

You can download this publication by going online:

publiccentre.esdc.gc.ca

This document is available on demand in multiple formats (large print, Braille, audio cassette, audio CD, e-text diskette, e-text CD, or DAISY), by contacting 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232). If you use a teletypewriter (TTY), call 1-800-926-9105.

© Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada, 2017

For information regarding reproduction rights:

droitdauteur.copyright@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca

PAPER

Cat. No.: Em16-11/2017E

ISBN/ISSN: 978-0-660-07369-9

PDF

Cat. No.: Em16-11/2017E-PDF

ISBN/ISSN: 978-0-660-07368-2

ESDC

Cat. No.: SSD-180-02-17E

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. Opening remarks from the Panel	1
B. Service Quality Review Executive Summary	3
C. What is the Employment Insurance Service Quality Review?	13
1. Why undertake a Service Quality Review of EI?	13
2. What did the Review focus on?	17
Streamlining applications	18
Reducing wait times	19
Reducing the administrative burden	20
What was not involved in the Review?	21
3. How did the Panel conduct the Review?	22
Stakeholder meetings	22
Employee roundtables and questionnaire	23
Online questionnaire	23
Written submissions	23
Survey of EI clients	23
International best practices	24
D. Where are we now?	25
1. How does Service Canada currently serve citizens?	25
2. Are citizens satisfied?	26
3. What improvement steps are being taken?	39
Taking steps for improvement through Budget 2016	39
E. Where do citizens want us to be?	41
1. Citizen-centric	42
Better citizen engagement and communications	42
Improved information and outreach on EI	43
2. Employee engagement	45
Need for engagement	45
Speed versus quality	45
Agent knowledge, authority and training	46
Back-office improvements	48
Improving staff morale	48

3. Process	51
Call Centre improvements	51
Reducing claims processing time	55
Targeted claimant portal by special benefits	56
Reducing reporting requirements	57
Enhanced and assisted access	59
Recourse process – reconsideration and the Social Security Tribunal	59
4. Technology	62
Improved use of modern technology	62
Online improvements and technology advancements	63
5. Policy	66
The two-week wait for benefits is a pain point	66
Issues for apprentices	66
Issues for First Nations communities	67
Labour market attachment and seasonal EI benefits	67
F. What do we need to do to get there?	69
Citizen-Centric	70
Employee engagement	77
Process	80
Technology	87
Policy	88
G. Where do we go from here?	90
H. Appendices	91

A. Opening remarks from the Panel

When the current Government was elected in October 2015, it committed to delivering better services to Canadians and to improving the Employment Insurance (EI) system to make sure that Canadians receive the benefits to which they are entitled in a timely manner.

EI is a foundational element of Canadians' social safety net and provides support when Canadians need it most. Front-line services are important interactions between Canadians and their government. Canadians expect their government to provide quality, responsive and efficient services. When the Government meets these expectations, and provides positive service transactions, we build trust in government.

It is clear that Canadians are facing too many challenges accessing EI services, which can cause stress and frustration for those who are often already experiencing a period of difficulty and financial hardship. Poor-quality service for Canadians can undermine confidence in the system and lead Canadians to question whether the system will be there for them when they need it.

The Government must do more to improve by engaging with Canadians and stakeholders, leveraging new technologies and using data more efficiently, with a goal of making it easier for Canadians to find and access our services and programs, and giving citizens a simpler and more straightforward experience.

As part of the commitment to improving service to Canadians, the Government launched the EI Service Quality Review (SQR), which sought input from stakeholders and Canadians across the country on ways Service Canada could improve the quality of EI services.

We, as the SQR Panel, have been honoured to engage Canadians and stakeholders on the EI program. This report and the recommendations it contains reflect the feedback we received from Canadians and represents a path forward for our government's continuing work to achieve results for Canadians.

We consider this review to be a step toward the Government of Canada client-first service strategy that was announced as part of Budget 2016. It also builds on the other Budget 2016 commitments that have already achieved and will continue to achieve tangible results for Canadians over the coming years. This includes the investment of \$92 million in Service Canada Call Centres and EI processing to improve program responsiveness; further actions such as reducing the EI waiting period from two weeks to one; eliminating the 2012 rule changes to suitable employment and job search requirements; eliminating the EI eligibility requirements for new entrants and re-entrants; and extending the Working While on Claim pilot project.

We began the SQR exercise with open minds and expectations of fruitful engagement. Through the consultations, we have been impressed by the commitment and dedication that the stakeholders, Service Canada staff, and everyday Canadians that we spoke to have in improving the quality of EI service.

We would like to thank all of those we consulted, including the Service Canada employees and their union, and the many stakeholders that took the time to meet and discuss EI service quality, with a special thank you to the Employment Insurance Commissioners for their support and assistance.

We expect Service Canada to track and report on their progress in considering and implementing these suggestions to ensure that Canadians and stakeholders can see themselves in the improvements of the program over the coming years.

Sincerely,

The Service Quality Review Panel

Terry Duguid

Member of Parliament for Winnipeg South and in his former capacity as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

Rodger Cuzner

Member of Parliament for Cape Breton—Canso and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour

Rémi Massé

Member of Parliament for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia



B. Service Quality Review Executive Summary

Service Canada was created 11 years ago in 2005. When it was established, it was designed as a service-oriented organization, focused on providing the best possible service to Canadians as a *citizen-centric* service delivery organization. Since then, however, there is the impression that Service Canada may have lost sight of this central principle, as a focus on efficiencies and a lack of investment in ensuring that the citizen remained the focus led the Department to be more *program-centric*.

After the current government was elected in October 2015 it committed to improving the quality and timeliness of services Canadians receive. It began this work immediately through Budget 2016 by committing to enhance the performance of the Employment Insurance (EI) program by investing \$19 million in program responsiveness and \$73 million in Call Centres, in addition to undertaking a number of measures to improve the program for Canadians such as reducing the EI waiting period from two weeks to one and eliminating the 2012 rule changes to suitable employment and job search requirements. The Government also committed to improving service to Canadians through the development of a Government of Canada service strategy that aims to put the client first.

The Government is delivering on that commitment by first reviewing how Service Canada can provide better EI services to Canadians most in need. In support of this, the Government took action by launching a nationwide consultation process on the quality of service provided to Canadians by the EI program, the Employment Insurance Service Quality Review (SQR), which was led by three members of Parliament:

- Mr. Terry Duguid, Member of Parliament for Winnipeg South and in his former capacity as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development;
- Mr. Rodger Cuzner, Member of Parliament for Cape Breton–Canso and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour; and
- Mr. Rémi Massé, Member of Parliament for Avignon–La Mitis–Matane–Matapédia.

Following their consultations, the Review Panel has developed a number of recommendations to improve the quality of service for the EI program. While these recommendations cannot solve all of the service quality issues of the EI program, the Panel expects that they will set the Department on the right path toward ensuring that the citizen will once again be the focus of the program and of Service Canada, and that the recommendations will act as a tangible first step for the Government of Canada in achieving its client-first service strategy.

Scope of review

The SQR was conducted from May to November 2016. It was designed to give Canadians and stakeholders the chance to voice their impressions, concerns, feelings, and suggestions, both positive and negative, on the quality of EI service, giving the Government a clear sense of where service quality needs to improve in order to give Canadians the service they deserve.

The breadth of the consultations undertaken by the Panel was quite extensive, and provided an accurate picture of how Canadians view the service quality of the EI program. Over 200 stakeholders, including citizens, employers, unions and labour groups, were consulted, 3,200 were consulted via a questionnaire, and over 7,550 Canadians engaged, providing their impressions of EI service delivery and offering suggestions for improvements. International organizations were also engaged to learn about new innovations and best practices in delivering citizen-centric service delivery.

40 meetings
with over
200 stakeholders




7,550
Canadians made
their voices heard online


100
written submissions
were received


1,500
EI clients surveyed


3,200
employee questionnaire
responses

Satisfaction with services

Service Canada provides important information on the EI program and offers help to citizens by phone, in person, or online; the SQR sought to gauge citizen satisfaction across these channels and with the overall EI service provision.

Overall

- During the SQR Panel's survey of recent EI clients, they found that the Government's recent investments in Call Centres (\$73 million over two years) and EI processing (\$19 million for 2016–17) were already making a difference.
- The survey of EI clients indicated that 78% of respondents are at least satisfied with the quality of service they received. However, this also indicates that one in five clients are either neutral or dissatisfied with the quality of the service received, so improvements can clearly be made.
- In 2015–16, nearly 70% of calls to the EI Call Centres were unable to reach the queue to speak to an agent. When a citizen gets through to an agent, their satisfaction is high—it is getting through to an agent that is the issue.



Call Centres

- The Panel heard repeatedly about people's frustration with not being able to reach a Call Centre agent. Service Canada has struggled to meet the call demand for EI Call Centres both in terms of accessibility (getting through to the Call Centres) and service level (the percentage of citizens who get through to an agent within 10 minutes), which has had an impact on citizen satisfaction given the importance of citizens being able to speak to an agent about their claims.

In Person

- Citizens are satisfied with the in-person channel, with 82% of clients being satisfied with the quality of service at Service Canada Centres.
- An issue is that in-person Service Canada agents have become generalists for the organization, rather than specialists in the program. Canadians who visit an in-person office expecting some assistance with their EI claims can be left disappointed that the agents do not have the knowledge or the authority to help them.
- Of note though, 63% of respondents to the EI client survey felt that the computers provided in Service Canada Centres to complete their EI application were the most important aspect of the service.

Online

- The importance of the online channel using today's modern technology was apparent to the Panel; the EI client survey showed that 76% were satisfied with the overall quality of the online channel.
- Most clients (84%) felt that being able to complete steps online made the overall service experience easier for them, with three-quarters saying it was easy to understand and fill out the information required online.

Impact on citizen groups with barriers to access

- A key result of the consultations was the difficulty of providing service to citizens who have barriers to accessing services. These citizens were more likely to require assistance in completing their applications and were more likely to seek in-person assistance when completing their EI applications, with 52% of clients identified as having barriers saying they visited a Service Canada office for help.
- Citizens who experience access barriers were less likely to feel that being able to complete steps online made the overall service experience easier.

Results of consultations

Building on the service quality improvements to the EI system through Budget 2016, which include enhancing access to Call Centres and improving the responsiveness of EI service delivery, the Panel's consultations sought views from stakeholders and Canadians on how to improve the quality of EI service delivery.

As the SQR Panel travelled across Canada and listened to the concerns of Canadians and stakeholders during the summer of 2016, they came to the belief that Service Canada has lost sight of the central principle of being citizen-centric; that, rather than focusing on the citizen, transparency, and the *quality* of service provided, Service Canada has become too focused on standardization of services, automation, as well as a drive for operational efficiency and cost savings. These stakeholders felt that, at least at some level, the organization lost sight of the client and became more inwardly focused, reflecting something that was more *program-centric*.

The results of these consultations were grouped into five priority areas by the Panel: citizen-centric, employee engagement, process, technology, and policy.

Citizen-centric

- The Panel heard the need to improve citizen engagement and communications when designing and delivering EI services, as Canadians find it difficult to communicate with Service Canada and feel they cannot communicate with Service Canada the way they want to, i.e. by email and other online tools. The Panel heard that the information available on the EI program was difficult to understand and needs to be made easier to find and read.

Employee engagement

- The Panel heard from employees that they need to be properly engaged when it comes to service improvements.
- The Panel also heard that performance measurement may focus on the wrong part of the job, with quantity being prioritized over quality.
- Employees told the Panel that increased authority (e.g. the ability to make changes to claims to help clients) and training is required and that they need to be provided with better support to improve satisfaction and morale.

Process

- Call Centre accessibility is the primary frustration for Canadians and needs to be improved, as it takes too much time to reach a Call Centre agent. Stakeholders suggested improving service quality by addressing a citizen's need the first time they call, precluding the need for a second or third call, and including modern features such as a callback option.
- Many Canadians felt they are waiting too long for the benefits they need, i.e. that processing times and the 28-day service standard (for Speed of Pay) are too long. Many felt that the processing time for benefits could be improved, particularly when compared to other industries.
- The Panel heard that the reporting requirements when a Canadian applies for EI are a burden for the employer, particularly small businesses. Stakeholders advocated a shared information system between employers and the Government (i.e. a real-time electronic payroll information service) to streamline administrative requirements.
- The Panel also heard concerns on the length of time it takes for reconsideration of a claim and subsequent appeal, and on the large number (almost half) of decisions that are overturned on appeal.

Technology

- Canadians want to be able to take advantage of modern technology, such as email and click-to-chat, and also want online tools such as My Service Canada Account improved. Technology could also be used to improve processing and back-office functions.

Policy

- While out of the scope of the SQR, the Panel heard that policy and legislation have an impact on service quality, and that many pain points in EI service delivery are rooted in program policy.

Panel recommendations for improvement

The Panel's recommendations were guided by their SQR vision statement:

To improve the quality of Employment Insurance service delivery, Service Canada needs to embrace a collaborative, citizen-centric approach. Services need to reflect the expectations of the citizen, appreciating their needs and driven by their satisfaction. This includes modern technology and simplified processes and policy developed through co-creation with employees and stakeholders.

As a result of their nationwide consultations and investigations, the SQR Panel developed 10 recommendations to help address the issues and concerns raised, all primarily driven toward improving the service quality of the Employment Insurance program, organized by priority area:

Citizen-centric

1. The Panel recommends that Service Canada adopt a citizen-centric approach to its service delivery, one that includes effective citizen feedback strategies to understand the needs and priorities of citizens for continuous service improvement, and measuring and setting targets for citizen satisfaction as a means to evaluate success.
2. The Panel recommends that Service Canada review and revamp its service standards, developing a citizen-centric service standard strategy that continually monitors the relevance of the standards based on citizen priorities and expectation of service. The standards' results are to be measured, tracked, benchmarked, and publicly reported annually. A performance measurement strategy including key performance indicators needs to be developed and implemented to assist in delivering good citizen service and accountability.



3. The Panel recommends Service Canada identify and address access issues facing citizens and develop service delivery strategies such as enhanced assistance for citizens who face similar access challenges to ensure their needs are addressed and positive outcomes and satisfaction achieved.

Employee engagement

4. The Panel recommends further developing a strong service culture in Service Canada by ensuring employees and management have the proper training, tools, and expertise necessary to provide service excellence, as well as developing and implementing an employee engagement plan that surveys and publicly reports annually on employee engagement to ensure Service Canada has satisfied and committed employees providing the best quality service possible to Canadians.

Process

5. The Panel recommends that Service Canada adopt a volume-based funding model for the Employment Insurance program to improve its ability to effectively accommodate fluctuations in the volume of claims received, to ensure that Canadians receive the benefits that they are entitled to in a timely and consistent manner.
6. The Panel recommends that Service Canada engage key stakeholders in the co-creation of a real-time payroll information-sharing solution.
7. The Panel recommends that the Department provide the necessary resources and flexibility in the short-, medium-, and long-term to improve Call Centre service quality while engaging the necessary private sector call centre expertise to assist in developing a long-term, high-quality, and cost-effective Call Centre improvement plan. This plan should include best practices and modern technology and factor in best value for money, enabling the kind of high-quality service citizens expect and need and that employees would like to deliver.
8. The Panel recommends that Service Canada undertake a root cause analysis of the entire reconsideration process to uncover the reasons that cause a large number of initial decisions to be overturned. Furthermore, the Panel supports the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) recommendation to undertake a review of the Social Security Tribunal to assess its efficiency, fairness and transparency.

Technology

9. The Panel recommends that Service Canada replace its outdated technology systems with modern processing technology and Call Centre telephony, doing so with prudence through a phased-in approach, which will allow the organization to use technology as an enabler to meet the needs, priorities, and expectations of citizens.

Policy

10. The Panel recommends that the Department review EI program policy with the goals of identifying the barriers that prevent the implementation of improvements to service quality and simplifying the policy to improve service delivery and find economies. This review would also consider administrative burdens and barriers for service to Indigenous peoples.

Going forward

The SQR Panel has tried to faithfully reflect the thoughts, feelings, and concerns of Canadians and stakeholders regarding the service quality of the EI program in this report. The Panel has presented its recommendations in good faith, anticipating that these suggested actions to improve EI service quality will be undertaken. It is the Panel's intention that the service quality improvements that result from this review will serve as a first step for the Government in actioning the Government of Canada Service Strategy, which aims to improve service for Canadians and put the client first. Going forward, the Panel expects the Department to continuously measure and monitor the implementation of these recommendations, reporting the results to Parliament and the public annually through existing mechanisms such as the Departmental Performance Report and the Report on Plans and Priorities or possibly considering reinstating the Service Canada Annual Report to ensure that information on the organization is easily found and accessible to all Canadians.

C. What is the Employment Insurance Service Quality Review?

1. Why undertake a Service Quality Review of EI?

Public services are the most important interactions Canadians and businesses have with their government as they have a direct impact on their social and economic well-being. Canadians expect better and faster service from their government—whether the service is provided online, over the phone, or in person.

The Government realizes that for far too long, service delivery has not been meeting the expectations of citizens. For many Canadians, especially ones in vulnerable positions, accessing the services they need is too difficult and takes too long. The Government's commitment to provide better service to Canadians has started with a review of the service quality of Employment Insurance (EI) benefits that are delivered by Service Canada.

SERVICE CANADA'S ORIGINAL VISION STATEMENT

— *Service Canada Annual Report 2005-2006*

Canadians Are at the Heart of the Service Canada Vision

Effective, citizen-centred organizations know what they want to achieve and have clear goals. In building Service Canada, we listened to Canadians to determine what it would take, not just to improve service delivery, but to transform it.

Service Canada – Strategic Objectives

1. **Deliver seamless citizen-centered service** ... by providing integrated, one-stop service based on citizen needs and helping to deliver better policy outcomes.
2. **Enhance the integrity of programs** ... by building trust and confidence in our programs and achieving significant savings in program payments.
3. **Working as a collaborative, networked government** ... by building whole-of-government approaches to service that enable information sharing and integrated service delivery for the benefit of Canadians.
4. **Demonstrate accountable and responsive government** ... by delivering results for Canadians and government, savings for taxpayers and transparency in reporting.
5. **Building a culture of service excellence** ... by supporting our people, encouraging innovation, and building the leadership and capacity to provide citizen-centered service.

According to Service Canada data, too many Canadians are not receiving the level of service they expect, need, or deserve. When someone loses a job through no fault of their own, they should not have to wait weeks, even months, to receive support and benefits from a program that they paid premiums to as workers. When they call the dedicated EI Call Centres, they should be able to get through to a Call Centre agent in a timely manner. Unfortunately, this has not been the case more times than not over the last decade.

Service Canada marked its 11th year in 2016. When it was established in 2005, it was designed as a service-oriented and citizen-centric service delivery organization; this was based on leading research, best practices, and evidence that showed that the best way to develop and deliver government services was by placing the citizen at the centre of focus. The organization was to be guided by the principles of transparency and accountability, focused on providing the best possible service to Canadians across the Government of Canada's three core programs: the Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, and EI.



However, the organization, at least at some level, has lost sight of the citizen and has become more inwardly focused, reflecting something that is more program-centric. Rather than focusing on the citizen, transparency, accountability, and the quality of service provided, Service Canada has become too focused on standardization of services, automation, and a drive for operational efficiencies and cost savings.

From the outset, Service Canada developed service standards to improve speed and efficiency, and while in some cases these standards were met, in other cases they were not. For instance, when the processing of EI claims has been resourced appropriately, Service Canada has been able to process the increased volume of claims received from Canadians and meet its main processing service standard. Meanwhile, Call Centres have never received the amount of funding needed to address the volume of calls received, and have therefore consistently struggled to meet Call Centre service standards. More importantly though, these standards show that Service Canada has been focused on aspects of service delivery that may have led to a deterioration of the *quality* of services in the eyes of many Canadians and Service Canada staff that we consulted.

