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# Assistant Deputy Ministers

**in the Canadian Public Service**

Ensuring Canada will have the public-sector leadership it needs

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## Summary

*Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs) are the most senior public servants appointed under the Public Service Employment Act, and the principal feeder group for appointment to Deputy Minister. As such, ADMs will be critical to the Canadian Public Service as it seeks to adapt and transform itself to help Canada meet future social and economic challenges. Yet relatively little is known (at least outside the Public Service) about this important senior-executive cadre.*

*The Centre on Public Management and Policy at the University of Ottawa has undertaken an in-depth study of the ADM community, how it has evolved over time, and the key issues that need to be addressed for the future. The methodology for the study included the analysis of quantitative data on ADMs over the last quarter-century and on the current ADM community; the development and application of a 'taxonomy' of types of ADM positions; qualitative input obtained through key-informant interviews and roundtables; and the review of current literature and research on public administration in Canada and internationally.*

*The key findings of the study are that the ADM community has been marked by both significant growth in size and remarkable stability in its composition over the last quarter-century; however, the nature of ADMs' work and their roles and responsibilities have changed in important ways in recent years, raising a number of issues. Action is warranted in several areas to ensure the Canadian Public Service will have the future ADM leaders it will need.*

*Growth in the number of ADMs has been quite significant over the last 25 years (more than 40%) and has outpaced that of the Public Service overall during this period (12%). There has, moreover, been significant growth in all management layers at the senior levels of the Public Service, including DMs and Associate DMs above ADMs and EX 1-3s below them. In today's context of public deficits and Public Service downsizing, the size of the ADM community will inevitably shrink. But the number of ADMs the Public Service will need in the future, and the roles they should play, is linked to the larger structural*

*issue of the overlapping and multiple levels in the most senior ranks of the Public Service.*

*The profile of the ADM community that emerges from the University of Ottawa study is one of continuity and stability in terms of its make-up.*

*The ADM community has changed over the last 25 years through better gender balance and a marked ageing. However, in other respects there has been little change. Recruitment sources and the path to becoming an ADM have remained virtually unaltered: almost all ADMs are appointed from within the Public Service, many (nearly 60%) from within the same department in which they had been working. On average, individuals have had 20+ years in the Public Service and are close to 50 years old when appointed ADM.*

*ADM career patterns after appointment exhibit significant churn. Most ADMs change jobs every two years; in 2011-2012, 40% of all ADM positions had a new incumbent. At the same time, most ADM movement is within the same department and type of ADM position; over 50% of ADMs, for example, have had three of their last four jobs in the same organization. From 2009 to 2012, the turn-over rate for ADMs was 50%. As of 2012, almost one-half of ADMs (49%) were eligible for retirement without penalty within two years.*

*The Canadian Public Service has undergone significant changes in recent years, driven by globalisation, technological advances, the increasing complexity and inter-connectedness of public policy issues, rising and changing political and public expectations, and fiscal restraint and downsizing. More and potentially transformational change lies ahead.*

*In this context, the remarkably stable profile of the ADM community over the last quarter-century raises questions as to whether it is too static and insular and whether it will have the variety and depth of skills and experience needed for the future.*

*There have also been important changes over the last few years in the scope and nature of ADMs' work, roles and responsibilities, and working relationships, raising a number of issues.*

*ADM's jobs appear to have become 'smaller' as they have increased in number, with ADMs having less scope and authority to lead their organization and deliver on key files and issues. Many delegations have been retained at the Minister or DM level, forcing ADMs to personally vet files that in the past would have been handled at lower executive levels. The trend is also to ADMs being more generalists, 'generic' managers rather than subject-matter experts. Decision-making is being pushed up and centralized, and knowledge pushed down. ADMs' primary working relationships have changed as well, with ADMs becoming more focused on their DM, Minister and political staff, and central agencies, and less on their own organization. As well, there is little sense of being part of an ADM community or strong attachment to the wider Public Service as a whole. Despite rhetoric about horizontality, ADMs find themselves working in vertical silos, and have few opportunities for taking on broader responsibilities.*

*The study makes a number of recommendations, in five key areas.*

*First, the **structural** issue of multiple and overlapping layers in the senior ranks of the Public Service should be addressed. ADMs' roles need to be clarified in terms of scope, responsibilities, and accountabilities and expectations. ADMs' jobs need to be bigger. They need to focus more on shaping and delivering change, and less on process.*

*Secondly, the Public Service needs **new blood** at its senior levels, leaders with wider and different experience, knowledge and skills, and who better reflect the diversity and changing social, economic, cultural and regional realities of Canadian society. There should be more external recruitment, with appropriate supports, from the provincial and territorial governments and the para-public, private, non-profit, community and academic sectors. Increased recruitment of visible minorities, Aboriginal Canadians, and persons with a disability, should be a priority. And the Public Service needs to appoint additional younger individuals to the ADM ranks, fast-tracking potential DMs.*

*Thirdly, the Public Service needs to **raise the bar** for appointment to ADM, strengthening and making expectations and requirements clear. This means emphasizing the need for greater breadth and depth of experience and a broader range of skill sets and leadership abilities than in the past.*

*Future ADMs will need: the capacity for strategic thinking and visioning; focus on measurable results, and on economy and efficiency; better management skills generally, and people management skills in particular; 'soft' skills such as communications, inter-personal relations and negotiation; and the ability to work effectively with partners and stakeholders. To acquire these, individuals will need a wider diversity of knowledge and experience; for example, experience in more than one department or type of work, experience outside their 'comfort zone', experience in regions and in service delivery, experience in the private and other sectors, international experience.*

*Fourthly, action is needed to **reduce churn** among ADMs and better manage ADM movement. Clear expectations need to be established and communicated on the expected minimum time an ADM will remain in position, for example making three years the norm. This should be part of the overall performance assessment for both ADMs and DMs.*

*As well, a more pro-active and corporate approach needs to be taken to managing ADM assignments, with the twin objectives of broadening and deepening ADMs' experience and skills and responding to the priorities and needs of the Public Service as a whole as well as those of the individual department or organization.*

*Finally, action must be taken to build a strong sense on the part of ADMs of being part of a senior-executive cadre, an ADM **community** based on **professionalism and attachment to the broader Public Service**. Consideration should be given to adopting a skills 'clusters' approach for the development and management of ADMs, including a 'heads-of-profession' model. The objective would be to identify skill gaps and future needs within each cluster – or "profession" – and to develop measures to address them, including recruitment strategies, learning and development programs, and assignments. Related objectives would be to foster opportunities for dialogue and exchange among ADMs, within and across different clusters, and opportunities for more corporate assignments to serve the overall Public Service.*

*The Canadian Public Service is at a critical juncture. The need for action identified in the study is compelling if Canada is to have the public-sector leadership it will require to meet the challenges of the future.*



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# Assistant Deputy Ministers

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## INTRODUCTION

### *Why study the ADMs?*

Canada, like every advanced country today, relies importantly on action by the state – government policies, programs and services – to ensure the effective functioning of its economy and a high quality of life for its citizens. While there are different views and shifting policies about the nature and extent of government activity, these differences play out within a broad scope of responsibilities common to all modern states.

To carry out the essential functions of government, modern states face very significant management and organizational challenges, and it falls to the senior ranks of public administration to lead in meeting these challenges and supporting Ministers in promoting the country's overall performance and development.

In this context, Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs) are critical to the success of the Government of Canada. They are the most senior level appointed under the *Public Service Employment Act* (i.e. formally on the basis of merit, with a commitment to political neutrality), and are the principal 'feeder' group for appointment to the Deputy Minister (DM) level.

The preparation and appointment of effective leaders, both from ADM to DM and from other executive levels to ADM, is of significant importance if Canada is to have the public-sector leadership that it will need to address future social and economic challenges in a world of globalisation, constant technological change, and public policy challenges of ever-increasing complexity.

The Canadian Public Service is currently facing budgetary and staff reductions on a scale not seen since the mid-1990s, and potentially transformative changes both in *how* it works and, indeed, in *what* it does. This heightens the importance of preparing our emerging future leaders for greater responsibility, and ensuring that they have the breadth and depth of experience, knowledge, and skills that will be needed.

*“ADMs ‘own’ all the ‘businesses’ of the Government of Canada. DMs are responsible for everything, of course, but in reality all government work is divided among ADMs. They ‘own’ all the pieces . . .”*

Key-informant interviews

While considerable research has been undertaken on Deputy Ministers over the years, relatively little has been done with respect to Assistant Deputy Ministers. Much of what has been reported has been more qualitative in nature, with little data-based and empirical analysis.

The Centre on Public Management and Policy at the University of Ottawa has undertaken an in-depth study on ADMs in the Canadian Public Service – *How has the ADM community evolved over time? What is the nature of ADMs’ work, and what are their primary roles and responsibilities? Have these been changing, and how will they change in the future? What kinds of ADMs will Canada need in the next five to ten years, and what skills, knowledge, experience and qualities will they require? What do we have to do to ensure that Canada will have the future public-sector leadership it will need?*

### ***Objectives of the study***

Examine the ADM community and how it has evolved over time

Identify key issues, emerging trends, and challenges for the future

Offer advice on the recruitment, development, and support of ADMs to help ensure the Public Service will have the future leaders it will need.

## ***Scope***

The study looks at all ADMs and ADM-equivalents (EX4s and EX5s and comparable levels in other classification categories) in the Canadian Public Service. This includes the ‘core public administration’ (CPA), i.e. departments and organizations for whom Treasury Board is the employer, as well as ‘separate’ organizations (e.g. the Canada Revenue Agency), that are their own employer. The study examines the evolution of the ADM community over the last quarter-century and describes the current ADM cadre. It also looks, briefly, at ADM-equivalents in other jurisdictions, including provincial and territorial administrations and other Westminster-like administrations, notably the United Kingdom.

## ***Methodology***

The methodology for the study included analysis of demographic and other statistical data on ADMs over time; examination of information on the current ADM community; the development and application of a ‘taxonomy’ of types of ADM positions; the conduct of roundtables and key-informant interviews with senior public servants and others; and a review of recent research and studies and relevant literature.

### Data collection and analysis

Sources included: ‘historical’ demographic data (25-year period); data on ADM positions and titles (15-year period); recent summary data on ADMs (2010 – 2012); and data from other studies and reports.

***A cautionary note on the data cited in this report is necessary. Given multiple data sources, sometimes using different definitions or covering different populations or periods of time, it is not possible to ensure consistency and comparability of data for all aspects of the study or for all years.*** Unless otherwise indicated, the source for data cited in this report is current and historical data on ADMs provided by the Treasury Board Secretariat and includes all ADMs or equivalents, in both the core public administration and separate-employer organizations. Where this is not the case, the different sources and years covered, as well as limitations in scope, are identified. Data is reported in this document at the aggregate level, in order to ensure the privacy of individuals and to protect personal information.

### 'Taxonomy' of ADM positions

A taxonomy was developed identifying broad categories of ADM positions according to both function and 'location' (geographic and type of organization). These categories are:

- Programs and Services/Operations
- Policy
- Corporate Services
- Central Agency
- Legal services
- Communications
- Regional management
- International
- Science and technology

This taxonomy was applied to ADM positions at five-year intervals (1995 - 2010) to see change over time as well as the current distribution.

The assignment of an ADM position to one of the above categories was based on the *primary* responsibility and functions of the position.

It is recognized that there is some overlap across categories, and also that many ADMs have multiple responsibilities. In particular, the number of ADMs with 'policy' responsibilities may be under-reported somewhat, as many Program ADMs also have program-policy responsibilities. Positions were assigned to the Programs and Services/Operations category if program management was understood to be their principal responsibility.

'Regional management' was defined as including only ADM positions whose primary responsibility was the management and delivery of programs and services in a region. 'International' was defined as including only ADM positions that represented Canada abroad. Other ADM positions located in regions or involved in foreign affairs and international relations were included in the appropriate category (policy or programs or corporate service, etc.) according to their primary function.

ADM positions located in Central Agencies that were identified as exercising primarily 'corporate service' responsibilities were placed under Corporate Services.

#### Roundtables and key-informant interviews

Preliminary consultations were undertaken in the fall of 2010 and early 2011 with more than a dozen individuals, including Deputy Ministers, ADMs, researchers, experts and others. These consultations were focused on the design and scope of the ADM study, and what were felt to be some of the critical issues and areas to examine.

Two ADM Roundtables were held in the fall of 2011. These involved over 40 ADMs, and included a broad cross-section of the current ADM community (gender, official language, type of ADM position, CPA and separate-employer organizations). The 'Chatham House Rule' was used to promote open and frank dialogue and discussion while ensuring anonymity and non-attribution of specific comments.

Key-informant interviews were conducted during 2012 with 50+ individuals, including:

- 12 current and former DMs and Associates, and a former Clerk of the Privy Council
- 14 current and former ADMs
- A number of Directors Generals and other direct reports to ADMs
- Two former Provincial Privy Council Clerks, four current and former Provincial DMs, and three ADMs
- 15 private and voluntary sector executives, academics, researchers, consultants
- A number of senior officials, academics, and researchers in the United Kingdom

The interviews were conducted in-person for the most part, as well as by telephone where necessary. An interview questionnaire was developed and shared with participants prior to the interview. A set of general questions was asked of all persons being interviewed, and more specific questions were asked according to the responsibilities, knowledge or experience of the individual. It was understood that interview participants would not be identified by name and that comments made in the interviews would not be attributed to specific individuals.

### Review of literature

A review was undertaken of relevant literature and recent reports and studies. Due to time and resource constraints, the primary focus was on the senior management cadre in the federal Public Service.

Studies and information on Provincial and Territorial jurisdictions and on other Westminster-like administrations, notably the United Kingdom, were also examined briefly.

