THE CONTEMPORARY ROLE AND CHALLENGES OF DEPUTY MINISTERS IN THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Jacques Bourgault
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Canadian Centre for Management Development

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A Word from CCMD

In this publication, Professor Jacques Bourgault, also a CCMD Fellow, focuses on the contemporary duties of federal deputy ministers in Canada, especially in terms of the challenges they face and certain work methods they use to meet these challenges.

This new study is in addition to several others published by Professor Bourgault including one that was written in collaboration with the Honourable Stéphane Dion in 1991 and which provided an initial profile of federal deputy ministers in Canada.

CCMD is grateful to Professor Bourgault for this new addition to its series of publications on this particular subject.

We hope that it will prove to be useful both to federal public servants and to researchers, and that it will improve knowledge and understanding related to the highly complex tasks currently facing federal deputy ministers in Canada.

Jocelyne Bourgon
President

Introduction

This research report deals with the contemporary duties performed by deputy ministers in the federal Public Service of Canada. It covers the challenges they face and the work methods used to meet these challenges.

No contemporary study exists on the authority exercised by senior officials in federal departments in Canada. It has been 15 years since one such study, the Gordon Osbaldeston report, was written and the highly informative testimony of people like Gordon Robertson covers personal experiences over a long period of time. This study focuses on all deputy ministers serving on September 1, 2001.

The purpose of this report is to give as intimate a portrait as possible of the work performed by deputy ministers today. Since first-hand observation was precluded for reasons of confidentiality, we decided to use semi-structured interviews with the deputy ministers themselves. By meeting all of the deputy ministers, we were able to even out the effect of any biased perceptions some of them might have.

The report is divided into six parts with the first section consisting of an exploration of the changes that are taking place in the world and which have an impact, not only on the Government of Canada or on a given department, but also on how deputy ministers perform their duties. This is followed by a discussion on the new skills required of a successful deputy minister.

The second section addresses the growing amount of time required for horizontal management: after defining the three types of horizontal management, the report tries to quantify the time required by each. The deputy ministers were asked whether they believe horizontal management demands too much time, how they participate in the process without neglecting their department, what their learning needs are in this area, and how accountability for horizontal management could be improved.

The third section focuses on the deputy ministers' initial time in the position, given the critical importance of this period, which lasts for almost a full year, deserves to be analyzed and thought about. This period is also important because it is the time when the newcomer is placed under considerable scrutiny, earns the trust of many types of colleagues and contacts and, most importantly, develops his plan of action for the department.

The practical scope of "leadership," a widely used term, has yet to be defined in the case of deputy ministers. The Public Service Commission of Canada has published a very exhaustive definition for assistant deputy ministers and senior managers. But what about deputy ministers? They, themselves, answer the question in the fourth part of the report through their personal accounts.

The fifth section of the report studies how deputy ministers approach one of their primary tasks, namely, guiding their subordinates. Deputy ministers create an agenda for their respective departments, but must then ensure that it is followed; they must also ensure that their departments respond adequately to emergencies, crises and current events.

The final section of the report addresses the potential needs of deputy ministers, such as learning, professional development, DM community affairs, and support during crises and career transitions.

The thrust of the research approach used for all these issues was basically to gather the views of active deputy ministers. The study therefore relied on semi-structured interviews of a non-directive nature. Non-directive interviews consist of open-ended questions to which the answers are not always cut-and-dried, especially when they contain subtle comments on complex situations. The aim is more to search for areas of convergence than for specific occurrences. The advantage of the non-directive approach is that it covers an entire field of investigation and reveals how respondents organize and explain their position. Unlike a survey method consisting of closed questions, this method is ideally suited to the wealth of information available in the case of deputy ministers. It produces more informative material to the extent that the respondents do not feel restricted by the questions. However, there are two sides to every coin: research involving semi-structured interviews sometimes precludes the possibility of quantifying the opinions expressed given that respondents are permitted to use whatever words or express whatever subtleties they please, whereas a closed questionnaire asks questions that lead to responses of a "yes," "no" or a greyer, in-between nature. The novelty of the present research led us to favour breadth of information over quantification.

Participant selection was the focus of lengthy discussions. In addition to the deputy ministers, these discussions naturally involved the Secretary of the Treasury Board, while several other senior federal officials – the Commissioner of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, the President of the Public Service Commission of Canada, the Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the President of the Canadian International Development Agency – were consulted as well. Time and financial constraints prevented us from contacting the leaders of every organization, but those who directly and routinely work in conjunction with ministers and central agencies were selected. Thus, 28 deputy ministers ended up taking part in the study, since we also

excluded the group who had commissioned it: the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council and the President of the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD).

The CCMD provided assistance by identifying the thrust of the questions, but then, like the Privy Council Office, gave us a free hand throughout the process, right up to writing the final report. The unstinting support of the Clerk at that time was evident right from the start when, at a breakfast of deputy ministers, he mentioned that the researcher would have complete freedom.

The survey began with a document submitted to the deputy ministers as a preliminary step in developing a questionnaire that was discussed by the deputy ministers in early June 2001. Approximately six weeks before the scheduled interviews, each deputy minister concerned received a letter requesting his participation and mentioning CCMD's support, as well as a document describing the issues to be covered in the study and a copy of the questionnaire. A pre-test took place from August to September 10, 2001, which led to the addition of three sub-questions. The second phase of the study took place between December 2001 and February 2002. The last phase, in March and April 2002, primarily involved new deputy ministers whom we wanted to ensure had completed one year in the position before being interviewed. During the study, the respondents' work context experienced a few disruptions such as the events of September 11, 2001, and the ministerial changes of January 2002. However, none of the deputy ministers concerned changed their posts during the fieldwork from August 3, 2001 to April 12, 2002. All interviews were conducted and transcribed by the same person: the senior researcher in charge of the study. For simplification and confidentiality purposes, notes were taken during the interviews rather than recordings. The detailed interview notes were immediately transcribed and entered into a computer by the interviewer, who reconstructed the answers.

Heavy demands are placed on a deputy minister's time, with frequent disruptions caused by emergencies and requests to help the minister. As a result, two interviews were conducted entirely by telephone, and two others had to be completed by the same means. Most of the interviews were postponed at least once and some as many as four times. This came as no surprise to us given the demands of the position. The twenty-four other interviews involved approximately twenty trips to Ottawa. In twenty-five instances, the deputy ministers had taken the time to read the questionnaire before the interview, and in almost every case, expressed a deep interest in the topic. It was always fascinating for the interviewer, and unsurprisingly, the respondent's comments reflected a level of thought of a post-doctoral standard.

Compilation involved decomposing the transcript of the interviews and grouping all of the answers into sub-questions. Reading these responses drew out similarities and

particularly enlightening quotes on the positions of all concerned and the rationale for these.

The content of this report is presented in a manner that gives precedence to the actual words of the deputy ministers themselves and reflects their description of reality, rather than allowing the researcher too much liberty with the material. Except for the introductory comments in each section, the text consists of the deputy ministers' comments. The researcher's role has been to group and organize information of a similar nature into topics, while drawing attention to similarities and multiple occurrences where appropriate.

To simplify reading and retain the anonymous, confidential nature of the interviews, as the deputy ministers were promised, all gender references in the report have been converted to the masculine form and all quotes are reported in a single language (with no distinction between the original French or English). Readers are expected to bear in mind that the group of individuals that was studied does not only consist of men who only talk about their male colleagues!

The author wishes to thank the CCMD, its President, Jocelyne Bourgon, and its Director General of Research, Raymond D'Aoust, as well as the former Clerk of the Privy Council, Mel Cappe, and the former Deputy Clerk, Ron Bilodeau, for the many ways in which they assisted this study from start to finish. The author also thanks the deputy ministers for their generosity and trust. Lastly, he expresses his gratitude to Carole Garand for her contribution throughout the project.

Jacques Bourgault

1. Changes in the World, Their Impact on Deputy Ministers' Duties and the Skills Now Required

Major changes are visibly taking place in society and in the public service. These changes can affect the way in which deputy ministers perform their duties to the extent that the context of their work has changed. Deputy ministers are required to work to meet the challenges facing Canada and maintain a high-calibre public service. As managers, they must adapt to change by becoming vehicles of change themselves.

Some people might say that the underpinnings of the Canadian political-administrative system have not changed and that expectations of deputy ministers remain the same. Others might shade this statement by arguing that the change in their work lies in how they meet these expectations. The deputy ministers' opinions confirm that changing factors have emerged which affect the skills their work requires. We must therefore gain a better understanding of these changes and the factors that cause them, and also identify how the deputy ministers' work has been affected and the new skills that deputy ministers are now required to have.

1.1 Perceiving change

Almost all the deputy ministers interviewed (twenty-five out of twenty-eight) confirmed that the nature of their work and their role have been affected by change. The three other deputy ministers confirmed that certain changes have taken place, but minimized their significance: one commented that the changes have not been major, but rather, that their scope and pace have increased:

> *The world is always changing; the pace has not increased in the past ten years; people exaggerate all that; DMs lived through the major changes in structure and government in 1993, and then the Program Review and so on. There have always been technological changes and waves of budget reductions. Now, there is more emphasis on horizontal issues, and no rest when it comes to multiple accountabilities. The basic role remains the same."*

For two other deputy ministers, although the key skills remain what they have always been, the way they are used has changed. Generally, the deputy ministers agree that several aspects of their work have changed; everything is more complex, fast-paced and group-oriented:

> *"We are still governed by action and have no time to study a question in depth. The different facts of an issue overlap to a greater degree: relations with the provinces, international experiences and so on. It is increasingly inexcusable to overlook all of this in our routine thinking processes. The greatest difference is the pace of events; the response time*

expected by the minister and members of the public is incredibly brief. They think that they simply have to ask and they will receive an answer on the spot! We are expected to live in action-reaction mode, and this is very dangerous for anyone, but especially for governments that are concerned with protecting the public interest."

1.2   Change factors

Eleven factors divided into three categories are responsible for the changes identified: factors originating outside of government, factors originating within government, and factors relating to public debate.

1.2.1   Outside factors

Four outside factors drew the attention of many deputy ministers: changes in society's values have increased the complexity of developing public policy; so has the globalization of social phenomena; thirdly, the fast-paced progress of scientific knowledge rattles the underpinnings of programs. Finally, more group-oriented work procedures demand the involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders in public-sector management.

Complexity was mentioned by most of the deputy ministers, especially in the following areas that have become more complex: social issues, solutions, the legal framework, social relations, management and communications. We are still negotiating among opposing paradigms and uncertain developments, and it is important that corporate policy be clear; the case of the legal framework is just one example:

> *"We are in the post-Charter, post-NAFTA and post-World Trade Organization era, where everything is more legalized; the legal system plays a greater role: in particular, the courts are increasingly deciding controversial issues. We have to deal with this reality."*

General advances in science and technology, more specifically, the creation of new tools facilitating access to information, are all changes that affect deputy ministers' duties; work and communication procedures change and the department's senior manager must take account of these new realities and make decisions that are appropriate for the department's mission and mandate. Both employees and the public expect government to change adequately.

Globalization is one fact that almost everyone mentioned: policies are no longer separate from the world; capital, investment and information flows and more international treaties add new dimensions to the factors that deputy ministers must take into account when giving advice and opinions.

The trends of change seem to be quickening: developments in knowledge and technology was a point that was underscored as well as the rapid turnover of the social phenomena that set public policy parameters. The nature of change itself has changed:

> *"The new demands are: to understand that the most significant changes are the shift from management or the concept of policy and programs to the idea of mega-policies, that we have moved on from efficiency and incrementalist issues to more comprehensive and deeper transformational issues: the approach is completely 'outside the box.'"*

Today, deputy ministers must work in co-operation with their peers in other departments, federal agencies and other levels of government, as well as with their counterparts in international organizations and society at large:

> *"Increasingly, we work WITH and THROUGH others. A few years ago, I focused on my department; today, I deal with the departments and groups that relate directly or indirectly to my sphere. If you think outside the paradigm, from the 'new public interest' perspective, you think in terms of overlap among departments, levels of government, NPOs and so on. Like it or not, everything is horizontal now; everything we do is integration-oriented; you have to think horizontally and holistically. Today, the major successes are matters that require collaboration among many departments and agencies."*

1.2.2   Intra-organizational factors

Within a single government organization, major changes affect the new role of deputy ministers − such as the nature of ties with the central agencies, democratization of the workplace, developments in information technology, the new mobility among managers, and the younger average age of federal public servants.

Other more familiar factors affect the activity of deputy ministers: the personalities on the scene, prevailing circumstances (the Prime Minister's many years in office, for example), economic developments and their impact on government spending, as well as the magnified role of the central agencies which limits the deputy ministers' control over their own departments. These factors − strong political stability, the PM's breadth of experience, a growing and fairly stable economy, and centralization in the central agencies − are not new, but how they play out is.

The growing role of the central agencies (especially the Privy Council Office, Treasury Board and the Department of Finance) was noted by almost half of the deputy ministers. Despite talk of managerial empowerment, it seems that these agencies have been more active in recent years in terms of strategic and tactical approvals, and that corporate life has taken its toll on the use of time:

> *"All of this affects how I perform my duties: if I wanted to, I could spend*
> *all of my time at the PCO; I therefore have to delegate a lot more now."*

Democratization of the workplace also affects the work of the deputy minister. Society's values dictate leadership through motivation and inspiration rather than by orders, by hierarchy alone or by spreading fear; they advocate consultation, participation and making employees accountable. Finally, information sharing makes employees better informed and potentially more critical of their leaders' decisions.

With growth in the use of the Internet and Intranet, the managerial transparency of deputy ministers has become necessary – in relation to employees as well as to the public, the media and client groups. As follow-up to the statement that the challenge for government posed by E-governance is to *"make knowledge available to the public by choosing the proper vehicles and appropriate formats,"* one deputy minister commented that this transparency, as made necessary by simplified access to information, includes its share of demands: this information in more easily accessible form exposes the government to increasingly demanding and urgent requests for information from the public and groups.

The managers' career has changed significantly. They now have considerable mobility, which reduces the time they spend in a given position and raises certain challenges in terms of retention, recruitment, continuity, safeguarding corporate memory, and accountability:

> *"Career-related transfers among ADMs and directors are occurring much*
> *too quickly; the system cynically adjusts to the turnover: 'be patient, he'll*
> *soon be gone!' It's not easy to ensure continuity and accountability when*
> *managers stay no more than two years in a position."*

This strengthens the pivotal role that today's deputy minister plays within the management team.

The federal public service is growing younger and is renewing itself. Employees must adopt its basic values and face the challenges of the new approach to public-sector management. The task of deputy ministers is to convey these values and interpret them in light of the contemporary challenges facing public-sector management.

1.2.3   Interface with the political process

New aspects of governance affect how deputy ministers perform their duties. Access-to-information rules and accountability to Parliament are among these factors.
Deputy ministers are currently managing organizations that operate under the spotlight and whose public image has been shaken in recent years. The government's image is not what it was in the 1970s. This raises the issue of the government's legitimacy as well as that of retaining employees and maintaining their morale:

> *"The question of the government's relevance to the private sector, the not-for-profit sector and international organizations makes the public cynical of government. We must be relevant and get outside of Ottawa to meet with ordinary people."*

More than one-third of the deputy ministers said that broadened access to information and the pervasive media presence have changed the way they perform their work. One deputy minister concerned over the future of the rule of anonymity that traditionally governs advice to ministers stated:

> *"Access to information raises greater challenges for deputy ministers in their role as advisors to the minister, the Clerk and the Government. This role leads them to consider issues from various angles and to analyze many options that will help leaders make choices. However, all these considerations and options have not been produced to be publicly exploited in a way that is not in the country's interest – as in situations involving political or media rivalry or the interests of certain lobby groups."*

The freedom of deputy ministers to give advice is directly proportional to the confidentiality of such advice. One deputy minister mentioned the importance of creating new rules in this area.

Appearances by deputy ministers before parliamentary committees are among the fairly recent factors affecting their role, tasks and skills. They appear on behalf of a minister and only to give information. However, this heightens their public exposure and forces them to find a professional comfort zone in this new role. The process takes more time than before: the deputy minister must now prepare to appear, then attend and manage the outcomes. On the other hand, these appearances are also perceived as opportunities for learning, where the concerns of the MPs can provide valuable perspective on those of the public service.

The public nature of these appearances and their potential use by the opposition, back-bench MPs, lobby groups and the media can be worrisome for people who have chosen an administrative career rather than seeking the spotlight. Apart from the traps set to embarrass the government, some information, for reasons of public interest, is not intended for public scrutiny and could be used in certain groups' efforts to lobby the government. Some deputy ministers would rather debate only the future, leaving political explanations to the minister.

Many of the deputy ministers mentioned the large number of simultaneous pressures as an ongoing factor:

> *"Chaos is our daily fare; there are and always will be changes that we must cope with. It will never get easier. DMs must develop the skills to manage through it all."*

1.3   Changes in the DM's work

The deputy ministers said that their work today relies more on three types of skill: versatility, sensitive leadership and the perception of contexts.

1.3.1   Versatility

The deputy minister's contribution is based on new underpinnings and greater versatility:

> *"Thirty years ago, deputy ministers were usually specialists. Today, they must know more than their own field: they have to learn about everything very quickly, otherwise you can't succeed! Last week, for example, the minister was having lunch with an ambassador who was very hostile towards us; the ambassador had circulated a document that was highly critical of us; the minister asked me to go along with him as a technical advisor (!)... As he well knew, I couldn't offer any answers – that is, I wasn't a specialist! I joined them after briefing myself on four extremely technical files, and I argued with this ambassador over the details of these issues as if I'd written my doctoral thesis on the subject!"*

1.3.2   Sensitive leadership

The approach to managing knowledge within the organization has changed considerably and this has affected the deputy minister's role:

> *"Everything has changed: management skills in this area, the diversity of knowledge, the increasing pace of its development; we need a different approach to acquiring and disseminating knowledge. The knowledge load is growing for every procedure: a person needs a fairly keen intelligence and an openness to using knowledge to the maximum. My role is to keep at the leading edge of knowledge, systems and technology (especially information technology) in the country."*

Most deputy ministers commented that changes in the pace of work, more direct and faster communications, expectations concerning decision-making timeframes, and the increased workload have all combined to make them adopt new work methods:

> *"Heavier demands are placed on time now than three years ago. Today, it is impossible to know everything about an issue or control it directly. It takes an adequate understanding of the details of an issue, which means setting priorities for what is given attention and importance; this implies some degree of risk-taking. Everything is faster because of technology and globalization... It takes time to properly respond; that means we must rely*

*on continuous and proactive systems of thinking and on data banks that
are always relevant and up to date. The world is changing quickly."*

Some of the things needed to develop an operational team and create a vision within the
department is to ensure strong communication with colleagues, cultivate attitudes that
encourage dialogue, build consensus and focus on results. *"Teamwork should be made an
art ... We have a great deal of potential in the public service but it is not being used to
the full,"* reported one of the senior public servants interviewed. Deputy ministers say
that developing team spirit and teamwork are now essential to meeting the increasingly
horizontal needs of each issue.

The complexity of contemporary issues calls for new ways of working:

> *"Outside factors generate so much complexity today that the challenge is
> to determine how advice can be fool-proof. Issues relevant to the 21st
> century are currently being addressed within 20th-century structures.
> Success requires fundamental changes in structure and practice, and this
> is almost impossible with an incremental approach."*

This complexity no longer allows deputy ministers to work in isolation; they have less
time to spend on each issue, and rely more on departmental teams. Accordingly, half of
them explained their new approach to operating with management teams:

> *"What has changed especially is the need to delegate more today; you
> have to be able to trust your people, which demands choosing them
> carefully during recruitment and promotions, and then retaining them. I
> have to be able to rely on trustworthy people who represent me at the
> highest levels of the PCO; I also have to delegate and organize an overall
> supervisory system, allow for interaction among sectors, and arrange
> brainstorming sessions with senior managers."*

Several of the deputy ministers pointed to the effects of significant renewal within the
public service. They note that such changes have put an end to authoritarian and
unilateral action:

> *"Young people do not want to submit to the 'command and control'
> method; they want to be listened to and be involved in the process from the
> outset; their activity must have meaning. We have to change the means of
> exercising authority by inventing a new approach."*

Along the same lines, another deputy minister pointed out that the younger generation –
young scientists in this case – must be managed by grasping their culture and including
them, while another DM mentioned that to attract young people to the public service, we
have to know about their ideas and plans in order to recruit the best of them.

Today's deputy ministers must pay much more attention to managing the people around them and all their department's employees:

> *"Our employees want to know who we are and that we share their concerns. Now, you have to meet with employees, speak to them personally, and walk around the floors; none of that was done in the past; before, DMs were the commanders; today, they have to be human beings who inspire."*

1.3.3   Perceiving and integrating environments

The environments that make up the frame of reference for deputy ministers consist of globalization, domestic organizations and players in the political process.

To manage the transmission of information, deputy ministers have adopted proactive behaviour. Access-to-information requests are continually increasing, and the situations to be addressed are increasingly diverse and complex. For this reason, one deputy minister underscored the importance of practising strategic communication rather than micro-communication; management must occur through more macro-oriented managers and through values: *"Content has to reach the grassroots through objectives, missions and vision,"* he explained. Values will increasingly replace specific guidelines.

Globalization has led DMs to *"constantly explore what forces affect this global environment and develop tools to excel in it."* The disappearance of borders affects their work. Now, they must *"clearly anticipate the impact of our actions on our ability to compete internationally."* This gives rise to prompt reactions within a pre-determined strategic framework geared to the global context and to the place Canada and its companies occupy in it. More than ever, deputy ministers require a fairly sophisticated knowledge of the state of the world, a capacity for "mapping" and a strategic outlook.

The public wants quite a different relationship with the national government: it wants to participate more actively in developing government policy, and expects government to take decisions that are more justified:

> *"The public is more demanding when it comes to accountability and is more critical; 'these are our lives, our money and you make the decisions!'"*

Furthermore, the public wants the government, in its service-provider role, to be receptive, flexible, effective and geared to its needs. Deputy ministers must combine such communication with the public into their management procedures; they must be able to read and decipher these expectations before choosing an appropriate approach and using (recycling) them to design and deliver policies, programs and services.

Management in government today involves a complex network of interactions within and outside the government apparatus. This demands a change in culture and in the measures that foster collaboration and collective effort within and among departments:

> *"The most important thing is the ability to work in partnership with other federal, provincial, municipal, and private agencies and with academia, not-for-profit organizations, communities and other groups. Community interest groups have a grasp of their needs: federal employees must be aware of them and be capable of responding to them, rather than simply gazing at their navels."*

Almost all the deputy ministers mentioned the increased inter-dependency among federal departments and agencies and those at other levels. The approach is now geared to a corporate team concept, and the need to work in partnership is accentuated by the new arrival of so many players:

> *"Under my performance agreement with the Clerk, a DM committee is changing the dynamic – no longer bilateral, but collective. We have to be able to motivate these people, gain their support and advance despite a more group-oriented apparatus."*

Several deputy ministers said that their duties are drawing ever closer to the political arena, since the most minor detail of any issue can now entail political sensitivity and such details are now exploited more politically. One deputy minister mentioned how this change might put a damper on innovation within the public service. Another saw it as a potential source of innovation among career public servants:

> *"I don't view the PMO's demands as a political constraint that needlessly complicates our work. On the contrary, it is a breath of fresh air. They ask pointed questions and work effectively for the PM; their questions force the system to be more coherent."*

Some deputy ministers mentioned the growing frustration among all the stakeholders in Parliamentary committees (ministers, deputy ministers and members):

> *"One thing that is changing is that the gap between government and Parliament seems to be growing, and this has created frustration on all sides; the ministers tend to retreat and send the DMs to the front lines to face the Parliamentary committees; they have to answer questions, but without damaging the minister; their reticence frustrates the members, who consequently dwell on details; the work of parliamentarians becomes fairly limited in perspective, trying to protect partisan interests and even engaging in systematic obstruction; the actual control of the*

*parliamentary committees has diminished, and members of Parliament
have become frustrated."*

Other deputy ministers commented that broader access to information exposes them to
more criticism from the media or groups. As a result, they organize themselves more
effectively and ensure greater coherence in their strategic and tactical plans. The aim is
prevention, and to react quickly and correctly:

> *"Improved technology facilitates the flow of information and the pace of
> change,"* commented one deputy minister. *"We must therefore be more
> alert, better equipped and better organized to confront people's
> reactions."*

The increased number and pervasive presence of specialized lobby groups affects the
work of deputy ministers. Some explained that *"the complexity of problem situations is
an outcome of the number of lobby groups ... which often support competing or
incompatible options."* Now more than ever, deputy ministers must have access to
information that is useful for assessing the increasingly sophisticated arguments and
options put forward by these groups. Senior public servants are required to stand more in
the public spotlight at meetings, conferences or appearances, and some groups try to
direct their lobbying efforts as much at these senior managers as at the minister. Analysis
of positioning and public communication will play a growing role in deputy ministers'
skills.

The deputy minister's duties are also changing because of the increasing political
sensitivity of their work.

> *"Things always have to be professional, but will become more politicized
> with the public exposure of DMs."*

The impact on the work of deputy ministers is to make them effectively anticipate the
political consequences of their contributions, to establish clear boundaries, and to decide
what action is acceptable within the grey zone linking politics and the public service.

1.4   Impact on skills

1.4.1   Basic skills

Several deputy ministers stated that their role basically requires the same fundamental
skills as before because the essential roles remain roughly the same. Federal deputy
ministers are still key figures in the federal political system; at the top of the
administrative hierarchy, they advise the minister and the government, prepare policy and
ensure its implementation, and enforce all the legislation under the minister's authority
while providing the best possible service to the Canadian public. The senior administrator

is a figurehead for the department as an organization and manages its resources; he also ensures that the department meets the needs of its minister and the government by shaping policy and legislation and by supplying requested information and opinions in a professional manner.

Deputy ministers said that the basic skills that characterize the nature of their duties include the following:

> *"To be a good manager, to be concerned about people, to have communication skills, to be perceived by people in the department as genuinely involved, to show leadership, ethics, loyalty and good judgement."*

It is also still important that deputy ministers maintain positive relations with the people around them, whether this is the minister or members of Cabinet, the Clerk, counterparts, senior managers or major clients. What is different is how these roles are played, and the different "ways of performing and thinking."

The basic skills used today appear quite different than those common fifteen years ago: the organization must be led, concern must centre on providing the best service to the public, more attention needs to be paid to communication and people, there has to be a different kind of involvement, and so on.