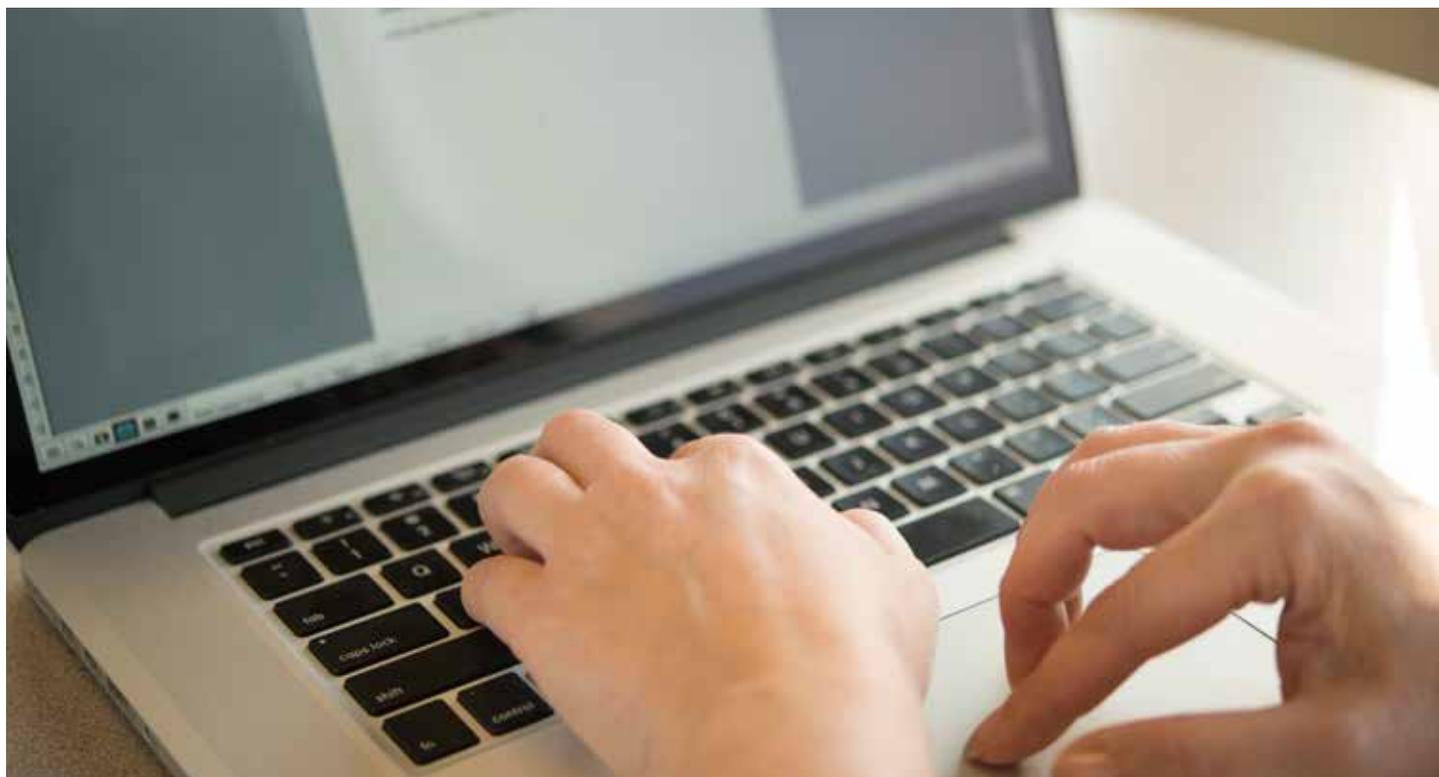
MEASURING CLIENT SATISFACTION

“In line with the Government of Canada’s commitment to improve services from a client-centred perspective, departments and agencies should specify in their Departmental Performance Reports (DPRs) the activities, goals, and achievements that are helping them increase client satisfaction with respect to delivering their public services. Ongoing service improvement depends on departments’ ability to measure levels of client satisfaction, set targets for improving client satisfaction with key services to the public, monitor implementation, and report progress on improvement in client satisfaction for key services to the public.”

— *Human Resources and Social Development Canada 2005–06 Departmental Performance Report*

Moreover, the business community adage “You can’t manage what you don’t measure” rings particularly true for Service Canada in recent years. At the outset, Service Canada established regular measurement, reporting, and monitoring of citizen satisfaction as a true gauge in its effectiveness in delivering services. However, the main measurement tool, the Client Satisfaction Survey, has not been implemented since 2010–11. In its place, Service Canada decided it would “explore more experiential measures rather than opinion-based measures for assessing the quality and effectiveness of its service delivery activity.”¹ This means a consistently measured and benchmarked picture of citizen satisfaction, which is needed to properly assess service quality, has not been available.

¹ 2012–13 ESDC Departmental Performance Report



To support its commitment to better serve Canadians, the Government took action by launching the Employment Insurance Service Quality Review, led by three members of Parliament:

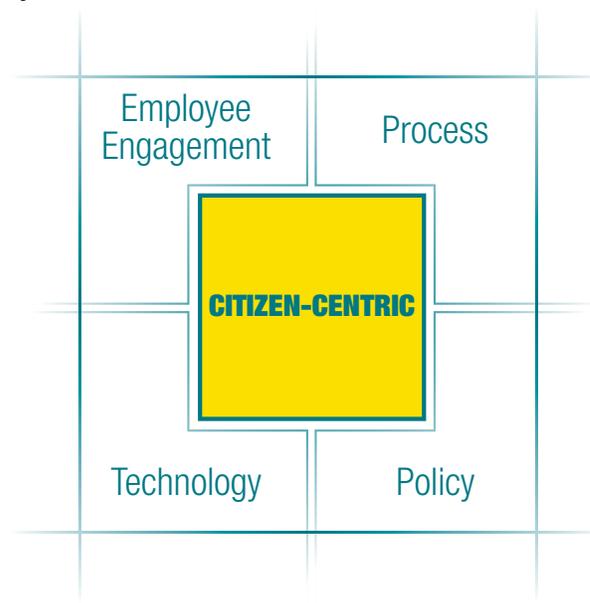
- Mr. Terry Duguid, Member of Parliament for Winnipeg South and in his former capacity as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development;
- Mr. Rodger Cuzner, Member of Parliament for Cape Breton–Canso and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour; and
- Mr. Rémi Massé, Member of Parliament for Avignon–La Mitis–Matane–Matapédia.

The Government is staying true to its commitment to being open and transparent in how it develops policy that affects citizens. With this review, our open and transparent process will allow Canadians and stakeholders consulted to see themselves in the report and its recommendations.

2. What did the Review focus on?

The Service Quality Review was conducted from May to November 2016. The Review was designed to give Canadians and stakeholders, including clients, employers, unions and labour groups, the chance to voice their impressions, concerns, feelings, and suggestions, both positive and negative, about the quality of EI service, giving the Government a clear sense of where service quality needs to improve in order to give Canadians the service they deserve.

Over the course of their consultations, the Review Panel heard input from Canadians and narrowed their priority areas down to five specific themes, which were the focus for the Panel in making their recommendations. These priority areas align with, and build on, the work that is already underway in Service Canada.



Through the results of their consultations and their five priority areas, the SQR Panel developed the following vision statement to guide their recommendations and the way forward:

To improve the quality of Employment Insurance service delivery, Service Canada needs to embrace a collaborative, citizen-centric approach. Services need to reflect the expectations of the citizen, appreciating their needs and driven by their satisfaction. This includes modern technology and simplified processes and policy developed through co-creation with employees and stakeholders.

To align the review with the service delivery priorities of the new government, the Panel began their review guided by three focus areas:

1. Streamlining applications;
2. Reducing wait times; and
3. Reducing administrative burden.

The three focus areas guided the Panel in facilitating their discussions with stakeholders and determining their own areas for improvement for EI service delivery and quality, the results of which are reflected in the five priority areas identified above.

This section provides details on the three initial focus areas.

A NOTE ON “CLIENT” VERSUS “CITIZEN”

While Service Canada uses the term “clients” to refer to EI users and stakeholders, the SQR Panel is supportive of the contention of Ralph Heintzman and Brian Marson, noted experts and published authors of improving public sector service delivery, that, “Those who deliver government services should bear in mind that the quality of government service delivery can and should contribute to strengthened democratic citizenship, and the bonds of confidence and trust between citizens, and between citizens and their democratic institutions. Public sector ‘clients’ are also citizens, whose pride and belief in their own democratic citizenship can be strengthened or weakened by the service experience.” As such, this report will reflect a *citizen-* as opposed to *client-* centric perspective—however, it is explicit that clients of EI go beyond the citizen, and include employers and stakeholders as well.

– Marson and Heintzman, *From Research to Results: A Decade of Results-Based Service Improvement in Canada, 2009*

Streamlining applications

EI benefits are delivered through a national network of processing sites and Call Centres located across Canada. The network assesses and processes new applications, and renews, reactivates, or revises existing EI claims. On average, Service Canada annually receives over 2.8 million EI applications and issues over \$14 billion in payments to qualified Canadians.

In order to process each application, Service Canada needs information from both the claimant (e.g. Social Insurance Number, bank information, etc.) and the employer (e.g. a Record of Employment providing a claimant’s employment history).

Unfortunately, changes to policy and program requirements have resulted in a complex program with a difficult-to-navigate process (e.g. complicated applications, forms, and reporting processes) and difficult-to-understand nuances such as severance pay or reasons for separation. Delays or mistakes in providing this information delay benefits, while more complex claims take longer to process. One need look no further than the Record of Employment (ROE) to see how complex the EI program and its requirements are; for example, the guide produced by Service Canada to assist employers in completing the one-page ROE is over 60 pages long.

“Simplify the requirements—some are very difficult to compile the information for, and some of the requirements are difficult to understand (so may have inaccurate information provided by employers).”

– SQR online questionnaire response

This complexity has been compounded by insufficient resources to keep up with processing demands and an out-of-date technology platform that is over 40 years old. The result is a processing system that often requires a high degree of human intervention, resulting in delays in processing and delays in citizens receiving EI benefits.

The SQR Panel recognized that for citizens to receive EI as quickly as possible, applications and processes need to be as simple and straightforward as possible.

Reducing wait times

Service Canada delivers the EI program across three service channels: in person at Service Canada Centres; on the phone through Specialized EI Call Centres; and online through Appliweb, which can be accessed through Canada.ca or in Service Canada Centres, and using My Service Canada Account to provide ongoing information to citizens about their claims. These channels provide information on the program, answer questions on program requirements and on claims, assist employers, process (some) claims, and allow Canadians to appeal decisions on their claims.

“Took too long to receive benefits. I was experiencing serious financial hardship.

I could not get through on the phone to ask for clarification for weeks! The phone line literally said, too many callers in queue to call back later; that went on for weeks at all morning and afternoon.”

– SQR online questionnaire response

Service Canada has been prioritizing program goals of efficiency and cost savings over quality of service. As a result, the quality of service has suffered and some qualified Canadians are waiting longer for their benefits. This situation is made worse when it is difficult for Canadians to contact Service Canada to get a response to their questions. For Canadians who may be relying on their EI benefits to pay for food, rent, or other necessities, this is unacceptable.

The SQR Panel engaged Canadians to find out where they experience the issues with the EI program that led to delays in receiving benefits, so that their wait could be reduced.

Reducing the administrative burden

Service Canada works with employers to receive the payroll information needed to determine if an applicant is eligible for EI, the amount of benefits that they should be paid, and the number of weeks that they would be entitled to receive benefits.

“EI administration is in the top three most burdensome requirements for employers according to surveys in 2011 by Statistics Canada and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.”

– Canadian Payroll Association

However, Service Canada has long known that the program demands on employers are an issue, particularly the administrative burden caused by having to fill out Records of Employment for each former employee, regardless of whether or not they are going to claim EI benefits. This burden is particularly felt by smaller employers. The Canadian Payroll Association points out that 6.2 million (70%) of the 9 million ROEs produced annually, each of which contains 53 detailed data elements, are never used for actual EI claims and that it is unreasonable for the Government to require employers to spend staff resources completing and submitting them. This burden has an impact on their economic performance.

“Much of the data required for the EI program must be allocated and/or estimated from payroll data to conform to weekly requirements. This requires significant manual data accumulation, manipulation, preparation, reconciliation, reporting and consultations by both employers and government representatives since only 18 percent of payrolls are produced on a weekly basis and 3 percent or less are produced on a Sunday to Saturday basis.”

– *Canadian Payroll Association*

The SQR Panel engaged employers to find out the impacts of this burden, and to seek advice on how the information needed to process EI claims can be gathered by Service Canada without continuing to place an undue administrative burden on employers.

What was not involved in the Review?

The Service Quality Review was designed with a specific focus in mind: to provide recommendations to improve *service quality* of EI program delivery. It was not meant to review the financial aspects, program policy or legislation of the EI system; however, the Panel did receive feedback on these issues and did note that service quality issues were often rooted in program policy and legislation. To ensure that feedback was faithfully represented in this report, the Panel has included it in the “Where do citizens want us to be?” section and, in a limited way, in its recommendations.

3. How did the Panel conduct the Review?

As part of the Service Quality Review, the Panel engaged Canadians and stakeholders in as many ways as possible to ensure that an accurate snapshot of how Canadians feel about EI service quality was taken.

Stakeholder meetings

The Panel conducted over 40 meetings with over 200 stakeholders of many different types in the National Capital Region and in all 10 provinces and 1 territory in order to understand local experiences of EI service quality. Stakeholders included advocacy groups, business associations, labour organizations, unions, academic and research institutions, claimant groups, and elected officials. The discussions with stakeholders were open-ended, with the Panel listening to what each stakeholder had to say and occasionally asking probing questions to gain a deeper understanding of what was said or to solicit the stakeholder's opinion on a particular issue or potential direction for the program.



Employee roundtables and questionnaire

The Panel met with and consulted regional EI Call Centre, Service Canada Centre, and Processing Centre employees, as well as employee unions, to hear their opinions and recommendations on service quality. The Panel conducted over 20 employee engagement sessions as part of their review; these were conducted in a similar fashion to the stakeholder meetings.

In addition, a questionnaire was provided to Service Canada employees, inviting them to answer questions on their impressions of EI service quality to Canadians across the service delivery channels and to identify possible avenues for improvement. Over 3,200 employees responded.

Online questionnaire

An online feedback tool was made available to the public through the Service Canada website. The questions focused on the client experience and their impression of the program's service quality. Over 7,550 Canadians completed the online questionnaire.

“I think more surveys like this [online questionnaire] would be a good start. Being informed by the Canadians who rely on income supplements like EI is critical to the delivery of timely, effective and fiscally responsible services.”

– SQR online questionnaire response

Written submissions

Over 100 written submissions were received from stakeholders and Canadians to a generic SQR inbox (consultation@servicecanada.gc.ca).

Survey of EI clients

A representative survey was conducted in late August where 1,528 recent EI clients were surveyed to rate their experience of the service delivery process. The survey assessed client satisfaction and the ease and effectiveness of the service delivery process as experienced by clients. It quantified the prevalence of the challenges experienced by clients that had been identified through the consultations.

International best practices

The SQR Panel also researched and/or spoke with international agencies to learn what new innovations in delivering services are being practiced. As well, organizations and individuals with expertise on best practices in delivering citizen-centric public-sector service delivery were consulted.

A NOTE ON SURVEYS VERSUS QUESTIONNAIRES

As part of the Service Quality Review, an online consultation was undertaken, soliciting opinions and feedback from Canadians on the EI program. However, this questionnaire could not be considered statistically reliable or representative of EI clients on the whole as no measures were put in place to limit the self-selection bias, double counting, or to identify whether respondents answering questions about the EI service were actually EI clients.

The same can be said of the employee survey, which was voluntary and cannot be considered to be representative of all Service Canada staff.

Both the online and employee engagement are, for the sake of this report, considered questionnaires.

To provide representative data on how EI clients experienced the delivery of the EI program, Service Canada undertook a representative survey of recent EI clients, where 1,528 recent EI clients were interviewed after being randomly selected. These results are representative of the entire population of recent EI clients with a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5% 19 times out of 20. As a result, when it comes to quantitative results, this report relies more so on the EI client survey and uses the results of the questionnaire as an indication of the feelings of Canadians only.

This is not to say that the results of the online and employee questionnaires are not useful for the sake of this report. Both provide valuable insight into the thoughts and feeling of Canadians and staff, and both provided the opportunity for respondents to give the Panel recommendations for improvements through the qualitative responses.

However, the Panel felt that for the sake of transparency, it was important to make a distinction between the SQR's survey and its questionnaires.

D. Where are we now?

1. How does Service Canada currently serve citizens?

Over the course of the Service Quality Review, the Panel had the opportunity to learn about each channel, hearing from Service Canada staff, EI stakeholders, and Canadians on their experiences, impressions, and expectations of each. This section provides a brief overview of how Service Canada delivers service to Canadians.

EI service delivery overview

Service Canada provides important information on the EI program and offers help to Canadians by phone, in person, or online.

Call Centres overview

The EI Specialized Call Centre network consists of 10 sites across Canada and 760 Call Centre agents. As a result of Budget 2016 investments, this will grow to more than 1,100 by the end of March 2017.

Specialized Call Centres provide access for citizens to resolve issues relating to the application process, the status of a claim, benefit eligibility and delivery. Open Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., coast-to-coast, Call Centres received 33.4 million calls in 2015–16.

Access to the network is provided through two Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems that allow Canadians to self-serve 24/7 on their application status, payment details, and bi-weekly reports. In 2015–16, over 18 million citizens used the automated IVR systems.

In-person services overview

General information on the EI application process and program eligibility is provided in person at 556 Service Canada locations (at 321 full-time Service Canada Centres and 235 Scheduled Outreach sites). At Service Canada Centres, Canadians can receive assistance from Service Canada employees to help complete EI applications, including validating supporting documents and verifying information to make sure their applications are complete.

Online services overview

Canadians can also choose to access information on the EI program online at Canada.ca and can self-serve through a number of online services, including:

- **EI Online Application:** currently used to complete approximately 98% of applications, allowing citizens to file for EI benefits online, 24/7.
- **My Service Canada Account (MSCA):** accessed over 300,000 times per month, MSCA enables clients to view and print current and previous EI claims, EI tax slips, and their electronic Records of Employment.
- **Internet Reporting Service:** used by EI claimants to complete and submit bi-weekly reports to confirm their entitlement to benefits.

Employment Insurance processing overview

The processing and payment of EI benefits occurs through a national network of processing sites and EI Specialized Call Centres located across the country. The 24 processing sites across Canada are managed nationally across four regions with the ability through a national workload system to move work across the network.

2. Are citizens satisfied?

The Panel believes that one of the most important measures for service delivery and service quality is how satisfied clients are with the service received. As part of the Service Quality Review, Service Canada measured citizen satisfaction through a representative survey of EI clients, and also gained an understanding of where the most prominent frustrations of Canadians lie through the online questionnaire. Taken together, the Panel was able to develop a picture of how satisfied Canadians are with Service Canada's delivery of the EI program and where needed investments and improvements can be made to increase service quality.

EI service delivery satisfaction

The SQR exercise included a statistically reliable survey of recent EI clients, an important measure given that the last EI client satisfaction survey was conducted in 2010–11. Through this survey, the SQR Panel found that recent investments in EI processing and Call Centres were beginning to make a difference. Despite the fact that 7 out of 10 EI clients are unable to reach a queue to speak to a Call Centre agent, the survey showed that clients are happy with the service they received, once they got through. According to similar client

experience surveys conducted previously by the Institute on Citizen-Centred Services, the principal drivers of client satisfaction are timeliness of service delivery and issue resolution. These findings are supported by the analysis of the EI client survey data.

On the other hand, many EI clients indicated that they are either neutral or dissatisfied with the quality of the service received. So there are clearly improvements that can still be made on the timeliness and issue resolution fronts.

Satisfaction with Call Centres

The Panel heard repeatedly about people's frustration with not being able to reach a Call Centre agent. Service Canada has struggled in recent years to meet the call demand for EI Call Centres both in terms of accessibility and service level, which has had an impact on citizen satisfaction given the importance of clients being able to speak to an agent about their claims.

Call Centre accessibility

Canadians' frustrations with the Call Centres starts with the fact that only a minority of callers can actually get through when they call. According to departmental performance data, only 31% of call attempts in 2015–16 resulted in joining the queue to speak to an agent, meaning that 69% of call attempts received a high-volume message asking the client to call back later. In 2015–16, over 10 million calls made attempting to speak to an agent received a high volume message, while agents only answered 3.4 million calls with an average call length of 12 minutes. From the SQR online questionnaire, 54% of respondents said they could not get in touch with an agent when they called a Call Centre.

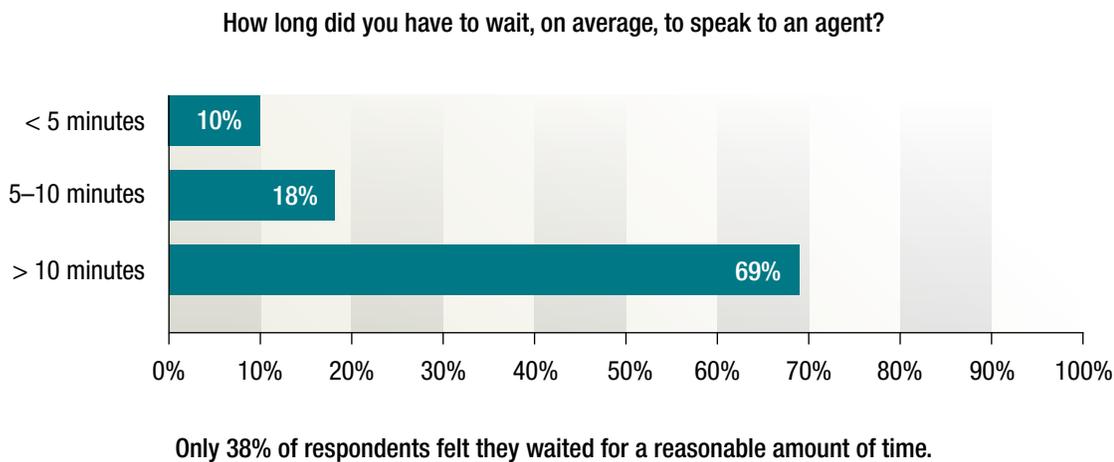
Service level

In the past, when Service Canada has been unable to meet its service standards for Call Centres, it has simply adjusted how it measures the performance of its Call Centres. For instance, before April 2008, the standard was 95% of calls answered in three minutes, but as Service Canada struggled to meet this standard, it was lowered in April 2008 to 80% of calls answered in three minutes. In April 2014, following further difficulties, this standard was lowered further to the current goal of 80% of calls answered within 10 minutes to “ensure better alignment with available resources.”²

² 2014–15 ESDC Departmental Performance Report

Despite lowering its service standards, Service Canada still struggles to meet these standards. For instance, while Call Centres attempt to answer 80% of calls in 10 minutes, this standard has not been met, with only 37% of calls answered within 10 minutes in 2015–16. During the SQR consultations, the online questionnaire feedback indicated that 7 out of 10 respondents said they had to wait longer than 10 minutes before getting through to an agent. This was supported by the survey of EI clients, which indicated that 69% of recent EI clients had to wait longer than 10 minutes to speak to an agent (see Figure 1). Only 38% of survey respondents felt that they waited for a reasonable amount of time to speak to an agent.

