

Clerk of the Privy Council and
Secretary to the Cabinet



Greffier du Conseil privé et
Secrétaire du Cabinet

Ottawa, Canada
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July 13, 2000

**LETTER FROM THE CLERK OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL,
HEAD OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE, AND SECRETARY TO CABINET**

Each day the Public Service of Canada contributes to keeping Canada the number one country in the world in which to live. I want to make sure that the United Nations report gives Canada this title, year after year, and that the Public Service is doing its part to achieve this result. In an age where globalization, technical innovation and demographic change are providing exciting opportunities for more creative ways to serve Canadians, this means having the right people with the right skills doing the right things.

Last year, I created three Deputy Minister committees to address the people-oriented priorities of recruitment, workplace well-being (retention), and learning and development in the Public Service. These committees were asked to take stock of what is being done now and to look ahead at what we could do to make the Public Service an even better place to work for those who serve today and those who will serve in the future.

The attached report covers learning and development in the Public Service. Many of the ideas in this report — from individual learning plans to creating platforms for sharing knowledge and ideas; from job shadowing to scanning for best practices — can be implemented right now. If these ideas make sense in your situation, you should just go ahead and take action in your area of responsibility. Other recommendations will require further consideration as they may involve changes to corporate practices and/or more resources directed to these priorities.

To build upon the work of the committees, I recently invited all Deputy Ministers to write to me about the progress in their departments in the areas of recruitment, workplace well-being, and learning and development. In response to this call letter, they provided me with an impressive list of initiatives that are already under way and they told me what is not working and what needs to be improved.

The committees' work and the responses from Deputy Ministers show that there are clear links between recruitment, workplace well-being, and learning and development. Accordingly, I will work with my colleagues to develop an integrated action plan that will set out the corporate priorities that we will focus on together to get results.

The input of managers and employees to this ongoing work will be important. I would encourage you to access my Web site < www.pco-bcp.gc.ca > to read the other two reports and to contact any one of the committee members to share your ideas and suggestions. This action plan will be as much yours as it will be mine. My Deputy Minister colleagues and I are committed to achieving positive results. In turn, we look to managers and employees for their full commitment and action.

Yours sincerely,

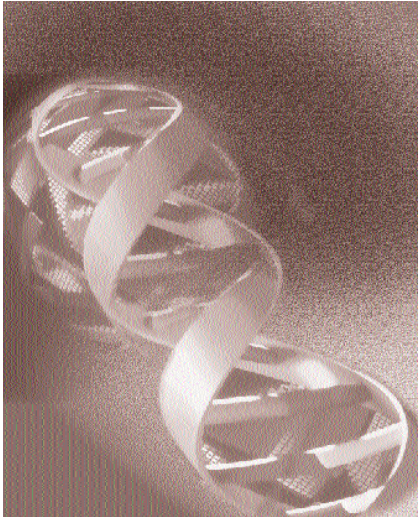


Mel Cappe



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada



A public service
learning organization:
from coast to coast
to coast

Directions for the Future

June 2000

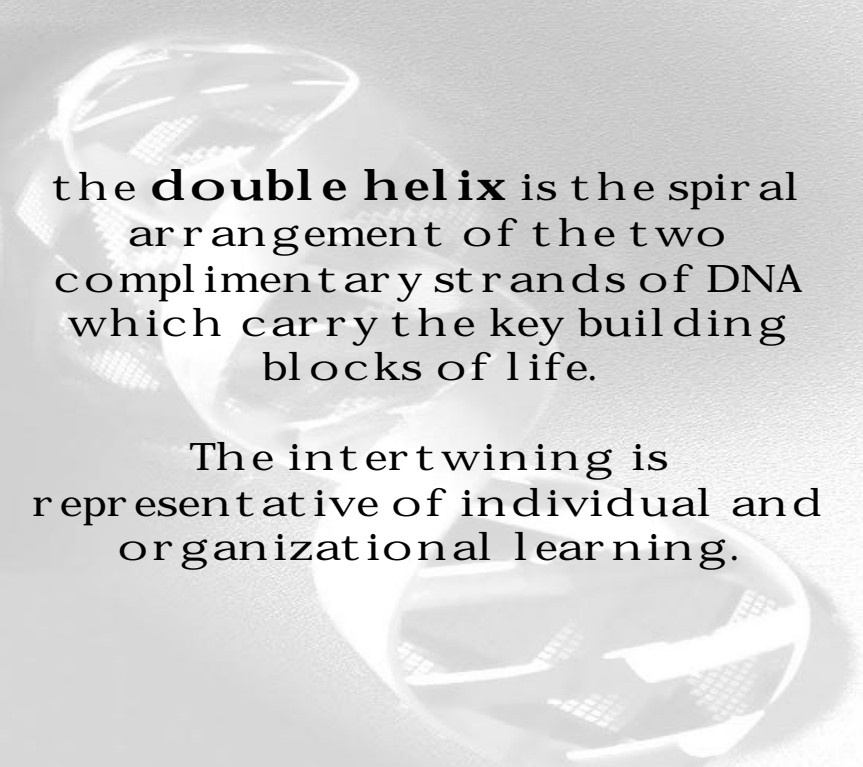
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the **double helix** is the spiral arrangement of the two complimentary strands of DNA which carry the key building blocks of life.

The intertwining is representative of individual and organizational learning.

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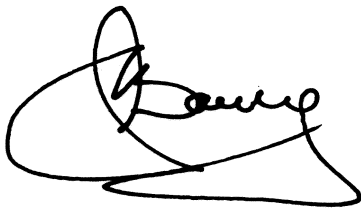
A Message from the Chair, Learning and Development Committee

In the October 1999 Speech from the Throne, the Government acknowledged that the Public Service will have a key role in helping Canada stay at the leading edge of the knowledge revolution. In the Seventh Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada, the Clerk of the Privy Council recognized that learning would be key to preparing the Public Service to serve Canada and Canadians in the knowledge age. The Learning and Development Committee was established and challenged to shape an ambitious learning agenda for the Public Service.