1.4.2   The new skills required

Because of the greater managerial challenges in the position, and the new generalist profile of most incumbents, seven skills were mentioned most often in the ideal profile sketched by the deputy ministers.

At the top of the list is <u>versatility</u> and the ability <u>to learn quickly</u> the critical aspects of any issue.

> *"The day of the super-expert DM is over, everything is more multidisciplinary, interconnected and horizontal."*

Versatility now counts a lot more:

> *"Depending on the situation, you have to be vertical or horizontal, strategic or tactical, and focused on details; both aspects are part of the craft's DNA."*

Second, comes the skills of <u>leading change</u> within the organization; it demands skills related to openness, an ability to comprehend complex systems, adaptability and risk-taking.

The world is changing at an ever faster pace, and both the government and its deputy ministers must be at the leading edge of this ongoing process of adaptation:

> "We must become agile within an extremely rigid system; it's a matter of survival; we have to convey this agility to the organization; in former times, superiors were rigid, hierarchical and changes occurred over a ten-year period. Today, the outside world can change everything in your department and quickly. You must react to this pressure."

To display leadership calls for exemplifying a coherent vision, innovating, setting priorities and supporting specialists:

> "We have to be leaders in innovation – always on the look-out for the new, generating creativity, and being seen as a constant innovator."

Deputy ministers have an ever more demanding responsibility in this area. Their ability to display openness and adjust quickly to all sorts of changes will increasingly be called into play.

> "A lack of leadership makes people blind to global challenges and fearful of risk."

Another went further:

> "A deputy minister is expected to be more of a leader than an administrator, yet effective administration must nevertheless continue. He must be active in the department and make his presence visible."

Many of the deputy ministers interviewed see the creation of a global frame of reference as more important now. More time is given to this issue and more interest is focused on asserting leadership in relation to foreign counterparts, with a greater effort to gear our action to account for international competitiveness. To do so requires that the deputy minister remain in a state of constant alert:

> "We need continuous and proactive thinking processes in addition to data banks."

Third, comes <u>creating a new form of authority.</u> In the past, the title and function of the deputy minister played a major part in securing people's obedience. Today, authority is no longer a given, and it must be cultivated by inspiring people and demonstrating flexibility in relating to others:

> "We need people who are more skilled in human resources, who know how to lead and motivate people; the days of the dictator, with his

> *servants and mercenaries, are over; today, the field belongs to the motivator. In the past, it was an advantage to be as firm as a rock; today, it is almost a flaw; people have to bend like reeds."*

Establishing authority increasingly depends on the kinds of relationships developed with subordinates. Leaders' people-management skills will have to increasingly rely on listening, vision, communication with subordinates, personal responsibility and the ability to follow and support. They will have to resist the temptation to centralize everything:

> *"To my mind, it is important that employees be involved, motivated, and feel privileged to work here; this concern is perhaps greater now than it was fifteen or twenty years ago. Now, we have to use a broader range of communication skills than we ever did in the past."*

Fourthly, we must be able to manage more by values than by strict rules: too much rigidity is harmful in this kind of position. A deputy minister must now perform more effectively in the area of <u>disseminating values</u> and prove it through professionalism and adequate facilitation of debate on ethical issues, while continuing to respect democratic principles and the personal development of others.

> *"We have gone from organizations managed by strict rules to organizations managed by values – another challenge for leadership! What has changed is the need to perform more effectively in the area of values (within the meaning of the Tait report), to be leaders in these fields and to exemplify such values."*

Fifth, a deputy minister under pressure from different quarters suggested that one increasingly important skill is the ability to <u>make decisions on complex issues</u>, an ability that often requires distinguishing, often amid controversy, between pressures that are more powerful than others.

Sixth, the respondents mentioned that leadership skills relate to a collective rather than individual level of leadership.

> *"It takes team-leadership talent, no longer simply individual leadership; you have to be able to reach groups of people and groups of peers to motivate them both within and outside the organization."*

Some deputy ministers expressly insisted on the need to develop <u>marketing and communication skills</u> while many others mentioned it more indirectly. They spoke of the importance of gaining greater familiarity with the procedures and techniques of public speaking, not only for use at press conferences, but to:

> *"Realize how actions and messages reverberate in a world where perceptions become reality."*

In addition to representing a leadership tool through its motivational potential, this skill ensures that delicate situations are handled more effectively. Secondly, it allows deputy ministers to develop a richer approach to public relations.

Another important skill emerged from the interviews: that of expanding the diversity of action and being a champion of <u>continuous learning</u>. Public-interest issues complicate things, and it is important to take a questioning attitude toward achievements and show openness to change.

Despite all the modern-day pressures of the position, many deputy ministers expressed what others simply implied: their enthusiasm for this public service function. One of them said:

> *"You have to realize that a DM position is unique. It's probably the best, most stimulating and most satisfying work society has to offer!"*

2.   Deputy Ministers and Horizontal Management

"An essential 'value-added' in modern governance."
(A deputy minister)

Are deputy ministers spending too much time on horizontal management? This question can be approached from different angles: too much time in relation to their workweek? More time than horizontal management deserves? Too much time in terms of the time required to manage the department? Or too much time in relation to the performance expected by the Clerk under the performance contract?

What exactly is horizontal management? For the purposes of our research, the parameters of this concept were defined according to a centralist approach that covers three areas: first of all, in its broadest sense, horizontal management includes any development, policy-management or program issue with bi- or multi-departmental involvement that pertains directly to the department's mandate. An issue shared by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and the federal Department of Justice would be one such issue, and even more so, an issue of national security involving fifteen or so departments. Reference groups and theme-based discussion groups belong in this category as well.

The Government of Canada is one of the most advanced in the world when it comes to the second kind of horizontal management, namely, at the corporate level. Here, deputy ministers provide collective opinions as broad senior advisors to government as much as in their capacity as deputy ministers of a specific department, if not more so. It may be through breakfasts with the Clerk, a Friday lunch, advisory committees like that to the Secretary of Treasury Board, retreats, study groups on corporate themes, and so on. The number of these groups and the frequency and duration of their meetings have varied over time depending on the model used by each Clerk.

The final type of horizontal management involves managing the community of deputy ministers; this essentially involves the Committee of Senior Officials (COSO) and the deputy ministers' working lunches at the Canadian Centre for Management Development.

2.1   The deputy minister's work schedule

Deputy ministers do not really have a standard work schedule: each organizes his week according to the nature of his department's mandate, its structure (size, type of employees to supervise, regional deployment, clienteles) and according to arrangements made with the minister. The values and preferences of the deputy ministers also play a role. Generally, they start their day at the office at about 7:30 or 8:00 a.m., spend lunches at gatherings or meetings, and return home at about 7:00 p.m.; they spend two to three

evenings a week in town for meetings, conferences, gatherings, ministerial retreats or official ceremonies.

They usually try not to work on Friday evenings and spend from three to six hours every weekend on their portfolios, especially Sunday, beginning in the afternoon. This schedule is disrupted by the activities of the annual administrative cycle, such as budget preparation, the Throne Speech or draft legislation. Emergencies and crises also affect their use of time, especially when the House of Commons is in session. Finally, travel eats away at their evenings and weekends: deputy ministers often travel abroad (e.g., Foreign Affairs and International Trade or CIDA), which can take up all of their time for more than a week, while others sacrifice their Friday and Sunday evenings to travel across the country. Deputy ministers working outside the National Capital Region (three regional development agencies or departments and Veterans' Affairs) spend time travelling and several evenings in Ottawa.

Everyone said they were well aware of the dangers of working too much, of neglecting their personal and family life and jeopardizing their health. Most of them think that an ideal workweek for a deputy minister should amount to no more than 65 hours of their time.

Time spent working by deputy ministers

Hours/Week	Number of DMs
Less than 60 hours:	0
From 60 to 64 hours:	8
From 65 to 69 hours:	7
From 70 to 74 hours:	6
From 75 to 79 hours:	3
From 80 to 85 hours:	1
From 85 to 90 hours:	2
Over 100 hours:	1
Average: 68.6 hours	

Deputy ministers work an average of almost 69 hours a week. This seems quite acceptable considering their responsibilities, the complexity of their duties, their proximity to the demanding world of political life and the number of people they deal with. The above chart shows that more than half of the deputy ministers work from 60 to 69 hours a week, thus within the ideal range of work hours; at the other extreme, four of them work more than 80 hours a week. A study of the respondents' characteristics reveals the factors that affect the time they spend on work: the first concerns the minister's

nature, his importance in the ongoing decision-making process and the size of his department, followed by his experience as a DM, values, preferences and personal style.

For a more accurate idea of how deputy ministers allocate their time, we asked eight randomly chosen DMs to describe in lengthy detail how they spend their time. We administered the standard test on perception of work time; respondents were asked how many hours they think they work, and then we carefully tabulated the time actually spent working; as is the case with all managers in the private sector or at other levels of the public sector, we noted a tendency (seven out of eight cases) to underestimate the time actually worked by 10 to 20 percent; when they stated that they worked 65 hours, they actually worked 75 hours. Many tend to exclude breakfasts, lunches, evenings, travel outside the city and weekends. Are they clinging to an idealized model, or do they portray themselves as not doing too much? Are they afraid of giving the negative impression that they are professionally overloaded or unbalanced in their personal life? It is generally accepted that people who are dedicated may not count all of their hours. The important thing is that work time must be estimated scientifically rather than relying on selective memory and good intentions! Is the answer to limit the deputy minister's commitments even more, or to delegate more? Or must we consciously accept that the work is simply very time-consuming?

2.2   Time spent on horizontal management

Several DMs are convinced that horizontal management takes up a great deal of their time and that the Clerk's committees are a factor in this situation. The deputy ministers spend an average of approximately 20 hours a week on horizontal management, that is, 29 percent of their time on average (of an average 69-hour workweek). Those who did not give a specific answer belong to the group of DMs who spend the most time on this area, which should increase this average, since two of them stated that they spend more than 80 percent of their work time on it.

Three deputy ministers felt they could not provide a detailed estimate of the number of hours they spend on *interdepartmental type* management, but estimate that the figure is high and that this time is increasing very significantly. They stated that they spend from 70 to 95 percent of their time on all types of horizontal management, but were unable to break this time down by the three kinds of horizontal management. They describe horizontal management as *"fuzzy, nowhere and everywhere, but increasing significantly."* A limitative tabulation would account only for time spent at interdepartmental meetings. To this must be added the briefing and debriefing time required to prepare for the meeting agenda, and take immediate follow-up action afterwards. More importantly, but less tangibly, is the task of developing the agenda for directing the department in relation to the agenda of the corporate machine and interdepartmental projects. Clearly, although all the deputy ministers were well aware of these distinctions, they do not have them in mind when estimating the time required for this kind of horizontal management. For example, one said he was certain that it took up one-third of his time, but, after a strict

calculation of all of the hours he spent on this issue personally, he discovered that it accounted for only 17 per cent of his time, in other words, half of the "perceived time!"

The breakdown of this average of 13.8 hours spent on interdepartmental, horizontal management is noteworthy:

Time spent on interdepartmental management

Hours/ week	Number of DMs
From 0 to 4 hours:	6
From 5 to 9 hours:	7
From 10 to 14 hours:	4
From 15 to 19 hours:	4
20 hours or more (20, 30, 40, 70):	4
Average: 13.8 hours	

The variation between the minimum and the maximum time largely reflects how the deputy ministers interpreted the question and their propensity concerning inter-departmental work to account only for the official time of the meeting rather than all of the time they spend on it even while working within their own department.

Rather unsurprisingly, the deputy ministers of central agencies and horizontal departments spend the most time on it, along with those required by current political events to coordinate more formally with their peers.

The second kind of horizontal management involves *corporate issues*. It is easier to identify than the previous one because it consists of official meetings requiring little advance preparation, or because the nature of the issue is often fairly distinct from the department's official mandate. Twenty-six respondents provided figures: they spend an average of 6.2 hours a week on this area; one of the two who did not answer admitted giving it very little time, while the other said he was close to the centre and responsible for certain complex issues.

A breakdown of the answers points to a fairly general growth rate for this kind of horizontal management, and shows that two-thirds of deputy ministers give it more than 5 hours of their attention a week:

Time spent weekly on corporate issues

Hours/week	Number of DMs
4 hours or less:	9
From 5 to 7 hours:	10
From 8 to 11 hours:	5
More (12 to 18):	2
Average: 6.2 hours	

Once again, central agency managers spend the most time on this area. In this case, the seniority of the other deputy ministers plays a role to some extent, given the reliance on the memory, wisdom and organizational culture of the most senior among them, whether or not they head up horizontal departments. This approach, described as deliberate, assists in transmitting organizational culture to the more junior among them and preserving the values of the Public Service of Canada.

The third type of horizontal management concerns *management of the deputy minister community.* The COSO covers most of this type, plus a few ad hoc tasks that the Clerk might assign to certain persons. Almost all the deputy ministers answered this question, but fifteen of them were uninvolved in this area at the time of the survey. The twelve others said they gave it a few days of their attention every year, rather than a few hours a week; nonetheless, the average time spent on this area by those who are involved is two hours a week, given that three central agency deputy ministers with seniority mentioned a fairly significant number of hours, that is, from 5 to 7.

Horizontal management constrains some of them to work far beyond the average. An average workweek is 69 hours. Four respondents work more than 80 hours. What is the cost of horizontal management? In two of four cases, there may be a very direct link between the many hours worked and the time required by horizontal management, but these respondents belong to the group that did not give a breakdown of their time. In the two other cases, a fairly precise description of their schedule showed that they spend an estimated 10 to 27 percent of their workweek on this type of management, which is well below the 29 percent average for the group as a whole. Two lessons can be learned: the horizontal nature of the department plays a greater role than the habits of the deputy ministers in determining the amount of time spent on horizontal management; secondly, in all cases, interdepartmental work consumes much more time than horizontal management of types B or C, despite the tendency to point the finger at the "central" committees.

2.3   Is it taking up too much time?

Twenty of the 28 deputy ministers considered this figure of almost 30 percent of time required by horizontal management sufficient. Three suggested that it should be given more time, and only five believe they have reached or exceeded the limit; one of them considered that this excessive time demand was due to the authority of the central agencies.

In fact, it is not too much time considering the importance of horizontal management these days, especially in the public sector. Some of the respondents also highlighted the direct and indirect advantages of horizontal management. The pressures placed on a deputy minister's time require a more collective approach to management and more frequent delegation:

> *"It forces me to trust and delegate to my direct collaborators. This improves one-on-one collaboration among DMs because everyone feels involved and knows what the others think. We know each other better, our habits, we are more in tune with each other and share a corporate outlook that facilitates contact when solving problems."*

Also, horizontal management generates new ideas and gives influence to the department, while the process enhances the creative energies of managers.

> *"It benefits the department because of the bi-directional nature of contributions – the department both gives and receives in this process."*

Horizontal management fosters coherence, enriches outlooks, forces delegation, brings in new ideas and improves creativity; it facilitates co-ordination and vision-sharing, gives influence to the small departments, and enhances the legitimacy of government, which is too often accused of operating in a cloister.

> *"It gives deeper meaning to the things I have to think about and do."*

> *"It's not too much time; it's just normal these days and it tends to be increasing irreversibly. Even while reforming the public service, we have to maintain consistency, to have shared values…"*

> *"It seems to take up more time but it's a lot more profitable. We have to be honest and accept challenging ideas."*

> *"It's not a waste of time. But the problem is that there seems to be too many corporate priorities; there are about 35 or 40! There are also too many meetings and too many meetings where DMs are given material for discussion that hasn't been prepared in proper depth."*

> *"Horizontal management (HM) is vital for certain complex issues, and it's been used for a fairly long time; the trend seems to be growing. Usually, it isn't wasted time. The surprising thing is that we manage to do it despite budget constraints; one department where I worked develops its policies after consulting every lobby group possible, perhaps producing a better product, with fewer resources; and yet, consultation takes time, energy and a few special skills."*

The challenge for DMs is to really use these consultations. The issue is: how can we better organize government and perform our duties to ensure that it really gets done; sometimes we have to deal with a lot of other players, and we must ask ourselves for which topics and to what extent are we absolutely obliged to use this approach (for example, consider the cases of HRDC and Health Canada, which have provincial stakeholders).

> *"It takes time, but it is essential on most issues; my department is horizontal and intergovernmental on all the issues. All issues are now horizontal or interdepartmental, or interrelated, and it seems likely this trend will only grow."*

> *"It's a good balance. It's part of the nature of my work. It gives me a richer sense of what I must think and do. There is room to do even more at the corporate level: consider the scientific or environmental issues."*

> *"It depends on what you call HM; in my opinion, it's everywhere and all the time. We have to become better at how we construct HM tables; we shouldn't begin with a small core and then expand; we have to involve as many people as possible from the outset; group thinking must evolve at the same time and at the same pace. This allows us to develop a shared vision that truly guides shared plans and shared indicators for measuring success; everyone feels committed to contribute because everyone has a genuine sense of ownership of the plan."*

> *"It's not a problem, quite the opposite; it gives my small department influence; this is critical to us. This is how we make the bigger departments listen to us and how we influence national policies."*

> *"It's very important, but not always done properly; everything hinges on the people involved. People should have a genuine understanding of what horizontal management means and can accomplish. The public is increasingly intolerant of these cloisters and their ritual confrontations. Everything should be organized in terms of products/results delivered to the public. See the Government of Canada Web site for more on this topic."*

> *"This agenda is just beginning. When it works well, it's very useful; it establishes a framework for co-operation, stimulates creativity, imagination and synergy, and creates opportunities for brainstorming. We can't do without it any more. It doesn't take up too much of my time."*

> *"It's unavoidable but indispensable. I'm not complaining; it's the cost of doing business in a world that functions on the principles of modern governance. It is extremely difficult to balance things (our time management), but we have no choice."*

Horizontal management takes up too much time according to those who think the priority should still focus on serving their own department or minister, and that ministers might perceive horizontal management as bureaucratic manipulation to distance them further from decisions.

> *"HM is given too much importance. I have to put things in perspective and drop a few considerations for the better management of my department, it's my job, my duty; the horizontal monster is growing; I have from 5 to 6 2-hour meetings every week; sometimes, I have to choose between a committee meeting and a national meeting of my managers in one region of the country; I choose the second because I have to give priority to strategic timing within my department."*

Deputy ministers who participate in horizontal management are greatly concerned with their minister's perceptions; discussions lead to policy directions and decisions that might give the minister the impression that his hand is being forced by a process outside the department, in which he had too little input. Some results of horizontal processes dim the department's distinctive role, and hence the minister, in favour of certain colleagues.

Horizontal management is also the victim of its own success; it is called upon to accomplish things that normal departmental administrative procedures do not. Following this logic, it could spread to the point where it demands an ever-increasing amount of the deputy minister's time at the expense of time spent managing his own department. To be a credible horizontal partner, a deputy minister must already be successful within his own department! The challenge is therefore to conduct horizontal operations within departments during the normal course of business and thereby reduce the pressure of creating additional horizontal procedures.

Some feel that we should go even farther and redesign not the apparatus but the outlook of governance.

> *"Management must constantly identify what could be done differently, especially in horizontal terms. For example, I often say during my presentations: Look at what we are discussing now and the information*

we have on hand. But imagine the discussion that we should be having and the information we should have on hand for such a discussion."

"Reorganizing is not necessarily restructuring, it's reviewing the work to be done. It's investing the organizations' money to achieve results."

This pressure toward horizontal management seemed new to only one of the deputy ministers interviewed; five of them insisted on pointing out that their concept of horizontal management has existed for a long time, some dating it back to the early 1980s.

"It hasn't grown that much, it was worse in 1983 with mirror committees and ministers of State. Here, it's part of our culture, and our Clerks after Pitfield have all contributed to it successfully. We are the most collegial of all governments in Canada; the Clerk does not play the same role elsewhere; there are no weekly breakfast meetings, except in Alberta."

"Maybe I missed something, but it seems to me that there's nothing very new about it all, we have always had interdepartmental procedures and committees since I entered the government, and the PCO focused even more on this area around about 1983. Everyone has a mission and if everyone understands it and works collaboratively, that's horizontal management; if it were more than that, we would have to redesign the structures of government! Also, we should not be too subtle when dealing with human nature; people are not as pliable as that and not spontaneously generous; we must change the institution in order to go farther. In my opinion, we must know our mandate, want to achieve it and stick to it."

"There's nothing new about this way of operating: it started 50 years ago. The difference is that today, it's more widespread and more complex. Horizontal management takes a different shape according to each issue, and can take up too much time; it should be on our minds every minute of the day. You have to accept it or change career!"

Several respondents said that horizontal management has become an inescapable reality that must be taken into account. Three of them explained that it will continue to grow very significantly; only one of them seemed to think that it has reached its cruising speed.

However, certain obstacles were mentioned, involving the degree of authenticity in what issue-table participants say and the question of whether their contributions are genuinely independent. Every player must make a specific contribution. The ministers, as project proponents who are always pressed for time, must also put themselves in horizontal management mode otherwise they will pressure the deputy minister to advance their portfolio at any cost; the central agencies must reflect an image that they are genuinely

sharing their concerns with the departments, and are not participating to acquire more control-related information along the lines of the traditional management model. For some deputy ministers, this creates a dilemma: if they manage horizontally because it is important to do so and because the Clerks demand it, they can expose themselves to the frustration of ministers and make their own position more vulnerable in relation to the central agencies.

> *"The major problem of interdepartmentality concerns overall coherence: to decide and take significant action that harmonizes with statements of principle. Many fine words, but everyone is still defending his own territory."*

> *"Another challenge is to be more effective as a group: to give it just the time necessary, to do only what is important, and especially, to move from words to results."*

> *"I am very comfortable with it all and I enjoy it. The stress is mostly a matter of poor personal interaction."*

> *"There is also the problem of accountability for ADMs sitting on interdepartmental committees: they have a very vertical mindset (belonging, unity, assessment and convenience) at the expense of a horizontal approach."*

In summary, horizontal management is not considered to take up too much time, the interdepartmental variety is certain to grow, improvements must be made in terms of holding meetings, and certain cultural obstacles remain to be overcome.

2.4   Surviving

Horizontal management often takes shape in meetings and consultations; time is spent preparing for these meetings, on follow-ups, travel, etc. As well, departments are generally larger than they were ten years ago, and ambient pressures are more complex and urgent. Can a deputy minister participate fully in horizontal management and at the same time exercise genuine leadership within his department? While some deputy ministers see these as irreconcilable options, most stated that an effective solution must be found because there is no alternative as long as horizontal management is a necessity. Others even answered that horizontal management can be seen as an opportunity to manage their department more effectively: ask real questions, get to the bottom of an issue, challenge things that were taken for granted, and force pooling of effort and forming of partnerships.

These pressures are not conflicting and should not be described as such. The problem of painful choices caused by HM is a myth.

> *"We always make choices on a range of topics in the normal course of business. You have to reach a certain balance and that calls for certain difficult choices...the same applies to HM; you can't allow yourself to abandon either HM or management of your department. It stresses some people more than others; it's a matter of personality."*

Three approaches were mentioned to achieve an optimal balance: understanding the role of the deputy minister, truly effective horizontal management to ensure that the effort is worth the effort, and effective time management.

a) Understanding the deputy minister's role

To function effectively in a horizontal management context, it must be accepted not only as a modern approach to management, but also as part of the basic responsibilities of Canadian deputy ministers. Interdepartmentality must be understood and genuinely accepted, along with the corporate aspects of the deputy minister's role. And yet, horizontal management contributes to a portion of the deputy minister's departmental role by linking the department to its environment and winning shared acceptance of a vision of what is to be accomplished. Some assign horizontal issues to their assistants, while others have chosen to develop an approach collectively. One deputy minister organizes the assignment of matters as follows:

> *"I attend to the major and corporate matters myself."*

Another enlists his entire team:

> *"I inform my subordinates about my performance agreement with the Clerk; we review every aspect with the team in question and determine how we will carry it out as a group."*

Another said:

> *"I use the executive committee to disseminate my corporate perspective and manage delegations on these committees."*

b) "Good" horizontal management

Horizontal management has its ground rules, which emerge with practice and learning. For horizontal management to produce positive results, certain basic rules must be followed. A few deputy ministers stress the importance of planning and playing the game properly:

> *"You have to take a horizontal approach from the beginning of work on a given matter, include everyone who has to be part of it; otherwise the process gets going, consensus starts to take shape, and it becomes too long and laborious later."*

Because interdepartmental and corporate management usually occurs through meetings, the deputy ministers must choose which meetings to attend:

> *"You have to ensure that the meetings are worth the effort and that our personal attendance adds value or raises information that we feel is vital to discuss in person."*

Horizontal management is not simply the business of deputy ministers; those above and below must also be part of the process. This calls for involvement by ministers and cabinet committees, as well as by departmental employees.

The minister's resistance was often mentioned:

> *"They have different constraints than we do and their position is much more individualized. They need personal visibility and they also need their ideas to move ahead quickly."*

At the Cabinet level, there must be more emphasis on joint projects and their joint application. We rely on the fact that *"in the end they will understand and accept; it's the learning curve, it takes time. Ministers now understand a little better the importance of that and are more accepting of the implications, like deadlines, sharing visibility, making compromises and so on."* In fact, ministers need to identify their new role as political leaders in horizontal management.

Similarly, horizontal management calls for support below the deputy-minister level.

> *"You have to function horizontally within your department, it saves you time and improves efficiency in the government's various horizontal projects; also, it's simpler for the smaller departments because it allows for better information sharing and easier co-ordination."*

Deputy ministers complained about obstacles and wasted time: some of the associate or assistant deputy ministers they encounter at meetings are insecure, have no delegated authority or take an outmoded approach:

> *"The too-vertically-oriented mentality of some ADMs needs to be opened up."*

Finally, for horizontal management to pay off, the partnership game must be played effectively:

> *"You have to keep your outside partners informed of your ideas and plans and of how they are progressing."*

The work methods suggested by deputy ministers concern structures and meetings.