### Coordination and management

The Centre on Public Management and Policy took overall responsibility for the planning and conduct of the study, and for drafting written products.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Treasury Board Secretariat (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer), the Privy Council Office, and the Public Service Commission.

These organizations agreed to make data available to the Centre as well as studies and reports, and to provide advice and input regarding the study.

The Centre has final editorial responsibility for all written and electronic communications on the study. The study does not represent the views of the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Privy Council Office, the Public Service Commission, or any of their officers, or the University of Ottawa.

### ***About the authors***

*James Lahey* is the Director of the Centre on Public Management and Policy at the University of Ottawa and had overall responsibility for this study. From 1973 until early 2009, Jim served in the Public Service, including as Associate Deputy Minister in Human Resources Development Canada, Associate Secretary in the Treasury Board Secretariat, Associate Deputy Minister in Indian and Northern Affairs, and Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet (Public Service Renewal) in the Privy Council Office.

*Mark Goldenberg* was a Senior Fellow at the Centre on Public Management and Policy and was the principal author of the study. He is a former Associate Assistant Deputy Minister in the Public Service, and worked in social and economic policy in several departments including Secretary of State, Canadian Heritage, and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. Since leaving the Public Service he has worked as an independent policy and research consultant and has published in the areas of social innovation, the not-for-profit sector, workplace learning and skills development, and official languages.

# KEY FINDINGS

## I. WHO ARE THE ADMs. PROFILE AND EVOLUTION OF THE ADM COMMUNITY

Examination and analysis of historical and current data on Assistant Deputy Ministers in the Canadian Public Service presents an overall profile of the ADM community that is marked by significant growth in size and by a high degree of stability in its composition, in terms of demographic and other key characteristics.

### *Size of the ADM community*

There has been significant growth, with some fluctuation, in the size of the ADM community over the last-quarter century.

The pattern has been one of growth in the 1980s, cut-backs in the mid-1990s largely as a result of Program Review and departmental restructuring, and then strong growth since the late 1990s.

Over a 25-year period (1985 – 2010), the number of ADMs increased by 40%: from 295 in 1985, dropping to 254 by 1998, and then increasing steadily to reach to 413 in 2010<sup>1</sup>.

Most recently, the number of ADMs decreased slightly to 409 in 2011 and then increased to 423 in 2012<sup>2</sup>.

The rate of growth of the ADM community has outpaced that of the Public Service overall, which followed a similar but less pronounced pattern. The size of the Public Service declined by almost 20% from 250,000 in the early 1990s to 200,000 in 1998-1999 and then grew by 40% to about 280,000 by 2009-2010, with total growth of 11.6% over the whole 25-year period<sup>3</sup>.



Within the ADM community, the number of EX5s has increased at a faster pace over the last 25 years, and with less fluctuation, than that of EX4s, who experienced the bulk of the ADM-level cuts in the mid-1990s (Chart 1). As a result, the relative proportion of EX5s to EX4s has changed somewhat, with EX 5s increasing from 29% of all ADMs in 1985 to 36% in 2010. Most recently (2008-2009 to 2011-2012), however, the number of EX4s has increased at a faster pace than that of EX5s. The number of Associate ADMs has fluctuated over the years, with recent data showing a smaller number of Associate ADMs recently (21 in 2011) than at times in the past.

The increase in the number of ADMs is also part of a larger story that points to an important *structural* issue within the Canadian Public Service – the significant growth and layering of management levels that has occurred in the most senior ranks of the Public Service over the last quarter-century.

Overall, the total number of executives (EX1-5) grew by 47% over the period 1985-2010<sup>4</sup>.

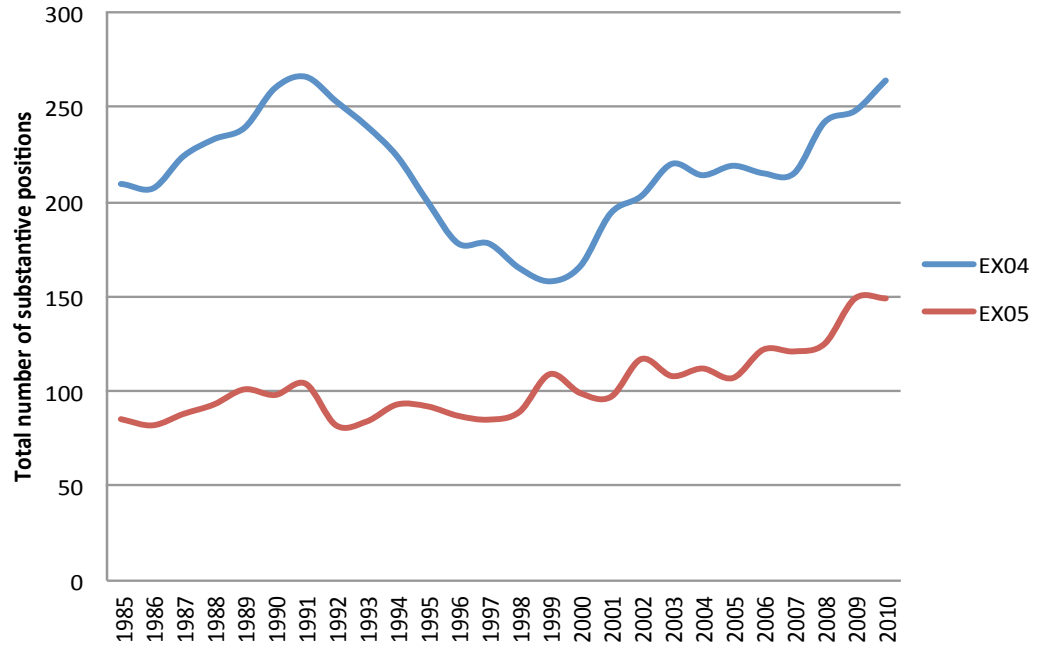
During a recent 10-year period (1999-2009), while the size of the Public Service as a whole grew by 35%, the ADM population increased by 49% and the EX1-3 population by 68%<sup>5</sup> (Chart 2).

The number of Deputy Ministers and Associate DMs has also increased significantly, although it has fluctuated over the years. For example, looking at 5-year intervals, the number of DMs (including Associate DMs) went from 65 in 1987 and 1992 down to 50 in 1997 before increasing again to 62 by 2002, 74 in 2007, and 77 in August 2012. The last ten years alone (2003-2012) have seen a 25% growth in the DM (and Associate DM) population<sup>6</sup>.

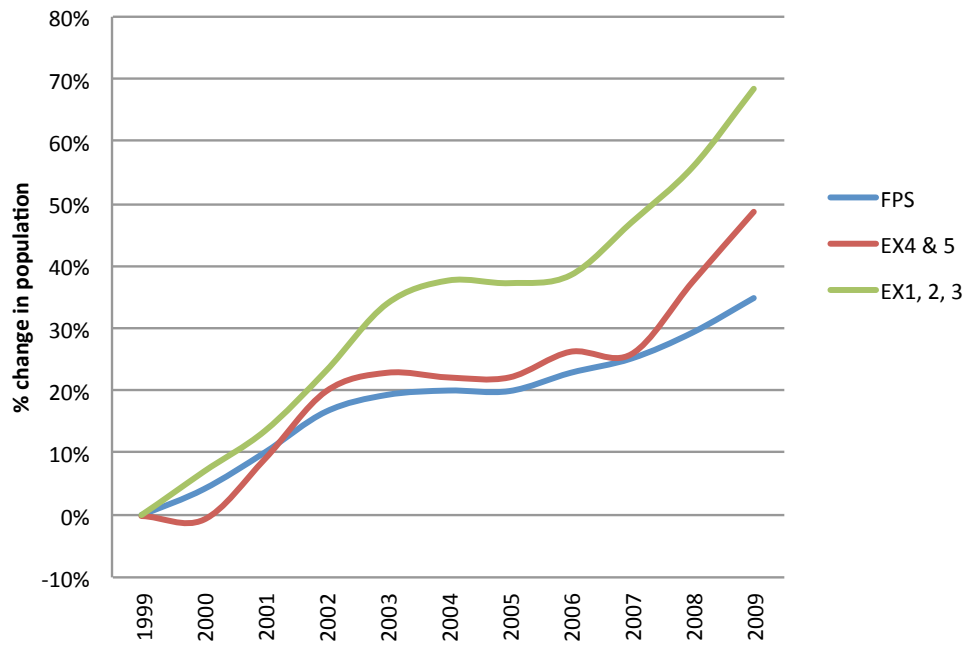
It should be noted that growth in the size of the executive cadre in Canada has been similar to that among other Westminster-style public administrations in the last decade<sup>7</sup>. These other jurisdictions, however, have already moved to reduce the size of their executive ranks, and will no doubt continue to do so.

Canada has also begun to take action to reduce its executive complement as part of the current down-sizing efforts across the Public Service. In this context, it would be desirable, as discussed further below, to examine and address the layering of senior-management levels at the very top of the Public Service.

**Chart 1: Changes in the number of ADMs (1985-2010)**



**Chart 2: Growth EX1-3, EX4&5, and Public Service 1999-2009**



## Gender

The most dramatic change in the composition of the ADM community over the last quarter-century has been the increase in women in ADM ranks.

Women went from 5% of all ADMs (1985) to over 40% (2010) (Chart 3).

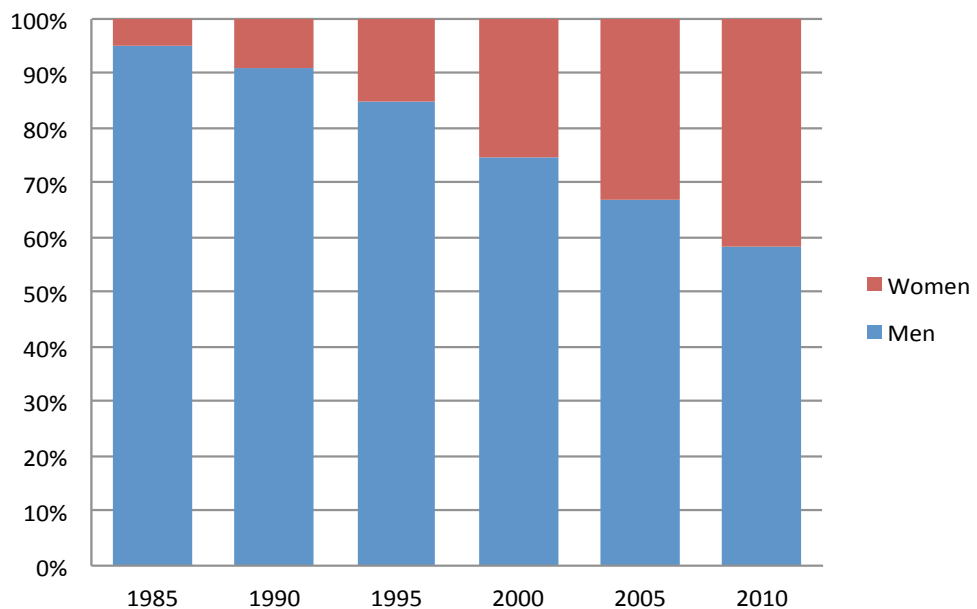
The number of women ADMs at the EX4 level doubled in the period 1999-2009 alone.

The proportion of ADMs who are women has fluctuated somewhat from year-to-year. In 2010-2011, for example, women constituted 43% of *all* EXs: 45% of EX1s, 43% of EX2s, 36% of EX3s, 41% of EX4s, and 39% of EX5s. Most recently (2011 – 2012), however, the proportion of women ADMs at the EX 5 level stands at 37%, while 34% of EX4s are women<sup>8</sup>.

Women's participation in the ADM and EX ranks remains lower than for the Public Service overall (55% in 2010).

The proportion of DMs who are women peaked in 2005 (41%) and has declined since then until 2012 (36% of all DMs, including 43% of DM1s and 32% of DM2+)<sup>9</sup>.

**Chart 3: Changes in the gender composition of ADMs, 1985-2010**

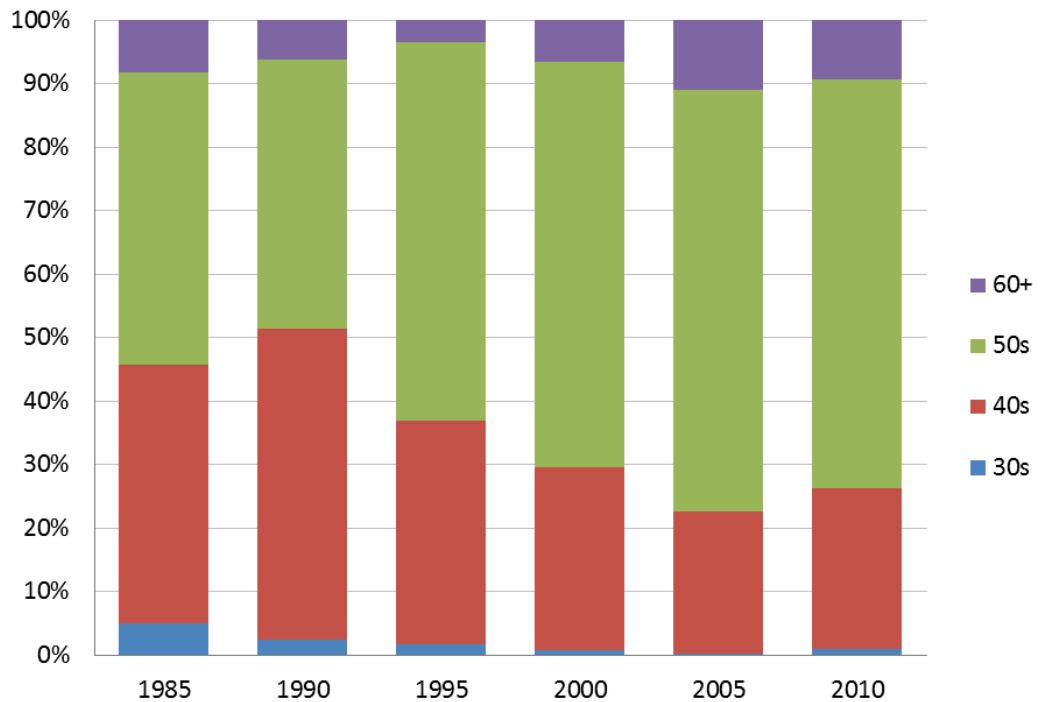


## Age

The other significant change in the composition of the ADM community has been a steady ageing of the ADM population (Chart 4).

