SPECIAL EDITION

COMMUNICATIONS Express

October 1988

Communications Canada

Canada

Intense planning

Department Mission focuses on common goals

by David Waisglass

After almost a year of intense work, all sectors of the Department have produced a common view of the Department of Communications' future in the form of a corporate Mission Statement and a set of Operating Principles. The need for the Mission exercise was identified as a priority at the 1987 annual strategic planning session with the Minister. In response to a request by the Deputy Minister, ADMs met last fall to discuss the project and determine the process.

Working groups consisting of 10 employees from each sector were then formed to develop the possible elements of the Mission. From that point, a Corporate Working Group, made up of two members from each of the sectors, further refined the results and prepared a report for review by the DM and the ADMs, who added a strategic overview to the bottom-up contribution from the staff groups.

Sector and regional briefing sessions were held over the last few months to review and discuss the Mission Statement and proposed Operating Principles with as many Department employees as possible.

The themes of the Mission were reflected in the elements of a Departmental Work Plan which was discussed at the Annual Strategic Planning Session in August. An action plan for implementation of the Operating Principles is under development by senior management and will include a review process to track progress on translating the words of the text into action.

Looking toward the future: Gourd

by Amy Heron

Deputy Minister Alain Gourd looked to the future of the Department of Communications as he launched the sector Mission sessions May 25 in Cornwall.

"We will be facing continuing challenges to manage this Department in coming years after the election. That is why it is quite timely to reflect on our essence, our objectives and on our Mission."

Gourd was speaking to about 60 Corporate Management Sector employees gathered for a two-day planning session which included a discussion of the Mission Statement and Operating Principles.

This sector briefing session was the first of about 20 held across the Department to inform a cross-section of employees and get their feedback on the Mission exercise.

These sessions were the culmination of nearly a year's work on the Mission Statement and Operating Principles by the DM, ADMs, managers and non-management staff from across the Department.

In his opening remarks at the Cornwall session, Gourd commented on the need for our young Department to examine its roles and responsibilities. "This interrogation is at the root of the current priorities of this Department. We are the Department that takes care of the 'railways' of this century which define our country and unite the various regions.

"The Mission Statement is not a sacred cow. It is, at best, an attempt to determine why we have telecommunications and culture — why we are involved in spectrum management as well as in ballet."

Free trade negotiations, the Meech Lake accord and the increasingly international nature of communications are rapidly changing the environment in which the Department works.

But perhaps the most far-reaching effect has come because of the "convergence" of technologies and content over the past decade, Gourd pointed out. The distinction between the various areas of the communications and culture mandate is becoming increasingly blurred.

Recently, Telesat Canada and the National Arts Centre (NAC) reached an agreement on electronic touring for the arts. NAC productions would be taped to be shown across Canada instead of the performers actually touring, said Gourd. "We could not imagine 10 years ago that Telesat and the National Arts Centre would have sat together with a common objective. Previously they never spoke to one another because their paths never crossed.

"That convergence gives us, I believe, a golden opportunity to more strongly pursue our Mission of nation-building through cultural identity and through electronic highways of the twenty-first century." The Department will have to develop forward-looking policies and programs to respond to continuing changes in the industry, Gourd said.

The Operating Principles, the statement of values which accompanies the Mission, may be traditional, said Gourd, but they are important because they reflect the goals of the Public Service.

"The Mission is an attempt to determine why we are involved in spectrum management as well as in ballet."

"We are not the private sector. We don't have the same kind of objectives. We don't have to provide dividends to the shareholders. We are the Public Service and our first goal is to serve the public and in doing so we have to care about individuals.

"I am still surprised at how little time and effort we spend on human resources management. We are always busy, the Minister needs to see us or we have something to do. I don't have the answers, but certainly that should be an Operating Principle that is pursued with greater emphasis."

It was decided that as many employees as possible would have input into the Mission exercise, Gourd said. The Mission Statement would not just be something developed by senior management and handed down to the employees, but rather it would start with a contribution from the bottom up. "The process is almost more important than the words. The fact that we are testing with you the results of this exercise is, to a

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Employees from the Corporate Management Sector discuss the Mission Statement and proposed Operating Principles at the Sector Briefing Session held in Cornwall this May. From left to right are Sylvie Sanctuaire (DSC), Nancy Gauthier (DGFM), James Tang (DGIM), Ginette Bouchard (ADMCM). Seated, left to right, Yves Lavallée (DGHR), Colin Taylor (DSCS).