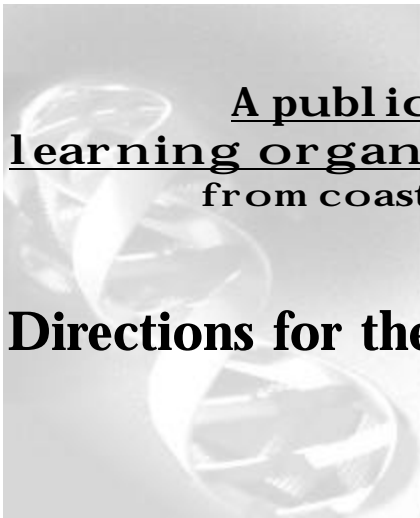
In the spring of 2000, the Learning and Development Committee undertook a consultation process with public servants across Canada to seek their input into the development of a learning agenda. Our journey began in Charlottetown on March 15, 2000 and moved across the country. In a period of three months, we visited eleven sites and met with over one thousand public servants. Each event was unique, building on the results of previous events. Our consultations culminated with youth events in Ottawa and Edmonton on June 16, giving the final voice to those who will be called upon to serve in the years ahead.

In the course of our journey, we went in search of answers to two basic questions: How can we best prepare the Public Service to serve Canadians in the knowledge age? How can we become a model public service learning organization? This report represents the cumulative knowledge of the over one thousand public servants across Canada who participated in our consultation process. It would not have been possible without their dedication and hard work. On behalf of the Learning and Development Committee, I would like to thank all those who took the time to participate and put forward their ideas and suggestions.

This document and the accompanying policy discussion paper are about learning. They are about a collective commitment by leaders and managers at all levels to move the Public Service of Canada toward becoming *a model learning organization, committed to lifelong learning*. They are a call to action. We encourage public servants to read these documents and act on their recommendations. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Together we will make a difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jocelyne Bourgon'. The signature is stylized with large loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Jocelyne Bourgon



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Introduction

On October 12, 1999, in the Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada outlined its priorities for preparing Canada and Canadians for the knowledge age. It announced that by 2004, Canadians will have access to government information and service on-line, at the time and place of their choosing. It indicated that in the knowledge age the advantage goes to those countries that are innovative, able to adapt the latest technological innovations and willing to invest in the learning and development needs of its citizens. It reminded us that the most important investment a country can make is in its people — in their education, training and lifelong learning.

In February, 2000, these themes were reiterated in the federal Budget, which noted that "...successful nations will be those that foster a culture of innovation. They will be those that create new knowledge and bring the product of that knowledge quickly to the market.... Skills and knowledge join the ambitions of the individual with the potential of the country." The Budget provided the financing for Government On-Line. Work is proceeding on a secure communications channel between government and citizens.

The Speech from the Throne and Budget have set an agenda for bringing a higher quality of life to all Canadians in the knowledge age and ensuring that Canada stays at the leading edge of the knowledge revolution. The Government recognizes that the Public Service of Canada will have a key role to play. It has committed to focus on "... the recruitment, retention and continuous learning of a skilled federal workforce".

"Skills and knowledge join the ambitions of the individual with the potential of the country."

Budget speech, Budget 2000

On March 31, in the Seventh Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada, the Clerk of the Privy Council outlined the priorities for the Public Service. On service delivery, he focused on supporting the Government On-Line initiative and e-government. On management issues, he expanded on the priorities of recruitment, retention and learning. He states that learning and development must go hand in hand with recruitment and retention. He invited the Public Service to shape an ambitious learning agenda to ensure that the Public Service of Canada becomes a learning organization committed to lifelong learning.

"To ensure that the Public Service of Canada remains a Strong, representative, professional and non-partisan national institution that provides Canadians the highest quality service into the XXIst century, the government will also focus on the recruitment, retention and continuous learning of a skilled federal workforce."

speech from the throne, Building a higher quality of life for all Canadians

The purpose of this document is to identify specific measures that will move the learning agenda of the Public Service of Canada forward in a cohesive and concrete manner. The initiatives proposed result from a consultation process in the spring of 2000 involving over one thousand public servants in eleven sites across Canada. This consultation process took place under the leadership of the Deputy Minister Committee on Learning and Development, in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Management Development, The Leadership Network, the Public Service Commission, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the federal regional councils in each of the provinces and the interdepartmental committees in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Numerous other departments, agencies and groups, including the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Western Economic Diversification, Veterans Affairs Canada, Natural Resources Canada and the Human Resources Council also contributed time, energy and resources to support this effort.

Mel Cappe, Clerk of the Privy Council, invited the Learning and development committee to

... shape an ambitious learning agenda for the public service of Canada by seeking input from a broad cross-section of public service managers at all levels, in all departments and agencies, all functional communities and all regions.

seventh annual report
to the prime minister

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Consultations 2000

Charlottetown	March 15
Ottawa	March 22
Winnipeg	April 26
Edmonton	April 27
Yellowknife	April 28
Montreal	May 9
Toronto	May 25
Vancouver	May 30
Regina	May 30
Whitehorse	June 1
Ottawa	June 7
Ottawa	June 16
Edmonton	June 16



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The Changing Nature of the Public Service

Through realigning the role of government, and modernizing public sector institutions and functions, the public sector has been transformed in recent years:

- In many ways the Public Service has always been a knowledge-based organization. It is a service organization where most employees collect, analyze and synthesize information. In recent years, *the knowledge-intensity of public service work has increased markedly* and it has been moving up the value-added chain as easier or more predictable tasks have been eliminated, transferred or contracted out.
- There has been a gradual shift in the nature of public service work, from performing clear, well-defined, predictable, largely repetitive tasks to achieving broad results, from a focus on efficiency to a focus on innovation, from vertical structures and top-down communications flows to teams and networks.

- The organization of work is changing from individual responsibility to team responsibility and accountability, from single centres of power to multiple centres of power, from command and control to leadership and a lessening of central controls in exchange for greater local accountability, creativity, innovation and flexibility.
- The policy and service delivery functions are converging. Services provided by the public sector are more intangible, based on knowledge — requiring skills such as strategic advice, rigorous analysis and judicious counsel — skills previously regarded as policy skills.

We are witnessing a progressive shift from the mostly bureaucratic management model of the past to a learning organization management model. Throughout the Public Service, departments and agencies are at different stages along this continuum of change. Different activities and services call for different management models. Departments and agencies do not all start from the same place, but are all seeing an increase in the knowledge intensity of their work.

We are witnessing a progressive shift from the bureaucratic management model of the past to a learning organization management model.

The challenge for the Public Service of Canada is to determine how best to guide that transformation without compromising our core values (our democratic values of respect for the rule of law and support to the government and our professional values of integrity, competence, political neutrality and impartiality).