Structures:
- *Maintain informal structures and procedures and rely primarily on networks*
- *Periodically review the relevance and operating methods of each committee*
- *A lot of time is wasted if people change at every meeting*
Meetings:
- *Limit briefing time for DMs during the meetings because DMs are primarily there because of their experience*
- *Be strict about time limits for discussion and for ending the meeting*
- *The style of chairing the meetings is important to ensure a fast pace, harmony, consistency and progression.*
Discussion content:
- *Participants have to have genuine authority for progress to occur; sometimes, only directors are in attendance to take notes for the absent DMs*
- *It's important to prepare carefully with effective briefings and notes, and then to proceed quickly with the debriefing of the group involved*
- *It's important to prepare and manage delegations of authority to associate and assistant deputy ministers.*
Number/choice of meetings:
- *There are too many meetings; some DMs spend all day going from one meeting to another and return to the office at 6:00 p.m. to pick up the mail: is that really good practice? Meetings must be chosen according to value-added criteria.*
- *I don't go to meetings whose agenda won't teach me something or allow me an opportunity to provide relevant input, and even then, to be effective, the input must be something only I could contribute; otherwise, another person will go instead. I do not go to a meeting just because I was invited. Even within this department, you have to consider the opportunity that each meeting offers. Is there a less costly means of communication?*

In general, as the format of horizontal management continues to evolve,

> *"We must analyze, reflect, learn and most of all, we must make a deliberate effort to make faster progress and waste the least amount of time possible."*

c)   *Basic time-management principles are critical*

Interdepartmental and corporate horizontal management largely occur outside the department and cover all matters that are not directly or exclusively within the department's mandate. Management of a deputy minister's time is therefore very important to prevent his impact within the department from dwindling. A few basic principles guide the decisions of deputy ministers on this topic. It is important to understand the deputy minister's specific role and area of performance in determining where and how he should get involved personally. The aim is to focus on doing what only a DM can do; this also applies to every other aspect of management, thus ensuring that the DM has the necessary time to play a role in horizontal management.

Essentially, the DM's role is to establish the outlook and make appropriate arrangements with the ADMs:

> *"I don't have to be everywhere all the time; my leading role is to operate the department by setting objectives and determining models of action. My chances of success are lower when the central agencies expect me to personally attend every meeting, and when they are disappointed if I do not go in person; some people will have to learn to change their thinking in this regard."*

It's important to <u>choose the best options on how to spend one's time</u> and not hesitate to constantly review time-management decisions and change them:

> *"We have to aggressively set priorities on how we spend our time and constantly review our agenda. I never had a job where I had to say 'no' so often. We must be strategic, disciplined and very strict in managing our time and we must rigorously follow our priorities; sometimes, we are sorry to have to say 'no' but we have no alternative. It can be difficult to please everyone; in fact, it's impossible."*

From the outset, it must be clearly understood and <u>appreciated what each project requires in terms of time</u> and commitment; then, a decision is made as to which committees the deputy minister wants to attend and then he must participate full-throttle after accepting.:

> *"I sort through which meetings I will attend in person according to my priorities and to ensure consistency. I have two golden rules: first, I only give my personal time to what will endure, what won't vanish tomorrow or in a week's time, and to what is strategically important to my department: I will not spend two days at a seminar, or open or close one ... unless I think it is tactically useful at the time; second, I only give personal attention to an issue or committee if it offers a unique value-added or if it*

gives me or my department something that I could not get if one of my assistants went instead."

The DM must know how to <u>limit his priorities,</u> show determination and take a methodical approach:

> *"My principle is to have a clear vision of what I want to accomplish. You have to bear in mind that a person can only do five or six things at a time. You have to persuade the department and manage around these few major objectives, and constantly sort through things to determine if they still deserve receiving priority."*

> *"Time management implies selecting and constantly reviewing your choices. I get the impression that my life is nothing more than a constant struggle to make painful decisions; there are things I want to do and things I have no choice but to do! There are some crises and emergencies I choose to attend to personally and some issues are more strategic to the department's agenda than others. That is why you must have a game plan to guide you, to refer to and to see whether you are making progress."*

<u>Delegation</u> is the other key to time management in successfully advancing horizontal management. First, you have to step back to gain perspective, and then make it a perspective shared by the management team; only then is delegation possible.

Some criticize the too frequent practice of avoiding meetings:

> *"I call a meeting and only assistants show; or worse, few of them have a mandate to make decisions; or worse still, I know that different people will turn up at the next meeting and we'll have to start from scratch!"*

This observation underscores the need to work with people who are self-confident and sure of the mandate conferred by their superior. This makes it possible to offer suggestions to the offices of the deputy ministers who call such meetings, to monitor changes in the list of participants and adopt appropriate tactics in response. For example, a deputy minister should <u>forward the committee's brief and outlook</u> to any new permanent member joining the committee at a welcoming lunch.

However, it is important to <u>manage delegation effectively</u>: policy must be promptly determined for each issue and the assistants left to advocate them. For assistants to succeed, a discussion system within the management team needs to be created, rather than more written reports. Some DMs suggest systematic individual supervision to monitor delegation; others urge caution:

> *"Careful: delegating poorly or too much takes its toll on the deputy minister's personal influence as matters evolve."*

For delegation to function effectively, it must be authentic and ADMs must clearly understand it and be taken into confidence:

> *"You have to create an executive-level management team and establish a fair amount of trust, whereby people don't feel they are being judged definitively on every word they say. There is a lot of trust among people on the management team: they are open-minded, independent and fairly critical; discussions are very honest. Afterwards, people are confident because they speak the same language and follow a single, shared policy. The people who substitute for me have full authority, they have my confidence; they share the common vision of departmental management."*

Optimal use of associate deputy ministers was a focus of considerable attention by most of the deputy ministers:

> *"I am not sure that we use our associates sufficiently. They are brilliant, competent people. We must trust them and give them genuine mandates and authority."*

The deputy ministers mentioned three approaches divided fairly evenly in relation to the associate deputy minister: interdepartmental, internal or clone. Several of the DMs assign interdepartmental management to the associate DM so as to have more time to manage the department's development. Others assign associate DMs to managing the department's resources so as to spend their time on corporate and interdepartmental affairs. In such cases, the level of mutual trust between the DM and the associate DM must be almost total. Several of them were strangers just three months ago, and now they are developing an intense professional bond, which sometimes grows into friendships between the families of the two senior public servants! This demands a lot of emotional intelligence, as well as strong listening and adjustment skills.

> *"Putting the associate DM to proper use is an invaluable asset; the associate DM operates the department and bears a considerable amount of the operational pressure. The fact that the associate DM comes from inside the department helps perpetuate institutional memory."*

Lastly, some practice the clone approach – in other words, almost total interchangeability in terms of attendance or contributions:

> *"I delegate very carefully and carefully manage my delegations to ADMs. My associate DM and I have agreed to interchangeability in principle; as well, he takes charge of specific projects on my behalf (departmental budget and management)."*

The use of assistants and delegates is not necessarily self-evident: some had a word of warning:

> *"Using ADMs in a disorganized way to replace you here and there has its limits; it's a good thing to delegate and necessary; sometimes I'm offended to see that there are more ADMs at certain meetings than DMs; not that I'm elitist, but the discussion changes with ADMs, they aren't at the same level and people are less inclined to make commitments; the DMs' commitments have more scope and their positions set a clearer, more definitive direction on the issues."*

Not everything seems settled in the case of associate DMs: one-quarter of the deputy ministers had reservations about certain choices and how they were used. Here are a few of the opinions expressed by deputy ministers:

> *"There should be a general policy on using them; first, they have to be chosen carefully; important mandates shouldn't be assigned to anyone but associate DMs who are capable of fulfilling them; a problem occurs when they are asked to do things more in relation to their professional development than the needs of the office; finally, they must win assurance from their colleagues, who accept them and view them as having the full authority of the deputy minister. This matter is still rather hazy."*

No DM challenged the role of the associate DM – a resource with considerable future potential. However, they suggested developing a more structured approach to their selection, assignment and use.

Lastly, the deputy minister gains time by relying on mature executive assistants who are confident and capable of interacting effectively with political staff and the DM's peers. They can be assigned mandates that are delicate (action with the minister) and strategic (monitoring changes in departmental operations):

> *"I always try to surround myself with a good team. I need another senior to improve internal communication in the department and to create change, help take on new challenges, and encourage the DGs act according to their promises; each action we take or fail to take is a symbol for others and something they interpret; we must therefore manage all of that effectively and we need help."*

> *"I take them at fairly high face-value; this allows them to interact with their colleagues with enough authority and self-confidence!"*

2.5   Do deputy ministers have something to learn about horizontal management?

a)   Learning needs

Almost every respondent confirmed from the outset that, within the community, a lot of progress has been made on this issue. Four of the 28 deputy ministers think that there is no real need for learning or that, at this point in their career, it is too late to develop the right attitude if it doesn't exist already.

> *"There are no specific learning needs, because this should have been a criterion for selecting the DM. Learning should be geared to motivating subordinates to learn. The DM must have been continually learning throughout his career. DMs must continue to learn every day of the week through interaction, openness and experimentation and by being accountable for what they do. It's a culture, an attitude."*

> *"DMs no longer have learning needs; a few years ago, there was a problem with the perception of HM, but the style has changed from old to new. DMs now know and accept that it's the right way to work; the lower levels must be encouraged to think and act the same. The problem is the scope of the management agenda: there is little planning or priority-setting, and everything asked of the DMs is like a heavy burden and they are frustrated."*

> *"When you become DM, you have already learned the basis of what you need to know."*

Some stated that learning needs depend on individual personality, past career experience or past learning, and that it is pointless to try to specify any common field of learning:

> *"It varies according to the individual's personal traits, character and experience."*

> *"It's not easy to change people at this point in their career; they learn on the job. The time for action is before, when they are directors and ADMs."*

After underscoring the major progress accomplished in this area, eighteen of the deputy ministers suggested a few avenues to explore in terms of learning needs: holding meetings, culture, an action- and results-oriented approach, multiple accountability, communication and partner motivation.

b)   Learning content

The most important items stressed by the deputy ministers are to continue improving attitudes about **meeting management**: many comments suggest learning to better organize meetings, *"according to the status of the issue and the stakes involved,"* and better direct them. Steps must be taken to ensure that everyone is heard and that progress is made toward tangible, participatory solutions while focusing at meetings on what strictly concerns the deputy ministerial level. We must streamline the agendas of DM meetings, removing anything that could be done by ADMs at an ADM meeting.

> *"We have to learn to send issues back to the EX when they send us something not at our level. Why do they do it? Because cultural changes are needed at the EX level as well: they need to develop skills in recognizing the effect of this attitude; sometimes, they have a false, exaggerated perception of centralization and cling too much to security by referring issues to deputy minister committees."*

> *"We also have to know how to delegate to ADMs; how to discipline ourselves when becoming personally involved with the central agencies, why and to what extent. We must not try to handle everything at every stage. DMs too often think they need to get involved fairly early in issues with the central agencies. They do it too soon. I call the Deputy Clerk at the PCO to express my opinion, and let my ADM proceed from there. I only call back if there is a problem. DMs think, 'They appointed me because I'm a good problem-solver, so I'll live up to the expectation!' It is no longer the DM's performance area. DMs must resist trying to always be at the centre of everything."*

Several deputy ministers say they have to continue **advancing the culture** on horizontal management: subordinates would like to protect the deputy minister and minister, which generates overly defensive attitudes. We must create a culture of confidence and action geared to a higher common good:

> *"We've made a lot of progress but vertical culture is still as prevalent as it was ten years ago,"*

one DM pointed out. Another added:

> *"If you don't take some distance in relation to your department, you're simply there to negotiate, which distorts the purpose."*

Horizontal management must be internalized: you accept to lose ground, share information and power, and see problems as if they cannot be resolved single-handedly (for example, Aboriginal issues or anti-terrorism).

You have to accept **that you are not always the leader** (agree to co-lead or even to simply be ready to help if necessary). There is a natural instinct to react according to the "command and control" model, and that has to change if we hope to mobilize teams, work from the inside, and influence and persuade rather than command. This is a special challenge, especially when you have so many leaders gathered in one room.

> *"You have to teach people to consider the possibilities from a horizontal perspective; it's an entirely different mindset. Can it be taught? Yes, it's a matter of interpersonal skills: listening, understanding, accepting to take second place, team spirit, and so on."*

DMs want to take the lead to make the culture evolve on this matter: *"You have to tell your colleague: my employees would like to work with yours, but they are pushed away."* You have to overcome cultural resistance within the departments. *"The problem arises when resources are the issue …especially when they've already been allocated; they see us coming as if to rob them!"*

Many deputy ministers would like horizontal initiatives to lead more often to **concrete action and results.** You have to develop an ability to move into action after pooling thoughts and making plans; multiple accountabilities are a drawback because the ministers' expectations sometimes clash with this approach.

> *"You have to reconcile horizontal and vertical management,"* one said. *"You have to manage the transition from vertically accountable to horizontally accountable"*

DMs believe that some of their colleagues identify too closely with their minister. Some ministers are reluctant to have their DM think too much in corporate terms rather than from the departmental perspective only.

> *"DMs must want to get to the heart of things and resolve fundamental issues, not simply 'pretend' while continuing to manage the same way as everyone else; they very honestly do what will please the minister, but this doesn't change much because it remains too superficial."*

The DMs want to be able to link horizontal management issues more closely to the deputy minister's performance contract; this would be a means of generating concern to gear these initiatives more toward results:

> *"The corporate role has grown and that's good, but we need a collective framework of accountability that takes this into account; for example, employee surveys led to the creation of a few deputy-minister working groups; this is wonderful because we are acting on what we see, and we are showing our willingness to commit; however, I am not so sure of what*

actually happens to the work that these groups accomplish: perhaps something has been done, but it seems very obscure; for each of these opportunities, we need an action plan, someone in charge, priorities, resources, a schedule and communication once steps have been completed. There is no magic solution; you have to advance as well as individual and group learning allows."

Several DMs thought that **interpersonal communication style** is an area where learning would be appropriate. The deputy ministers explained that horizontal management relies on honesty, communication and trust; it demands a positive atmosphere for relating to others. However, some players in the process manifest 'prima donna' attitudes:

"Some people have to learn to manage how they relate to others. During negotiations and arbitration, you have to pay attention to human relations and your interpersonal approach; the image a person projects is much more important than what is generally understood; over time, this aspect bothers you less, but the net effect is that we do not make the best use of the potential for interdepartmental co-operation and corporate management."

Others referred to a kind of personal competition that makes people less at ease in expressing their opinions:

"Based on what I see, there is too much 'taking centre stage' going on at the meetings. It's normal; there are all sorts of personalities in every context."

On the other hand, another DM defended the rather direct nature of the conversations as key to realistic and profitable discussions:

"The ability to be open and get to the bottom of things saves me time in the long run, even if it creates short-term conflicts; once the basic issues have been resolved, everything else falls into place. For example, we must tackle a proper definition of the long-term problems we hope to resolve."

Finally, one deputy minister thought it appropriate to learn **to more effectively motivate partners** outside government:

"We could be much more effective, and we are still in the process of experimenting. We have to learn how to mobilize interest groups, the public and partners. We have to find a way for the central agencies to operate in a two-way manner through it all. We need mechanisms to determine peoples' interests, to ensure that companies take it all seriously. We must learn to specify accountability for these projects. We need a

mechanism for resolving disputes that emerge in the process. Often, the dynamics of these projects creates solutions designed to please numerous parties, but which are not, in fact, the best solutions. The methodology for this has not yet been developed."

c)   Methods

Most of the deputy ministers say that learning methods should centre on practice, analysis and joint reflection.

The ideal would be to develop consistent reflexes early in one's career. EX employees must be given opportunities to get out of their department. They need to participate in workshops, activities, forums and working groups.

> *"People need to realize that they must belong to several communities at once: internal, departments, deputy-ministerial communities, international networks, Canadian networks, and so on."*

CCMD has already done a great deal through its orientation course and roundtables. The CCMD can continue to foster learning by analyzing examples and organizing discussion groups. We could use the best practice method to disseminate what is learned in these areas:

> *"We could also reflect more often as a group, although with 28 members, it's not always easy!"*

The DMs are aware that much progress has been made in this area, and they readily refer to the work of Carole Swan and Judith Moses. The deputy ministers are sure that they are on the right track and, in the end, that a culture will develop that will be enhanced by continuous practice; on the other hand, they also mention the need to pay attention to structural support: structures (committees, meetings), accountability (systems and procedures), resources (acting on people), and so on.

2.6   The accountability framework for horizontal management

Six deputy ministers see no need to change the existing system; on the other hand, the Clerk thinks this is very important *"and lets us know."* He conveys his concerns, publishes a list of corporate priorities that everyone must adopt, and everyone's contribution is clearly reflected in the assessment. If the contract does reflect the DM's work, every deputy minister should look into the situation and will do so with practice and experience.

For some DMs, the problem is not in evaluating people, but rather in focussing the evaluation on committee action:

> *"HM has not produced much because no one has a genuine interest in advancing collective issues; instead, we could better define what is expected of each committee (inform, decide, coordinate, take action, assess and so on)."*

Generally speaking, the deputy ministers are ready for certain changes. Three-quarters of the deputy ministers want changes that will trigger a movement toward action and results. Four major avenues toward change were mentioned: a system of incentives based on the model used in Alberta, fewer priorities, a more directive and precise identification of expectations, and a more joint approach to assessment.

No DM is in favour of setting aside the current system, and everyone acknowledges its significant merits. Several warned against overly simplistic and hasty action: we must not become too mechanical or too bureaucratic, the deputy minister does not have control over all the variables; the rise of horizontal priorities should coincide with a decline in vertical priorities to ensure the amount of time and energy required. Emphasis was also placed on the need to foster the shared nature of certain horizontal objectives.

a) *Bonuses*

Half the deputy ministers spontaneously raised the issue of bonuses for achieving horizontal objectives, similar to the practice in Alberta:

> *"No specific reward system exists like the one in Alberta: a portion of the DM's bonus could relate to specifically identified horizontal issues; this would generate a lot of initiatives and prevent passivity. If this was done, the impact would reach to the very foundations of the hierarchical pyramid; if we had to report on it, we would ask our subordinates to do the same."*

b) *Be more specific and a bit more formalistic*

Two-thirds would like the system to continue to evolve cautiously towards greater precision in identifying expectations and anticipated results. They would like to see indicators, overall timelines and even changes in the terminology used:

> *"I am very supportive of specific accountability frameworks, and the problem with horizontal management is the frequent confusion over what must be done, the results, who is responsible and who contributes what. This would clarify these areas."*

> *"It's always too implicit. We should spell out in black and white the specific areas where we want to see horizontal management. We must continue to increase performance measurements. We need a bit more formalism and precision on permanent commitments. We must specify priorities, problem areas, expectations and key initiatives."*

> *"We must refocus assessment on impacts and results rather than on the budgets and responsibilities achieved. Reasonable clarification of the focus of co-operation and the degree of progress on issues after a year would help."*

> *"We can change the wording of the contract: use 'shall' more often than 'may'."*

c)   *Be more selective about corporate priorities*

For some DMs, the specific nature of the contracts is not so much the problem as the profusion and diffusion of priorities:

> *"More precision in the contracts? I don't know; it would be useful, but the most important thing would be to isolate one or two key priorities and describe them precisely. ... We must be more specific on the commitments that DMs have to make; it's a tool for achieving objectives. There should be prior dialogue with people from the PCO, including the Clerk. We have far too many corporate objectives and not always the right ones: sometimes, all the trouble hardly seems worth it."*

d)   *Adopt a more joint approach*

Since horizontal management occurs in a group, various suggestions were made to ensure that components of the assessment framework are shared, or at least, related; this might include expectations, actions, indicators or evaluative judgements. One DM even suggested establishing a policy application contract with the Clerk.

> *"We must share our horizontal commitments in a book that is passed around, in addition to creating joint commitments for accountability purposes. We can go farther by specifying in the contract the committee's accomplishments or its anticipated progress on an annual basis. I hope that the others expressed expectations in this area too. However, I'm not aware of the scope of any."*

The COSO process must also change because it is too much based on individual performance.

> *"We must ensure that they (expectations) are actually accomplished with colleagues."*

> *"Yes, it is possible and it would be a very good idea to include horizontal performance objectives in the performance contract. I would even go further: each DM should have several 'policy contracts' with the Clerk; each would specify the work objectives and results within a certain timeframe, identify the other DMs involved in the effort, as well as the basis for accountability (who, what, when, how) and the support that the central agencies agree to provide. These contracts would also be issued to other DMs involved and should also be signed by the Department of Finance, considering the importance of its current role."*

Finally, the most vulnerable DMs would like stronger signals sent to ensure that the most powerful departments cooperate better.

> *"Improving the specific character of the contract implies performance indicators, and that is possible provided the system can change to accommodate this; we need clearer signals that oblige people to cooperate."*

Here are some comments on general changes of approach in identifying the work agenda:

> *"We need an entirely different system in which leadership is more important than structures and procedures."*

> *"It's not only a matter of procedures. Does the government really want to pay attention to coherence, rather than merely work on the surface? Consider the issues of health, international development and global warming as examples of issues outside my authority. If this is the case, we need clearer signals and more encouraging incentives to ensure that DMs are in step with government policy. In cases where government objectives clash, we must be open to identifying lasting solutions rather than being self-centred; we must identify options through a transparent procedure open to PCO scrutiny."*

Although the deputy ministers ponder quite different approaches, two overall messages emerge from the opinions of three-quarters of the deputy ministers interviewed: they must focus more on results and they need a systemic bonding agent to guarantee co-operation. Performance contracts can contribute to both these ends.

3.   *The Initial Period as a New Deputy Minister*

*"First of all, congratulations on getting the most interesting job in the country. Enjoy it,
or it won't be worth the pain."*

(My first advice to a friend who became a colleague.)

A deputy minister's initial time in the position is a crucial period in many respects. The newcomer gets checked out from all sides – the minister, managers, staff, client groups and the central agencies. Everyone wonders what his agenda and style will be and how co-operation will be engendered (see Mintzberg, in Mintzberg and Bourgault, 2000). Everyone tries to determine how their interests will be affected by the newcomer.

The new incumbent knows that he's being watched and that his actions and even his lack of action will be interpreted in certain ways that could affect his mandate's chance of success. He will soon have to make strategic decisions and adopt tactics that will lay the groundwork for what his style will be like on the job. His first actions may spark co-operation or resistance from those he deals with, hence ease or jeopardize his ability to fulfil his agenda.

The newcomer finds himself in a complex situation: moving too fast will make him seem reckless and could lead to mistakes; moving too slowly will make him seem insecure, indecisive and inclined to settle for the *status quo*. Being too controlling will give him the image of someone who does not trust accumulated expertise, and listening too much could get him bogged down in perpetuating past practices.

What strategy should he adopt when starting his new job? To use Henry Mintzberg's deliberately simplified image, should he enter like a conqueror who immediately imposes new rules of the game or should he listen intently to absorb the organization's existing vision?

Should the DM be the "spearhead" (conquering new territory that he submits to his domination and distancing himself from the vision of the long-standing occupants by imposing his own over their objections) or should he be a "sponge" (taking on the concerns, constraints and objectives of the environment he moves into, identifying with them and adopting the vision of those who are already there)?

The advantage of the conqueror approach is that the new DM swiftly gets the organization to commit to change and does not let himself get trapped by discussions designed to defend the *status quo*. This presents a number of drawbacks: the failure to listen is seen as a rejection and lack of trust; it involves untested solutions, whose difficulties will undermine the credibility of the person promoting them to the managers. Failure to listen disengages managers from identifying themselves with the proposed reforms.

The advantage of the "sponge" approach is that it gets the existing staff to "buy into" the new perspectives by proposing projects that are technically tested and proven feasible and makes them feel secure. The downside is that the departmental project may become less relevant, even if it survives at all. On the other hand, a certain dynamic starts to take shape whereby the people in the organization believe that the new DM is not a person of substance or change, but one who can be used as a channel of communication to the central power structures.

Very few issues define the DM's role better: he defines agendas and is responsible for overall results, all within a technical field in which he might not necessarily be an expert. What he is, in fact, an expert in is the notion of seeking the public interest, strategic analysis, administrative operations in a political universe, the government process and management. Without being very familiar with each of the department's fields, unless he has previously worked there or made a career in a related department, he must:

1)   introduce cohesive integration

2)   bring together and support the orientations of the specialized branches

3)   link them to various external universes

4)   obtain results that are more or less clearly related to the government's agenda.

His concerns are defined in terms of a general approach (the image of an energetic and determined practitioner with a plan to implement, as opposed to the image of a person who listens and is sensitive to the organizational culture), a sequence of things that must get done, people who have to be met and attitudes that have to be adopted. He seeks to make people feel at ease, to understand, to organize, to engender a vision and a plan, to communicate these, and forge productive bonds of co-operation.

Several rather immediate decisions will have to be made, some of which, such as how he relates to the minister, will be more or less imposed on him. He will have to decide on the fate of the most immediate assistants whom he has inherited from his predecessor, assess his assistant deputy ministers and key senior managers, and determine how to influence the central agencies, earn the trust of client groups, and, especially, how to go about defining the department's action plan.

His approach will be coloured by the new management values that favour listening more than control, inspiration more than orders and understanding more than self-importance. However, he will have to "make a difference" and, as such, will need to live up to the specific mandate conferred upon him.

3.1   Strategy-determining factors

The deputy minister will first have to establish a take-over strategy. A third of the respondents said that this depends on various factors that commonly characterize each situation: the wider environment. the prevailing situation, the mandate and each person's individual style.

External factors are more or less imposed by the various players: sometimes, but not often, a specific mandate will be given by the Clerk, in the wake of reorganizations, innovations or crises:

> *"Ideally, some time should be spent with the Clerk to get a good grasp of the department and the mandate."*

Only six instances of meetings were reported. In several cases, the specific mandate was deferred to a subsequent discussion of the next performance contract. Generally, this involves a tacit mandate since the Clerk assumes that the deputy minister already has the wisdom required to interpret the mandate in accordance with the circumstances and information provided. This kind of research will enable him to better document the elements of the prevailing situation – in such cases, the deputy ministers refer to a mandate that is "obvious from the situation:"

> *"When the minister has to be brought closer to the department or vice versa. Everything depends on the department's context: which phase is it in? The same thing applies to the minister."*

Another type of tacit mandate emerges when an individual has come through the department and knows that he was chosen for this very reason. He knows the people, programs and clients and has to consolidate the department's activities. A mandate could also be shaped by more or less prescriptive input from the minister, depending on whether the latter has been there for a long time, is senior in the government or has specific projects in mind.

> *"Some ministers have their own plans, while others want to be fed ideas."*

Most of the time, deputy ministers describe their initial mandate as "open" and requiring interpretation based on the prevailing situation and the government's overall agenda.

