



House of Commons  
CANADA

# **Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates**

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OGGO • NUMBER 057 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, June 12, 2007**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Diane Marleau**

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Tuesday, June 12, 2007

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.)):** We have quorum, so I am going to call the meeting to order.

Before we deal with our witness, I want to talk about the newly appointed public sector integrity commissioner-to-be. This person, as you know, is an appointee of Parliament, and I think it would be a good thing if we were to ask her to appear before our committee on Thursday.

This office was created approximately two or two and a half years ago. It's taken some time to get to this point, so we're pretty pleased to have it. Basically this is the office the public sector will have access to for whistle-blowing protection, and it's Madame Christiane Ouimet. If the committee is in favour, I would suggest that we have her to our committee on Thursday, if she can come. If the committee is willing, we could have it televised. Is that okay? Perhaps we can get the clerk to ask her if she's available.

I want to tell the committee that we did approach the Clerk of the Privy Council to appear before the committee on the issue of pay. They cannot appear on Thursday; we know we have that spot, so we think it's appropriate to have Madame Ouimet. We will see whether there is someone from his office who can come before us the following week. We'll keep working on this because it's an issue that concerns all our employees, and we want to make sure they get paid on time.

We will go on now with our study on the demographic challenges of the federal public service. We have before us Judith MacBride-King, who is the principal of MacBride-King and Associates.

Normally we allow 10 to 15 minutes for a presentation and then we open it for questions.

As you know, there's a great concern over whether there will be enough trained people to take our places when we all retire.

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King (Principal, MacBride-King and Associates):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, everyone.

Good afternoon. I am delighted to be here.

I am very pleased indeed to discuss what I consider to be a critical issue, an issue that too many organizations have for too long been too slow to respond to, and that, of course, is the aging of our population and ultimately the implications of that trend for public policy-makers, for our communities, and for organizations across the country.

I congratulate this committee for focusing on this issue as it relates to the federal public service, and I was honoured to be asked to appear before you. In preparation, I read with interest some of the previous testimony provided to the committee and noted that some members were struck by what appeared to be, at least on the face of it, varying points of view regarding the demographic challenge facing the public service of Canada and/or its ability to respond to that challenge in a timely fashion.

My view, with all due respect, is that the federal public service will face some serious problems in recruiting and retaining people with the skills it needs now and in the future. I will tell you why I hold that view. As we all know, or should know by now, our nation is greying. I know that when I look into my husband's loving eyes every morning and see my grey hair reflected back at me. I'm getting older; so are you, and so is Canada.

Currently our median age is about 39, and Stats Canada, as you know, is projecting that we'll reach the ripe old median age of 44.3 by 2031. The reason we're aging, of course, has everything to do with low fertility rates, rates that remain below the level necessary to replace our population—and there is no evidence, ladies and gentlemen, this is going to turn around.

Consequently, the proportion of our population aged from zero—that is, newborns—to 14 will decline, and the proportion of older Canadians 65 years of age and over will increase, to the point in the not-too-distant future that the aged will have a bigger piece of our population pie than the very young. For example, currently Canadians aged zero to 14 make up about 18% of our population, and those who are 65 and over are about 13%. By 2031, according to Stats Canada's medium growth scenario, almost one in four Canadians, or 23.3%, will be 65 years of age and older, and only 14% will be in that younger age category.

As a consequence of lower fertility rates and larger numbers of deaths as people enter the oldest of the age cohorts, our population growth will slow from about a 1.4% compounded annual growth during the years of 2001 to 2005, according to my alma mater, the Conference Board of Canada, to less than 1% over the next two decades, and labour force growth is also projected to wane. So what?

One challenge, of course, is that other nations, such as Japan, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Greece, etc., are aging at a faster rate than we are. The median age in Germany and Japan, for example, is over 42 now; in fact, Japan, Germany, and Italy are all at zero population growth. Demographers across Europe are predicting population declines throughout that continent.

This means, obviously, that the race for talent—which we all know is already fast paced in some regions of our country, particularly, and for some occupations—will heat up and will become even more global than it already is. China and India are already recruiting in Canada, and so is Australia, the United Arab Emirates, the U.K., the United States, and other countries. This could translate into more losses of Canadians as they emigrate or work offshore for longer periods of time. In this environment, recruiting people and retaining and continuously developing them are critical must-dos, not only for the nation, but also for organizations.

Within Canada, as I've noted, we already know the skills race is on. No matter what survey or what organization one looks at, the story line is the same: many organizations are finding it difficult to find, get, and keep, and keep motivated, the staff they need to run their businesses. For example, the Bank of Canada surveys 100 employers every quarter to tap into organizations' perspectives on a number of items relating to their business health and well-being—the *Business Outlook Survey*—and one of the questions asked in that survey relates to skills shortages. In the most recent survey, 41% of these employers reported that skills shortages were restricting their ability to meet demand.

Similarly, for the past several years, the Conference Board has asked employers about their experiences in recruitment and retention. Last year, almost three-quarters of employers surveyed noted difficulties in these areas, up from 67% the previous year and 49% of employers the year before that.

- (1540)

Turnover rates in many organizations are also increasing. We hear from some consultants that as many as 57% of Canadians, while not actively looking, are open to leaving their current employers, and 15%, at any given time, are actively looking or they have made changes to leave.

Ladies and gentlemen, the fact is, given our current demographic picture, this pressure will only heighten as time moves on. By 2010 or 2011, the shortages of labour will intensify as larger numbers of baby boomers begin to retire or slow down their involvement in the labour force. One of my ex-colleagues at the board, at a recent Conference Board conference I chaired, said, “These are the good old days”. That phrase has stayed with me. In fact, many argue that what's happening in Alberta and B.C. in terms of the skill shortages is only the canary in the mine, or case studies for what the rest of us will experience over the next few years.

On the aging front, you've heard testimony that the federal public service is aging. This is a fact. So does the Public Service of Canada have a problem? While admittedly I don't have access to statistics from the Public Service Commission or other agencies, I do pause when I see the results from the 2005 public sector employee survey. In that survey, 30% of federal public servants overall, 45% of executives, and roughly one-third of the technical, professional, and scientific staff responded that they're planning to leave the public service within the next five years. The number one reason for leaving is retirement. This, coupled with the fact that other governments and private sector firms, again both within and outside of Canada, will continue and will intensify their efforts to recruit talent, suggests to me there is a problem and there will be more challenges ahead.

A few years ago my colleagues and I at the Conference Board of Canada conceived of and launched what I think is, to this day, the most comprehensive study of recruitment and retention issues in the public service, in all three levels of government in this country. I want to take a couple of minutes to share with you what we did and what we learned, because I think it's apropos to the conversation you're having.