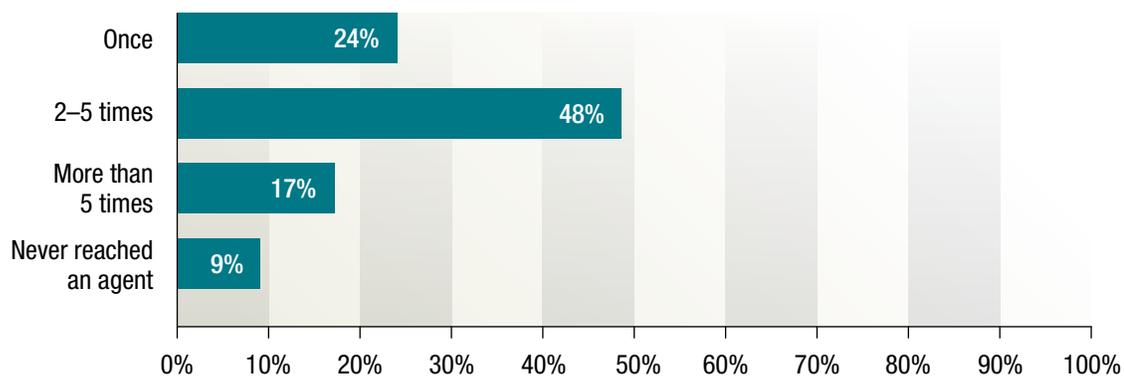
FIGURE 1 EI client survey results



The result of this is that citizens hang up, are faced with a long wait, and end up making multiple calls to access a Call Centre agent and receive the service they need. Sixty-five percent of respondents to the EI client survey indicated that they had to call more than once to reach an agent, while 9% indicated that they never reached an agent at all (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2 **EI client survey results**

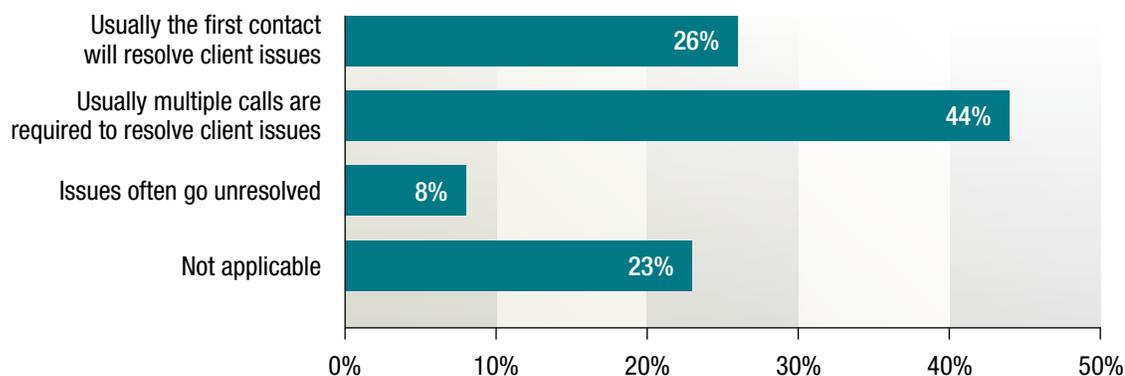
On average, how many times did you call before you were able to reach an agent?



Even when citizens were able to reach an agent, EI Call Centres struggled to meet the expectation of the callers. For instance, while 48% of online questionnaire respondents said the first agent contacted was able to answer their question, 24% of respondents said that their issue was not resolved once they reached an agent. The results of the Service Canada employee questionnaire were poor, with 43% of staff indicating that they felt that multiple contacts were required to solve a client's issue and 8% indicating that issues generally go unresolved despite contact (see Figure 3).

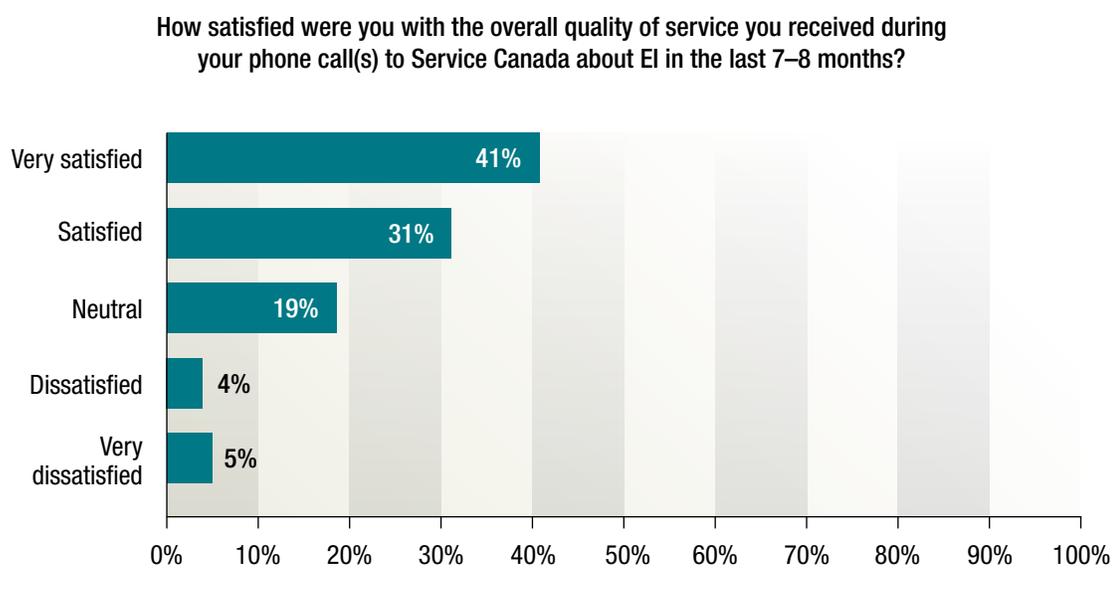
FIGURE 3 **EI employee questionnaire results**

In general, are you able to resolve client issues after the first contact or does it take many contacts?



The results of the survey of EI clients showed that once callers get through to an agent, 72% of them were either very satisfied or satisfied with the overall quality of service they received through the phone channel (see Figure 4). The issue with Call Centres is not the quality of service received by citizens when they speak to an agent, but rather the issue is getting through in the first place. Overall, struggling to provide service in line with citizen expectations has impacted how citizens feel about the phone channel. This was reflected in the fact that satisfaction levels with EI Call Centres are the lowest among the three service delivery channels in the survey of EI clients.

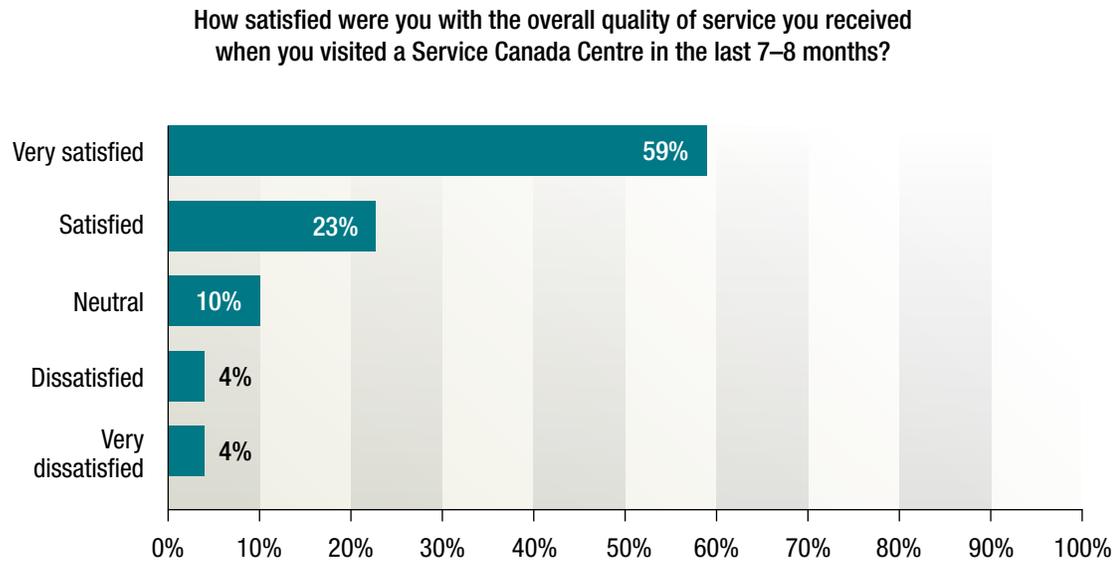
FIGURE 4 EI client survey results



In-person services satisfaction

According to the EI survey results, 82% of EI clients were either very satisfied or satisfied with the overall quality of the in-person service, while only 8% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5 **EI client survey results**

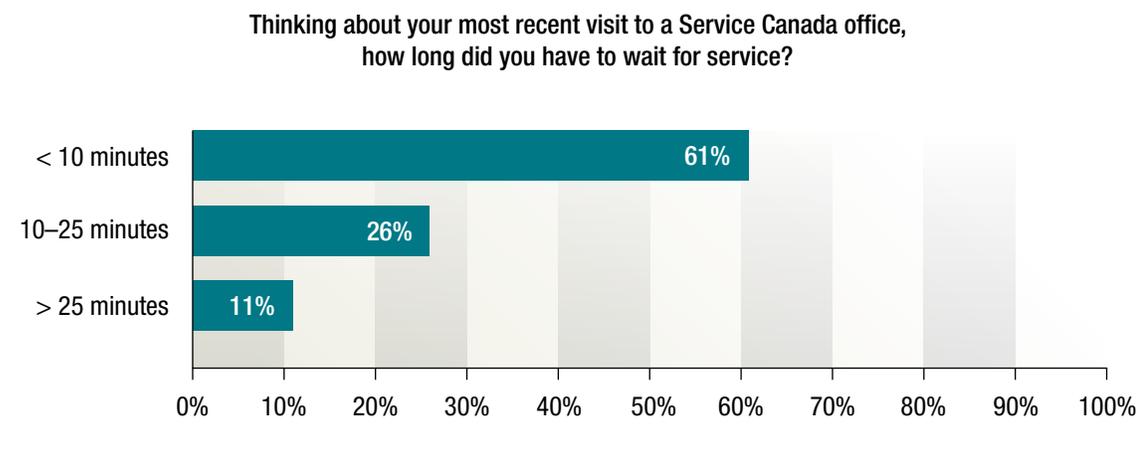


In 2015–16, 96% of Canadians were within 50km of a Service Canada location; however, this means that over 1.3 million Canadians are *not* within 50 km of a Service Canada point of service. Of online consultation respondents, 21%, or 1 in 5, said the Service Canada Centre location was inconvenient to access.

The in-person service standard is that Canadians can receive assistance from an in-person Service Canada agent within 25 minutes. In 2015–16, this was achieved 84% of the time. This still meant that 16% of clients in 2015–16 were waiting longer than 25 minutes in an in-person centre.

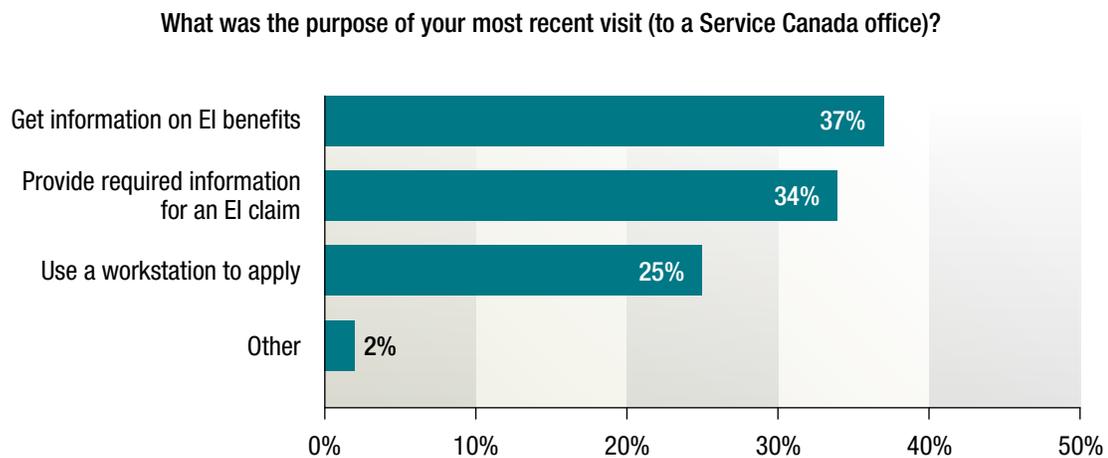
The EI client survey indicated that clients considered wait times at in-person centres to be reasonable, with 6 of 10 respondents estimating that they received service in less than 10 minutes, 100% of whom felt that this was a reasonable amount of time to wait. Twenty-six percent of respondents waited 10 to 25 minutes, but even with this wait, 89% of clients felt that this was a reasonable amount of time to wait (see Figure 6).

FIGURE 6 **EI client survey results**



In-person agents are meant to provide general information to clients rather than being program specialists who could make changes and take specific actions on claims. The survey of EI clients indicated that the most common reason clients visited an in-person centre was to get information on EI benefits (see Figure 7). However, while 34% of all respondents indicated that they visited an in-person centre to provide information required for their EI claim; this was the most popular response among clients with disabilities. This indicates that there are client segment groups for whom the other service channels do not fully meet their needs and who require a more hands-on level of service when interacting with the program. Furthermore, 25% of clients indicated that they visited an in-person centre to use a workstation to apply for EI—indicating that they may have digital accessibility or digital literacy issues or some other challenge that requires some in-person guidance to use the online channel.

FIGURE 7 EI client survey results



When it comes to first contact resolution, 68% of online questionnaire respondents said the first agent was able to help at a Service Canada Centre location, meaning that 32% required multiple contacts with the Department. Of the surveyed clients, 89% felt that complete resolution of their issues was the most important aspect of in-person service, the same level as providing friendly service. Of respondents, 92% felt that they were treated respectfully and 87% reported that staff were helpful.

Of note though, 63% of respondents to the EI client survey felt that the computers provided in Service Canada Centres to complete their EI application were one of the most important aspects of the service. The survey showed that clients who experience barriers to online access were more likely to require assistance in completing their applications. These barriers to access could be

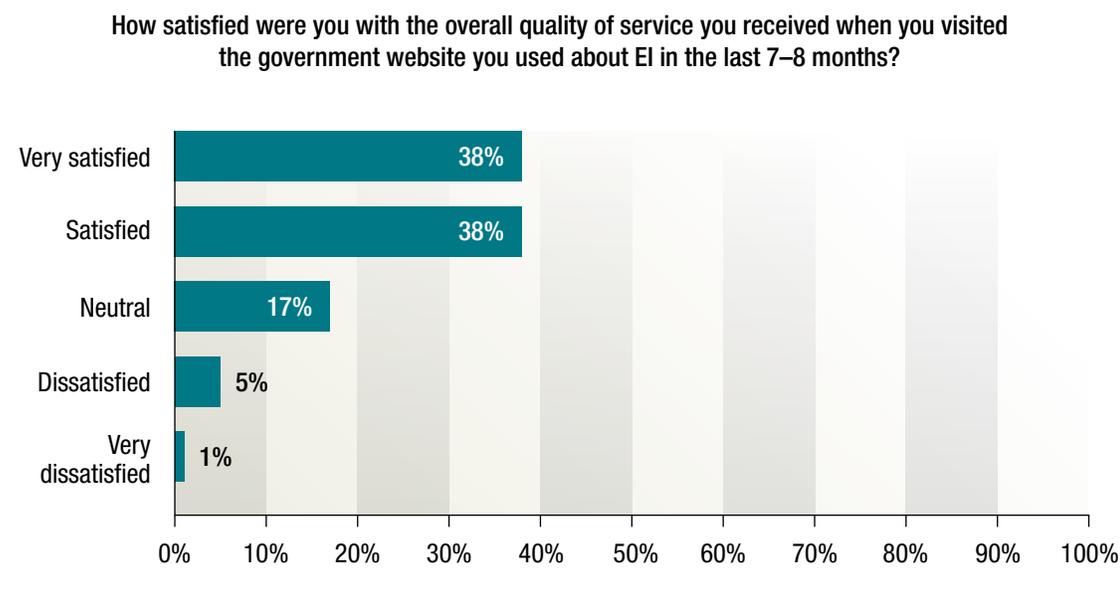
a result of difficulty in understanding the language the service is provided in, online accessibility issues, low education, or a lack of comfort with digital services. Across client groups with barriers to access, 30–40% were more likely to complete their applications in a Service Canada Centre (compared to 12% of clients without barriers to access). Furthermore, over half of clients who face barriers indicated that they were more likely to seek in-person assistance when completing their EI applications. Overall, when a client needed help in applying for EI, the preferred channel for assistance was the in-person channel, with 52% of respondents saying they visited a Service Canada office for help.

Online services satisfaction

The importance of the online channel using today’s modern technology was evident through the results of the online consultation and the survey of recent EI claimants. Ninety-two percent of respondents to the online questionnaire indicated that they applied for EI through Appliweb, the online tool, while 25% of respondents that used Appliweb said that they did so at a Service Canada Centre.

The results of the survey of recent EI clients indicated that 76% were either very satisfied or satisfied with the overall quality of the online channel (see Figure 8).

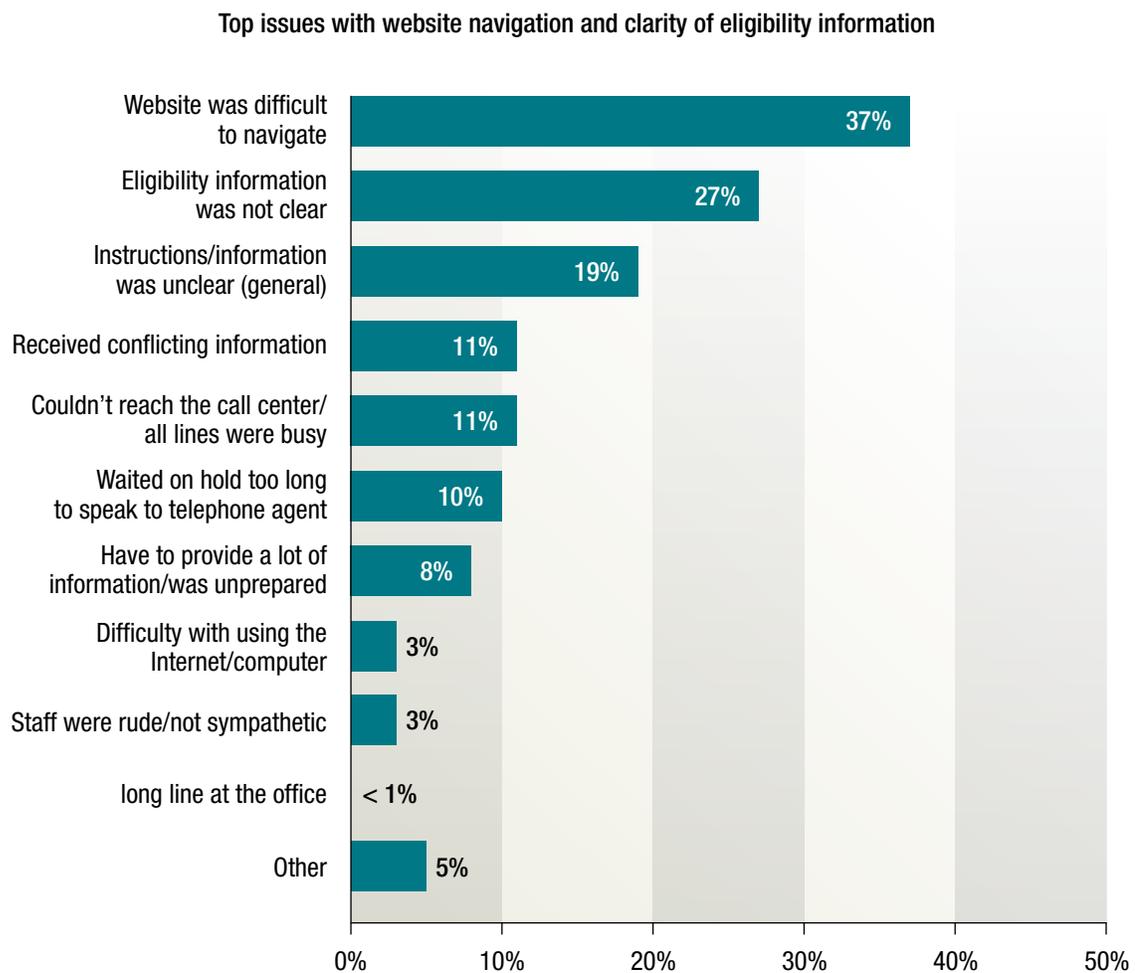
FIGURE 8 EI client survey results



The survey found that clients are most likely to use the online channel first to find information about EI benefits, with two-thirds using the Government of Canada website first.

Not everyone who uses the online channel finds it easy though. Of those who used the online channel, one in five (22%) of recent EI claimants indicated that they required assistance, and the majority of those who needed assistance said it was helpful (77%). Importantly, 82% of online respondents indicated that they had helped someone *else* (e.g. a family member) use online services. In the client survey, of those who found information difficult to find, the top reason given (by 37% of respondents) was that the website was difficult to navigate (see Figure 9).

FIGURE 9 **EI client survey results**



In the EI client survey, roughly two-thirds of clients who used the online channel found that they were quickly able to find what they were looking for and that the process to create a My Service Canada Account was straightforward. These figures were supported by the online questionnaire results, with 66% of respondents indicating that they were able to quickly find what they were looking for and 72% of respondents saying the registration process for My Service Canada Account was straightforward.

Most felt that being able to complete steps online made the overall service experience easier for them (84% of EI clients), with 76% of online questionnaire respondents saying it was easy to understand and fill out information required online.