> *"The mandate depends on the type of department. If the department is too stable, changes and new policies might be called for. This means pushing harder, challenging, and listening to those who want change. Everything depends on the existing agenda. There is always an agenda in every department. The agenda consists of problems and issues – things that need to be done or corrected. In setting your agenda, you have to work with the*

*government, the minister, the Clerk, the department and your DM
colleagues."*

Personal factors also play a part, as in the case of someone who comes from the
department. The DM's personal style, personality (extrovert or reserved) and previous
experiences also play a role in determining the initial strategy.

The more specific the strategy and the more it constitutes a break with the current
situation, (which is quite rare), the more the deputy minister will have to look for
information outside the organization, have something to say about the mobility of
managers and attempt to establish an approach that could veer away from existing
practice. Instances of open mandates have become increasingly frequent and call for a
strategy as described below.

The question asked was couched in terms of the "conqueror" and the "sponge" in order to
provoke a reaction. In terms of the various degrees of inquisitive activism or empathy
that should be shown, the DMs' responses show that there are no alternatives, only orders
of sub-phases and degrees of intensity. Depending on the strategy chosen, one can apply
both, but in a certain order, with phases that vary in length and in terms of varying
degrees of control and openness to listening.

3.2   The transition

Ideally, deputy ministers would like to make use of a three-week period before taking
over their new functions. They could close some files, manage the transition with their
successor, give some more thought to their new mandate and starting strategy, and make
some arrangements concerning their immediate staff. Until April 2002, there were not
many cases of this type: only five were found. Generally, the transition took less than a
week. The one in May 2002 took at least three weeks.

The arrival of a new deputy minister does not stop the department's operations or the
pressing demands from the work environment. At the same time, a frame of reference has
to be established, issue updates have to be prepared, and a functional network of
relationships has to be established, all while earning the trust of the existing employees.
The longer the transition takes, the better the chances of achieving harmony.

3.3   The strategy

The deputy minister has to take a strategic approach as soon as he arrives in the
department. One of them offered the following advice:

> *"In the very beginning, leave the everyday work to the staff and spend
> your time on strategic aspects: understanding the context, seeing the*

overall picture, setting priorities, finding out where the resources are. You will have to reallocate resources on the basis of your priorities. You will have to establish your leadership in this respect. This is the type of leadership that people expect from you."

Deputy ministers provided 18 pieces of strategic, tactical and operational advice for initial success in a new DM position; 3 of these were mentioned most often, 6 came up quite often (almost half the deputy ministers mentioned them) and 9 came up at least 4 times (25%). They are presented in order of frequency, not in strategic or chronological order. The frequency reflects the importance deputy ministers attach to these items. In fact, most of these pieces of advice will have broad strategic, tactical or operational ramifications, but the frequency of their being cited reflects the DMs' perception of their relative importance and priority.

The first category includes the three items mentioned by almost every deputy minister: earning the trust of both the staff and the minister and developing a vision and a plan.

3.3.1 *Understand the department and earn the staff's trust*

Regardless of their authority, reputation, prestige and network of relationships, deputy ministers cannot do anything without the support of their employees. It is important to avoid sabotage, as well as passive or active resistance, and it is important to generate enthusiasm, commitment and productivity. Even if it were easier to lay off, move or reassign employees in the public service, the time and energy required to deal with so many people would totally absorb the newcomer's agenda. This is why deputy ministers give absolute priority to securing the collaboration of the department's employees. There are four basic things that have to be accomplished: first, employees have to be reassured about your approach and you have to introduce yourself personally; second, you have to listen to people if you want to get to know and understand the organization; third, you have to discover the organizational culture so you can take it into account, respect it, identify the sensitive areas and choose where you want to foster development; finally, you have to visit the employees where they work to show your personal commitment and mobilize them.

a)   ***Reassuring employees and winning their acceptance on a personal level***

> *"The biggest stumbling block is winning the organization's acceptance, because that's where everything starts (ministers, managers and employees); this is more important than deciding on which people to move and the various directions and problems to address. Attend important departmental events. Build a family. In addition to reassuring people about the future and your projects, you have to listen and learn."*

b)   ***Listening to people in order to get to know and understand the organization***

"Next, you have to establish a climate of trust within the department: listening, learning and consulting…especially if you've arrived from outside. You have to visit the regional offices, meet people and managers there and listen to their concerns."

"You're not there to change everything, but rather to listen and offer complementary assistance."

"Be humble. I had ideas, but there was no question of imposing them on my arrival: first, they would have been wrong and, second, they would have been rejected. One of my ideas involved changing the structure, but staff constraints prevented me from doing it for three years: thank God, I didn't do it as soon as I arrived! Without this constraint, I would have acted much sooner – too soon, in fact, based on what I knew at the time."

"You must not breeze into the organization with ready-made solutions that you 'spring on' people; the department's staff have to participate in the process of identifying solutions. First, you have to be a sponge: recognize that you don't have all the solutions to all the problems, prejudices or preconceptions."

"You really have to listen and understand what is going on before claiming to change things. This does not take a lot of your personal time, but is the unavoidable price to pay for bringing about successful fundamental change. It also takes a lot of time to deepen your level of understanding of what is sensitive in an organization; for instance, in one case, human resources are extremely important and everything depends on that; in another, it is operations that are extremely important."

c)   ***Understanding and acting on the culture***

"Don't forget that each department has its own culture and sensitivities. These have to be discovered and taken into account. The organizational culture derives from people and the department's history: it is difficult to ignore and represents both a constraint and an opportunity. If you are not already aware of it, you'll have to discover it through the employees who have been there the longest. You have to use it, discover its mechanisms and sensitive points so that you can make the changes you want. For instance, in our case, we've been making decisions for the past 20 years about changes that haven't really been applied. Yet, I noticed that the organization's operations revolved around the budget allocations. So, I

*organized change around this and the people had no choice but to operate
in accordance with the change I made.”*

d)   **Getting involved to motivate the staff**
        *“Go to the department: listen and learn; be a team builder and show
        yourself to be a team player.”*

        *“But you have to do certain things at the beginning: go to the staff, listen
        to them, show that you’re open; in so doing, you have to be honest,
        transparent and humble; you have to recognize that you don’t know
        everything and that you’re counting on them to get things done.”*

3.3.2   Become the minister’s trusted ally

The minister is the head of the department over which he has absolute authority; the
minister delegates this authority to the deputy minister in various areas. The minister is
the spokesperson for the department’s projects in Cabinet. The minister also responds in
the House and parliamentary committees about what is happening in the department.
Finally, the minister may have some influence on the PM, and some of the other
ministers as well as on caucus members and the overall party in power.

For each of these reasons of legitimacy as well as of opportunity, the minister plays a
very important role for the deputy minister, even if the minister’s work sometimes keeps
him away from the department. While the minister contributes the energy, as described in
the Aberbach *et al.* energy-equilibrium model, he also incarnates authority, veto power
and a role as a potential advocate. The minister can do a lot for the department and the
department should do a lot for the person who is responsible for implementing the
government program that the department constitutes.

The underlying principle is that the public service is neutral, professional and at the
service of its employer, the federal government, and that the right way to serve the
country is to serve the government of the day within the bounds of the law.

The minister is located at the centre of a process of multiple and complex pressures. He is
under constant media attention. He will be constantly criticized, no matter what position
he takes. It is a far more difficult job than people think and the constant pressure can
eventually lead to an assortment of premature announcements, impulsive decisions,
scandals, etc. Different types of people become ministers, and the same goes for deputy
ministers; individuals have different Achilles’ heels. The minister may inadvertently
harm the government or the department. That is why the deputy minister must provide
him advice on a wide range of topics and take the minister’s contribution into account.

It is apparent in the opinions below that different approaches are based on various
degrees of formality and utilitarianism, depending on the personalities and past
experiences of the deputy ministers concerned. Individual experiences include a meeting

with the DM prior to an appointment, one describing it as being the fifth step; one for whom the DM can become a trusted ally and able to speak 'off the cuff;' one who needs reassurance; one who is the boss; and, lastly, one with concerns to be taken into consideration while keeping the department's management "on track."

The relational dimension is of the utmost importance: first, with the minister, then with the minister's office. However, there are limits: the deputy minister is accountable not only to the minister but also to the Clerk and some colleagues. Certain limits must also be maintained with respect to the relationship with the minister on both the personal and hierarchichal levels. The following maxim applies: "The deputy minister is the servant of the Crown, which means, in the democratic context, that he has to be a loyal and competent servant of the government of the day with the strictest regard for legality."

> *"The first thing that needs to be done is to establish good relations with the minister and his office; you have 6 months to do this; there are three levels of success (0%, 70% and 90%) and your professional life will depend on it. Talk to him; you have to know (and satisfy) his needs; talk to your managers and predecessor about this."*

> *"Meet with the minister as soon as possible; you have to know his views on the most pressing issues as well as his expectations. Especially when you first start, you have to get the minister's opinion and get him to commit. This is what I hear from the central agencies and the Clerk; how do you see things? It is essential that you develop good relations; you have to do quick and detailed research on matters he raises and provide him with informed advice."*

> *"You have to get a mandate from the minister – especially in my area where political relationships are so important. Write a general, but basic piece on the vision and discuss it with the minister. You have to keep your ears open to discern what he feels strongly about and avoid doing anything that will be detrimental in that respect. You shouldn't have a personal agenda (career ambitions or a preconceived project); instead, you should concentrate exclusively on the minister's."*

> *"Fifth, collaborate with the minister to establish work procedures; have an informal working dinner; try to understand what this person is interested in and how he operates; quickly establish trust. In general, ministers are inclined to cooperate with you; you have to project an attitude of: 'I want to hear your views on every topic.' If he agrees to speak openly, you'll have earned some points."*

> *"The number one priority is to personally connect with the minister at any level you can (authority, interests, conceptual frameworks, etc.) and*

advise him on the agenda and, finally, sell it to the department as the minister's vision."

"Spend a lot of time with your minister. Get to know him well. Once you know each other well, he can become your ally. Develop a good and respectful interpersonal relationship with him. You have to become a key element of support for him. There were some difficulties, because things had gone very badly with the previous DM: without trust, it is very difficult to do anything."

"Make sure that the minister is satisfied and keep him feeling that way; know his views and needs and designate people who know how to look after him properly rather than spending too much of your own time on maintaining the relationship. The minister does not need an in-depth knowledge of the department, but he has to feel as though he is informed and in control of changes involving policy, programs and management. He has to feel like he's 'in the loop' and has a certain authority over the department's overall direction."

"The question is how to bring the agendas together. You have to manage your minister; you are the gatekeeper, the interpreter; you need his trust if you are going to play a bigger role than merely being his assistant. You have to understand your minister's strengths and use them while at the same time helping him out in his weaker areas. In the medium-term, it's impossible to do without the minister, so you have to work with him."

"The minister: in case I haven't mentioned it before, I took him for granted! What could be more important? That's 50% of the DM's role. He's the first person to meet with; you're there to serve him. You really can't give advice on how to go about it because everyone is different and you have to proceed in a way that both parties are comfortable with. In this particular relationship, the minister is the one with the authority and it is up to us to try to adapt. I got along well with all of my ministers: you have to figure out how to win his trust and adapt to him, to his particular style of dialogue; are you going to communicate in writing or orally? It's up to the minister to decide."

"It's more sensitive in the case of the minister's office (8 or 9 assistants) than with the minister: do they have their feet on the ground and are they strong? If they are not well informed about the respective areas of jurisdiction in policy and administrative organizations, they will resist. You have to set up a rather formal work and communications process."

The relationship with the minister is of paramount importance, but 5 out of 28 respondents did not raise it and 10 did not mention it as one of the top two things to be

involved with. When asked about this, the deputy ministers answered that it was so obvious that they did not feel they had to respond, especially since the context of the question led them to focus on the administrative machinery.

3.3.3 Generate a vision and a plan

A top-level manager has to ensure that what has to be done gets done. The vision is his way of determining "what has to be done" and of helping "to ensure" that it gets done. Recent management literature has turned to the question of vision. The deputy ministers' comments represent a unique opportunity for determining what a vision consists of and how it is developed. The vision defines a goal and a rationale and plays a motivating role. It is then used to set priorities, plans, values, standards, etc. Several agenda components compete with each other at the top of each department. The deputy minister is the person who, after consultation, decides what has to be done and organizes the action components relating to the vision. The minister, if he agrees, will be the official standard-bearer, while the management team will supervise its introduction into day-to-day management.

> *"You will need an agenda, a plan: set out what you want to do and how this affects relationships, policy issues and so on. You should already have the nucleus, a certain vision, certain ideas. You will need a clear frame of reference when directors share their suggestions and views; you have to be able to ask the right questions, discern the issues and identify the effects of their suggestions."*

> *"It is important to understand that you have a personal style and that each minister has his own culture, which has to be respected, but not completely. You have to develop a strategy to change the discourse and bring it to management and the department, which will have an impact on the department's management. The first year is very important. You have to quickly determine the priorities and how to carry them out. You also have to identify the department's values and communicate this philosophy so that the department's managers can reflect it. All of this constitutes your vision. Then, you have to start the process of exploring, improving and (even) changing this vision."*

> *"At the end of the third month, you should be in a position to set a relatively clear direction. But be careful not to cast the vision in stone or make it too detailed. Continually follow this direction. Be sure that your management team is really on board and remains so. The following three months will help refine this vision and institutionalize it in the organization through different means. Then, develop a plan and make sure it is carried out."*

"In the final analysis, you need a plan or a vision that makes sense, is feasible and reflects a certain degree of continuity with the past. You have to set the tone and help establish a vision for the department. This has to be your obsession. That is where you will make a real difference with the DGs. You provide an overall, integrated and consistent vision and you mobilize the DGs around it. That's what a DM is for."

The second category of factors consists of elements that were mentioned by nearly half the deputy ministers:

3.3.4   360-degree listening

The deputy minister has to develop his vision by listening to the people in his organization, those who are the most qualified in this respect. He has to be careful not to be misled by background noise and hear only one approach or be limited by a *status quo* perspective. Finally, he has to work with the power structures that are inherent in all organizations. Thus, he will need fresh air, new perspectives from different vantage points. He will therefore have to consult those who have been there the longest – the senior managers, peers, employees, clients and suppliers – in order to do an all-round scan of what the organization that is now under his care has been, is and might become.

"The mandate given by the Clerk is never too explicit or definitive. A situational analysis is always called for. This means turning to those who make up the department's context rather than to the department itself."

"It is important to talk to as many people as possible; take time to form your vision of things; take time to inject some wisdom into your vision of things – but not too much! Six weeks is a good timeframe. You really have to 'travel on foot' through your organization and I based my work plan on this approach: over two years, I had lunch with every manager because here, the kind of work to be done and my role in human resources make it important to know everyone. Talk to the employees and senior managers; consult at different levels; show that you are interested in what they do; listen carefully to the details."

"You have to meet with the previous DM and get him to help you form your picture of the situation."

"You have to seek advice from other people who are farther away from the department – the other DMs, the central agencies, people who work with the department, interest groups and clients: talk about the department's issues and ways of doing things."

3.3.5   Develop special lines of communication to the central agencies and the other DMs

According to Mintzberg, one of the fundamental roles of the most senior managers is to manage relationships: to communicate (transmit as well as receive), read, argue, sell and so on. The central agencies have a significant impact on the outcome of departmental projects and the deputy minister who knows how his peers perceive his department can more productively guide the slant taken on issues. Personal knowledge of these senior officials makes one's advocacy more effective.

Lastly, the support of the DM community plays a key role: peers sit on committees, can warn one another in time and, above all, can provide support and solidarity as well as rapid, seasoned advice.

> *"Second, you have to establish a relationship of trust with the centre: find out who the players are and figure out how to work with them. You have to meet the people in the central agencies (at all levels) to see what it all means for the department."*

> *"First, you have to meet your deputy-minister colleagues as soon as possible: only they can appreciate the difficulties involved in your job. They will be your partners in your horizontal work and will give you wise counsel and seasoned advice. As it happens, they have all been very helpful in my case. In a way, they are your lifeline. I strongly believe in the DM community. It can be very useful. Be actively involved in it. Attend meetings and committees as much as possible. Meet the DMs who are closest to your portfolio at dinners or private lunches. Being a DM is a lonely task. You can have a somewhat special relationship with 2 to 5 DMs or have a mentor; two DMs helped me; what a difference they made! You have to make the most of every opportunity to develop these contacts through dinners, lunches, meetings, conversations, etc."*

> *"You must not overlook the political side: the minister's office, the PMO and the Finance Minister's office. Whether you like it or not, they all have something to say about your agenda. Donald Savoie's book is very informative on this topic, and I used it."*

3.3.6   Build a committed team

There are four phases to team-building: assessing the individuals available, making the changes required, getting the management team to "buy in," and creating team chemistry.

"Second, there is the issue of speed: on some matters, it is easier to act early, for instance in the case of weaknesses in staff members. It is also important to meet one-on-one with the management team so that they can talk about their work. The fundamental issue is to determine whether the senior managers are the right ones for the job: I am not an expert in every area and I need their expertise and judgement; I need absolutely reliable people; so, I've made some changes among the managers. You shouldn't start suspecting everyone as soon as you arrive; nonetheless, you are the one who's accountable, so you have to spend the first few months watching and learning and then you make the decisions that have to be made."

"You should quickly set up your management team; this will result in difficult situations, such as transfers and departures; the team has to fit with your vision; if you put off making these decisions because they are difficult, you'll pay for it and they will only become more difficult to make; after a year, you'll realize that you paid a high price. I changed three ADMs in the first three months because my criteria for retention were: vision, values, management style and impression projected both within and outside the organization."

"You have to use staff departures; this can be a good opportunity to change the organizational structure with a minimum of difficulty. There is nothing more important than people: that is why I insisted on sitting on the selection juries for a dozen key positions in Ottawa and the regions: I wanted people who could share my vision and whom I could fully trust. Then, you have to identify the key individuals who will help you and fill your requirements in terms of style, skills and competencies. Bring in people who do not think like everyone else in the organization. Then, establish a relationship of trust with certain key members of the team: those who can be trusted; it is important to choose well since it will enable you to then be honest and speak freely; this brings integrity to your relationships with people; otherwise, everything is undermined."

"You have to get the management team to commit through a questionnaire based on needs and priorities. You have to articulate a vision, connect with senior managers or change them. Otherwise, you'll be nothing more than the minister's go-between and the leadership shortfalls will become your problem. You have to set up a process for securing people's commitment, and this process must get people to identify themselves with change and what change entails; it has to become their process."

"You have to act deliberately to create chemistry among the senior managers; three months after my arrival, I held a two-day retreat outside

the workplace ith the stipulation that we would not talk about the department. We talked about world problems with well-known speakers and so on – no notes, no reports; after this event, one manager told me I had them eating out of my hand! This cemented the team: 98% reported being very satisfied."

3.3.7   Reduce premature expectations and commitments and focus action

A new deputy minister initially finds himself subject to many requests from within the department. Some people have expectations and projects that were not very popular with the previous management; others want to prioritize a given area. Naturally, several managers have personal ambitions. Every effort is made to get the newcomer to commit as soon as possible.

> *"You have to resist the expectations of people who want a vision within a week, even if they seem to be saying: he doesn't know what to do! Just tell them that it has to be done together. Say as little as possible and learn as much as possible from briefing books and meetings with all parts of the organization. Do not try to agree or disagree with what people say; keep your distance. Say that you don't have all the answers. Wait 2 to 3 months before making major changes…and only make those that are necessary!"*

> *"With respect to your department, don't try to do everything on the first day and race off in all directions. You have to avoid trying – or giving the impression that you will be trying – to do everything on the first day."*

> *"Next, meet with the people in the department and listen; don't talk yet; listen very carefully; don't commit yourself too early; a lot of people will try to get you to commit early. In fact, you have up to three months to show the first glimmer of a vision of things; the first two months are used for learning. You have to be able to identify the key issues, the ones where you want to leave your mark, which will have the greatest impact on the system and on relations with the minister."*

3.3.8   Protect your health and personal life

For those coming from the outside especially, there is an enormous amount of learning to be done. At any rate, you want to make a good impression and show that you are up to the job. There will be endless demands and no shortage of opportunities to work too many hours. The danger is to expend too much energy at the outset and become physically or psychologically exhausted and neglect your personal and family life.

"Leave room for your mental health; occasionally change the pattern of your day; do not try to read everything; keep yourself fit. Protect your physical and mental health: get enough sleep, exercise and relax. If you cannot use your strength or mind to work, you will not achieve anything. Try to encourage this approach among your senior managers so that they will spread it down throughout the pyramid. I don't make people work at night or on weekends, and I don't call meetings that will make people travel on Sundays."

"Whatever you do, balance your personal life because the work and its contact will eat you alive!"

3.3.9 Deal with key individuals among your immediate staff

"The second thing is to choose your closest staff. I have 7, including the support staff; they help you stay sane. You have to have a real relationship with them. You have to quickly calm their very legitimate fears and insecurities when you arrive."

"It was the same story with the DM's immediate collaborators: they all left within two days; very good positions were found for them and they were well looked after in order to reduce the impact of the change and also because of the respect we had for them and their work."

Lastly, a third category consists of three elements mentioned by a significant contingent of at least four deputy ministers:

3.3.10 Set your prejudices aside and ignore rumours

"Third, avoid prejudices; talk to the most senior managers, get to know them, make them feel at ease with you, get them to talk about the department's history."

"Above all, I would say avoid getting carried away, listen a lot and set aside prejudices, preconceptions, rumours, myths and so on."

3.3.11 Be careful about the image you project

This is true everywhere: the perceived image is seen as reality. Who said that first impressions were the right ones? New deputy ministers and those who come from outside the federal public service are especially vulnerable with regard to their image. This is also true for those who are on their second appointment; the rumours about them can create perceptual biases: such and such was heard about them, so such a statement has to be interpreted in this way!

Moreover, every sign (word, gesture, look, pout or external appearance) given by a deputy minister has a unique effect. Employees will certainly attribute a great deal of importance to it.

> *"New deputy ministers tend to underestimate the anxiety of staff when they join a department; they are worried about all sorts of things and tend to over-analyze each of our words, gestures and attitudes. You have to be reserved and circumspect."*

> *"You can't imagine how the most ordinary statement can take on the most extraordinary proportions just because the deputy minister made it or because it was said in a certain way. The same applies to greetings made – or not made because of distraction or fatigue – in the elevator. Everything gets blown out of all proportion during the deputy minister's breaking-in period!"*

3.3.12 Ensure a certain degree of continuity with your predecessor

When you start a new position, you want to make a difference. You want to prove your importance. Messages of change have to be made with a certain degree of caution. The predecessor should not be criticized and sarcasm should be avoided. Who can say what tomorrow will bring? You have to generate a positive climate, avoid appearing self-important and project an image of humility, humanity and loyalty.

> *"Avoid being seen as someone who says 'I don't like the way things are set up around here,' and who radically changes all the managers, relying only on his little triumvirate of autocrats."*

> *"Clearly establish continuity (unless your mandate dictates otherwise); I told everyone that I was trying to continue my predecessor's path, and I praised his achievements to all of the staff."*

3.3.13 Be critical

A deputy minister should see his fundamental role as the critic of the specialists' projects. His criticism should be based on criteria of integration, thoroughness and relevance. Specialists tend to favour a certain way of doing things. The deputy minister has to analyze everything in overall terms. His contribution serves only to forestall what clients, groups, the media, other government levels and politicians would say publicly and other federal departments privately. He takes note of the fact that each manager has his own interests and perspectives. His role is to balance the various contributions and integrate them.

"Information coming from inside the organization should never be taken for granted: one of our roles is to criticize!"

"Check whether the story you are being told makes sense to you; if so, you will have nothing but marginal changes to make; if not, you will have to get to the bottom of things. Be sure that the department is doing the right things in the right way. Don't be afraid to challenge their understanding of things and to change their vision."

"You shouldn't automatically believe the directors who say that every system is running smoothly. You have to go down one level to check and then analyze the audits and follow-ups."

3.3.14 Know the legal framework

The power to act is based on the legal framework and it goes without saying that the deputy minister is managing not only an organization but also a framework of obligations, powers and responsibilities. If he can properly master this framework, he will be in a better position to see what is possible and what is inevitable.

"It is also important to read the relevant legislation. You have to have a good understanding of the legal basis: what is there and what it means for the DM."

3.3.15 Manage a communications strategy right down to the department's base

Stepping into a position of higher authority is like marketing a person, a set of skills and a vision. Since hierarchical authority is not as effective as encouragement and inspiration, the deputy minister has to concentrate on his message and image, as well as on how these are communicated and received. Some people say the most difficult task is ensuring that people two or three levels down share the perspective the deputy minister projects. This type of communication will be blocked if the emitter's image is tarnished or if the message is garbled and not received by the person it is intended for.

"Present yourself as a normal, humble and genuine human being."

"Concentrate on teamwork, as well as on developing a learning organization and an internal system to communicate your values and key messages: don't be afraid to repeat yourself, it is essential that you do so; too many people take it for granted that they really have been understood the second or third time round!"

"Develop a clear vision of what needs to be done; summarize it in a clear presentation; prepare a 2 to 3-year game plan."

3.3.16 The CCMD

New deputy ministers get invited to orientation sessions that are periodically given by the Canadian Centre for Management Development. Since DMs are overworked and often anxious in their first year, there is a strong temptation to remain within the department to deal with problems and move ahead with the agenda. Some might be inclined to postpone this session, especially when they have already spent 25 years at various levels of the public service. Some might think that they have a pretty good grasp of it all!

> *"The CCMD course is terrific in this respect."*

> *"Don't put off your CCMD orientation session, even if you think you know the system well. I knew it very well, but the discussions and presentations provided a wonderful opportunity for reflecting and adopting approaches that became clearer and more based on the position's requirements. It also refreshed my knowledge of PCO structures and processes."*

3.3.17 Set up a work process

> The deputy minister finds himself at the centre of a very thick network of relationships and is subjected to constant and multiple pressures. To achieve his objectives, the DM has to skilfully manage not only his time, but also his contributions and work organization. A strategic and resolute approach is recommended.