First, what did we do? We surveyed all three levels of government across the country, municipalities, departments, and agencies of every province and every territory, and departments and agencies in the federal government. We wanted to learn from them the scope and breadth of the challenges they were facing in terms of skill shortages and learn about the actions they were taking, or not, quite frankly, to prepare for future skill challenges.

We also spoke to about 112 people in focus groups; that is, we spoke with students about their dreams and about their aspirations and what they were looking for from their employment, and about their job destinations, and we spoke with public servants working in all three levels of government about what attracted them to the public service, about what kept them there, what kept them motivated, and about what would drive them out. We also asked, by the way, both students and employees to provide us their advice or to share their views on what governments could be doing to close skill gaps and better prepare for the future.

The results of our study were released in a 2002 report entitled *Building Tomorrow's Public Service Today: Challenges and Solutions in Recruitment and Retention*. By the way, I'm often asked, still to this day, to speak to that study. I think it's quite relevant, and quite relevant to the committee, if you haven't seen it—she said, quite proudly, nonetheless.

Here's a bit about what we learned, interspersed with more recent information.

First, at the time of our survey, the average age, for those who could tell us—and not everyone could—across all levels of government, was 43.5 years of age. In the federal government overall at the time it was 43.4 years of age. When one drilled down and looked at the data in the federal public service, particularly at the management levels, we saw some disturbing trends, and your own data I think support this. Then the average of the senior management or executive cadre was about 50. The next feeder group was about two years younger than that, and the next feeder group, only one year younger than that.

The average age of retirement across all three levels of government was 58.3 years of age—57.9, so roughly the same at the federal level. Using this figure as a base, governments across the country predicted that by December 31, 2010, they could potentially lose 44% of their staff to retirement. Of those who put out our fires, those who check our water, those who police our streets, those who take care of policy, 44% are due to retire. As I recall, this figure was higher among the federal government departments, but I'm sorry, I don't have that data with me.

Let me also say that these figures may have been higher than what has actually occurred subsequently.

● (1545)

At the time of our survey, many governments, including the federal government, simply didn't have the capacity or the knowledge to make that kind of prediction. Nonetheless, more recently, as facts and figures are being released from various jurisdictions, the picture is, and should be, one of concern to this committee.

For example, at a recent conference I chaired on human resource issues in the public sector, we heard from my home province, the Province of New Brunswick, that within five years, 34% of senior executives, 20% of aspiring executives, and 20% of that province's civil service overall would be in a position to retire. Within 10 years those numbers grew substantively to 63% of senior executives, 44% of those aspiring executives, and 40% for the civil service overall.

We heard from British Columbia. By 2015, the B.C. government is projecting that 45% of managers and 35% of bargaining unit employees will retire from the public service in British Columbia. The numbers are higher for deputy ministers, about 57%, and for ADMs, 63%. The deputy minister of the B.C. Public Service Agency indicated that the current age of retirement from government jobs in B.C. is 55, and people do go, in this province, at age 55.

So other jurisdictions are also providing similar statistics.

I was at a panel with young professionals in the public service across all three levels of government in March of this year in Toronto with the Ontario Provincial Police. The individual who presented provided some very disturbing statistics, and I want to give those to you as well. In the OPP, by 2009, 91% of chief superintendents are eligible to retire, 78% of superintendents, 55% of inspectors, and 47% of staff sergeants.

So the federal public service is, and will be, competing with these and other organizations for talent, there's no question. The 900,000-plus résumés processed and the 19 million-plus hits on the federal government's website won't guarantee the federal public service a smooth ride in the talent wars ahead.

In this context, I should also mention that in our study on almost every question relating to recruitment and retention, respondents from the federal government sector were more likely than their counterparts in the provinces, the territories, and in the municipal sector to report having challenges, difficulties, or problems in these areas. They were more likely, and often significantly more likely, to indicate having challenges.

By the way, within the federal government departments and agencies surveyed, they were most worried about their ability to recruit and retain professional, technical, and scientific staff and senior managers and executives. I believe this is still a concern five or six years later.

In our study, we learned from governments across the country that the top recruitment challenges they face, that is barriers to recruitment, were in order of importance: compensation—that is, they were concerned and of the view that they could not compete with the private sector on wages. The image of the public sector is of a slow and bureaucratic place—by the way, both students and employees also spoke to this—and, ultimately, slow recruitment practices.

Responding federal government departments and agencies reported a variation on this theme. That is, they noted their top challenges in a slightly different order, and I think you'll be interested in them. The first two were staffing and recruitment practices and speed of decision-making, the top two barriers to recruitment. The third was the image of government as an employer, and compensation came in as number four.

Indeed, time to hire was a much larger issue for federal government departments and agencies than for their provincial, territorial, and municipal counterparts. For example, it took over double the time to hire staff at the federal level than at the municipal level. Federally, we were told that on average it took 14 weeks for organizations to fill positions—much longer, by the way, for executives and for middle managers, supervisors, and entry-level professional staff. So 14 weeks versus 6 weeks for municipalities versus 9.8 weeks for the provinces and territories.

At the time we were analyzing the results—because actually I thought 14 weeks was quite low, given what I'd been hearing around town in having conversations with people and looking at this issue for some time. We did ask some colleagues in the federal public service what they thought of these numbers, and they felt the number of 14 weeks to hire was in fact significantly understated.

More recently, at that conference I mentioned I chaired, we heard from some people in the federal public service that the time it takes to hire someone into the service hasn't gotten any better, not any better at all. In one department, as an example, they took well over a year to fill a very significant position. Again, ladies and gentlemen, this isn't good news, particularly since, as I've mentioned, the federal government will be competing with private sector firms, with other governments, both within and outside our country.

● (1550)

In our study, we learned from students that they wanted or needed a high-touch courting process, not the long and onerous waiting game they endured, and still endure in some cases. They spoke about tedious and boring websites and complicated applications processes. They told us that making promises without delivering on them was folly, that everyone says they're an employer of choice. What counts is what happens when they get on the inside. Here, the work environment and the quality of management counts.

Students in our focus groups—actually almost any study you read these days says about the same thing—were looking for challenging work, interesting work, growth and advancement opportunities, fair pay and good benefits, and they were looking for job security, which surprised many people at the time. While compensation wasn't number one on their list, let me say it was important to them, and it's important not to underestimate the value of compensation and benefits to students. StatsCan recently released some data, for example, that suggested that students graduate with a debt load of somewhere around \$37,000-plus.

When I look at the most recent federal public service employee survey, I see that over one in five, or 22% of the youngest people in the public service, those aged up to 29, reported planning to leave the public service within the next five years. The top four reasons were to pursue other employment opportunities, to make better use of their skills and training, to return to school, and, interestingly, because of workplace difficulties.

