

Dear Mr. Wernick:

Attached to this letter you will find the Privy Council Office Blueprint 2020 Annual Report 2016, which outlines the work that PCO secretariats undertook in 2016 to advance the Blueprint 2020 objectives as well as your specific priorities of Public Service Recruitment and Respectful Workplaces / Mental Health. Although not all of the activities included were explicitly part of the Blueprint 2020 effort, they all reflect its underlying vision. Over the course of 2016, PCO made great strides in advancing that vision and we look forward to continuing to do so in the coming year as well.

In addition to the report, you can access a Prezi-based presentation summarizing the key highlights from the year. Both the report and the presentation will be posted online.

I would like to extend special thanks to a number of people involved in creating the report and the presentation: René de Bellefeuille, Johanne Boisvert, Andrea Bain, Andrew Chisholm, Tomina Rioux, Shiva Chellen and Emily Galliazzo. It would not have been possible without all of their hard work.

Also, I am delighted that Jean-Frédéric Lafaille has joined me as the Co-Champion for Blueprint 2020.

Sincerely,
Isabelle Mondou

Overview

A few years ago, consultations with Privy Council Office (PCO) employees identified three themes for the Department's Blueprint 2020 efforts: (1) Innovative Practices and Networking; (2) People Management; and (3) Technology. In 2016, PCO continued to carry out work under these three themes as well as going beyond them. This report gives an overview of initiatives across multiple secretariats under each theme and in line with the Clerk's specified priorities: Public Service Recruitment and Respectful Workplaces / Mental Health. It also describes the work being done in certain secretariats that are deeply connected to the Blueprint 2020 vision through the nature of their work and whose work strongly reflected this vision in 2016. Overall, the narrative is one of both steadiness and dynamism: progress is being made on existing initiatives and new initiatives are emerging all the time.

Across PCO, secretariats are finding ways to advance the Blueprint 2020 objectives in big and small steps under PCO's three themes and in line with the Clerk's priorities. Networking events and workshops, training and mentoring initiatives, and moves to a more digital workplace are just some of the activities undertaken at PCO in 2016.

Innovative Practices and Networking

In 2016, a number of secretariats and teams across PCO launched or continued team-specific and department-wide initiatives under the Innovative Practices and Networking theme. Many of the initiatives pursued this year involved networking and career development, knowledge and learning, and changes in the workplace environment.

Developing strong interpersonal networks is a key aspect of career development and of building a flexible, knowledgeable Public Service. In a great example of improving links across government, the PCO Consultations and Public Engagement team—created this year—joined the existing Consultations Community of Practice, which brings together those with responsibility for consulting and engaging citizens and stakeholders. Among other value-added activities, members of the team participated in full-day workshops designed by the Community to help public servants connect to the network, learn from each other, and discover the plethora of resources available to them.

Consultations Community of Practice Bootcamp



PCO International Women's Day Event



Closer to home, PCO held its second annual International Women's Day Event on April 18, 2016. More than 75 employees from across PCO gathered at a local restaurant to enjoy an evening of mingling. This served as an opportunity for employees to celebrate the accomplishments of women in the workplace; broaden their networks within the organization; and affirm employment equity, diversity, and women-friendly workplace culture. As part of the event, all PCO attendees received a magnet featuring wise words from prominent women leaders.

Not to be outdone, the PCO Young Professionals Network (YPN) pursued a number of initiatives during 2016. One highlight for the YPN was a fifth "speed mentoring" event where young professionals were paired with PCO executives for a few minutes, allowing them to chat about professional strengths, challenges, and information on how young professionals can make the most of their careers at PCO and in the broader Public Service.

PCO YPN Event

In addition to networking events, 2016 at PCO featured many opportunities to build knowledge about important issues. For example, the PCO Talks series, operated by the YPN, enables participants to learn from speakers and one another. Among the many discussions this year, a highlight was a lunch-and-learn session with Canada's High Commissioner to India. He discussed his role as high commissioner and his career development in the Public Service. He even tweeted a photo with the participants to his large following abroad.