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What is a Learning Organization And Why Does It Matter?

To better understand the basis of the proposals put forth in this document, it is necessary to understand the concept of a learning organization and why it matters.

At the most basic level, the process of *learning* is the acquisition of new information, knowledge and ideas that changes the way one understands, acts or views the world. It is a continuous process of drawing new lessons from the interpretation and reinterpretation of experience — one's own experience as well as the experience of others. At the individual level, the ideal approach to learning is called *lifelong learning* — an ongoing process of curiosity and commitment to inquiry, discovery and intellectual growth.

At the organizational level, *a learning organization* is a collective undertaking rooted in action:

- A learning organization is characterized by its ability to continually improve performance through new ideas, knowledge and insights. It is able to constantly anticipate, innovate and find new and better ways to fulfill its mission. It is continually changing its behaviour to reflect new ideas and insights.

- It is built around people. People, their knowledge, know-how and ability to innovate, are at the heart of the learning organization.
- It recognizes that learning is a collective undertaking involving the exchange of knowledge and ideas among people working together in teams and networks. Just as the machine in the industrial age expanded our physical capacity, the learning organization relies on teams and networks to expand our intellectual capacity.

Why does it matter that the Public Service become a learning organization?

First, it matters because a learning organization is essential to the ongoing relevance of the Public Service in meeting citizens' needs in the knowledge age.

The knowledge economy, the knowledge society are no longer distant realities — they are already here. Once dependent on the abundance of natural resources, labour and access to capital, the economy is now based on information, knowledge and innovation. The digital revolution and the use of modern information and communications technologies is altering every aspect of our lives. Government On-Line will be a reality by 2004. Work is becoming more knowledge intensive. Whether it be the primary sector, construction, services, transportation or the new sectors of the economy, the future belongs to knowledge workers.

Doing more of the same, even if it is done better, will not be good enough.

This is the context within which the Public Service now serves and will be serving Canadians. Doing more of the same, even if it is done better, will not be good enough. Reacting to change will not be good enough. Those approaches simply lead to crisis management, an ever-increasing workload and declining relevance of the Public Service in the future.

Second, it matters for the Public Service of Canada to remain a professional, non-partisan public service.

It would be a grave mistake to take the Canadian model of a professional, non-partisan public service for granted. Several other countries are now following a different path. Some are going the way of increased *politicization*. In these countries, the public service is not expected to provide policy advice nor lead public sector reforms. The public service is expected to efficiently provide an agreed upon range of services. Other countries are taking the route of *privatization*. In this case, the public service is seen as the arrangement of last resort, far less efficient than the market place. The learning is expected to take place in the private sector, from which the public sector can draw its best practices. In some cases, public sector services are managed under clear contractual terms to ensure the compliance and responsiveness of the public service.

In the Canadian model, political leaders and public servants work in partnership.

The Public Service of Canada has followed a different route. The Canadian model of public sector reform affirms the primacy of a professional, non-partisan public service. In the Canadian model, political leaders and public servants work in partnership. Public servants are expected to be knowledgeable advisors able to help the Government realize its agenda. The Public Service is expected to have the expertise and the know-how to constantly modernize its services and take charge of modernizing its institutions to meet the changing needs of citizens and society. In a model where political leaders and public servants are partners, a public service learning organization is mission critical for ensuring that the Public Service of Canada brings value-added to this partnership.

Peter Aucoin, a prominent public administration scholar, observes that while other public sector reforms have been marked by politicization and privatization, "the Canadian approach assumes that a professional public service constitutes public value because such a service is managed as a learning organization, that is, an organization that continuously learns to provide the quality of policy advice and quality of service delivery demanded by the requirements of governance." Learning is thus an integral part of Canada's system of governance, within which a professional Public Service plays an essential role.

Third, it matters because it is essential to attract and retain the talent we will need to serve Canadians in the knowledge age.

The competition for talent will be fierce among countries, between the private and public sectors, and among ourselves. To fulfill its mission, the Public Service of Canada must be able to attract and retain its fair share of talent. What will be the comparative advantages of the Public Service of Canada in the competition for talent? Why will people decide to join and to pursue a career dedicated to serving the public interest?

Investing in people, in lifelong learning and in career development could play a key role in the ability to attract and retain talent.

The Public Service of Canada could rely on two key comparative advantages. In the future, as in the past, people will join the Public Service of Canada because of a sense of mission and commitment to serving the public interest. A public service career is like no other because of the diversity, the complexity and the breadth of experience it provides. The Public Service could give itself one other comparative advantage if it decides to become a model learning organization dedicated to lifelong learning. Investing in people, in lifelong learning and in career development could play a key role in the ability to attract and retain talent.



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A Plan of Action

Making the transition to a learning organization will take time. It will require action at the system-wide, departmental, community, team and individual levels. It will mean building a culture that promotes learning, creating a commitment to learning at all levels, building learning into our systems and processes and taking specific measures to practice and promote learning.

“Be the public servant you want the public service to be.”

youth event participant

What follows is a proposed approach built around *six broad attributes* that are characteristic of a learning organization — promoting learning, learning from experience, valuing people and diversity, integrating learning into management practices, learning for serving and evaluating processes and outcomes. Initiatives are suggested in each area. These initiatives are a start, initial steps along the way toward becoming a learning organization and a Public Service that is capable of effectively serving in the knowledge age.



six attributes of a public service learning organization

- i promotes learning
- ii learns from experience
- iii values people and diversity
- iv integrates learning into management practices
- v learns for serving
- vi evaluates processes and outcomes



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Directions for the Future

I. Promotes Learning

In an organization that promotes learning, learning permeates all aspects of the organization's culture. The organization values knowledge and new ideas. It enables and encourages its employees at all levels to learn and share learning. It builds on the capacity of people to acquire and develop knowledge and to add value to existing knowledge. It provides opportunities and incentives for people to learn. It fosters participation and openness.

Achieving this in the Public Service of Canada requires commitment throughout the Public Service. An organization that is committed to and values learning is adept at aligning learning and learning activities with the achievement of its corporate goals and objectives. Learning is integrated into the corporate mission — how goals and objectives are to be reached is directly related to the skills and capabilities of people in the organization and to their learning needs.