A brief word about the views of public servants in our focus groups. In our study, employees across all three levels of government told us the challenge, the diversity of opportunity, and learning and development opportunities as well as job security were key advantages of employment in the public sector. Further, they told us that they, too, like to be valued, rewarded, and recognized for what they do. They told us of the importance for their organizations, whether that was a city, a province, or a federal government department, to leverage the know-how and know-who of older workers in the recruitment and retention practices.

I'm going to skip over a lot because I know I have about 30 seconds left.

To conclude, I do believe that the challenges facing the federal public service are quite significant but not insurmountable. In reading the testimony provided earlier to this committee, it's clear that there are several activities under way that attempt to ensure that the public service has the people with the skills and talents it needs now and in the future in order to serve Canadians well.

However, I would also say that change in this place seems to take quite a bit of time. In other words, it's one thing to have a plan or a vision and it's quite another to implement it quickly, efficiently, and effectively. As one of my previous bosses once said to me, "Judith, vision without implementation is mere hallucination". I see one of the key challenges is speed. I think that's very important.

I also see, and have seen over the years, a challenge, quite frankly, in commitment from political leaders in staying the course on positive change and in helping to sell the public service as a viable, exciting, and challenging career choice. The public service writ large has taken major hits in reputation. Stories of wrongdoing are spread across the newspapers. And the reputation of the organization is a factor in recruitment and in retention. According to Towers Perrin in their 2006 global workforce study, in Canada it plays a particular role in keeping employees fully engaged with their work.

The good work, the excellent work, of the clear majority of people in the public service goes virtually unsung by the public itself and by their political masters. In this, I would argue, you and your colleagues have a major role to play, and that did come through very clearly from all three levels of government in our work.

I will conclude with that, and thank you for the opportunity. I know I didn't get to a lot of solutions directly or explicitly, but I hope some implicitly, and I hope to be able to answer any questions you may have.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Simard.

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

Thank you for being here, Ms. MacBride-King. I guess the obvious comment from me is that it's unfortunate we didn't have you as the first witness, because you seem to be contradicting a lot of the testimony we've had, once again.

Obviously, you don't necessarily agree with Mrs. Barrados when she says they don't foresee any problems, that everything's under control. You seem to think there are some issues that we should be aware of, and that we should force or implement certain solutions or certain programs right now.

• (1555)

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** Absolutely. In fact, I would argue that if it's the view of the federal public service that there isn't a problem or won't be a problem, then it's probably in the minority of other governments and organizations across the country. Most organizations are waking up to the fact that they have a significant problem. They're slow to get to solutions, by the way.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** The public sector?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** And the public sector. Alberta, for example, is doing some great work in this context, as is B.C. and several other provinces.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Over the weekend, as a matter of fact, it was interesting, because my brother, who worked at CIDA for 33 years, called one of his colleagues here and she was saying that a lot of the positions right now are actually going unfilled. Of the high-level positions that they're putting out there, people are not applying for them or the process is so slow that by the time they get security and everything else, they're picked up by the private sector. Again, you talked about how slow and inefficient the government process is.

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** Time to hire is key. Some organizations in the private sector, particularly—and this was before, too, when we had the high-tech bubble in 2001—were hiring and filling positions within 48 hours. One fellow I know from Agrium out in Calgary happened to meet two people at a vegetable stand on a weekend who were just driving into Calgary. They were two young engineers, just graduated. He said, "Here's my card. Promise me you won't call anybody, and call me on Monday." They did and he hired both of them, like that.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** When you're talking about the skills gap, another issue we're apparently facing is that we have a lot of young people with master's degrees who are very smart people but with very little experience. There's some catching up to do, if you will. Is that what you're talking about when you're talking about the skills gap?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** It's both, actually. I would argue that right now, from my limited knowledge of what's going on currently in the federal public service, it seems to be that most everybody wants to hire experience first. They don't want to have to grow from within. When you ask individuals or organizations where the shortages are, they'll most often say the experienced tradesperson, the experienced professional, technical, or scientific person. However, there are shortages as well at the entry level. It's a bit of both, and I think organizations have to invest in youth, bring them in quickly, and meld them with the more sage and experienced in organizations to ramp up their skills quickly.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** One of the fascinating things you said as well that I don't think we've heard from other witnesses is that other countries are recruiting here in Canada. I didn't realize that. Japan and.... Are they successful? How are they doing that?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** I was very interested when I learned that China and India, with huge populations, were recruiting in Canada. The first time I heard it was about two years ago. It was through an article in the *Asian Pacific* or something like that. They were recruiting for people with particular talents: skilled management people, skilled project managers, but they were also looking for skilled tradespeople. So yes, in some cases they are being successful.

China is trying to lure students who are currently learning in Canada to go back home. India has a program, and towards the end of the meeting I'll try to remember the name of it, but it's a program that virtually provides a special lifelong visa to go back and work to anyone who was born in India, whose parents were born in India, or whose grandparents were born in India. I'm hearing that 500 engineers have taken them up on that already. So absolutely it's happening.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** And they produce 400,000 engineers a year.

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** Here's another very interesting issue. I don't quite know how to deal with this one myself. When we did our focus groups with students—again, it comes to the question about experience versus non-experience—we met with many engineering students, young women and young men. When we were talking about why we were there, we introduced the subject that it was about skill shortages and things we need to be concerned about, and hands went up around the table. Engineers in more than one focus group said they had their CV out in organizations and were just not getting taken. I'm not quite sure how to deal with that difference. Again, I think organizations are looking for experience first.

•(1600)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Nadeau.

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

Good afternoon, Ms. MacBride-King.

We've heard evidence—we talked about this earlier—from various stakeholders who are interested—

[English]

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** I'm so sorry, I can't seem to—they told me channel one. Can we try that?

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** We've had evidence in the past from people who emphasized that the earth was round and that, ultimately, summer had arrived—

[English]

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** Are you telling me you're having a nice summer vacation?

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** —and we are all very happy about that. Moreover, Mr. Warkentin's radiant smile confirms it all, doesn't it?

[English]

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** Okay, thank you. The laughter will come later. I apologize for that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** We've had evidence from experts, from people in the federal public service, on both the employer and union sides. The analyses they told us about differed widely.

Ms. Jauvin, from the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada, said that they saw things coming, but that it wasn't as serious as that. Ms. Barrados, from the Public Service Commission, said that everything was under control, except perhaps in the scientific field, where there are things that must be attended to.

On the other hand, the people who came from the Professional Institute of the Public Service and the Public Service Alliance said that there were red flags everywhere, that things were not going well and that there would be a major crisis in the medium term. All these words caused ambiguity, because we still don't have an answer.