The average age of ADMs was 50.2 years old in 1990; in 2010 it was 53.2. In 1990, more than 50% of ADMs were *under* 50; in 2010, nearly 75% are over 50. The proportion of ADMs under-50 has declined among EX4s from 54% in 1990 to 28% in 2010 and from 45% to 24% among EX5s. The proportion of EX5s who are 55+ has increased from 21% to 41%.

**Chart 4: Changes in the age distribution of ADM rank (EX4 & 5) 1985-2010**



Not surprisingly, since ADMs are the principal feeder group for appointment to Deputy Minister, there has also been a relative ageing of the DM population. Over the 20-year period 1987–2007, the average age of DMs went from 49 to 53.7. Only 15% of DMs were in the 50-54 age group in 1987; by 2007, 43% of DMs were in this age group. Some 37% of DMs were in the 45-49 range in 1987; this was down to 13% by 2007. In 1987, 64% of DM1s were under 50 years old; in 2007 only 17% were under 50. Over the last decade alone (2003-2012), the average age of DMs went from 51.5 to 55.4 for DM1 and from 53.8 to 56.3 for DM2+<sup>10</sup>.

### ***Other demographic characteristics***

There has been little significant change in other key demographic characteristics of the ADM community.

Francophone representation at the ADM level has increased from 23% in 1985 to 28% in 2011-2012<sup>11</sup>; currently, it is still slightly below francophone representation in the rest of the EX category and in the total Public Service, while consistent with the Canadian population overall.

There has been a very small increase over time in the representation in the ADM ranks of Visible Minorities, Aboriginal Persons, and Persons with a Disability. Since 2009 the rate of representation of Aboriginal Persons and Persons with a Disability in the ADM ranks have, in fact, declined. The ADM representation of all Employment Equity populations, including women, has never fully matched overall **workforce availability rates**<sup>12</sup>.

### ***Recruitment and path to becoming an ADM***

Although complete data are not available for all years, the recruitment profile of ADMs does not appear to have changed significantly over the last quarter-century.

The vast majority of ADMs – almost all, in fact – are recruited from within the Public Service (Chart 5). External recruitment (from outside the Public Service) at the ADM level has been and continues to be very small.

There are also, of course, similarly low levels of external recruitment at the EX 1-3 levels, the principal ‘feeder’ group for the ADM category. One study found, for example, that in the period 1991 to 1998 external recruitment in the EX community overall surpassed 1% in only one year<sup>13</sup>.

In other words, the vast majority of ADMs are individuals appointed from within the Public Service, from within the EX ranks, and the vast majority of those individuals were themselves appointed from within the Public Service.

In addition, available data suggests that many ADMs are appointed from *within* their own organization. Almost 60% of ADM appointments in 2010, for example, were from within the organization in which they had been working<sup>14</sup>.

Typically, individuals appointed to ADM:

- Have 20+ years of experience in PS, including 12 years as EX
- Generally have spent four years as EX 1; 3.5 years as EX2; and 4.5 years as EX3
- Have occupied six EX-level positions, spending about two years in each position at the EX 1&2 levels and 2.5 years in each EX3-level position

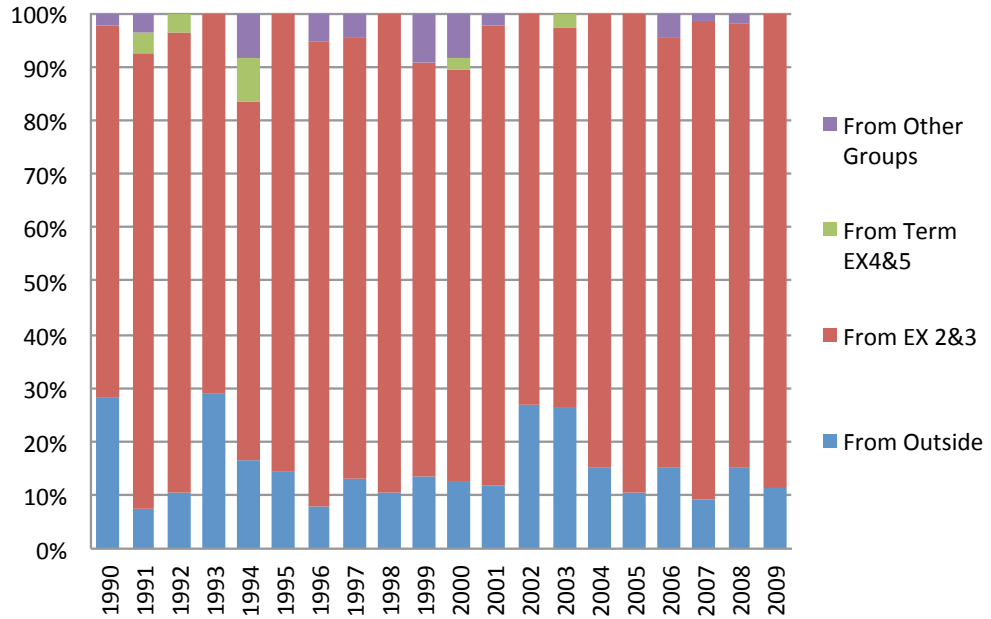
The average age of individuals at appointment to ADM is just under 50 years old (49.6 for EX4s and 48.2 for EX5s) (Chart 6).

Again not surprisingly, the average age at appointment for DMs, although it fluctuates from year to year given the relatively small numbers, has tended to reflect the increasing age of ADMs as the feeder group.

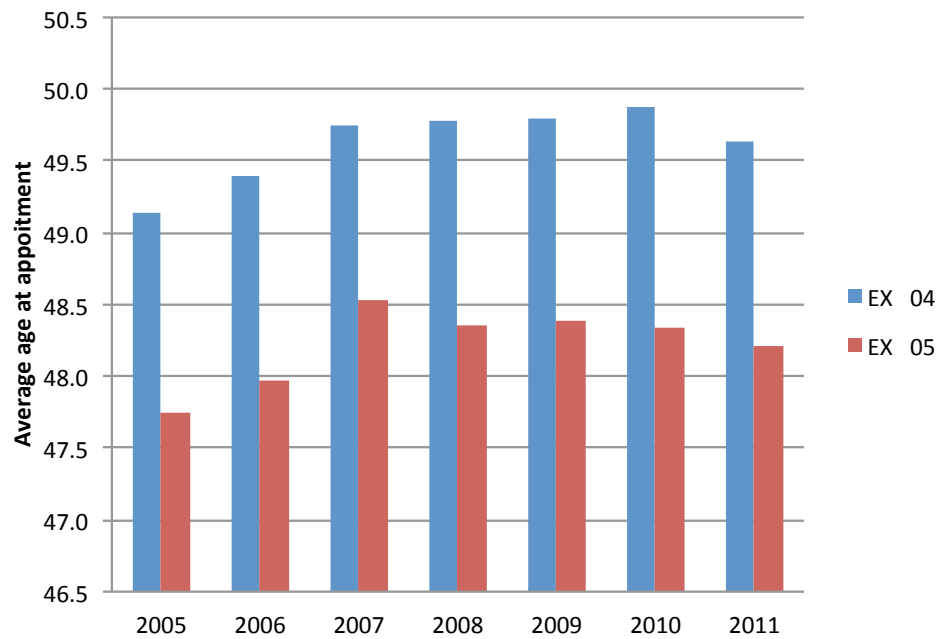
The average age at appointment for DMs has ranged from a low of 49 years (2004-2005) to a high of 54.5 (2011-2012), and was 53.8 in 2012. The average age at appointment of DMs was 44.5 in 1987.<sup>15</sup>

**Chart 5: Sources of ADM recruitment 1990-2009.**

'From Outside' refers to recruitment from outside the core public administration, i.e. including from separate-employer agencies

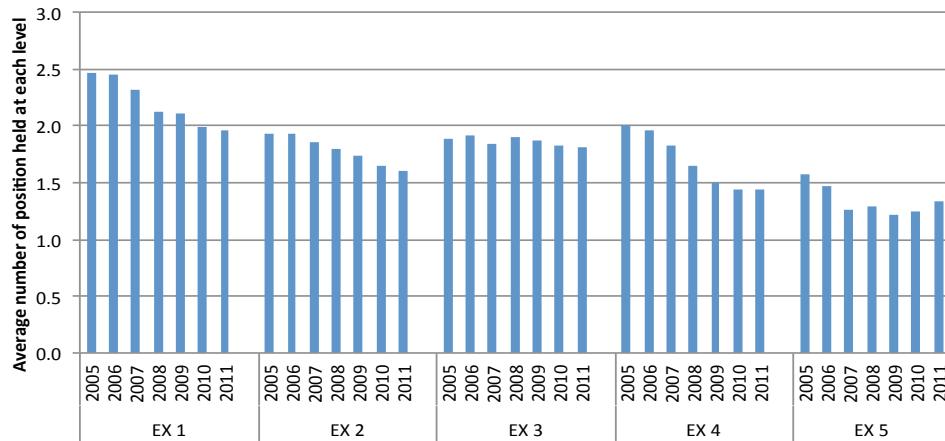


**Chart 6: Average age of ADMs at appointment 2005-2011**

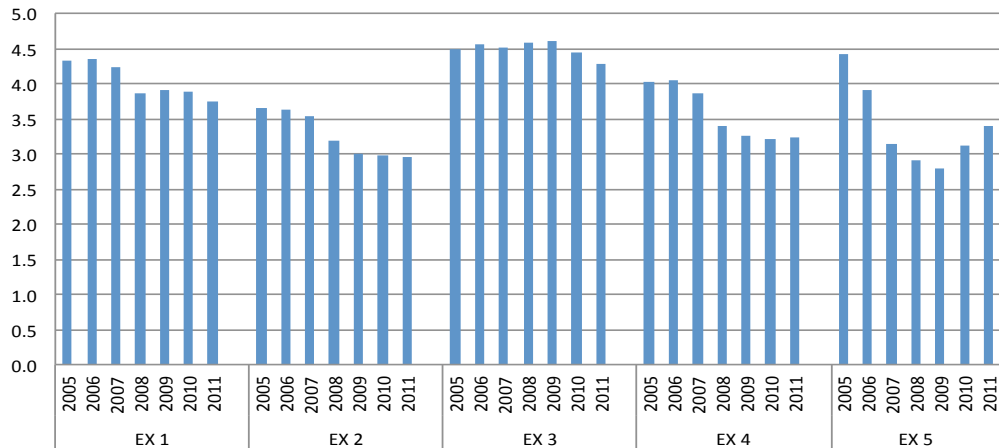


More recent ADM appointees, however, seem to have had less experience in terms of the number of executive positions held and the number of years spent as at each EX level (Charts 7 and 8).

**Chart 7: The average number of positions held by ADMs at each EX level during their career, 2005-2011.**



**Chart 8: ADMs experience at each EX level (i.e. average number of years as an EX at each EX level) 2005-2011**



**Type and location of ADMs' jobs**

Analysis of data from the taxonomy of different kinds of ADM positions that was developed for this study indicates that the distribution of ADMs, in terms of *where* they work as well as the *type* of position they occupy, has not changed significantly over the years<sup>16</sup>.



By far, the vast majority of ADMs work in the National Capital Region (87%). The proportion of ADMs located in the Regions has actually declined somewhat, from 8% in the mid-1990s to about 5% (2011), although the number of ADMs working in some regions has increased over the years, notably Alberta and BC. Some 8% of ADMs represent Canada abroad<sup>17</sup>.

In terms of type of ADM position, the largest proportion of ADMs work in Programs and Services/Operations positions. Some 42% of all ADMs (2011) work in this kind of position. This is up from 35% in the mid-1990s and 37% as recently as 2005.

A significant proportion of ADMs also work in Central Agencies and in Corporate Services, with 15% and 13% respectively.

The proportion of ADMs working in all other types of position is *less than 10%* in any category<sup>18</sup>.