I. Promotes Learning

Consultations across the country produced a consistent message that *there is a pressing need to address governance and leadership issues in the Public Service's human resource functions*. The current human resource governance system, including the governance system for learning is fragmented and uncoordinated. It needs to be clarified and simplified to provide clear direction and accountability.

“the governance of learning in the public service is just as fragmented and uncoordinated as the remainder of the human resource governance system. There is no clear direction for public service learning nor integration of service delivery.”

human resources council

There is a need to bring focus to the government's overall management agenda in order to channel energy, reduce the risk of agenda overload and ensure success. A cohesive learning agenda is also required and it needs to be supported by, and coordinated with, the government's broad management agenda, including initiatives such as Government On-Line, and the Treasury Board Secretariat's Results for Canadians management framework, if it is to guide the Public Service into meeting the challenges of serving in the knowledge age.

I. Promotes Learning

Because a learning organization relies upon the skills of its people, recruitment, retention and learning are inextricably linked. In the knowledge job market, the priority accorded to learning will affect the ability to recruit and retain the talent needed to serve Canada and Canadians. Similarly, the skills sought through recruitment programs must reflect the needs of a learning organization. *Recognition and reward systems should also be aligned to the needs of a learning organization.*

“it’s time to establish a reward system for groups that are creative and reflect the values of a learning organization.”

yellowknife participant

Making learning mission critical is a fundamental step to becoming a learning organization. This means integrating learning in all departmental activities and tying it to business strategies. It requires business plans that focus on people and the pursuit of the mission. It means treating learning as a key, strategic investment in people. It means monitoring the results of such investments in terms of the quality of advice, the quality of service and the management of the Public Service. It forces a re-thinking of corporate goals and objectives vis-à-vis human capacity within the department/agency and requires a plan to address gaps to meet future demands. It requires individual commitment to promote one's own learning and to support the learning needs of others.

“top leaders have a responsibility to be model learners.”

Ottawa participant

I. Promotes Learning

Initiatives

1. Human Resource Governance

Within one year, the human resource governance system in the Public Service, including the governance system for learning, should be clarified and simplified to provide clear policy leadership and direction.

2. Learning as a Management Priority

The government's management agenda requires focus to ensure success. This means setting out clear priorities and developing proper sequencing to avoid overloading the agenda.

To effectively promote learning throughout the Public Service, it must be established as *a corporate priority, not an add-on or an afterthought*, but an integral part of the government's approach to modernizing the Public Service. This means ensuring that learning is a key component of the government's overall management agenda and its human resource priorities. It must involve a commitment to action on the part of all, including deputy ministers and senior managers.

3. A Framework for Learning

The Deputy Minister Committee on Learning and Development should ensure a coordinated, cohesive approach to learning throughout the Public Service of Canada, and should be asked to monitor and evaluate progress on an annual basis. While different departments, agencies and particular groups within departments and agencies will be at different stages of development as learning organizations, the Public Service of Canada needs an overall framework to guide development, to serve as a benchmark or reference

I. Promotes Learning

point, while respecting the differences among departments, agencies and regions.

4. Recruitment for a Learning Organization

The Public Service approach to recruitment needs to *focus on the skills* required to serve in the knowledge age, such as creativity, innovation, and the ability to function as part of teams and networks, as well as on the requirements of a particular job.

In order to adapt to an evolving job market, the speed with which recruitment decisions are made will become an increasingly important factor in recruiting the talent needed to serve in a knowledge age.

5. Job Classification in a Learning Organization

To help prepare itself to serve in the knowledge age, the Public Service must be able to attract and retain knowledge workers. The design and operation of the *Universal Classification System should assist in this goal by valuing knowledge, know-how, innovation, creativity and the ability to work in teams and networks*. It should also encourage mobility across the public sector and flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

6. Recognition, Rewards and Performance Pay in a Learning Organization

Incentive systems, including performance pay, recognition and reward systems, need to be aligned to *support innovation, team work and the acquisition of knowledge*. The degree to which managers demonstrate leadership in helping their employees meet their learning needs should be recognized and rewarded. Learning should also be a prerequisite for managers themselves, who would be rewarded for the active measures they

I. Promotes Learning

take to keep their knowledge up to date, on an annual basis. By taking the time themselves, they would set a powerful example for all Public Service employees.

Performance pay guidelines should recognize *team work* at both the departmental and inter-departmental levels, as well as the *contribution to corporate priorities* through networks.

Recognition and reward systems should also recognize team and community achievements and contributions.

7. Business Plans

To reinforce the importance of investing in people, Treasury Board guidelines for developing business plans and performance management reports should first and foremost focus on mission and people.

Business plans should identify the most critical learning needs of the organization to fulfill its mission and to meet government priorities in light of the skills, knowledge and demographic profiles of the employees of the organization. The business plan should outline strategic investments required to develop the necessary knowledge, knowledge transfer, knowledge infrastructure and human capital. Performance reports should monitor and measure progress.

Provision of such information could help create a *constructive dialogue with Parliamentarians on a department's knowledge gaps* and the options available to remedy the situation. It could also help create a more favourable context to discuss how departments learn from experience and past successes and failures.



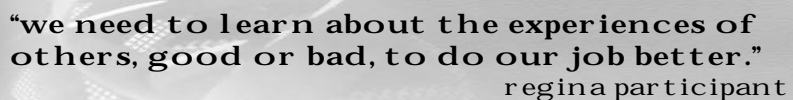
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II. Learns from Experience

Learning is about converting knowledge into know-how and value-added. It is rooted in action and it needs to be practiced. This means drawing from the experience of others in order to capture and use existing knowledge, to incorporate best practices and lessons learned. It also means experimenting to explore new avenues and gain new knowledge. In all cases it requires the effective sharing of information and lessons learned.

Learning from experience is a continuous process requiring openness and a desire to learn. We learn from everyone around us — those nearing retirement; people with specialized knowledge or expertise; the young workers who bring a fresh perspective and experience as students or apprentices. Learning from experience also means benchmarking ourselves against the best in the world, searching for best practices of other organizations such as other levels of government, the voluntary sector, or the private sector.



**“we need to learn about the experiences of
others, good or bad, to do our job better.”**
regina participant

II. Learns From Experience

The ability to create *new knowledge* is different than capturing existing knowledge. It requires an environment that is open to new ways of doing things.