You are one of those people who have studied the question, and you have provided some interesting information.

One aspect has been previously emphasized, the issue of temporary positions. A certain number of government employees have temporary positions and, for that reason, are not interested in going further when there is an opportunity elsewhere.

Don't you think that we could simply give these people permanent positions to avoid a shortage of government employees as best we can?

[English]

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** Thank you, and again my apologies for the translation glitch.

I would say that I don't know enough about this issue, frankly, within the federal public service to speak with a lot of knowledge in terms of what the process is and what the steps are. My argument, Mr. Nadeau, would be that if you have people who are working in the public service currently, and they've worked there for a period of time and then been laid off, and then worked for a period of time, they are people who are obviously committed, and I would look for some way to bring those people in. Some organizations are doing two in a box. Despite head count, they're doing anticipatory hiring, because they're so concerned about shortages. I would say I wouldn't do it helter-skelter either. I would look very clearly, and I'm assuming and know frankly that the federal public service is developing quite a substantive plan.

What is our “business”? What are the skills and competencies we need in the future to be successful in that business? And how are we going to get those skills? Are we going to recruit in, develop up, perhaps make some of those temporary people permanent people. I think those are all relatively—

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** What you've just said is very interesting.

Ms. Jauvin, from the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada, emphasized that the Treasury Board wanted to put forward four priorities. One of them was to have integrated planning, and thus to know whether a specific situation requires that the public service adapt to it in the short or medium term. That solution was put forward at that point, but no planning was developed.

What do you think about the fact that the administration of a federal government, which is significant in terms of services to the public, does not have a permanent audit and counter-audit plan to ensure that needs are met? What advice would you give the Canadian government for being proactive and positive, for identifying significant factors in order to meet needs which suddenly seem glaring in some and perhaps less so in others, but which are predictable for the future?

• (1605)

[English]

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** Thank you.

Let me say that at the conference I spoke about—it was in February, I believe, of this year—there were people there from the federal public service and various provinces across the country. One of the speakers asked how many of us were doing appropriate workforce planning. Probably one-third of the people in the room put up their hands. This individual was quite surprised. She was from the U.S. and did a lot of work in workforce planning in the U.S. private and public sectors. She thought it was a large number. In fact, most of the one-third who put up their hands were from federal government departments and agencies and said they were mandated to do that.

That's a good thing. Going forward, it's crucial to have a workforce planning exercise and process in place that's fully aligned with the business plan. It needs to be fully integrated as to what's the business, what are the skills and competencies we need to achieve our goals in this business of serving Canadians, and how are we going to get those skills in the door or ramp them up quickly? So integrated workforce planning is critical, and I commend the federal public service for getting started in that area. Those at other government levels are not where they need to be.

So it's an excellent strategy to move forward; it's the only strategy to move forward. It'll help make decisions like where do we go, what skills do we need, what skills do we not need, how are we going to bring them in, and should we use technology instead of people? There's the whole supply-demand issue. How do we deal with issues like that?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Your time is up, Mr. Nadeau. We'll come back to this.

Mr. Kramp, go ahead, please.

[English]

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair and Ms. MacBride-King.

I have a little query on behalf of this committee, and I don't know if it's proper or not. You mentioned that you've completed a study on all three levels of government. I'm wondering, if it's not proprietary,

if this committee could have access to that study so we could view it effectively. Of course, if there are contractual arrangements with prior clients, I think we understand. But I think it might prove to be an asset to this committee. So I ask for your thoughts on that.

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** Absolutely. In fact, the document was published through the Conference Board. I would say that the federal government departments, cities, and provinces funded the work. So you certainly should have access to the report. I'll leave you some information about it.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Fine. Thank you.

Assuming we'll be going through quite a dynamic change, with the real plethora of retirements that will take place in the medium to near future, my concern is the budgetary capacity of a government to do two things. First is to pay for all of the retirement benefits—a significant increase from what is already in place. Then of course is to hire replacement staff. I'm wondering how this will impact the budgetary capacity of government. Do you see that as being a potential problem?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** The short answer is yes. I'm not an actuary, by any stretch of the imagination. But I think there have already been moves by this government and those of other countries—as much as it makes me cry—to think about extending the age of retirement. In the United States, as you know, it has gone to 67, which will be implemented in just a couple of years. They announced that several years ago. The OECD asked all the OECD countries about eight years ago to consider moving the age of retirement to 67.

The other thing I would say about retirees is that many people leave their organizations but they don't leave the labour market. So there are ways to access that talent and knowledge and deal with some of the pension issues you discussed. I'm not an expert in that area, so I hesitate to go too far down that road.

• (1610)

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Thank you.

To encompass proper workplace planning and to try to not only identify problems but more importantly come up with solutions, I'm wondering how you would categorize some of the points you've mentioned. Would they be equal in priority, or would certain issues be more important than others?

Are we competitive on the pay scale as a public service? Do we have to educate and train more and mentor or apprentice more? Do we have to simplify the hiring process? Do we need to create different work environments? These are all points you mentioned.

Do you think they're all comparable, or is there a preference there? Should we simply take those and many other tangibles and intangibles under the umbrella of proper workplace planning?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** I think it's all of the above, because other organizations are getting focused on all of the above.

Now, having said that, there are ways to prioritize. I have a very small firm now, so I can't do the workforce planning for me, because if I go, so goes the firm, but at any rate, what I would do is look at what are the critical positions I'm looking to have filled and make sure that people are there in those positions. What are the critical jobs I need to fill? I would focus there first.

We know the first thing, in terms of learning and development, is that growth development opportunities are important to all of us despite age. So I would look at those things.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** One thing I find very disturbing is that naturally we have to be prepared and yet we've heard from a number of witnesses, Madam Barrados, etc., on the discrepancy between the number of people who apply and/or want a job and the number of people who are accepted and/or eventually become contributing members of the public service. Is it 1,000 to one? It's a ridiculous figure; that's the point. I cannot imagine going through that kind of a process to find—If 1,000 people come in and only that one person eventually comes through, do 999 of them not have the capacity? Is our process too selective? Is it too bureaucratic? What's seems to be the real problem? We don't appear to have a shortage of applications, but somehow we don't end up with a workforce.

Where do you see the problem?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** I did see the figure, and it was that over 900,000 résumés or CVs were processed last year. It was a significant number, and I just went, wow, that's phenomenal.

When we ask public servants why they started to work in the public service, by the way, without fail, all three levels of government said, "I needed a job, any job". It wasn't that they were attracted to public service, for the most part. It was that when they started they were young and they needed a job.

So people will take a shotgun approach and say, "I'm going to send my CV out to everyone". The other is that of the 900,000 people, how many of those people actually desired and had the skills and competencies that could apply to critical positions or key positions in the federal public service? I don't know. That's one comment I'll make.