> *"Lastly, manage your time strategically; my week is very busy, but productive. We are making real progress in long-term areas that do not get swept away by current concerns. We consolidate our progress: we make sure that we will not fall behind in areas where we have made progress. My schedule is not a collection of disparate and dispersed activities. It is focused on a vision, then a project, then a work agenda and everything gets linked, both in terms of the way I organize my time and what I say. You need a yardstick for allocating your personal time, and that's the one you'll have to stick by."*

> *"Do not let the system run your life; stay in control. Make sure the constraints don't tie you to your desk and totally absorb your mind. Don't let the department overload you. Set your own pace and don't be afraid of looking like a human being with limitations in this respect."*

> *"Manage your 5 or 6 most important relationships well; they are your lifeline!"*

> *"Quickly make contact with the key elements in your environment: include some deputy ministers and people from the outside."*

3.3.18 Assert yourself and your style

> *"The first rule: don't apologize for being there. If you were appointed, it's because someone found you worthy. You have to demonstrate self-confidence and self-respect. You have to start by establishing your presence in the system: your mark and your style. You have to be clear about your values and express them. Specify what you believe in: loyalty, innovation, creativity and decisiveness."*

> *"You have to put your cards on the table. I told them I was going to be there for at least three years and I talked about the Clerk's concerns. I mentioned that I really wanted this job so I could do something with it."*

> *"You have to announce your style and the main points of your vision; use meetings with senior managers and regional directors 3 or 4 times a year; I told them I had conditions and a mission. We will change from 11 departments to a single department that is coherent and credible in the eyes of the entire federal public service. Either you shape up or ship out. However, I did not mention how we would do it; I need you and your ideas to get there. You have to be genuine and determined: style matters; I said: 'I don't take myself seriously, but I do take my work seriously.'"*

3.4.　Final comments

Let's go back to the images of the spearhead and the sponge. Listening was felt to play a universally important role. Control was highlighted by only a quarter of the respondents. Rejection by the organization is the greatest fear, since without it you are bound to sink with only a few resources (budgets, appointments, reorganizations, missions and advocacy speeches) to possibly save you. Nobody recommends the pure conqueror (spearhead) style, even though everyone would like to get the organization on track as quickly as possibly. It would be better to talk about the spearhead – with an inquisitive mind. On the other side of the coin, nobody practices the pure sponge approach either, the preference being for a streamlined and substantial one with an abrasive side!

> *"You can't be a conqueror, since nobody can manage alone, or a sponge, since you'll get walked over."*

While some respondents indicated that you should not be either the spearhead or the sponge, many leaned towards a combination of both, but sequentially, and with varying intensity, depending on the time and the context.

TIMELINES

Before the first day
- *You get the briefing book ahead of time. Before the first day, you have to ascertain the department's context. Read the documents and talk to anyone who might be useful.*   - *You don't meet with the minister on the first day. You've already met him!*   - *You first meet the Clerk so that he can clearly spell out his expectations.*
The first day
- *On your first day, start thinking strategically: set up work teams and develop an approach for developing your plan. You are not a sponge, but you have to look ten years ahead. In the first 24 to 48 hours, you make your first contacts; you have to listen carefully to what is going on in the department; you have to interpret the culture and be open to the particular environment.*
The first 15 days
- *Initially, leave the everyday work to your staff and use your time on strategic factors: understanding the context, getting the "big picture," setting priorities, finding out where the resources are. You will have to reassign resources based on your priorities. You will have to exercise leadership in this respect. Leadership is what people expect from you.*   - *During the first two weeks, your absolutely top two priorities are: a team and a vision. Then, you can start making the necessary changes without fear. This means you will have to consult with directors, travel around the country, and meet staff, external contacts and business leaders.*
The first month
- *The classical approach is to listen in the first month, and then gradually become more assertive. You have to arrive with a game plan, one that people will identify with after your two-to-three-month grace period. During this time, you will have to listen to the key players in the department, find out their impressions about the central agencies and what the partners (often client pressure groups) say about them.*
The first three months
- *You have a three-month window to define the role you will play and make known your ambitions as the department's leader.*   - *Very quickly (within three months), you will have to develop a vision for the department, laying out where you want to take it; the main themes will have to be chosen; personally, I was aiming for two things: enhancing the department's credibility and restoring its financial health.*   - *Not until after your consultations have been completed will you be in a position to develop your overall objectives and a plan. Depending on the situation, you will move more or less quickly and be more or less hands-on. You have three to four months to develop a general vision. You will need to balance the sponge and visionary approaches: be a sponge with a vision and a plan.*
The first 6 months
- *For a while, you will be in "listen and analyze" mode and you won't move too fast. You can deal with obvious issues and shouldn't be afraid to take corrective measures in urgent cases. With regard to fundamental issues, you should give yourself six months to a*

year before fully taking over control of the department; don't try to make changes just for appearance's sake. In due course, you'll obtain a clear view of what has to be done; at that time, you should get things moving, explain your philosophy, leadership, standards and so on.

- The most important thing is to concentrate on developing a good understanding of the organization and its mission. In my case, I took six to nine months to visit people even though I had some knowledge of the organization as a result of my previous appointment. It's important to quickly grasp these two things: what is going on and what you want to do. You have nine to twelve months to make fundamental changes, if necessary; afterwards, you get seduced by your team members' agendas.

- The test for your relationship with the minister's office takes place after six months: that's when you find out whether it's working or not.

At nine months

- You have to keep refining your plan, reinforce the team's operating methods, complete your field visits and start taking concrete action to implement the key major changes.

After the first year

- After three months, you will be judged by first impressions; after twelve months, you will be judged in a more fundamental and definitive way!

- You can get off to a bad start in the first week and at any time in the first seven months. You can't get it right until after twelve to fifteen months!

STANDARD STRATEGIES

Taking control:	Investigate, listen
	Impose a style
	Staff assignment strategy
	Vision
	Cement the team
Activist leadership:	Make a difference by listening internally and externally
	Critical attitude
	The DM organizes the development of his vision
	Importance of mobilizing the staff through personal involvement
	Role as facilitator of the specialists' work
	Make things possible
Organization:	Immediate staff
	Time
	Image
	Communication style
	Self-protection

PROPERTIES OF A VISION

- Priorities have to be determined quickly, as well as how to achieve them. You also have to identify your values and transmit your philosophy so it can be reflected in the managers. All of this constitutes your vision.

- A spoken account of the department's development that involves and motivates the staff
- A clear sense of what has to be done and you have to get the ball rolling, explain your philosophy, leadership, standards and so on.
- This is eventually reflected in plans, values, strategies and courses of action.
- It guides conduct and reactions.

TIME AVAILABLE FOR DEVELOPING A VISION

- Three to six months
- Gradual disclosure over twelve months
- Nothing is ever cast in stone; everything is continually refined and updated.

FOR DMS COMING FROM OUTSIDE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- Visit the people in the department so make a good impression
- Find out as much as you can about the government you are joining. In the beginning, try to be a "fly on the wall" at TBS meetings and Finance department briefings. Also find out about unwritten PCO procedures.
- Join the DM team and acquire three or four "guardian angels."
- Arrange for the central agencies to get to know the man behind the name.

4. Deputy Ministerial Leadership

"It's not just a matter of getting people to do things…which they want to do anyhow! It's a matter of getting them to do things they would not do if it were up to them; down the line, they'll understand that it was in their best interests: this calls for vision and motivation."

(A Canadian deputy minister)

Leadership seems to have been a fashionable concept for the last 15 years, well after Warren Bennis made his famous statement: *"We are over-managed but under-led."* The main approach to leadership is based on sporting concepts whereby, when things become difficult, a leader emerges, issues orders that are followed because he shows courage, honesty and sound judgement, and inspires the team to almost heroic performance. At the other end of the spectrum, there is leadership through listening, whereby the leader has the respect of his "troops", encourages them, supports them and gets them to demonstrate quite remarkable commitment in action. Simply stated, the dilemma is whether the leader should show his "troops" the way or follow them and provide support. The reality gets more multi-faceted, complex and subtle, depending on the particular situation. A reasonable blend of these two components of control and listening, combined with the other components, will be used.

Leadership has emerged as a comprehensive but elusive concept; it includes everything that makes up a director who is not one in name alone, requires him to have mastered the full range of skills, and applies to every management situation. As the paradigm becomes increasingly comprehensive, might we not end up associating the term with the concept of the "ideal manager?" If so, what will remain of the specific concept of leadership? Might not the desire to isolate the concept of only figurehead leadership to include everyday leadership bring back the concept to the simple level of "sound management", which is what should always be practised?

There is more to the recent acceptance of the concept of leadership; with the advent of the "modern" management period a few years ago, which pushed back the frontiers of arbitrariness and discretion, authority was practised on the basis of hierarchical relationships, management promoted compliance (through laws, budgets, social standards and so on) and management concerned itself more with activities than results, showing itself reluctant to take risks. In more recent years, there has been more talk of leading by inspiring and mobilizing people; looking after people is strongly recommended, as is managing by values rather than by standards and defining management by results (even taking risks, if necessary) rather than through compliance. The type of leadership shown by a manager can enable him to achieve all of this while instigating reforms, drawing people out of their comfort zone and getting them involved in change and continuous learning.

The Public Service Commission of Canada has prepared a list of 14 leadership competencies for managers and assistant deputy ministers, which it uses in support of training and recruitment profiles. Do these profiles also apply to incumbent deputy ministers?

Instead of engaging deputy ministers in the theoretical area of the complex nature of leadership and encouraging them to speak generalities on the topic, we preferred to challenge them to tell three concrete and quite recent stories demonstrating that they had exercised leadership in their deputy ministerial functions. Who better then they to address the issue of deputy ministerial leadership, and relating situations would give them the opportunity to include in their accounts all the factors they deemed important.

The examples provided cannot "quantify" the dimensions of leadership since the respondents were not given a set list of options to prioritize. A semi-structured questionnaire is not a survey made up of closed questions, and the realities faced by deputies cannot be expressed in terms of 'yes' or 'no' checkmarks. Some chose to prioritize, others deliberately chose different types of situations, while others just gave the answers that came to mind. The goal of the exercise was to produce an empirical inventory of the dimensions of leadership for a deputy minister, but not from categories already established by the scientific literature or an administrative exercise.

This approach helped distinguish four categories of situations in which the deputy minister considered himself to have exercised leadership as a deputy minister in the past two years. These are: change leadership; risk and courage leadership; day-to-day leadership; and external leadership. These categories were established on the basis of the characteristics which deputy ministers most often highlighted in their stories and comments about the examples provided.

These categories are not mutually exclusive. The cases of change leadership, for instance, often involved courage and risks, and could not have succeeded without almost daily support. An effort was made to distinguish the more strategic cases, involving comprehensive, longer-term effort, from the more difficult cases in which only a deputy minister could have taken a decision, if he wished, and cases in which leadership was ever present without being spectacular. Too often, high-profile leadership is highlighted at the expense of day-to-day leadership.

We should not use the number of occurrences to infer that one type of leadership is more central or important than another. On the contrary, deputy ministers insist that leadership is a "cocktail" of moral, intellectual and managerial aptitudes and that each situation calls on some of these dimensions. Thus, the following nomenclature identifies various leadership situations rather than leadership competencies. Naturally, there are connections between situations and the competencies required to deal with them, but

these same leadership competencies are used to varying degrees depending on the types of situations that arise.

Samples of leadership, grouped by category: **/90**

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1. CHANGE LEADERSHIP   **44**

Leadership through vision
Vision
Strategic plan
Getting people involved

Leadership through major reforms led and promoted by the DM
Structures
Processes
Approaches
Culture

Becoming a champion

Leadership by taking charge of a situation

In-field leadership for crisis situations

2. RISK AND COURAGE LEADERSHIP   **26**

"Against the current"
- through truth
- through management

"Stepping up to the barricades"
- for the department
- for the employees

Ability to make tough decisions
- situations
- people

Taking charge in crises

Taking responsibility for mistakes and using them as lessons

"Stepping out into the line of fire"

3. DAY-TO-DAY LEADERSHIP   **13**

Figurehead

Support
- in risks
- for people

Presence

Cohesion
- management team
- budget issues

4. EXTERNAL LEADERSHIP   **7**

External leadership:
- in Canada
- with peers
- internationally

DM authority

4.1   Change leadership

Change leadership refers to drive, openness and the ability to stimulate awareness, change and commitment among managers and other employees. This type appears more often in the list of examples because leadership is highly relevant for change and major changes require a considerable amount of energy (hence deputy ministers readily remember such situations), and because one of a deputy minister's key roles is to introduce change when required (the expression "see to it that what must be done is done," as reported in Bourgault and Mintzberg, 2000, is still referred to when defining the senior manager's role).

Change leadership consists of five dimensions: vision; major organizational changes; championing a cause or project; taking charge of a portfolio; and in-field involvement.

SOME EXAMPLES

4.1.1   Leadership through vision

a)   Vision:

"Over two years, I created a vision and clearly articulated where we were going; I had to show passion and confidence in the project and I respected the culture; it was important to get people to the point where they would

say: 'He knows where he's going and so do we, he's right and we're glad to join him in this process.' I managed to create good vibes with people."

"I was able to get them to see the larger picture; their culture was fatalistic and cynical ('we're a second-class department'); now, we constantly refer to excellence and quality and serving others; I identified and circulated a vision more imbued with the department's usefulness, i.e., showing the staff the significance of their work. It was important to get them to see opportunities and seize them."

"After four months, I set out clear priorities; previously, our department was the kind that acted on an ad hoc basis, did everything and anything. I organized a retreat with all of the managers, which the minister attended; we talked for a day; I set out a vision and the priorities based on these discussions and now, on a day-to-day basis, I see to it that we fulfil and stick to these priorities. They are updated approximately every six months. I never fail to correct the minister's speeches if they are not in line with the vision."

b) Strategic plan:

"When I arrived, the employees were very concerned about the future of the department: staff cutbacks, more work, departures of co-workers, a shortage of fresh blood in the department, ageing clientele, etc. I had them prepare a strategic plan based on solid studies, supported by skilled specialists, setting out an organized vision of the future and establishing a vision shared by the employees. This had a tremendous impact on employee motivation, morale and work satisfaction. It led to a positive evaluation by the Treasury Board, which had not had a high opinion of the department before that. My role as a leader was to identify the need, decide how it would be addressed, get people to work together, ask the tough questions, make choices on the agenda and decide where the department's potential lay, see to it that people were fully committed to the process, ensure that everything was moving along and then recognize the work accomplished."

"I set out a strategic plan for this department; I cut back the number of corporate priorities to five (there were some tough choices involved) and then we drew up a plan, along with standards against which to carry out our policy agenda; in this case, leadership involved making a change in direction, completing the agenda by constantly supporting it and requiring accountability, as well as taking upon myself the responsibility to make it all happen: I link everything that goes on to this plan and I do so in very simple and concrete language so that employees constantly associate with it and it means something to them in terms of their actual lives. Leadership

means creating discourse within the organization, one to which its leaders constantly refer and in concrete terms; this discourse has to communicate values and directions."

c) Getting people involved:

"You have to get people to participate based on their strengths, not turn the project into a 'single hero' enterprise; you need a participatory process that integrates good ideas; this requires the desire to share ownership of the project and make it a collective one; you have to encourage shared ownership of the project; you have to give it attention and time; it's not just a matter of getting it down on paper, you also need good reflexes and the right attitudes so that people really get involved."

4.1.2 *Leadership through major reforms led and promoted by the DM*

a) Structures:

"I undertook a major organizational transition, which had the whole organization worried: they were looking for the meaning behind it as well as what would have to be done in the new agency; I had to clarify all that, find support and get people on board; so, I defined things, became fully committed and got results; my challenge was to take responsibility for all of it, make it a matter of life and death, define the criteria for success and then sell it to the team, the minister and the central agencies. My predecessor had done more or less the same thing, integrating another organization into the department."

b) Processes:

"Managing the annual management cycle: you lose time when you manage several compartments at the same time; I streamlined all that in the department; with the associate DM, I set up a new system of governance that included all DGs and ADMs; we integrated all planning systems and plans as well as reporting systems. Today, there are only two reports: a strategic plan, which includes the business plan and the report on performance to Parliament; they run on the same annual schedule; people have become more aware, thoughtful and motivated about plans and issues and have a better understanding of their roles in the overall departmental plan."

"The department's internal communications: I identified a major need in this area and took it upon myself to make significant changes, such as

enhanced collegiality in decision-making, the inclusion of other directors on the management team, the expansion of decision-making centres outside headquarters, insistence on pride and recognition, face-to-face communication and concern for people. I made it a priority and ensured that my associates made it theirs and transmitted the message down through the ranks, which meant making it a priority, taking risks, changing habits and behaviours, insisting on making sure it really happened and having people really understand it rather than passively obey, and requiring reports on concrete changes achieved. As the leader, I assumed the responsibility for doing it rather than pretending that there was no problem and, as a result, I became the 'symbol' of this movement within the department."

c)   Approaches:

"With regards to employment equity, we had four committees, one for each target group. I reviewed the whole thing. I created a single group with a broader scope and volunteer members who were chosen by neutral specialists. All of this called for profound changes in a very sensitive issue: members, agendas, ways of doing things and, especially, the way of seeing the issue and solutions. In this case, leadership meant having the courage and determination to change the paradigm."

"At the operational level, I changed the philosophy. The approach we had was too reactive and fearful of consequences; I believe we have to be proactive and I developed our decision-making grid accordingly; this led to a change in the approaches of all staff and management, and also showed them that I would defend them in this new approach; I had to get them to have confidence in me and in my loyalty when things become difficult."

d)   Culture:

"I was determined to get the organization to change a culture that was strongly embedded in people's mentality: I had to expand their perspectives by exposing them to some powerful ideas from the outside. I had to promote the attitude that change happens every day and is impossible to avoid. We have to help people adopt this point of view and get them to lead change instead of trying to avoid it."

"I modified the approach to the issues so we could think about our political clients more in connection with analysis, strategy, policies, communications and resources. I developed the notion of partnership and had the department's policy updated on this basis. I created a culture of

consultation with the other departments, which we had not had before and for which we were being criticized."

"Here, when I arrived, there was no corporate management system that could help the department grow; everything happened in separate compartments; I developed an integrative strategic vision in a bottom-up process over one year; I did it through a process of inclusion. I created a small team and got as many people as possible to 'buy in' and become involved in the process; this is especially important in the public sector, where people are permanent. This meant that I had to display knowledge and courage, and it took a lot of work; I had to be humble, flexible, but also determined and always well prepared. You have to find ways of getting the department to approach its work in a more corporate way. I devoted a lot of time to putting the required process in place. This was important for everyone, not only one part of the department: strategic plans, updated annually through the business plan, administrative modernization, etc. Not to mention the human side over and above the pressure I was putting on them; I'm with them, but not 'just anybody' among them!"

"I took the initiative to contact my DM colleagues at the very outset. I wanted to show that I was looking for real collaboration; this was where I noticed their resistance to the department, which they mistrusted a bit. Then, I got my managers to open up more naturally to the other departments; at first it was not easy, but now the other departments and my managers are delighted with this new form of authentic collaboration."

4.1.3   Championing a cause or issue

"Managing people: I no longer left this to HRM or to each manager. I made it a personal issue and made sure that everyone knew and felt it. The idea is not to give orders but to educate, promote and then back the effort in several ways until it is irreversibly implanted. The important thing is to set the example. You also have to 'be a champion,' prepare speeches, give signals, launch and foster initiatives, and set expectations for subordinates and ensure that they meet them."

"Employment equity: I decided that employment equity had to be a priority. Our department had to become a 'champion,' and that was not negotiable. I gave the signal and appointed myself the cheerleader: I set objectives and applied strict, ongoing follow-up. I set up committees and launched initiatives. All of this called for a great deal of personal

commitment on my part. Championing an idea means you have to launch the idea, then explore, push, foster, test, correct and amplify it. You have to stimulate discussion and ensure that the others get on board and start applying it. Merely approving an idea is not enough: you have to champion it.”

“I decided to manage through values and I wanted them to feel strongly about this approach; from the very first day, I prepared and shared my commitments concerning my values, but not my vision of the department, because this would have appeared too technical.”

4.1.4 Leadership through taking charge of a portfolio

“When I first arrived here, my work took a rather dramatic turn because of current developments and the need to make a strategic contribution to the government’s agenda. We based the portfolio on substance and teamwork; I worked with the Clerk; I facilitated a working group that I took over and we provided the appropriate material to the minister. I took charge of the portfolio and organized the team work around me.”

4.1.5 In-field leadership in crises

“You have to be on the front lines: don’t be afraid to be front and centre! The day after a violent and very disquieting incident for the Canadian public, I travelled to one of the provinces to meet with that province’s leaders in this area; I listened and suggested a plan, which led to the adoption of the legislation. The provincial government did not use it for political purposes; this approach worked. In this case, leadership involved galvanizing the troops, taking initiative, listening actively, taking a broad and inclusive approach, being present in the field as soon as possible, and supporting the people there.”

4.2 Leadership through risk-taking and courage

Leadership through courage, daring and risk-taking refers to the deputy minister’s hierarchical position. If situations get overlooked in the hierarchical pyramid or if tough decisions are passed on to the higher levels, once the top of this pyramid is reached, there are no higher levels left to which to pass them on. The deputy minister may consult, reflect and study, but he has to make a decision even when he knows it will be not be popular with all the various interest groups he deals with. The deputy minister is the last level of responsibility, accountable to the political leaders and his peers. He has to make decisions so as to achieve the results expected. Simple decisions seldom make it to the deputy minister’s desk – they get dealt with in the normal course of events.

One type of tough decision concerns taking organizational risk. Tough decisions involve strategic changes, reforms that change ways of doing things, and approaches that challenge existing habits. Tough decisions challenge interests, may create discomfort and insecurity and require additional and new kinds of effort. Another type of tough decision involves taking risks on the details of certain matters: should we go with the decision that involves uncertainty and heavy financial or political impact? Should we proceed and commit ourselves to very demanding timeframes? Advice comes from every direction and the pressures keep cropping up. A decision has to be taken and some people will be worried, disappointed and even frustrated. After consulting, listening, analyzing and reflecting, some direction needs to be given to the situation and it is up to the deputy minister to do it. He must not avoid his duty but will decide according to ethical and managerial principles.

Six types of leadership were mentioned as in the following situations: "going against the current;" "stepping up to the barricades:" making tough decisions; taking charge in crises: taking responsibility for and learning from mistakes, and "stepping out into the line of fire."

Some examples of leadership

4.2.1   "Against the current"

a)   through truth

> "Some people get free tickets to shows and sports events. In my opinion, there could be a danger of appearance of conflict of interest; when I arrived, I was advised not to touch this because it was standard practice in the business world. But I preferred to stick to my principles of sound management and appearance of ethical management even if it meant being badly seen by some departmental employees. I had just arrived in the department and did not want to send out the wrong signals in either direction (tolerance and status quo vs. 'I'm here to crack down'). I had to put my foot down and risk creating a conflict. I intervened gently and simply by explaining the situation to those concerned and their colleagues. We needed a reminder and an explanation of the principles involved."

> "I was not from the department but I knew it quite well. I set out an agenda for the department even though I sensed a certain degree of resistance to recognizing the reasons behind the difficulties they had been going through for the past few years. I sensed that they felt that cosmetic changes would suffice. Then, I started a process of 'putting the cards on the table' in connection with these difficulties and tried to get the managers to become involved in a wide-ranging process of in-depth

reform of approaches and mechanisms. I had to challenge the managers to force them to commit and become involved in the kind of corrective measures that are not always pleasant. It was necessary to restore credibility, morale and awareness among the managers and employees."

b)   Tough management decisions:

"When interacting with the provinces, you need consensus. First, you have to know where you are and where you want to go before meeting the provinces. You have to break with the traditional client-based approach and the directors were reluctant to change this secular approach by the department. In this case, leadership meant having the courage to change the approach and challenge the directors who were resisting. For me, leadership is teaching. This calls for vision, interpersonal communication skills and a real desire to learn and grow."

"You have to be able to take and make risks. I convinced the main government decision makers to take a big risk by going after a certain company for perpetrating a fraud. In the beginning, there was a lot of fear and resistance everywhere in town in connection with this issue. I invited several DMs and ministers to a meeting, where we outlined our project: the financial, political, legal and business risks; we were able to 'drum up enough courage' to agree to do something out of the ordinary, especially since this issue involved disclosing Cabinet documents that implicated several governments. In this case, leadership involved daring to 'put my head on the block' at a time when it would have been easier to just turn the page!"

"Things are always more delicate in the area of human resources, and here, they had acquired a lot of bad habits. I took charge of the whole system. I found that it was being managed a bit too loosely: staff exchanges were being made just for the convenience of individuals, even when it was to the overall detriment of the organization. I stepped in at the micro level to make decisions in the interests of the organization rather than those of managers. Some people found this a bit daring, but I'm not afraid of being that when it's the most effective solution."

"I quickly changed most of the ADMs and the whole DMO; everybody was unhappy; but it was more a matter of a tough decision needing to be made right at the point when you're being watched, examined and interpreted by everyone; logic required that there would be people in place who shared my vision, with whom I'm used to working with, and who will give 100%, and not only what they have to."

"People expect me to lead them somewhere; taking them where they want to go is easy; real leadership means taking people where they are not prepared to go. I forced through the implementation of new legislation instead of waiting six months, something which people around here would have preferred; I knew we had to move fast and that this legislation was important. I told them that we would make mistakes, that it was all right and there was no need for anyone to change their holidays because of it. By the time we reached the end of the exercise - which involved everyone - the overwhelming feeling was one of pride in their performance instead of fear of the risk."

"My department's field was low down on the list of government concerns when I arrived; the legislation had undergone nothing but cursory touch-ups in the past 25 years and there were holes and inconsistencies; it was no longer suited to the country's latest challenges. I had to do a lot of work in the field to convince everyone that it had to be done. Many tried to talk me out of doing it because it was such a big job; there was even some fear and hesitation within the department. I took over the portfolio and obtained the committed support of both ministers to go ahead with it. I also had to convince the other departments concerned. My leadership involved convincing, mobilizing and involving people, getting them "excited" about the project and reversing the sceptics' arguments; I presented myself as the "ball carrier." In the beginning, my task as a leader was to get the process rolling to the point where we could no longer go back; we were brave because we were convinced of the validity of our assessment of the situation; I then made sure that there was solid, intense and continuous teamwork to see it through to the end."

4.2.2 *"Stepping up to the barricades"*

a)   For the department:

"You have to move difficult portfolios along and sometimes, the deputy minister's personal involvement can provide a real boost. As I see it, we have to find a way to do more in terms of managing diversity in the workplace. I actually took over the portfolio and 'stepped up to the barricades' for the department and for this cause, and I obtained ten additional management positions for this portfolio. We are responsible for supporting people and it is important to prove that what is being done is in the best interests of the department. People have to feel and see that you are personally committed in every respect."

"At this point, our organization is being seriously challenged from the outside. I lead the fight, get involved in the portfolio at every level, and the employees see it and know it. They know that I am committed without consideration for my future career. I want to instil trust in my people and I work on maintaining the troops' morale."

b)   For the employees:

"Through what I say when I appear before parliamentary committees or give speeches, I show my staff that I understand what they are doing, the difficulties they face in their work and that I will 'go to bat' for them; in this regard, I act both as a figurehead and as a buffer against the pressures they face. They know that I support them because I openly commit myself to them."

