



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

OGGO • NUMBER 045 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, April 17, 2007

—
Chair

The Honourable Diane Marleau

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

Tuesday, April 17, 2007

•(1535)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

[Translation]

Let me begin by reading out a brief note from Ms. Thibault. She wanted me to transmit a message to you. She says that she appreciated working with you as part of the team and that she wishes us all success in our future work, and she sends her best regards. This is from Ms. Louise Thibault.

[English]

I said I would read this for her. She sent me this note, and I said I would.

To start off, one of our colleagues, Madam Nash, has asked that we pass to the notice of motion right away, if that's fine.

You have to leave early, so if you'd like, you can speak to your notice of motion.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Okay. Thank you, Madame Chair.

My motion is that the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates immediately undertake a study on the cuts to the CBC design department, which constitute the selling of government property; that the appropriate officials from the CBC be invited to explain this decision; and that the president of the Canadian Media Guild be invited to explain the impact of this decision.

If I could, Madame Chair, I'd like to say that, clearly, the sale and closing of the CBC design department is, of course, being dealt with by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. However, the issue I wanted to focus on was the issue of the selling of government property. I have toured this facility. I've seen the decades of history, of costumes, of sets, of props. It takes you back to the days of *Don Messer's Jubilee*. It was from that perspective, and I thought it was pertinent to this committee.

The Chair: Are there any thoughts from other members of the committee?

[Translation]

Ms. Bourgeois, you have the floor.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I sit on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and I know that that committee is currently studying the mandate and funding of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I think that our colleague Ms. Nash would find it useful to ask her colleague who sits on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to table this motion, as it really has to do with the current lack of funding for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The Chair: Mr. Poilievre, you have the floor.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): I am not sure that this motion should be tabled before this committee because the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage is currently studying it. In my opinion, there is no substantial difference between Ms. Nash's motion and the motion that the other committee is studying. If I understand committee rules correctly, two separate committees cannot study the same thing.

Moreover, parliamentary committees do not normally get involved in the management of crown corporations. Corporations must remain independent from politics and government. Consequently, as a member of the government and as a member of the House—

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Bourgeois.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I am sorry, Mr. Poilievre, but we are not here to discuss what is, or what is not the Parliament's mandate. On the other hand, I think that normally, motions are studied in camera. I wish we could stop this.

The Chair: We are not in camera.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Normally, this is not done before witnesses.

The Chair: The witnesses are here, and this is an open debate. She asked me to table this early, therefore, there is no problem.

Mr. Poilievre, you have the floor.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: I thank Ms. Bourgeois for her comments, but in any case, I am convinced that neither parliamentary committees nor the government should intervene directly in the management of a crown corporation. Despite the fact that Ms. Nash raised an interesting point, we cannot influence this decision, which belongs to an independent crown corporation. Therefore, I oppose the motion.

The Chair: I simply wanted to say that the decision belongs to the committee and that this is only one aspect of things. Given the way in which our committee was set up, we can study almost anything. Therefore, it will be up to the committee members to decide whether or not we will follow that path.

Mr. Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

We have exactly the same view. First, I think that we are really meddling with the management of the CBC.

Secondly, I think that Ms. Nash should perhaps get in touch with her colleagues who sit on the other committee. I think that this is the right time to submit this to the other committee. I do not think that we should interrupt our current work by doing this.

Therefore, I oppose the motion.

The Chair: Ms. Nash.

• (1540)

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash: Yes. There is clearly not going to be support for this. But I want to make the case that the reason I had brought this before the committee is that the study undertaken by the heritage committee is going to take some time. Meanwhile, these goods that belong to the people of Canada will be dispersed in a couple of weeks. Once they are lost, a piece of our cultural heritage is lost forever. This came before the committee with that intent.

Thank you for the time.

The Chair: Thank you.

(Motion negated)

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Nash, for bringing the motion forward. I'm sorry that we couldn't get it through, but maybe at another time we will.

We will now go to our invited guests. We have before us representatives of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada. Madame Jauvin is the president, Karen Ellis is the vice-president, and James Ladouceur is acting director general, planning, policy and research, public service renewal division.

As you know, we've been studying the challenges faced by the public service in recruiting and retaining individual workers and the actual future of services to Canadians.

Madame Jauvin, as you may know, we allow the presenters to speak for about ten minutes, and then we open it up to questions from the different parties.

Madame Jauvin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Jauvin (President, Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak to the members of your committee.

You invited me, along with my colleagues, to speak to you today about the demographic challenges facing Canada's public service.

My presentation—and I promise not to speak for the full 10 minutes—will deal with these challenges, and also with other

factors that are radically changing the environment of the public service at this time.

First, with your permission, I would like to explain briefly our responsibilities as an agency, because it has a relatively new role with regard to human resources in the public service.

[*English*]

The agency was created in 2003, when the legislative reforms to the management of human resources in the public service were introduced. Our fundamental *raison-d'être* is to modernize and foster excellence in people management within the public service.

I arrived as head of the agency last September, which means that I am still relatively new to the wonderful world of human resources. As president of the agency, I am the government's chief human resources officer. Now, government being government, it's never quite as simple as that, and I have to admit we all find that the HR machinery in the government is a bit complex. So while the agency assumes overall leadership on human resource matters in the public service, there are a number of other players with HR responsibilities out there.

First, there's the Treasury Board Secretariat, which has the authority for labour relations and compensation at all levels except the executive, which is a responsibility of the agency. The Public Service Commission has the authority, as you know, for staffing policy and audit, as well as external recruitment. The Canada School of Public Service delivers all the training according to policy that is set by the Treasury Board on advice from this agency. As a consequence, we at the agency have to play a leadership role to bring coherence and direction to all HR matters in the public service, regardless of whether or not the agency itself holds all the actual levers to make things happen in the system.

Given these responsibilities, I was therefore delighted to respond to your invitation to discuss some of the issues we're facing right now, and more importantly, what we're doing about them.

The federal public service, like all other private and public institutions, is facing demographic challenges as the makeup and diversity of the Canadian workforce changes. We need to attract, recruit, develop, and retain our fair share of talent in the face of increasing domestic and global competition for this vital resource. Fortunately, we have a strong base to build upon. The Public Service of Canada is a valued national institution, and interest in working for the public service is very high. The vast majority of our employees are highly dedicated, skilled, and committed to their work. In fact, our most recent survey shows that 96% of employees were strongly committed to making their organization successful. A lot of people in the private sector would be extremely happy with these numbers. But the public service is in a state of change. We're facing internal and external challenges that we cannot ignore. I would like to touch on three in particular. They are the changing nature of our work and the labour market, a changing and more diverse population mix, and an aging population.

Starting with the first one, the changing nature of our work and the labour market, we know that the Canadian economy is facing important challenges. Innovation, productivity, and growing competitive pressures are changing the Canadian workforce and the public service. Demand for highly qualified and highly educated workers is growing. Educational levels are rising. The online workplace is a reality for many Canadians.

This evolution has shifted the level and types of skills required in the public service. Based on the definition we use, roughly 58% of our employees are now knowledge workers, whereas ten years ago this number was about 40%. Globalization has in many ways changed the way we do business, and the business we do, and technological advancements have transformed how we provide services to Canadians. In addition, the talent pool from which we are drawing is becoming more scarce with such a competitive labour market.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Canada's labour force has changed just as the very nature of its work has changed. Recent trends in immigration, the greater participation of women in the labour market, a growing aboriginal population and new language profiles have brought greater diversity to the labour force. According to forecasts from Statistics Canada, visible minorities could make up 21% of the Canadian population within 10 years. Obviously, the labour market will become even more diversified.

Currently, the public service is doing well in dealing with the representation of women, aboriginal people and handicapped persons. We hire members from all of these designated groups beyond their availability on the Canadian job market.

However, we must do much better with regard to visible minorities. This is a designated group that needs more sustained efforts on our part.

Clearly, we have made some progress. The representation of visible minorities went up from 5.5% in 2000 to 8.1% in 2005 and 8.6% in 2006. However, this is obviously not enough.

Of course, we must continue ensuring the geographic representation of all of Canada's regions within the public service.