Deputy Minister Alain Gourd explains the importance of the Mission Statement and Operating Principles to the continued growth and success of the Department.

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Nation-building/Bâtir le pays

Committee finds common ground for Mission

Preparing a Mission Statement to communicate long-term Department goals was a difficult challenge for the Corporate Working Group, a 12-person committee representing managers and employees from all sectors.

Diversity was easier to find. The participants came from different levels, sectors, backgrounds and experience. But members of the group say they were determined to clearly convey the common goals and values that link all employees in the Department.

"We had to create a framework in which all that jumble of experience could make sense in a corporate way," says Allan Collier, a regulatory policy analyst and corporate group member.

The initial stage of the session was spent in what Collier labels a "definitional exercise."

"It was important we were clear that everyone understood the definitions and what other people meant. We were breaking down some of the misconceptions and preconceptions that people had about other areas than their own."

The Corporate Working Group members were chosen from the five Sector Working Groups which met in early to mid-November to discuss the Mission from a sector point of view. Briefing papers produced from these day-long sessions were used as the basis for the discussions of the Corporate Working Group on November 23-24.

"What we were given to start with was a series of statements which could have applied to any Government Department," says Anne Séguin, Executive Assistant to Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Ken Hepburn. "We wanted something which said it belonged to us."

The discussions led to a clearer understanding of who does what within the Department of Communications, says Craig Taylor, Director of Special Projects (DGTA). "Clarifying the roles we all played helped to pinpoint exactly what we do."

It was "long and involved" but a "lively" process, group members say. The sessions were led by a professional facilitator, Jacques Noël, who focussed discussions on points raised in sector sessions. Reactions and comments by the group were then recorded on flip charts.

The Department mandate of both communications and culture covers the broad spectrum of regulation, technology, policy and content.

Peter Homulos, Director of the Canadian Heritage Information Network, says one common trait he noticed when he first came to the Department was "the commitment to the work demonstrated from all sectors. It's more than just a bureaucracy."

But because each area is specialized and the links between them aren't well recognized, internal and external perceptions of the Department's role and function are unclear.

What the Working Group discovered through its discussions is that there is "a basic desire to make the two sides (telecommunications and culture) work together, instead of in our own little worlds," says Séguin.

"We came to a consensus, a generally appreciated view of what we did," says Taylor. "But we also recognized the disparity within it."

With the sector briefing meetings, the message was reviewed with employees at all levels. Homulos says this is the true test of the whole process.

"The core of the employees have to buy in and understand the purpose of all this. We need to create a kind of discussion about it."

The group members agree the consultation approach to the process is very positive. But now is the critical stage.

"So far, so good," says Daryl Leitch, a financial analyst. "But it all depends on the delivery. We have to see this through to the end, if we are really serious about making it work."

The discussion sessions and the words they produced should be seen as a starting point, says Collier. "Success will not come from words, but from the commitment to the words that is evidenced."

Craig Taylor: The clarification of roles.

Daryl Leitch: It all depends on the delivery.

Peter Homulos: It's more than just a bureaucracy.

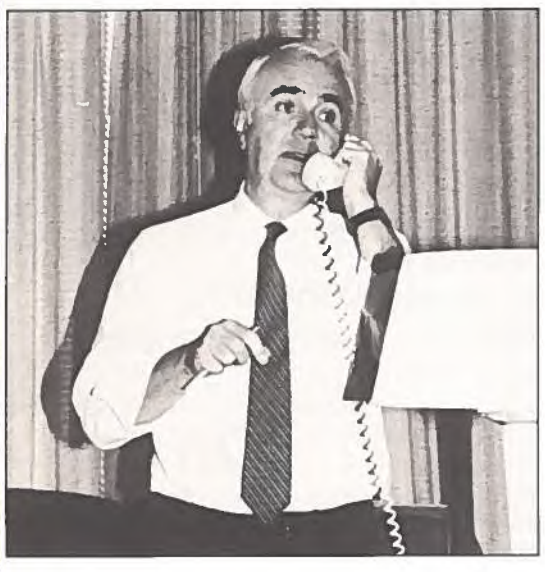
In perspective

Ken Hepburn talks about past and future

by Amy Heron

Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Ken Hepburn is one of the Department's original employees. He has seen tremendous change in the Department of Communications since its conception — from its telecommunications roots to today's multi-dimensional role, which includes broadcasting, arts and heritage, cultural initiatives and museums.