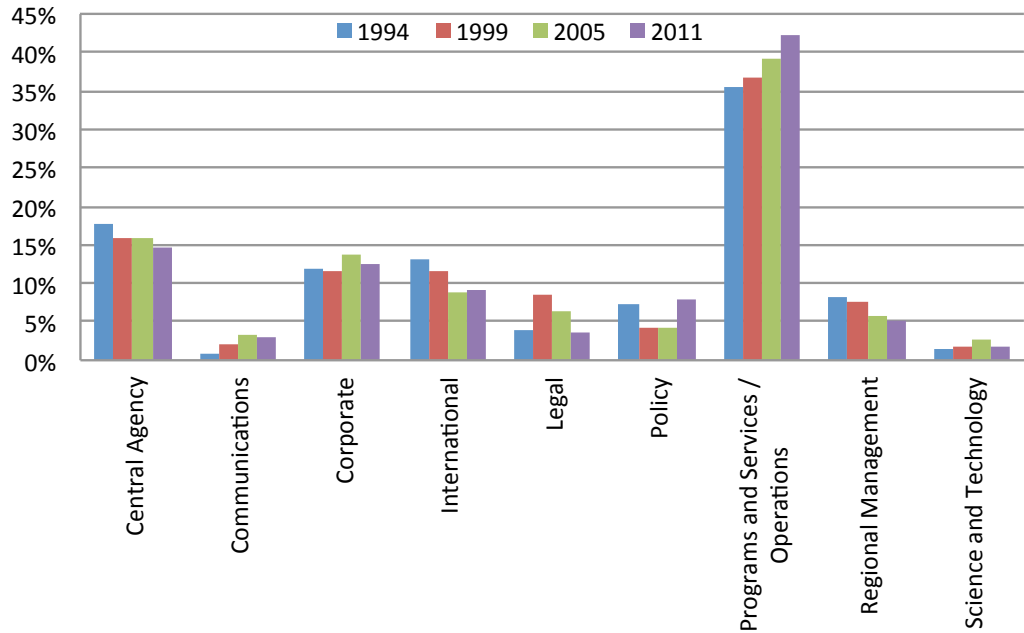
**Distribution of ADMs by type of position (2011)**

Type of ADM position	% of total
Programs and Services/Operations	42%
Central Agencies	15%
Corporate Services	13%
International	8%
Policy	8%
Regional Management	5%
Legal Services	4%
Communications	3%
Science and Technology	2%

There had been a widely-held impression, among persons interviewed for this study or who participated in the Roundtables, that the results from the taxonomy would show that there had been a significant increase in ADMs working in Central Agencies and in Corporate Services. In part, this was expected because of the long-term trend-lines to increasing centralization of decision-making and to enhanced accountability requirements. Interestingly, while the number of ADMs working in these two types of positions has increased and as noted, those two categories represent the largest share of ADMs after Programs and Services/Operations,

the overall proportionate distribution of ADMs by type of position has not varied significantly over time (Chart 9).

**Chart 9: Changes in the share of ADMs by type of responsibility, 1994-2011.**

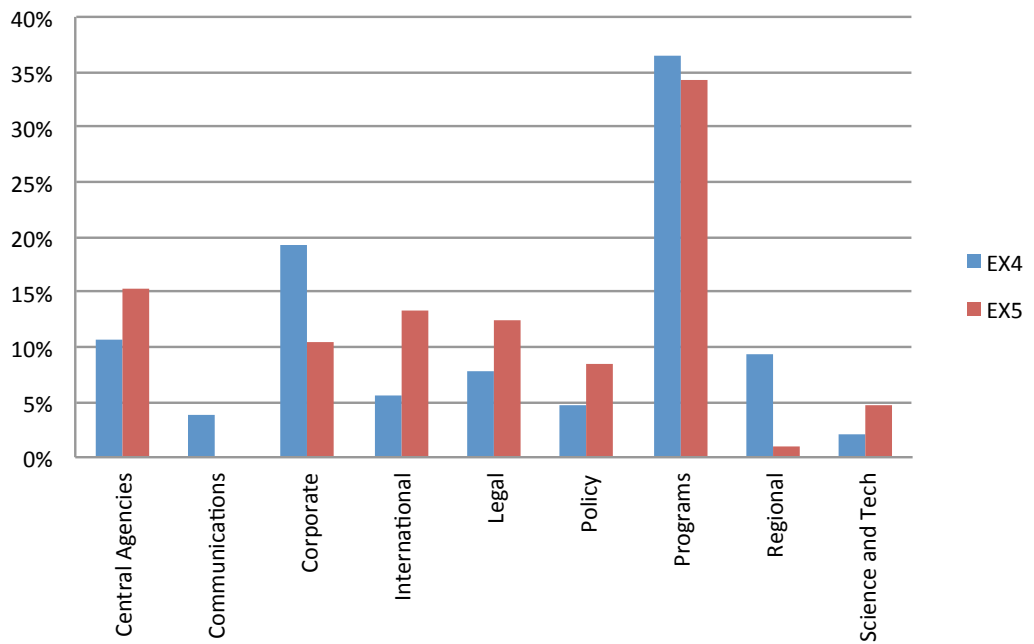


There is some variance in terms of level (EX4 or EX5) across type of ADM position (Chart 10). For example, although overall EX5s constitute 36% of all ADM positions (2010), there is a higher proportion of EX5s than EX4s in some types of ADM position: Policy, Central Agency, International and Legal.

There is also a (much) higher number and proportion of EX5s in the NCR/NHQ as compared to Regions.

The proportion of EX5 positions occupied by women (35%) lags behind the overall representation of women in the ADM ranks (2011).

**Chart 10: Share of EX4s and EX5s by type of responsibility in 2011**



***ADM movement and mobility***

ADMs follow a pattern of frequent movement from job to job after appointment to the ADM ranks.

***The majority of ADMs spend less than two years in a position***, ranging from a ‘low’ of 47% of ADMs in 1999-2000 to a high of 64% in 2004-2005 according to one study<sup>19</sup>. And the trend is that the **average time** that ADMs spend in a position has been **decreasing** in recent years<sup>20</sup>.

In 2011-2012, **40% of all ADM positions** had a **new incumbent** (59 new appointments, 16 promotions to EX5, 81 lateral moves)<sup>21</sup>.

The high level of movement of ADMs mirrors that at the DM level; the latter, however, has declined in recent years as the result of a conscious decision.

For example, DM1s had spent on average 1.5 years in position in 1987, but in 2002 they had stayed on average 2.0 years; DM2+ averaged 1.4 years in position in 1987, and 2.7 years in position in 2002<sup>22</sup>.

While ADMs move frequently, at the same time much ADM movement appears to be 'internal'. More ADMs move *within* their own organization rather than across departments or between departments.

Overall, **50%** of current ADMs (2010-2011) have had **at least three of their last four positions** in the same organization. About 23% of ADMs have had **all of their last four positions** in the same organization. Less than 10% of ADMs have had none of their previous four positions in the same department (Charts 11 and 12)<sup>23</sup>.

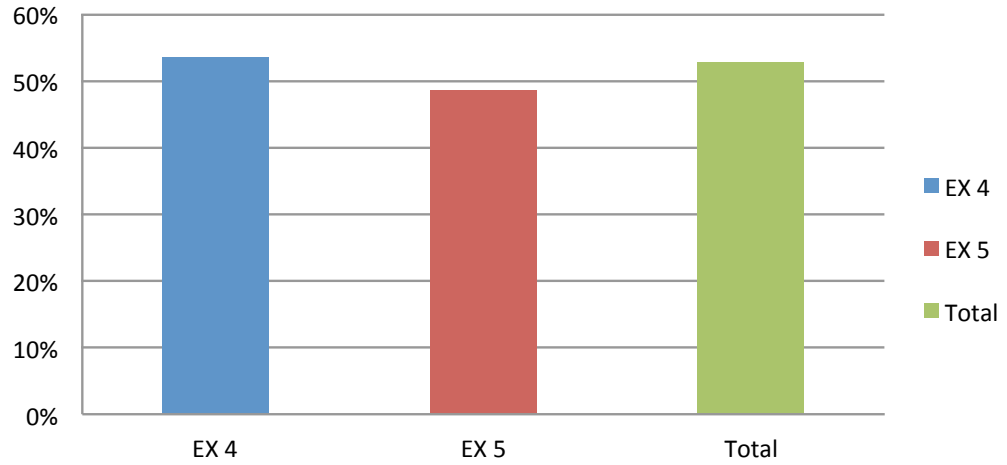
This mobility pattern is similar to that among EX 1-3s. For example, according to a 2008 study, 90% of EX 1-3s in 1997-1998 and 80% in 2007-2008 moved within their own organization<sup>24</sup>.

Another study (2010), found that in 2008-2009 only 5.3% of EX4s and 9.2% of EX5s moved to another department; the average for *all* EXs (1-5) was 8.5%. The same study reported that in 2009-2010, 9% of EX4s and 12.6% of EX5s engaged in interdepartmental movement; the average that year for all EXs was 9.3%.<sup>25</sup>

Based on self-reporting by ADMs, there also appears to be little movement across types of ADM position (Policy or Corporate, etc.) and only minimal movement between NCR/NHQ and Regions.

It should be acknowledged that the data on ADM movement – both from statistical analysis and from self-reporting – may overstate matters somewhat, as some ADM job moves may not be 'real' in the sense that the actual position may have changed in name or seen a relatively minor restructuring of responsibilities but not changed significantly in substance. The principal trend-lines regarding the frequency and nature of ADM movement, however, are clear.

**Chart 11: Share of ADMs with at least 3 out of 4 past positions within the same organization (2011)**



**Chart 12: Share of ADMs with all 4 past positions within the same organization or with only 1 of 4 past positions in another organization (2011)**



Turnover among ADMs, in terms of movement in and out of the ADM category, is very high. Between 1990 and 2010 the ADM community changed by 11% on average every year. In 1990, slightly more than 45% of ADMs had been ADMs five years earlier. **In 2005, only 37% of ADMs had been ADMs five years earlier** (Chart 13).

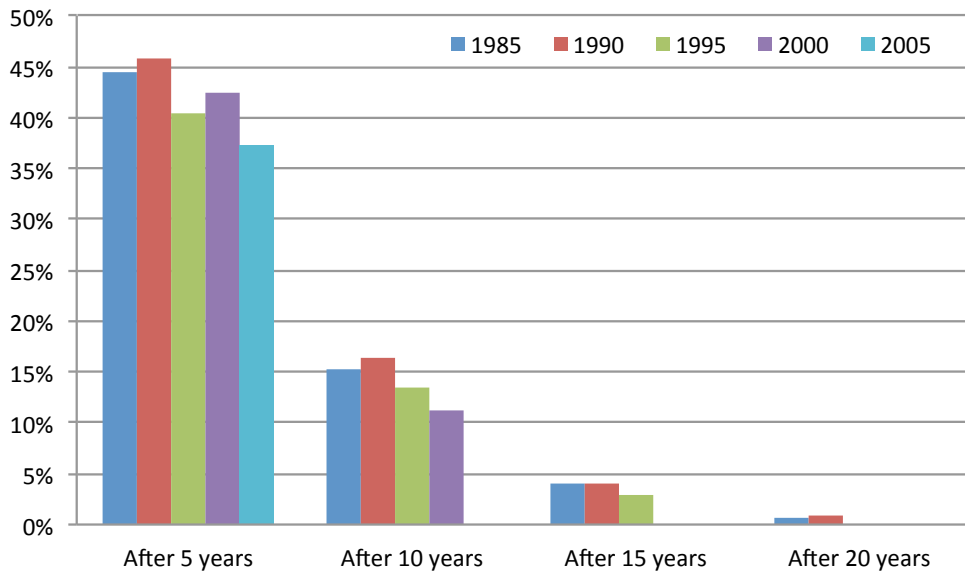
Over the period from 2009 through 2012, the turnover rate among ADMs was almost **50%**<sup>26</sup>.

On average, seven ADMs are appointed each year to the DM level, or less than 3% of the ADM population.

As well as average time in position, the average time at level for ADMs has been decreasing in recent years. In 2000, average time at level was 4.79 years; in 2012 it was 3.46 years<sup>27</sup>.

At the DM level, on average individuals remain approximately 5+ years<sup>28</sup>.

**Chart 13: Share of ADM cohort remaining over time**

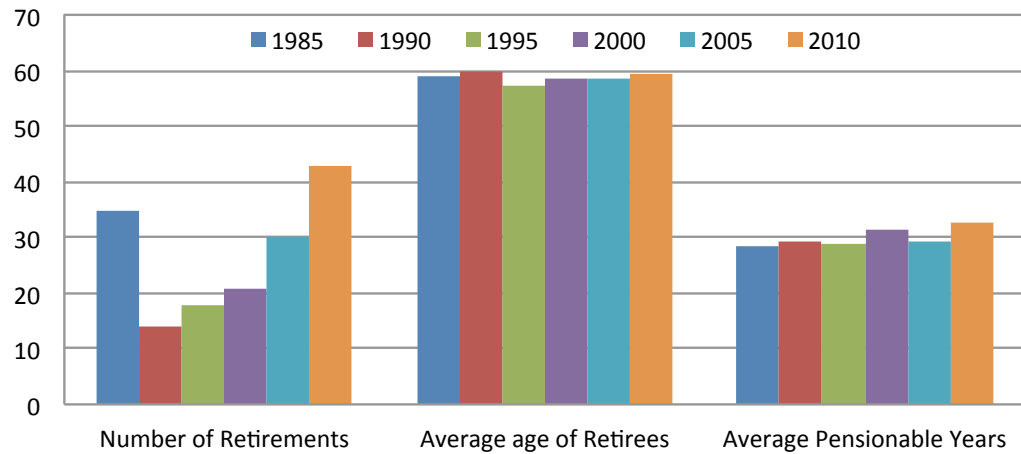


***Departure from the Public Service / Retirement***

The number of ADMs retiring has varied from year-to-year, but has increased steadily over the last 20 years. In 1990, 4% of ADMs retired. In recent years, approximately 10% of ADMs have been retiring annually.