[*English*]

The last trend I'd like to address is our aging public service. It's true that Canada's public service is aging. The demographics of the country as a whole show a similar trend.

The current average age of a public servant is 45. This is five years older than in 1990, when the average age was 40. The current average age of a public service executive is 50. The age of a brand-new executive is 46. More than half of all public servants are now over 45.

Departure rates for the public service are traditionally low as compared with the private sector. In the private sector they're at about 8%, and we're at just a little over half that. We expect retirements to peak at around 2013 and then slowly come back down.

The ranks of our youngest employees are strong. Generations X and Y account for 31% of the public service. So we do have a solid foundation to build upon.

We also know that interest in public service jobs is still very high, as Madame Barrados highlighted in her presentation to this committee last month.

If you ask me, therefore, "Is there a crisis looming?", I will answer, well, maybe, if we were complacent—but we're not. Are we taking these pressures seriously? Absolutely.

One of the first things the Clerk of the Privy Council put on his agenda as head of the public service, when he assumed the responsibility a year ago, was the need to renew the public service. The moment he arrived, Kevin Lynch turned his attention to these challenges and the need for renewal. He launched a process of renewal of the public service based on a practical, results-oriented management approach to achieving and sustaining excellence in the public service. He is doing this with the full support of the Prime Minister and Minister Toews, President of the Treasury Board.

Kevin Lynch created a senior forum of deputy ministers to drive this process of renewal. This deputy minister committee, which is supported by my agency, has been working hard, and has brought forward, after careful analysis of the issues, some specific priorities for action.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

We have defined four priority sectors that require our attention.

First, there is integrated planning. We need to understand clearly our current and future activities in the departments and make sure that we have the people and the resources that we need to carry them out. Essentially, we must plan for our needs in personnel at the same time as we make our business plans, so that we can balance our resources.

Secondly, we must deal with recruiting. We must renew and maintain our capacity at all levels. Currently, 86% of our hiring meets our short-term needs, and this is why we need integrated strategic planning. We must also give the public service a better profile as a dynamic and stimulating career choice.

Third, there is training. We must invest in people at all levels, not only to improve their skills, but also to encourage the leadership that we need in the long term.

Fourth, we need a basic infrastructure with systems, procedures and tools that can support planning, recruiting and training. When Parliament adopted the Public Service Modernization Act, it provided us with means for improving our human resource management.

However, we still need to modernize the entire administrative structure that the new legislation involves. This obligation has a great deal of impact, not only on the efficiency and the cost of human resource services, but also on the perception that the younger generation has of the public service, because we want to keep the new recruits with us.

[English]

This concrete and practical action plan, based on these priorities, is fully described in the clerk's most recent annual report, which actually was tabled yesterday in Parliament, and I believe that every member of Parliament has received a copy already. Thank you, Chair.

The report is our road map for public service renewal, and it's our response to the challenges we face as an institution. We will certainly be glad to provide this committee with updates as our work progresses.

In closing, Madame Chair, I hope you will agree with me that yes, there are real challenges before us, but the public service is well positioned to effectively manage future pressures. And while we recognize that there is still a lot of work to do, we are confident in our approach. I would certainly welcome your questions and your comments.

Merci beaucoup.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll go to Mr. Garth Turner.

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Ind.): Thank you very much.

Thank you for your testimony. We appreciate having you here.

I'm a little fuzzy on your concrete action plan. It sounded more like principles you were articulating rather than like absolute actions you're effecting to solve the problem you're talking about, particularly the demographic problem. Maybe I didn't quite catch it, but can you just give me sort of the top-line actions you're taking, please?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: With pleasure. I thought this question would come up. I was trying not to take the time of the committee in my presentation, which was long and detailed, but I'll capture a few highlights.

For example, "integrated planning": we've noticed it's really important to enhance the capacity of departments to do their business planning at the same time as their HR planning, so we are going to require that departments actually do that. They're supposed to be doing it, and now we're actually going to ensure that departments are in fact doing that.

One of our responsibilities at the agency is making sure they have the tools to do this. When you have a huge department, it can be very daunting to integrate all your HR needs and your financial needs. It's quite an exercise, but it's absolutely essential, and it's the first thing we need to do.

Second, on recruitment, one of the specific things the clerk has asked is that deputy ministers and senior leaders get personally and directly involved in recruitment, to make sure they're in charge of the recruitment campaigns and that there's attention from the top.

We also need to think about senior-level recruitment and bringing in people at senior levels from outside of the public service. That's not necessarily an easy task. The public service is an established culture and it's not necessarily easy to come in at senior levels. We're working on what we need to do to facilitate this. We're also targeting specific areas in the private sector and other levels of government where we might attract some very interesting candidates at those levels.

We're also doing some recruitment pilots for specific needs we have with respect to financial officers, compensation officers. We find that we have a big need for them. We also have a need for personnel officers, and we're recruiting people at that level. There are a number of other initiatives I could talk about, but that gives you a sense of them.

With respect to development, the Prime Minister announced the "Fellows" program. It is a development program aimed at senior levels, to build bridges between the private sector and the public service. It's an exchange program, if you want, of limited duration, to give both sides a sense of what the other universe is.

Every employee in the public service will have a learning plan. That's something that will be appreciated by all. Of course if you have a learning plan you have to explain why you're not following up on the learning or why you're not being given the time to follow up on the learning. That's another very specific example of something we're doing.

I'm sorry to go on. We are doing these initiatives right now, to make sure we give life to these four priorities.

● (1555)

Hon. Garth Turner: Let me ask you about a couple of comparisons with the private sector. You said that the average age of your workforce is 45. How does that compare, in general, with large private sector corporations?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: It's very difficult to do such comparisons.

Hon. Garth Turner: I understand.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: We have information from the census, so we know the labour force is a few years younger. But that's the total labour force, and it includes my son, who is 18 and working in a restaurant. I'm not sure you could compare that to an executive in the public service. But by and large we can say with confidence that the public service is older than the labour force.

With respect to the private sector, specifically, I would only have an intuitive answer. My sense is that it's not that different. Basically you're looking at executives in one area and executives in another area and there's no reason for there to be a difference.

• (1600)

Hon. Garth Turner: All right. How about job stability? How is the public sector different from the private sector?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: In terms of job stability, what happens in the private sector is that essentially you have either a contract or a limited tenure in a company and people tend to be a little bit more mobile. In the public sector there is less mobility in and out because of the pension arrangements. It's very difficult to move out into the private sector after a number of years in the public service. It's not attractive to do so. Some people do it because of course the salaries are much higher, so that becomes something else to weigh.

The other thing I would say is in the public service I think it's a well-kept secret that most people just love their jobs and they love what they do, so nothing really compares in the private sector. It's a personal choice. You do find that people stay for a long time.

Hon. Garth Turner: When your colleagues were here last month, there was some discussion about the impact of the public sector pension plan on the demographics of your workforce and whether in fact the attractiveness of the pension plan relative to the private sector actually kept people in your workforce longer, much longer than they would be kept in a private sector job. The question, then, some private sector analysts have is do you have a workforce that's constantly renewing itself, or do you just have people who are getting older?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I think you have to look at the executives and the rest of the public service. In terms of attraction, if you're in it for the money you won't be working in the public service if you're an executive, because the EX-1s are at parity with the private sector, but as soon as you go above the EX-1 level, which is the first entry of executives, the discrepancy, the gap, becomes wider, wider, and wider in terms of salary. If you're in it for the money, you wouldn't necessarily stay in the public sector.

Hon. Garth Turner: Is that a good thing for our senior managers, though, to have that wage gap? Has any thought been given to the option of compensating your senior levels better without as much of a pension benefit?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Obviously this is a decision for ministers to make, but at the end of the day there's a balance between how much is acceptable to retain people and how much is required to retain the best people. I think that balance, by and large, has been respected.

The government in the last several years has introduced the concept of at-risk pay, where you don't automatically earn all of your pay, but you have to be judged or be evaluated on a portion of your pay. That has given a little bit of a private sector flavour to the arrangements, but there's no question the salaries don't compare the

higher you go. By and large, I don't think that's a huge issue. As I said—

The Chair: Could we get some numbers on that? It would be good for us to get numbers on that if you have them.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Madam Chair, do you mean numbers on the salary gaps?

