even more complicated in our era of populism and minority governments. We are asked to share our science and our opinions, but in the end sometimes we don't feel represented. If we were more transparent about that process, I believe it would help to increase overall confidence in the system. ”

Participants also raised issues of accountability, including the role of political staff and ministerial accountability, in contrast to the responsibilities of public servants.

For example, some participants expressed concern with their ability to maintain political neutrality when dealing with political staff in a minister's office. It was noted that serving the government of the day is a premise rooted in our core values of respect for democracy, integrity and stewardship, but it is not without its challenges. Striking a balance between political neutrality and providing expert advice, as well as the faithful implementation and delivery of programs and policies, can be challenging.

There was strong agreement that public servants must maintain their independence and credibility, which requires non-partisanship and resistance to external pressure. It was acknowledged that without intentional separation, such as the directives outlined in important policy frameworks such as *Open and Accountable Government*, there is the risk of undue political interference in the operation of the public service.

“ I have a well-tabbed version of the Open and Accountable Government from 2015 that I've had to pull out with political staff multiple times. I've also had to pull it out with our own staff to explain why co-development [with political staff] sounds lovely, but carries major risks. ”

.....

What We Have Heard

“ Serious consideration needs to be given to how to ensure departmental work is free from political influence... There is a need for intentional effort to create a clearer and bigger space between the political realm and the work public servants do. ”

.....

“ The division between the public service and the political side is very important. But in front-facing organizations such as mine, there is no division. I have middle managers who deal with the minister’s office directly every day. They can’t direct public service but guess what...? They do. The lines are blurry. They tell us what they want and how they want it... This is something that we are seized with, particularly as we get closer to going to the polls. ”

.....

“ The interface between ministers’ offices and departments is one of the areas that concerns me most. Regional offices end up bearing the brunt of the work when it comes to a minister’s engagements in the regions. We have to pick up the pieces when plans fall apart at the last minute. ”

Many participants raised the significant impacts of the proliferation of social media, the emergence of generative AI, and the spread of misinformation and disinformation. While these technological and communication trends offer opportunities for government engagement, transparency and communication, they have also raised complex challenges with regards to maintaining transparency and accountability, as well as public trust in the integrity of information and institutions.

“ Having a group conversation online is very powerful. People sometimes don’t realize that what they are doing is problematic. The use of social media to profile personal achievement is not always appropriate. ”

.....

“ Employees take to social media platforms like Reddit or X [formerly Twitter] to inappropriately complain or rant about their work, their boss, or policies and decisions they don’t agree with. This is rampant and difficult to prevent, as they are often posting anonymously... ”

.....

“ As public servants, we need to support our government in the work that we do, which means we have to be very careful in what we are posting publicly, because Canadian confidence in our institution is essential. It’s up to us to determine what the standards are for social media, as right now, it is not obvious in our values and ethics codes. ”

There has been an evolution in public servants' awareness of collective responsibilities versus individual expectations

Participants discussed the evolution of individual expectations and the commitment to collective values and actions as public servants.

We heard there can be challenges in reconciling the concept of individual expectations and rights versus the collective responsibility in the role of a public servant. This is corroborated by the results of the 2021 Staffing and Non-Partisanship Survey which indicated that 5% of public servants with less than 10 years of service say they have no awareness and 22% of public servants with less than 10 years say they have minimal awareness of their rights and responsibilities with respect to political activities.³

Participants discussed the commitment to collective responsibilities that is made when entering the public service. Many felt that while this may have been widely accepted by public servants 30 years ago, today's public servants may push back against this notion.