However, the survey of EI clients showed that clients who face barriers were less likely to feel that being able to complete steps online made the overall service experience easier for them. To follow-up on their application, clients with barriers to access were less likely to have used the website first than clients without barriers.



These difficulties for clients with barriers speak to issues of digital literacy and ease of access—and indicate to the Panel that taking an approach to service delivery that pushes clients to the digital channel and assumes that they have equal access and digital savvy risks leaving important and in-need segments of the client population behind.

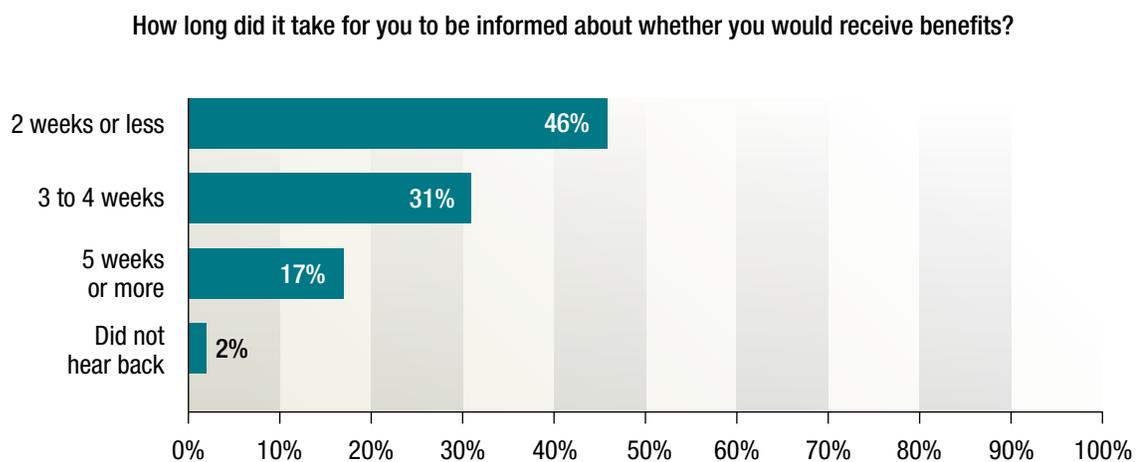
Employment Insurance processing satisfaction

The key EI performance measure focuses on the amount of time it takes for the processing network to issue a citizen’s first benefit payment, or to let them know they are not qualified for benefits. This Speed of Pay (SOP) is reported publicly in the annual EI Monitoring and Assessment Report.

The annual objective for SOP is to provide 80% of citizens (who have filed their first EI application or are having a previous claim renewed) with their first payment or to let them know that they do not qualify for benefits within 28 days of the day they submitted their EI application. For 2015–16, the annual 80% SOP target was exceeded at 84%.

During their consultations, the Review Panel heard from Canadians regarding the time it takes to process EI claims, and the quality of service received by citizens, particularly through the online consultation and the survey of EI clients. Of survey respondents, 46% said they waited two weeks or less to receive a decision on their benefits (see Figure 10). However, nearly one in five EI clients responded to the representative survey that they waited five weeks or longer for their benefits.

FIGURE 10 EI client survey results

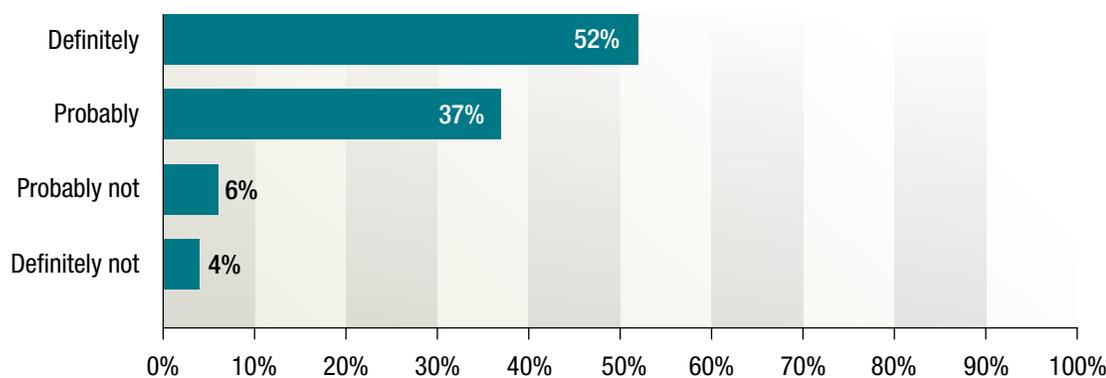


Sixty-six percent of clients felt they waited for a reasonable amount of time.

The results of the online consultation were more negative, with 48% of respondents indicating they waited more than 28 days for their first payment and 49% describing the timeliness of the EI system as poor or very poor. This is likely a result of the selection bias in the online consultation, but indicates that the service quality is not what it should be for all Canadians. For instance, while 48% of respondents to the online consultation rated their experience with the EI program as somewhat or very negative, only 10% of respondents to the randomly selected EI client survey indicated that they would not speak positively about the service they received from Service Canada; half (52%) of EI clients said they would definitely speak positively about the service and an additional 37% said they would probably do so (see Figure 11).

FIGURE 11 EI client survey results

If someone were to ask you, would you speak positively about the service you received?



3. What improvement steps are being taken?

Taking steps for improvement through Budget 2016

In the 2016 federal Budget, the Government reiterated the importance of the EI program in providing economic security for Canadians who need it most, including those who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own, as well as those who have had to take time off of work to, for instance, care for a loved one or to raise children. Regardless of the reason for claiming EI, the Government supports Canadians who need it: *“Canada’s Employment Insurance program provides economic security to Canadians when they need it most ... Whatever the circumstance, no Canadian should struggle to get the assistance they need.”*³

OTHER EI BUDGET 2016 COMMITMENTS

The service delivery commitments were made in addition to a number of other policy and program improvements.

Completed EI improvements include:

- reducing the EI waiting period from two weeks to one;
- extending EI regular benefits in affected regions hardest hit by changes in the economy;
- eliminating the EI eligibility requirements for new entrants and re-entrants;
- extending the Working While on Claim pilot project; and
- eliminating the 2012 rule changes to suitable employment and job search requirements that required people to work farther away from home and accept lower-paying jobs.

While, EI commitments include:

- making Compassionate Care Benefits easier to access, and more flexible and inclusive; and
- providing more flexibility in parental leave benefits to better accommodate unique family and work situations.

³ Budget 2016

In support of these commitments, the Government undertook a number of measures to improve the program and the system of benefits provided to Canadians. These commitments included some that specifically seek to improve the *service quality* of the program:

- **Enhancing access to Employment Insurance Call Centres:** To address the difficulty Canadians have in accessing the EI Specialized Call Centre network to speak with an agent, receive assistance on their claims, and submit needed information, Budget 2016 invested \$73 million over two years to increase the number of Call Centre agents. This will reduce wait times and ensure that citizens can receive the assistance needed to receive their benefits as soon as possible.
- **Making Employment Insurance service delivery more responsive:** to accommodate recent increases in EI claims (which increased 8% between December 2014 and December 2015) and to ensure that Canadians get access to EI when they need it, Budget 2016 invested \$19 million for 2016–17 in EI processing, enabling Service Canada to meet demand and provide better support for Canadians.
- **Strengthening the integrity of the EI program:** To promote compliance with program rules, Budget 2016 committed \$21 million over three years to improve program integrity.

These measures are targeted at improving the EI program, making sure Canadians can receive financial assistance in their times of need. As a condition of these measures, Budget 2016 also reiterated the commitment to undertake a review of the EI system, specifically, a review of the *quality* of the services provided, which is the focus of this report.

Furthermore, Budget 2016 committed the Government to developing and implementing a Government of Canada service strategy, which will put clients first and will include new performance measures. The Panel sees the Service Quality Review as a first step toward the service strategy and improving service for Canadians.

E. Where do citizens want us to be?

Results of review – What the Panel heard

This section reflects the key results of the Service Quality Review Panel's consultations with stakeholders, Service Canada employees, and Canadians, supported by the results of the online consultation questionnaire, the representative survey of EI clients, and the employee engagement questionnaire.

As mentioned, the Review Panel has taken what they have heard across their consultations and have determined five areas of focus: citizen-centric, employee engagement, process, technology, and policy. As these five priority areas informed the Panel's recommendations, the results of the consultations are provided along these themes.

This section provides a high-level summary of what the Review Panel heard, with key quotes provided, reflecting the feedback and opinions of Canadians, Service Canada staff, and stakeholders.

WHAT WAS HEARD VERSUS SCOPE OF SQR

Over the course of their consultations and engagement with Canadians, the Review Panel heard feedback and suggestions that would be considered outside the scope of the review, which was guided by the priority areas of streamlining applications, reducing wait times, and reducing administrative burden.

As a result, this feedback should not be part of this review or reflected in the Panel's recommendations. However, in the interest of transparency, and to ensure that Canadians and stakeholders can see that their voices have been heard, the Panel has decided that these opinions would still be reflected, even though they are outside the purview of this report, and may not be addressed in the recommendations (Section F).

1. Citizen-centric

Better citizen engagement and communications

Given the key challenges facing Canadians, it came as no surprise to the SQR Panel that a large amount of feedback heard from Canadians and stakeholders centred on the need to improve citizen engagement and communications when designing and delivering EI services.

Canadians generally find it difficult to communicate with Service Canada. They find that the language and information provided are difficult to understand, too bureaucratic, and often inconsistent. For instance, the definitions of “earnings” used by the EI program do not align with the definitions used by other programs delivered by Service Canada, such as the Canada Pension Plan, or with the definitions used by other government departments that Canadians often interact with, such as the Canada Revenue Agency.

“Communicating decisions by mail is problematic. The content of the letters should better explain the reasoning behind the decision in a clear, complete and unambiguous way. The vocabulary should be simplified and uniform with the vocabulary used by the EI Commission in its various business lines.”

– *Mouvement autonome et solidaire des sans-emplois (translated from French)*

Citizens and stakeholders also felt that they cannot communicate with Service Canada in the manner of their choosing. For instance, despite the technological advancements in communications over the past few decades, the EI program still prefers to communicate its decisions to Canadians via mail (i.e. letters), or by cumbersome online applications. Those consulted wondered why the program cannot communicate electronically, and suggested that they should be able to email the program with questions or with key documentation.

The tone with which the program communicates with Canadians was also the subject of feedback, which is important given that many Canadians using EI are already likely in stressful situations. According to the EI survey results, the vast majority of EI clients who spoke to a Call Centre agent (91%) agreed that they were treated with respect. Many of the questionnaire respondents also agreed that they had a positive and helpful service experience.

“I just wanted to tell you how wonderful your employees have been, I am pregnant and on bed rest and every time I call to get an answer about anything online everyone I talk to has been so helpful. I just got off with the phone with Craig and he was fantastic with a wealth of knowledge and incredibly helpful. I did not want this to go unnoticed I know how hard it can be to work in a call centre.”

– *Written client submission*

However, another common response regarding communication with Canadians was that some felt that when they were able to contact a Call Centre agent, they received inaccurate or unclear information on their claims. Twenty-eight percent of EI survey respondents indicated that they had received conflicting information from phone agents.

“For online services, to get started, the language: it’s legalese, and challenging for people with disabilities to know if they match the criteria. The language is a burden; there is no concise information or instruction. Right from the get go, there should be specific questions to determine eligibility. You don’t want people who are absolutely not eligible to apply, and not having people waiting longer if they have a disability.”

– *SQR stakeholder submission*

Improved information and outreach on EI

Similar to the points above, the Review Panel heard from stakeholders and a substantial proportion of clients that the information available on the EI program was difficult to understand. Clear and easy-to-find information is needed by both Canadians and employers. This is an important point for EI processing because when a client does not understand the program, the application, or their responsibilities, it leads to mistakes that then need to be corrected later in the process. This can cause delays in coming to a decision on a claim and delays in the delivery of benefits to qualified clients who are relying on those benefits.

“The greatest need for improvements to Service Canada’s customer service is when it comes to the readability and simplicity of information provided by Service Canada.”

– CFIB Research September 2016

Many employers and employer associations felt that they have taken on a role previously filled by Service Canada in providing information to their employees and members on the EI program. To that end, many stakeholders and respondents felt that Service Canada should do more to inform clients of what they need to know (in terms of expectations, requirements, roles and responsibilities, timelines, next steps, etc.) at the front end of the EI application process, as there was a strong awareness that reducing mistakes upfront will help ensure quicker processing.

“I would like to know how to take advantage of hiring programs to offset the cost of training a new employee. It takes time to increase production to pay for another employee. I wish information was more readily available.”

– Retail business owner, Yukon – CFIB Research September 2016

Furthermore, many stakeholders consulted, in particular those dealing with certified trades, felt that more needs to be done on the part of the EI program to inform citizens of what is available to them in terms of training and other support measures, for instance through the EI Part II benefits delivered by the provinces and territories. Suggestions were also made that the federal government can work more closely with provinces and territories to help clients get back to work.

“Inform new claimants of the Work While on Claim.”

– Key recommendation, Retail Council of Canada submission

2. Employee engagement

Need for engagement

It was clear to the Panel in their engagement with staff that many Service Canada employees do not feel listened to or engaged by senior management, particularly when it comes to influencing and improving service delivery to Canadians. For instance, following a meeting with mid-level Service Canada management, the Panel heard from participants that this was the first time that they had felt engaged and listened to in such a manner.

“I think the best suggestion I can give for improving the delivery of the EI program is to revisit the suggestions that were previously provided by your staff throughout the years. When I speak to co-workers there’s many that feel that we’re constantly being asked for suggestions in order to give the illusion that our opinions matter, but they don’t matter enough to actually do anything with the suggestions being provided. Frankly, there are many of us that get frustrated each time we’re asked to provide suggestions for that very reason.”

– *Employee engagement questionnaire*

During their briefings with the Department, the Panel learned of the existing employee engagement tools available to staff, but having heard from and engaged staff, they came away with the impression that these were insufficient to meet the needs of staff. Staff need to be heard and need to see their contributions to improving service quality. The existing tools need to be improved in collaboration with employees.

Speed versus quality

Service Canada employees who met with the SQR Panel felt that the productivity expectations they must meet impact the quality of service they can provide. Many of those consulted, including front-line staff and their union, felt that by giving front-line staff more time to resolve and prevent errors, there would be less follow-up work to be done once the claim was in processing.

The Panel feels that a balance needs to be sought between speedy service and taking the time to improve service quality and outcomes to citizens. As mentioned, Speed of Pay is Service Canada’s primary service standard for processing claims, and the Panel learned that most individual performance measurements for agents are based on time and not based on service quality or citizen expectations.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

“Performance standards should be based on the provision of quality, informed service. For example, in call centres quantity-based performance standards based on the number of calls answered or an arbitrary fixed time allocation should not compromise quality of service.”

– *Canadian Employment and Immigration Union, SQR submission*

Agent knowledge, authority and training

During their employee engagement, the Panel learned that front-line Service Canada employees in both Call Centres and Service Canada Centres were eager to enhance their overall knowledge of the EI program and their authority to help clients in the most effective way possible. A common theme in the employee questionnaire responses was an awareness among staff that increased training (i.e. having the knowledge to be able to make more informed decisions in their work) and increased authority (i.e. being empowered to be able to take more actions on claimant files) would enable them to increase first contact resolution and increase citizen satisfaction.

“Increase authority of front end staff to resolve non contentious issues at first point of contact rather than have to always create a work item for someone else to do.”

– *Employee engagement questionnaire*

Staff want to feel that they have done everything they could for a claimant; decision-making authority and appropriate, up-to-date training are major elements of this. Service Canada in-person staff feel that decision making on the part of agents should be increased and levelled up, making it equal to the authority of Call Centre agents.

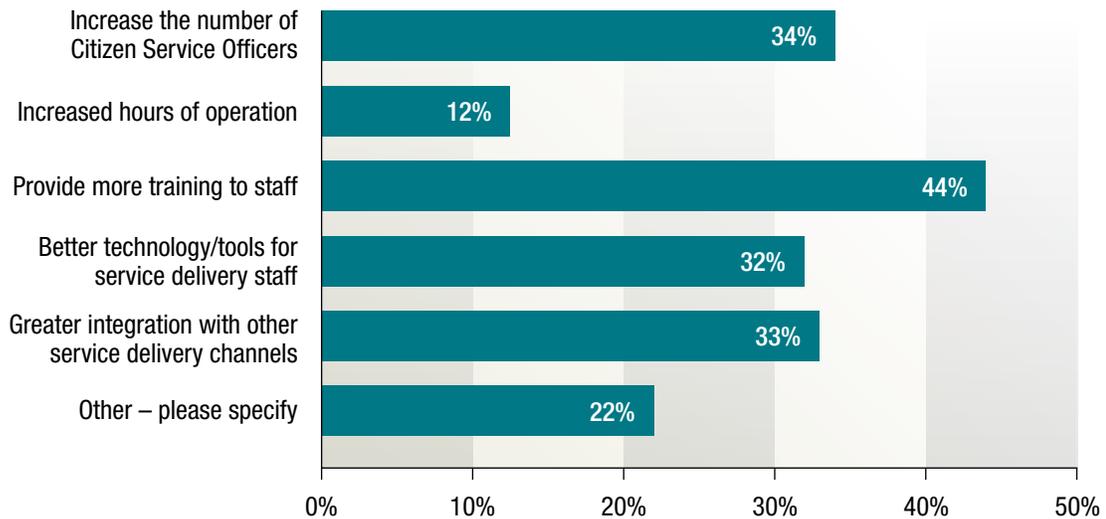
“More [authority and] training for Citizen Service Officers (CSOs) is required, accompanied by an increase in their authority for EI. They currently have a general overview of EI, but no transactional authority. Amended reports, for example, must be cross channelled or create an Action Item for Processing to follow up. This is a simple transaction that a CSO should be able to do at a Service Canada Centre.”

– *Service Canada employee questionnaire response*

The number-one response from Service Canada employees to the employee questionnaire on improvements to in-person service was to provide more authority/training to staff (44%)—this also indicates the desire by staff to be able to perform more tasks to be able to help the client (see Figure 12). Being able to provide more services to Canadians would increase the ability of Citizen Service Officers to resolve client issues at the first point of contact, but it would have the adverse effect of increasing wait times for clients more generally. A balance between speedy service and high-quality service for citizens is clearly a challenge for the in-person channel for Service Canada.

FIGURE 12 **EI employee questionnaire results**

In your opinion, which of the following in-person service enhancements would provide the greatest benefits to Canadians regarding EI service delivery?



More specific suggestions from staff included being able to enter information on clients' files in real-time, rather than creating an action item, and to adjust training modules to suit different types of learning (e.g. in-person instruction vs. eLearning format).

Back-office improvements

The Panel heard from many Service Canada employees who felt that they were not empowered, as in provided with the best tools and support, to be able to provide the best possible service to Canadians. This includes modern and efficient IT support, improved processes and internal services such as human resources, and providing the modern tools to staff so they can meet the service delivery expectations of modern Canadians.

“[Enable] two-way communication via the My Service Canada Account—allow processing staff to leave questions/requests for information for clients online, and allow them to respond online. This would greatly speed up many transactions.”

– *Employee engagement questionnaire*

Employees offered concrete suggestions on how to improve back-office processes to the SQR Panel, which included: having the ability to communicate more effectively with citizens (i.e. through a secure email portal); having more flexible work conditions; and increasing and improving real-time communication between front-line staff and processing agents.

Improving staff morale

Key to service excellence is the morale of those serving Canadians. The Panel heard during their consultation of the direct link between job satisfaction, service quality and citizen satisfaction. Having happy employees leads to happy clients. Unfortunately, in their engagement with Service Canada staff, the Panel learned that many employees feel that staff morale and satisfaction are lower than they should be.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR SERVICE VALUE CHAIN

There exists a two-way relationship between employee engagement and service satisfaction in the public sector—employee engagement has a demonstrable impact on citizen satisfaction with public sector service delivery, which in turn impacts citizen trust and confidence in public institutions. In general, service satisfaction scores improved by one point when employee engagement increased by approximately two points.

– Marson and Heintzman, *From Research to Results: A Decade of Results-Based Service Improvement in Canada, 2009*

Improving staff morale can include their working environment. Many employees expressed the need to be comfortable in their workplaces. This includes small suggestions such as being able to personalize their work environments.

Morale is also affected by how staff feel about how they are monitored, assessed and managed. A common theme in the responses to the employee questionnaire was that employees want to see a shift in management strategy, so that quality monitoring would be more constructive rather than punitive. As mentioned above, there is often a focus on speed rather than quality of service, and staff feel that if they do not meet their speed targets the repercussions are unduly punitive. This can cause stress for the staff and have a negative impact on service quality for Canadians.

“Mental health and morale are at stake when an employee has an uncertain future. I believe that a happy workplace is a productive workplace and I’ve seen the decline since I started in 2002. We need to ascend back to a place where people are not just proud to work but happy, supported and ready to support each other and Canadians.”

– *Employee engagement questionnaire*

Another common theme from the perspective of staff morale was staff turnover and the level of permanent staff compared to term (or temporary) staff. In some areas of Service Canada, staff retention is a problem; the Panel learned that in some Call Centres, turnover exceeded at times 54%. Constantly having to fill vacant positions and train new staff increases pressure on existing staff and also requires a lot of investment. For a Call Centre agent, it takes nine weeks of training and then months of learning on the job for the agent to become fully productive. During this time, it is the existing staff that are relied on to shoulder the burden and help impart knowledge to the new employee. Staff indicated that when they are taken on as permanent rather than temporary employees, they have the stability to feel secure in their job and also feel valued as employees.

