

JANUARY 22, 2021

CALL TO ACTION
ON ANTI-RACISM,
EQUITY,
AND INCLUSION
IN THE FEDERAL
PUBLIC SERVICE



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada 

THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW

The past several months have precipitated deep reflection on the unjust treatment of Black people, other racialized groups, and Indigenous peoples in our society. As public servants come forward and courageously share their lived experiences, the urgency of removing systemic racism from our institutions and from our culture becomes more evident.

Our leadership across the Public Service must be more diverse. Unless swift action is taken, we will fall short of effectively supporting the Government and serving Canadians. We have an obligation to our employees, and to all Canadians, to do better by ensuring that we are putting the full capacity of our entire pool of talent at the service of Canadians.

Grassroots networks and communities have opened conversations, often reliving their own personal traumas, in an effort to increase our collective awareness and to build paths forward. More data is being disaggregated, helping us to further understand where gaps exist and to inform direction and decisions. Training and new recruitment models are being developed. We are by no means where we want to be and much work still remains, but these efforts across the Public Service are creating a foundation for change.

As we focus on combatting racism, it is not sufficient to simply equip ourselves with knowledge and tools. We must take action in ways we know will be meaningful in addressing all barriers and disadvantages. Being a leader means taking an active role in ending all forms of discrimination and oppression, consciously and constantly challenging our own biases, and creating an environment in which our employees feel empowered and safe to speak up when they witness barriers to equity and inclusion. Inaction is not an option.

With the [Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada](#), we have seen how concerted, system-wide efforts, together with strong commitment and leadership, can generate necessary momentum. Although much work remains, setting out a plan with concrete actions, bringing the voices of those most impacted to the forefront, and holding ourselves accountable for success is a model worth following.

We must encourage and support the voices that have long been marginalized in our organizations. We must create opportunities where they have long been absent. We must take direct, practical actions to invoke change. This is a true test of leadership, and one we must meet head on. Now.

I am therefore calling on all Public Service leaders to:

- › **Appoint** Indigenous employees and Black and other racialized employees to and within the Executive Group through career development and talent management
- › **Sponsor** high-potential Indigenous employees and Black and other racialized employees to prepare them for leadership roles
- › **Support** the participation of Indigenous employees and Black and other racialized employees in leadership development programs (for example, the Executive Leadership Development Program) and career development services (for example, official language training)
- › **Recruit** highly qualified candidates from Indigenous communities and Black and other racialized communities from across all regions of Canada

I am further calling on all Public Service leaders to invest in developing inclusive leadership skills and in establishing a sense of belonging and trust for all public servants, as well as those joining us now and in the future, regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation or gender expression by:

- › **Committing** to personally learning about racism, reconciliation, accessibility, equity and inclusion, and fostering a safe, positive environment where these conversations are encouraged throughout our workplaces
- › **Combatting** all forms of racism, discrimination and other barriers to inclusion in the workplace by taking action on what we have learned, empowering employees to speak up about bias and oppression, and better equipping managers to address these issues
- › **Enabling** and advancing the work of grassroots networks and communities within the Public Service by providing necessary resources and bringing them into discussions at senior executive tables
- › **Including** voices from diverse backgrounds in the identification of systemic racism, discrimination and barriers to inclusion, and the design and implementation of actions to address them
- › **Measuring** progress and **driving** improvements in the employee workplace experience by monitoring disaggregated survey results and related operational data (for example, promotion and mobility rates, tenure) and acting on what the results are telling us

This call to action represents specific and meaningful actions. My expectation is that progress will be measured and lessons shared. While senior leaders are accountable, this set of actions demands our collective responsibility – at all levels – and a recognition that the existing equity work underway must continue. We have already seen the value of this work in early implementation of recommendations from reports such as [*Many Voices One Mind: A Pathway to Reconciliation*](#).

As we are bringing these actions to life, we must also recognize that experiences vary across different regions of Canada, and that interconnected dimensions of identity, such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identification and expression, physical or mental ability, and other individual characteristics, often create varying and complex experiences of bias. As persons with visible and invisible disabilities continue to face physical and technological barriers, the approaches we develop must be truly inclusive by also being truly accessible.

Building a diverse, equitable and inclusive Public Service is both an obligation and an opportunity we all share. We must advance this objective together, acting both individually and collectively, and recognizing that our progress will rely on amplifying the voices of those within our organizations to help lead the way. In my role as the Head of the Public Service, I will keep close to the voices of public servants. I am calling on you to do the same.

Ian Shugart

Clerk of the Privy Council
and Secretary to the Cabinet