The Chair: The amounts, yes.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Oh yes, absolutely, we will do this. There is a committee that advises the government on senior-level compensation that does a lot of very interesting work with respect to that.

The Chair: Can we also get numbers on who gets the at-risk pay and how much of the at-risk part they get? Do they get it all the time? How does that work? It would be nice to have some evaluation of that, as well.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Okay, that would certainly be doable.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'd like to go to Monsieur Nadeau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. Ellis, Ms. Jauvin, Mr. Ladouceur, good afternoon.

We met people and organizations that gave us their opinions on the situation. I am somewhat surprised to note that there are very divergent statements and comments on the issue of demographics in the federal public service.

Earlier, you said that you were not expecting a crisis, that there was no sign of anything of the kind. However, you are vigilant, you are aware that there is an upcoming situation due to the average age of public servants and the new generation that must be recruited. To this effect, we saw documents that said that the federal public service is employing an older-than-average age group, at least at the higher levels.

What are your comments and your worries regarding this situation that you are watching so closely?

• (1605)

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: This is not a crisis, because we are managing it. Of course, if we let things slide, we might not be pleased with the results. In any case, there is no sign of a crisis. I think that we have a very clear view of what is going on and of what to expect. I also think that we are well equipped to manage the situation.

In fact, we could consider this an opportunity. If we can rightly say that the nature of the work done by the public service has undergone great changes, we can also say that the workers' needs are changing as well. In any case, those who are about to retire are not necessarily interested in undergoing training to learn entirely new ways of doing things.

Let me give you an example. I visited a Service Canada Centre in Regina. As you may know, these people have completely changed their approach. Previously, people would answer the telephone, and when they dealt with the client, they concentrated on a single problem. Now, with Service Canada, the employee has to deal with a host of questions or problems raised by the clients. It is like a shopping centre. Some employees stand and wait for clients to arrive so that they can ask the clients what they can do for them. Next, the employees bring the clients to the places where they can get answers to all their questions.

I asked a lady employed by that centre to tell me what she thought of it. I reminded her that when she first came to the public service, she sat behind a desk and did her calculations manually, and that her current job was entirely different. She answered that she was going to retire in six months, that she had accumulated all the needed years of service and that it was time for her to retire. In fact, she was not pleased with the new way of doing things. On the other hand, there are others who—

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Let me interrupt you, Ms. Jauvin. We must say that Service Canada is a rather exceptional case. Public servants are expected to answer technical questions regarding 14 departments, and it is not always easy.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: It is difficult.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I do not think that abolishing jobs and putting the entire workload on one person is a long-term solution.

We were told that we would not have enough university and college graduates to fill the positions of the people who will be shortly leaving the public service. Do you think that you will have to face the situation in the near future, or do you already have to deal with it as you plan your recruiting procedures?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Regarding that data, I rely on my colleague Ms. Barrados, who receives all the applications. She says that on the contrary, the PSC has no problem in attracting highly educated people.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I am not saying that universities and colleges are not training competent people: I am simply proposing that there will not be enough of these people to fill all the vacant positions at that time.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: If that occurs, I believe it will be in very specific sectors. We are in the process of doing such an analysis, to ensure we can recruit the appropriate people. In fact, we are increasingly searching for specialists in highly particular fields.

• (1610)

Mr. Richard Nadeau: We are talking about more specialized disciplines.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Exactly.

In some disciplines, we will have to try to find the appropriate people. Generally speaking, however, when searching for policy analysts or consultants for a minister, we try to find people who were trained as generalists. The existing recruitment and professional development programs show us that there are a number of people with one or two master's degrees in our labour pool. These are highly competent people. I do not believe that the pool will dry up.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: That issue does not appear on your radar screen for the time being.

I would now like to talk to you about something very concrete. The committee has heard things about the payroll services. Training people takes some time. Once they are eventually trained, they move elsewhere in the public service, because they can find better paying or more rewarding employment. There are always positions to fill. There's a recurrent problem that needs to be solved. With regard to quality and effectiveness, has the Human Resources Management Agency found new ways or approaches that could be implemented?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: You have put your finger on one of our major concerns, and we are indeed dealing with it. We have implemented a recruitment program specifically for compensation officers. This is the first year we have such a program. Officers join the public service at the entry level. We have recruited approximately 100 people. By the way, this is a very diverse pool of people and we are quite pleased with them. We will train these people, and they might find other positions within the public service. We do prefer that people remain at their jobs for at least two years, but having mobility between departments is not necessarily a bad thing. We do not frown upon that. With regard to compensation, that is a fundamental service, and we make sure that people are hired. As I indicated, there is a recruitment campaign underway as we speak.

The Chair: I am afraid you have exceeded your time.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: We will come back to that.

The Chair: Mr. Kramp, the floor is yours.

[English]

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and good afternoon.

By your earlier statement, you mentioned we have a number of departments and/or organizations of government that are all involved in the human resources business, I guess we'll call it, whether it's the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Public Service Commission, Canada School of Public Service, and/or various agencies. Are they all doing the same thing? I doubt it. Obviously there are some differences. What do we have for overlap and duplication, and is there competition from within?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: We all have clear mandates that stem from a statute. Public servants tend to want to only do what is allowed in their statutes, so that normally, because of the work of Parliament, reduces the possibility of duplication.

Is there overlap? I'll give you an example. If we're preparing a learning framework, there's no question that the school, the institution that will deliver it, is at the table, is with us, and is doing a part of it and we're doing part of it, but that's the extent to which there is overlap.

It's a little tougher, no question, when there are a lot of players around the table, but we're doing our best. To tell you the truth, everybody is so busy that you're happy when somebody takes the ball on something.

•(1615)

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I'm certainly not wanting to draw a comparison with the private sector, because it is different and I understand that. We almost seem to have so many cooks in the same broth here that I just want to ensure that somehow we're not finding ourselves in a competition that is making it difficult to retain employees.

As an example, are you losing most of your employees to the private sector, or are you losing to other governmental agencies and other governmental departments? Where would the loss provision be?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I would say, personally, for the agency, we seem to be attracting a lot of good talent, so maybe I'm poaching from other people. You can get talent from all kinds of sources in the government. You don't have to necessarily go within the portfolio. And one of the reasons—I probably should have mentioned that right away—there is a little less fear of competition, I would say, is because we're all under the same minister, the President of Treasury Board, and that makes a big difference.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Okay.

Do you have any problems finding staff in rural areas? The reason I ask is because there are many members, obviously, who represent rural areas. The majority of main government jobs are located, naturally, in your core areas, but there are many branches and agencies that exist out in the rural areas or in small cities and so on. Do you have any problem with staffing there?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Not that I'm personally aware of, but I would say that it probably depends on some.... Some areas might be a little bit more difficult. In some areas it might be difficult to find the people you need.

I remember going to Whitehorse, for example, and people were all fighting for the one engineer who happened to be there.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Might I offer just a potential...? It is something that, to me, has been a problem, and I've seen it many times. It is simply a policy.

As an example, if you're located in the city of Kingston and you want to apply for a government job and/or a federal agency job, there's a stipulation that you have to live within so many kilometres. In an urban core, 60, 70, 80, 90, or 100 kilometres is reasonable. In rural areas, that's not reasonable. I know many people who drive 100 to 150 kilometres one way every day to work. Yet now they're excluded from working for the federal government service, simply because that kind of stipulation is in there. So you're definitely excluding many potential capable workers in many rural areas.

Has there been any consideration given to possibly changing that?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I believe that the new policy the Public Service Commission has just instituted—I believe it was on April 1 of this year—on the national area of selection, which means that any job across the country is open to anyone across the country when they're applying to the public service, will have exactly the impact you're looking for.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Has that been implemented yet? Or is it in the process, at least?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: This comes under the Public Service Commission. If it has not been implemented, it is just about to be implemented.

You should take credit for that. I know that the Public Service Commission is always talking about the fact that this is coming from MPs who make that point all the time.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you.

Do I have time for another question?

The Chair: Yes, you do.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you.