“There can be no new knowledge without experimentation. There can be no learning without challenging the status quo.”

charlottetown participant

If the Public Service is expected to bring value-added through knowledge, know-how and innovation, it will need to practice experimentation, which implies risk taking. A culture that encourages innovation is needed and systemic factors that impede experimentation and risk taking need to be addressed. A successful experimentation process requires that the parameters surrounding risk taking are clearly set out and understood; accountability and responsibility structures are clear, and monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place during and after to maximize the chance of success and mitigate the possibility of failure.

“we’re scared to talk about risks, let alone take any. we need to learn to manage risk, not avoid it.”

Montreal participant

Maximizing the benefit of learning from experience requires efficient mechanisms to disseminate lessons learned and knowledge gained. Mechanisms and resources are required to capture best practices as they happen. Systems need to be put in place to *disseminate knowledge across the organization at all levels*. In the same way that the Public Service is working to serve citizens in a seamless way, public servants need seamless access to knowledge and information relevant to their functions. Modern IM/IT infrastructure can play a useful role in sharing knowledge across the Public Service but there is a long way to go — many public servants do not yet have access to computers or to the Internet.

II. Learns From Experience

Initiatives

8. Preserving Corporate Memory

A Public Service learning organization must preserve and share existing knowledge and best practices, while at the same time shedding knowledge that is obsolete and no longer of value to the organization.

Many individuals nearing retirement in the Public Service have a wealth of knowledge and experience that they are eager to share. A system of "elders" would allow such individuals, at various levels, to progressively step out of their regular duties and use pre-retirement years to document best practices, preserve corporate memory, transfer knowledge within and outside the department and help prepare those who will take over their responsibilities.

A system of "elders" would aim to retain the services of a limited number of people recognized inside and outside of the organization for their mastery in a field of activity of critical importance to the Public Service. To play their role, they would receive proper training in mentoring and would be used as a corporate resource.

9. Professional Coaching

The use of professional coaches, who assist employees in achieving breakthroughs in performance related to specific, measurable goals, should be used more widely than at present. Strategic use of professional coaches, at various points in an employee's career, can be a powerful learning tool.

II. Learns From Experience

10. Expertise Within the System

The need to compile best practices and share knowledge across the organization could be used to provide individuals who have acquired an expertise in an area of strategic importance to the Public Service, at various points in their Public Service careers, with *time out to document their unique knowledge or expertise*. This process should be made as simple as possible, which could mean exploring partnerships with organizations experienced in documenting processes and practices, for example the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC).

Such information would be used within the department and would also be disseminated more widely throughout the Public Service, through teaching, the use of electronic networks and publications.

In addition, public servants with particular expertise that may be useful in areas beyond their immediate work environment (e.g. interactive or hands-on skills), could be given the opportunity to share their abilities and know-how throughout the Public Service through short-term loans or visits to other departments. Some might even be supported corporately in these efforts and linked together into a network of learning associates for the benefit of the entire Public Service.

Such practices would also create an opportunity for these individuals to reflect, to rebuild energy and to establish some distance from the intense pace of Public Service work.

II. Learns From Experience

11. Retired Public Servants' Expertise

When there is a loss of corporate memory within an organization, particularly in a key strategic area, it may be most efficient to seek out certain retired employees with an expertise in that domain in order to recoup that knowledge, rather than re-create it through other means. For example, the Department of Justice currently makes use of the significant expertise of retired lawyers and judges to assist with opinions, internal seminars/courses, and to act as mentors and advisors for new lawyers. The departments of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Natural Resources Canada also rely on retired scientists to continue research and lend their expertise to the organization.

A small group of "Masters" could be established to retain the services of such public servants with exceptional knowledge and experience of critical strategic importance to Canada and to the Public Service, after they have retired.

12. Two-Way Mentoring

Two-way mentoring is a system aimed at meeting the learning needs of seasoned managers and new recruits. It is a voluntary system where seasoned managers would be expected to mentor younger public servants and new recruits in their area of expertise (knowledge of the department, knowledge of government, specific expertise) and the new recruits would mentor the manager in their area of expertise (new academic knowledge, new, fresh ideas, technology).

II. Learns From Experience

13. Improved Understanding of Canada, the World and the Public Service

In a public service learning organization, public servants need to keep their knowledge current on their country, the diversity of the Public Service, and global trends. This could be achieved through regional tours, site visits and interacting with others:

- A site visit program, "*Rediscover the Public Service Program*", could be established based on departmental site visits at the local, regional and national level.
- A "*Discover Canada Program*" could be established to encourage departments to build occasional visits to other parts of the country into the work program of employees.
- A corporate level program could be developed to provide senior professionals and managers with an opportunity to stay on top of *international issues and global trends*.

14. Mobility

Departments and individuals should be encouraged to use mobility programs (e.g. movement at level, secondments), exchange programs and international assignments to their fullest to assist employees to gain new experience. *Barriers to using these programs should be identified and resolved*. Incentives could be provided to managers who accept employees for development purposes who do not have all the skills and knowledge needed for a position. Departments with employees on exchanges should ensure that links with the home organization are maintained, e.g. by regular return visits, opportunities to brief colleagues on experiences, insights.

II. Learns From Experience

Departments should also explore special assignments built around the concept of *job shadowing* where public servants would have an opportunity to see first hand people working in different capacities including more senior levels.

15. Collective Management of Risk

The ability to create new knowledge requires an environment that is open to new ways of doing things, values experimentation and challenges the status quo. This implies risk-taking.

Risk-taking in the Public Service, where there may be public consequences, must be undertaken in a concerted and considered manner. It is important to keep in mind that not all risks can be foreseen. Depending on the nature of the risk, appropriate procedures must be identified to ensure the involvement of senior managers, ministers and even Cabinet, in a *meaningful discussion of the limits to risk and their tolerance for risk-taking*. Proper monitoring and contingency plans should be in place to maximize the chance of success and to mitigate the impact of failure.

16. Training for Innovation and Experimentation

Managers at all levels must be trained in innovation, experimentation and risk management. Joint training of public service managers with elected officials on experimentation and risk-taking in a public sector context could also be considered.

II. Learns From Experience

17. Learning Innovation Seed Fund

To encourage innovation and experimentation, a learning innovation seed fund could be established to sponsor the development and piloting of new ideas for service delivery, use of technology, policy development or leadership for those initiatives which have potentially broader application in the Public Service. Projects would be experimental and focussed on knowledge creation, and would have an expectation to both identify lessons learned and to facilitate knowledge transfer.