The second comment is that it is an onerous process. We have heard that from youth, we've heard that from older, more mature workers who want to work in the federal government—and also other governments too, by the way, but it particularly seems to be an issue here—that they would put in an application and never hear back.

Young people today told us they wanted, as I talked about, a courting process. They told us they wanted high-touch. Yes, they use the Internet, absolutely, and they like to file online. They also like to be able to understand the language of the jobs that are online. It's in code. Often, it's not in a language that youth understand. It's written either in very technical or highly bureaucratized language and they just don't get it. It's not an exciting ad, in other words.

We were told by Monster.ca a couple of months ago that people, when they're looking online, will only spend eight seconds. When they're skipping along through the Internet looking for job postings, they'll only spend eight seconds looking. They don't read a lot, they just want to look, see what's exciting.

Process is important, how people can access that opportunity, the level at which individuals actually contact them, and to be a part of it.

I will give you an example of a story I heard in Calgary a couple of years ago, which is an example of excellence in the federal public service. At the time, the son of the chief administrative officer of the City of Calgary wanted to join the Canadian armed forces. So he called down to the recruiting office and said, "I'd like to join the Canadian armed forces." The recruiter said, "I would love to have you join the Canadian armed forces." So the young fellow said, "How do I get to your office?" This person said, "I'm going to come to you. I'll come to your house and tell you about it. And, listen, why don't you ask a few of your friends if they want to come too?" And he did. That recruiter was on top of the game. He knew he had to get out there into the community and have high touch. High touch counts.

So yes, improve the process. And it's not only what you do, but how you do it as well.

Students encouraged more employers, particularly the federal government, to be more on campus, more in discussion with people, and to bring people other than from HR, people who also do the jobs for which you're recruiting.

So these are some of the things they told us.

• (1615)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Madam Nash.

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

Welcome. It's great to have someone with your expertise here this afternoon. We appreciate it.

In my riding in Toronto we're experiencing quite a baby boom. But I know if you look at the demographic numbers overall, if our population is going to grow, we're going to continue to need a growing number of skilled immigrants in Canada.

Something we have noted in looking at the federal recruitment and hiring is that while the numbers of women are up significantly, the numbers of people of colour and ethnic minorities are not. We've asked other witnesses about this, and I remember Mrs. Barrados saying they really don't know. They're looking at why the government is not making real progress in terms of better diversity of hiring.

We had a couple of witnesses who said that perhaps the problem is with the number of term or temporary hires, because there wasn't the same kind of equity criteria applied to the temporary hires, but often it was easier to get a full-time hire if you were a temporary hire.

With your expertise and experience in management and human resources, what advice would you give, or what recommendations can you offer, for the federal government to be more successful in our equity hiring?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** The issue you raise, of course, is of concern to lots of organizations. As I recall, we did some work on this a couple of years ago, and I think the figures for the federal public service weren't as robust; they were low, as in the private sector they were low.

One of the things to do I think in terms of that is to know your market, segment your market. It's like Marketing 101 for people. So if you understand you want to recruit more people with racial backgrounds and more visible minorities, and you're working in Montreal, you know the largest immigrant population in Montreal is from Haiti, and then you would know that population; you would target that population. I would target the population and I would speak in a language, culturally and literally, that they understand. So I would appeal to what appeals to them.

I think the federal government has tried very hard, from what I can see, in trying to remove those barriers, but there is something definitely going on.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** You mentioned the Internet and sometimes the language barrier for youth. I can well imagine for newcomers, even if your first language is English, that the bureaucratise can be a barrier—especially if English is your second language. But we bring so many skilled people to this country, and we all know the problems of credentialism and how that can be a barrier for newcomers. There's an incredible untapped resource. If we could perhaps run some of our job-hiring websites through a plain language filter it might be helpful for us.

• (1620)

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** That's a great idea.

You know, I'm thinking of the RBC, which I'm a big fan of in this context. If you go to RBC's website—and actually, the federal government may want to do that on its job site, whatever the job site is—there's all sorts of information for newcomers to Canada. There's a little bit about banking, of course, but there's information and web links for newcomers to go to and get information—where you can go, even about the culture, the Canadian way, if you like, a bit about how we do things in organizations, how to write a CV. All those things are right there, and I think that's very, very important.

The other point you mention is one of the key barriers, not only the lack of foreign credential recognition but also the lack of Canadian work experience. From my experience in speaking with newcomers to Canada, this can sometimes be a greater barrier, and that I think is something that we as employers can control.

When we asked what advice they would give other newcomers to Canada, we were told by people who were engineers, doctors, nurses, who had senior management roles before they came to Canada, “Get any Canadian work experience on your CV, anything, just to show that you've held a job in Canada.” There's something wrong with that, from my perspective. So I think that's an issue.

We also heard, quite frankly, about some of the challenges. Again, this is en masse; it's not related to the federal public service alone. We heard from people coming to the country from outside that even their names could turn people off. They were concerned that even when they gave their name, “I'm so-and-so, from whatever country”, and their name was not anglophone or francophone, they were

somehow immediately put aside. Similarly, we heard about it with accents, that if you have certain accents, it's the same sort of thing.

So I think we have a lot of work to do there, because again, Canada as a nation is competing with Australia. It takes 12 months I think to process a new immigrant to Australia. It takes 24 to 48 months in Canada, which is a problem.

And I recognize that in your riding it's a highly diverse, very exciting area.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Just talking about Australia, I was told there is credential verification for newcomers prior to their acceptance as immigrants in Australia. Are you aware of that?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** No. Actually, I couldn't speak of it with any authority, but I do know that is an issue, and certainly an issue for newcomers coming to Canada. If there's some way we could quickly expedite that assessment offshore in the Canadian sites, it would be much better.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Lastly—if I have a few more seconds—you've mentioned the Royal Bank. Are there any other models, either government or corporate, that you would see as a model for the recruitment and retention of newcomers or people of colour, ethnic minorities?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** They're the usual cast of characters, I'm afraid, who are probably excellent in most things. I mentioned RBC. I happen to bank there. Anyway, RBC, to me, is the best in Canada in this context. IBM is excellent. Many of the large financial institutions are quite good, but RBC tops them.

Many of the large international organizations that operate in Canada are quite good. Xerox, I think, is pretty good. I could give you a full list.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** There are lots of places where the government can go to consult and to get expertise to help them with this, which is what I see, and certain others share this, as a serious recruitment issue for the future.

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** Absolutely, there are.

I have been asked to speak at several events in public sector forums with organizations such as RBC and others that do bring that information and insight. So there have been opportunities, and the federal government has sought those opportunities.