In terms of training programs—upgrading, in-service training—are we up to snuff? Do we have the capacity to train ourselves? As one example, for the skilled trades, say the construction trades—our carpenters, our plumbers, our electricians—do we have the proper...? We have such a shortage, as we of course now see in many of the western circumstances. Do we have the apprenticeship programs available within government agencies to handle our own?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: As far as I know, we don't, with the small exception of specialized areas, I believe, in the Department of National Defence. There may be other departments that have very specialized areas for which nobody else trains. So they have to train, for example, to repair a specific ship or a helicopter or something like that. But by and large, we don't train for these other trades you mentioned.

•(1620)

Mr. Daryl Kramp: But of course we've seen a myriad of government programs over the last couple of decades that are available to other jurisdictions, whether it's the private sector or through tax credits or something like that. But you're saying that, really, the public service does not seem to be.... Are they not applicable to these programs? Or do we just need something separate or different?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I guess to the extent that we need those workers, we would expect them to come to us trained. It's a small number, again. If it's a general trade, then we would expect them to come to us already trained. If it's something that's a little bit more specialized that they can't learn anywhere else, then we would obviously have to give them that training. But we're now talking about a very small proportion.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you.

The Chair: I want to hook on to one of the questions that was asked about the retention or hiring of people in rural areas or regions of the country.

If you go back and look, you'll see that when you have jobs and hire in certain locations outside of capitals, retention rates are extremely high. As a matter of fact, this is extremely effective. Do you have any kind of policy that looks to expand this, rather than centralize all of these jobs in the major areas, where they're poached by everybody? As an agency of the Government of Canada, I think you should be doing more of that. That's the one question from me.

Regarding the other thing I want to know, you mentioned Service Canada—and I think they're great—but you wanted to know what they're like. They're like an MP's office. My staff is very well trained to do a lot of what Service Canada does. But I want to know who coordinates all of this.

In my area, they're going to have to hire ten people to do essentially what my office and Ray Bonin's office do for passports—that is, to check them and send them to Gatineau. Then they'll have to wait, right now for 45 working days to get a regular passport. They can't get an emergency passport, unless they travel five or six hours.

Why wouldn't the Government of Canada say that it doesn't make a lot of sense to hire ten people here to do what's already happening, when we can set up a processing office probably with fewer staff, and actually serve the people in the area? Does anybody look at that? Or is it just Service Canada is now the way to go, and there's no service, but it's nice? It sounds good—nice ads.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: First, I don't know everything about Service Canada, but I do know enough to say that this is in development. I would think they would be the first ones to say they're not perfect, and they're always trying to improve. Any way they can improve, they will look at.

The Chair: My question was, does anybody look at the difference between hiring ten people for Service Canada and Passport Canada opening an office to actually service the people, so they don't have to wait 45 days? Now they can't get an emergency passport, which means no documentation for at least 45 days.

So does anybody look at that? It's nice to have a Service Canada; it's wonderful that they want to do this. But what I'm asking is, who is overseeing the best use of money and personnel?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: There's a committee of ministers called the Treasury Board that is looking at Service Canada as an initiative. Of course the ministers would look at this and make the ultimate decisions.

But when those decisions are made with respect to how to organize Service Canada and which services to deliver, we have to remember that Service Canada is not an end in itself. The end is service to Canadians, and if Canadians aren't being well served, then adjustments and improvements have to be made until this happens. There's no question.

• (1625)

The Chair: My point.

At any rate, I'm taking somebody else's time.

Madame Nash, I'm sorry about that.

Ms. Peggy Nash: You were taking my time.

The Chair: I feel passionately about this issue because it drives me crazy. Somebody says we're going to give you great service, but it's not the service you need.

Madame Nash.

Ms. Peggy Nash: How much time do I have?

The Chair: You can have as much time as I give you.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Peggy Nash: It's the discretion of the chair.

I want to welcome our witnesses this afternoon.

An issue that I found interesting in Madame Barrados' presentation was the equity targets for the federal public service.

I come from a riding in downtown Toronto where there are large numbers of new Canadians and many people of colour. As I understand it from Madame Barrados, we are consistently failing to reach—and you reinforced it again here today—the employment equity targets for people of colour. When I asked her why, she was unsure. She said that there are lots of applicants, but very few people get through the system to be hired. As you indicated in the numbers, there was some marginal increase, but it was still far below where the numbers should be.

Why do you think this is a target that the federal public sector is failing to meet on a continual basis?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: The Public Service Commission is asking that question and is actually undertaking a study to answer that question. The reality is there is no obvious one thing that we could point to. It is what makes our task very difficult.

Although we'll be very interested in the results of this drop-off study that Madame Barrados is doing, what we are doing is trying to think of innovative ways to ensure we don't have a drop-off rate.

For example, I'll give you the example of our pool of compensation specialists. We had a percentage rate for people of a visible minority group of about 27% of applications. It was thousands and thousands of applications. But as we were narrowing the group down to the last 100 or 200, we made sure we were keeping the percentage consistent so that our pool gave us a result of 27% or a little higher.

We are really trying to make sure that we don't do anything in terms of the interviewing. We're preparing tools for our managers to make sure we don't inadvertently do something to make it more difficult for persons in that designated group to come into the public service.

It's a very tough question, and it's something that we absolutely have to get right. We have to do this. I'm absolutely with you.

Ms. Peggy Nash: There are certainly people who come to me in my riding saying they want to apply, but how do they get in? I tell them there are thousands of applicants for every job, and it's very difficult to get in.

It is distressing to see how low the success rate is for people of colour. As you know, there are many very highly qualified people who come here. To get past the points system and get into Canada, people are highly skilled. Those skills often are wasted because their credentials aren't properly recognized. It would be very desirable on their part to be able to be accepted in the federal public service.

The parliamentary library has given us some background information for our meeting today. They say that about 88% of new federal employees are hired as term, casual, or student applicants. It seems to be a very high number. Why is that?

• (1630)

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: There are a number of reasons for that. I agree with you that it's a very high number.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Is it true that casual employees are exempted from the employment equity legislation?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Yes.

Ms. Peggy Nash: None of these casual employees would be part of the equity groups, and it wouldn't be a problem.

Ms. Karen Ellis (Vice-President, Public Service Renewal and Diversity, Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada): What you said is absolutely right. For any term positions of less than three months, those people, plus casual employees, would not be counted under the act. We wouldn't actually be able to count those numbers.

Ms. Peggy Nash: How likely is it that someone who is hired as a term employee or a casual employee would get a better chance of being hired in the federal government? Does it happen? If I work three months or two months as a term employee, am I more likely to get a job?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: To become an indeterminate employee after you've been a term employee, it's automatic if you have uninterrupted service after three years. It is only fair at the end of the day that if you've been giving your time and effort to the government on a term basis, you're converted to indeterminate status automatically. But to become a term employee, there is a full competition.

For casual employees, it's not exactly the same. There is no competition. The issue is that you can only be hired for 90 days within one department.

Ms. Peggy Nash: But in a competition, if I've been hired for 90 days, does it give me a bit more of a step up on other applicants?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Clearly, if you've been in a department, you have more experience than somebody who hasn't. That experience will be there and will be looked at and considered. You wouldn't not do so.

Ms. Peggy Nash: So this could be one factor that is preventing us from reaching our employment equity goals.

Why is it that the casual employees, term employees, do not have to meet the employment equity targets?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: It's not that they don't meet them; it's that we don't count them. I'm not sure, if we were actually able to count them, what result we would find.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Could you count them and let us know?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: This would have to be on a voluntary basis. Even to have people in the public service now stand up and be counted is very difficult. We find that the number of people who self-designate and what we can see is not necessarily always the same, and there's nothing we can do. You can't force someone.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Do people self-identify when they apply for a job, or is it just a survey that you do every few years?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: It depends on the department, I believe. I know that it's in the department's interest to know, so you can ask the question. In some departments, every time you move jobs they ask you on your form when you're accepting whether or not you wish to self-identify. But as I said, a lot of people choose not to.

Ms. Karen Ellis: I believe that in a lot of the processes run by the Public Service Commission, they will actually ask that question on the poster that goes out; people can identify that way as well. So there are ways of doing it, but, as Madame Jauvin says, it may vary depending on the competitions by different departments.