“ There has been a recentering of priorities. Pre-pandemic, work came first. Now, people are more comfortable asserting themselves and putting limits on their work or leveraging the opportunity to do so now as a result of remote work. [People are] branching from collectivism to a focus on individualism. ”

“ Public service does not start with self-interest. ”

“ Many new public servants and new Canadians grew up hearing about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is hyper-focused on [individual] rights. People may not see the difference with regards to the responsibility of citizens and the collective good. ”

“ People are quite adamant about their rights, but they are often ignorant to their responsibilities. You are a public servant even when you are off the clock. ”

3 2021 Staffing and Non-Partisanship Survey: Highlights Report
(<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission/services/publications/2021-snps-highlights-report.html>)

What We Have Heard

Some participants noted that serving the government of the day can feel like censorship or a loss of one's own voice, particularly among those in the science and/or security and intelligence communities. This includes having to have a social media presence that is aligned with values and ethics principles — including the need to respect non-partisanship as part of demonstrating respect for democracy. Yet individuals also have an expectation of a right to express their own opinions.

“ How does the non-partisan stance that public servants are supposed to demonstrate mix with [values and ethics] when it comes to world events and crises? People want to demonstrate their personal stances at protests, [by displaying] a flag in the background on MS Teams, on social media, etc. ”

.....

“ Public servants should have a policy for social media use that outlines what we can say on a public platform and we should not say on a public platform. Negative comments about a current government's policies and procedures may not go over well. It's not clear what the rules are for public servants. ”

.....

“ Younger generations are entering the workforce with different values; more value is placed on protecting the environment and inclusion, and there are now more competing ideologies. ”

.....

“ With technology and social media, it can be challenging to uphold our non-partisan status as public servants and withhold commentary on politics and geo-political events. ”

Participants raised examples of information leaks and unauthorized disclosure of information as an area where the collective responsibility versus individual expectations has come into focus. The potential for conflicts of interest also arose, as did the idea that more clarity on the rules and transparency around compliance and enforcement is required.

“ Public servants going to the media or outside sources when they disagree with a decision or direction is completely offside and a clear breach of our values and ethics. In extreme circumstances, these become public cases that play out in court, but where are the consequences? Do people even understand the rules they are breaking? ”

Participants also discussed the culture of risk aversion that exists in the public service when it comes to providing fearless advice or giving dissenting opinion. They noted that the culture negatively impacts trust between employees and management, undermines creativity and innovation and decreases the level of overall trust and confidence in the system.

They noted that this culture can prevent people from “speaking truth to power” and stems from fear of repercussions or reprisals for those who challenge the status quo or who may not agree with the direction of the elected government. To note, this concept of “speaking truth to power” also gave rise to some questions of whose truth was reflected when individuals' expectations or perspectives may differ from one another.

What We Have Heard

Participants noted that addressing this culture of risk aversion requires a shift in organizational mindset. We heard that public servants want leaders to actively encourage open and honest dialogue, protect those who speak out, and foster an environment where debate is viewed as a valuable part of the decision-making process, rather than a threat.

“ The willingness to disagree needs to be separate from the outcome. We stop conversations before they begin due to fear of reprisal... ”

.....

“ We tend to have binary views. It’s not just black and white. It is okay to disagree. Tension is good. Not resolving tension is a problem. Tension is required to innovate. Debate. Expand your mindset. ”

.....

“ It’s not just senior executives to political leaders, but team members to team leads. We need a discussion with the middle management community; fear of reprisal is a barrier to open feedback... ”

There is recognition of shortcomings in service delivery to Canadians and the importance of excellence

As public servants, our direct interface with Canadians is often through points of service delivery. As such, it’s important to demonstrate excellence in the services we provide.

We heard that public servants take the value of excellence seriously, but that living that value and delivering service excellence to Canadians has become more challenging. We have had recent successes, but by almost any objective measure, the public service has not adapted to meet the heightened demands of citizens when it comes to service delivery.

Public servants understand and want to embody the spirit of values and ethics in their work, but some report that they can feel conflicted in the application given the workplace culture. This includes the high pace of work, high workload and a lack of training or clear leadership.

“ We were asked to put aside the data and do what we were asked to do. But this is how you have a values-and-ethics crisis. You need to understand how the speed in which we operate puts us into a values-and-ethics crisis. We are not giving ourselves time to do the work properly... ”

.....