• (1625)

**The Chair:** I would like to add something before I go to the next speaker.

I'm aware of one thing, and that is that the federal government hires a lot of temporary help, and a lot of full-time jobs come from those temporary contracts. That's part of the problem that Madame Nash talks about.

From what I see, it may also be because of the speed it takes to hire a full-time person. But they also limit themselves, because there is a pool of qualified people out there who are already working, perhaps not at the jobs they prefer, who would consider applying for these jobs, but they're not going to apply for a 12-week job if they already have a full-time job, no matter how much better it appears to be, because they don't know what's going to happen after.

I'm wondering whether the federal government shouldn't also reconsider its way of hiring and move away from these temporary jobs, because that's what you're seeing in a lot of cases: short-term contracts, temporary jobs, which can and often do lead to full-time work.

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** If I could just comment on that again, when asked what they are doing to close the gap because of some of the challenges they are having with recruitment—again, in that report that I'm sure you'll get copies of—one of the top solutions cited by federal government departments was to hire that temporary help. It was a stopgap measure to get people in, because the process takes so long.

So I think that is a huge issue. And I would also say that most people today, you're quite right, do not want temporary jobs. They do not want McJobs in government; they don't want McJobs anywhere. Again, one of the greatest advantages of the federal government and large organizations overall, if they can see themselves as one entity, is that there is all this opportunity. They have a huge advantage. The federal government has a huge advantage in the recruitment game. What are young people looking for and what are older people looking for? They want diversity of opportunity. So you can say, as Alberta does, that you'll do secondments for a year from one ministry to another so they can learn and build their skills.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Simard.

[English]

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Thank you very much.

One of the things you mentioned was the possibility of moving the age of retirement up, and I thought that was interesting. We discussed that a little at our committee. I'm just wondering if you had focus groups of people who are close to retirement and how that was received by them.

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** That's a good question.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** If somebody is 54 or 55 years old and has a year left and we encourage them to stay until 57, is that something people are considering right now?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** We didn't do focus groups. But Statistics Canada actually did a really interesting study of older Canadians and retirement. It might have been through the labour force study. I can't remember now. But they did ask people who were getting close to retirement when they wanted to retire, and when they wanted to retire was age 55. The age at which they actually thought they were going to retire was a little bit older.

The reality is, as we're learning, that lots of people don't have the financial resources to retire when they really want to. I should send you that study as well, because that is an important one for you to see how "close to" retirees and retirees answered. I don't remember all the results, but that struck me. If you have the choice as to when you would retire, it's young, young, young. But the reality is that they know... Most will plan to retire long before age 60, and the majority before age 58.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Can you give me an idea of how the government is perceived in the market? You talked about people wanting a great place to work. They want opportunity. They want decent compensation. Is government perceived that way? Is it perceived as a place where you can make a decent living and have an interesting career?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** I believe that government is seen as a place where you can make a decent living, depending on the occupation you're in. For example, if I'm a CEO, I sure wouldn't want to be flipping back into the public sector because I wouldn't want to leave my \$1 trillion.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Let's say a young person coming up—

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** In our focus groups we asked students about their destination of choice. Was it the private sector or was it the public sector? With the exception of master's of public administration students, by far it was the private sector, because they have a stereotypical view, I would add, that somehow or other the private sector is sexier and has more to offer than the public sector. Their view of the public sector is also a stereotype: it's staid, there's no risk taking, no innovation, and no great technology, which is in fact often not the case.

That did come up. I am aware as well of the study, which one of your previous witnesses mentioned, done by D-Code, which is a consulting firm in Toronto, and Brainstorm Consulting in Vancouver. Of roughly 30,000 university students, when asked where they wanted to work, their second choice, next to IBM, was the Government of Canada. I thought that was really interesting. Actually, it was shocking, from my perspective, given what I had heard. I'm pleased to say that I don't know—

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** There may be some opportunities there.

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** There may be opportunities.

• (1630)

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Having said that, you also spoke about "close touch"—I'm not sure of the exact term. It was something "touch".

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** It was courting.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** If there is anything the government does not do, it is court. It is very impersonal. It's bureaucratic. We talked about that. There would have to be a huge change in strategy.

You're talking about people going to meet them at home to bring them on board. I think that is the future, actually. I think you are absolutely right. We will be chasing people, so there is going to have to be a very extreme change here in how we do things.

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** Absolutely.

Again, Monster.com is interesting, because, as you know, they're one of the biggest job boards in the world. They told us the five things job seekers desperately want to hear are, and I'm going to read this:

Fewer words in job descriptions—be more concise. Summarize the application requirements—I have no idea what half these jobs are looking for.

Make it easier to apply online.

Put it in layman's terms.

Eliminate useless jargon.

And the last point this fellow made was:

It would be nice to know a timeframe for a response to my application.

Again, I think it's true of other organizations as well. But face it, I think the federal public service has a major challenge in that context.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Just one last question. You also spoke about a workforce plan. Can you tell me what that entails? What's included in the workforce plan?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** The best organizations start with, "What's the business, so where are we going?" What's the business of government? Each department would do that as well. It would roll down.

Our business is providing...well, name it. The CRA's business is collecting revenue for the future well-being of Canadians. I don't know what their vision is, but that's what I would say in my nice moment. So collecting revenue. What kind of people do we need to do that? Where are we going to be looking for revenue?

You'd start with the business and then you'd look at what types of positions, what types of skills you're looking for in those positions, and then you would develop strategies to get those skills. Again, a lot may be internal. There may be skills across government that could apply perfectly to these jobs in the CRA. How do you help them to get to where you want to be?

It may be investing in curriculum development or working with community colleges and universities to develop the type of people you want. It may be recruiting from abroad.

But you start with the business and work up. It's quite a process, for sure. It's quite technical, which I absolutely am not. But you start with the business, the philosophy, and the skills you need.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Thank you very much.

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** A pleasure.

**The Chair:** We will go to Mr. Warkentin.

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

Thank you very much for coming today. We appreciate your testimony. You have brought us a lot of information, and we'll be looking at the studies you've referenced because I think they'll help us as we move forward.

I am from Alberta, so I think I have a perspective—

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** My sympathies.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Absolutely.

Up until a year and a bit ago I was hiring people, skilled tradespeople, so you can understand the difficulty in that.

That leads me to the question—When Madam Barrados was here, I asked her specifically, from my Alberta references, whether or not she felt there was an issue. She said lots of people are applying, so there's not a perceived problem.

Obviously, we know there are other problems, but is that a good indicator as to whether there are people in the workforce, simply because they're applying?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** In seeing that testimony, I didn't think that was a very solid indicator. It's good to know people are

applying, but again, they could be applying the shotgun approach I mentioned earlier.