4.2.3   Taking charge in crises

"After one particular crisis, I pushed for legislative reforms at a time when everybody was against me. I went 'against the current.' I assembled players with different interests around me and finally convinced the minister. This should never happen again and I made sure it never would."

"The situation had to be examined in the cold light of day, the reasons for the problem had to be understood and the decision-making structures and processes had to be quickly adjusted, despite the fact that the centre (PCO) could not make up its mind. It was necessary to take risks and show the people that we were not afraid once we had carefully thought things through."

"We went through a serious crisis because we were not yet working as a team; one group had set up a project without consulting another which should have been consulted. My leadership not only involved damage control and crisis management (taking control, creating a crisis cell within 30 minutes, managing the unfolding of events and the communications process, and quickly bringing out a clear vision of our strategy for managing this crisis), it also involved using the crisis as a collective learning opportunity, showing how important it was to work as a team and laying the foundations for a form of collaboration that was more thoroughly integrated among the various parts of the department. We all worked together during the crisis, prepared a memorandum of understanding among the units involved about the solution (in fact, they wrote it together at my suggestion); then, we brainstormed as a team about the crisis, its underlying reasons and solution− not to identify a

scapegoat, but to highlight the importance of teamwork; we organized seminars on the lessons learned, which helped cement the team."

4.2.4   Taking responsibility for and learning from mistakes

"A catastrophe showed us that our rules were outdated. We could have pretended that there was no problem or everyone could have blamed the other. Instead, I told my people that there was a problem, we should recognize it, then move on instead of looking for a scapegoat; we should correct the problem directly and learn from the situation. This radically changed the atmosphere, as well as the attitude towards work and co-operation among the people here."

"Leadership also shows in tough situations. Problems came up with a portfolio we were handling with another department; the easy solution favoured by some people was to blame the others. I changed this approach, pointing out that, as leaders, we had to assume responsibility; the real problem would have been to prolong the period of denial; instead, we had to focus our energies and interest on the lessons learned and the conditions for success; my leadership involved giving the signal to change the approach and providing a new approach, a new angle for dealing with the situation."

4.2.5   "Stepping out into the line of fire"

"There was a major crisis, in which there would be no winners. Day after day, the minister found himself in the line of fire. I played a personal role in reassuring and advising him and his team. Instead of settling for a passive role, I had to hold the department together and keep the people functioning."

"I showed leadership in a major issue involving the minister: within 6 to 12 months, I clearly set out the direction for the minister's portfolio; he was attentive and had a leadership role laid out for him; he was persuaded to make the integration of the portfolio's components his legacy; we wrote out his role and his vision and had him endorse and accept them."

"I prepared a vision statement for the minister from scratch; he endorsed it 100%; I had convinced him to the point where he was using my words before the media. I shifted the department from an ad hoc grant system to one that involved a strategic plan."

4.3   Day-to-day leadership

Day-to-day leadership is not a matter of making drastic and controversial decisions, and it has nothing to do with radical organizational change; this type of leadership directly involves the employees and management, in whom it inspires trust and among whom it creates a desired behaviour.

Four dimensions may be identified based on the examples provided: figurehead, support, presence and cohesion.

Some examples

4.3.1   Figurehead

"Day-to-day leadership implies that you are aware of not only your image in the public relations sense but also of the way that people see you; naturally, it comes through in each and every one of your answers, comments, silences and actions."

"Leadership is very much a day-to-day matter: it can be very important; you are constantly being deciphered by people in the hallways and elevators; they check out how you appear and react, who you greet, whether you smile, look confident or in a good mood, etc. The DM 'performs' (in the showbiz sense) at all times; he is a figurehead in the image sense (as opposed to the part that absorbs the first hit, which is also a figurehead in this sense). He has to instil self-confidence in us."

4.3.2   Support

a)   In risks:

"Leadership involves encouraging and getting your staff to take risks. You have to give your employees the confidence to do this. Your attitude will facilitate matters in this regard. You have to support them even if this might lead to mistakes. They have to know and feel that you will back them even if they make mistakes. This has to form part of a frame of reference that they can always rely on. This calls for the deputy minister to play a leadership role."

"I am genuine and honest. If a mistake happens, I'm not afraid to tell the group: it was my fault! I link the human side to the pressure I put them under; I'm with them, but not just anybody among them! If they make mistakes, they know I'll back them…through a process in which we will work to ensure that it doesn't happen again."

b)   For people:

"I provide close support to my people: I work with them on seeing portfolios through to the end. I choose where I spend my time. I never act in their place; instead I provide active support, get committed and involve myself in the major portfolios so that they can feel my support. They know I'm available and know that I won't be slow to help them."

4.3.3 Presence

"Work is seen as a commitment by each member of the management team and the deputy minister has to be able to get everyone to share in this approach. I spent a lot of time talking with my managers; I organize a deputy minister's lunch every month, to which everyone is invited. I try to be present in the regions, communicate as much as I can, attend farewell ceremonies and give priority to staff receptions over deputy ministerial meetings, but it's not always easy. I try to be available as much as possible: my staff has clear instructions in this regard. My leadership strategy involves being on the floors."

"The very least you can do is to be there with the employees during important events. I have a deliberate policy of being physically present in the department; we need good human relations; I am always on the lookout for an opportunity to share a beer or a meal with the people I visit in the regional offices for more formal reasons."

4.3.4 Cohesion

a)   Management team:

"Leadership means maintaining the team's cohesion even in the face of major changes that you introduce into the organization. One of the criteria is having two conditions occur at once: there are major changes, but, nonetheless, there are no conflicts at the meetings. You have to integrate everyone into the process and resolve the difficulties that, ideally, you had anticipated."

Budget issues:

"The department has always been well off; this is the first time it has had small budgets; I was facing requests totalling $550 million and had only $180 million to work with: there were tough choices to be made. I prepared the staff and brought them together; I started by using humour.

The meeting went from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and was attended by all senior managers; there was agreement on the $180 million; we came wearing two hats: the 'corporate hat' and the individual hat; then we went to the minister; we had concerns because the first project that was discussed and turned down among ourselves was one that he was totally committed to. He only changed three projects out of the lot. We had to go through this without tearing each other apart."

"In the last budget, we ended up with only a third of what we wanted, which forced us to go through a painful budget reallocation exercise. The department was a collection of independent compartments. In December and January, we introduced a totally new team dynamic; a process that would move budgets from low priority areas to high priority ones. My leadership involved getting everyone into the game and getting them all to understand that, in the next budget, we would proceed in the same manner and that the decisions might come out differently; beyond that, I asked them to consider that the department as a whole belonged to us all, not only to the section managers and that they had to operate as corporate managers for the whole department. My leadership involved leading the exercise in a harmonious manner and turning it into an opportunity for growth rather than confrontations."

4.4   External leadership

The last category represents a collection of all of the leadership situations in which a deputy minister is involved in civil and political life, with his peers and internationally. This is **leadership practised outside the department**, though departmental interests are not always excluded. It will become increasingly important because of the development of various forms of horizontal management, which involve several federal organizations, other levels of government, civil society, other countries and international organizations. The impacts of action or inaction by these partners are felt on the agendas of Canadian departments and Canadian deputy ministers would be wise to play a leadership role in those instances.

Some examples

4.4.1   External leadership

a)   In Canada:

The deputy minister's leadership is not limited to the government machinery. It can be exercised among client groups or, as would be expected in a federal system, stakeholders at other levels of government.

For instance, one deputy minister indicated that he was proud of having come up with an arrangement that ended up bringing together a number of departmental client groups which, through their diverging interests, had paralyzed the process for the government's contribution. Departmental officials were frustrated at always being at the centre of the conflicting pressures from these groups. In this case, leadership involved daring to introduce a new solution that involved several groups outside the department and encouraging them to come to an agreement. It was a matter of taking charge of an issue that had always been seen as rather difficult and which was of great concern to the employees, "stepping up to the barricades" to come up with a solution, and then getting it accepted by clients and then the minister. In this case, a proactive shift was made from a model focused uniquely on concerns that were internal to the department to another focused on agreement among the partners in the field.

Another DM told how he had built a very broad coalition to redefine the department's mission and methods:

> *"Our financial situation was that transfers were falling and our own revenues had been cut back as a result of political decisions. At that point, we probably would have been wiped off the map! Through more than three years of meetings, I mobilized the deputy ministers in one region of the country as well as my ministers and the premiers of the provinces in this region. I was not 100% successful, but we survived. As a leader, my role was to make a convincing case, develop a strategy, go to the outside, build consensus to strengthen our government agenda, become personally committed, anticipate objections and develop the strategies needed to get there."*

b)   With peers:

> *"I arranged to co-ordinate the work of several departments in preparation for a major conference on some highly complex and interrelated issues. This involved a number of technical and co-ordinating committee meetings; I kept up the momentum, sense of perspective and harmony among the people in the group."*

> *"In terms of science management throughout the government, I was at the forefront in helping to create a community, design a basic model for the federal government's scientific activities and develop tokens of recognition on the part of the federal government."*

c)   Internationally:

> *"In my field, I seem to have become a world leader; at the international level, I have managed portfolios on strategic issues through to the*

commitment stage, even when so many thought it couldn't be done; this gave me a lot of credibility. All to the benefit of the Government of Canada, which ended up being better informed and more influential."

4.4.2   Deputy ministerial authority

"In one particular area, I used the formal authority of the DM to get Canada involved in implementing the recommendations contained in a report on an international issue. Only a DM could have done this, there was no question of delegation. DFAIT, which was in agreement, became involved, which influenced other countries to agree as well."

4.5   The deputy ministers' leadership learning needs

Slightly more than one quarter of the deputy ministers think that deputy ministers do not need training in leadership: they are convinced that a deputy minister would have demonstrated such a skill before his appointment and that this skill would have been inculcated into him throughout his career. This skill cannot be entirely learned and cannot be taught. This set of opinions very much reflects the DMs' views in this area.

"When you are appointed, you already have to have demonstrated that you have some leadership ability and are prepared in that respect, even if there are other DMs who might be appointed for different reasons. Leadership is attitude, approach, discernment, a way of being, life skills. All DMs are leaders and express it in different ways. Some DMs have made the choice in their agendas to follow the trend or rationalize why they cannot change it; training is not what it will take to change them. It is difficult to say how the needs of so many different people and situations can be met. At this point in a career, it might be too late to change someone's attitude and get them to acquire such a fundamental skill."

Five deputy ministers did not express their views or felt that it was a case-by-case matter:

"It depends on everyone's history…and their natural abilities (sincerity, openness, desire to change, interest in people, ability to motivate, and tendency to question without blaming)."

Slightly more than half the group believed there were opportunities for leadership learning among deputy ministers; listening, collegiality and openness to change came up most often. It is important to learn to identify the pockets of negative energy and cynicism in the public service and to learn to reverse them. Other topics mentioned were: collegial values, the ability to make quick decisions in crisis situations; self-criticism in risky or uncertain situations; active listening, the ability to work with others; encouraging politicians to commit; empowerment; and creativity. There was also interest in the new approaches to leadership.

Some of the more specific areas of learning suggested by respondents included emphasizing action-based leadership versus leadership in policy development, learning how to manage risks and people and, finally, thinking about how to manage one's credibility.

In general, the following aspects were seen as being desirable:

> *"Displaying as much passion and enthusiasm for your work as you should; this is not routine work, work like any other, nor just an honorific position in your career. It calls for energy, commitment and passion in front of the other staff serving under you. This cannot be found in manuals, only through sharing, in workshop settings, successes, best practices, changes that worked well or not so well. Humour is important in leadership. It would be important to build on the concepts of passion and pride to get people involved. All deputy ministers should be personally committed to this, even the most senior ones."*

Many suggested more individual approaches to learning through their current management practices rather than through an overly formal process. Learning is a continuous process and an attitude:

> *"I never stop learning through my everyday work because I have developed an attitude in that regard, it's part of my way of seeing and analyzing everything that is brought to my attention on a daily basis, both at work and away from work."*

4.6   Learning strategies

Deputy ministers who see learning opportunities are given the option of a strategy based on voluntarism. Individual decisions have to be respected: DMs decide according to their needs, preferences and constraints. Three obstacles came up more than five times: time availability, the painful candour in group discussions, and the minister's willingness to deprive himself of his deputy minister for a few days. It was suggested that incentives and motivating factors might be needed. A "little" support strategy would facilitate things. It takes more than encouragement or incentives to convince the minister that our absence is justified for this.

Six approaches were favoured for group development: first, there was a lot of focus on the CCMD, which everyone seems very satisfied with. The CCMD orientation session could focus on the basis of this competency. The CCMD roundtables could also address this issue; in the case of presentations, the speaker's credibility is as important as the approach: anything that is said has to be usable by the participants in their own situations. Peer accounts of concrete situations attract a lot of attention.

Many people thought that this type of learning should take place through the community's everyday experiences:

> *"Make sure that it becomes a topic raised at every retreat and organize a joint presentation for a group of 2 to 3 of us, where we could relate our own concrete experiences; this would be followed by a discussion."*

Open discussions in small groups are encouraged but not everyone feels comfortable with this:

> *"This is not really part of our culture. There should be a discussion process, but there are some difficulties involved in accepting the candour in the package. We should have sincere and honest discussions amongst ourselves; it would be good for the spirit of community."*

Somewhat more formal interventions were also mentioned, such as formal use of the 360-degree approach, sharing innovations, and using self-assessment grids:

> *"Guidelines are needed for the practical aspects of everyday life. Each of us needs a little checklist with points such as the search for and promotion of diversity in the broader sense, identifying our filters, measuring our propensity to prematurely reject approaches we find detrimental, and openness to different points of view on a given topic."*

Lastly, some DMs made more ambitious suggestions, such as learning leave and formalizing a refresher program between assignments:

> *"We could rely on our associates and assistants to look after the department: this would make them feel validated and give them an opportunity to learn; and it would be a refreshing example of leadership."*

> *"Change is difficult and has to deal with resistance; our task is a solitary one and it is easy to doubt…so we need support, encouragement and input from people who have gone through it."*

5.   Supervising Subordinates

The supervision of subordinates is a major part of the work of deputy ministers. The departmental mandate originates with the deputy minister and is then shared with the various branches and teams, and everything that has to be brought to the political level then converges back towards the deputy minister. This calls for appropriate systems to support quick decisions, strategic thinking and the co-ordination of branch activities so that the work progresses according to the various plans and, where necessary, these plans are corrected.

The deputy minister oversees the associate deputy minister(s), assistant deputy ministers, some directors general, and sometimes a chief of staff and other DM office staff. The survey revealed that up to thirty persons, including sixteen assistant deputy ministers, can be directly under a deputy minister. Federal departments have a variety of missions, structures and sizes, which dictate the style of high-level oversight. For instance, some agencies operate almost like Crown corporations; some organizations report to more than one minister; some deputy ministers advise the minister on very broad portfolios; some organizations have a few hundred employees, while others have tens of thousands; and some have an extensive regional network.

Oversight takes up some of the scarce and precious time on the deputy minister's calendar. The type of oversight used should reconcile the best use of available time and the organization's particular characteristics. The deputy minister might prefer to look ahead, anticipate to formulate the department's strategic vision and look around to make connections for it. Frequent meetings with subordinates might give an impression of wasted or sub-optimal use of time. However, subordinates are the ones who make or break the supervisor's performance, so it is important that he show them understanding and support and give them a sense of the direction to take.

5.1   The type of oversight

What kind of oversight can you give assistant deputy ministers and directors general who, themselves, oversee managers? We are talking about very senior managers, who are well-trained, experienced and responsible. In the late 70s, the autonomist point of view was: "These are responsible, competent and well-paid people, and I don't have to tell them how to do their jobs." These days, we recognize the need for supervision and co-ordination. But how far should we go? Traditional supervisory methods rely on regular bilateral meetings with reasonably systematic follow-up; we were curious about what deputy ministers do now to oversee their very senior subordinates. There are many approaches to supervision and each deputy minister has to choose the best oversight methods for ensuring the management team's performance, which will then determine the department's effectiveness.

Half the deputy ministers interviewed use a blend of general and regular bilateral meetings to supervise subordinates. Depending on one's point of view, this may be too little or too much. In this particular model, the assistant deputy ministers meet individually with the deputy minister at a planned session, which is held at regular intervals. In one department, these occur on a monthly basis, in two every three weeks, in five every two weeks, and in four on a weekly basis; two deputy ministers use a system involving several meetings per week.

Three of them use a hybrid system: meetings are held with a minority of ADMs on a weekly or bi-weekly basis while most ADMs are seen on request (2 cases) or every 3 weeks (1 case).

We could also discuss what constitute the criteria for regular or formal oversight: frequency, regularity, the thoroughness of the agenda or the formality of the interaction.

The following table illustrates these different practices.

Bilateral meetings	
3 - 4 times per week	2 cases
weekly	4 cases
bi-weekly	5 cases
3 weeks	2 cases
monthly	1 case
mixed	3 cases
weekly with 1 ADM + as required for 3 weekly for 1 ADM + as required for 1 weekly for 1 ADM + every 3 weeks for 4	
group model	11 cases
(with opportunities for meetings on issues, on request, open-door, ad hoc, etc.)	
	28 cases

Many people distance themselves from this traditional style of supervision because of its lack of transparency and relative inefficiency and, though not excluding it entirely, prefer a more collective form of oversight:

> *"My coaching is fundamentally collective. I want to involve everyone. I call in people individually only when there is a problem. I work more in committees than on a bilateral basis: this is closer to horizontal management and helps avoid secrets and jealousies."*

> *"Meetings on particular matters are never done on a bilateral basis because of the transparency factor. The ADM comes to see me with his colleagues and subordinates, which helps us save time and avoid conflicts."*

> *"I never meet one-on-one. Except when people are having difficulties. It is important to keep people from thinking that there are secrets, favourites, backroom games."*

This is why six deputy ministers prefer group meetings on an issue-by-issue basis and four others prefer general group meetings as their way of supervising subordinates; this is a form of "street learning" (learning on the job or case). These methods promote transparency, equity and information-sharing, while enabling the deputy minister to supervise the overall work.

> *"The key is to make sure that everyone knows what the others are trying to do; this way, I'll have to spend less time on oversight. The whole group has to be aware of your vision and agenda. This will turn into a strategy for creating 'organizational knowledge': for my part, I prefer to share information instead of managing transactions on a piecemeal basis. The more time you devote to presentations at the front end of a matter, the less time you'll need later. You have to clearly express your views to the largest possible group; as a result, there will be less confusion."*

Naturally, every DM practices the open-door method in case of difficulties; but one indicated:

> *"Bilateral is minimal: it is only used for personal requirements and very critical decisions. I am never presented in private with an issue that might concern another colleague, I would not tolerate it!"*

Others indicate that it is not necessary to supervise ADMs too closely:

> *"Assistant deputy ministers, in my opinion, should not need a lot of very close supervision."*

This is why, when it comes to providing oversight, five deputy ministers practice the open-door policy, thereby leaving a great deal of latitude to their subordinates. However, others feel a need to restrict the opportunities for open-door encounters in order to preserve organizational unity:

> *"I practice an open-door policy, not to create a free-for-all where it becomes impossible to control your time, but only in emergency cases because I want to know right away about anything that goes wrong."*

Regardless of which supervisory method is used, the challenge is always to achieve the best possible oversight while making best use of the time allotted for this purpose.

Thus, one deputy minister works with his ADMs to practice a form of collective oversight of his senior managers:

> *"Our new system involves dividing my tasks into four categories and linking them with the twenty or so key matters that come under them (corporate strategy, management, policies and advice); the three associate deputy ministers have been released from their operational responsibilities to become executives in charge of one of the four categories; we make up a four-person management team and they share my work; executives report to the team, not to one particular associate; there are approximately 25 managers reporting to the group in its capacity as a management team. This helps the associates' development, while giving them an opportunity to have a broader vision of the department and contribute to this vision. This system also gives their subordinates more authority. It redefines management and control: managers report to the team as a group, which means there is no DM or associate DM to micro-manage over their shoulders."*

The associate DMs are increasingly being used as clones of the DM, not only in external representation, but also in the oversight of ADMs and senior managers.

In other instances, use is made in the annual management cycle of relatively elaborate forms of collegial oversight, under the DM's supervision:

> *"I have an open-door policy (it's easy because I get in at 7:00 a.m. and they can drop in until 8:30 a.m.). They had collegial oversight here before I arrived and it worked. They have a twice-yearly assessment cycle, a good management assessment cycle and a good annual peer-assessment session; it's very systematic and collegial; for instance: there are three assessment meetings a year and a succession planning meeting. I also arrange meetings on request."*

In one instance, ADMs undergo 360-degree accountability:

> *"Here, oversight includes consultation with the employees; we have an annual public accountability session where each ADM reports in public on his human resources management, which is attended by 80% of the department's employees."*

The oversight methods used are directly linked to the size and form of the department and the number of individuals to be overseen; in this regard, the cut-off point seems to fall at around five assistant deputy ministers. However, several deputy ministers of small departments prefer collective oversight.

5.2 The meeting agenda

We will first address oversight through supervisory meetings and then turn to bilateral oversight.

Supervisory meetings vary in number and form depending on the department: in one case there are ten committees, in another only three; in one case the deputy minister chairs nearly every meeting, in another he only chairs two out of eight. The committees comprise anywhere from three to fifty people, depending on their objectives and the size of the department; however, in most departments, there is one meeting reserved only for the assistant deputy ministers, the associate deputy ministers and the incumbent deputy minister, who briefs the management team on the topics discussed at the weekly breakfast with the Clerk. The most common committees are those dealing with management, strategic and human-resource issues; they follow a very flexible agenda. This is a long way from the situation where a single committee would deal with strategic issues, developing situations and current affairs. The DMs interviewed set the agendas for some of the committees based on the needs of the moment, while others operated on a longer-term perspective.

> *"I intervene very little. I develop the overall picture for them and it is up to them to identify their roles and do what needs to be done. There is no set structure or routines for these oversight meetings; the topics of the hour are on the table. In any case, we all work on the same floor and we see each other several times a day."*

> *"We address topics that affect their units: problems, changes, requests from the minister, difficulties in applying the key policies; I concern myself with the quality of interaction during these briefings; there are no notes, it's their meeting; if I want to send out a message, I'm the one who calls; often, I do it in association with the associate deputy minister, with whom I work very closely ('good cop, bad cop' model)."*

This reflects the desire of deputy ministers not to get locked into overly rigid frameworks, which would result in inefficient negotiating frameworks. There has to be a wide margin of manoeuvre for responding to problems in a flexible manner. The uncertainty associated with departmental activities and the variety of issues dealt with call for a flexible system of supervisory meetings. Committee agendas, and sometimes the frequency and duration of meetings, essentially depend on the committee's mandate: week-preparation committees, committees associated with the main management-cycle obligations, thematic committees and so on. Weekly management committee meetings tend to take place through videoconferencing for three of the weeks and in person once a month. Their duration may vary a great deal depending on the department, the deputy minister's style and the existence of a system of individual oversight:

> *"Weekly telephone discussions are not structured and can last from 5 to 60 minutes; it depends on needs and circumstances. I know that elsewhere they may last more than three hours."*

Fourteen deputy ministers use a system of regular bilateral meetings. Some oversee their DGs in the more specialized matters more systematically than their assistant deputy ministers. Out of these, nine use a specific work plan to structure the meetings.

> *"The meetings are arranged bilaterally and are based on the follow-up to previous meetings. I set the agenda and stay open."*

> *"Everybody receives a list of discussion points ahead of time. The DM prepares himself and collects information. This serves as a continuous evaluation process and helps with ongoing follow-up on the agenda."*

> *"The weekly bilateral meetings with my human resources DG, corporate administrator and legal advisor are extremely structured, even going as far as to include an exchange of documents to prepare the common briefing book before the meeting. This is less applicable to the meetings with the ADMs."*

The other deputy ministers tend to use performance frameworks or progress reports as guides for the meeting agendas.

> *"Yes, it's pre-arranged: half structured (I use the performance management framework for each one; what they want as guidelines; current critical issues); half ad hoc, based on the topics they raise or that emerge from the conversations."*

These meetings tend to serve several objectives: monitoring developments and determining the help that should be provided, contributing to performance evaluations,

sharing the organizational vision, getting to know everyone better, and learning how to cooperate with them:

> *"Once a week, there are mandatory personal meetings with each individual; these are not transactional and there is no paper involved; they last one hour, even if we have nothing specific to tell each other; we talk about everything and avoid making judgements; I allow myself ten hours a year with each staff member concerned. This is a form of coaching, based on shared feelings. When it comes to monitoring performance, I spend 5 minutes at the end of each meeting, when we review the performance contract. I let that discussion unfold without any agenda."*

Bilateral meeting systems are configured to maintain an ongoing dialogue with subordinates while at the same time allowing for close monitoring of the matters at hand:

> *"Here, we use the bilateral approach several times a week, based on ongoing discussions. The agendas tend to be determined according to the way in which our matters and circumstances are evolving. Things tend to be organized around the policies, based on their different stages of development. Moreover, people can put any topic or idea they want on the table."*

Other DMs practice a more remote form of oversight:

> *"My approach is to delegate the work to others, so I don't supervise very closely unless there are problems or an exceptional event."*

Clearly, each deputy minister's style plays a fundamental role in determining the approach to guiding his executives.

A system of retreats at varying intervals (from six to thirteen weeks) seems to exist in all departments; it helps bring all of the executives together to address the major matters, develop a more collective approach and get to know one another better in order to enhance co-operation. Better yet, it seems to provide an opportunity for professional development among the department's executives.