“ Managers are treading water, three feet below the surface. They are dealing with multiple priorities and very large ones. COVID, an ambitious political agenda, accessibility, work under the Call to Action. We are asking these people to take on a lot. ”

What We Have Heard

Participants with private-sector experience discussed how the private sector has exhibited more agility and has harnessed the power of innovation to streamline operations, enhance customer experiences, and remain competitive. In contrast, it was noted that the public service often faces more bureaucratic hurdles and resource constraints, making it less agile in adapting to technological and sociological shifts. This is particularly relevant to the imperative of digital transformation.

“ There seems to be a disconnect between the parts of the organization that are supposed to deliver and where the resources are. Technology moves really fast. We are unable to keep up. The concern about value for money keeps us behind in technology because we hold on to things far past their utility. ”

.....

“ We have aging infrastructure, but we are being asked to deliver top-notch science. We need to be able to compete with our international colleagues. We are being compressed due to our limited resources, both financial and human, and we can't keep up. This erodes our sense of values and ethics... ”

.....

“ [There is] some ebb and flow of workload in comparison with the private sector that does sometimes cause a disconnect, but overall I believe that public servants want to produce as much as possible during their work hours and are faced with an external perception that doesn't always match the actual lived work life. ”

There is recognition of the need to demonstrate empathy for Canadians. The theme of empathy was also relevant in the context of our internal interactions with public service colleagues.

“ Empathy is becoming a more core value not only in the public service but in the workplace more generally, particularly in the hybrid environment. Employees feel more attached and committed to their work when their manager/supervisor demonstrates behaviours related to empathy... ”

Values and ethics dialogue and integration are essential to navigating big challenges

Participants highlighted the importance of discussing values and ethics, and their implementation, when navigating significant challenges or change. Many participants noted that the Code can be a compass to guide actions and expected behaviours. However, some participants noted that, at times, scientific integrity and other professional values may clash with public sector values and ethics.

Participants from the scientific community highlighted challenges related to climate change, pandemic response and the professional obligations of scientists working within a regulatory decision-making process versus those working in labs.

“ The Values and Ethics Code is a cross-cutting policy that sits above all other directives. But many of us must also consider other important policies, as well as other professional codes of conduct. We have doctors, nurses and pharmacists. We need opportunities to discuss potential clashes and also to establish a hierarchy of values to follow in specific situations. ”

“ Scientific integrity is at the core of what we do, and there is an opportunity for that value to clash with the direction of the elected government of the day. Our science must translate to impartial advice, but this can be tough when there is a real political divide on an issue... ”

“ One challenge is in practising the ethics of our individual professions (medical, scientific, legal, economic) in concert with the ethics of being a public servant. ”

Participants noted that public sector values and ethics can be used to guide the use of generative AI, for example with ChatGPT in the work of the public service and broadly in the economy and society, but that much more thinking needs to be done to work through the implications of these technologies and how to safeguard the public interest.

Discussions on values and ethics also help to navigate the challenges that arise in the context of global events or social movements. It underlines the role we play, as leaders, in the need to create safe, respectful workplaces. It also guides our expectations of how public servants conduct themselves in maintaining and contributing to a respectful and inclusive work environment.

“ Ethical and values-based behaviours and actions are important not only with how we serve Canadians, but how we work with each other. These are challenging times with increased expectations, and we need to look at our actions from within. ”

Training and support for employees on values and ethics are essential

Participants voiced very strong support for ongoing and modernized tools and training on values and ethics for all public servants, and stressed the need for scenario-based, practical training adapted to different departments and job functions. There was also a recognition that the challenges facing public servants change over the course of their career.

Participants noted that, over the years, there has been a loss of the rigour and presence of values and ethics discussions in onboarding new employees, and in maintaining “good hygiene” of practical dialogue sessions with employees to keep the Code visible and alive in our day-to-day work as public servants. Across the board, participants agreed that discussions on values and ethics cannot continue to be a “box-ticking” exercise and that it must be part of daily work and dialogue so that public servants can learn from one another.

“ We used to have values and ethics training; I took it in a room with real people. Now it’s online, it’s a test and it means very little. This needs to be reintegrated into our daily life through ongoing discussions and training. ”

.....