PCO also furthered its knowledge about reconciliation through two events run by the Consultations and Public Engagement team on the theme "Reconciliation Begins with Me." In September, the team led a two-hour interdepartmental discussion that explored public servants' challenges and opportunities in integrating reconciliation into their work. Twenty participants from multiple departments attended the event. It led to the creation of a GConnex page to begin conversations about reconciliation in the workplace. In December, the team hosted a full-day, multi-department learning event to promote understanding of Indigenous history, recognition of how world views impact dialogue and collaboration, and protocols for working respectfully with Indigenous Peoples. This engaging and emotional day for participants featured a Kairos Blanket exercise, Sharing Circles, and Jann Derrick's Box-Circle activity.

Several teams at PCO led the Blueprint 2020 charge with efforts to change the way their workplaces operate. Of particular note are PCO Micro Missions, which improve workforce flexibility and give employees an opportunity to see new areas of work and acquire new skills. In June, PCO held its second annual Micro Missions Fair to allow employees to sign up for opportunities across the department, such as with the Results and Delivery Unit, on official languages event planning, and much more. Over 60 employees signed up through the Fair, and the Youth Secretariat alone recruited over 20 individuals during the intense period of reviewing applications for the Prime Minister's Youth Council.

Micro Missions Fair



The newly minted Youth Secretariat ran several other initiatives as well, including the creation of a new Deputy Minister Committee on Youth. At its inaugural meeting, an employee made opening remarks showcasing the potential of young public servants. During National Public Service Week, the Secretariat also supported a new event, “Empowering Young Public Servants,” attended by more than 100 young public servants (and many more virtually) and by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Democratic Institutions, the President of the Treasury Board, and the Clerk.

Another example of making positive change in the way we work came from PCO’s Intelligence Assessment Secretariat. It improved its outreach to academics, think-tanks, and other non-government experts by seeking and incorporating their views into assessments

as well as by making it easier for employees to lecture in university classrooms. The Secretariat enhanced its collaboration with international partners, resulting in well-received joint products. It also broadened its outreach to clients throughout government to better understand and respond to their needs.

At the September 2016 PCO Town Hall, the “Going Green in ATIP” idea to eliminate paper copies of tasking memos was endorsed and will be adopted to reduce redundancy and improve efficiencies. For every formal ATIP request, a number of paper files are created that require processing, printing and handling—which create a lot of administrative work. “Going Green in ATIP” will significantly diminish the time consumed by the ATIP analyst, manager and director in the preparation, review and approval of each file, and reduce the use of paper and financial resources involved in the process.

Finally, the newly created PCO Results and Delivery Unit (RDU) is leading the Government’s efforts to drive progress on top priorities and provide meaningful outcomes for Canadians. The RDU is working across departments to create a whole-of-government approach that supports regular oversight for each top government priority, provides tools for identifying outcomes, uses data and indicators to monitor progress, and builds capacity through learning, guidance and communication. Although the RDU is relatively small, with fewer than 20 permanent staff, it is supported by three communities of practice: Chief Results and Officers, DG Data Leads and ADM Results Tables. This innovative approach has created a broad network in the Public Service to drive the Government’s agenda, share best practices and collaborate on horizontal priorities.

People Management

Several PCO-wide People Management initiatives that began in 2015 continued in 2016, while new team-specific initiatives emerged as well. New and continuing efforts on recruitment and training as well as on employee management were key for PCO this year.

A new recruitment effort was launched by the Intelligence Assessment Secretariat, which brought in four graduate students as analysts and designed a training program to support their professional development. The Secretariat also organized innovative training sessions with other departments to strengthen the quality of products. Also on the training front, the Public Service Renewal Secretariat has continued its initiative to include experiential learning in its employees' learning plans in order to supplement course-based learning. For example, employees participating in regional meetings organized site visits to operational departments to better understand the different realities of our colleagues who are directly serving Canadians on the front lines.