“Hire more permanent/indeterminate staff so as to prevent losing trained employees to other departments/end of terms and cut costs on constantly training new staff. Staff retention across all departments is key to promoting good service from knowledgeable staff.”

– Employee engagement questionnaire

The Panel saw first-hand through their interactions with staff and the responses to the employee questionnaire that the front-line of service delivery to Canadians is a stressful job. Service Canada agents deal with the very real issues of Canadians in need on a constant basis. This can be very emotionally taxing, which has an impact on mental health.

“It would be of benefit to have some kind of regular ‘check-in’ with a supervisor and manager. As these jobs are innately stressful, it may be of some benefit to regularly check-in with supervisors to see if there are any emerging mental health issues as a result of the work being performed. Additionally, it might be of benefit to have mandatory workshops over the course of a year with the goal of helping agents manage stress more effectively. The result may be lower absenteeism, more efficiency as a result of decreasing the time needed to return to work after a difficult call, and greater workplace morale.”

– Employee engagement questionnaire

3. Process

Call Centre improvements

As they conducted their consultations, the Review Panel experienced first-hand the dedication and commitment of Call Centre staff to serving Canadians and was impressed with their depth of knowledge. However, the Panel also experienced the frustrations of Canadians in not being able to effectively reach an agent in a timely way.

One of the main, if not the main, challenge facing Canadians is low Call Centre accessibility, which is a root cause of many frustrations and delays in service. The phone channel provides a direct link to knowledgeable resources on the EI program for all Canadians and is the key access point to the program for many citizen groups (e.g. the elderly, special benefits clients such as the parents of critically ill children) who may not have the skills/resources to take advantage of the Internet channel. The fact that Call Centre accessibility is so low has a direct impact on how many Canadians and stakeholders feel about the EI program.

HELPING CANADIANS IN NEED

Fort McMurray wildfires

When properly enabled, Service Canada staff have the dedication, commitment and wherewithal to mobilize and help Canadians in need. This was nowhere more evident than when they heard how Service Canada quickly rallied to assist those affected by the spring 2016 wildfires in Fort McMurray, Alberta. When tasked with responding to an emergency and properly enabled to take fast, decisive actions, EI Specialized Call Centres and their agents showed their worth and provided fantastic service to those who were in need.

Service Canada set up a special “tiger” team, a virtual team of agents linked across the region that were enabled to deal with client issues right away. A special phone line was set up for EI clients affected by the fires and allowances were made, such as being more lenient in terms of availability for job searching, for affected clients.

“The special line set up for the crisis of the Fort Mac fire was an excellent way to streamline the calls.”

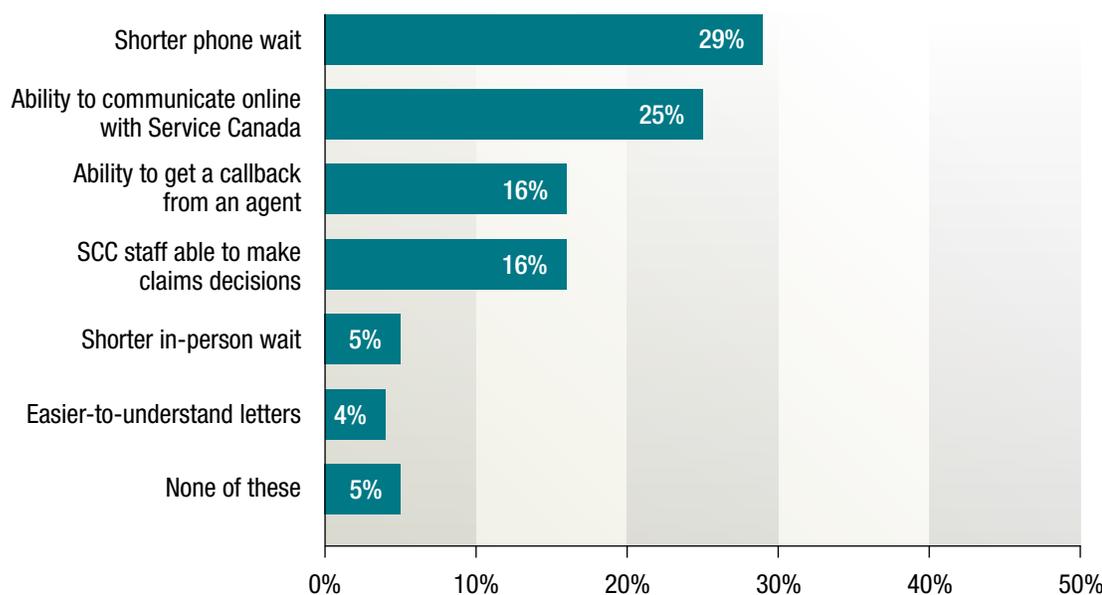
– SQR online consultation

The most common issue highlighted by survey respondents was the time it took to reach a Call Centre agent. The Panel heard many personal accounts of citizens being on the phone for hours, often calling back multiple times in a day or a week, or being cut off while waiting because of higher than average call volumes.

Most online consultation respondents felt that reducing the wait times on the phone should be the focus when it comes to improving EI service delivery; almost half of respondents said their experience with Call Centres was “very negative,” despite 72% of EI survey respondents indicating they were satisfied with the service. Of the EI survey respondents, 29% said that the change that would have the most positive impact when communicating with the Government after submitting their application would be a shorter phone wait, while 25% said the most positive potential impact would come from having the ability to communicate online with Service Canada, avoiding the phone channel altogether (see Figure 13).

FIGURE 13 EI client survey results

Which of the following changes, if any, would have had the biggest positive impact for you when communicating with the Government during your follow-up?



Beyond improving accessibility, stakeholders suggested improving service quality by including features that Canadians are familiar with from other Call Centres in other industries, such as the insurance and telecommunications industries. There, the Panel heard that Canadians are used to features such as the option to receive a call back from an agent when available, which would be viewed as notable improvements for EI Call Centres in the eyes of clients.

Furthermore, some stakeholders such as unions and employer groups noted that the fact that many Call Centre employees are not permanent employees was a concern. They felt that without a more permanent staff, turnover can be high, which impacts staff expertise and therefore the quality of service provided to callers.

“It’s very difficult to get through to an agent over the phone if you have questions regarding the application questions or about your claim itself. Sometimes you get lucky and only have to wait on hold 20 minutes . . . majority of the time you can’t even get placed in the hold sequence and have to keep calling back, sometimes this takes upwards of 20 calls over multiple days.”

– SQR online consultation

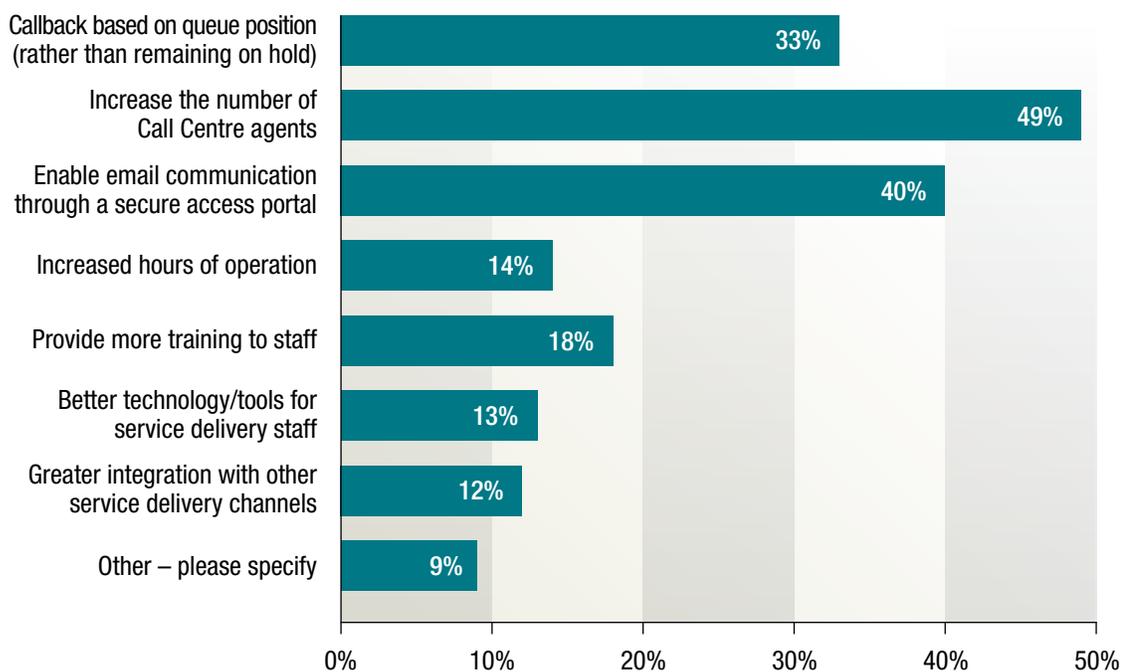
The Panel also heard from Service Canada staff who supported this point, feeling that the quality of service provided to clients by staff could be strengthened by improving the morale of staff by increasing their feeling of belonging and comfort in the organization. Namely, this includes making their day-to-day jobs more comfortable and making many casual/term positions permanent, which would provide a sense of stability to their jobs and make them feel that their contributions to the organization are more valuable.



The employee questionnaire indicated that the best enhancements for Call Centres to improve service delivery to Canadians were to increase the number of agents, enable electronic communications and provide a call back option—all of which respond to citizen expectations in terms of accessibility and functionality (see Figure 14).

FIGURE 14 EI employee questionnaire results

In your opinion, which of the following Call Centre enhancements would provide the greatest benefits to Canadians regarding EI service delivery?



Reducing claims processing time

The Panel heard from many Canadians who struggled to understand why it took so long to process claims and issue benefits. Many Canadians felt they are waiting too long for the benefits they need, i.e. that processing times and the 28-day service standard (for Speed of Pay) to receive a payment or a decision of non-payment on their claim, were too long. Only 24% of respondents to the online consultation described the timeliness of the EI system as fair, while 48% responded that they had to wait longer than 28 days to receive their first payment or decision of non-payment on their claim.

Many felt that more could be done to improve the processing time for EI benefits, particularly when comparing the time it takes Service Canada to process claims to other industries. Thirty-eight percent of respondents to the online consultation felt that Service Canada is slower in providing payments than other companies (e.g. an insurance company). Many stated that they worried about paying bills or had already found a job when they received their first payment.

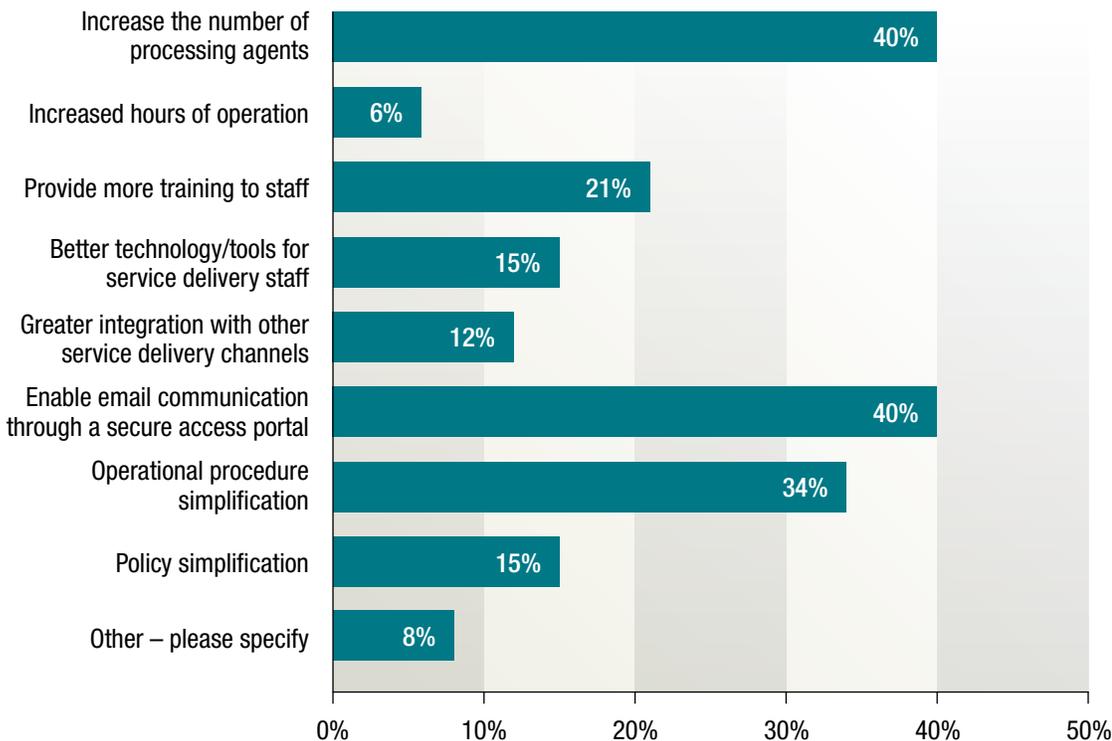
“With today’s technology, they should (or it is presumed that they do) have the necessary information to be able to calculate someone’s eligibility within a timely amount of time. If you can apply as soon as you are laid off why do they need extra time to do things? We lose two weeks from them right away with the waiting period (which I don’t understand). I don’t know anyone in this day and age that can really afford to lose two weeks’ pay, let alone get behind further because they’re waiting for money they’re entitled to in the first place.”

– SQR online consultation

When Service Canada employees were asked what processing changes would result in the greatest impact to Canadians in terms of service delivery, the top response was increasing the number of processing agents (see Figure 15). Over the past few years, it has become apparent that when EI processing is resourced appropriately with an adequate number of staff to process claims intake, then service standards (Speed of Pay) are met, and client satisfaction increases.

FIGURE 15 EI employee questionnaire results

In your opinion, which of the following claims processing enhancements would provide the greatest benefit to Canadians regarding EI service delivery?



Targeted claimant portal by special benefits

The Employment Insurance program provides a number of special benefits for Canadians in particular situations, such as caring for a sick loved one, or going on maternity or parental leave. When engaging Canadians and interest groups representing these Canadians, the Panel heard of the particular needs and concerns. They heard that, for these EI client groups in particular, time is at a premium, and special assistance and access are consistently desired.

They also heard that, for these special benefit clients, targeted portals to access information and their benefits should be implemented for the online, and possibly phone, channels.

“The lines should be set up to have calls go to a line that is dedicated to the type of claim. Example: have special benefits directed to one line and apprentices to another line . . . setting up a special line for special benefits and apprentices would certainly make a difference of getting the clients claim processed efficiently.”

– *SQR online consultation*

Furthermore, the Panel heard that for those respondents who had experience trying to claim special benefits such as sickness, maternity/parental, or parents of critically ill children benefits, the process seemed especially confusing and difficult.

“[I] applied for critically ill children. End date was not filled out. How can it be filled when your child is about to die??!!?? Very frustrated as I had to go back to the hospital and get all new paperwork done after he had passed away bringing back many horrible memories.”

– *SQR online consultation*

Reducing reporting requirements

When a person separates from their job, employers are required to complete a Record of Employment (ROE). When a Canadian applies for EI benefits, Service Canada uses the information provided by their employer through the ROE, such as their employment period and how much they were paid, to process their claim. This requirement can place an undue burden on the employer.

This burden can be particularly felt by small businesses, seasonal employers, and in times of mass lay-offs. The Review Panel heard from multiple employer groups and stakeholders who cited the administrative requirements of the EI program, e.g. filing and submitting an ROE, as a particular burden on employers, one that they would like to see addressed and alleviated going forward.

“Canada needs a modernized system comparable to the United States and the UK where data is collected via employer payroll systems on an “as required” basis. RCC supports the position of Canadian Payroll Association to transform the administrative process.”

– Retail Council of Canada submission

“CFIB recommends that the federal government change administration requirements further so that employers can use current payroll data to eliminate the administratively burdensome process of manipulating weekly EI data . . . Consider eliminating ROEs that provide no extra benefit.”

– CFIB Research September 2016

The Panel also heard recommendations to improve the administrative process for employers, either to make processing more timely or to improve the process for particular occupation and employee groups; these included specific changes to the ROE form. For instance, it was suggested that adjustments be made to the ROE form by providing specific boxes for occupations that are more difficult to process (e.g. teachers, apprentices, etc.), which would help assist these particular employers when it comes to completing the ROE.

Many stakeholders and employers, meanwhile, wonder why the ROE is even necessary. The Panel heard these groups advocate for a shared information system between employers and the Government (i.e. a real-time electronic payroll information service), which would be particularly welcomed by large employers, and would enable much more flexibility in terms of EI provision and policy through the streamlined administrative requirements.

“There are specific ways to file ROE and it can have a great impact on people. I keep thinking of . . . when small offices have to fill [ROE] every two or three years, they have to relearn a very complicated process.”

– Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters

However, before moving forward with such an electronic payroll information service, all perspectives would have to be considered, as it may place an undue technological burden on small and medium-sized enterprises, which would need to be fully understood and addressed.

Enhanced and assisted access

Before Service Canada was established in 2005, a position existed called a Public Liaison Officer (PLO), which provided a personal experience for employers and citizens. These PLOs had expertise in the EI program, knew the local labour market conditions, and had the authority to make a number of decisions on an EI claim. With the creation of Service Canada and the move toward standardized service across the country, this position was discontinued.

Over the course of their consultations, the Review Panel heard consistently that the removal of PLOs has left a gap in specialized, local/regional knowledge and key touch points for employers and Canadians. There were often calls to reinstate this position.

The call to reinstate the PLO, however, is more representative of an apparent deficiency in how Service Canada interacts with citizens. As mentioned in the previous section, there is a need for specialized knowledge of benefits and particular claim types that the Department used to provide. Some citizens and employers want to re-establish a personal point of contact with a specific Service Canada agent, seeking direct access to an expert as a touch point or special contact on their files, e.g. a case worker.

The varying needs of Canadians and employers should be recognized and accommodated, i.e. enhanced and assisted access should be provided across all channels, particularly at in-person centres where citizens can be walked through the various processes.

There were also suggestions from Service Canada staff that in-person agents should have an overall better and deeper knowledge about Service Canada benefits; some felt that in-person agents in particular need increased decision-making abilities on claims; and that agents are in need of up-to-date training.

Recourse process – reconsideration and the Social Security Tribunal

When Service Canada makes a decision on a claim that a client does not agree with, the client is entitled to request a reconsideration of the decision which is filed with the Employment Insurance Commission. This takes on average 44 days and may include additional fact-finding and review of the process; the initial decision can be supported, cancelled, revised, or replaced.

Thirty-four percent of respondents to the online consultation considered their experience with the reconsideration process “very negative.” Despite this, the Panel generally heard that the EI reconsideration process is going well. However, some clients who had used the reconsideration process found it to be confusing and ultimately not helpful in their particular cases. In addition, the Panel learned that approximately 50% of original decisions on EI claims are overturned under reconsideration, leading the Panel to wonder if there is something inherent to the EI decision-making process that was causing so many decisions to be overturned.

“Every time I try to follow up on the status of my claim and reconsideration, I have to deal with a new person from square one, who assures me that everything is taken care of. Weeks later I discover no progress has been made, and have to provide information over and over again.”

– *SQR online consultation*

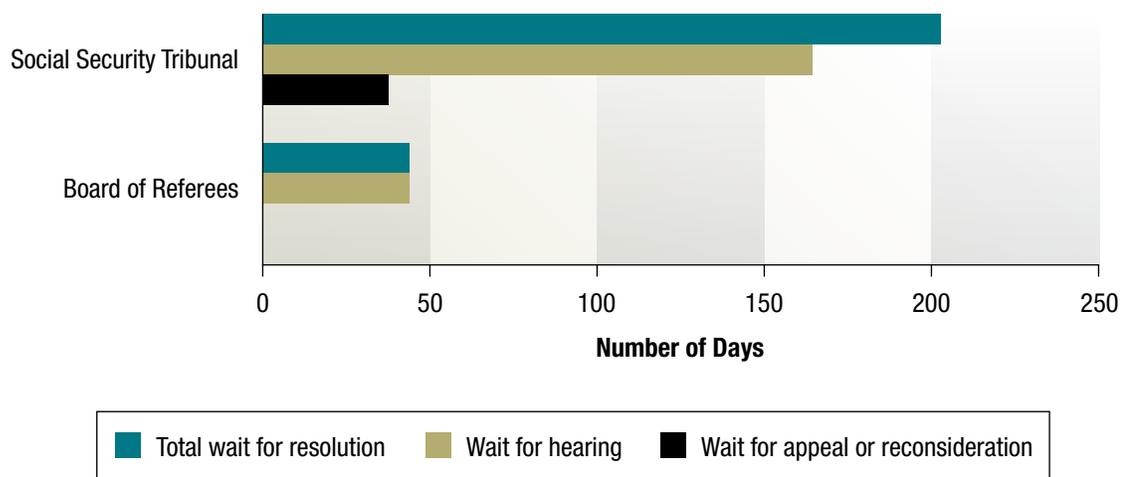
Following the review of the claim by the Department, should the client not agree with the reconsideration decision, they can make an appeal to the Social Security Tribunal (SST), where the average wait for a hearing is 165 days.

The formal appeal and SST process was implemented in 2012–13, replacing the previous informal reconsideration and Board of Referees system. Many of those consulted by the Panel felt the old system was preferable to the current SST model in terms of timeliness. Under the old system, a client received a hearing at the Board of Referees in 44 days on average, with the information reconsideration occurring concurrently. This is considerably less than the over 200-day average a clients now has to wait for the formal reconsideration on their decision and then a hearing at the SST.