“ Adequate training is essential for ethical behaviour, as employees need to understand the ethical standards and guidelines relevant to their role. ”

.....

“ Training materials need to be culturally adapted and sensitive. As an Indigenous person, if I see a lot of references to loyalty to the Crown, it might not sit well with me. ”

Reflections and Recommendations

In this section, we highlight and explore five areas that warrant further reflection and action.



Public service as a calling

The values and ethics dialogue has spurred a renewed discussion on the foundations of the public service and its enduring mission and purpose. This has highlighted the critical role of a non-partisan, professional public service in our democracy, and noted the changing relationship to ministers and Parliament. Dialogue also focused on the importance of delivering services to Canadians at home and around the world, and the importance of our credibility as an institution.

However, public servants also spoke of a lack of awareness of the Code and the absence of values and ethics in discussions, decisions, and actions. The public service has a unique role in comparison

to other employers, which is key to the special calling to service inherent in our values as public servants.

Ongoing, practical dialogue on the Values and Ethics Code is essential to ensure awareness and use in day-to-day work, supported by guidance and department-specific codes of conduct. Dialogue and engagement are essential to understand tensions that can arise between values, such as between respect for the democratic process, often involving consultation and listening to diverse perspectives that may conflict with operational values such as efficiency, speed, responsiveness, and entrepreneurialism.

It is recommended that:

- deputy ministers be tasked to continue the dialogue on values and ethics in their departments and agencies. We do not suggest a specific process be followed, but rather that engagement be inclusive, maximize employee participation at all levels, and ensure psychologically safe spaces for open and honest reflection on real issues and challenges.
- public service leadership on values and ethics be supported by senior-level governance structures to ensure that best practices and cross-cutting issues and actions can be broadly shared, with the objective of establishing an enduring process for dialogue on values and ethics.
- deputy heads review their codes of conduct to ensure alignment with the evolving context (e.g. social media, artificial intelligence) and organizational environments while remaining rooted in the core values.



Stewards of the public trust

Public trust takes ongoing, sustained efforts to earn but can be lost quickly through ethical breaches, conflict of interest and service shortcomings, as we have seen recently in multiple jurisdictions. Even the perception of a breach is enough to undermine public trust.

Our report has honed in on what has changed over the past 25 years within government and in the dynamic external environment. However, there has been explicit recognition of the enduring nature of our core values, and the importance of using them as a compass or north star, to help public servants navigate the increasingly complex domestic and global context.

The essence of this core truth and foundational principle was captured by the Honourable Senator Ian Shugart, former Clerk of the Privy Council, in his clear reminder that as public servants, we are stewards of the public trust. The Senator acknowledged our responsibilities for integrity in stewardship of public resources, and he reinforced the responsibility that public servants carry: to safeguard and strengthen public trust and confidence in the public service and our democratic institutions.

It is recommended that:

- broad-based work be done to reinvigorate training and dialogue on values and ethics for employees throughout their public service careers. Both the Canada School of Public Service and departments and agencies should contribute to this work.



Respect for people has grown in importance as a value and driver of change

Respect for people was one of the four core values identified in the Tait report, and it has grown in importance for the public service. The central focus on respect for people also highlights the importance of accountability. Employees expect and deserve consistent standards and a governance structure to ensure that our commitment to people values is meaningful, inclusive and empathetic, and that it drives action and culture change.

There is a clear expectation that our workplaces should be physically and psychologically safe, healthy environments where hate, racism, discrimination and harassment of any kind are not tolerated, and where public servants are free to work in the official language of their choice. However, while progress has been made, the reality is that we are not there yet.

Respect for people must embody commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion. The profoundly important Call to Action, launched by Ian Shugart on January 22, 2021, and reinforced by Janice Charette in spring 2023, stands as an essential complement to, and support for, the respect for people value, and should be highlighted in the

context of ongoing values and ethics discussions and any dialogue on the future of the public service. Like the Values and Ethics Code, this recommitment to the Call to Action will help it endure.