In terms of employee management, PCO's mentoring pilot project ran throughout 2016 and generated feedback that indicated a continued interest in mentorship and opportunities to meet, talk with, and shadow senior executives. The Corporate Services Branch's Human Resources Division is now exploring next steps to set up a structured program to promote mentoring across PCO. Also in this area is the Corporate Services Branch's 360° evaluation pilot project, launched in 2015. This year, feedback on the project indicated that while the evaluations were useful, it was difficult to use or implement the results. A new approach is being taken to address this: rather than a PCO-wide program, there will be a focus on ensuring that the leadership programs in which high performing employees participate have a 360° evaluation component, in a more structured setting. Finally, the Senior Personnel Secretariat launched new efforts to encourage temporary staff to work remotely, providing tools, such as hoteling stations, to connect them with colleagues. This both reduced costs and enabled the Secretariat to offer flexible working arrangements for its employees.

Technology

Across PCO, various teams continued to employ new technologies to change the way they work and to improve their products. Connecting with one another, digitizing our workplace, and changing our products to build our knowledge, expand our networks, and improve our productivity, are just some of the ways in which PCO made better use of technology in 2016.

In terms of connection, a PCO-wide initiative was launched this year to implement BlackBerry Messenger Protect as a corporate service. This was a Government of Canada debut and the service will be rolled out to the rest of the federal government in 2017. New features for 2017 are expected to include protected video and voice calls, and installation on desktop computers to allow non-BlackBerry users to participate. Another connection project came from the Senior Personnel Secretariat, which set up a GConnex group to promote networking within the Governor in Council appointments community by acting as a repository for guidance, information, and updates as well as a forum for discussion and sharing of best practices.

Also in the “connecting to learn” vein, a new effort emerged from a partnership between the Central Innovation Hub and the Consultations and Public Engagement team. “TrackChanges / Changer de Voix” is a podcast series produced by an interdepartmental team. It explores policy innovation in Canada and beyond through stories of innovation that worked and innovation that failed. The series demystifies buzzwords and concepts, features conversations with previous generations of public servants, and offers interviews with current leaders and practitioners from Canada and around the world.



Initiatives to use technology to improve our work were led by the Senior Personnel Secretariat, which launched an online portal for applications for Governor in Council (GIC) appointments. This helped the Secretariat reach a broader and more diverse audience of Canadians and to begin collecting appointments information in a single place on the Canada.ca website. The Senior Personnel Secretariat continues to use tablets to provide meeting materials for the Committee of Senior Officials and for selection processes. This reduces employee time spent preparing documents and increases accessibility for users.

Similarly, PCO Intergovernmental Affairs is working with provinces and territories to help modernize Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) business. Through an ad hoc working group that was launched in fall 2016, FPT Senior Officials of Intergovernmental Affairs are discussing and exploring practical innovations and opportunities to better leverage technology. This includes the use of web-based videoconferencing and virtual platforms/networks. They are also reviewing best practices across sectors and partners. The working group is co-chaired by Canada and Manitoba, with representation from British Columbia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Yukon, and Northwest Territories.

Modernizing FPT Business



A great team effort in the area of technology emerged from the Corporate Services Branch and the PCO Governance and Counsel team: a pilot project for the digitization of Prime Minister Notes and Prime Minister Returns. It involved collaboration with teams in Information and Recordkeeping, Printing and Graphics, InfoXpress, and the Office of the Clerk. The project resulted in significant changes to analysts' work practices, the digital archiving of notes and returns in InfoXpress, and timelier cataloguing. An evaluation will be carried out in early 2017, with the hope that the process could later be rolled out across PCO.

A particularly important digital initiative was the launch of e-Cabinet on September 21, 2016, as a pilot project at the Cabinet Committee on Diversity and Inclusion. The initiative is intended to modernize the tools and processes of the Cabinet system via increased automation, improved security, and the replacement of hand delivery of final Cabinet documents with an electronic document transmittals process. Specifically, the project is intended to improve efficiency in the preparation and distribution of Cabinet meeting material; simplify access to Cabinet meeting material, including when Ministers are travelling across Canada; improve the consistency and reliability of communication with departments and within PCO, by providing a common environment to share information and collaborate in the preparation of meeting material; and improve security of information. Learning from the pilot phase, the target is a transition of all Cabinet committees and full Cabinet to an electronic document distribution for all materials (up to and including Secret) by the end of fiscal year 2017-18.