Ms. Peggy Nash: So we could do it for casual employees or term employees if we wanted to.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I think you could certainly.... If people chose to identify, there would be no reason not to. I think we'd have to think carefully about it. If you're asking the question, are you creating a situation in which people feel that they are being put in...?

But it's a good point. I think we should go back and look at it.

Ms. Peggy Nash: I would just close by saying that it's something that stands out to me as one potential barrier, and I would be interested in seeing whether there is a way to address it. Maybe it would help make the numbers less skewed than they are today.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Definitely.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Simard.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Thank you very much, Madame Chair.

I'd like to apologize first for missing your presentation. I had to leave for a few minutes.

From the answers I've heard up to this point, I guess I can assume you have a certain level of comfort, like Madame Barrados, that things are under control, things are being looked after, and you don't expect a huge problem down the road. Is that what the general feeling is?

• (1635)

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: The general feeling is that if we did nothing, we'd probably have some serious problems, but we are certainly managing this in a way to take advantage of what's happening.

Hon. Raymond Simard: I'm sure you must have looked at some of the testimony from some of the other witnesses who came forward and who maybe didn't have the same opinion. There was a lot of concern expressed, actually, by some of the unions. What do you do in a case like that? I'm sure you must have reviewed their testimony. Do you speak to them? Do you basically match the two and try to figure out why there would be such a discrepancy in the testimony we're receiving here?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I'm not sure which one exactly, but I would say to you that we work very closely with the unions. I see it as a personal responsibility in my job, but I'm not the only one. I think the other deputies in the HR portfolio see it just as much as a responsibility.

We work very closely together. I have regular meetings with John Gordon and with Madame Demers. Some other unions represent a much smaller group of people, so obviously they get a little less attention from me, but by and large—

Hon. Raymond Simard: There's good collaboration?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Relations are good, yes.

Hon. Raymond Simard: I'd like to move on, just quickly. Both you and Madame Barrados have indicated that there are lots of people applying when jobs are posted. My understanding is that in the regions—in Winnipeg, for instance—there are lots of people applying, but there are not necessarily lots of qualified people applying in the area of trades, for instance.

Do you weed it out and break it down to three or four candidates? I would assume you do that. I'm hearing that in Winnipeg, for instance, they are even increasing wages because they can't get plumbers or others in certain trades. They're increasing the salaries.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: The first point I would make is that we probably don't have a lot of jobs that would be in the trade area. I know from personal knowledge that it's really hard to find a lot of good tradespeople.

We wouldn't have a huge need for those kinds of occupations. For those we do need, though, the applications would be received by the Public Service Commission. They have a process, filters on the computers, to narrow down and make sure that the people they actually put together in the pool to be considered for a job meet all of the job qualifications.

Hon. Raymond Simard: I was really surprised to hear that you are getting a lot of good, qualified people in HR, in your own organization. The feeling out there right now is that almost every private sector industry, even the small ones, are building their own HR offices or are getting the expertise from outside. It would seem to me that over the next five to ten years, that will increase. A lot of my colleagues who are in business are saying that is the future. You know, it's not accounting any more; you need to have good people working for you.

Do you foresee that as being a problem down the road, even for your own organization?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I think there's a lot of interest in HR issues and HR management. To give you an example, I had never done HR in my life, except as a deputy minister of a department. Coming to this, frankly, has been really interesting and exciting.

You're absolutely right, it's something that's essential right now, in that people are taking it maybe a little bit more seriously than they had before. So I don't find that I'm having this difficulty.

We are trying to build up a bit of a policy capacity, though, because we do offer services to departments, but we also need to do the higher-level analysis so that we can answer some of the questions that you put to us and that we put to ourselves.

Hon. Raymond Simard: One last question: Does your agency have employees across the country, or are they all here in Ottawa?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: They're all here in Ottawa, but they're—

Hon. Raymond Simard: You're kind of apologizing.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: No, no, I just.... I guess I consider a lot of the regional councils as not my employees but as my conduit into the regions. Regional councils are the networks of people who come together in the regions—

• (1640)

Hon. Raymond Simard: I'm sure you've considered having employees in the regions as well. I think that might be beneficial in the long term.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: It might be, you're absolutely right; it's a question of money.

One thing we're doing is we have assigned one management trainee, so one person per regional council, to represent the agency and so on. But I think what you're getting at—

Hon. Raymond Simard: Have somebody on the ground who knows what's going on in the region.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Yes; that is something that I personally would like very much.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Thank you very much.

The Chair: The regional councils, where are they—Toronto, Montreal? Am I correct in saying that this is where the problem comes in, that it's always the big cities?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I can tell you that I went to Saint John, for the one in New Brunswick. I went to Charlottetown, for P.E.I. In Nova Scotia, it was Halifax. But they don't necessarily meet in the same place all the time. Sometimes it's Moncton—

The Chair: No, but they do have councils that are usually in the capitals in the regions. That's what you call regional councils.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: They come from across the region, though. It depends; some of them will always meet in the capital due to cost issues, but others, when they're all over the place in the region, will meet elsewhere on purpose, to make sure that the—

The Chair: I ask that because it's important that you get that flavour from out in the regions—and not that they tell you what you want to hear, but that you get what's real out there. Often in the public service they tend to tell you what you want to hear. You don't really get the real picture.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: They don't always tell me what I want to hear, I can tell you that.

The Chair: You'll understand that I'm quite taken with all these issues. It drives me crazy.

And you didn't really answer my question a while ago. I'm going to come back at you on that.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Which one was it, Madam Chair?

The Chair: It was the one about who coordinates. Who decides what's best and how it goes, or does everybody just follow one way, and if that doesn't work you go the other way? If Passport Canada could open an office for what.... You're just going to let Service Canada do what's already available there, but they're going to have to hire your people. Who coordinates? Who thinks what's best for the region and the people you're serving—or is that not part of the thought process?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: It absolutely is part of the process. I am not up to date on how they're doing things currently, but I happened to be in that portfolio for several years, and I am aware that in those days Service Canada was not on its own. I would just extrapolate that something similar is happening now. You had representatives of all departments that were interested in offering services through Service Canada, and they had an interest in making sure that the level of service stayed the same.

The Chair: But it's not. There are some services that Service Canada can offer; there are others it cannot. That's my question. If you just say that Service Canada is at the end of everything, then it is.

I'm going to let you talk to somebody else, and that's Mr. Albrecht.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. Did you use my time as well?

The Chair: If I feel like it I will. You be nice to me or I'll cut you off.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I'll try hard.

We've certainly had a wide range of opinions on the potential crisis or there not being a crisis. I was glad to hear you say today that there could be one, but it's being well managed so it's under control.

I would like to pick up on the question of tradespeople and skilled workers. When PSAC was here they were very concerned that unless we had a specific apprenticeship program for our own skilled trades we would face a critical shortage in this area.

On your comment that once people are in the public service they generally stay there, it seems to me it would make sense that if we were training these people in the apprenticeship program for skilled trades positions, we might have a better chance of retaining them and mitigating this problem of a shortage in that field.

I'm just wondering if you could respond to that.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: From what I'm aware of, these skills are specific and specialized—

Mr. Harold Albrecht: It seems strange to me that with the hundreds of buildings the Government of Canada owns and manages, we wouldn't need a significant number of plumbers, electricians, and those kinds of people. So I'm having difficulty understanding why that number is so small. Maybe you could help me with that.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I will have to come back to you on that, because it's not something that has been on my radar screen. But if PSAC says it is, then I think I'd better put it on my radar screen.

• (1645)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: That's my recollection of what—

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I can undertake to look at that and give you the numbers and a proper response. How's that?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you.

I think it's true for all companies that concern about the potential loss of institutional memory has been raised at different times. I'm wondering if you have considered or are recommending any initiatives or incentives to delay retirement or have this phase-in concept of retirement. Someone could have the benefit of retiring in stages. That would not only give them the benefit of slowly easing out of the workforce; it would also give the new employee the benefit of a mentor relationship. Is that being explored and expanded?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: We absolutely know that it's important to have this knowledge transfer happen. We need to make sure we know in which areas we need it more than others. It also means getting a sense from people as to when they plan to retire. We haven't traditionally asked people that. Most managers would not necessarily sit down with their employee and ask—not that you could be bound by the answer. But we're starting to get a better sense of that.