5.3   Sharing outlook

Sharing the organizational vision and more specific instructions is also part of the process of overseeing subordinates. There appear to be two ways of sharing outlook, either directly or through the oversight structure, i.e., to the department's staff as a whole or just to senior executives as an additional dimension of their professional development. One DM explained proudly:

> *"Seven of my former ADMs have become DMs. It all depends on who you have on your team: you adapt according to whether they are DM1s or EX-5s. I had a 'vague' plan for each of them, a type of individualized approach."*

Sharing outlook requires deputy ministers to use four different methods: meetings, traditional means of communication, new technologies and the annual management cycle tools. Group meetings, as a tool for sharing the vision and directives, is a method that comes up every time. It is an effective way to thoroughly discuss the issues and perspectives and make best use of time:

> *"The conversation evolves in the course of the meetings. It is not transactional or focused on a negotiating style, but rather on an approach to discussion and mutual learning. There are group meetings with assistant deputy ministers three mornings a week for general discussion."*

> *"Perspectives are shared through group meetings. Things have to get done, there have to be discussions and we have to find a way to make best use of the deputy minister's time. I want to use these meetings and discussions to create and maintain a team."*

> *"Different committees essentially act as focus groups and produce a certain desire for vision. You also have to find a way to actively support the process between committee meetings."*

> *"We often get away for retreats lasting a day and a half (every six weeks); it's a lot, but it's because of our process for changing departmental policy; the retreats always cover the same topics and we use them to measure our progress."*

Five other deputy ministers also focus on the involvement and accountability of staff serving under the ADMs. Employees have to be involved in the discussions to create cohesion within the organization. The positive effects of such an approach are reflected in the organizational culture, staff morale, professional development and work efficiency:

> *"Here, we deliberately follow a policy of information-sharing with every level in the organization; we invite them to meetings. Our meetings are horizontal; if there is a discussion, I gather all of the interested parties and tell them to bring their people. This way, the message does not get diluted as it moves down through the organization. They come to every executive committee meeting."*

> *"I always discuss matters in front of the executives and the official in charge of the matter at hand even if the latter is low in the hierarchy; they*

> *hear me and know what I think and want; in this way, we avoid diluting the information; this is good for the organization and people's morale; it contributes to their development and makes their work more rewarding."*

> *"I always make sure to invite the new and more junior officers to the meetings; this has enabled them to develop a more overall vision and thus improves their performance. We even have meetings with support staff."*

> *"We have more methods than ever before: previously, we had dialogue; then, we made each executive a champion of an issue on which he could leave his mark."*

The more traditional approaches, such as messages to all, welcome sessions, a corporate bulletin, case studies of "best practices or greatest achievements," management development sessions and so on are also part of the deputy ministers' arsenal:

> *"At orientation sessions, I meet employees who have joined the department at every level; I do so in person or in the video-conference room. Last year, there were 600 new employees!"*

> *"We use internal surveys to evaluate internal communications; we are doing just as well as any private-sector organization."*

DMs have to adapt to the latest needs, time constraints and settings as well as to the staff concerned. They have access to new methods for achieving their goals: computers, e-mail, Web sites, the Intranet, "street learning" and *Business Tiles Vision* (BTV) exercises:

> *"My predecessor sent two e-mails a year to all employees. Personally, I prefer to communicate hierarchically, in a continuous and human way through all levels of management. With BTV, there are 85 sites where you can talk to everyone; they can all see me at the same time and ask me questions. I introduced my management team one by one, adding my own comments: 'shared leadership,' 'trust,' etc.*

> *"Naturally, we use a whole range of tools: videos, e-mails, etc. We use every possible means…and hope for the best. It's never over. My pet topics are managerial development, succession, staffing, equity, computers and the strategic framework of activities."*

> *"We created a Web site for the associate deputy minister: the aim was to get good ideas circulating, generate questions and comments, receive suggestions, share concerns, etc. We used e-mails to circulate letters that were of interest to everyone and offered interesting points of view to various categories of employees. When we share concerns, we end up sharing solutions as well."*

The current operations of the management cycle must not be neglected in the interest of trying out the latest techniques: the selection and oversight of managers, the performance contract, integrated planning and corporate co-ordination are all part and parcel of the whole. Two deputy ministers pointed out the importance of carefully selecting the work team as the best way of sharing the organizational vision. The choice of good people helps create a climate of closeness and trust, which promotes the sharing of vision and implementation of instructions.

> *"Every one of my executives can represent me before the PCO. My strategy was to sit on the selection juries for ten of the top twenty-five positions in order to ensure that we ended up with people whose mindsets were compatible, who shared similar visions and on whom I could count in full confidence."*

> *"I chose the ADMs, so I give them every latitude and trust them implicitly."*

One deputy minister created special links to increase his proximity to his assistant deputy ministers in order to promote the sharing of his vision. Another deputy minister preferred one-on-one supervision as the way of ensuring the sharing of information and the organizational vision:

> *"I dine with each ADM on a regular basis in order to develop quality personal relationships with them."*

The performance framework and integration of the planning and program development processes help disseminate outlook; thus, these should not be seen as passive constraints but rather as vehicles of commitment:

> *"I try to share my understanding of performance with my subordinates; their success is mine; they have to do the work so that what is expected of me can be delivered."*

> *"Internally, we have now adopted the corporate government model by preparing one single annual plan: we are accountable against this plan; accountability moves through the various levels to the 3,000 front-line managers; in the fall, we submit our report to Parliament. It has been very well rated; our report is authentic because we have only one; we also have a good process for preparing it; maybe it's easier for us because our area is highly administrative."*

One deputy minister uses a co-ordinating committee that is directly charged with disseminating guidelines and ensuring follow-up:

> *"I use a co-ordinating committee, which meets every week for an hour; co-ordination and supervision are essential to the advancement of the department's agenda."*

The synthesis of responses revealed that group meetings are more frequently used as a means of sharing organizational knowledge and outlook than as a means of centralized supervision of subordinates. Four deputy ministers use group meetings primarily to supervise subordinates, while thirteen use them as instruments to create and disseminate organizational vision and circulate guidelines. We believe that if vision is well assimilated, it serves as a means of guiding behaviour, providing that it is reinforced by ad hoc interventions by deputy ministers when things go awry. The exclusive use of a system of group meetings helps provide oversight through shared vision but does not ensure individual development, resulting instead in a system of successes/failures.

The need to share outlook is a matter of concern for many deputy ministers, who indicate that although they have everything in place they are still not sure of succeeding:

> *"All of this remains in constant development: sometimes managers ask us questions about things we thought had been settled months ago! It's inevitable, but it proves that you have to keep at it relentlessly."*

Another DM said*:*

> *"You can see that we've invested a great deal in all that within the past two years, yet I believe that our success rate, in terms of outlook-sharing with managers, is around 60%!"*

Another DM suggested creating an assistant deputy minister position that would focus entirely on guaranteeing the effective sharing of messages! This is a key issue because, what is the use of getting ideas and plans on paper if they remain only half understood by the second and third levels down from the deputy minister?

6. Professional Support Needs

"A very lonely job! All alone in the middle of the traffic!"
(most of the deputy ministers interviewed)

This section discusses three types of professional support that deputy ministers may receive: professional development; support from the DM community; and support during crises or during transitions between assignments.

6.1 Professional development for deputy ministers

Do deputy ministers really need professional development? Haven't they already reached the top of the pyramid? Haven't they already succeeded? What really meaningful skills can be added to the arsenal that they already possess? Is acquiring new skills and knowledge worth the risk of taking out from their departmental responsibilities? And yet, the world and its challenges are changing, and what a CEO does or fails to do will be felt for many years throughout the organization, because of his unique role in strategy and decision-making. Maintaining the quality of an organization's senior manager thus becomes a strategic imperative, and everywhere the only alternative has been removal of officials who do not meet the standard required.

6.1.1 How real is the need?

Professional development for deputy ministers should be compared with professional development for CEOs in the private sector. It goes beyond simple training, and it includes enhancing, "refreshing", and continuously developing the individuals' skills and knowledge on the basis of four factors: his own needs for improvement, ongoing changes in the environment, the emergence of new challenges, and the availability of new approaches. This professional development can take several different forms. They include traditional training methods such as courses and seminars, readings and exercises and other methods more centred on practice, such as coaching by a consultant (from outside the government, or a retired colleague), mentoring, peer networking, conferences (through a variety of media), and outside events (forums, symposiums, sessions, panels, study tours, etc.).

Initially, five of the deputy ministers interviewed said they did not really feel any need for professional development; they had enough training to do their jobs and felt in control of the situation; they felt that these kinds of skills cannot really be taught (*"We should already have it in us."*) They were really rather adamant on the subject:

> *"I am not interested in the superficial things surrounding the heart of a question. I have all the background I need now to do a good job; I do not want to spend my time and energy on activities with which I am already*

> *very familiar and that deal only with broad considerations. With my experience, I already know more than what they are teaching. Maybe taking a course and discovering some detail that I have never applied would make me anxious for no reason! I choose competent people to take care of the technical end of things. Put me anywhere, and in one month, I'll be ready to do the job: identify sound public policies and implement them through sound programs, sound management practices, and sound audit mechanisms. In the complex, operational department where I work, that's what's essential, and that's what I do: I work on the institutional culture, the processes, the human resource management process and the budgeting process. That's how I achieve institutional change."*

> *"You need to already have the personality to cope with the uncertain, the unforeseen, and the unknown, so you have to be willing to learn on the job. Most of the skills you need must already be part of you before you ever become a DM. Too many of the people chosen to be DMs are allergic to taking risks. You'll go further faster if you practice intellectual integrity, take risks, and embrace change. I have no pressing needs in this regard; I've been in the system here for 25 years now, and I think that I know everything I need to know to do my job well."*

But subsequently, three of them showed enough interest in professional development to talk about the ways that it is provided and the topics that it covers. In the process, they showed that they were less resistant to professional development that is delivered outside the classroom:

> *"It would annoy me to have to take a course, even at Harvard! At my age, after a 30-year career, going back to school is not what I need. I need a more suitable approach; I am a great believer in continuous learning."*

The other deputy ministers, over 75% of the total, displayed an interest in professional development under certain conditions; they perceived a growing need to refresh their knowledge to meet ever more demanding challenges. But several of them also felt that the community, the PCO, and the political leadership do not place enough value on training for DMs. They argued for a corporate approach that would be far more assertive but still adaptable to each DM's individual needs:

> *"Everyone should manage this personally, but the system should offer opportunities and put an approach in place."*

For any progress to be made in this area, there will have to be a certain recognition of this need:

"To succeed in our work means much more than just working hard, doing a good job, and getting your promotion. You have to be constantly learning new things; this is even truer for leaders. You have to constantly ask yourself, 'Is my approach still the best one, am I still just as effective a leader as I was 3 or 4 years ago?' The changing demographics of the public service are going to increase the pace of change and the pace at which we are going to have to learn and adapt."

For many reasons, the deputy ministers agree that the modalities of professional development differ from one level of the organization to another. One of these reasons is the view from the top:

"The DMs feel isolated, which is the big difference between them and the ADMs."

As several of the respondents explained, practical constraints also play a major role:

"A DM is often so tied up on weeknights with events in town and travel around the country that it is not easy to see how training could be fit in to their schedules. Another thing that makes it hard is that our schedules are frequently upset by emergencies and the demands of the political system."

The DMs also said that over time, daily pressures tend to erode their desire to pursue professional development, and that they need help in being more determined about this:

"It's up to the deputy ministers to take the necessary time, so they have to make the time, and to do that, they have to be well organized. They have to create their own opportunities and take advantage of the opportunities that come their way."

Because of these problems of interest, time, and methods, and because of the new challenges that are coming over the horizon, steps must be taken to optimize opportunities for meeting these needs and the means of doing so:

"I have some professional development requirements. They can be met in many different ways, and these ways must converge."

6.1.2 Approaches

The deputy ministers mentioned two different kinds of approaches to professional development: those that would require some form of external support, and those where the DM could pursue professional development on his own. These two types of approaches could be applied in complementary fashion to meet each DM's particular needs:

> *"When you become a DM and you're running a department, you have to strike your own balance between what you learn from within your department and what you want to go outside your department to learn."*

a)   Approaches requiring external support:

In this category, the approach that would be endorsed by the most deputy ministers would be the issuing of a training passport. This approach is flexible, can be customized to the individual, and is official enough to guarantee a certain support and provide a good enough reason for the DM's absence to satisfy his minister. The training passport would be an agreement in principle with the Clerk to obtain his moral, material, and logistical support to pursue professional development activities:

> *"It should be the equivalent in budgetary terms of 5 days per year. In fact, training passports already exist, but few deputy ministers know about them!"*

The DMs want a general framework that offers them options in terms of methods and subjects, but they also want to remain masters of their own professional development decisions and schedules:

> *"It shouldn't be anything too structured. We need a lot of choices and we need to have things suggested to us. I plan my personal learning schedule a few months in advance, according to the openings in my calendar, and then I tell my people to prepare the content for me. I want to learn about subjects that are peripheral to my work, but still related to it."*

The performance contract should identify certain elements in each DM's development plan. This would take the form of a learning contract with the Clerk:

> *"Each DM would give the Clerk a brief statement of what he planned to do, and he would then be guaranteed support for it."*

It must be recognized that not all of the deputy ministers are senior and that not all ministers are equally sensitive to these matters. The existence of an official policy and an official training contract of this kind would help some DMs justify their choices and their absences. But everyone's freedom and preferences have to be respected; this would create more concrete incentives than any two-way commitment.

The orientation session for new DMs was greatly appreciated for the way it introduced them to their roles and gave them a sense of unity:

> *"I was pleasantly surprised by the orientation sessions for new DMs. Refresher sessions should also be provided after 1 or 2 years. This should*

> *be done using external resources, such as outside experts, former public*
> *servants, and studies. New DMs need training in the fundamentals of the*
> *government process."*

Another DM added:

> *"You'd be surprised how many people don't know how the Cabinet system*
> *operates!! It is very important for DMs to be thoroughly familiar with it,*
> *so that they can preserve the basic operating principles of our political*
> *and administrative system and work in accordance with them. Otherwise,*
> *we'll have chaos!"*

Three of the deputy ministers mentioned coaching as a professional development method, though they feared that it might take too much time and be hard to co-ordinate with deputy ministers' constantly shifting schedules. But they felt that coaching by a retired executive or consultant could be helpful, and, of course, they stressed the importance of choosing the right coach:

> *"Someone who is both wise and discreet, who knows how to put things in*
> *perspective and how to speak frankly, but with whom you can get along."*

Other deputy ministers feared that the cost of such a solution might be out of proportion to deputy ministers' actual needs. Before introducing coaching, some consideration would also have to be given to the problem of these coaches' potential mobility and the problems of confidentiality and trust that would arise from it. Once the existence of these coaches is discovered, they could become subject to internal and external pressures. Some further thought could be given to what makes a "good coach". Some of the deputy ministers prefer a solution similar to what they experienced in earlier stages of their careers:

> *"It would be good to be more systematic about professional development*
> *and to use mentoring."*

A few of the deputy ministers would like to have a form of sabbatical leave lasting a few months, at intervals of five to seven years, or between assignments:

> *"All of us need to look at our organizations with fresh eyes; this might be*
> *possible after a brief leave from the department, along the lines of a*
> *sabbatical leave."*

All of the respondents recognized the practical difficulties of this idea. They wouldn't want the central agencies to forget who they were during their absence, and they had trouble imagining a minister who would agree to wait for three months for his deputy to return! Yet this formula appears to already have been used successfully, in the 1990s, when five deputy ministers took temporary postings with armies abroad and at universities, and then returned to the public service:

> *"We need more time to think and reflect, and that should be part of the overall system of managing our assignments."*

Seminars and lectures were the format that the greatest number of respondents found attractive. They appreciate guest lecturers from outside the federal government, especially peers from the provinces or from other countries, and especially if their presentations are followed by discussions where the participants were able to relate the issues raised to their own concrete situations:

> *"We need to define training in a broad sense. It includes contributions by provincial colleagues and academics to let us understand what they do and hear what they have to say about it."*

Several of the deputy ministers suggested that the seminar format be adapted to create an international forum, which would give them the chance to compare more cases and to analyze and discuss issues in greater depth:

> *"Whatever we might say, we actually find the time to attend at least three-quarters of the conferences that really interest us."*

Some of the deputy ministers, on their own initiative, take the time to attend such events, which are not always focused on the Government's current business. One of the DMs spent three days in Colorado analyzing conflict management. Another attended a retreat on human relations and found it "poignant to hear a first-person account by an executive who lost 300 people in New York!" Both of these DMs found these experiences fascinating and have no regrets about having spent their time on them:

> *"We need to keep informed about trends, styles, etc. We need to get out of our own organizations and get away from our day-to-day concerns in order to improve our leadership. We have to learn from the things that we already do right, and identify those things that we need to improve."*

Many deputy ministers would like to engage in more extensive group discussions:

> *"Guest lectures always have their good side. For example, the other day, a well-known lecturer made a presentation that was highly questionable, but it led to a good discussion and a good examination of some of the issues."*

However, for in-depth discussions to succeed, the participants must have a certain comfort level:

> *"We could learn a lot by discussing things with our peers, but here in Ottawa, we can't have really frank discussions. Small groups would let us avoid this difficulty. We have to be able to react freely without worrying*

about being judged. It would be ideal if we could all read an excellent article on some topic, then share our ideas about it."

Several DMs would like to hear a bit more from their own colleagues in these presentations and discussions:

"We should take advantage of other DMs' experiences and have them make presentations to us on their learning experiences. I find, that at our level, what works well is learning from our peers. And what a great opportunity to get to know one another better!"

Updating their knowledge was also mentioned by several DMs. As one of them remarked,

"*In our jobs, it's not easy to read, but it's essential to do so, and there are so many different sources of information. I have a lot of work waiting for me and I cannot find the time to read. Besides, just keeping informed is not enough; that's not learning."*

This DM suggested some ways of condensing the relevant material (content digests) and converting it into learning content that the deputy ministers could assimilate at their own pace.

"*Perhaps we could offer a program of directed readings, but that doesn't always work, because people often do not get around to reading them. Perhaps some materials could be sent out by e-mail, and then people could get together in groups of 6 to 8 to discuss a subject that interest them or ask for a conference to go into it in greater depth.*"

Formal activities within the senior management community also contribute to professional development:

"I also learn at the DM luncheons and the Clerk's breakfasts. We have to get the best people and the people with the best ideas to contribute at dinners, seminars, and two-day sessions. In management, we have the DM retreats, which serve us well. We need to establish a menu of topics and approaches and let people choose on the basis of their recent perceptions of their needs and provide them with the required material support. I also like dinner speeches; in addition, we get to know one another and build a network."

Some of the DMs would like to enhance the format of the Clerk's breakfasts, which they feel have become too exclusively informative for contemporary needs: *"We can improve the weekly breakfasts by allowing more two-way communication."* But others feel that a change in this direction might be too ambitious and might make the breakfasts take up

too much time. It is hard to discuss any fundamental issue in one hour, especially when there are more than thirty people around the table!

b)   Individualized learning approaches:

The interviews revealed two co-existing attitudes about group learning. A very small number of DMs were against the idea ("*I do not feel any needs that can be met in a group. My attitude is to learn more every day.*"). The others would like to have group learning experiences but also said they learn mainly through observation, reflection, and discussion in the course of their daily work:

> "*Personal observation plays a big role. For example, it extends all the way to the strategies used in a committee or a federal-provincial meeting.*"

In general, the DMs are highly resistant to structured training:

> "*DMs should learn through their activities every day; it's an attitude, a state of mind, a reflex you need to have. Life is continuous learning. I have no specific learning plan; learning is intrinsic to the way I think. All of my activities are learning elements.*"

> "*My learning has been through applied practice: learning the facts, analyzing things. Today, I am more confident than before about what I am going to find under every stone I turn. You don't know everything on your first day on the job, but with practice and discussion, it comes to you.*"

> "*I feel that my learning needs are met through my work itself. For example, for my work on the committee on ...have to read, talk, and make trips regarding a subject that I used to know very little about. I want to concentrate on my subject areas but also be aware of emerging issues. I hate theoretical management studies; I find them artificial. The things, I learn by doing.*"

> "*The only way you can learn is from the inside. Learning, for DMs, takes place through action, through work, through discussions, through visits, through conferences and monthly lunches. My best learning vehicle is my own organization: it gives me opportunities for self-learning.*"

The DMs place an especially high value on discussions with employees, peers, and clients:

> "*Policy issues mobilize groups and motivate people to share their ideas. My best learning comes from the time that I spend with clients, which is*

one day per week. And once per month, I have a lunch meeting with a group of 25 employees who have some characteristic in common. I use the questions they ask as a sort of barometer. I learn with my group: listening, questioning conventional wisdom, looking at things from a different angle, identifying a vision and the right methods of achieving it. Learning is really a group exercise through listening and discussion."

"I learn through networking with my colleagues, my clients, and people from the outside. My real discussions take place at noon one day each week with another DM who is one of my best friends. I learn through my contacts with my peers from other countries. You have to learn how to listen and how to get something out of discussions with visitors and visits to other countries."

As the result of many factors, including globalization, the need to keep Canada competitive, Canada's international interfaces, and the speed at which information now travels, foreign and international experiences have become more and more a part of the deputy minister's job. Foreign travel is no longer regarded as a perk, and it is anything but tourism. DMs now need to build networks and become thoroughly familiar with developments abroad:

"In addition, I learn through my international commitments, such as chairing committees for two international agencies that are active in my field. When a DM travels, it constitutes training and development. You have to travel out of town and out of the country for the specific purpose of learning through observation and discussion. You have to apply to yourself, on a small scale, the model of the old Advanced Management Program (where you were exposed to paradigm change and had to identify the fundamental issues). You have to go out into the field and talk with the people who have achieved the most fruitful innovations or attempted the most daring ones, for example in England, regarding public policies."

Others make a personal practice of continuously scanning for information on new approaches and trends:

"I have a systematic reading program, a subscription to three book-review systems and I read a lot of magazines. I also have people who scan Web sites for me every day."

Lastly, events that take deputy ministers away from their day-to-day activities can offer excellent learning opportunities:

> *"Especially each of the big horizontal-management events, because they are so exceptional, offers unique opportunities to learn ...about myself, about others, about the things that lie outside my own field of work."*

In any case, deputy ministers who wish to do so can pursue formal, individualized learning activities on their own, like the deputy minister who has begun studying Spanish two evenings each week. The big challenge is the time available and the emergencies that can force deputy ministers to set formalized professional development aside:

> *"We have to be wary of our overloaded schedules, which tend to make us constantly put off our own professional development. That's the greatest challenge for DMs: finding time to think and to stay in close touch with the trends in the literature and in professional development; DMs do not have enough time, or do not make enough time, for organized learning; we have to be forced a bit more in this regard, otherwise we'll rely too much on the lessons we learn from the incidents that happen at work! An ideal formula would be three days per year, according to our individual preferences; it has to be in a field that is new for us; that would give us more resources and help us to do our jobs better."*

> *"There is a need for a function that would identify these things: interesting readings, innovative ideas, interesting lecturers, and successes in other countries. There are some existing mechanisms, and they ought to be reinforced, but above all I do want any additional bureaucratic constraints in this regard."*

This review of forms of learning that take place individually, and chiefly through the DMs' daily activities, points to the need for the agencies that manage senior government executives, as well as educational institutions, to conduct a methodological investigation of the protocols and best practices, for example, regarding on-the-job learning, discovery through focused observation or discussions, and, more generally, how personal development agendas are implemented at senior management levels.

6.1.3   Role of the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD)

The Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD) hosts orientation sessions for new deputy ministers, a monthly dinner exclusively for them, and sessions and seminars on new approaches. It also does research and holds international events. The DMs' comments about the CCMD were enthusiastic. Almost all of the DMs mentioned its role, and those who did, always added a comment that was positive, if not outright glowing. Not one of them offered any criticism:

> *"The CCMD does fantastic work; I get everything from it that I can. The professional development has been much better for the past five years, thanks to the CCMD and the openness of my colleagues."*

The orientation session for new deputy ministers was singled out for special praise at least ten different times:

> "*It's good especially when you're first entering your position and the CCMD does a good job of that!*"

Nor do the DMs overlook the Centre's other programs:

> *"Learning also takes place at the roundtables that the CCMD holds every month. The biggest problem is managing to find the time to take advantage of all the great things that the Centre has to offer: sessions, seminars, forums; the CCMD's dinners for the DMs are very useful; they give us an opportunity to meet our colleagues and thus avoid feeling all alone. In this way, the CCMD does a very good job of bringing these people together in a large yet relaxed forum. Many activities are already being offered, and we feel guilty about not being able to attend every one."*

Many of the DMs would like to continue to develop the role of the CCMD as a provider of specialized services in this area:

> "*We should continue discussions on this subject with the President and the Clerk. We will need to stop and take a deliberate look at the professional support mechanisms for DMs; we need to grow and develop the CCMD's programming. We need a more corporate approach, in which support and encouragement would be more co-ordinated. I am delighted with the CCMD's new approach. It used to be moribund. Now it has programs for DGs, ADMs, and even DMs. The CCMD has reassumed a central role, and that is because of its management, which commands the attention of its fellow deputy ministers.*"

6.1.4   Learning areas

The DMs' appetite for learning involves nine specific areas. Readers should keep in mind the comments by most of the deputy ministers, to the effect that their preferred learning methods do not include classroom instruction.

1.   Self-knowledge:

DMs must always consider how their past experience relates to their current tasks, identify any gaps, and correct them. DMs should concentrate their learning efforts on the subjects where they are weakest.

2.   The World:

To cope with the demands from their ministers and their departments, DMs must always be reading about the changes taking place in the world and how they are affecting the management of the government and of their departments.

3.   Analyzing and Thinking in a Context of Complexity:

People need to learn how to grasp the complexity of the situations that they are facing and how to develop complex conceptual frameworks.

4.   Governance and Public Policy:

"What would interest me would be to figure out how to explain to Canadians what we are doing with their money, why we are doing it, and why we are doing it the way we do. The subject of governance is of interest to deputy ministers: how research is conducted, how policy networks are established, how models evolve, how governance is inherent in societal transactions. We need to teach the difference between playing politics and making policy; playing politics means pretending to take care of business while managing to reconcile the statements of the Government, your minister, the central agencies, and your departmental mission; you patch everything together so that it looks like it's all working; making policy means that you actually get to the bottom of things, to the heart of the problems."

"I am especially interested in the change in government management environments."

5.   The Government's Agenda:

"We have to take better ownership of the government's overall agenda, so that we can get stuck into it more easily."

"I want to learn more about the government agenda; we know a fair amount about it because of the Clerk's breakfasts, which are excellent, but we should be given updates and a chance to go into things in greater depth, such as the question of climate change; I would like to have information sessions on the major public policy issues, such as health, the ageing population, and trade with the United States."

6.   The Critical-Approach Method:

"We should be taught the method for critically analyzing the information provided by the people who brief us in our organizations."

7. Best Management Practices:

"The ability to properly analyze and assess best practices in government and in the private sector; for example, risk management. The DMs would like to be made aware of new trends earlier, as was done so effectively for GOL. We should have quicker, continuous, more systematic access to the best practices in the various departments. They are bringing the BALANCED SCORECARD into the department. There's something new to learn about.