Other efforts focused on using technology to improve our products with better data visualization. One example is the effort of the Communications Branch to improve the skills of analysts across PCO and other departments to communicate data by providing focused training and purchasing new software. Another initiative came from the Intelligence Assessment Secretariat, which rebranded products by increasing the use of graphics to create more accessible products.

Public Service Recruitment and Respectful Workplaces / Mental Health

Several initiatives across PCO tackled the Clerk's specific priorities: Public Service Recruitment and Respectful Workplaces / Mental Health. Simplifying process, improving employee awareness, focusing on interpersonal relationships, and taking physical health seriously were all part of PCO's 2016 efforts.

On the Public Service recruitment front, the Corporate Services Branch's Human Resources Division began an effort to transform its human resources operations, improve service to clients, and move towards value-added and more strategically focused advice to managers with a review of its staffing operations using the LEAN methodology. The goal was to improve efficiency and to reduce the number of steps in the staffing process by 40 percent. In fact, an improvement of over 60 percent in the overall staffing process was identified. Changes will be implemented throughout 2017.

LEAN Exercise



As regards employee awareness and workplace culture, the Corporate Services Branch included several mandatory training courses in its learning strategy: Creating a Respectful Workplace, Gender-Based Analysis, and Security Awareness. In addition, PCO worked with other stakeholders throughout 2016 to develop its Mental Health in the Workplace Strategy, which will be launched in 2017. In line with this work, the Intelligence Assessment Secretariat organized a workshop to provide employees with useful information on mental health and tools to better manage stress at work.

In a similar vein, the Consultations and Public Engagement team launched an effort to set new behavioural norms through a trial and error process designed to discover what works for their team. It focused on cultivating respect, space for reflection, and a shared vocabulary and protocols for a diverse team of specialists. Among other practices, the team reduced communication outside of work hours; made a point of celebrating small wins; and set up a mobile device for its shared mailbox to allow the team to leave the office together to participate in meetings and workshops for their functional community while still meeting established service standards for responding to emails. The team plans to adjust these practices over time as the group's composition changes and as they discover better methods to reduce stress and improve productivity.

With regard to physical health, the PCO Wellness Committee led the way with a pedometer challenge in May 2016. This 30-day challenge featured five-member employee teams competing to reach the most steps. The initiative fostered comradery, encouraged personal fitness, and helped promote a wellness-oriented corporate culture. The winners of prizes for most steps, most creative team name, and team spirit were announced at the PCO Awards and Recognition Ceremony in June. The Wellness Committee also hosted its annual Wellness Week to coincide with the February 2016 PCO Town Hall. The week-long events were well attended and included: a talk on aging parents, dementia, and mental health; a session on mindfulness; and skating on the Rideau Canal.



Also on this front, the Senior Personnel Secretariat initiated an employee-driven wellness committee that aims to promote awareness, provide practical guidance, and create a sense of community within the Secretariat. Meanwhile, the Public Service Renewal Secretariat put a focus on health by prioritizing ergonomic assessments for all employees within the Secretariat.

Key Secretariats in Focus

Every day, secretariats and teams across PCO engage in innovative practices, find new work methods for people and use technology to improve their work. But for some groups within PCO or key projects carried out in 2016, these approaches have been central. A number of initiatives taken by the Public Service Renewal Secretariat and the Central Innovation Hub as well as the work by the Youth Secretariat to staff the Prime Minister's Youth Council are showcased below.

Public Service Renewal

Created in 2016, the Public Service Renewal Secretariat advises, engages with, and organizes others to renew the Public Service in line with the Blueprint 2020 vision. It carried out this work in 2016 with a number of new initiatives under PCO's three themes and in support of the broader Blueprint 2020 effort.