I don't think we have all the tools we need to do proper knowledge transfer. We have a classification system that doesn't necessarily allow us to bring in someone to shadow, for example. We can't necessarily bring in people once they've retired. It's very difficult. We don't want double-dipping, so you can't really bring them in. We need more tools. You've put your finger on something that's a preoccupation.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I was thinking more in terms of letting someone go from five days a week to three days a week—some arrangement like that where the person would still be accessible to the new employee and some days actually be there at the same time.

I have one other question relating to the visible minorities. I think all of us are eager to have adequate and equal representation of visible minorities. You mentioned that 8.1%, I believe, is the current employment statistic. The other part to keep in mind is that not only do we have to look at the number of people who are applying for those positions from visible minorities, but also how many of those people are qualified applicants. Do you have any figures on what the percentages would be in terms of qualified visible minorities applying versus the actual employment statistic?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: That was the preoccupation of Madame Barrados. We know that there are many more people who apply—

Mr. Harold Albrecht: And are qualified.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: —and are qualified. As the PSC puts it, there's a drop-off rate. We know that it's actually quite significant.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Would it be double? Would it be 16% versus 8%, or 10% versus 8%?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I think I saw a 15% drop-off rate. This is one of the issues we're grappling with. The PSC is looking at that and trying to sort out what exactly the problem is. We're not waiting for that. As I was saying, we have a range of things—tools for managers and specific initiatives—to promote the development of employment equity groups, and in particular, visible minorities.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you very much.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Karen was going to—

Ms. Karen Ellis: I want to add two thoughts, because it's obviously very, very important.

In some of our management and leadership development programs, they are smaller scale, things like the management trainee program, the career assignment program, and even the accelerated executive development program actually have very good numbers of employment equity representation. We're saying that we have some best practices here. When we really focus on it, we can get good results.

Just to tie back to what Madame Jauvin said earlier about public service renewal, you have to build in the thinking about the EE into your recruiting, your developing. And if you start with your planning, and it's a really explicit focus, you can actually make a difference. This is why the importance of all of those priorities meshing together with things like EE is really important.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: If you already have existing situations where that is happening, then it's simply a matter of trying to replicate that.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: That's right.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you.

The Chair: I think one of the things that I heard was 88% of all new employees are hired as casual, term, or students. Do they go through the same rigorous process when you're recruiting them? They're the ones that end up with the full-time jobs. So if your pool there is not as varied as it should be, then that would make it more difficult for others to get in.

• (1650)

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Terms actually go through a competitive process—terms over six months, to be precise. Casuals do not go through a competitive process, and because of that, they can only work 90 days for a department. Students, as I think you might be aware, go through a process as well. There is a huge data bank that the Public Service Commission keeps, and when you want to have a student, you can't just hire someone you want. You have to go through the Public Service Commission and it brings in a number of names who fit the criteria and you choose from those names. That's somewhat of a process. It's not as rigorous as an actual competition, but it's felt that for student employment the idea is to give people access to a job.

The Chair: Okay.

Madame Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

Your agency has quite a challenge to meet, a sizeable task to carry out. I was reading Mr. Lynch's document to which you referred, Ms. Jauvin. It is a very nice document, but the recommendations have to be implemented. That leads me to a question for you, Ms. Jauvin. You have been at your post in the agency since

September 5. Have you developed a strategic plan to implement that nice document?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Yes. I thought you would ask me if I had designed a plan for my agency.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: And I thought you would come with your strategic plan, which would have allowed us to see, by way of a chart, the direction you are taking and what you will be asking of departments. Could we get a copy of that chart?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: The first step was to conduct an analysis and to agree on the nature of the problem.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Has that analysis been done?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Yes. After a number of discussions with deputy ministers who are on the committee and who advised the clerk, we agreed to the fact that there were a number of problems that had to be settled. I said a few words about them earlier. They are described much better in the clerk's report. We then said that we could not respond to all those priorities and deal with everything at the same time. That would have been impossible. We really have to face the facts: things have to be done one at a time, or else no progress can be made.

On the advice of the committee, the clerk decided to establish an action plan and identify four priorities. They form the basis of the action plan. I am convinced that the action plan contained in the report will lead to a series of concrete projects and initiatives.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I do not doubt that. Action plans lead to projects and initiatives.

You touched on integrated planning. If I am not mistaken, you have to start with proper strategic planning. This is a plan and not a planning process. You start with strategic planning, bringing together everything that will be needed. You then draw up a chart with the kind of individuals and public servants you will be needing over the next 5, 10, 15 or 20 years. After that, you have to find the people to fill the positions. You also have to search for the leaders—you spoke about leadership being part of your mandate—whom you will need. You also have to work with the unions. Has that been done? Where are things at?

You spoke to me about the plan. You have been working on it for six months. Did you conduct planning before incorporating the departments' processes? Don't forget that settling equity and fairness issues in a transparent manner throughout the public service would allow for strategic planning, for example, in the staffing of positions and psychological harassment and health problems due to the fact that there are not enough employees to do the work. Several committee members raised a lot of problems that might have been identified using a strategic planning chart.

•(1655)

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: In response to that question, I will say that each deputy minister—they are responsible for planning—is asked to conduct such integrated planning. Some departments are further ahead than others. There are departments that, for a number of reasons, have not made the necessary progress. Each deputy minister will be responsible for preparing an integrated human resources plan, and corporate and financial resources plans. But that takes time. In some departments, the process is well underway and almost completed. In others, it might take two or three years. These are cycles, and in each case the work has to be done carefully to get things right. Planning shows us what the needs are in each department.

However, it is not up to the agency to resolve problems at the Border Services Agency, for example. If Mr. Jolicoeur, the president, needs 1,000 customs officers, these are very specific functions. It is not a good idea to say that we should immediately establish a major, central program for the Border Services Agency. We want to know whether there is a need for people, and the number of people the Border Services Agency needs, but it is better placed to actually recruit them.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I am not saying you should develop a major program to manage the public service. I am simply asking you what the agency's program is, to show us that departments will carry out their work within the public service. That was all I was asking you.

I have a brief, supplementary question. Will you be using the comparative gender analysis that Status of Women Canada has been conducting over a number of years? That might help you understand the extent to which women are challenged within departments. Were you aware of that analysis?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Yes, I was aware of it. I have not examined the study personally, but for the people in charge of analyzing the plans, it is a very important aspect.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Should we bet that they won't use it?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I can ask them because—

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Simply because all of these wonderful reports are piled up on shelves, even though they cost Canada \$20 million. Would you care to bet that they won't use it?

Madam, that is why I was asking you what your strategic planning was. It was simply because if you were to show us some nice orderly plan, as a committee, we could follow the steps. I am going to put a suggestion to our chair to allow you to do some strategic planning, and then you could come back and see us. That would enable us to support you in your work with the departments, which often do as they see fit.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: We would be more than pleased to keep you abreast of our progress.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: We are going to give you a hand.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Warkentin.

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate your coming in this afternoon. We certainly appreciate your perspective. We've had a number of different perspectives as we've gone through this—I guess I wouldn't call it necessarily an inquiry—looking for information. We certainly don't want to see what's happened out west happen in the federal government.

I'm from a riding in Alberta, and unfortunately even the federal government is now experiencing some difficulty in attracting employees. I know of one specific situation. I know that Canada Post is a crown corporation, at arm's length. I'm sure that you don't have much to do with them, but they've actually had to close a post office permanently, because they were unable to find people who would work for the wages that were offered. Without question, nobody expected this five years ago even, never mind ten years ago, and we don't want to see the federal government come into this type of situation.

I know that Mr. Poilievre is the one who initiated this discussion. We look down the road and certainly don't want to see our generation and our children's generation having to face this major crisis if it isn't looked at. We do appreciate your attention to it.

I know that Madam Barrados had expressed that she was certain that there wasn't a problem—certainly not in the immediate term, but maybe not in the longer term—based on the number of applications that were coming in. I would just implore you to reconsider that methodology, because you know as well as I do that those applications wouldn't come in if all those people got a job. Next week that draw may dry up. For sure, there has to be some other type of mechanism in terms of identifying the possibility of a crisis out there.