"I want to develop my skills; I already have some, but I want to adapt them to new contexts."

8. Human Resources Management:

"Human resources management: various kinds of approaches. Emotional intelligence is just as useful in perceiving sets of problems and issues as in managing human resources."

9. Communication Within the DM Community:

We have to do even more to develop the feeling of belonging; every DM should be made to feel a member of the family of DMs, in order to create trust and facilitate the exchange of information, experience, and tricks of the trade. The ability to work effectively with a group of peers.

The general feeling among the DMs is that they have the necessary potential to manage their way out of most situations, but that they need to help themselves through a more proactive approach:

> *"This is a job that makes you very humble; if you're honest with yourself, you quickly realize that you don't know everything. As long as you're afraid that you may not succeed, you're going to do a good job. You can't know everything in every situation. Sometimes, you mustn't be afraid to rely on your judgement and your instincts – after all, they were among the criteria used to select you to be a DM; in these cases, apply the basic principles. But you can't rest on your laurels, or you'll soon get left behind."*

6.2　Cohesion within the DM community

Cohesion among deputy ministers takes on all the more importance given the solitary nature of the job and the ongoing expansion of horizontal relationships. Such cohesion also allows more trust, consistency, and effectiveness. It also facilitates recruitment and retention of high-quality people in departmental senior management.

Canada is recognized for having corporate operating mechanisms that are highly integrated compared with those of other countries. The professional, apolitical nature of its senior public service and the conventions regarding its role give it a stability that contributes to its cohesion. Moreover, these career public servants do not usually assume

their positions in order to impose the beliefs of some political master. Each of them instead enjoys an authority that is grounded more in his skills and reputation than on his political relationships. The lack of partisan political control can reduce the ideological and hierarchical cohesiveness of these senior officials.

There are several mechanisms that currently help to make the DM community more cohesive. They include the Clerk's weekly breakfasts, the Committee of Senior Officials (COSO), the periodic deputy ministers' retreats, the numerous horizontal management mechanisms, the integrative role of the CCMD, etc.

The Privy Council Office also plays a primary role in this regard. It co-ordinates most of the deputy ministers' committees and horizontal management committees. Its Senior Personnel Secretariat handles the appointment of deputy ministers and meets their career management needs. It also supports the process of establishing performance and evaluation contracts. The Deputy Clerk actively supports the deputy ministers and gives them the advice they seek. In short, the PCO constitutes a sort of parent company, especially since almost all of the DMs have spent part of their career in the PCO shortly before they were appointed to DM positions.

The third mechanism involves the role of the Clerk. Every Clerk has his or her own style and way of working, but some aspects of this role seem immutable. The Clerk of the Privy Council is the Head of the Public Service, exercises moral and intellectual leadership within the community, provides an overall vision in the Clerk's Annual Report, directs the PCO and its secretariats, recommends appointments to the PM, negotiates performance contracts and recommends performance evaluations for the deputy ministers, and supports and advises the deputy ministers in their work.

According to all the observers, such a high degree of integration is not found in any other developed country, and it serves to strengthen the cohesion among the members of the community. All of them have experienced its benefits and express pride in this success. Having been socialized in this context, almost all of the deputy ministers place great value on this cohesion, and one of them says:

> *"We should always be spending more time on it, not less! It should be a constant concern, and many factors can contribute to it positively or negatively."*

Eleven of the deputy ministers said they were very satisfied with the degree of cohesion within the community at the present time (August 2001 to April 2002) and saw no problems that required any major changes. Nine other deputy ministers felt that some tensions were inevitable in all communities and that the degree of cohesion was satisfactory; in total, close to three-quarters of the deputy ministers expressed unreserved satisfaction on this subject. Five of the deputy ministers found the situation acceptable

but worrisome, while three found it very difficult. Seven of the eight evaluations that expressed the most reservations were produced after the events of September 11 and preparation of the December 2001 budget. The perception of cohesion may depend on some fairly immediate events. The evaluations that expressed the most satisfaction took place before September 11 as well as between March 15 and April 12.

6.2.1 Satisfaction factors

The strength of the Canadian model is that the people have known one another for a long time, in other positions and other circumstances in which they have had to work together and support one another; these are incredible strengths – mechanisms that build a familiarity with one's colleagues and a sense of mutual trust.

The community is driven by a set of shared values, even if they are not all written down on paper. These values are perceived as a rich heritage by the members of the community and generate a sense of belonging.

In general, the deputy ministers sense a genuine desire to help one another:

"*We have a real community, and it is a very good one. In any community, there will always be some tensions; that is inevitable and especially normal given the stress on our operations following September 11.*"

The mechanisms for cohesion exist and have been proven:

"*Nothing lasts forever, and we have to keep on refining and adjusting these mechanisms, but overall, we should be very satisfied with what these mechanisms enable us to accomplish as a group. It began in the late 1960s, and Paul Tellier reinforced it, as all the Clerks since him have done. There are various meetings, various committees and work teams. We are co-ordinating our efforts sufficiently. We recognize the challenge of horizontal management and we are rising to meet it.*"

The community works very well in small groups. The people get along well and see how to effect compromises that are satisfactory for all parties:

"*Small groups of 12 work better than when all 28 of us get together (as the case of the reform of the public service demonstrated). In these smaller groups, people get more involved. They all have to say what they think.*"

The DMs have the impression that they belong to a fairly functional group:

"*Horizontal management is pervading all our activities; we spend all our time meeting with other DMs, and that helps us to know each other better and work well together.*"

6.2.2   *Needs for improvement*

a)   Fear surrounding the PCO's role

As Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman wrote 20 years ago, we operate according to an energy-equilibrium model in which the politicians must contribute ideas and reflect societal trends while the bureaucrats provide the knowledge, expertise, information, processing models, analysis, and advice. The current political continuity means that the politicians have become more self-assured as, they have acquired over time many of the same attributes of expertise as the professional public service. The challenge for the senior public service is to preserve its role despite these new circumstances.

At the same time, certain departments and central agencies have enhanced their influence over certain processes such as budgeting and budgetary control. The PCO has always had an important role in designing the government's broad strategies and co-ordinating its policies. Its challenge is to reconcile these waves of influence; otherwise, the deputy ministers will feel that they have been placed under the sway of peers who should not be playing such a major role:

> "*The PCO should continue to play a very strong role and maintain a strong presence as a central agency providing guidance and co-ordination, but without interfering in the production of the departments' policies. The community has been forged around and by the PCO; it is therefore important to protect its traditional role in the government process. Otherwise, the PCO, its influence, and its role in the community will become marginalized, ...and the community's own vitality could be sapped as a result. Another factor reducing cohesion arises when the community loses some of its autonomy to political staff, in particular in the PMO. It is up to the PCO to establish a clear line of demarcation between what is political and what must not be.*"

> "*We have to protect the natural balances among the various components of the community. Some processes can end up expanding the role of a department unduly and making it into a central agency that is even more powerful than the traditional ones. It becomes all the more frustrating for the deputy ministers if this process appears to be very centralized and does not project an image of transparency.*"

b)   The central agencies:

In all countries at all times, the central agencies have had a reputation for doing too much micro-management. Canada is no exception to this rule. Both our traditional central agencies and our more recently created ones are perceived by many as intrusive, insufficiently understanding, and not always very helpful. They are felt to consume too

much of the deputy ministers' time and energy without seeing that what is most important is not their own agenda, but rather what their departments and their deputy ministers have to do:

> "*To improve things, there is a need for help on specific subjects that occur from time to time but are peripheral to the departments' main concerns – topics such as Government On-Line, official languages, and Public Service Renewal (La Relève). One has the impression that the central agencies should be doing more to help the DMs fully achieve what is expected of them in these areas – for example, by circulating best practices.*"

c)   Formality of relationships:

Over the years, as values in the public service have changed, the style in which groups operate has changed a good deal. The presence of deputy ministers who are female or parents of young families has impact on the kinds of informal meetings that are held – the schedules, the activities, and the degree of informality, etc. It is not a matter of mourning the past or of casting stones at anyone, but rather of acknowledging that ways of relating have evolved:

> "*There has been a fairly sizeable change here, in my opinion. We have made our mutual and collective relationships much more formal. Last week, at the DM lunch, there was no lecturer, and it was great, because it gave us a better chance to exchange ideas with one another. The biggest thing we need is a chance to talk together in an informal setting, to understand what our colleagues are going through. We have to find the time to discuss our real problems together in an informal way.*"

> "*We have lost something. It is important that our retreats not have a structured agenda focused on current problems. The community used to have some social events that included more informal, relaxed activities, in some fairly unique settings (the Wilson House or the dinner at Foreign Affairs); these events helped people to communicate with one another and get to know one another better. Nowadays, the framework is tighter; this has its good sides, but it also has its drawbacks.*"

Not all the deputy ministers showed the same willingness to meet this need:

> "*We already have enough commitments in the evening; we're not looking for any more.*"

> "*More than half the deputy ministers have shown a desire to develop informal relationships; some would even like to have access to a social club to get together and talk after office hours – we don't get the chance to*

have fun together. We meet only for serious work or to address specific challenges. We should use the evenings of our retreats or the lunches to relax, play some golf from time to time, reconstruct the world together, and form more of a family."

"There are the breakfasts, the CCMD, and the retreats, but in the final analysis, we do not get enough time to share ideas, talk about new ideas, and have profound discussions about possibilities. The agendas for the retreats are too tightly organized."

Group trips help DMs get to know one another better:

"We should be able to travel together when possible; with that kind of day-to-day contact, people get to know each other better; it's more genuine. We should facilitate regional group visits throughout the country; not only the Clerk should make such visits."

This is a chicken-and-egg kind of dilemma; better relationships help people do better work together, which strengthens the relationships among them.

"If it were improved, that would facilitate the success of horizontal management."

Within the context of his own personality, every Clerk has a leadership role to play in this regard; no matter how he plays this role, he has to show a certain concern for informally promoting ties within the community.

d)   Need to increase mutual trust:

People who have solitary jobs, such as deputy ministers, tend to try to form limited circles around themselves in which they can verbalize and exchange thoughts on their experiences. Many of the deputy ministers expressed the fear that these very human arrangements of convenience could degenerate into clannishness:

"We have to be vigilant to prevent clans from developing within the community. This is a small town. Relationships are more or less rewarding according to the groups that people belong to. Can we do better? Today's DMs get along well in small groups, and there are some nice communities throughout the city. I don't know whether we should make a big effort to try to do more."

The issue is presented as one of mutual trust:

"There will always be some cynics, but it's far better than 15 or 20 years ago, and we can do better still."

"It doesn't work like my management committee, where no one has to feel threatened for what they say. Here, if you get on people's nerves, if you deviate from the norm, you're going to pay for it. There's a kind of reticence to recognize that nobody's perfect. However, I have noticed that once one person gets the ball rolling, in general the others will start to open up about their own problems."

It is a matter of leadership and mutual respect. Every DM is a brilliant, hard-working individual who has successfully met major challenges and contributes tremendously to the organization. The challenge is to make them work together and make them comfortable enough to express themselves to the group.

Many DMs mentioned having especially close, ongoing relationships with colleagues, ranging in number from one to four. Others would like to enjoy better networking. All of them mentioned how much establishing friendly relations with certain colleagues had helped them more than once. This question becomes more acute for general administrators who do not practice in the National Capital Region or who come from outside the federal departments; twenty per cent of the community are in this situation. Some of them praised certain colleagues whose spontaneous openness had helped ease their entry into the community:

"The regional DMs are all alone in their regions, and the people in Ottawa do not always show a great deal of sensitivity to their situation; when I go there, they put me absolutely on the same footing as anyone else; they have to show more understanding for the difficulties associated with being in the regions and trying to maintain ties with the centre."

"Within the community, the CCMD does more now for the new arrivals; someone should also take the new DMs under his wing, especially when they come from the outside: we should never take it for granted that everyone knows certain things – for example, that everyone is aware of conflicts with the ministers, the central agencies, and the management team, ethics, etc."

e)   A common vision:

Many of the deputy ministers would like to have more time and more mechanisms for discussing new fundamental challenges, establishing common visions, and committing themselves to them:

"For example, we could have a little get-together when one of us is retiring. There are not enough in-depth discussions among the DMs as a

group on important subjects, on change, and that's bad. We should have some. The community needs to engage in a discussion exercise around the establishment of a common vision, and it is essential for us to emerge from this exercise with a clear consensus. We should make our common corporate vision clearer. It should include priorities that we cannot circumvent; if we clarified them, it would help. There are no shortcuts: we need clear priorities that all of us share and that all of us can really commit to."

Not all of the deputy ministers have the same desire to get involved in such an exercise, either because they do not feel a priority need or because past experiences have made them lukewarm on the subject:

"It's good enough the way it is; I don't have any particular need; don't force me to sit down with a whole group for days on end to discuss things that will never happen (!): there is often a lot of talk and very little action. We should talk about real things and get to the bottom of them. Many meetings don't actually accomplish any changes; all they do is transmit messages and news on current topics."

f)   Clarify COSO's role:

Approximately ten of the deputy ministers did not seem to clearly understand what COSO's role is or how it operates. They expect more from this committee; they would like its agenda to more accurately reflect the new challenges that the community is facing, and they would like it to operate more transparently. Its agenda should be circulated, and the deputy ministers have the impression that it does not take sufficient account of the realities in the departments.

6.3   Special situations

6.3.1 Crisis management

With just two exceptions, the deputy ministers expressed a certain need for help in crisis situations. This help can come from either of two sources: personal contacts or the PCO. In the case of the PCO, they see three possible forms of help: advice from a "wise man" within the PCO, fairly extensive involvement by the Office as an institution, or simply having the PCO act as an observer while the situation is played out.

While two deputy ministers suggested "*developing a list of general rules*," another has distributed a much-appreciated account of a case that occurred in his own department. It remains fairly hard, however, to imagine any very general rules, because as two-thirds of the deputy ministers observed, every crisis is distinctive, in terms of who or what it depends on, whether it is political or administrative in nature, what issues it involves

(ethics, procedures, disasters), what consequences it may have (depending on its nature –
for example, public health and safety), what other organizations are involved, what time
of year it is (whether Parliament is sitting), how heavily the media are covering it and
what angle they are covering it from, how the provinces or client groups are involved,
when the crisis originated, how fast it is developing, and lastly, how much control we
have over events to halt the damage or correct the situation. The department's culture, its
capacities, and its cohesiveness also play a major role, as do the style and profile of the
minister concerned.

Thus, it is no surprise to hear that the deputy ministers need help, but don't know exactly
what kind of help they may need! (In similar circumstances, CEOs in the private sector
would rely a great deal on their boards of directors.)

The most frequent response, from more than half of the deputy ministers, is that they
would ask for the help of a "wise man," in this case the Deputy Clerk, whom several
deputy ministers described as having the ideal personal and professional profile to help in
such situations:

> "*There is already someone in the PCO who is exceptionally helpful
> because he has been there a long time; he shows wisdom, he knows where
> the hidden traps lie and what the next steps to take might be, he provides
> advice without being judgmental, he's trustworthy, he's reliable, and he's
> willing to take the time to play this role.*"

One-third of the DMs would prefer to reach out to trusted personal contacts; in this case,
they suggest consulting a few different contacts separately in order to get their varying
perspectives and see where their opinions converge:

> "*This is something that has to be done discreetly, on the basis of personal
> trust, with someone whom you're comfortable with. In our job, you can
> feel very alone. If you don't have support from someone, it's really hard,
> especially for new deputy ministers. You need someone to reassure and
> even support you if the minister or the department is resistant to change.
> Young people have to be encouraged to maintain contact with someone
> they can trust. In Ottawa, people don't feel comfortable talking about
> experiences that didn't go well.*"

> "*In a past crisis, once I had developed my plan, I shared it with four
> trusted friends. Two of them told me it was OK, one gave me some
> suggestions, and the fourth told me that I had it all wrong. If I had asked
> only one of them for advice, who knows which one I might have chosen?
> As it was, I applied my own plan, and everything worked out fine.*"

It's even better if these confidants are other DMs who have no connection at all to the
crisis:

> *"You can ask them: 'Am I on the right track?' The choice of a confidant has more to do with his personality than with his position in the system. Personally, I count a lot on 3 to 5 friends who are DMs (depending on how close we are). We arrange to see each other just about every month. You need to have friends in the community, and they have to be there for you on these occasions. You have to know that you are not alone at those times. You need someone to tell you, 'Don't worry about it. These things happen!'"*

According to one deputy minister, the best personal support is a stable personal life and an understanding spouse!

Two deputy ministers would like the way to be paved for them in case they need it. If the process were made more official, it would seem easier to take advantage of it.

> *"Maybe we should set up a place where you can go for advice on a voluntary basis. It would be nice to be able to count on some of the more senior DMs to make themselves available to talk with us as needed."*

Other DMs felt that this "officialization" might lead to an overly generalized process that could disturb established hierarchical relationships.

Two deputy ministers would be content to use their department's own resources:

> *"You should rely mainly on your department's own staff, because it's still a matter for your team, your crisis management team."*

Some of the DMs plan to resolve the situation alone or with their employees, whenever possible:

> *"It depends on the timing. In the middle of a crisis, you have to get up and solve it yourself. Every crisis is unique and special; you should solve it together with your managers in the department. You need your specialists whom you can bring together at a moment's notice."*

Help from the centre: a worrisome solution

A good many deputy ministers expressed ambivalence concerning the support that may come from "the centre," meaning the institutional support of the PCO. There is a fine line between being open to support and confessing that you have lost control. Though the DMs recognize that the PCO has every right to play such a role, they also say that they are capable of working things out themselves using their own leadership abilities, and several fear they will be harshly judged if they admit to a problem and ask for help:

> *"There is a need, and it cannot be greater than the strength of the PCO at this time. It has to be the PCO that takes on this responsibility; it assembles its team to do precisely that: lawyers, communication experts, the secretary for the machinery, the secretary for operations: they have to co-ordinate their efforts and intervene with an integrated rationale."*

> *"There has to be some support from the centre; this may not seem obvious, because the centre isn't necessarily your friend in all circumstances. You need to have support in place well before the crisis. If you don't have the necessary sources of support in the centre, you can end up feeling very isolated."*

The DMs acknowledge without hesitation that the PCO has a role to play, but this role will depend on the nature of the crisis. It can be very important to maintain excellent contacts with the PMO and the PCO. One of the first things to do is to quickly inform the PCO which will then look for the appropriate way to support the deputy minister:

> *"There is a certain ritual to follow at the PCO in these situations: they know that certain things have to be done in these circumstances; it's only normal that the DMs don't all have these things in their heads, immersed as they are in the day-to-day needs of their operations."*

Once a crisis strikes, DMs should be encouraged to act quickly and resolve situations rapidly:

> *"You have to alert the PCO as soon as the first serious signs of a crisis appear, so that there won't be any surprises".*

At such times, to develop a genuine, sustainable relationship of help and support with the department concerned, the PCO must meet three challenges. First, its representatives must not give the impression that they are judging the people who find themselves in the middle of the crisis. Second, the PCO must take care not to let communication between the two organizations become "institutional" and hence more calculated, rigid, and cold. Third, the PCO must not give the impression that it is placing the deputy minister under its tutelage.

> *"There are a certain number of things that you should do with the PCO, but I wouldn't let them watch over every step I made; on the other hand, I would give them all the information, but that's all. They would have greater needs than I would. Theoretically, the PCO is there to support you, but inevitably, you can sense that they are starting to blame you; you see it by the number of questions they ask, the tack they take in asking them, their tone, their body language."*

Other DMs expressed some reservations, because by providing help that was too invasive, the people from the PCO could give the impression that they were taking control of the place:

> *"They tend to co-ordinate their efforts more effectively when the Clerk or the Deputy Clerk is personally involved!"*

> *"The first thing to do would be that in a time of crisis, the central agencies identify a single person to act as our point of contact. Tthere you are in your conference room with your crisis team, and there are 60 people waiting for you to phone them back, including five from every central agency, and you have to repeat the same thing to each of them. It takes up too much time that could be better spent dealing with the crux of the crisis!"*

According to several deputy ministers, the PCO, for its part, needs to refine its communication processes:

> *"The PCO is not a problem in itself and can be helpful in a crisis situation, but for that to happen, they have to know when and how to get involved, how to help, and when to step back."*

And yet, most of the deputy ministers have spent part of their careers as senior managers at the PCO: *"So it's all a matter of viewpoint!"*

The Clerk still remains the most sought-after adviser in these circumstances. The time available and the way a particular case unfolds may reduce his involvement. Several of the DMs expressed appreciation for the quality of the help that they had received from Mel Cappe as Clerk:

> *"The Clerk's leadership is always important. The Clerk is a sort of gentle mentor in these difficult cases."*

Some deputy ministers say that it is hard to help certain departments:

> *"The PCO provides some help, but the department's leadership does not always have the open attitude that would let them establish the kind of ad hoc internal management structure needed to really help the minister and place the corporation's interests ahead of its own personal needs. It isn't easy, because at such times, people have very thin skins, and you have to understand that."*

The departments also have their jobs to do; they need to have planned some potential management scenarios before the crisis ever struck, and they need to disclose the

information and accept the changes that are necessary. One deputy minister described his first three days of confusion when a crisis struck, while another boasted that he had been able to get his crisis team rolling in thirty minutes:

> "*It's always better to have some discussions and establish a mechanism before the crisis rather than in the middle of it.*"

A better job should be done of sharing lessons learned in the past, as one deputy minister has done by giving presentations on this subject. Curiously, some of his peers did not seem to be fully aware of this initiative.

> "*Before, we had no idea at all of what to do. Now, we can relate some of our experiences and discuss them. We should count on the people who have been through it before.*"

Others see this as a topic for the CCMD to pursue:

> "*Perhaps the CCMD's seminars, which are very helpful in this regard, could lead to some other form of assistance.*"

There were six rules on which there was a certain unanimity: use your network of trusted advisers; alert the PCO early on; clarify your method of communicating with the PCO; show a certain willingness to put all aspects of the problem on the table; seek advice from your peers; and prepare a general management scenario in advance, but nothing too formal and/or standardized.

In fact, the deputy ministers want to preserve their autonomy, on which their credibility depends, and most of them would not want to see a crisis team set up within the PCO for these kinds of cases. The DMs greatly prefer flexible mechanisms based on human relationships.

To enhance its co-operation with a department in crisis, the PCO would also do well to ensure that certain rules were followed: set common objectives with the department; establish simple, efficient lines of communication; adopt a support orientation to serve the department first, and a judgement-free attitude about the department concerned.

6.3.2 *Transitions between assignments*
A transition is defined here as a passage from one assignment to another. The DMs interviewed expressed two kinds of needs: a "positional" need to get settled in at one's new level (in the case of new deputy ministers) or new position (in the case of transfers), and a need for a "refresher" period .

Three kinds of situations arise. The most common is when a deputy minister is transferred from one department to another. The second is when an associate deputy minister is promoted to full deputy minister. Third, there is the often difficult situation where a deputy minister comes to Ottawa who has been recruited from the "outside" –

from a provincial government, or the private sector, or a non-profit agency, or even from a government office in the regions.

a)   ***Transfers***

The deputy ministers do not ask for much additional assistance to help them get through the transitions from one conventional assignment to another. They would like to have a bit more time between assignments, as was done for the appointments made at the end of April 2002, and they would like to have clearer indications as to the objectives of their new mandates:

> *"It's a sign of confidence when no one explains things to you; when you are given encouragement rather than any specific objectives. I imagine that this is not always possible!"*

> *"It's not too big a problem. You need a few days to close your files and say goodbye to the people with whom you have had contact both inside and outside government. In my case, my new appointment was announced on Friday, I met the minister the next Monday, and I began work one week later. At my meeting with the Clerk, I wasn't given any particular mandate; he just gave me some encouragement, pointed out 4 or 5 subjects that were a concern for either him or the PM, and wished me good luck; it was very good that I didn't receive any orders that were too definite, because that way, I had more freedom to act."*

The DMs generally feel that transitions are being managed fairly well, including the orientation session:

> *"It should discuss the issue of transitions, if it does not already do so."*

The Clerk's personal support is the most important:

> *"Even though he does not spend too much time going into details with us, we feel that he is ready to support us and obtain support for us; that's a good sign!"*

Some of the deputy ministers feel that the planning of assignments could be somewhat more complete. Often, everything happens in less than a week, and it is hard to think about any "refresher" time.

Opinions were divided on a "refresher" period between assignments; some said that they did not feel the need for it, while others would like some but realize how difficult it is:

> *"We are more like migrants than specialists, and we always have to be*
> *prepared to face challenges; to do that, you have to make a real effort to*
> *stay alert and continuously up to date on new developments and trends.*
> *You also have to seize any opportunities that the community may offer."*

Those deputy ministers who would like to have a certain "refresher" framework between positions cite the demanding nature of their work. The problem arises from the unpredictable duration of assignments and the difficulty of providing a transition period between two appointments; the appointment of one person at a certain location may trigger a series of transfers.

> *"...maybe three months to learn elsewhere. The danger of leaving for too*
> *long is that people will forget you and you'll miss some good*
> *opportunities; I'm not sure that we have enough confidence that the*
> *system will make us any guarantees in this regard; there are so many*
> *immediate constraints. Why couldn't we have a three-month leave during*
> *assignments that are fairly long – say five or six years?"*

And yet a few of the deputy ministers have already enjoyed assignments abroad between two appointments. The Clerk can generate a certain amount of trust in this regard within the DM community.

b)   Promotions

Several of the DMs pointed out the sizeable challenge involved in making the transition from associate deputy minister to full deputy minister, and they suggested that some follow-up activities should take place during the first year of each new DM's mandate. They would like the PCO to prepare a follow-up program of this kind, and they would like it to be flexible. Almost all of the respondents praised the orientation program that has been established by the PCO and the CCMD.

c)   New DMs from outside Ottawa

DM community support plays a crucial role at the beginning of a new assignment, especially if this is a person's first appointment as deputy minister, and even more so when the new DM does not come from Ottawa. In some cases, the group of female deputy ministers (which meets every 6 to 8 weeks) offers some bonds of solidarity that are highly appreciated. In other cases, the community of DMs who come from the regions has played an important role during the first few months, until the new DM has developed a network of friendships.

d)   The PCO's roles

The PCO can therefore play six types of roles: the personal support of the Clerk; the planning of personal replenishment time; the establishment of a transition period between

the time an appointment is announced and the time the new DM actually assumes his new position; input into the orientation session; support for newcomers; and follow-up with them as well.