It must also reflect the commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. Through the commitments made in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and by recognizing the continued legacy and ongoing impacts of our colonial history and systemic racism, it is essential to redouble efforts to support reconciliation and Indigenous employees at all levels. The wisdom of elders can help infuse and inform our dialogue on values and ethics through talking circles and storytelling.

Respect for people must also embody a commitment to a systemic approach for identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to accessibility as outlined in the *Accessible Canada Act*.

Equally important is the implementation of recommendations from the Emerging from the Purge Report, to support 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

It is recommended that:

- the Public Service follow through on the important commitments related to the core value of respect for people. This includes advancing the Clerk's Call to Action to address racism and increase diversity and inclusion, respecting the *Accessible Canada Act*, honouring commitments to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, implementing recommendations from the Emerging from the Purge Report and supporting official languages.
- senior leaders continue the engagement with equity-deserving communities and networks across government on values and ethics.
- managers at all levels are supported to ensure that they uphold the respect for people values and commitments on equity, diversity and inclusion.



Values and accountability

The Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector sets out accountabilities for public servants. The Code itself is a condition of employment for public servants, and there are sanctions for not upholding the Code. Even in this area, uneven application of discipline associated with lapses in the Code hurts confidence in the values of the public service.

Addressing those gaps through education and training, and by demonstrable acts of leadership is critical to ensuring that there is not a double standard on expectations and consequences for senior leaders and others, which is important for the credibility of the Code. There was considerable discussion on important aspects of accountability and roles pertaining to the respect for democracy value. The discussion included the impact of ministerial accountability, a key underpinning of our Parliamentary democracy and something discussed substantively in the Tait report and subsequent reviews.⁴ *Open and Accountable Government (2015)* is the document that sets out principles and expectations for ministers and their staff, other parliamentarians and Governor

in Council appointees. It sets out the distinct but complementary roles of public servants and exempt staff in supporting ministers in the performance of their departmental duties.

In the 25 years since the Tait report, the increase in the number of agents of Parliament, and expectations of parliamentary accountability for public servants, rather than ministers, have had profound impacts on the public service remit. In addition, while the focus on increased transparency and openness in government has been positive, the emergence of social media has created an unregulated arena for discourse that challenges traditional structures and processes for accountability, including for public servants.

These tectonic shifts in the environment and context for the public service are further amplified by changes in the relationship between ministers and their offices given the significant growth in political staff across the system. Lines can often be blurred, with challenges on accountability, with space occupied by political staff.

It is recommended that:

- deputy ministers ensure that obligations under the Values and Ethics Code, and departmental codes of conduct, are clear and are upheld with consequences for violations regardless of level or position. This includes well-communicated and supported recourse mechanisms.
- central agencies, in particular the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer and the Privy Council Office, should update related policies and guidance supporting the Values and Ethics Code and ensure broad awareness of them, as well as awareness of related recourse mechanisms.
- deputy ministers should support internal communication on and use of *Open and Accountable Government (2015)* as a complementary document and touchstone to the Values and Ethics Code, including with their ministers and staff.
- senior leaders should lead by example in supporting effective processes to develop and deliver evidence-based, professional and impartial advice and decision-making in day-to-day actions, including for science- and security-related areas.

4 Time for a Reboot: Nine Ways to Restore Trust in Canada's Public Institutions (https://ppforum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/PPF_TimeForAReboot_ENG_v6.pdf), Public Policy Forum, 2015

1

2

3

4

5

Individual action and collective responsibility

An important area of change over time, reflecting a broader societal and generational evolution and the impact of digital technology in our lives, is the rise of individualization and technology-enabled individual expression.

In a more open and connected society, this evolution enables increased personal agency and autonomy and facilitates rapid communication and networking. It can also lead to dynamic tensions as individual expectations intersect with the collective responsibilities and structure of the public service. The Code outlines what we stand for as an organization and as such, is intended to support and guide our actions within the unique public service organizational context. Fundamentally, public service is a team sport, and citizens are best served when advice is informed by collective professional advice.