The chair has even talked about this, with regard to some of the possible inefficiencies within the federal government. Often many of us, especially MPs, hear from constituents and experience ourselves the problem with red tape, or whatever you call it—bureaucracy—and possibly inefficiencies between different groups.

Just looking at the different arms of our human resources department within the federal government, of course, we have PSHRMAC, which you represent, and then we have the Public Service Commission of Canada, and then we have the Treasury Board Secretariat, and we have the Canada School of Public Service. I know that they each have their own identified mandates and their responsibilities. Then beyond that, we also have the temp agencies that provide the federal government with public servants as well, at least on a term basis.

I'm concerned—and I'd like your comments on this—that we're losing valuable information. I guess I should say, in addition to all of these, we also have all the HR departments within the crown corporations and the different departments. With all of this and all these different groups, are we experiencing the same types of inefficiencies and red tape and bureaucracy in our HR experience as we are in some of the other departments? If so, what information might we be losing? Where one group might be experiencing a crisis, and if the right hand is experiencing a crisis and the left hand doesn't know what's going on, I can just see that this might explode, and we might be in a real situation by having these inefficiencies.

Would you concur that there are possibly some inefficiencies because there are so many different people doing similar activities?

• (1700)

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: You've chosen my favourite subject. I absolutely believe we need to do significant damage to the existing HR systems and processes and so on. I'm not sure it's because there are a number of players involved. I think it's just that over time we've built up systems that are frankly not efficient. I've seen some statistics with respect to the number of people you need in the public service to do some very simple HR systems processes, compared to the private sector. Okay, there are reasons for that, but that being said, they're not acceptable, in my view. That's certainly something that has to be addressed. It's not going to be easy, because we have a number of departments that have their own systems and that don't necessarily want to change their systems. There's always a good reason you do something a certain way, and we certainly don't want to get into big IT exercises. That's not the point.

What I think we need to do is start with the basics, look at our processes, and develop some generic processes so that if you're staffing a job at National Defence and you're staffing a job at the agency or you're staffing it in Health Canada, you're doing it the same way, with the same number of steps. You do it in a way that's efficient. Those are very basic things, but we really need to fix that. That's why it's the fourth priority in this, and it's one I am taking personal responsibility for—she said bravely.

• (1705)

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Right. Well, we certainly do appreciate that.

I think this may be something our committee wants to look at further. Especially with the enthusiasm that you're now taking on this cause, if you are, then obviously you have identified that there are issues that have to be resolved.

Now, do you find that it's across the agencies and across government, this perspective that's the same? Would you ever venture to say what types of efficiencies we might find in the system, in terms of manpower, that we might be able to allocate to other places, such as the passport processing folks?

There is no question that the federal government has a lot of people. I'm just wondering, for how many people could we find more effective places for them to be?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: And it's also about what these people are doing.

You can probably find a much more efficient use of people once your processes are more efficient. And I know that in the private sector, I've been told, they look you in the eyes and say to you, "There's a very, very high percentage of savings once you start doing a bit of rethinking in your processes and you start the cleaning up."

Then that allows you to use the technology, not to make up big systems, but to use the existing technology so that you do something once, not five times by hand.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Yes, and that's maybe the question we have to look at as a committee, how we might be able to find efficiencies within the federal government. Again, the chair has identified a situation where ten people have been hired in your constituency, ten in my constituency, simply to transfer paper. They're collecting paper and passing it on. We have to see at what levels and at what places we can find efficiencies.

We appreciate your helping us to be in this discussion.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I appreciate the support.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: No problem. We are behind you 100%.

The Chair: One of the other neat tricks with the public service is that you open a call centre. They ask questions because you haven't been able to process the actual thing that you're supposed to be doing.

I recall years ago, when EI was always backed up and we were getting calls. So what they did was they opened a call centre. Well, that didn't satisfy the people. Eventually they actually got the systems in place; the cheques got out on time. The need for this massive call centre really isn't there, and the people aren't half as frustrated.

So I often wonder whether we can tackle the problem right off the bat, where it is, instead of trying to placate people, which doesn't really work anyway.

One of the big problems is that you have all these term employees. You said to me that after three years they become permanent. Well, no, they don't. They have all kinds of tricks to prevent them from becoming permanent. It's not unusual for people to work at term jobs within the public service for years on end and they never become permanent. So I think you need to look at how you can be that loyal to your employer if you never know whether your job is going to come to an end at the end of the year or what's going to happen. You don't build up loyalty and you don't really build up the kind of expertise that you need.

Are there any other questions from anybody?

Mrs. Charlton hasn't been recognized.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Thank you.

I apologize for coming into this process late, so some of the questions may have already been asked. I'll know, when my colleagues are rolling their eyes, that's the case, so just do cut me off at that point.

On the upcoming retirements, yes, there's a downside in terms of the loss of knowledge, the inability to transfer that knowledge, but to me it seems it also represents a huge upside in an economy where we're losing tons of decent-paying jobs. There is an opportunity within the public service to provide those jobs and to give some hope to young people. I find that side of things really exciting. But of course that kind of change needs to be managed and monitored. So I just have a couple of questions that come out of that.

To my mind, delaying retirements isn't the answer to the problem. It may be a stopgap, but I don't even think it's a desirable stopgap. So I wonder, first of all, whether you might comment on whether that is part of the strategic thinking.

Secondly, I don't believe that EE targets are part of the criteria that are looked at with respect to temporary, casual, or student employees, and yet in many ways those categories, it seems to me, make the natural feeder pool, if you will, into permanent positions. I know that my colleague Mr. Albrecht talked about visible minorities, but employment equity really should go far beyond that.

I'm not sure whether you have statistics, for example, on the disabled community, on native Canadians. The outreach for each of those groups is a little bit different because really the process starts with recruitment, not just with the hiring. If you don't get the right people to apply we'll never change the numbers. So I wonder if you could comment on that a little bit.

Then the last question—because I know that I'm limited in time—is temporary, casual, and student employees are one part of filling job vacancies, but I know there's also been, at least in recent history, a trend towards contracting out, and not contracting out just specific jobs but rather entire projects and the staffing associated with those projects. I wonder if you can comment a little bit about, first, the numbers of potential employees that would affect who otherwise might be in the public service full-time, because they too will take experiences away with them that we then can't benefit from within the public service.

I'm sure that will generate a bunch of more questions, but I'll stop there for now. Thanks.

•(1710)

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I'll be brief in my answers so I can give you opportunities to have more questions.

On delaying the retirements, it is not an objective of what we're doing to delay retirements. I think, first of all, people who are ready to retire and want to retire should be allowed to retire, and that shouldn't be the issue.

I think the issue arises when you're thinking about knowledge transfer, and there it's a little different. What we need to do is manage those retirements. We may be able to find some better tools than what we have now. We have some, but they're limited in terms of what we have to allow this knowledge transfer.

I'm with you. I think everyone is with you on that one. The objective would not be to delay retirement.

With respect to EE targets, it's not that for casuals we don't have any EE targets—well, that is true—but the issue is more that we

don't actually count them. We were saying a little earlier that if we could count them and if we could know, we probably would have a little bit of a different picture from the one we have now.

On the visible minorities in particular, I think we might have a different picture, but we don't count so we don't know. For all the other groups, all the other employment equity groups, we are actually over. If you want to be in the numbers game, we are over the total workforce availability. It's just the visible minorities where we're a little bit under, and we find that's still not acceptable.

Did you want to add something, Karen?

Ms. Karen Ellis: All I would say is I think you make a very valid point about the feeder pool. As we think about how we get into better planning so that we know when a short-term type of hiring approach is suitable for operational needs versus when we need to do a more thoughtful, reflective process for recruiting, that starts to make you think explicitly about EE representation, and that's a good thing. So you've made a good point.

That's why the first priority in the renewal planning is really doing thoughtful planning in every department. That starts to explicitly get at the very types of things you're talking about. It's only by sitting down and actually saying this is my business, these are the kinds of people I need, this is the population I serve, how do I get the best team together and how do I recruit it and develop it, that you start to get into a very personal engagement of people who are managing and hiring.