Communications Express asked Ken Hepburn to share his personal views of past developments, current policy initiatives, and the future of the Department.



Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Ken Hepburn: "It's a real winner for the next 20 years."

EXPRESS: You have witnessed many changes in the Department. Could you tell me about its evolution?

HEPBURN: When it was formed back in 1969, the Department was made up of two basic pieces: one from the Department of Transport which dealt largely with spectrum management and telecommunications policy, and the other from the Defence Research Board. The latter is now the core of our research and development activities.

Over the space of 20 years, the Department has grown and matured. It's taken on additional functions, the most notable, of course, being the arts and culture mandate added in the early '80s. The world of communication as we knew it in 1969 was really quite different from what you have in 1988. The industry has changed — there's more competition. The whole attitude towards user choice in telecommunications is different. The one thing we really see is the convergence of technologies.

The re-examination of what we're all about, what we do and why we're doing it really focuses attention on the wisdom of putting the arts and culture activities in the Department of Communications and whether they co-exist with our telecommunications responsibilities.

So after 20 years I think it's very timely to sit back and say 'Whoa, wait a minute here, what are we all about?' I think we will come out of this exercise much stronger in our perceptions and our realization of how strong this Department really is — how great a role we can play in shaping how Canadians communicate and how they see themselves.

EXPRESS: The history of this Department is much longer than 20 years, isn't it?

HEPBURN: The individual components that joined together to form the Department have a long and proud heritage. And we mustn't forget that. We don't communicate our history well enough to newcomers. Although we are a relatively new Department, we must realize that we do have roots and a heritage that should give us a sense of stability and a set of values. One of the things the Mission Statement exercise does is allow us to reflect back on our history and then project forward.

When you look at the strengths of the Department, with the combination of the technology and public policy, and the regulatory and creative side of it — boy, it's a real winner for the next 20 years!

EXPRESS: You are responsible for corporate policy and strategic planning for the Department. How will the Mission exercise affect future plans?

HEPBURN: It's fundamental to them. Every now and again you've got to do that basic re-assessment. Now that we have done that, it will affect very directly how we structure our work plans and our priorities over the next four or five

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large extent, as important as the final product."

Participants at the sector Mission sessions held panel and smaller group discussions, working on the individual concepts in the Mission Statement and the relevance of the Operating Principles to the day-to-day functions of the Department.

There will not be a dramatic change in the Department overnight, said Gourd. "Like every big ship, it takes some time to turn it around. It's gradual. We need good internal communications to make it work."

Gourd said this type of planning is not unique to our Department. He estimated six or seven other departments in the Federal Public Service have implemented a similar re-assessment of their mission and others are considering such action.

The public sector can learn from the private sector, Gourd said. "If we take a look at what makes companies like Bell Canada or IBM so successful, we discover to a large extent it is corporate culture. That's why they have fewer guidelines, procedures and manuals, because they know what to do."

Interest in mission planning across the Public Service has sparked three deputy minister-level committees. The Governing Values Committee, chaired by Gaétan Lussier, former Deputy Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada, has examined the possibility of creating a set of operating principles for the entire Public Service. The roles and responsibilities of Public Service managers have been examined by a committee chaired by Ramsey Withers, the former Deputy Minister of Transport Canada.

Gourd, who chairs a Deputy Ministers' internal communications committee, says the Department of Communications must take a leading role in communicating our values, roles and responsibilities to employees.

COMMUNICATIONS Express

Communications Canada — Canada

***Communications Express* is published for the employees of the Department of Communications by Information Services.**

Telephone: (613) 990-4841

ISSN: 0833-5400

OUR MISSION/NOTRE MISSION

Nation-building/Bâtir le pays

Helping Canadians share their ideas, information and dreams.