While not within the scope of the Service Quality Review, the Panel heard of many of the frustrations of Canadians and stakeholders on the SST, and have relayed this feedback faithfully here in the interests of openness and transparency. For instance, some stakeholders, particularly labour representatives, felt that the loss of employer and employee representatives, which were a part of the Board of Referees but not the SST, was a negative development.

FIGURE 16 **Longer waits under the SST (Departmental data)**

Prior to the SST, in 2012–2013, appeals were informally reconsidered within a standard 14 days *while* a client awaited a hearing at the Board of Referees; those who were unsuccessful with their information reconsideration and went on to the Board had their hearing, on average, in 44 days. Under the SST, the average reconsideration takes 38 days, while unsuccessful claimants, after waiting for the resolution of their formal reconsideration, wait on average 165 days appealing to the SST.



This means that some citizens who could have their denials successfully appealed at the SST are now waiting over 200 days, as compared to under 60 days under the old system.

The Panel also heard that the SST is seen as unfair and deters clients from seeking appeals, which affects program integrity and fairness. Furthermore, some stakeholders felt that giving the SST more flexibility in interpreting EI regulations and providing direct communication between SST staff and citizens would be beneficial. Some stakeholders feel that direct contact between claimants and SST personnel would allow for a better understanding of the individual’s case.

4. Technology

Improved use of modern technology

The Review Panel heard from both Canadians and stakeholders that Service Canada should make better use of technology when communicating with Canadians. Feedback the Panel heard included the need for enabling two-way email communications between clients and Service Canada; but beyond this there were calls to better enable online and mobile communications. Twenty-five percent of EI clients felt that being able to communicate online would have had the greatest positive impact on their ability to follow up on an application.

“Service Canada staff are currently regulated into using archaic processes and data formats that replicate a paper form when they should be . . . using technology-based data capture processes.”

– *Canadian Payroll Association*

Furthermore, many Canadians and stakeholders felt that the issues of clarity in providing information upfront were still apparent online, despite the improved technology. While many respondents found the online tools easier to use when applying for EI, there were still calls to clarify terminology and simplify information available online.

Making better use of available technologies could also improve processing time for EI claims, which would result in faster and better service for Canadians.

That said, there are issues of digital literacy and access to online and mobile technologies that need to be recognized by Service Canada—not all Canadians have the skills or the access to the Internet that enable them to take full advantage of modern technology.

“In the North, there are many issues around online services . . . many households do not have a computer . . . often people are not computer literate . . . the phone alternative and in-person services are essential to people in remote communities.”

– *SQR online consultation*



To this point, the Review Panel heard from many respondents that resources should be built into the online service channel to ensure all clients can access their files and pertinent information—for instance, enabling facilitated access where citizens can be walked through the system either on the phone, in person, or using click-to-chat.

It was also suggested that improved use of technology could improve back-office functions, with some Service Canada staff feeling that service quality could be improved by increasing and improving real-time communication between front-line staff and processing agents. Also, that enabling document imaging and emailing of scanned documents by front-line staff would also streamline processes and improve results in terms of timeliness, accuracy and speed of claims processing and service delivery.

Online improvements and technology advancements

Over the course of their engagement activities, the Review Panel put themselves in the shoes of Canadians, using the available online services to open a My Service Canada Account and apply for EI benefits online. This, coupled with the consultations with Service Canada staff, allowed them to develop in-depth impressions of the available EI online services.

“All information needed to apply is indeed online, but the Government source pages lack clarity and coherency. The documentation is confusing, making for a nerve-racking process. I never felt confident that my application was actually in progress during the weeks leading up to approval. The online tools for the entire procedure of application, through to approval and reporting, need to be redeveloped to better serve the client. The beginning registration and application should be included in the MyServiceCanada profile with instant access, and not just limited to those that are actually approved. The entire process should be laid out with personalized account tools to ease the mind and stress of those applying for benefits, not just those approved, reporting and receiving.”

– SQR online consultation

In terms of making better use of technology in communicating with citizens, the Review Panel heard that Service Canada can make better use of modern technology to reduce wait times for Canadians. As mentioned, many citizens also had difficulty navigating the available online tools, feeling that the systems available could be improved by being made clearer and more user-friendly.

STAKEHOLDER SUGGESTIONS

The Panel heard suggestions from many stakeholders and Canadians over the course of their consultations on online and technological improvements that should be implemented, including:

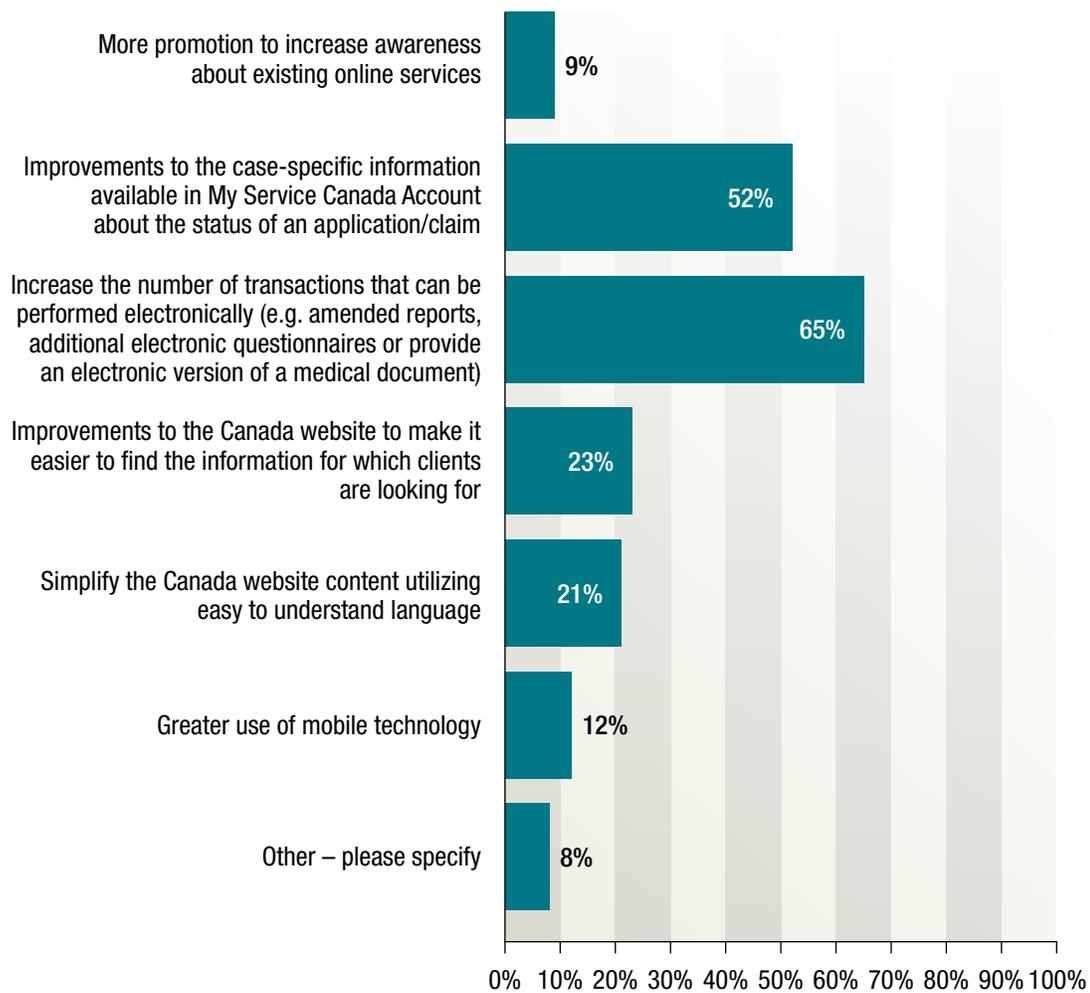
- e-alert on application questions or processing;
- two-way email communications with Service Canada;
- the option to Click-to-Call and Click-to-Chat; and
- enabling call back while in call queues.

While many respondents and stakeholders suggested ways to improve online services, the majority admitted that online service was an improvement to paper or in-person options.

When Service Canada employees were consulted on what improvements to the online channel would result in the greatest benefits to Canadians, the top two responses were: increasing the number of transactions that can be performed electronically and making improvements to the case-specific information available on My Service Canada Account regarding claim or application status. This speaks to the insight that Service Canada agents and employees in general have in knowing how best to improve service to Canadians and meet citizen expectations (see Figure 17).

FIGURE 17 **EI employee questionnaire results**

In your opinion, which of the following online enhancements would provide the greatest benefits to Canadians regarding EI service delivery?



5. Policy

As mentioned, the Panel heard feedback through their consultations that falls outside the purview of the Service Quality Review, or may not be subject to a recommendation. While this feedback may not necessarily be reflected in the recommendations of the Panel, the Panel feels that it is important for openness, transparency, and participation to still relay this feedback here and to recognize that many service quality issues are a result of EI policy and legislation.

IMPACT OF POLICY ON CANADIANS

The Panel heard from stakeholders and Canadians of many pain points and frustrations that were not the result of the administration of the EI program, but instead rooted in legislation or program policy. For instance: the particular challenges felt by seasonal workers when the duration of their benefits does not match the length of their off seasons; the limitations of the current 15 weeks of sickness benefits, particularly compared to the duration of available Compassionate Care Benefits; and the issues experienced by apprentices who are often finished their apprenticeships before they receive benefits.

The two-week wait for benefits is a pain point

When a citizen applies for and is approved for EI benefits, there is a two-week waiting period that acts as a deductible before they receive their benefits. When engaging Canadians, the Review Panel heard from respondents that two weeks was too long to wait for their EI benefits. Many said they worried about paying bills or had already found a job when they received their first payment, a situation aggravated by the two-week waiting period. However, as mentioned earlier, the Government has taken steps through Budget 2016 to reduce the waiting period from two weeks to one, reducing the income gap for qualified Canadians effective January 2017.

Issues for apprentices

Employers consulted felt that EI forms do not accommodate apprentices who need access to EI and that there is little upfront information available for apprentices about how to access EI, which leads to errors and delays. The Panel also heard that the process of applying for and receiving EI is too slow to properly benefit apprentices, who often only experience work stoppages for a short time and sometimes do not receive their benefits until they return to work.

“Delays for apprenticeship claims: it’s a big thing, it brings frustration, employers want more results. We don’t understand why there is a two week waiting period for apprentices. The waiting period is to encourage people to seek work, but when apprentices stop work to go to school, they are not going to be looking for work. We just don’t see the rationale.”

– *Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters*

There were also calls for the same kind of enhanced services called for elsewhere, but specifically for apprentices. Many also felt that the content of apprenticeship programs was sometimes inadequate and that there should be more co-leadership with regional experts to provide a more strategic approach to program content.

Issues for First Nations communities

During their consultations, the Panel met with First Nation advocacy and Indigenous groups who highlighted the fact that existing EI service quality issues were particularly heightened in their communities. This included more geographical isolation in terms of proximity to Service Canada Centres and outreach sites. There were also cultural issues, particularly in communities where neither French nor English is the primary language. For some, there was also perceived discrimination and insensitivity at Service Canada Centres against Indigenous claimants.

Furthermore, the Panel heard that income in many First Nation communities was lower than in the surrounding areas. For clients in these communities, receiving only 55% of their earnings through EI is hardly worth going through the application process.

For the Panel, it is important that any solutions going forward recognize the particular effect that service quality can have on certain groups, particularly Indigenous communities, which are impacted by a concentration of challenges.

Labour market attachment and seasonal EI benefits

The Panel heard consistently from employers and stakeholders that the EI program does not adequately meet the needs of seasonal industries and that EI requirements do not easily accommodate seasonal workers, which in turn adversely affects seasonal employers and their employees. These concerns related particularly to the duration of benefits and the labour market attachment of seasonal employees. For some seasonal workers, the Panel heard that the duration of EI benefits in their region does not match the length of the off-season, leaving them in financial hardship. Furthermore, the Panel heard from many

stakeholders who felt that the EI program needs to fully recognize that seasonal workers are an important and permanent part of the Canadian economy, and that this should be reflected in the design of the program.

“CNLA believes that seasonal careers are essential to the Canadian way of life. People who choose to use the winter months to upgrade education and in many cases provide snow and ice management should not be denied Employment Insurance.”

– *Canadian Nursery and Landscape Association*

For instance, the Panel heard from employers of seasonal workers who have concerns that the EI job search and job acceptance requirements actually encourage the seasonal employees to move to regular (non-seasonal) employment. This causes labour and skills shortages for seasonal employers and forces them to train new staff every season. The Panel heard suggestions that these requirements should be changed so that EI special and regular benefits could be used to promote labour market attachment. This also includes allowing clients to more easily work while on claim and addressing the systemic impediments to returning to work (e.g. disqualifying eligibility if a Canadian quits a new job).

SERVICE ‘BLACK HOLE’ FOR SEASONAL WORKERS

As a point of particular concern, the Panel heard from stakeholders representing seasonal workers, particularly in Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, who are affected by a phenomenon called a “black hole,” where the duration of EI benefits is not sufficient to cover the full off-season. Stakeholders argued that changes to EI economic regions made in 2000 affecting the length of EI eligibility vis-à-vis hours worked worsened this occurrence for many.

“For us, seasonal workers need to be considered skilled workers in the EI program. The company that paid to train them wants them to come back. It’s important for those employees to have job security all year long. We try to extend the work periods (so they can accumulate enough hours to qualify), but we also need to be competitive. Sometimes we need to lay them off or our production costs will come back to bite us. If they haven’t accumulated enough weeks to qualify for EI, they end up in a black hole. We shouldn’t have to pay for that. I have to pay them to do unproductive work if I want to keep them. But if the weather is nice and they’ve already left, then we end up with no qualified workers.”

– *Regional Roundtable held in Essipit, QC*

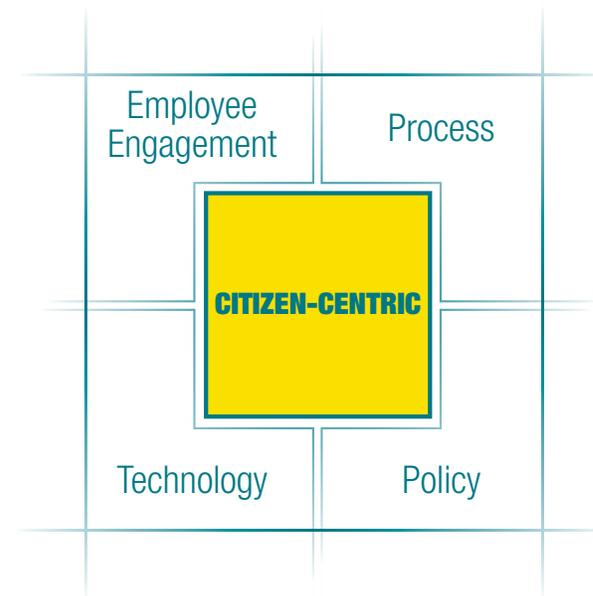
Furthermore, some felt that allowances should be made for seasonal employees in terms of training during the off season. Typically, Canadians on training would not qualify for benefits, but the Panel heard that there is no reason to punish seasonal employees who seek to improve their skills during the off season.

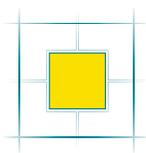
F. What do we need to do to get there?

Panel recommendations

Over the course of their consultations and through other key engagements with Canadians, the SQR Panel heard and saw first-hand some of the challenges and frustrations that affect Canadians trying to use the EI program every day.

Based on their experiences and what they heard, the Review Panel has developed a number of recommendations to help address the issues and concerns raised, all primarily driven toward improving the service quality of the Employment Insurance program. This section relates those recommendations, organized along the lines of five priority areas:





Citizen-Centric

Citizen focus and satisfaction targets

The Service Quality Review Panel heard over the course of their consultations and engagement with stakeholders and Canadians instances and experiences that indicate that Service Canada had moved away from its original goal of being a citizen-centric organization to one that was program-centric. This means that the organization's focus had become inward, concentrated on program and departmental outcomes, rather than focusing on the needs and expectations of citizens. The Panel feels that being citizen-centric should be the overarching philosophy of the organization, whether in policy development, service design, or service delivery.

A CITIZEN-CENTRIC APPROACH

A client-centred approach is at the heart of planning, the development and implementation of service standards, human resources practices, and all other core organizational practices. In other words, it is established as the main focus for the day-to-day culture and practices of the organization.

– *Answering the Call, Institute for Citizen-Centres Services, 2007*

Paramount to realizing this philosophy is the adoption of an “outside-in” approach to developing and implementing service delivery based on citizens’ needs, priorities, and expectations. The key is for citizen input to be regularly obtained, not only to inform service delivery improvements, but also to bring the voice of the client into Service Canada so that it resonates throughout the organization, benefiting everyone from front-line workers to executives. The Panel believes service needs to be designed based on the citizen’s journey in seeking and accessing EI services. That means understanding how citizens actually experience this journey, not how government thinks they do.

CO-DESIGN IN SERVICE DELIVERY

“Co-design encourages stakeholders, communities and ordinary citizens to get involved in the design process. It can provide a primary stimulant to working to build deeper engagement and true partnership arrangements.

In the public engagement approach, empowerment and responsibility are two sides of the same coin. Exploring them together is a critical part of the dialogue process. Rather than just asking clients to give their views on a particular issue, the process is designed to encourage them to reflect, discuss, challenge, and be challenged; to weigh competing priorities and to decide which ones are really most important; to make trade-offs with others who receive the same services; and to identify their respective roles in achieving the goals of the service.”

— *Co-Design: Toward A New Service Vision For Australia, Public Policy Forum, 2011*

Essential to hearing and understanding the voice of the citizen with respect to their needs, priorities, expectations, and satisfaction with service is having in place an effective feedback strategy. However, the Panel was surprised and concerned to learn that Service Canada no longer had a comprehensive client feedback strategy. For example, the primary tool to measure and report on levels of citizen satisfaction in Service Canada, the client experience survey which reported on citizen satisfaction every two years, was replaced in 2012–13 by what Service Canada called then a more “experiential-type” strategy, which used other client feedback mechanisms to assess citizen needs. These include the Canadians Out of Employment Panel surveys, Client Comment Cards for in-person service, an e-questionnaire for online services, and the Office of Client Satisfaction. These mechanisms could not provide the same representative client satisfaction measures to be assessed against previous benchmarks. In addition to not being able to collect information on citizen and client needs and priorities, it meant that Service Canada no longer had access to the key indicator of the citizen experience—namely, how satisfied they are with the service delivery experience provided by the program. The EI client survey undertaken by Service Canada to support the Service Quality Review was the first representative survey done since 2010–11. In 2015, Service Canada reviewed its client feedback strategy, which now includes a new client experience measurement survey model for tracking client satisfaction—the EI client survey completed for the SQR was the first step in actioning this strategy.

EI CLIENT SATISFACTION

Given the lack of client satisfaction surveys in recent years, how has the Department measured satisfaction levels? Was this the right approach?

The recent evaluation of EI automation and modernization suggests that Speed of Pay (SOP) acts as a proxy for client satisfaction: satisfaction is good in times when SOP is met, and decreases when the Department struggles to meet SOP.

The report indicates that: “A decrease in client satisfaction potentially stem[s] from an increase in the number of claims pending over 28 days and impeded and limited accessibility to services, such as call centres (blocked calls).”

– *Evaluation of Employment Insurance (EI) Automation and Modernization 2001–02 to 2011–12*

However, to ensure that the things that really matter to the client are measured and tracked, a sound measurement strategy, including continuous client feedback, is needed.

The Panel believes that the continuous and measurable improvement of citizen satisfaction is one of the most reliable indicators of improvement in service quality and service performance. Setting citizen satisfaction targets helps determine if you have set the right service improvement priorities and are making progress in achieving them.⁴ The Panel feels Service Canada cannot become a truly citizen-centred organization if it does not set targets for improving client satisfaction and publicly monitor and report on its efforts to do so.

Very important to identifying client priorities for improvement is knowing and understanding the drivers of citizen satisfaction including the primary ones of timeliness, ease of access, and positive outcomes. The Panel believes Service Canada must put in place the necessary processes to continually identify and measure these drivers correctly to ensure that the things that really matter to Canadians are measured and tracked to inform service delivery design and implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 1 The Panel recommends that Service Canada adopt a citizen-centric approach to its service delivery, one that includes effective citizen feedback strategies to understand the needs and priorities of citizens for continuous service improvement, and measuring and setting targets for client satisfaction as a means to evaluate success.

⁴ Institute for Citizen-Centred Services, “How to Guide for Service Improvement Initiatives”, 2004

Effective performance measurements and service standards

There is a saying “you can’t manage what you don’t measure.” The Panel believes having a strong information management system is critical to any organization and is a necessity for a citizen-centred one. Knowing what the right measure is and measuring it well and having the tools to analyze it are the most critical parts of a sound measurement strategy.

The Panel feels that measuring the right things means identifying the key drivers of citizen satisfaction with the service channel and anchoring the measurement strategy in them. This ensures that the things that really matter, from the perspective of the citizen, are measured and tracked.⁵

How Service Canada measures its performance and sets service standards was a concern for the Panel. It found that in some cases, certain standards and measurements were more program-centric than citizen-centric in their design and the outcomes they were trying to achieve. In other cases, there was no standard or performance metric for key internal operational or organizational issues.

For example, the main publicly reported service standard for EI claims processing is the Speed of Pay, which measures the percentage of EI applicants that receive their first payment or a notice of non-payment within a 28-day standard. Besides being misleading, as it actually measures “speed of decision” not “speed of payment,” the standard is not focused on the citizen; instead it is inwardly focused on the processing efficiency of the Department. But how does this reflect the expectations and actual experience of the citizen? For those who receive benefits, how long do they have to wait? What are the reasons why citizens are denied payment? How does this impact citizen satisfaction?