The new Deputy Minister Network on Public Service Renewal was set up this year to support the Clerk in driving the renewal and modernization agenda across the Public Service. The Network is designed to draw on the insights and experience of key horizontal communities. This knowledge can then be leveraged in areas of renewal, such as human resources, change management, workplace culture, and internal systems and tools. The Secretariat also prepared an Engagement Kit for Deputy Heads and Engagement Champions, which was distributed across the Public Service and is available online.

A key example of interdepartmental collaboration was the second Blueprint 2020 Innovation Fair, held in April 2016 in Ottawa. The event's objective was to share modernization and transformation efforts taking place across the Public Service. It involved a tradeshow area, FED Talks (modeled on TED Talks), workshops, and other events, such as a human library and the Clerk's launch of GCTools (a suite of online collaborative tools). In-person attendance tripled over the previous year (2,123 visitors in 2016) and virtual participation increased as well (from 2,300 to 2,879).



In 2016, the Secretariat also focused on regional engagement. It has worked closely with the National Managers' Community, Federal Youth Network, Regional Federal Councils, and Chief Information Officer Branch to connect with regional employees across the country—in person, through WebEx sessions, and using GCTools.

Youth Secretariat

PCO's Youth Secretariat was set up in March 2016 following the Budget 2016 announcement that the Prime Minister's Youth Council would be created. The Youth Secretariat used modern and innovative techniques to run a wide-ranging process to select the first members of the Council. A national online application process was set up and announced via a Twitter Townhall led by the Prime Minister. It was designed to give all young Canadians the opportunity to be considered for the Council and received applications from 13,000 youth in its first three weeks.



Working with Statistics Canada and using state-of-the-art statistical tools, the Youth Secretariat designed an algorithm to select a pool of approximately 500 candidates for consideration. The algorithm recognized youth involved in engagement as well as diverse youth, using over 40 diversity indicators, including Indigenous, gender, LGBTQ, mental health, and homelessness. User experiences and user design testing were used throughout the process to increase the effectiveness of outreach to young people across Canada.

Young people could also use the application process to sign up for engagement opportunities with government departments on more than 30 public policy issues. Over 17,000 young people have expressed interest in participating in such opportunities and this new resource is already being used by departments: hundreds of youth have participated in online and in-person engagement activities on topics ranging from climate change and agriculture, to international development, to accessibility legislation, to youth employment.

Central Innovation Hub

PCO's Innovation Hub retooled during 2016 to better create an enabling environment for public sector innovation. Its work focuses increasingly on co-designing program solutions with departments and stakeholders, documenting what works to support learning and replication across government, and partnering with departments to measure experimentation results.

On the networking front, the Hub is currently building communities of practice centred on using behavioural insights in public policy across the federal government (the Behavioural Insights Community of Practice) as well as with provincial, territorial, and municipal officials (the Behavioural Insights Network). In addition, the Hub launched its Advisory Council in August to connect with leading Canadian and international academics and practitioners in behavioural insights and design.



Among its many projects, the Hub's work in 2016 included: experimentation on how to encourage students to make their first student loan repayments as evidence suggests that those who make the first loan payment on time are less likely to default in the future; behavioural trials to increase participation in Registered Education Savings Plans and the Canada Learning Bond among low-income families; and a crowd-sourced initiative to gather ideas for recommendations on promoting bilingualism in the federal government workplace.

Overall, the Hub was a key driver of innovative approaches, not just within PCO, but across the entire federal government and in partnership with other levels of government as well.

Conclusion

Aside from the highlights covered in this report, secretariats across PCO are embedding the Blueprint 2020 vision in their day-to-day work on an ongoing basis. In various areas, this means building direct links between employees and deputy secretaries, adapting to Workplace 2.0, or using video conferencing to reach out to colleagues across the government and the country. All things considered, PCO is excited about the progress made to date and is looking forward to the necessary work ahead to push Blueprint 2020 even further.