C'est aussi aider les Canadiens à partager leurs idées, leurs informations et leurs rêves.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

Service as our highest goal
Caring about individuals
Good management
Effective communications
Recognition of achievement
Teamwork and shared values

Our focus is two-fold; *one*, the communications systems that link us by carrying our information and values and, *two*, the availability of Canadian cultural products and information services. Together, they constitute the central nervous system of our society. They bring Canadians together for work, learning, entertainment and service to the public. They enable us as individuals to express our collective reality as a nation. They make possible the contact among people which nourishes and magnifies the creativity and innovation essential to Canada's social, cultural and economic integrity.

Today's rapid technological change multiplies the power and reach of communications and information systems leading to a growing interdependence between carriage and content, between media and culture and in the relationship between communications and the economy as a whole.

Our task has two dimensions: to ensure that our communications systems evolve in an orderly fashion at the forefront of global developments while continuing to meet the needs of all Canadians at affordable cost; and, to ensure that Canadians have the freedom to choose a wide selection of Canadian cultural products and information services among the broad international choice being carried through our communications systems. Our central challenge is to balance the historic tensions between these two imperatives in support of the overall Canadian interest while continuing to nurture the creative process in Canadian society.

Operating Principles require employee participation

Representatives of all sectors in the Department met over the last few months in "briefing sessions" to discuss the Department of Communications' suggested Operating Principles, and determine how they should be implemented. These statements stress the value of people — clients, managers and employees.

"It's important to know whether the principles mean anything to anyone and are an accurate reflection of the working values the Department should hold," says Michael Binder, Assistant Deputy Minister of Corporate Management. "These (the Mission Statement and Operating Principles) are just a bunch of words unless they represent a belief about what we do and why we do it.

"What we are trying to do is explain what we mean by our operating philosophy in language that can be understood by all our employees."

The Mission exercise is an opportunity for employees to discuss two fundamental topics, Binder points out. "The first is the nature of our business. It is important for any organization to review its mandate and get a consensus among employees about the relevance of the things we do. It is healthy to do this periodically to ensure we are not stale.

"The second topic is the nature of our organizational culture. That is, we must assess how we manage the Department, how we treat, motivate, communicate with and reward our staff. It is crucial we engage in such discussions with our employees, because senior management tends to become insulated from daily operational issues. The concerns of all ranks should be heard and acted upon."

Binder hopes the proposed Operating Principles will show all employees, no matter what job they do, that they are actively making a contribution to meeting the goals of the Department.

For our employees, Binder says the discussion process of the Operating Principles should promote self-assessment. "A manager should go back to his or her sector and say, 'Do I really manage this shop as if I believe service to the public is important? Do I care that I close at 3:30 and some managers want service at five? Should I worry about that?'"

As well as pushing for a re-examination of the Department's operating rationale, Binder hopes the principles will help to deregulate the system and simplify accountability.

"Right now a person has to fill out mountains of documents and go through many approval levels to justify doing something. However, once the project is approved, no one really assesses whether it was worthwhile or not."

To address this problem a new initiative called Increased Ministerial Authority and Accountability (IMAA) is being pursued by the Department of Communications. The IMAA process should allow senior management to delegate more authority to managers and clarify accountability.

Binder says IMAA, along with the Mission Statement and Operating Principles, could help simplify life in the bureaucracy. "We're trying to think of ways to give the manager more control and authority and say to them, 'we trust you.'"

The "briefing sessions" and our survey of employees are the first of many steps to improve internal communications, says Binder. "Receiving feedback from employees and clients is vital to the operation of this Department."

"If there are some fundamental issues uncovered, we have to act on them. The worst thing to do is not act."

Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Management, Michael Binder.

Binder encourages an honest and frank discussion about the Mission Statement and Operating Principles. "I hope we can be open and not hesitant about raising any issue or question about our Department. Issues should be raised if we are to improve our daily working environment.

"We are committed to move on all fronts. It cannot be a one-person show. The Deputy Minister, the Assistant Deputy Ministers or even the Directors General cannot do this by themselves. It has got to be a lot of people at all levels who have accepted this philosophy and in their own local working environment are doing everything they can to implement it."

We're trying to convey the big picture.

Employees' comments result in changes to Mission

by E. D. Rainboth

The text of the Mission Statement and the suggested Operating Principles was discussed with over 1,800 employees representing about 75 per cent of the Department's total staff between May and September. This consultation process resulted in a number of very useful suggestions which have now been considered by the Senior Management Committee.