18. "Learning from Experience" Conference

An annual Public Service-wide conference on learning from experience could be held to recognize innovation and responsible risk-taking, share knowledge, learn from experience and avoid repeating mistakes and failures.

The Head of the Public Service Award or the Prime Minister's Award of Excellence could be used to recognize learning from experimentation and responsible risk-taking. Rewards would recognize successes and failures leading to new knowledge and insights.

19. Platforms for Sharing Ideas/Knowledge

Regular team and community meetings should be conducted to review lessons learned and what could be done differently. In the course of the consultation process, a variety of tools and techniques were proposed to help enrich these discussions. For example, teams could be encouraged to experiment with individual and/or team learning journals, learning circles, brainstorming or "workout" sessions or role play in order to provide opportunities to table, challenge, discuss and receive feedback on ideas.

II. Learns From Experience

20. Virtual Networks

An Internet-based virtual network of public servants could be used to pool and share talents and ideas. Discussion forums and other interactive technology could be used to introduce new ideas, share thoughts and comments on ideas and issues under consideration. A strategic alliance among all Public Service websites supporting learning could be established, in effect, creating a consortium of learning information in the Public Service. The Government On-Line initiative could be used to ensure that those who serve have access to the infrastructure they need to connect to each other in the same fashion as they are expected to connect to citizens. *Investing in infrastructure must also include an investment in the skills of people, to ensure they are able to use the technology effectively.*



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III. Values People and Diversity

A learning organization is built around people.

People innovate and it is through the interaction of people that new ideas and new knowledge emerge and are transformed into value-added. Learning is a lifelong journey built around *knowledge* (acquiring new information and ideas), *know-how* (converting knowledge to value-added) and *self-awareness* (your particular values, talents, characteristics, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours).

The richness of a learning organization comes from its diversity of people and of their ideas and perspectives. In a public service context, it is particularly important to reflect societal diversity — its different cultures, backgrounds and experiences, as it leads to better policy advice and better service to citizens.

“if we create a trusting, supportive and open environment, it will foster diverse ideas and opinions.”

vancouver participant

III. Values People and Diversity

To fulfill its mandate, the Public Service must strive to be representative of the diversity of Canadian society. The next five years will provide an exceptional opportunity to change the face of the Public Service. The Task Force on the Participation of Visible Minorities in the Federal Public Service has provided some useful suggestions. The Task Force on an Inclusive Public Service will provide further guidance.

“knowledge, know-how, self-awareness represents a whole - we need to talk about all three to attain our objective.”

Montreal participant

Valuing diversity means societal diversity, as well as the diversity of ideas, perspectives, skills and talents. It starts with respect for the individual and a climate of trust. It requires a culture that favors openness in order to challenge, to debate, to speak one's mind and to push forward new ideas. This has not always been characteristic of the Public Service culture. *Managers bear a special responsibility for creating an environment receptive to debate and differing perspectives.*

“as a young public servant, I'm hopeful to build a long and rewarding career in the federal public service. Learning will be essential for this to happen. I ask for your continued commitment.”

toronto participant

III. Values People and Diversity

Initiatives

21. Reflecting Societal Diversity

Special efforts will be needed over the next five years to change the face of the Public Service to better reflect the diversity of Canadian society. The Public Service Commission will have a crucial role to play in identifying qualified people and building an *inventory of pre-qualified candidates* to meet departments' needs as they emerge.

22. Training Managers to Work with Diversity

Managers must be trained to work and serve in a cross-cultural environment where diversity (culture, background, age, ideas) is respected and valued. This means learning to identify and set aside one's own biases, to challenge the status quo and to encourage the emergence of new ideas.

23. Staff Training

Departments must ensure that training programs and training tools are available to prepare employees to work and serve in a cross-cultural environment. Orientation for new recruits should pay special attention to the importance of working and serving in diverse environments, as well as to the values and principles of service to the public.

III. Values People and Diversity

24. Environment that Challenges the Status Quo

Managers bear a special responsibility for creating an environment where debate is encouraged and where individuals develop their capacity to see the other side. The provision of "safe spaces" for discussions, where titles and hierarchies are put aside to encourage equal air time for all, can assist in creating this environment. The establishment of "ground rules" for debate and techniques such as "role playing" may also be helpful.

25. Team and Team Diversity

The best teams are those that bring together the greatest diversity of talent and skills. Managers should be encouraged to develop teams that reflect diverse talents, skills, professions, life experiences. They should resist the tendency to surround themselves with people who share views similar to themselves. Using multi-disciplinary teams and brainstorming with non-experts are additional ways of increasing diversity of ideas and enhancing creativity.

Teams can only be strengthened through frequent team meetings and activities designed to exchange ideas, take stock and develop teambuilding skills.



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IV. Integrates Learning Into Management Practices

In a learning organization, the leadership and management styles throughout the organization are key to encouraging learning. Roles and responsibilities should be clear and well understood — at the corporate, departmental, team, community and individual levels — to ensure accountability and avoid overlap and duplication.

Managing in support of learning means that departments have *an explicit policy on lifelong learning as well as a commitment to individual and team learning plans*. Learning plans are being used and developed in many departments and agencies such as Health Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs, Canadian International Development Agency, and are recognized as useful tools in promoting learning. Departmental learning policies are the link between the corporate and departmental priorities and the role of teams and individuals within the organization. Individual learning plans serve as reference points for upgrading and updating employees' skills and knowledge. Team learning plans help develop cohesion and to unleash creativity toward a common goal.

IV. Integrates Learning Into Management Practices

Managers in a learning organization must also facilitate access to learning for themselves and their staff. There are many different types of learners and learning styles.

Classroom training is one avenue for learning — distance learning, self-learning, on-the-job training, scanning for and applying best practices, documenting and sharing experiences and experimentation are other methods of learning. Individual differences are more easily accommodated as the range of learning tools expands.

Everyone has a responsibility to learn and to expand their knowledge.

“the public service needs to not only have individual learning plans, but an annual departmental learning strategy.”

winnipeg participant

Learning plans require individual and collective commitment. The individual responsibility should be supported by the collective commitment to support and encourage learning. *Learning plans must be supported by the allocation of resources and time.* Knowing that resources are there and that learning is a legitimate use of time can empower employees. The effectiveness of learning plans must be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

“the desire to become a learning organization needs to be reflected in the way resources - time, money and facilities - are assigned.”

human resources council

Funding is critical. Just as program integrity is assured through appropriate capital and operational investments, investment in human capital — the knowledge, creativity and know-how of teams and individuals — must keep pace with the demands of the future. Making funds available for investments in public servants is a fundamental step in becoming a learning organization.