The Panel believes Service Canada must review its service standards to ensure they are citizen-centric and relevant. Citizen-centric service standards should seek to balance the citizen’s expectation for service with program priorities around efficiency and value for the money. The Panel believes standards are not static but dynamic and should be reviewed annually to ensure that they truly are citizen-centred, transparent, and based on current and relevant needs and expectations of service quality.

In order to increase client satisfaction with each service channel and with EI service delivery overall, the Panel feels that service standards need to be developed based on the key drivers of satisfaction (e.g. timeliness, access, outcome) for each channel (i.e. in-person service centres, Call Centres, Internet) and process (e.g. claims processing and reconsideration process).

⁵ Institute for Citizen-Centred Services, “Answering the Call,” 2007

FIRST CONTACT RESOLUTION

First Contact (or Call, in the case of Call Centres) Resolution (FCR) means properly addressing a client’s need the first time they call, precluding the need for a second or third call. An important part of this is that it is the client, and not the organization, who determines if their needs have been resolved in one contact.

– Institute for Citizen-Centred Services, “Answering the Call,” 2007

FCR, while difficult to measure, has a direct impact on client satisfaction levels, with some studies indicating that for every 1% increase in FCR, there is a 1% increase in client satisfaction.

– Telus, “First Call Resolution: Difficult to measure, dangerous to ignore”

Reflecting on best practices from other jurisdictions, the Panel feels that Service Canada’s service standards should be citizen- and outcomes-focused—that solving a citizen’s needs should be the priority, as opposed to increasing speed or reducing costs. A key indicator that would help shed light on the citizen experience is FCR. The Panel feels that FCR must remain a goal for the Department as it modernizes its technology and updates its processes in the years to come. However, accuracy in measuring this metric is paramount, which means ensuring that issue resolution is based on when the client determines an issue is resolved, not Service Canada, which is currently the case.

For instance, when they were engaging citizens and Service Canada employees, the Panel heard first-hand that Canadians have difficulty in accessing EI Specialized Call Centres, which is a key point of frustration for EI clients. From employees, the Panel heard that owing to processes, levels of authority, or even technology, they often cannot fully address the issues of the citizens with whom they are interacting. This is frustrating not only for the client but also for the employee.

BENCHMARKING TOOL BEST PRACTICE

The Institute for Citizen-Centred Services’ Common Measurements Tool (CMT) is a client satisfaction survey design tool that allows public-sector managers to: assess client satisfaction, understand client service quality expectations, identify service gaps, recognize priorities for improvement and define service standards. Managers can also compare their results against peer organizations

The Panel believes Service Canada should adopt a tool such as this that would allow it to compare its results against similar organizations, identify best practices and share lessons learned.

The Panel found that it was difficult at times to understand what the Department viewed to be key performance indicators for its internal operations in order to determine how they affected service quality. This seemed to support the recent evaluation report of EI automation and modernization that recommended Service Canada “review the performance measurement strategy and related financial and administrative data collection practices and systems to ensure ongoing relevance and effectiveness.”

An important tool in measuring your own organization’s performance is benchmarking, not only in terms of the citizen’s service experience, but also internal operations (e.g. cost, productivity, etc.) and organizational issues (e.g. employee satisfaction, employee turnover, etc.). The Panel was once again surprised Service Canada did not already consistently benchmark performance measures internally against its past results or externally against results by other similar federal, provincial or municipal government departments and agencies. The Panel believes Service Canada must use benchmarking as an important learning and an adjustment tool for identifying and adopting more efficient or effective service delivery practices from its peers.

RECOMMENDATION 2 The Panel recommends that Service Canada review and revamp its service standards, developing a citizen-centric service standard strategy that continually monitors the relevance of the standards based on citizen priorities and expectation of service. The standards results are to be measured, tracked, benchmarked and publicly reported annually. A performance measurement strategy including key performance indicators needs to be developed and implemented to assist in delivering good citizen service and accountability.

MINISTER’S MANDATE COMMITMENT

Recommendation 2 supports Minister Duclos’s mandate letter commitment to work “to set transparent service standards for the delivery of EI benefits so that Canadians get timely access to the benefits to which they are entitled” over the course of the four-year mandate.

Accessing service

Echoing this citizen-centric perspective, the Panel noted the frustration of many Canadians and stakeholders in accessing the EI system, including lack of awareness of some of its programs and benefits. Access concerns included not only being able to contact an agent to discuss their issue, but also in terms of availability, usability, and accessibility of basic information on the program, e.g. how do they apply, what is expected of them, how do they know if they are eligible, etc. Many felt that the information available to them was not in plain language nor was it easy to understand. Access is also a problem if claimants or employers do not know about EI programs that can benefit them. The Panel feels that for EI to be truly citizen-centric, the public-facing content it provides should be easy to access, clear, and easily understood. Also, EI programs that benefit claimants or employers need to be promoted in an effective way to ensure they can take advantage of them.

BEST PRACTICE: QUEBEC REGION ENQUIRY UNIT

To answer Member of Parliament questions on the program, Service Canada provides a special hotline to provide quick responses.

Responding to a need from stakeholder associations, the Quebec region of Service Canada now provides the same hotline service to designated representatives from third-party agencies to answer questions on the program and make enquiries on a claimant's behalf without additional consent or authentication requirements.

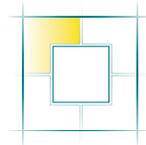
This is an example of the kind of enhanced service that could be applied more broadly by Service Canada across all channels to those clients and citizens who want it.

However, even with more easily accessed and understood information, the Panel also noted that there are particular groups of citizens and employers who need specialized help in accessing the program, either in terms of help using the tools available or help accessing available information they need. The Panel heard from many stakeholder groups, namely employer associations, claimant interest groups, and advocacy groups for vulnerable populations, that desired a more enhanced option in terms of accessing information and services.

From the Panel's perspective, more enhanced service means providing more effective and personal help and assistance to Canadians who request it or need it most, regardless of the service delivery channel. For instance, clients with access barriers to the Internet may require a more "hands-on" level of service to ensure that service delivery expectations are met and a high-quality level of service can be provided. The Panel feels that citizen needs and challenges with accessing services should be better understood and anticipated. This includes

identifying citizen groups with increased needs and developing strategies to help them, such as the efforts being undertaken by the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, in consulting Canadians on federal accessibility legislation, the results of which the SQR Panel is very interested in hearing. Using strategies such as providing enhanced assistance to those who need it is fundamental to understanding the citizen experience and journey and making service delivery improvements through a citizen-centred “outside-in” approach. The Panel also believes that the Government should continue to engage citizens and third parties to find novel and innovative way to address the needs of those who require enhanced service.

RECOMMENDATION 3 The Panel recommends Service Canada identify and address access issues facing Canadians and develop service delivery strategies such as enhanced assistance for citizens who face similar access challenges to ensure their needs are addressed and positive outcomes and satisfaction achieved.



Employee engagement

During their consultations with employees in Service Canada Centres, Call Centres, and processing centres, the Panel was impressed with the commitment and dedication that Service Canada staff have to providing Canadians with the help they need. However, the Panel heard from many employees that they want to be better engaged and empowered by the organization. In their daily interactions with Canadians and employers, employees are often left frustrated that their voice cannot influence the service improvement process or transformational projects. The Panel recognizes that this impacts their job satisfaction and their commitment to the organization, which in turn impacts service quality and citizen satisfaction.

BEST PRACTICE: SQR EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE

Beyond the employee engagement sessions, as part of the Service Quality Review, the Panel felt it important to provide the opportunity for all Service Canada staff who work on EI to be able to voice their opinions and provide their recommendations on how to improve service quality. To this end, they issued an EI employee questionnaire to find out what employees really thought.

Nearly 3,000 employees responded with some encouraging results for the Panel with regards to their recommendations—mainly that staff feel that to provide the best possible service, adequate resources and training are needed, and that modern services supported by upgraded technology, such as email communications and a callback feature, would provide the best enhancements to service delivery for Canadians.

For instance, during their employee engagement sessions, the Panel held a forum in the National Capital Region with mid-level managers and directors, all with stakes in the Employment Insurance program. While the session was a success, some of the immediate feedback from the participants gave the Panel the impression that, for some of them, the session was the first instance where they were given the opportunity to break out of their work silos and discuss, at least at a high level, the general direction of the EI program and improvements that are either in the works or need to be made. While the Panel is aware that Service Canada and the Department do have vehicles for the exchange of ideas, such as a *Management Community* to discuss the program and feedback mechanisms like *Expose & Explain*, they still feel that more can be done to foster an inclusive and engaged culture driven toward service excellence. The Panel feels that Service Canada should ensure that employees are engaged on an ongoing basis. The Department is on the right track, but these existing mechanisms should be bolstered to foster a more inclusive environment for the free flow of innovative ideas and sharing of best practices. The Panel believes this is important because many of the best ideas come from the front lines of the public service, which are in constant contact with citizens and not only know their needs and priorities, but what may be the best way to deliver good service.

BEST PRACTICE: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The Panel realizes that engagement and empowerment start with recognizing that employees have a role in shaping service delivery.

“We cannot stress strongly enough that the EI program will work best when the expertise of employees at all levels is recognized and valued and the opinions, ideas and recommendations of the employees and their union are an integral part of the Department’s day-to-day work.”

– *Canada Employment and Immigration Union Submission*

However, the Panel also believes that more can be done. Looking at best practices from other jurisdictions, the Panel believes specific actions should include developing annual employee engagement plans with measurable goals, setting employee satisfaction targets and surveying and reporting the results annually, and holding senior management accountable for improving the results. This should be reflected in a service culture strategy for the organization that ensures management, including senior executives, understand front-line service issues and have the proper training and expertise in promoting and delivering service excellence.

BEST PRACTICE: CULTURE OF SERVICE EXCELLENCE

In the very first Service Canada Annual Report from 2005-2006, the organization evoked the drive for a service excellence culture.

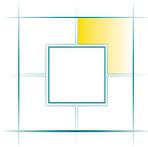
“From the start, we saw how critical it was to listen to employees about making service excellence a reality. The unions representing Service Canada staff have been involved every step of the way. They have identified many ways to make this organization and our activities responsive to the needs of Canadians.”

This is what the Panel would like to see Service Canada return to as a result of this review.

The Panel heard about issues that impacted employee engagement, including the need for appropriate training, better “back-office” and logistical support, and assistance for the mental and physical health of employees. In the online consultation with EI in-person employees, 44% indicated the need for better training as the most important suggestion for improving service to Canadians.

The Panel recognized through their consultations that some employees do not feel empowered or supported to be able to execute their jobs effectively and provide the best possible quality of service to Canadians and employers, (e.g. issues related to levels of authority given to agents to solve clients’ problems). The Panel believes that the Department should review the level of authority employees have to take action on claims and where it is appropriate enough so that they can provide the best possible service to citizens.

RECOMMENDATION 4 The Panel recommends further developing a strong service culture in Service Canada by ensuring employees and management have the proper training, tools, and expertise necessary to provide service excellence, as well as developing and implementing an employee engagement plan that surveys and publicly reports annually on employee engagement to ensure Service Canada has satisfied and committed employees providing the best quality service possible to Canadians.



Process

Funding service delivery to meet demand

Processing claims is at the heart of the administration of the EI program for Service Canada. Without the ability to process claims quickly and efficiently and meet the 28-day Speed of Pay service standard, eligible Canadians experience delays in receiving the benefit to which they are entitled. As mentioned previously, when the Speed of Pay is met (i.e. when Canadians receive a decision on their benefits within 28 days), citizen satisfaction is high. During their briefings with Service Canada, the Panel noted that citizens who wait longer for their claims make more enquiries to the Department to find out the status of their benefits—they make more visits to in-person centres or make more calls, which increases call volumes and decreases accessibility. The Panel learned that Service Canada often struggles with being able to secure the resources needed to process the number of claims it receives, particularly in times when the economy unexpectedly shifts and more Canadians need EI. When processing is not funded properly, it causes problems all the way through the service delivery continuum, including contributing to increased call volumes for Call Centres, and ultimately service quality suffers.

It is easy to compare this situation to the customs lines in airports. A small number of agents might be able to handle the average number of passengers arriving, but when a large number of planes all land at once, the number of agents is insufficient to handle the volume of passengers and the result is long lines. When this happens, more agents open up more kiosks to address the increased load and to keep things moving smoothly. Once the influx of passengers is processed, those extra kiosks are closed and the agents go on to other tasks, leaving the original number of customs agents to handle to normal number of passengers. Service Canada needs to be able to take the same “volume-based” approach to its resources for EI processing and other areas of service delivery (e.g. Call Centres and appeals): in peak periods, when a higher than average number of EI claims are received, it needs to be able to increase the number of agents to manage the influx. As things stand right now, the funding for resources is fixed, meaning that the program cannot accommodate the increased volume of claims resulting in processing delays and slower service to Canadians.

Also on the topic of resource levels, on their tour of Service Canada processing, call and in-person service centres, the Panel heard of the issues caused by staff attrition and turnover in some locations. For instance, the Panel learned that in some urban Call Centres, the attrition rate was as much as 55% in a given year, which causes excess challenges in terms of hiring and training new staff and knowledge retention; conversely, the attrition rate for Service Canada Call Centre and in-person locations in more rural areas was much lower. While this is not

necessarily a negative, as many staff who have the opportunity move on to jobs in processing or elsewhere in the organization, it did highlight an issue for Service Canada in terms of knowledge retention and management in some locations, which may impact quality of service, and reiterated to the Panel the importance of recognizing the connection between service quality and resource levels.

RECOMMENDATION 5 The Panel recommends that Service Canada adopt a volume-based funding model for the Employment Insurance program to improve its ability to effectively accommodate fluctuations in the volume of claims received, to ensure that Canadians receive the benefits that they are entitled to in a timely and consistent manner.

Collecting information from employers better

Over the course of their consultations, the Panel noted that there are a number of improvements that can be made from a process perspective, that is, how Service Canada conducts its business on a day-to-day basis, which could improve service quality. In some cases, Service Canada had simply become accustomed to operating in a certain way and relying on certain business processes that had become barriers to improving the service experience for citizens and businesses.

One example of this is the Record of Employment (ROE), which, despite becoming more electronically enabled in recent years, still represents a high level of administrative burden for employers. The Panel heard during their consultations with stakeholders that EI reporting requirements, particularly the ROE, are one of the top burdens for employers, and wondered if there is a better solution to capture the information needed. The Panel feels that a solution should be co-created with key stakeholders such as employer and employee representative associations, payroll service providers, payroll software vendors, and bargaining units, and phased in over the next few years. As one of the first steps, the Panel believes that the solution should be tested through pilot projects for both large and small/micro businesses within the next three years.

If Service Canada found a new way to capture the needed payroll information and discontinued the need for employers to produce the ROE, the reporting burden for employers will be lessened, meaning that they will be able to spend more time devoted to their business and less time filling out forms to satisfy the administrative requirements of the program.

For Canadians, a real-time payroll information-sharing solution will allow for accurate, high-quality information to be shared between employers and Service Canada. This will simplify the application process for applicants, improve the

timeliness of benefits, and decrease financial hardship on Canadians who rely on their EI benefits. It will also increase the accuracy of EI processing, resulting in fewer mistakes and reconsiderations. There will also be decreased burden on Canadians as many program requirements, such as having to self-report while on claim, will be done automatically. The overall result will be better and faster service to Canadians.

RECOMMENDATION 6 The Panel recommends that Service Canada engage key stakeholders in the co-creation of a real-time payroll information-sharing solution.

Call Centre service channel

The ability of citizens and employers to access EI Specialized Call Centres to receive help on EI was the most prominent point of frustration heard by the Panel. The main solution proposed by many stakeholders, including Service Canada, to improve low Call Centre accessibility and service levels was to provide extra resources so that more calls can be answered more quickly.

SERVICE BRITISH COLUMBIA BEST PRACTICE

During this consultation, the Panel heard of an interesting example from Service British Columbia that validates root cause analysis.

Service British Columbia Call Centres were suffering from poor performance owing to very high call volumes. The assumption by senior management was that they were understaffed, who tried to address the problem by increasing staffing levels.

However, this did not have the desired effect, so a root cause analysis was undertaken, which showed that a recent change to a form was confusing clients and driving them to contact call centres for clarification. After fixing the issue on the form, they found that their call volumes dropped to the point where the call centres were actually overstaffed.

The Panel spent considerable time trying to understand as many underlying issues facing the Call Centres to be confident that resourcing issues were the primary problem. In doing so the Panel became aware that there were other factors that were impacting call volumes and service quality; it also became evident that Service Canada's plans were not fully successful to address the service level issues relating to the increasing complexities of achieving Call Centre performance. For example, approximately the same number of claims are processed today as a decade ago when claims were almost entirely manually processed and there was a lot less use of the online service channel for information and claims applications. Yet a decade later, when almost 70% of claims processing

is partially or fully automated and more claimants apply online and use the Service Canada website to see answers to their questions, EI Call Centres still receive the same number of calls; i.e. significant increases in claims automation and web usage as a service channel has had no demonstrable impact on reducing call volume. The Panel recommends that the Department undertake efforts to understand the root causes of call volume (e.g. the needs of clients, the growing complexity of client needs, why clients call back) and develop sound strategies to decrease it (e.g. effective service channel strategy).

Over the course of their consultation and investigations into the best practices of other jurisdictions and the private sector, the Panel learned of many service enhancements that could be adopted by Service Canada to decrease call demand, including making better use of electronic means to transfer information between the citizen and Service Canada, such as email communication and allowing scanned documents to be submitted, and also expanding and enhancing the functionality of electronic tools such as My Service Canada Account. Best practices can also be adopted to improve the citizen experience such as: providing callers with a “call back” option and developing and monitoring revised service standards that take into consideration citizen expectations. The Panel feels that Service Canada can do more to learn from the best practices of other jurisdictions and industry, and should adopt a strategy that embraces best practices that aims to not only decrease call volume but increase citizen satisfaction. The Panel also feels Call Centres must be upgraded to enable better service for citizens as well as increased operational performance for Service Canada.

The Panel also learned that EI Call Centres experience a 30% turnover in staff annually, with some Call Centres as high as 55%. This means Service Canada spends a lot of money and time recruiting and training new employees to answer questions and solve problems related to very complex legislation. The Panel feels that this impacts Call Centre productivity in terms of familiarity with the program and business processes and knowledge management and, therefore, impacts service quality. Given this, the Panel believes that Service Canada should strive to retain the knowledge and experience on the program in its Call Centres. The Panel feels that Service Canada should develop positive initiatives to encourage increased staff and knowledge retention that enables the Department to meet Call Centre service standards going forward.

The Panel appreciated the complexity of the Call Centre issue and the potential solutions to address the obvious frustration with service quality at the Call Centres. The Panel wants to ensure that the real reasons for poor service quality are addressed. In the medium- to longer-term, once the revised service standards for Call Centres (part of Recommendation 2) have been developed through co-creation with staff and stakeholders and a volume-based funding mechanism for the program is implemented (Recommendation 5), the appropriate staffing

and resource level for EI Call Centres will emerge. It is the Panel's hope that funding and continuous improvement strategies to achieve service standards will help address the Call Centre accessibility issue.

In the short-term, the Panel believes that something needs to be done to improve Call Centre accessibility and service levels to meet the expectations of Canadians today. This will require providing the necessary resources to meet today's standards so that Canadians can experience real improvements in Call Centre service in the next year—this means more Call Centre agents. This will build on the Budget 2016 Call Centre investments, which saw \$73 million over two years to increase the number of agents and reduce wait times to allow the Department to improve Call Centre accessibility.

Beyond this, the Panel believes that Service Canada must adopt best practices and put in place the necessary strategies to address and accurately measure root causes of call volume, First Contact Resolution, and employee turnover, and to enhance performance measurements.

The Panel understands that Service Canada has been developing a comprehensive business plan for Call Centre improvement. The Panel supports this work and suggests that it continue through the further engagement of private sector industry experts and learning from best practices. The improvement plan should include a work plan and implementation strategy to address the issues highlighted by the Panel to ensure the best possible service for citizens while respecting the employees' and employers' premiums that ultimately fund the EI Call Centres.

RECOMMENDATION 7 The Panel recommends that the Government provide the necessary resources and flexibility in the short-, medium- and long-term to improve Call Centre service quality while engaging the necessary private-sector call centre expertise to assist in developing a long-term, high-quality, and cost-effective Call Centre improvement plan. This plan should include best practices and modern technology and factor in best value for money, enabling the kind of high-quality service citizens expect and need and that employees would like to deliver.

Appeals process

Service Canada receives approximately 40,000 to 50,000 “requests for reconsideration” on Employment Insurance benefit decisions a year. Since 2013, between 48% and 50% of these first level appeals were successful, and clients who had initially been denied EI benefits were deemed eligible. This means that approximately 20,000 to 25,000 of initial decisions are reversed under review. This creates a large amount of work for the Department and indicates that there are a large number of eligible Canadians waiting longer than necessary for their benefits, leading the Panel to wonder if there is something inherent in the EI application process that is leading to so many decisions being overturned upon review by the Department.

The frustrations of Canadians heard by the Panel on the reconsideration process go beyond effectiveness and also include timeliness, both at the first level of reconsiderations (which is within the scope of the SQR) and at the Social Security Tribunal (SST) (which is outside of the SQR scope). The SST replaced the old Board of Referees system in 2013 and coincided with the formalizing of the reconsideration process; however, the time it takes for decisions to be made has worsened under the new formal reconsideration process compared to the old informal system. This not only delays clients with successful reconsiderations from receiving their benefits, but also delays unsuccessful clients from accessing the SST. Prior to the new system, in 2012–13, appeals were informally reconsidered in 14 days, with those who were unsuccessful receiving a hearing at the Board of Referees, on average, in 44 days; whereas currently, the average reconsideration decision takes 38 days, with unsuccessful claimants waiting on average 165 days when appealing to the SST. In effect, this means that some applicants who would have their denials successfully appealed at the SST are now waiting over 200 days, as compared to just over 40 days under the old system.