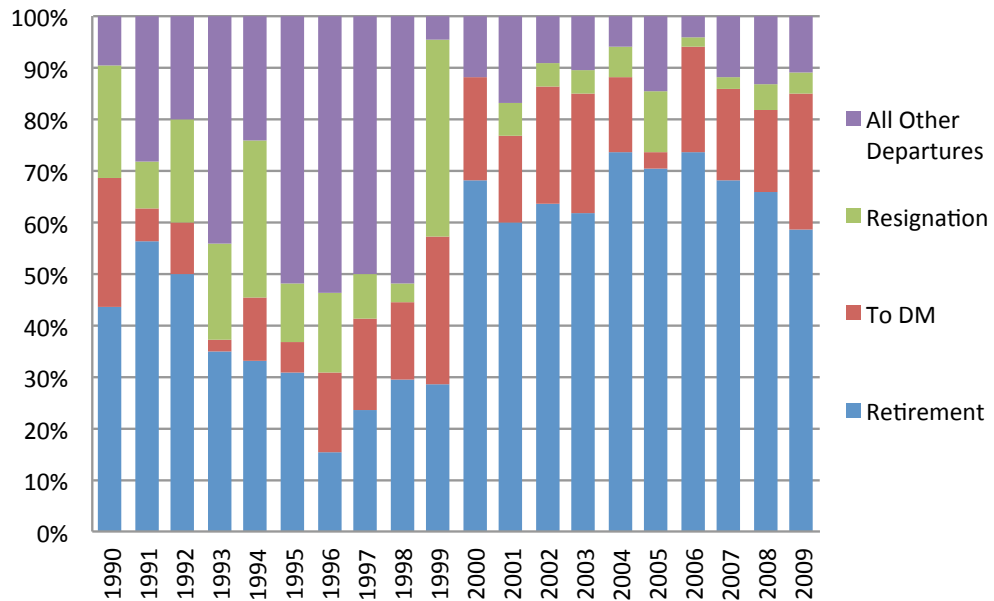
In 2012, half of all ADMs were eligible to retire within the next two years with an unreduced pension, most (i.e. 41% of these ADMs) with a full pension<sup>29</sup>. Similarly, more than 40% of Deputies were eligible to retire with an unreduced pension<sup>30</sup>.

**Chart 14: Number, average age and average pensionable years of ADMs at retirement, 1985-2010**



**Chart 15: Type of ADM departure, 1990-2009**

Note: The unusually high number of "resignations" in 1999 resulted from the creation of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency in that year



***Summing up: Profile and evolution of Canada's ADM community***

The profile of the ADM community that emerges from the analysis of available data over the last quarter-century is one of *significant growth* in size and relative *stability* in composition.

The growth of the ADM community has been significant over this period, and is linked to a larger structural issue, the multiple and overlapping layers at the most senior levels of the Public Service.

There has been little change in the composition of the ADM cadre with regard to most important demographic characteristics, except with respect to a better gender balance and the ageing of the ADM population. Recruitment patterns and profile, and the path to becoming an ADM, have remained virtually unchanged over the last 25 years. Almost all ADMs are recruited from within the Public Service, generally from within the same department or organization. Most have spent some 20 years in the Public Service before becoming an ADM, and are close to 50 years old at appointment.

ADMs' career patterns after appointment to the ADM ranks are marked by significant churn and a high rate of turn-over. The majority of ADMs change jobs every two years or less, with most movement occurring within the same department or organization and type of ADM position.

The distribution of ADMs by type of position and location has remained consistent over the years, with most ADMs working in the National Capital Region and the largest number of ADMs working in Programs and Services/Operations.

Overall, the ADM community can be seen as one that has embodied professional stability and continuity that is important for the leadership of the Public Service.

Or . . . the ADM community can be seen as *static*, at risk of becoming insular, and potentially lacking the variety and depth of skills and experience that will be needed to lead the Public Service of the future.



## II. EMERGING TRENDS AND KEY ISSUES

While the profile of the ADM community that emerges from the available statistical data is one of stability and continuity, the portrait of ADMs' *work* that emerges from more qualitative input – roundtables, interviews with senior public servants as well as representatives of other jurisdictions and sectors, and the review of recent studies and current literature on public administration – is one of *significant change* in recent years, both in the Public Service world and in ADMs' roles, responsibilities and relationships.

Taken together, the findings from both the quantitative and this more qualitative input allow the identification of a number of emerging trends and key issues.

These include:

- *The changing context of the Public Service in today's world*
- *How ADMs' roles and their jobs are changing*
- *Whether ADMs should be more generalists or specialists and subject-matter experts*
- *Whether ADMs are moving too frequently, and whether they are making the right moves*
- *The skills and leadership capabilities future ADMs will need*
- *How to best recruit, develop, manage and support ADMs*

Each topic is discussed in turn below.

### ***The changing world of public service***

The Canadian Public Service has undergone significant change in recent years, with more and more fundamental change to come.

Canada is not alone in this regard. Other countries around the world face similar challenges.

There is widespread agreement on the key trends and directions of change, both in Canada and in public administration generally.<sup>31</sup>

*“Periodically, profound changes emerge in society and new sets of values come to the fore that transform the role of government and the practice of public administration. Recent decades have been marked by profound changes and a deep transformation of the world we live in . . .”*

*“Uncertainty, volatility, and complexity are characteristics of today’s world. They are the result of the growing interdependence and interconnectivity of many of the systems societies depend on . . . Governments are called upon to serve in an unpredictable environment and to address an increasing number of complex public policy issues . . .”*

*“Countries supported by public administrations fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century will have a significant comparative advantage. They will be best positioned to anticipate what might be, and influence the course of events in their favour”*

Jocelyne Bourgon, *A New Synthesis of Public Administration* (2011)

New fiscal and economic realities and successive crises are making change imperative, and will mean not only on-going cuts in public expenditures and services but a smaller and different Public Service.

Change is also being driven by the transformative impacts of globalisation and of constantly- and rapidly-changing technology.

Public policy issues today are seen as becoming more complex and increasingly inter-related and inter-connected, cutting across sectors –

social, economic, environmental as well as public, private and community – and across jurisdictional and national boundaries. No single government or department today can ‘own’ an issue or act on it independently. Modern public administrations, and especially senior public servants, have to work more horizontally and collaboratively. And they increasingly need greater awareness and appreciation of global trends and issues, and the ability to *think and work across borders*.

*“There are important differences in the dynamics facing today’s public service . . .”*

*“There is a greater focus on accountability and transparency than in the past; complexity has increased – on individual issues and in the relationships between issues; and there is a greater focus on service delivery at the expense of policy development . . .”*

Public Policy Forum, *Ten Tough Jobs* 2010

There are also changing and rising demands and expectations of the public sector from elected leaders and the public – for greater accountability, transparency and availability.

Oversight bodies have multiplied and accountability requirements and processes have increased exponentially. One of Canada’s leading experts on public administration suggests that Canada has more ‘watch dog’ agents of Parliament than any other Westminster-style government, and that the system is in danger of “collapsing under its own weight”<sup>32</sup>.

Public servants are increasingly working in a much more open public environment, and senior public servants are seen as losing their traditional anonymity. As well, stakeholders are more numerous and more demanding, and media more sophisticated and ever-present.

The Canadian Public Service, as is the case for public administrations everywhere, is under pressure to find new ways to improve service and program delivery; to make full use of modern and ever-changing technologies; to apply business models and practices; to do *more* and *better*, and to do so with *less*; to be faster and more flexible and responsive; to be more focused on results and measuring performance.

*“Political and policy actors have lost the sense of the traditional space that they were expected to occupy . . .”*

*“Ministers are not making policy; the Prime Minister, the Privy Council Office and a handful of senior ministers now fill more functions than they should; and the public service is increasingly uncertain about its role . . .”*

*“Governments now tend to concentrate policy and decision-making authority with a few key officials, who carry an unmanageable burden, but they also diffuse authority on other issues to the point that accountability evaporates”*

Donald Savoie, [Breaking the Bargain](#) (2003)

Also like other countries, Canada has seen a trend in recent decades to greater centralization of power and decision-making in the Prime Minister's Office and, within the Public Service, in the Privy Council Office and other central agencies.

Paradoxically, power is also more dispersed in some respects – Government structure is larger and more complex; there has been a proliferation of new organizations and agencies; the Ministry, despite periodic attempts from different Governments to reduce its size, has become larger.

At the same time, recent Governments have been seen by many observers as being *risk-averse* with no margin for error and little tolerance for boldness and innovation. Overall, the current climate and relationship between the Public Service and the political level is seen by many as a difficult one, strained in many regards, often marked by wariness and mistrust. Policy

*"The climate today between the Public Service and the political level is one of disregard and disdain on the part of the latter for the former"*

*"The role of the Public Service has changed from one of 'fearless advice and loyal implementation' to one of executing political decisions and directions through 'fearful implementation' "*

*"Public servants have to shoulder some of the responsibility for the current situation. A Public Service that had been comfortable for decades working for a Centre-Left government now has to adjust to a Centre-Right one"*

*"It may not be so much that policy advice is not wanted. It is also that the Public Service hasn't been able to make the shift to be able to provide that advice within the frame of a different lens and world view, a different perspective . . . "*

Key-informant interviews

*"Going forward, the Government will continue its efforts to transform the public service into the public service of tomorrow."*

*"The Government remains committed to ensuring that it is delivering the programs and services that Canadians want and need efficiently and effectively. The Government will continue to examine ways to streamline its operations by ensuring that programs and services are delivered by those best positioned to do so. The Government will introduce legislation as needed to consolidate operations and eliminate redundant organizations"*

*"As world events evolve rapidly, governments and private sector organizations around the globe are examining new ways to become more effective and efficient. Canada's public service has contributed much to Canada's success. As with all institutions, its systems and processes must be reviewed and updated periodically to ensure they are modernized to better serve Canada and Canadians"*

*"Going forward, the Government will continue to ensure that the public service is affordable, modern and high-performing"*

Budget 2013

advice is seen as unwanted or under-demanded by elected leaders, and consequently increasingly under-valued within the Public Service itself. Policy capacity is seen as having eroded and in danger of atrophying further.

*“Deputies and other senior managers face new challenges in managing today and for tomorrow . . . Wider forces of change in our society and our information economy are compelling change in every public institution”*

*“While the details differ from one country to the next, when we look at the changing shape of government in the Westminster world, we can see some obvious common themes:*

- *A desire to make government more responsive to political direction*
- *A desire to make bureaucracy leaner, more agile*
- *A desire to make optimal use of modern information and communications technologies*
- *A desire to bring private sector modes of operation into government*
- *A desire to make government operations more focused on measurable outcomes and results”*

*“We can see where all this is headed, both generally and for us in particular*

- *Much greater integration in the design and delivery of programs and services*
- *An ever-more open policy process*
- *The outsourcing of whatever can be outsourced*
- *An ever-sharper distinction between ‘policy’ (the business of elected leaders) and ‘administration’ (the business of officials)*
- *A smaller Public Service – perhaps half the size of what we have now”*

Jim Mitchell, Sussex Circle, [Notes for Remarks to the Heads of Federal Agencies](#)  
September 2012

The Public Service itself is seen by some as having lost its edge, no longer playing its traditional role of serving the public interest through objective and evidence-based policy advice, as well as loyally implementing Government decisions.

In summary, profound and accelerating change in society and the economy, as well as the current political context, are likely to continue to drive fundamental change in public administration in Canada and necessitate the *transformation* of the Canadian Public Service in terms of both *what it does* and *how it works*.

And this will also mean changes in the kind of senior leaders the Public Service will need in the future, the roles they will be asked to play, and the skills and leadership capabilities that they will have to have.

## Blueprint 2020

### MESSAGE FROM THE CLERK OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL

*“This is a pivotal time for Canada’s Public Service. As events evolve rapidly in an increasingly complex world, we must continue to ask ourselves how what we do for our country and for Canadians can remain relevant”*

*“Canadians’ quality of life and our nation’s position in today’s uncertain and competitive world depend, in significant part, on a strong and high-performing Public Service”*

*“We need to ask ourselves: Where does the Public Service need to be in five to ten years? How do we have to change to get there?”*

### OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

*“An open and networked environment that engages citizens and partners for the public good”*

*“A whole-of-government approach that enhances service delivery and value for money”*

*“A modern workplace that makes smart use of new technologies to improve networking, access to data and customer service”*

*“A capable, confident and high-performing workforce that embraces new ways of working and mobilizing the diversity of talent to serve the country’s evolving needs*

Blueprint2020 – Getting started – Getting your views  
June 2013

## ***How ADMs' jobs, roles and relationships, and the nature of their work are changing***

*"In the future, the Public Service workplace will be organized and will work very differently"*

*"We are on the cusp of fundamental change, the equivalent of the Industrial revolution in terms of how the Public Service works and what it does"*

*The job of a public administrator is in total flux"*

ADM Roundtable participants

ADMs' principal responsibilities are managing their own staff and organization; leading on key policy, program, operational, service, or administrative issues; and being a member of the senior management team of the organization where they work.

It should be emphasized – and ADMs themselves made this point very strongly – that ADMs' jobs and roles vary enormously from department to department, depending on organizational size and mandate, the management style of the Deputy Minister, and the context of issues and challenges that the department and the Government are facing.

In the context of the changes in the world of the Public Service that have taken place and that, indeed, are seen as accelerating, many feel that the work of ADMs has changed significantly over the last decade in terms of scope, roles and responsibilities, expectations of ADMs, and their primary working relationships.

There are, however, different views of how ADMs' roles are changing, whether the changes are for the better, and what these changes portend for the future.

Some believe that ADMs' jobs have become *smaller* . . . that they have been in some sense *hollowed out*. They feel that ADMs have less power and authority, less scope and less opportunity to lead on important issues and major files and to have real impact, than in the past.

The increased centralization of power, with decision-making being *pushed up*; the proliferation of new organizations and actors who must be involved on almost all issues and files; and the current risk-averse culture – are all seen as contributing factors to the *diminishing* of ADMs' roles.

Some also feel that the Public Service has become *over-layered* with too many senior levels and hierarchy, and that ADMs are being *squeezed* by the increase in the number of ADMs, in the number of Associate Deputies, and in the number as well of DGs below them.