My question would be—and my question was when I saw it—who is applying and what skills and competencies do they have? Are they applying to a specific position and do they have the skills and competencies for that position, or are they doing that shotgun approach?

• (1635)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Again, from my Alberta reference, what I have witnessed is the same thing you've witnessed with those two engineers who came to Calgary, that you are hired on the spot and it doesn't matter who you are or what you are. The private sector is doing it that way.

So that comes to the issue as to whether the federal government is doing anything about the length of time it takes to hire somebody. Obviously, it's something we could identify from your testimony today, that being a major stumbling block for the government.

In that lengthy time period of making a decision, do you know what is included and what accounts for the time being so much different from the private sector?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** I can't answer that, I'm sorry. I have no idea.

I assume it's checks, rechecks, committees. I have no idea what goes on behind closed doors, and, quite frankly, I haven't wanted to know.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I imagine it would be like seeing the wizard behind the curtain, in some respects.

I guess that's the answer, or not the answer, but that's one of the issues you have identified, and I think all of us around this table can identify, having heard a similar story, that the length of time to be hired by the federal government is a major concern.

Would you say that's the number one issue we have to deal with, or the one we have the power to change at this point—the most power to change?

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** I think there are several things this committee can influence and that it has the power to change; that is one. I would say the other one is to really work on developing a brand for the federal public service. Alberta has a tag line; it's "Alberta's Best is Hiring". I like that a lot. That little tag line is on everything.

I think it's extremely important that one look at speed to hire. I think it's important that one look at the reputation of the public sector and really build the brand. You should sell it for the wonderful place it is. I mean, really, the opportunity across government is phenomenal. There's probably no other place you can get that experience. I think you have immediate influence on that.

Again, as I mentioned in my testimony, I think you have immediate influence in helping raise the bar in terms of what public service is. Make people proud to be public servants and be proud to be associated with them, instead of—I read all these things; they're not happy.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Thank you.

Madam Chair, I have a comment, maybe to you as we move forward. Obviously our time here may be limited, but I'm wondering if we could—

**The Chair:** We're staying all summer. Didn't you know that?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I'm hoping. That's why I'm suggesting possible people we might want to bring forward to provide testimony as to what accounts for the lengthy time of hiring. I think we would be well—

**The Chair:** There are tough exams as well. There's a lot of stuff.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** It would help us to understand, and there may be suggestions that can be made there.

**The Chair:** There's something else I'm wondering if you've run into. There are some public sector jobs in the regions of the country. There aren't that many, but there are some. I know that one of the things that prevents some people from taking the promotions, when they're quite capable, is the fact of moving. To consider moving to Ottawa to pay three times for a house to get a small increase, people have said, "No, my life is good here. I'm going to finish raising my family here. I'm not going to go for that promotion because it's too costly. In the end, I'm not further ahead, I'm further behind if I take that job."

How much of that have you seen? That could be an issue.

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** I haven't seen much of it.

I'm originally from a very small town in New Brunswick—Woodstock is the name of the place, which I always say wherever I am—and I know that government jobs, at all levels, are valued there. They're solid. They're stable. They're well paid, for the region.

Now, on the issue of people not wanting to move—and there's probably nothing you can do about that—people can manage in different ways. And people ought to have opportunities to grow and develop in different ways. You may want to move them to give them more responsibilities. Maybe they can still have those responsibilities but be off site.

Many organizations do that so well now. As you know, you have the matrix organizations, where you might have the head of marketing in Dallas, Texas, and the head of HR in Toronto and the head of something else in China. And they do very well.

•(1640)

**The Chair:** I think the federal government has to consider doing exactly the same thing, and they haven't. They have had the habit of sucking in all the jobs to the major regions and leaving the others behind. I've seen it myself.

I think that's another way of ensuring continuity.

*Madame Bourgeois ou Monsieur Nadeau.*

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. MacBride-King, I found your presentation extremely interesting. You have supported figures, and if it were possible for you to submit that report to us, we would very much appreciate it.

In addition, your CV speaks volumes. You are a leading figure in the world of human resources and management. I imagine reference must often be made to you. Have you previously spoken with the federal government people in your many meetings? Have you previously talked to them about the studies you've conducted?

[*English*]

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** Absolutely.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Are those people aware?

[*English*]

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** What's interesting, Madam Bourgeois, is that what happened happens a lot to organizations. Studies get published and get shelved. Only those who authored them remember them. So I remember that study and raise it quite often, because I think it is important.

In fact, I have a copy here, and it was funded by the Government of Canada. It was funded by Human Resources Development Canada at the time, Public Works and Government Services Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Natural Resources Canada, Transport Canada, the Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada, Industry Canada, etc.

A lot of federal government departments funded it. The challenge is that they were interested in it at the moment, but the crisis died down. September 11, 2001, hit. We saw the high-tech boom drop. We saw less pressure in both the private and public sectors for talent.

We argued, and I argued very strongly, don't take your eye off the ball, because we have some structural issues happening with the aging of the population. So don't lose sight, and most organizations did lose sight. There are only a few that maintained sight, and the federal government was one that lost sight.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** I operate on the principle that the federal government—if not the minister, at least the deputy ministers, in short people that you know in this environment—is aware of the risk and of the challenges it will be facing around 2012. Madam Chair, I find it quite peculiar that these people told us, when they appeared before the committee, that there weren't any problems and that everything was under control. I would like to bring back Ms. Barrados and Ms. Jauvin for the simple reason that it was about strategic planning.

I asked Ms. Jauvin whether she had started planning since taking up her duties six months earlier. I don't remember whether she answered yes or no. She didn't seem to know what I was talking about. Whatever the case may be, I think it's important that you're here. I think the situation in the federal public service somewhat reflects our society. People are having increasing difficulty finding employees who have the necessary skills and, what is more, want to work, put some heart into their work. That's part of the problem.

The second problem is that governments, one after the other, have applied cuts in order to get labour at the lowest possible cost in the public service. We won't hide it: four or five years ago, people at Statistics Canada worked awful hours and were very poorly paid, and, if they left their jobs, they were unable to find other positions elsewhere. They were struck off the list everywhere by the federal government, which gave no indication that those people had been in its service.

As for the third problem, don't you think that a mentoring program would be ideal in the case of our federal public service? Couldn't employees with experience, who know how to work and respond to the public support these youths and show them how to do things, particularly since people in society today have fewer and fewer values?

Lastly, the unions criticized the working climate in the federal public service a few years ago. Next week, we're going to hear from a person who is responsible for protecting the whistle blowers. There is a poor working climate in the federal public service, and we are all responsible for that, including the ministers.

We could probably have the best employees in the world. Highly qualified people would be ready to stay on the job until the age of 75, but can no longer bear this federal public service. What do you think of this situation?