Social Security Tribunal

Another prominent point of frustration for Canadians heard by the Panel was the Social Security Tribunal (SST), in particular its quality of service, efficiency, and perceived fairness. While not technically within the scope of this review, the Panel supports the recent recommendation of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) to undertake a review of the Social Security Tribunal, investigating its efficiency and fairness.

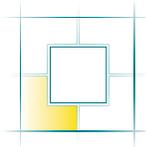
RECOMMENDATION 8 The Panel recommends that Service Canada undertake a root cause analysis of the entire reconsideration process to uncover the reasons that cause a large number of initial decisions to be overturned. Furthermore, the Panel supports the HUMA recommendation to undertake a review of the Social Security Tribunal to assess its efficiency, fairness, and transparency.

HUMA RECOMMENDATION ON THE SST

The Committee recommends that Employment and Social Development Canada undertake a review of the new Social Security Tribunal (SST) to determine:

- how it compares with the previous system in terms of costs, efficiency, and client satisfaction;
- how the SST can improve transparency, by providing claimants with all the evidence on which its decisions are based, and making all of its decisions public;
- how the SST could improve efficiency with more resources;
- the impacts of facilitating hearings in person, or via videoconference, at both the first and second appeal stages; and
- the impacts of setting a limit on the amount of time the SST takes to issue decisions.

– HUMA, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, Report 3 – Exploring the Impact of Recent Changes to Employment Insurance and Ways to Improve Access to the Program



Technology

A key enabler of high-quality service to Canadians and businesses is technology. Up-to-date technology is needed for a service delivery organization to be able to keep pace with modern advancements in citizen-centric service delivery and to meet citizen expectations, including providing features such as correspondence by email, proactive notifications and claims status updates, callback options, real-time wait times, etc. During their departmental briefings and engagement with Service Canada employees, the Panel learned that the technology system that underpins the EI program is over 40 years old and is in desperate need of being replaced. This old legacy system is based on a custom code that was designed specifically for the EI program over the past four decades. As changes to the program have been made over the years, layer upon layer of additional code was added to the system, which has resulted in a very complex technology process, one that is difficult and costly to change to address policy and citizen expectations, limiting the improvements that can be made.

INDUSTRY BEST PRACTICES THAT CITIZENS EXPECT

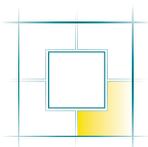
There are a number of industry best practices that have informed citizen expectations that could be adopted by Service Canada. These include enabling secure electronic communication, click-to-call and click-to-chat, enhancing e-alerts, and the option to enable a client to leave a number and receive a callback from the next available agent.

EI Survey respondents to the public opinion research that identified as being persons with disabilities indicated that the callback option would be the change that would have the most positive impact for them in terms of service quality.

The Panel feels that a modern system should be used, one that is co-designed collaboratively with stakeholders and engagement with suppliers and implemented prudently through a phased-in approach. This new system should ensure usability across all three channels and benefit processing, including an updated client/case management system, and should enable new service enhancements, such as a real-time payroll information sharing.

Similarly, the Panel also learned that aging and outdated technology also impacts the ability of Service Canada Call Centre staff to provide the best possible service quality to citizens; meaning that meeting citizen expectations in terms of accessibility and providing modern, service quality enhancing features is difficult, if not impossible. The Department needs a new Call Centre technology platform, which should be focused on improving access for citizens and meeting their expectations.

RECOMMENDATION 9 The Panel recommends that Service Canada replace its outdated technology systems with modern processing technology and Call Centre telephony, doing so with prudence through a phased-in approach, which will allow the organization to use technology as an enabler to meet the needs, priorities, and expectations of citizens.



Policy

The SQR Panel realizes that the complex policy and legislation behind the EI program impact service quality and processing times. For instance, Service Canada employees highlighted two complex policies that govern the Record of Employment as having a particular impact on service; namely, the rules surrounding reasons for separation, which was also highlighted by the Canada Employment and Immigration Union, and also the treatment of severance monies. Having rules that are complicated and difficult to understand affects service quality by opening the doors for mistakes to be made by employers when filling out the forms; these mistakes require follow-ups by Service Canada to fix and, ultimately, slow down the time it takes a qualified Canadians to receive their benefits.

Furthermore, the Panel heard from many stakeholder groups, e.g. Indigenous stakeholders, that the challenges and service quality issues faced by EI clients resulting from the current program policy and legislation were exacerbated in certain communities.

The Panel recognizes that making recommendations that relate to eligibility and duration of benefits would be outside of the scope of the SQR exercise. However, the Panel cannot ignore the impact that complex EI legislation and policies is having on the quality of service to Canadians and recognizes that the EI program is overly complicated and does not adequately service all Canadians.

A priority from the mandate letter for the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development was to “Improve our EI system so that it is better aligned with the realities of today’s labour market and serves workers and employers. This would include . . . undertaking a broad review of the EI system with the goal of modernizing our system of income support for unemployed workers that leaves too many workers with no unemployment insurance safety net.” It is through this program review that the Panel believes that EI policy can be changed and simplified—not only so that the program can be made fairer and more equitable, but so that the service quality to Canadians can be improved as well.

RECOMMENDATION 10 The Panel recommends that the Department review EI program policy with the goals of identifying the barriers that prevent the implementation of improvements to service quality and simplifying the policy to improve service delivery and find economies. This review would also consider administrative burdens and barriers for service to Indigenous peoples.

G. Where do we go from here?

Panel Closing Remarks

The SQR Panel has tried its utmost to faithfully reflect the thoughts, feelings and concerns of Canadians and stakeholders regarding the service quality of the EI program in this report and its recommendations. The Panel has presented these recommendations to the Department and the Minister in good faith.

The Panel believes that these recommendations can and will make a difference in the lives of Canadians. The Panel hopes that the service quality improvements that result from this review will serve as a first step for the Government in actioning its Government of Canada Service Strategy, which aims to improve service for Canadians and put the client first. The Department must leverage best practices and a service improvement methodology to develop continuous service improvement. Rigorous implementation plans for these recommendations that are monitored and measured closely will ensure that Canadians see the difference that a commitment to improving the services to which they are entitled can make. Results and progress on these recommendations should be reported to the public and Parliament through existing mechanisms (e.g. the Departmental Performance Report or Report on Plans and Priorities) or possibly through consideration of the reinstatement of the Service Canada Annual Report to ensure that information on the organization is easily found and provides a clear picture of what Service Canada has done and is doing to provide citizen-centred services for Canadians.

H. Appendices

APPENDIX A Panel biographies



Terry Duguid

In his former capacity as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
(Winnipeg South)

Terry Duguid is a community leader who is proud of his involvement with a number of local cultural organizations, and of his advocacy on environmental and public health issues. He has served as president of Sustainable Developments International and as Chairman of the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission. Terry has also served as a board member for Concordia Hospital and was the founding president of the International Centre for Infectious Diseases, a non-profit organization established to support and enhance the mandate of the Public Health Agency of Canada. Terry was a member of Winnipeg's City Council from 1989 to 1995. As a city councillor, he negotiated the city's first infrastructure program, and pioneered Winnipeg's blue box recycling program as well as the city's first-ever water conservation program. Terry earned a Bachelor of Science Honours degree from Carleton University and a Masters degree in Environmental Design from the University of Calgary. Terry and his wife Linda have two daughters.



Rodger Cuzner

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of
Employment, Workforce Development and Labour
(Cape Breton–Canso)

Rodger Cuzner was elected as Member of Parliament for Bras d'Or-Cape Breton in 2000 and was re-elected in 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2011. He has served as a member of the Standing Committee for Canadian Heritage, Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, and as critic for Veterans Affairs. He was also appointed as Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister in 2003 and later served as Chief Whip of the Official Opposition. He most recently served as the critic for Employment and Social Development and for Labour. Rodger earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Kinetics from St. Francis Xavier University. Prior to politics, he worked as Special Events Coordinator for the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Recreation Director for the town of Dominion, and Athletic Director for the City of Fort McMurray. Rodger has demonstrated his life-long commitment to hockey and to ensuring that Canadians are given the opportunity to succeed at our national sport. His love of the game has allowed him to coach at the Major Midget, Junior A, and university levels, and serve as a master course conductor for the National Coaching Certification Program. Rodger coached Team Nova Scotia at the Canada Games in 1995 and 1999. He is the founding member of the Cape Breton Sport Heritage Awards Committee. Rodger, a native of Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, is the second of six children born to Truman and Kay Cuzner. He and his wife Lynn (nee Hopkins) have three children: Mitch, Scott, and Brad.

**Rémi Massé**

Member of Parliament for Avignon –
La Mitis – Matane – Matapédia

Rémi Massé is the Member of Parliament for Avignon–La Mitis–Matane–Matapédia and Vice-President of the Liberal Party’s Quebec caucus. Since May 2016, he and his colleagues Rodger Cuzner and Terry Duguid have led the national Employment Insurance Service Quality Review. He is also a member of two standing committees.

Before beginning his political career, Rémi was the Executive Director of the Cégep de Matane. He previously spent 16 years as a manager and executive in various federal government departments in Ottawa and in his region.

Rémi is very familiar with the inner workings of the Government of Canada. Over the years, he has built strong business relationships with representatives at the provincial, federal and international levels. These relationships, combined with his experience, knowledge and skills, have helped him carry out numerous initiatives in his region, attract investments and create many good jobs.

Rémi earned his Bachelor of Arts in French studies and a graduate degree in Linguistics from Université de Sherbrooke.

He and his wife Helen are the proud parents of four young sons.

APPENDIX B List of stakeholders

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Stakeholder(s)
May 19, 2016	Ottawa, ON	1. Canadian Payroll association
May 20, 2016	Montréal, QC	1. Conseil national des chômeurs
May 24, 2015	Winnipeg, MB	1. Cormer Group Industries
May 24, 2016	Carleton-sur-mer, QC	1. Mouvement action chômage
May 30, 2016	Ottawa, ON	1. Canadian Premature babies foundation 2. Canadian Federation of Independent Business
May 31, 2016	Ottawa, ON	1. Canadian Nursery and Landscape Association
June 2, 2016	Ottawa, ON	1. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters 2. Canadian Home Builders' Association
June 3, 2016	Ottawa, ON	1. Mouvement Autonome et Solidaire des Sans Emploi (MASSE)
June 6, 2016	Ottawa, ON	1. Canadian Labour Congress 2. Canadian Teacher's Federation 3. Saskatchewan Federation of Labour 4. Association of Canadian Financial Officers 5. Manitoba Teachers' Federation 6. Manitoba Federation of Labour 7. Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation 8. PEI Federation of Labour
June 9, 2016	Ottawa, ON	1. Ontario Regional Contact Center Association

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Stakeholder(s)
June 10, 2016	Ottawa, ON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada 2. Canadian Steel Producers Association 3. Canadian Union of Public Employees 4. Canadian Police Association
June 14, 2016	Gatineau, QC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. YMCA (Brockville and area) 2. Canadian association of Geophysical Contractors 3. Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance 4. Euthanasia Prevention Coalition 5. Teamsters Canada Rail
June 16, 2016	Ottawa, ON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Atlantic Federation of Labour 2. Canadian Homebuilders Association
June 20, 2016	Ottawa, ON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mouvement Action-Chômage Kamouraska 2. Comité Chômage de l'Est de Montréal 3. Lieu d'Actions et de Services Travaillant dans l'Unité avec les Sans Emplois (LASTUSE) du Saguenay 4. Mouvement Action-Chômage Lac-St-Jean 5. Mouvement Action-Chômage de Montréal 6. Mouvement Action-Chômage Pabok (Gaspésie) 7. Mouvement Action-Chômage de Trois-Rivières 8. Mouvement autonome et solidaire des sans-emploi

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Stakeholder(s)
		9. Regroupement des sans-emploi de Victoriaville 10. Conseil national des chômeurs et chômeuses (CNC) 11. Action chômage de la Haute-Côte-Nord 12. Action Chômage de Québec 13. Comité Chômage de Montréal 14. Mouvement Action-Chômage de Charlevoix 15. Mouvement Action-Chômage Saint-Hyacinthe 16. Regroupement des sans-emploi de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue
June 27, 2016	Toronto, ON	1. Unifor 88 2. United Food and Commercial Workers Canada 3. International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers 105 4. Canadian Union of Public Employees 5. Hamilton Building Trade
June 28, 2016	Toronto, ON	1. Good Jobs for All Coalition 2. Ryerson University 3. Inter-Provincial EI Working Group 4. Workers Action Centre 5. Canadian Union of Public Employees 4400 6. Canada Employment Immigration Union 7. Unifor 8. Migrant Workers 9. Income Security Advocacy Centre 10. Toronto Area Council Steelworkers Job Action Centre

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Stakeholder(s)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Voice of Scarborough 12. Income Security Advocacy Centre 13. Workers Action Centre 14. Canadian Federation of Students 15. Toronto East Employment Law Services 16. Scarborough Leadership Group
June 29, 2016	Ottawa, ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. United Kingdom Department for Work and Pensions : Universal Credit
June 30, 2016	Thunder Bay, ON (Teleconference)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Northwestern Ontario Building Trades 2. Confederation College Thunder Bay 3. YES Thunder Bay 4. Elementary Teachers Association of Ontario 5. Ontario Native Women Association
July 4, 2016	Listuguj, QC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conseil de bande de Listuguj
July 5, 2016	Cap-aux-Meules, QC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Centre communautaire L'éclaircie 2. Chambre de commerce des îles de la Madeleine 3. Renaissance des îles 4. Fruit de mer Madeleine 5. École polyvalente des îles 6. Municipalité des îles 7. Maison à Damas 8. Carrefour jeunesse emplois 9. Resto Bar Les Pas Perdus 10. Centre intégré de santé et des services sociaux des îles

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Stakeholder(s)
July 5, 2016	Kamloops, BC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Human Resources Operations, Thompson Rivers University (TRU) Thompson Okanagan Community Services Cooperative Canada Employment Immigration Union – British Columbia/Yukon
July 6, 2016	Jonquière, QC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Représentants du bureau de la député Karine Trudel Mouvement action chômage Saguenay Lac-St-Jean Syndicat des producteurs de bois du Saguenay Lac-St-Jean Lieu d'Action et de Services Travaillant dans l'Unité avec les Sans Emploi (LASTUSE) Fédération des Travailleurs du Québec – Saguenay Lac-St-Jean
July 6, 2016	Edmonton, AB	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta Building Trades of Alberta – Edmonton Edmonton Chamber of Commerce Board Governance, Edmonton Regional Airports Authority Landscape Alberta Nursery Trades Association Sherwood Park Chamber of Commerce St. Albert Chamber of Commerce Somali Canadian Education and Rural Development Organization (SCERDO)

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Stakeholder(s)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN) 12. Career and Employment Consultant, Executive Spa Group Ltd. 13. Executive Spa Group Ltd. 14. Distinctive Employment Counselling Services of Alberta (DECSA) 15. Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association 16. Alberta Federation of Labour 17. Policy and Evaluation – Labour, Government of Alberta
July 7, 2016	Essipit, QC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mouvement action-chômage 2. Affaire publiques Essipit 3. Association libérale fédérale de Manicouagan 4. Agent de développement Tadoussac 5. Coopérative forestière côte Nord 6. Maire de Bergeronnes 7. Coordinatrice aux opérations complexe Pelchat 8. Tourbières Lambert 9. Mairie les Escoumins 10. Communauté autochtone Cri 11. GD Essipit 12. Festival de la chanson de Tadoussac 13. Commission locale des Premières Nations 14. Croisières Essipit

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Stakeholder(s)
July 7, 2016	Yellowknife, NT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Status of Women Council of the NWT 2. Northern Territories Federation of Labour 3. Department of Education, Culture and Employment 4. Conseil de développement économique des Territoires du Nord-Ouest 5. Mine Training Society 6. NWT Disabilities Council
July 8, 2016	Regina, SK	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business Representative Saskatchewan Provincial Building & Construction Trades Council 2. Regina Chamber of Commerce, Chairs Regina Skills & Trades Centre 3. Alliance Energy Electrical Contractor 4. Employment Service Manager at Gabriel Dumont Training & Employment 5. Unemployed Workers Help Centre – Regina 6. Unemployed Workers Help Centre – Saskatoon
July 12, 2016	St. Johns, NL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NL Federation of Labour 2. Aerospace and Defence Industry Ass of NL 3. Memorial University of Newfoundland 4. NL Building and Construction Trades Council 5. Empower 6. NL Teachers Association 7. Canadian Union of Public Employees

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Stakeholder(s)
July 13, 2016	Charlottetown, PEI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PEI Fishermen’s Association 2. Landscape NB/PEI 3. Commissioner for Employers 4. Tourism Industry Association of PEI 5. PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada 6. PEI Business Women’s Association 7. Canadian Home Builders’ Association (PEI) Inc. 8. PEI Federation of Labour 9. Southern Kings and Queens Fishermen’s Association 10. Native Council of PEI
July 19, 2016	Halifax, NS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Halifax Employers Association 2. Mainland Building Trades and NS Construction Sector Council 3. Restaurant Association of NS 4. Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS) 5. Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association 6. CARP, NS 7. Canadian Nursery Landscape Association 8. NS Home Builders’ Association 9. Canada Employment Immigration Union 10. Canadian Union of Public Employees

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Stakeholder(s)
July 21, 2016	Winnipeg, MB	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg Manitoba Chamber of Commerce Manitoba Building and Construction Trades Council Community Unemployed Help Centre Council of Canadians with Disabilities Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Public Service Alliance of Canada Brandon and District Worker Advocacy Center
July 22, 2016	Ottawa, ON	Canada Employment Insurance Commission : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioner for Employers Commissioner for Workers
August 2, 2016	Ottawa, ON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Institute for Citizen-Centered Services (ICCS)
August 16, 2016	Ottawa, ON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Retail Council of Canada
August 18, 2016	Kanawake, QC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assemblée des Premières Nation du Québec (APNQL)
August 22, 2016	Ottawa, ON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Canada Employment and Immigration Union Call Center Committee (CEIU) Canada Payroll Association

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Stakeholder(s)
August 29, 2016	Bathurst, NB	<p>First Session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Association des conchyliculteurs professionnel du New Brunswick 2. Union des Pêcheurs et de l'Aquaculture de l'Est 3. City of Bathurst 4. New-Brunswick Federation of Labour 5. Canian Enterprises Ltd. 6. Conseil d'éducation du District scolaire francophone Nord-Est 7. Chambre de commerce du Grand Tracadie-Sheila, Inc. 8. Centre de Bénévolat de la Péninsule Acadienne, Inc. 9. Chambre de commerce de Shippagan 10. Staff of MP Serge Cormier 11. Canada Employment and Immigration Union 12. Canadian Federation of Labour <p>Second Session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maire, Grande-Anse, NB 2. Aurèle et Fils Ltée, Saint-Isidore, NB 3. New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) 4. Village de Petits-Rocher 5. District de services locaux (DSL) de Pigeon-Hill et Conseil administration service municipaux de la Péninsule 6. Village (DSL) de Petit-Rocher-Nord 7. Canada Employment and Immigration Union (CEIU)

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Stakeholder(s)
August 30, 2016	Moncton, NB	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) NB 2. New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, Canadian Labour Congress 3. New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice Inc. 4. Dramis Communications Solutions Ltd. 5. The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work 6. Canada Employment and Immigration Union (CEIU)
September 14, 2016	Ottawa, ON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canada Federation of Independant Business 2. D. Brian Marson – Professor, Public Management Development Program Development Academy of the Philippines and Fellow, Institute of Citizen Centred Service, Canada and Ralph Heintzman – Adjunct Research Professor in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa and Senior Fellow of Massey College University of Toronto
October 4, 2016	Ottawa, ON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canada Revenue Agency
TOTAL: 42 meetings with 206 stakeholders		

APPENDIX C List of site visits

Processing and Call Centres were visited in:

- Kamloops, British Columbia;
- Vancouver, British Columbia;
- Edmonton, Alberta;
- Regina, Saskatchewan;
- Ottawa, Ontario;
- Sudbury, Ontario;
- Montréal, Quebec;
- Chicoutimi, Quebec;
- Jonquière, Quebec;
- Halifax, Nova Scotia;
- Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island;
- St-John's, Newfoundland and Labrador;
- Bathurst, New Brunswick; and
- Moncton, New Brunswick.

APPENDIX D Bibliography

- Employment and Social Development Canada, “Evaluation of Employment Insurance (EI) Automation and Modernization 2001-02 to 2011-12,” 2016.
- HUMA, “42nd Parliament, 1st Session, Report 3 – Exploring the Impact of Recent Changes to Employment Insurance and Ways to Improve Access to the Program,” 2016.
- Human Resources and Social Development Canada, “2005-06 Human Resources and Social Development Canada Departmental Performance Report,” 2006.
- Institute for Citizen-Centred Services, “Answering the Call,” 2007.
- Institute for Citizen-Centred Services “How to Guide for Service Improvement Initiatives,” 2004.
- Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Mandate Letter, 2016.
- Marson and Heintzman, “From Research to Results: A Decade of Results-Based Service Improvement in Canada,” 2009.
- Public Policy Forum, “Co-Design: Toward A New Service Vision for Australia,” 2011.
- Service Canada, “Service Canada Annual Report 2005-2006”, 2006.
- Telus, “First Call Resolution: Difficult to measure, dangerous to ignore,” accessed 2016.