The proposed Mission slogan which was "Nation-building through communications and culture" has been refined to add more precision about the "why" of this central theme. In general, employees responded very positively to the sense of vision and the integration of the communications and culture dimensions embodied in the Mission. However, while it was accepted that "nation-building" is an appropriate goal for all federal government departments, there was an expressed need to define how that concept related specifically to the Department of Communications. Based on a variety of suggestions made by participants, the revised Mission slogan is:

Nation-building/Bâtir le pays:
Helping Canadians share their ideas, information and dreams
C'est aussi aider les Canadiens à partager leurs idées, leurs informations et leurs rêves.

The new elements in this wording are the emphasis on "sharing" and "ideas, information and dreams."

Through *sharing*, the Department fulfills its primary responsibilities of ensuring that Canadian communications services and cultural products are available from

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Mission key to better communications

Robert Gordon, Assistant Deputy Minister for Spectrum Management and Regional Operations, says the development of the Mission Statement and the Operating Principles will foster a strong sense of communication among all parts of the Department.

"This process will be helpful in limiting the natural separation we have between regions and headquarters because of distance. It should help all employees to work together as a whole to serve the Canadian public."

The Mission Statement articulates the Department's role in bringing Canadians together. The Operating Principles outline corporate values to achieve the Mission.

Gordon says the Mission Statement should help employees make day-to-day decisions. "After all, if we all understand our objectives well and understand our credo, then a person anywhere in the organization should make a good decision, maybe one which the DM or I would make, given the same set of facts."

However, Gordon warns, "one shouldn't have inflated expectations that the Mission is the revelation of the total truth of everything in life. The words used are not a reflection of everybody's task. It's an attempt to explain to ourselves and the outside world what we think we're about."

Another benefit of the Mission Statement, Gordon explains, is that it will help all employees understand how they fit into the wider scope of the Department's activities and allow them to better articulate its functions.

Putting the Operating Principles into perspective, Gordon says that they provide the basis for constructive dialogue between individuals in the Department. Armed with these principles, people have a commonly agreed set of values on which to base their decision making. Any group in society needs shared values to perform effectively. Shared values are essential to enable us to function well both as an organization and as individuals within that organization.

"The emphasis on service to Canadians should help headquarters' employees appreciate the challenge the regions face each day explaining policy and regulations to the public. When a policy is written we've got to recognize that someone has to explain it.

"At the same time, regional input should continue to be solicited. There are a lot of experienced, knowledgeable people out there who've been in the game a long time. A manager thinking about a policy wants to exploit that."

The Department has an advantage in this regard, Gordon says, because it has always tried to include the regions in policy discussions and respect their opinions.

Assistant Deputy Minister, Spectrum Management and Regional Operations, Robert Gordon.

"There's a fair amount of sensitivity to regional perceptions and perspectives," says Gordon. "If you've got mutual respect, you're going to communicate well. And if you communicate well, you're going to formulate good policy not overly focussed on Ottawa. The Mission exercise can only improve this.

"All in all, I'm very positive about the Mission Statement and Operating Principles and from my discussions with staff, I believe it has been a very fruitful process. The challenge now is to convey that mission to the public and to better implement the Operating Principles within the organization."

Hepburn

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years. It will give us the signposts along the road. The top priorities, of course, are those set for us by the Minister.

The Mission, and its influence on the options we develop for our programs, gives us a very solid sense of direction. This way we can look ahead and see some of the issues which will affect us and for which we will probably have to develop public policy positions.

EXPRESS: Could you give me a specific example of that type of planning?

HEPBURN: Let's look at our telecommunications and broadcasting policy. People see telecommunications policy affecting telecommunications carriers and the users of those services and broadcasting policy affecting people who want to watch television. But what's the link between watching television and making a phone call? I think the work we have done shows it is very difficult to think about these things in isolation.

"Once they realized how important some of the linkages are, they became advocates of the Mission. Once you have that, then you've got real strength."

In the future, you might have a database that's made up of recipes. So when you want to do something flambé one night, you can call an appropriate number and see the video on your television. This information is very similar to what you get today on some TV programs. If you come at it from one end it's just an information service; but if you come at it from another, it starts to resemble broadcasting.