• (1645)

[English]

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** You mentioned a number of things that I think are important.

Throughout the federal public service there are pockets of excellence where really interesting things are happening and where mentoring programs are going on. I know there are, and it just strikes me that you haven't heard about them and that you don't know what's possible. StatsCan is well known as being an excellent employer; so too is the CRA. I feature them as case studies as some of the best in class in Canada, so there are some excellent things going on. In other areas there are obviously improvements needed.

You asked me about the work environment. I think because of all the changes, all the things that have been happening, and all the scandals, etc., there has been an ever-increasing tightening and this control business. Part of it is needed, but part is not; frankly, it goes beyond accountability. People are afraid to turn sideways—you know, don't buy me a hamburger—because that's not a good thing; it's seen as bad.

I think risk-taking is not part of the environment in the federal public sector because of some of those issues. Risk-taking and being innovative and being able to try new things are important to people, all people, so I think that's important.

Questions in the 2004 public service employee survey ask people who are thinking of stepping out of the public sector in the next five years what some of the key reasons are for doing so. Again, as I mentioned, the first reason has to do with the 30% who are about to retire within five years. I thought 30% was a pretty high number, but at any rate....

One of the other top reasons has to do with the work environment. I mentioned that for youth in the public sector—those who are up to 29 years of age—that was the fourth-highest reason for wanting to exit the workforce.

I think a lot needs to be done. In a lot of the work we've done over the years, we were looking at workload issues and work life issues. Those are all very important to young people. They're also very important to older people, who may want to exit the labour force on a "sometimes" basis and work on a "sometimes" basis, so flexibility is important.

I think all of those things that you raised are important.

I would say, however, that lots of things are happening in the federal government, and I'd be surprised, and am surprised, that as a committee you haven't been able to see and hear all about them, because there are some very positive things happening. Everything can be improved, obviously, but in my many years of experience with the federal public service, I've seen some pretty great examples of good works and good efforts being done.

However, there are all these other issues that need to be addressed as well.

**The Chair:** Madam Nash, did you want to ask another question? I have nobody else on the list and I'm wondering—

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** I'll just ask one last question.

When we asked Ms. Barrados about the demographic change, we asked her if it was a crisis, and she said she didn't think it was a crisis but a challenge, an issue that had to be dealt with, but that she was confident and comfortable that the government would deal with it.

Let me ask you that same question. Do you think the demographic challenges constitute a crisis for the government, or do you think it's being adequately handled?

• (1650)

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** Would I call it a crisis? I think if it's not handled it will be a crisis. That's the way I'll deal with that question. I think there are some.... I'm going to be careful about how I respond.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** It's going to put you on the spot—

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** I want to be careful about this. I will say it's a tough spot for someone—the witness you mentioned, in her position—to come to tell you the house is falling down. It's a tough position to be in.

The house isn't falling down, I would also say, and I do think the federal public service is doing an adequate job.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** The government does a lot of things right.

**Ms. Judith L. MacBride-King:** They do, absolutely, but I also think I would be very careful of being too complacent in the face of some of that excellent work. I do think that if actions aren't taken more quickly to fix some of those things we talked about—speed to hire, the work environment, better learning and development opportunities, better opportunities for people to grow without leaving their region—then this place, the federal public service, will lose; it'll lose that race against the Suncors or the Syncrudes from Alberta, or the IBMs, or the Governments of Alberta or New Brunswick, or others.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** I just want to correct the record. I guess I meant to say that the public service does a lot of things right, because if I say the government does a lot of things right, one of my colleagues will be quoting me in some context that is unfavourable. I should say the public service does a lot of things right.

I appreciate that answer.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for coming before us. It was quite a good presentation and quite refreshing. We'll take this into consideration.

Before we adjourn, I'll remind you that the clerk tells me we will be able to have Madame Ouimet before the committee on Thursday afternoon. She's the new public sector integrity commissioner.

*Oui, madame Bourgeois.*

[Translation]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Madam Chair, I don't know whether my colleagues on the committee are of the same view, but, in view of the fact that a witness of Ms. MacBride's importance has told us that our deputy ministers and the persons responsible for human resources know what is going to happen, but are telling us that everything is fine and under control, I think we should meet with them and ask them what planning they have developed to address staff problems, including the working climate that will prevail in the next few weeks or years.

Let's not forget that the more employees leave, the more other employees may have to bear the workload of two persons. That troubles me enormously. It's important that we be able to question these people more. It's unthinkable that Ms. Barrados or Ms. Jauvin should not have studies or plans to remedy the situation in the next few years.

**The Chair:** We could definitely do something. For the moment, Ms. Ouimet is scheduled to appear Thursday. I believe we will be here next Tuesday and Thursday. I think we had planned to hear from people in the pay sector, but it's up to the committee to make the decision.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** We could take another look at the issue in the fall. I don't want us to stop at this point. What is happening is really very serious.

**The Chair:** Yes.

• (1655)

**The Chair:** The situation we are observing in pay is, I think, like a symptom of what will be happening in many other places. It's in pay that this symptom has begun to appear. We don't have all the answers either.

Mr. Simard.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Madam Chair. I would prefer that we draft a report with recommendations. We've heard the witnesses; now I think it's up to us to report on things and make our recommendations. If we aren't satisfied with the testimony of Ms. Barrados, we need only say so in the report, but between that and bringing back the witnesses two or three times... There comes a time when things have to come to a conclusion. We've been talking about this for a long time, and I'd like us to table the report as soon as possible.

**The Chair:** I don't have any objection. We aren't ready to prepare the report. That will definitely go to the fall.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** However, I'd like you to put your hand on the booklet that the Clerk of the Privy Council, Mr. Himmelfarb, wrote last year. It referred to the public service and its importance.

**The Chair:** Do you think we could try to find it?

**Mr. Guy Beaumier (Committee Researcher):** That was in the context of his duties as Clerk of the Privy Council? Every year, the clerk prepares a report on the state of the public service.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Yes, that's what I'm talking about. Since I had put a file together, I may still have that document, which was very well done. I'm going to check.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Simard?

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** As regards Thursday's witness, have we planned for one or two hours?

**The Chair:** That's up to the committee to decide.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** I think one hour would be quite enough.

**The Chair:** So an hour for Ms. Ouimet?

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** What do you think?

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Ms. Ouimet holds a very important position. If I understood correctly, it is she who will be the next commissioner. Either way, all harassment cases will go through her. So it's a crucial role.

**The Chair:** It's also a position that has to be approved in Parliament.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** I'm ready to submit it to the will of Parliament.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** We'll take the time it takes.

**The Chair:** Indeed. So we'll see each other next Thursday at 3:30 p.m.

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**

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