IV. Integrates Learning Into Management Practices

Time is often the more challenging constraint. Often, learning opportunities are regarded as a "perk" and are subject to operational requirements. Committing time to learning and sticking to it, even in the face of other pressures is an important feature of managing in a learning organization.

"WE NEED AN E-GOVERNMENT STRATEGY FOR INTERNAL OPERATION - IT NEEDS TO BE SUPPORTED IN TERMS OF BOTH INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRAINING."

EDMONTON participant

To serve in the knowledge age, the Public Service must be capable of discovery. Managers need to encourage the search for new ideas and the sharing of knowledge and information. They must support efforts to scan for new and useful approaches or processes for fulfilling the mission. Utilizing the power of technology can help put knowledge and information at the fingertips of those who serve. As initiatives such as Government On-Line are developed to ensure that Canadians are well-served by technology, this same philosophy needs to apply "inside" the Public Service as it is applied "outside".

"Consider using innovative techniques like the internet and video-conferencing to make learning accessible in remote areas."

whitehorse participant

IV. Integrates Learning Into Management Practices

Initiatives

26.Roles and Responsibilities for Training and Development

The roles and responsibilities for training and development within departments/agencies and corporate entities such as Training and Development Canada, The Leadership Network and the Canadian Centre for Management Development, should be clarified to ensure that the corporate obligation and commitment are well understood, and that there is clear accountability for results.

27.Horizontal Linkages

A voluntary alliance of learning institutes and teams across the Public Service could be established to share learning expertise, training tools and instruments and ensure mutual assistance and avoid duplication of effort. Learning specialists need to strengthen their community in order to become key learning advisors to managers. Much could be done through virtual networks.

28.Departmental Learning Policy

Many departments and agencies, such as Public Works and Government Services Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs have an explicit learning policy committed to lifelong learning at all levels. This approach should be encouraged in every department and agency. To achieve the desired results, *learning policies must be supported by an explicit commitment of time and resources* — a commitment which should be reflected in the organization of work and the work schedules of all employees. Accountability for implementation of learning plans and results must also be established within a policy statement.

IV. Integrates Learning Into Management Practices

29. Individual Learning Plans

Individual learning plans are the key instrument to ensure that the organization does not live off the existing human capital of its people. *Learning is a shared responsibility between managers and their employees.* Learning plans are built on the commitment of employees to learn and reflect the collective undertaking to support their learning needs by investing corporate resources to ensure that their knowledge remains at the leading edge in their area of expertise and that they are able to reach their full potential. Investing in individual learning is the key to providing people with a sense of security and to encouraging mobility inside and outside the Public Service.

Learning plans must include formal training, opportunities to learn through experience and to share knowledge with others. They should exist at all levels — in particular, senior managers, including *Deputy Ministers, need to serve as an example to others* if the importance of learning is to permeate the organization.

30. Learning Accounts

There could be some experimentation with the concept of Portable Learning Accounts where learning resources are associated with a person, rather than a unit or departmental budget, so that they move around with the person. This concept could be pilot tested with a small community.

Similarly, portability of learning could be recognized using the concept of a *“learning passport”* through which individual achievements would be recognized across the Public Service.

IV. Integrates Learning Into Management Practices

31. Team Learning Plans

Team learning plans build on the individual commitment to learn while supporting a team effort to look at new ways to fulfill its mission within the context of the departmental mandate. They require a commitment of time and resources as well as an assessment of competencies, know-how/expertise, complementary abilities and, where the team may be lacking. *Team plans could also include benchmarking, experimenting, site visits, networking, and participation in communities of practice.* The existence of team learning plans reaffirms that learning is central to the mission.

32. Time and Resources for Formal Training

Formal classroom training provides an occasion to take time out to think, learn and interact with others. A learning organization needs an ongoing commitment to professional training and development. To make learning a reality, you need to create a guilt-free environment for learning. It must also recognize the importance of other learning activities, such as learning on the job, undertaking experimentation, coaching others, which are more difficult to measure.

Consideration should be given to *refunding departmental expenditures on formal corporate training from annual lapsing funds as an incentive to encourage timeout for learning outside the home department.*

33. Self-Learning and Computer-Assisted Learning

Self-learning is about taking responsibility on your own to deepen your knowledge. Computer-assisted learning is about bringing learning to your work station.

Tools and support for self-assessment, self-learning and distance learning are available and should be made

IV. Integrates Learning Into Management Practices

available across the Public Service. Virtual tools, such as The Learning Coach, currently under development at Canadian Centre for Management Development, should provide managers with the tools needed to encourage self-assessment and self-learning.

34. Career Development

Career development is about taking a long-term view. It should be an investment in the individual for the overall career journey, not just for the current job.

35. Networks

A key to facilitating access to new knowledge is the ability to multiply the channels that are available to interact and network. The development and use of networks at all levels (e.g., regional, interdepartmental, middle managers, functional communities) should be encouraged to develop communities of practice, with the explicit objective of fostering learning both within and across fields.

A network of "Public Service correspondents" could be designated on a rotational basis to communicate and disseminate corporate initiatives within departments and in the regions and to better inform central agencies on emerging regional and departmental issues or of the need to adjust corporate initiatives.

"We need to take the long-term view of the new employee – invest in them for their career, not just one job."

youth event participant



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V. Learns For Serving

Managing in a manner that is supportive of serving in the knowledge age will be key to translating the principles of a learning organization into practice and to ensuring that the Public Service remains relevant in meeting citizens' needs in the future. It is essential to the quality of service the Public Service provides and the advice it gives. It is essential to ensuring wellness and balance in the workplace, which in turn has an impact on how well the Public Service is able to serve.