*"There is a huge structural issue here for the Public Service"*

*"The Public Service is increasingly over-layered, there are too many organizational entities, and the Ministry is too big. There has been a burgeoning of organizations. We have not increased the size of the pie in terms of how much power there is . . . we have just cut it more finely"*

*"Power is both more diffuse and more centralized at the same time"*

*"No wonder ADMs' jobs seem smaller"*

*Key-informant interviews – former DM*

*"ADM's used to own the business of the Government. They were the ones who led and delivered on the key files. They were indispensable to setting and delivering on the policy agenda"*

*"We used to think that ADMs were where the rubber hits the road . . . they brought departmental knowledge and subject-matter expertise"*

*"But in recent years, decision-making has been pushed up, and knowledge pushed down"*

*"Today, ADMs are in danger of becoming little more than a glorified older executive assistant to the Deputy"*

*"We have been forced to become form-fillers rather than decision-takers"*

*"What's been the biggest change? ADMs' jobs have been devalued"*

*"In the past, ADMs were enormous figures. They were virtually a power unto themselves, they did their jobs without much 'interfering' from DMs, Ministers, Parliament or the public. They ran the big programs, led the big policy files. They also spent more time managing their own organization. Of course, it was a smaller, simpler universe then"*

*"And now . . . Decision-making is much more centralized. Ministers value policy advice from officials less. There are many more 'players' – more political advisers, more DGs and other EXs and more Associate DMs, and many more government organizations and agencies. And on-going fiscal restraint in the DRAP, post-DRAP, and future-DRAP world means less money to do things"*

*"So today, ADMs have become more 'stick-handlers', more doers of staff work to support the DM and Minister in following direction from the Centre. The Government is looking elsewhere for policy ideas. ADMs have much less scope for action and influence. They have to manage the cuts in their organization. And they are not having as much fun as in the past"*

*Key-informant interviews and ADM Roundtables*



Others feel that ADMs' jobs are simply *different* today, not smaller.

They argue that the world has changed, that public policy issues are more complex and interconnected, requiring different ways of working, different skill sets, and a different kind of ADM-leader.

In this view, ADMs' roles are seen to be changing in ways that are better suited to the nature of public administration and work in the Public Service of today and tomorrow.

Regardless of whether ADMs' jobs are seen as smaller or just different, ADMs' primary *work relationships* and use of time are seen as having changed. They are seen as becoming increasingly focused *upwards* with their DM and Minister, spending more time on issue- and *file-management* and less time managing their own organization.

Moreover, more restricted delegations to regional and program executives have required many ADMs to personally vet detailed files, a task that drains energy and time that might be devoted to larger, longer-term opportunities for reform.

ADMs are also required to spend more of their time working with their peers and colleagues in Central Agencies and other departments in order to advance their own files in the governmental system.

*"The days of the all-seeing, all-knowing, all-doing super-ninja mandarin are long gone"*

*"Our job is not to be the smartest policy wonk or resident expert"*

*"Our job is to lead our organization, to articulate and communicate vision, to lead and empower our staff to innovate, take risks, and find creative solutions"*

*"Previously, ADMs were supposed to be the experts in their area. Now, their role is to 'help others bloom', bring out the talents of others"*

*"The challenge for public-sector leaders of the future will be to be able to lead on issues where you do not have power and authority, where you don't 'own' the issue, where you don't have all the tools to act on it"*

*"This means leading through communication, dialogue, collaboration, consensus-building and negotiation"*

Key-informant interviews and ADM Roundtable participants

*"One-third of an ADM's job is to deliver on current files and issues. One-third is to work on the longer-term for their own organization. One-third is corporate within the department. What is missing (forget the math!) is ADMs playing a more corporate role for the Public Service as a whole"*

*"There has been a strong drift towards managing up. ADMs are spending too much time managing up to the DM, Minister and political level, and to Central Agencies. ADMs are absent from their own offices and organizations, spending their time in DMO and MO. There are fewer rewards for managing their own organization"*

*"ADMs now spend much more of their time on the care and feeding of their Deputy. DMs expect ADMs to jump when they call, and much of organizational management is left to the DG level"*

*"The senior Public Service works in an aquarium now. There has been a loss of traditional Public Service anonymity"*

Key-informant interviews and ADM Roundtable participants

At the same time, ADMs are seen as less engaged than DMs with respect to broader, corporate or horizontal responsibilities across the Public Service.

There has also been a trend for ADMs to be called upon to devote more of their time and energy to *external* relations: working with other levels of government; international relationships; and, although this has not been the case under the current Government, interaction with the general public, stakeholders, and the media. In this regard, ADMs were seen as assuming a somewhat greater public presence and visibility. ADMs are also increasingly being expected to be able to respond quickly and across a broad spectrum of issues '24/7'. ADMs feel they always have to be *on*, that they are continually *under the gun*.

An issue raised repeatedly by ADMs was the lack of a strong sense of ADM *community*, and of opportunities for networking, learning together, and engaging in dialogue with colleagues.

A related – and perhaps more disturbing finding – was the lack of a sense of attachment and service to the larger *corporate* Public Service. ADMs feel they have few opportunities to take on broader responsibilities across the wider Public Service. And many say that, despite the *talk* of 'horizontality', they find themselves still working in vertical silos, focused on 'delivering' for their own DM and Minister.

These perceptions on the part of ADMs – and the realities that appear to lie behind them – are worrisome since the ADM cadre will be critical to the leadership of the Public Service as it faces significant challenges and change in the coming years.

### ***Whether ADMs should be specialists or generalists?***

The issue of whether ADMs should be subject-matter specialists or generalists was the subject of sharply different views.

A concern expressed, often very strongly, by many who participated in the study is that ADMs are becoming more *generalists*. While acknowledging that there are still specialist ADMs in a number of areas, they are worried that ADMs, and DMs as well, are no longer expected to master and lead on *content* in a policy, program or service area.

The Public Service is seen as being increasingly at risk of creating a *generic managerial class* – focusing too much or almost exclusively on management skills and competencies, with a view that a *manager-is-a-manager-is-*

*a-manager*, and under-valuing *knowledge* and *expertise* in subject matter. There is concern that *knowledge is being pushed too far down* in departments, and that DMs and ADMs are no longer expected to master or lead content-wise in a policy or program area.

*“ADMs have become more managers, they have less knowledge and expertise, less content. But it is anathema to have senior managers who have no content expertise or even interest”*

*“The Public Service has been suffering from a plethora of generalists, of persons who are not professionally competent in the business they are leading”*

*“You cannot divorce subject-matter knowledge and feel from the job of an ADM, you can’t have some kind of content-free generic ADM-as-super-manager”*

*“Knowledge competency among senior managers seems to have dropped dramatically. This is wrong. The Public Service should consider itself one of the learned professions, with senior managers bringing deep and strategic thinking leadership capacity to the area they are leading”*

*“It is absolutely wrong to have ADMs who are generic managers, divorced from policy and content. There has been a kind of managerialization of ADM jobs in recent years, bringing those jobs down below what they should be. What we need is more professionalism”*

*“The Public Service needs to move to more place-based leadership. I don’t mean geography. It’s about understanding deeply the place you are in (the policy or program or service area or function) and all its dimensions, context, drivers, issues and challenges. True leaders work from the place they find themselves in ... They are not just accountants”*

Key-informant interviews

Others argue that today's Public Service leaders should not necessarily be the best policy *wonk* or the individual with the most subject-matter knowledge and expertise.

While none would see or advocate ADMs' jobs as being devoid of content, they consider that the days of individuals spending their entire career in a single department or policy or program area, mastering subject-matter content and eventually rising to the ADM and DM levels, are long past.

They believe that ADMs need strong management and leadership capabilities, and a wide breadth of experience, *as well as* subject-matter knowledge, and that such individuals will make better and more effective leaders in the Public Service of today and tomorrow.

*"You used to become an ADM because you had policy smarts or you had subject-matter expertise. Management and leadership skills were not sought, were not even asked about. At most, there was a presumption that you could manage, at worst a view that it wasn't important"*

*"But the best person to be an ADM is not necessarily the one with the most knowledge and expertise. It's more important to be able to lead and to get the 100 people who work for you working effectively"*

*"True effectiveness comes from mobilising excellent resources under you, not by doing everything yourself"*

*The number one thing for future ADMs will be managing people"*

Key-informant interviews – former DM

*"The Public Service needs all three: managerial leadership, subject-matter knowledge, and deep public-service ethos"*

*"ADMs have to have passion and interest and enough content – or the interest and ability to get content – to be able to both manage and lead. I'm not saying ADMs have to be narrow content specialists. They have to be people who have the aptitude to get into the policy or program area or functional area so they can be true, effective leaders"*

*"But in order to lead you also have to have, in part, sufficient content . . . We need senior leaders who are people who do not have a narrow specialization but the capacity to get enough content to be an effective and credible leader"*

Key-informant interviews

***Whether ADMs are moving too frequently . . . and whether they are making the right moves***

The frequency and rapidity of movement among ADMs from job to job is seen as constituting considerable ‘churn’ within the management ranks of the Public Service, and was a serious concern for many participants in the study and other observers and commentators.

It is widely felt – and very strongly by many – that ADMs are moving too fast to be able to master their jobs and effectively lead their organization and deliver on important policy and

program or service or operational issues. Such movement on the part of senior leaders is seen as disruptive and harmful to the effectiveness of the organization and the Public Service overall.

The current situation of ADMs staying on average only two years or less in a position is felt to be unacceptable, and there are many advocates for establishing a longer term of 3-4 years as the desirable *norm*, although imposing a mandatory term for all ADMs is neither feasible nor desirable.

A related concern for many is the *limited nature of ADM movement*, as it suggests that ADMs may not be widening or deepening their experience significantly despite the frequent moves. As noted earlier, it appears that much of the movement by ADMs occurs *within* the same organization and within the same type of ADM position. As a result, both ADMs themselves and the Public Service as a whole may not be benefiting from ADMs enhancing and expanding their experience, knowledge and skills through different challenges and varied assignments and position changes.

*“Most ADMs are not staying long enough in any job to learn or do anything”*

*“ADMs now come with a ‘best-before two years’ date. They collect different job experiences like you collect stamps in a passport, on the way to promotion”*

*“How can we expect them to inculcate the knowledge and values of their department and provide professional and expert advice and leadership?”*

*“Why would a Minister listen to an ADM if they have been in their job or had experience in that policy or program area for a shorter time than the Minister?”*

*“How can you have subject-matter knowledge, how can you have any content, when you only stay in a job for a year or two?”*

*“Too-frequent movement means there is a lack of ‘bite’ among current ADMs, and, for them, less satisfaction in their jobs”*

Key-informant interviews

Some argue that the fact that much ADM movement is internal is important from the perspective of depth of knowledge and institutional understanding, and also that it acts to mitigate the negative effects on organizations of too much movement. Others see it as compounding the problem of churn – the *worst of both worlds*, as some put it – as we may well be seeing both too-frequent moves by ADMs, to the detriment of the organization, and little *pay-off* in terms of individual and professional development for the longer-term benefit of the organization and the Public Service as a whole.

Taken together with the almost exclusive staffing of ADM positions from within the Public Service – and frequently from within the same organization – there is concern that ADMs in the Public Service may lack the breadth and depth of experience, knowledge and skills that they will need to be effective leaders in the Public Service of tomorrow.

***Different skills for different times – The skills and qualities ADMs will need in the future***

There is widespread agreement that future ADMs will need different skill sets than ADMs in the past, a broader and deeper range of knowledge and more varied experience, and, especially, strong leadership qualities and abilities.

Skills and abilities that it is felt will be increasingly vital include:

- The ability and capacity for *strategic thinking* and to develop a *longer-term vision* and strategies, synthesizing and integrating a wide diversity of views and inputs and using ‘good radar’, foresight, and systems thinking

*“ADM jobs are not and cannot be generic. They are what they have to be, whatever is needed. The real question is what kind of leadership should ADMs provide?”*

*“ADMs today are not really what they will have to be for the Public Service of the future. They lack the breadth and depth of experience that future Public Service leaders will demand. They have grown up vertically in their own department and in the same field of public policy and type of work. They are not well prepared to lead the Public Service of tomorrow”*

*“The ADMs of the future will have to have a broader understanding of how stuff works. And they will have to acquire the skills and knowledge and experience they will need through hands-on work. . . . We will have to send people to do the hard things”*

*“ADM leaders will have to operate within a greater integration of policy, program management, and financial management in the future”*

*“Future ADMs will have to be all about flexibility and reacting quickly. ADMs will be more public figures, and will have to be able to respond on the spot. They will also need a thick skin.”*

*“ADMs will have to be tech-savvy and world-savvy and more innovative. Future ADMs will also need a sense of humility, they will have to know when to ask for help, and where. The days of the hero mentality are no more”*

*“The ADMs of the future will need a more systems view. They will have to understand and be able to work effectively in complex systems and appreciate how they work. They will need complex systems-thinking skills”*

*“For example, how will the PS support policy-making in the future? You won’t be able to ‘do’ policy unless you are providing advice within a broader system of knowledge and views. You will have to have connections to thought-leaders in both the private and para-public sectors. This should be part of the excellence towards which the Public Service of the future must strive. The apparatus of policy-making is much wider than the way we conceive it now . . . And it’s more than just knowing how to move an MC”*

Key-Informant interviews and ADM Roundtables

- Strength in *innovation* and thinking – and working – *outside-the-box*
- A focus on *getting stuff done*, on concrete and measurable results, on *delivering*
- Better *management* skills, generally
- *Stronger people management* skills
- ‘*Soft*’ skills, such as communications and interpersonal relations, negotiating
- The ability to work effectively *horizontally* – with other departments and agencies, with other governments in Canada, with the private and not-for-profit sectors and with communities, across policy sectors, and internationally
- The ability to manage in a more complex, more visible public environment, one of greater transparency, greater scrutiny and oversight, and less anonymity for senior public servants

In general, future ADMs are seen as needing *broader* and *deeper* experience – in operations, in service delivery, in policy; in Central Agencies; in regions; in intergovernmental and international affairs; and outside the public sector, in the private and voluntary sectors and the academic world.