When we develop our telecom policy, we must consider the effects on broadcasting because of this kind of melding. When we are doing our broadcasting policy, we have to decide what the implications are for new information services. I think the Mission exercise has led people to talk about these things. We don't live in isolation. We all deal with different parts of an elephant. I think people, in the past, have held on to one part of the elephant and said, "That's my world." Now we are collectively starting to see the whole elephant.

EXPRESS: What role did the ADMs play in developing the Mission process? And why was that process chosen?

HEPBURN: Well, we certainly got the ball rolling. But I think it was a very conscious decision by everyone that it would be a bottom-up process. It's a question of encouraging people to think about the issues. We formed teams of people from each sector. Two people from each of those teams started to knit things together. And the feedback I got from this process was very, very encouraging. The people going in really hadn't thought about our Mission much or were a bit skeptical. But after, once they realized how important some of the linkages are, they became advocates of it. Once you have that, then you've got real strength.

EXPRESS: I guess the next step of the process was the sector briefing sessions. What was the function of these sessions and what do you think came of them?

HEPBURN: Well certainly, the initial objective was to communicate the results of the exercise so that the broadest cross-section of the Department understands it fully. The exercise allowed them to go through the same metamorphosis as those who took part directly in its preparation.

"I hope that the kind of informal communications that have been animated by the exercise will carry on."

In respect to the suggested Operating Principles, it is important for us to validate the conclusions that have been drawn, to see if they are really shared by others in the Department, and then for us to start implementing them. Those would be the immediate goals. I don't think we would have a mission exercise every year, but I would hope that the kind of informal communications that have been animated by the exercise will carry on; that they'll be an integral part of our sociology.

Maybe there's a certain amount of management structuring we can do to facilitate that type of thing — two months after the major summer planning session, a group of people should get together to talk about what's on their work plan now. Management can make sure the momentum we've developed now is not lost. It's easy to lose sometimes, when you're working under a lot of pressure. It's hard to find the time. So maybe we can try to make sure we don't lose steam.

EXPRESS: How did the Mission exercise affect the annual summer strategic planning session?

HEPBURN: Well, I think the timing was certainly right, because in the summer recess, we look at what challenges lie ahead for the next period. What are the things we have going today that must be completed? How much of our human, financial and other resources is that going to absorb? What are our new challenges? It gives us a chance each year to take an organized look at what's happening in the environment in a very broad sense. We may not have to deal with a policy issue for two years, but it's good to do the basic spade work now. The planning session has a near-term and a long-term aspect, and it also gives us a chance to sit with our Minister and discuss our view of the future.

EXPRESS: Thank you very much for sharing your insights with us.

HEPBURN: You're most welcome.

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suppliers and accessible to all Canadians. This wording recognizes that while it is essential to accelerate the production of Canadian information and cultural products and services, it is equally important to ensure that they are available to all Canadians who wish to have access to them.

The content conveyed through our communications system and our cultural activities consists of Canadians' *ideas, information and dreams*. This content may be (among many other things) a telephone call to close a business deal, a television program bringing new life to a Canadian novel, a dance performance by a touring company, a museum exhibition on Inuit art, a new record by Bryan Adams or progress towards an improved photosensitive optical communications fibre resulting from collaborative research between CRC and the private sector. They are all means of expression of central importance to the Department of Communications. We are in the business of ensuring that other Canadians can enrich their lives economically, socially and culturally through the exchange of information.

In addition, a number of minor but important amendments were made to the Mission text to reflect views voiced by employees such as recognizing the contribution of research and standards and the need to more adequately identify archives and galleries as elements of the heritage area.

There was strong agreement with the Operating Principles as an expression of organizational values which the Department should strive to reflect in its day-to-day activities and its ongoing management practices. In response to suggestions made by participants at the Mission sessions one new Principle was added: "Teamwork and Shared Values". This addition is aimed at developing a spirit of partnership across the Department with more emphasis on common goals. As well, the Operating Principle dealing with "Celebration of Excellence" was retitled "Recognition of Achievement" in order to include group achievement and recognize continuing good performance over extended periods by employees. Moreover, minor changes were made to the sub-text to improve clarity and fine-tune some of the explanatory points for several of the Operating Principles.

Copies of the full text incorporating the final revisions are being distributed to all staff of the Department. While it is recognized that some employees were unable to participate in the earlier Mission discussion, it is hoped that over the next few months all Department personnel who are interested will have an opportunity to attend a briefing session on the Mission.