**“WELLNESS AND BALANCE IN THE WORKPLACE
CONTRIBUTE TO EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE DELIVERY.”**

EDMONTON participant

An organization that focusses on serving must clearly be able to understand and respond to the needs of citizens and those they elect. Responsiveness requires incorporating input from a variety of sources, internal and external. Much of the knowledge resides with people who are served by the organization and means must be found to ensure that this knowledge is best put to use in serving the public interest. Departments must be prepared to search out best practices and benchmark against the best. *They must systematically seek feedback from clients, elected officials and employees.*

V. Learns for Serving

Initiatives

36. Scanning for Best Practices

Departments should be capable and adept at scanning for best practices linked to the mission, inside and outside of government. This may include the development and use of "knowledge prospectors", people expected to search beyond the organization for new knowledge pertinent to the organization and the delivery of its mission.

37. Benchmarking

Services provided should be benchmarked against the best in Canada and in the world.

38. Feedback from Citizens

Systematic feedback should be sought about the services provided, from citizens, clients and elected representatives. Mechanisms must also be in place to respond to concerns, issues raised.

39. Feedback from Supervisors, Peers and Employees

Feedback is not one dimensional. It is important to give feedback to and receive feedback from superiors, peers and employees.

Managers have a special responsibility. Since the wellness of employees has a direct impact on the quality of service an organization provides. Performance measurement results and related information should be utilized as feedback from public servants, and must be accompanied by means of addressing issues of concern in the workplace.

The national employee survey should be repeated every two years and input on specific issues or areas of concern should be addressed through more targeted surveys in departments and agencies.



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VI. Evaluates Processes and Outcomes

A learning organization evaluates on an on-going basis the process and results of its strategic investments in learning. Evaluating learning requires a careful examination of the tools, mechanisms and processes through which organizational learning is fostered throughout the organization. It means examining the extent to which all existing management processes (human resources, financial, technology, citizen engagement, stakeholder relations, etc.) contribute to organizational learning.

“i WOULD LIKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMPLETE AN EVALUATION EVERY YEAR TO SEE WHAT i HAVE LEARNed AND WHAT i AM MISSING.”

WINNIPEG participant

Evaluating the success of learning should examine both the process and the outcomes. This can take many forms, from periodic reviews to on-going monitoring. The focus should not only be retrospective but also prospective (anticipating learning needs and requirements). Applying a relevance test, such as how the people served will benefit from the proposed learning, is crucially important.

VI. Evaluates Processes and Outcomes

Initiatives

40. Evaluating Overall Learning Processes and Outcomes

Based on departmental business plans and performance reporting documents, *the Learning and Development Committee could be asked to monitor, evaluate and report annually on departmental performance on learning.* The Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada could be used to report overall progress on both process and outcomes.

41. Evaluating Individual Learning Processes and Outcomes

Managers, in partnership with their employees, should also be accountable for their effectiveness in identifying and addressing learning needs for employees and the organization. The results of learning initiatives should be monitored and evaluated in terms of tangible indicators (e.g., productivity), as well as less measurable indicators (e.g., quality of advice and service provided).

42. Research

The Canadian Centre for Management Development could, in collaboration with the Auditor General, undertake *research into how to evaluate learning*, drawing on best practices from the public and private sectors.

43. Learning Organization Index

Building on the analysis undertaken on the Public Service Employee Survey, Statistics Canada could establish, over time, *a baseline and index for measuring progress on building a public service learning organization.*



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Conclusion – Creating a Learning Charter

The proposals presented in this document would go a long way to transforming the Public Service of Canada into a model learning organization. It will take time to implement all of the ideas and suggestions presented. But that should not prevent anyone from beginning now to do what can be done today. If there is a commitment to action significant progress can be made. A "*Learning Charter*" could be a useful vehicle around which to garner commitment at all levels.

initiative

44. A Learning Charter

A "Learning Charter" should be developed for the Public Service of Canada. It would provide the statement of intent on behalf of the Government of Canada and outline the broad objectives and results expected. It could also include a commitment to action at the corporate and individual levels. The following pages provide wording for a possible Public Service "Learning Charter".

A PROPOSED LEARNING CHARTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

A Statement of Intent

“The Government of Canada embraces the concept of a Public Service Learning Organization to meet the needs of Canada and Canadians in the knowledge age and to support lifelong learning as a defining characteristic of a professional and non-partisan public service.”

Objectives and Results

The two broad objectives the Public Service of Canada would pursue to support this commitment are:

1. To take concrete measures and actions to transform the Public Service of Canada into a model Public Service learning organization in all its activities of policy formulation, program implementation, service delivery and internal services to meet the challenges of its time.
2. To support lifelong learning at all levels to ensure the Public Service of Canada is able to attract, retain and develop the talent it needs in support of its mission.

The Commitment to Corporate/Collective Action

Deputy Ministers, as a community, are committed within one year to:

- Clarify and simplify the federal governance system for human resource management, including learning.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities for training and development so that there is clear accountability for results.
- Develop learning policies in every department and agency and establish a central process for monitoring and reviewing results on an annual basis.
- Establish a minimum annual commitment of funds or time for learning for employees.
- Hold the first annual "Learning from Experience" Conference.

As learning is a shared responsibility, deputy ministers call on managers and employees at all levels to commit to take those actions that are within their power.

The Commitment to Individual Action What Can I Do Today?

- Prepare an individual learning plan for myself that incorporates my learning needs and what I will do to support the learning of others.
- Work with my staff to develop individual learning plans for all employees that reflect a balance of organizational and personal development needs.
- Work with my team to develop a team learning plan.
- Provide the necessary time and resources to live up to the learning needs identified and agreed upon.
- Resist the temptation to divert learning funds to other uses or to use operational requirements as an excuse to delay learning.
- Volunteer to mentor a young public servant or new recruit.
- Be on the lookout for best practices.
- Hold regular team meetings to review lessons learned and what could be done differently and share learnings with others.
- Work toward a work environment where discussion, debate and questioning the status quo are encouraged.
- Find out more about tools and techniques that might enrich team discussions.
- Ensure that I have a diversity of talents, skills and perspectives represented on project teams.
- Be open to different ideas and ways of doing things.
- Participate in networks and communities of practice and encourage staff to do the same.
- Ensure that those who have had training or learning experiences have the opportunity to share it with others.
- Seek regular input from clients and employees and benchmark services provided against the best in Canada and the world.
- Monitor and evaluate the learning activities of employees.

endnotes

Speech from the Throne, Building a Higher Quality of Life for All Canadians, October 12, 1999

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Peter Aucoin, *The Public Sector as a Learning Organization: Maintaining the Momentum in Public Sector Reform*, A paper prepared for Governance Research Project, CCMD, April 15, 2000