Two specific dimensions of this deserve further comment and consideration. The first is the critical importance of creating increased awareness and understanding of how to apply our Values and Ethics Code. This has historically manifested in terms of obligations for non-partisanship, including during election periods. Indeed, the public service plays an exceptionally important role during these periods in sustaining government operations and services and supporting peaceful and effective transitions of power when the government changes.

The rise of social media and the ubiquity of personal technology has brought down walls between our professional and personal lives, which further converged during the pandemic as we worked

from home. It has also raised questions and issues about what we say on social media through personal accounts that can impact our values of respect for democracy and for people, and the expectation of non-partisanship that extends beyond the physical and temporal workplace.

The second dimension related to individual action and collective responsibility is how individual initiative, innovation and creativity can be encouraged and supported as part of the essential renewal of the public service. This energizes the public service as a nimble, agile and digital organization that is attractive to current and future generations of public servants who want to contribute and make an impact through their work.

While generations of public servants have joined the institution and have had careers driven by the motivation and pride in public service, the discussions have shown an increased expectation of younger and future public servants to have more agency and direct impact through their actions. While important to encourage and support, it is also essential to ensure awareness and dialogue on collective expectations and responsibilities, underpinned by our values and ethics.

More fundamentally, further reflection and dialogue is needed, including external to the public service, on the generational shift to more individual expressions of views and expectations, and how to reconcile and integrate these into the collective provision of advice and collaborative work central to public service delivery of policies, programs and services.

It is recommended that:

- central agencies update guidance for social media use as required, and that deputy ministers ensure that it is communicated to and discussed with employees to provide clear expectations.
- deputy ministers encourage and support innovation, collaboration and agility in all areas of public service work, including service delivery, to ensure excellence.
- deputy ministers, with support from central agencies, provide employees with the tools and training to enable their work, and guidance on emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, such that public service delivery is aligned with and enabled by our values and serves the public interest.
- senior leaders use the dialogue on values and ethics to engage employees, including those who joined recently, on the future of the public service and encourage individuals to recognize their contributions and impact through teamwork in service to Canadians and their democratically elected governments.

Conclusion

Public servants take pride in their work serving Canadians and have demonstrated excellence in rising to challenges at times of crisis and national need to support people at home and abroad.

Throughout the discussions this fall, we have been inspired and encouraged by the honesty and passion that we have heard from public servants. We heard unanimous support for ongoing engagement on this important topic, and we conclude in reaffirming our belief that ongoing dialogue on values and ethics, as John Tait recommended over 25 years ago, is essential.

Annex A: From Tait to Today

Year	Milestone
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of the Deputy Ministers' Task Force on Public Service Values and Ethics
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The First Public Service Employee Survey • Creation of the Office of Public Service Values and Ethics
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Results for Canadians: A Management Framework for the Government of Canada</i> • Auditor General's Report on Values and Ethics in the Public Sector
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Workplace • Internal Disclosure of Information Concerning Wrongdoing in the Workplace
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Guide for Ministers and Secretaries of State</i>
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Guidance for Deputy Ministers</i> • Management Accountability Framework • <i>Public Service Modernization Act</i> • Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auditor General's Report on Accountability and Ethics in Government • Creation of the Office of the Ethics Commissioner for the House of Commons and of the Senate Ethics Officer • Report of the Working Group on the Disclosure of Wrongdoing
2004–06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The (Gomery) Commission of Inquiry into the Sponsorship Program and Advertising Activities
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act</i> (Bill C-11) • Proposed Charter of Public Service Values and Code of Conduct
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime Minister Harper's Letter to Ministers on Accountable Government • <i>Federal Accountability Act</i>, including the creation of the Parliamentary Budget Officer function • <i>Conflict of Interest Act</i>
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act</i>
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Accountable Government: A Guide for Ministers and Ministers of State</i> • <i>Lobbying Act</i>
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Open and Accountable Government</i> • Ministers' mandate letters made public
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directive on Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion • Directive on Duty to Accommodate • Directive on Telework (amended in 2023)
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy on People Management
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Report of the Public Inquiry into the 2022 Public Order Emergency