There is broad consensus, among ADMs themselves as well as other observers and commentators, that *leadership* qualities and competencies will be more important than specific skill sets.

Key leadership qualities include the ability to articulate and communicate a vision; to motivate, lead and inspire staff; and to bring together, manage and empower multi-talented teams.

*“Today, you have to be able to watch the whole screen, not just do a few things well”*

*“Vision is critical for ADMs as leaders – not only knowing how to get things done but also where you want to go”*

*“ADMs need energy, passion, the ability to lead a team, to imagine a different future, to plan for and lead and manage change”*

*“Vision, passion, the ability to communicate and to motivate will be key attributes of ADMs”*

ADM Roundtable participants

Personal qualities that will be required include integrity; *adaptability* and flexibility; *emotional intelligence*, including compassion and empathy; passion for their work; ‘social awareness’, including understanding of cross-cultural differences and differences across generations;

'worldliness' in the sense of practicality and knowledge and experience of 'real life'; and energy, stamina, courage, and personal resilience.

A cultural change will also be needed on the part of our future Public Service leaders, in recognition of changed fiscal and economic realities and public and political expectations, emphasizing effectiveness and efficiency, value-for-money and results.

*"For the future, we will need to see a big cultural shift on the part of our senior Public Service executives. Previously, there was prestige in building new – and often costly – policies and programs. But the main legacy of that culture has been debt"*

*"The Public Service of the future will need a different mindset, one focused on outcomes and efficiencies. Not on the most expensive programs but the best programs for the least cost and available dollars. And supported by the metrics of productivity"*

Key-informant interviews – former DM

*"Profound changes are coming . . . the Public Service will continue to shrink . . . it will be smaller and more professional . . . it will need skilled generalists and high-end polyvalent people with more varied and deeper experience than in the past"*

*"Technology and information will drive huge change in the Public Service and how it works, real business transformation and re-design, not just shifts"*

*"Most important for the future will be the ability to lead, to take responsibility, to know when to step in . . . and have the courage to do so"*

*"ADMs will have to be able to give 'tough advice'. They will need good people skills. They will have to know how to communicate, to empower and not disempower. They will have to be able to take hard decisions . . . to lay people off, for example . . . to both 'push' and 'pull'. They will need inner strength and resilience. They will have to be both 'tough' and 'charming"*

*"Future ADMs will need much more breadth of experience and a strong and varied portfolio of talents, to have moved around different disciplines, to be a bit of a specialist as well as a generalist"*

*"What should aspirants to be ADMs do to get there? Don't have 'pencil careers'. Get experience doing a wide variety of things, doing the hard things. Take the next 'good' job, a 'real' job, a hard job. Don't take assignments just to check things off on paper. My advice is to get as much breadth and depth of experience as possible. Policy and operations, for example. And get the hell out of Ottawa! Get regional experience, which is not valued at present, find out how things work on the ground. Work in another jurisdiction in Canada or another country"*

Key-informant interviews and ADM Roundtables



## How to recruit, develop, and support ADMs

The recruitment, development, management, and support of our future ADMs was the subject of much discussion and debate among participants in the interviews and Roundtables.

Many feel that more external recruitment of ADMs would be very difficult. They see it as critically important to have ADM leaders who have ‘grown up’ in the Public Service, with Public Service values and ethics, who know and understand how the system works, how decisions are taken, and who have developed a personal network among their peers.

They point out that for many who come from *outside*, integration into the Public Service at senior levels is often very difficult, particularly for persons coming from the private sector. They emphasize the multiple objectives and ever-fluctuating ambiguities that the public sector must pursue, as compared to the single bottom-line of the private sector.

Others argue that *some* increase in the number of ADMs recruited externally would be of value, bringing new skill sets and knowledge and experience. They emphasize that this would require more and better supports for new ADM recruits, and also suggest that it might be desirable to do more external recruiting one or two levels below ADM, as a better entry point for recruits from outside the Public Service.

The question of how to manage the ADM *cadre* within the Public Service was also the subject of much discussion, and different views.

*“The process for appointment to ADM needs to be more open and more porous. But we must continue to recruit our senior leadership from within the Public Service ranks”*

*“Public Service leaders need to be imbued with the culture and professional ethic of public service, and devotion to the public interest. A long period of apprenticeship is needed”*

*“There is a certain snobbism now, with what, 95% or more of ADMs coming from within the ranks of the Public Service. We could significantly ‘up the game’ for the quality of senior management cadre if we brought in more people from the outside, with a smart system of supports in place for them”*

*“We need a bigger strategy to make sure the Public Service will have the leadership it will need – a strategy over a longer period of time, that looks to the development of people at EX and pre-EX levels, and also looks outside the Public Service”*

*“Future ADMs will have to be very culturally grounded, in the sense of reflecting Canadians back to themselves and relating to Canadians across the country. Right now, the average Canadian is not what we look like”*

Key-informant interviews and ADM Roundtables

Canada, like most modern states, has adopted different approaches over the years to the management of its ADM group, in response to changing needs and circumstances<sup>33</sup>.

In the late 1990s, in the context of the *La Relève* Public Service reform initiative, the *ADM Collective Management* approach was introduced, intended to focus on accelerated development and the promotion of promising candidates, as well as better succession planning. This included the creation of an ADM Pre-Qualified Pool (PQP) to identify qualified ADMs, which continued until 2005. Important features of the PQP included appointment to level (rather than to a specific ADM position); prequalification to ensure an adequate pool of ADMs was available at all times; and promotion to ADM based on readiness (rather than a requirement to fill a particular ADM position).

The *Public Service Modernization Act* of 2006 introduced new flexibilities in human resources management practices, and a new Talent Management process provided support for the development and appointment of ADMs. A new Public Service human resources management regime was introduced in 2009, providing Deputy Heads with the primary responsibility for managing the people in their own departments, including leadership development and talent management. The *Leadership Development Framework for the Public Service* was adopted to enable the shift from centrally-led leadership to Deputy Head accountability, with central agencies providing support to DMs in their new responsibilities.

Further to consultations in 2010 with ADMs and others, Treasury Board Secretariat announced in 2011 that a new *ADM Collective Leadership* approach was being adopted. The underlying principles of this approach are: ADMs' responsibility for their own learning and career development; clarified roles for Deputy heads and central agencies; support for ADM community and networking; recognition that "executive development is most effective when done on the job"; and emphasis on "breadth and depth of experience [as a] prerequisite for senior executives' effectiveness". Key features of the new approach include strengthened communications with ADMS and improved transparency and clarity; support for individual ADM career management; and a Governance Framework intended to "enable broad enterprise-wide discussions and knowledge sharing" as well as clear roles and responsibilities. "Clustered Deputy Head Reviews" are intended to support opportunities for more ADMs to be recognized among a broader group of Deputies and foster a common approach and standard for the assessment of ADM talent and potential<sup>34</sup>.

Many participants in the University of Ottawa study were critical of the earlier more collective approach and sceptical about how *collective* it was in actuality. At the same time, many felt that delegation to DMs under the subsequent approach to ADM management had perhaps gone too far.

ADM participants in the study were very critical of what they perceived as a *lack of openness and transparency* in processes for the management of ADMs – including recruitment and appointment, opportunities for and decisions about new assignments, performance assessment, and promotion to EX 05 and to the DM level.

They also criticized the lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities in the management of ADMs – between DMs, PCO, Treasury Board Secretariat/Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, and the Committee of Senior Officials (COSO). ADMs decried as well a lack of opportunities for *networking* and *learning together*, and for *dialogue* and discussion with their peers on key issues of import for the ADM community.

ADMs indicated that they were taking a *wait-and-see* approach with regard to the new management regime.

It is also clear that, beyond the question of ADM management, in order to ensure that Canada will have the future public-sector leaders it will need, it will be vitally important for the whole process of developing our future leaders to begin much earlier – in selecting and developing EXs and even the levels before that. ADMs are generally appointed, as we have seen, when they are close to 50 years old, and by-and-large have only a few years at that level before they retire. Solutions to getting the ADM leaders we will need will have to be found beginning at earlier levels of people's careers.

### III. HOW CANADA’S ADMs COMPARE WITH EXECUTIVES IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS AND SECTORS

It was not feasible in the context of this study to undertake an in-depth comparison of ADM-equivalents in other jurisdictions – provincial and territorial governments in Canada and public administrations in other states – or the private sector. However, a number of observations can be made further to a scan of recent literature and relevant studies as well as interviews conducted with senior officials from several provinces, senior officials and researchers in the United Kingdom, and individuals with private-sector experience at senior levels.

#### *Provincial/Territorial administrations*

There are important differences between the federal and provincial/territorial public-sector administrations in Canada. At the same time, these different administrations are also facing similar challenges.

*“ADMs are critical. They run the government, at both the federal and provincial levels”*

Key-informant interviews – former Provincial Privy Council Clerk

All public administrations in Canada are being challenged to respond to a changing social, economic, and fiscal context, the increasing impacts of globalization, and rapid and transformative technological advances. All governments are dealing with fiscal restraint and the pressures for reductions in spending and the down-sizing of the public service; with changing and rising political and public expectations regarding results, accountability, and value-for money. All are looking for new ways of delivering and improving services, with greater efficiency and effectiveness, and based on a citizen-centric model.

*“There is an ambiguity of expectations today for ADMs and other senior public-sector leaders, wherever they work. Expectations about the effective implantation of policy decisions and programs and services, using new delivery mechanisms. Expectations about managing their own organizations. About meeting budget targets. And about the international context and globalisation”*

Key-informant interviews – Provincial ADM

Many provincial administrations have also seen, as at the federal level, an increasing centralization of power and decision-making, greater numbers of political assistants and policy advisers, and changing roles, relationships and boundaries between the bureaucratic and political levels.

A 2003 study, for example, comparing the Ontario public service to the federal government and to other Westminster-style public administrations (Australia and New Zealand as well as the UK) found that all were struggling with changing understandings and practices regarding

Ministerial responsibility, public servants' accountabilities, their traditional anonymity, and public service values and ethics, and had taken a variety of approaches and measures to addressing these issues<sup>35</sup>.

There are a number of important similarities in the composition of the senior-management cadre in the federal and provincial-territorial public services.

Most senior provincial/territorial officials, as at the federal level, are recruited from within the ranks of their own public service, with little external recruitment – although a couple of provincial Deputies interviewed in the course of this study noted that provinces generally did have some success in 'luring' senior people from other provincial administrations. The participation of women in the executive ranks is similar to that at the federal level, with significantly increasing representation in recent years. Despite modest improvements, Visible Minority and Aboriginal Canadians continue to be under-represented. Like their federal counterparts, provincial and territorial ADMs and DMs are well educated, with almost all holding a university degree. As at the federal level, there is wide variation in their fields of study, with no one field or another predominating; this is seen by some researchers as orienting public administrations in Canada more towards the generalist or more managerial senior executive<sup>36</sup>.

Age profiles also appear to be similar; a recent (2007) study found that 56% of all DMs and ADMs in public services at the federal and provincial levels were between the ages of 50 – 59 (although 62% of territorial DMs and ADMs were *under 50*)<sup>37</sup>. Like the federal government, provinces and territories are facing an ageing senior management cadre, with impending retirements expected in increasing numbers, and the need to renew their executive cadre.

A 2004 Ontario study, for example, estimated that 56% of the Ontario public service's senior managers would be eligible for retirement by 2014<sup>38</sup>.

*"The ageing of the senior management cadre can only get worse given the demographic bubble, which is a ticking time-bomb, and it raises concerns about the capacity to recruit or develop sufficient numbers of ADMs with the required skills and experience"*

*"In our province, the ADM community is now actually older than the DM community"*

Key-informant interviews – Provincial DM

The issue of high *turnover* and *churn* is similarly one of concern for provinces and territories.

A study of movement in all public administrations in Canada several years ago reported similar levels of frequent executive movement in provinces and territories as at the federal level, in the period 1988-1996. The study found the average level of turnover (movement in-and-out) in provinces and territories at the ADM level was running at over 30%, with similar levels for provincial/territorial DMs. In terms of length of time in position, the study found that 46% of *all* ADMs and DMs, at the federal, provincial and territorial levels, had held their current position for two years or less, and another 34% from two to five years<sup>39</sup>.

*“There has been increasing frequency in the change of DMs and ADMs, at both the federal and provincial levels. They are just not staying very long in a job”*

*“Provincial officials used to get to know their federal counterparts and establish working relationships with them. The tendency to more ‘churn-and-burn’ in the appointments and movements of DMs and ADMs means that this is no longer the case. This does have an impact – a negative one – on relationships and the ability of federal and provincial officials to work together on files and issues”*

Key-informant interviews – Provincial DM

Key-informant interviews confirmed that these trends have been continuing, and are a matter of concern in most jurisdictions.

There also appear to be significant differences between the federal Public Service and provincial and territorial administrations in some respects, notably organizational structures, the roles and responsibilities of senior executives and the nature of their work.

Provincial and territorial administrations are generally much smaller in size than the federal Public Service. They also tend to have a smaller executive cadre and a flatter management structure; for example, the Director General (DG) level is largely non-existent in Provincial/Territorial administrations, and directors and managers report directly to the ADM.

*“How do federal and provincial ADMs compare? Size matters. Administrations in provinces are smaller, flatter, closer to the community and clientele, and to the politicians. They are more operational, focussed on services, closer to delivery at the coal-face”*

*“The role of a provincial ADM is easier in some respects, and harder in others. The government and the public service are smaller. You are more visible within the bureaucracy and publicly. You interact more directly and frequently with the political level, including other Ministers and not just your own. Issues are more immediate and impact people directly”*

*“Provinces have always seen the federal administration as a huge policy brain, with much greater capacity for research, analysis and policy development than provinces”*

Key-informant interviews – former Provincial Privy Council Clerk

Provincial/Territorial administrations are seen as closer to clients, and focused more on service delivery, and less on policy.