•(1715)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Has there been a trend line of percentages of casual, temporary, and student employees? Has that number actually risen over the last decade and a half? If it has, is part of the planning process in terms of HR management to reduce those numbers? In a very competitive environment for particular skills shortages, whether they be among the trades or whether they're in the professional categories, I think offering only temporary employment is often a barrier to attracting the best and the brightest. Are those numbers increasing, first of all? Secondly, if they are, is there a concerted effort to bring those numbers back down and offer permanent employment earlier in the process?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: The numbers are quite high. While some of the terms might be going down, the casuals are going up, so overall the final number is still much too high.

We find that the answer is essentially that we need to do better integrated planning. We need to make sure that we have a clear sense of what the departments individually need to do that, so that they have a sense of what they need and they know this is their demographic picture. This is what it should look like, this is what they need to get there, and this is where the decisions to hire, even for short-term purposes, can start to be made in a corporate fashion, as opposed to being made just at the very local level of someone hiring for a staff of five people.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Is there a reason why it needs to be done in the ministry silos? It seems to me that if you knew that the vast majority of your casual or temp positions were administrative in nature, you may well, if you didn't deal with ministry silos, be able to offer a number of permanent positions where the workplace might just change. So the workplace would be temporary or casual, but the employment would be permanent, which would mean that the employee would have all the benefits of tons of experience, frankly, in a number of different workplaces.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: You're absolutely right, and we do, but not for everyone, because as I was saying.... I was giving the example of the border guards. There's only one department, really, that needs border guards, so that's fine. But there are nurses, some administrative assistants, some scientific applications—

Ms. Chris Charlton: IT.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: IT is another one, finance, and so on, where departments can group together and say, "Wait, we need three. We need five. We need 10. We need 1,000." Then it's much easier to look at all of this together. By and large, if the requirements are the same, then you can choose someone from those pools.

First of all, the process should be a little bit cleaner and faster, when you've decided to hire, because you can go straight to a pool. This is the direction we're going in.

Ms. Chris Charlton: I'm not talking about hiring from a pool, but rather establishing permanent employees of the public service who, as employees, may go to different ministries to fulfill the similar function. So a nurse is hired not as a casual employee or a temporary employee, but rather becomes a full-time employee. At one point the nurse may work for this particular department and then three months down the road may work for another one, but doesn't in the meantime lose the ability to have the other benefits that come with working in the public service as a permanent employee.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Well, that, in effect, is indeterminate employment. Once you're in the public service you can do that. There's nothing to prevent you from doing that. We can do some development programs where we help people move from department to department, if that's what they wish. But once you're indeterminate, you basically can decide to stay where you are or to move around. Nothing will stop you from doing that.

Ms. Chris Charlton: I don't think that answers it, but anyway—

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Madame Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have one last question.

Ms. Jauvin, in a reply that you gave to someone whose name escapes me, you talked about the culture of the public service. What is the public service culture?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: The public service is an institution, and of course the majority of people who work there experience more or less the same thing. So we have values that are important to us and that make up who we really are. The public service is not for everyone. That is why I talk about the public service culture. It is not

really for everyone. Normally, people who pursue a career in the public service are comfortable in that environment. Therefore they are part of that culture. That is how I would describe what I meant.

• (1720)

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: In a plan like the one that was presented by Mr. Lynch, if I'm not mistaken, I sensed—I am someone who senses many things—that the culture would have to change slightly.

Changes will undoubtedly be made, which will change the culture. I want to know what you think.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Some things must change. Our objectives must be clearer. We want to achieve a level of excellence, and the clerk wants the entire public service to have that objective.

To achieve excellence in all areas, we will have to continue our process of renewal and continue to have the necessary tools to do the job. The renewal is not an end in itself. The end is achieving excellence and being able to serve ministers and Canadians. If we want to maintain that objective, we must renew ourselves.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: In that light, you would not be opposed to our committee asking you, for example, to come back and testify in a few months on this famous plan. You can use all kinds of expressions, like integrated planning, strategic planning, or implementation planning. Nevertheless, you know what I'm talking about.

Since we are striving for excellence, the committee could adopt a motion asking you to provide us with a plan that would clearly indicate the processes you will use and the staff and departments you will integrate in this fine report that, in passing, is excellent. It is excellent work. Moreover, how do you plan to get the departments to work along the same lines as the Clerk of the Privy Council?

So you wouldn't object to our asking you to do that?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: I don't object at all. You may ask me whatever you want and I will be more than pleased to respond.

I think you are referring to the integrated plan for the public service. The clerk has indeed stated that it was an absolutely essential aspect of our work. However, he planned to take steps for the longer term, and not within the next three months.

I can come back to you with a status report to keep you abreast of our activities. That would be very doable. As regards the plan the clerk referred to, he had more than three months in mind.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Ms. Jauvin, don't get us wrong. I have been in charge of all kinds of files where we use strategic planning. So I am fully aware that you cannot manage people in the public service or an institution of any kind without planning. I'm talking about a plan that would clarify how you will proceed, with whom, and what tools you will use, what the expectations are, and so on.

Clearly, I would not ask you what the departmental planning is tomorrow morning. You have been in your position for six months. I imagine that since then, you have been able to indicate what direction you want to go in: managing the public service as if you were managing a ranch or as if you were managing human beings. If you are managing human beings, you would say how you do it, whom you involve in the process, and how managers are encouraged to understand the human beings in front of them and not manage them by prodding them in the back so that they trip up.

I am fully aware that in some departments—I will not name them here—it will be extremely difficult to prepare an integrated plan. However, if you complete one, you will enable all members around the table to support you, as the department will not be able to sidestep the issue. At regular intervals, we will be in a position to say that there is a plan and that normally, it would take three or six months to reach a specific stage.

Is that where you are at?

• (1725)

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Yes.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: That is what I am asking for.

I am going to introduce a motion, of course, and I will ask my colleagues to support me. That is the only way of proceeding so that you no longer have to deal with the unpleasant aspect of the situation; we will have to deal with it.

We are going to discuss that. I realize that I am doing something completely new today, but that way, Parliament will help the agency.

The Chair: I had the impression each department was supposed to have a plan.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: That has long been the case, but it has never been put into practice.

The Chair: The plan is—

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Yes. The departmental plans are contained in the Report on Plans and Priorities. You have those in Parliament.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Yes, but they have never been put into practice, namely as regards gender-based analysis and harassment, and I can prove that to you.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: If that is something that is of particular interest to you, we could explore the issue in all of the plans.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: If you wish. I am offering you transparent management, equity and justice. You can deal with it if you want to, because your mandate includes that. Otherwise—

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Planning is the plan. Then we ask the departments to do integrated planning. That takes time. Some are more advanced than others. I am prepared to provide you with a status report if you want. Otherwise, we can go at it a bit differently and examine specific aspects of the public service. We can do that as well.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Do you have objectives in percentage terms for women and representatives of ethnic minorities?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: We have objectives. I will give them to you.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: You have objectives?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Yes, we do.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: In percentages?

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: Yes.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: We could put them in the planning.

Okay.

The Chair: Thank you for appearing before us. I hope that certain questions will be answered.

I know that many people are starting to work part-time in the public service; they have a 90-day contract, for example. I can tell you that there are many people who want contracts like that, but some who could go and work at places like that won't go if they already have a full-time job. It might not be the best job, but they will not quit a secure job to accept a three-month contract that may not lead anywhere.

By always doing that, you are losing many good opportunities to find good staff. It's almost like an illness, because most employees who become permanent go that route. It is not as well planned. There is no planning at all.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: That is why we want planning.

The Chair: That is a major problem for you.

That is also why there is no equity in certain areas. There is a tendency to give full-time jobs to people we know, people we like, and they are people like us.

Thank you, and I hope you will be able to send us the reports on what you do shortly. It would be appreciated if you could give us the answers to the questions we have asked.

Ms. Nicole Jauvin: We will come back any time you want to see us again.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

For the information of the committee, Minister Vic Toews is coming on Thursday, and

• (1730)

[Translation]

next Tuesday it will be Mr. Fortier.

[English]

Then we'll have to plan where we're going.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.