They are also seen as working more closely with the political level on a daily basis. It was noted that there has been a tendency in some jurisdictions for DMs and even ADMs to be changed when a new government of a different political stripe comes into office.

With smaller numbers of provincial and territorial ADMs, some see the jobs themselves as *bigger*. The scope of provincial and territorial ADM jobs is seen by many as broader than at the federal level, in terms of both operational and service delivery requirements and the ability to take action and assume responsibility. Provincial and territorial ADMs are seen as having greater decision-making authority, and clearer accountabilities. Some provincial officials interviewed in the course of the study were in fact quite critical of the limited mandate and scope of authority of federal ADMs, at least in terms of their dealings with them.

*"Most provincial ADMs find federal ADMs useless in terms of their dealings with them and advancing files. They have a very limited mandate, they offer little information, they try to make deals with smaller jurisdictions and divide-and-conquer . . . They just smile and keep on moving . . ."*

*"It's a mandate problem, not a people one. I have dealt with federal ADMs who were stunning people"*

Key-informant interviews – former Provincial DM

All provinces and territories have begun reforms in their public service in order to address the challenges of diminished fiscal capacity, new social and economic realities, public-sector downsizing, and ever-changing technologies. Provincial and territorial administrations, like the federal government, are working to strengthen and renew their senior-management cadre and ensure that they will have the right kinds of executive leaders for the future. A 2012 study reported that six provinces had adopted formal talent management approaches to managing their key human resources, using either an 'executive' model focused on their most senior managers or a 'strategic' model across the public sector, and introduced a wide variety of strategies and measures regarding recruitment, planning, deployment, development, and assessment<sup>40</sup>.

## **Private sector**

Key-informant interviews provided insight into how senior executives compare in the public and private sectors. A review of relevant literature and research studies also provided some information and analysis, although most studies appear to be more qualitative in nature and there is relatively little solid comparative statistical data available. Most studies, as well, tend to focus on Deputy Minister comparisons with CEOs, rather than on ADMs and their private-sector equivalents, although the DM/CEO comparisons can be instructive.

Overall, the differences between senior executives in the two sectors are seen as significant, with regard to the nature of executives' work.

It has long been observed that the private sector has a single bottom line, driven by profit, while the public sector has multiple and often competing objectives to balance.

Private-sector executives are seen as having greater decision-making authority, without the multiple oversight bodies of the public sector. Decision-making and management processes and structures are less onerous and complex. Accountabilities are clearer in the private sector and more susceptible to results measurement, based on net earnings and profits.

*“Public-sector senior jobs are more complex – defining the success indicators is more complex; there are many more moving parts; and melding good public policy with political reality takes ingenuity”*

*“Private-sector executives do not have the same constraints, like staffing, the same oversight, or the same focus on process as in the Public Service”*

*“Their focus is on measureable results, which are clearly identified, essentially in terms of money and profit. In pursuit of those results, private-sector executives can hire and fire to get the people they need, and they do not have the same daily – and multiple – oversight with which public-sector executives must contend”*

Key-informant interviews – former ADM and private-sector executives

The senior executive ranks in the two sectors appear to be relatively similar in some demographic respects, notably age (average in the mid-fifties) and education levels, although there tends to be a lower percentage of women senior executives in the private sector.



Many of those interviewed, however, emphasized differences between the two sectors in terms of the composition of the senior-management group. The *age range* of executives in the private sector is seen as broader than for Public Service executives, with more individuals getting to the VP level in their late 30s, and working as senior VPS in their 40s. There are also seen to be fewer generalists in the private sector, with senior managers being promoted because of their expertise, knowledge, and experience, as well as proven performance in the sector. Another difference is that there appears to be more frequent movement among ADMs than their private-sector equivalents.

*"Senior executives in the private sector are much more diversified than those in the Public Service in terms of their background, experience, and interests"*

*"The Public Service has more generalists at senior levels than the private sector. Private-sector executives usually get there because of their specific knowledge and expertise and experience: you know the business and you have proven yourself a leader"*

Key-informant interviews – HR consultant

An important area of difference between the two sectors that was frequently underlined in key-informant interviews was human resources management and professional and leadership development.

There is, of course, much greater flexibility in the private sector in human resources management, notably with respect to compensation and benefits.

The private sector is also seen as having a very focused and corporate-driven approach to development of senior managers, an approach that is keyed to specific needs and priorities of the corporation.

For example, individuals are sent on assignments to acquire specific skills or experience needed for their *next* position, in perceived contrast to practice in the Public Service. At the same time, however, the private sector is seen as making less specific investment in the development of individuals.

*"In my experience, the biggest difference between the public and private sectors was that in the latter the HR people were your allies, not the enemy who told me what you couldn't do"*

*"Training gets a much higher priority in the private sector. But it is job-specific. And there is constant attention and effort on developing the management pool of people . . ."*

*"Of course the private sector is also brutal in getting rid of people who are not performing"*

Key-informant interviews

A widely-held view expressed by private sector leaders is that the Public Service needs to adopt more of a private-sector approach to management, services, and human-resources practices.

### ***Other countries – the United Kingdom***

As noted earlier, it was not possible, in the context of the present study, to undertake an in-depth examination of ADM-equivalents in other states.

However, a number of interviews were conducted with senior officials, academics and researchers in the United Kingdom, who generously shared their time as well as data and background documents, studies and reports on the British civil service.

While there are of course important differences between Canada and the UK in terms of the nature and role of the state and the organization of public administration, it is interesting to compare the experience of the two countries with their senior-management cadre. The Canadian Public Service was, after all, broadly modelled on that of the UK.

The UK government and civil service have experienced significant change in recent years, further to daunting economic and fiscal crises and the formation of a coalition government.

*“A revolution is underway in Whitehall. Confronted by budget cuts on a scale far greater than any since the end of the Second World War, a radical policy agenda and supporting a coalition government, Whitehall is facing enormous challenges . . .”*

*“Whitehall is at a turning point. The rapid change of pace to date belies a deeper fragility and challenges ahead”*

Institute for Government, [Leading major change in Whitehall departments](#)  
November 2012

While there had been reductions by previous administrations in the size of the civil service, the current context has led to very large cuts in public expenditures and in the size of the civil service, and important changes in the structure and workings of government. There have been large-scale departures from the senior ranks of the civil service as well; a third of senior civil servants are reported to have left over the last two years<sup>41</sup>. Overall, the UK civil service has shrunk by 54,000 full-time-equivalents (11%) since a 2010 Spending review<sup>42</sup>. The Government’s Civil Service Reform Plan estimates that by 2015 the civil service will be almost one-quarter (23%) smaller than it was in March 2010. Currently (2013), the size of the UK civil service stands at around 400,000<sup>43</sup>.

There appear to be several important differences between ADMs in the Canadian Public Service and their equivalents in the UK administration. These include: the size of the ADM/equivalent cadre; the extent to which there is external recruitment; the overall approach to the management and development of senior leaders; and the sense among ADMs/equivalents in the two countries of being part of a community, of being a corporate resource.

What is perhaps most striking is the difference in the relative size of the executive cadre in the two countries. Proportionately, the size of the Director General (ADM-equivalent) community in the UK is less than half the size of the ADM community in the Canadian Public Service.

The “Senior Civil Service” (SCS) in the UK is comprised of 38 Permanent Secretaries (DM-equivalent), 143 DGs (ADM-equivalent), 723 Directors (DG-equivalent), and 2990 Deputy Directors (March 2012). Overall, the Senior Civil Service is less than 1% of the entire civil service<sup>44</sup>.

One way to compare the size of the executive cadre in the UK and Canada is to look at the ratio of executives to employees. While there is less than one executive for every 100 employees of the civil service in the UK, there are about 2.5 executives for every 100 employees of the core public service in Canada. In fact, for every 100 employees of the core public service, there is more than one executive at the EX 1 level alone.

Also striking in terms of differences between the two countries is that there is a significantly higher proportion of senior ranks appointed from outside the civil service in the UK, as compared to Canada. This has resulted from a conscious decision to do more external recruitment, beginning several years ago (under the previous Labour governments).

41% of the current *Top 200* group of senior civil servants in the UK were ‘external entrants’ (appointed from outside the civil service, including recruitment from the broader public sector, e.g. local authorities as well as from the private sector). 23% of the entire Senior Civil Service were external entrants<sup>45</sup>. Although external recruitment (at the DG and other levels) has declined recently, 55% of DG competitions since January 2011 have been through ‘open’ (external) competitions, and 8 of 49 DG appointments were from outside the civil service.

The UK put strong supports in place to facilitate external recruitment, thereby enhancing the possibilities of success. For example, the interview process included a specific assessment of the supports that would be needed by external recruits; strong on-boarding programs were set up at both the departmental and corporate levels; and mentor and 'buddy' systems were also established for new senior recruits. There was also some discretion available in salary levels enabling the offer of higher salaries for persons recruited from outside the civil service, both from the private sector and from local authorities, as senior people in those sectors are generally recognized to be paid more than their counterparts in the civil service. Since 2011, UK departments have not been able to use this discretion as much, given budget cuts and pay freezes.

A further difference with Canadian experience and practice is that the UK, overall, appears to have adopted a very strong and pro-active *corporate* leadership approach to its talent management strategy for the senior ranks, to a greater extent than has been the case in our Public Service. This approach has been adopted, in part, to address skill gaps and shortcomings identified within the senior ranks of the UK civil service, and a sense that future senior leaders will need broader and deeper experience than in the past. In particular, there is currently a strong focus on *improving operational delivery*. Key skill gaps have been identified and priorities set for development and training, e.g. project management; 'commercial' and 'commissioning' skills; managing risks and *taking* risks; innovation. A *Major Projects Leadership Academy* has been established to train senior leaders, and in future successful completion of the Academy program will be a requirement to lead a large-scale project. A new *Commissioning Academy* is also being established to focus on commissioning and contracting skills.

Specific developmental programs have been put in place in the UK administration targeting different groups and levels: e.g. the 'Top 200' initiative and the Accelerated Development for DGs deemed ready for promotion; an Exchange Program for DGs seen as needing further development; and a High Potential Development Scheme for Directors considered ready for promotion.

Overall, the UK has placed a focus on *professionalism* in civil service. To support this, it has adopted a *talent groups or skills clusters/communities* model for the management and development of its executive cadre. Each group or cluster/community is responsible to develop qualifications and standards specific to their field, and to identify skill gaps and design

development and learning programs and initiatives. These include cross-departmental movement to broaden and deepen experience, and connecting members to the broader professional community in each area outside civil service.

The *Heads of Profession* approach complements the clusters/communities model, and is an important vehicle for the implementation of these objectives. Currently, some 22 “professions” are recognized in the UK civil service, although it is felt that this is too large

*“The old idea of a Civil Service ‘generalist’ is dead – everyone needs the right combination of professionalism, expert skills and subject matter expertise . . .”*

*“It should no longer be possible for civil servants, except in the most specialist roles, to get to very senior levels without having worked outside of a single department of the Centre of Government, or having worked in more than one type of role . . . The new common standards for promotion will require evidence of success in gaining broader experience as part of promotion to Director level and above”*

The Civil Service Reform Plan June 2012

a number and the intention is to integrate some professions. The work of some professions is more advanced than others, for example in fields such as Finance or Human Resources where it is possible to build on the standards of the relevant professional body; in other areas, such as Policy or Program Management, the civil-service profession must develop its own standards.

The Head of Profession is a senior-level and well-respected leader in his or her professional community, and current practice is that they are normally named from within a ‘line’ department rather than a central agency. This is meant to underscore that the intention is one of fostering a *corporate* approach to senior talent management and development, rather than a *centralized* one. Support for the Heads of Profession can come from a variety of sources, including the Head’s own department, other departments, and sometimes the Cabinet Office or other central agencies.

*“Capability and talent will need to be managed and deployed corporately across the Civil Service, especially for high potentials and senior officials . . . [W]e need a stronger and collective focus . . .”*

*“The Civil Service does not always have the right capabilities in the right place to do what is needed. Digital skills are lacking in an organization committed to becoming ‘Digital by default’. With more services being commissioned from outside, the Civil service needs staff with commissioning and contracting skills; and project management skills need a serious upgrade . . .”*

*“Some skill gaps have already been identified, such as leading and managing change, commercial, financial, programme and project management, digital skills, skills in managing risk and the ability to drive continuous improvement . . . For too long, operational management and delivery has been undervalued with policy development . . . In future the leadership of the Civil Service will need to have much greater operational experience and ability”*

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The Heads of Profession are responsible for fostering a government-wide approach to ensure capability and professionalism, setting standards, identifying skill gaps, establishing developmental programs/assignments; and in general managing the talent pool for each professional community, including identifying strong performers and supporting their development; and encouraging links with the larger professional community.

The IT Head of Profession illustrates how the model works. The current (2013) IT Head of Profession is the CIO for the Department for Justice, and is supported by resources in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), which had been the 'home' of the previous IT Head of Profession, as well as some resources in other departments and agencies. Several work 'streams' have been established, including IT Leadership Development, Talent Management, Community Networks, Technology in Business, Apprenticeships, Accreditation, and Retention. In terms of developmental initiatives, for example, the IT Senior Leaders Development (SLD) Programme includes a 'CIO Scheme' and a 'Future Leader Scheme'; activities include workshops, 'master classes', and 'action-learning sets'. The IT Professional Board meets on a regular basis, usually monthly, to review progress with the different initiatives underway. The IT Senior Management Forum meets several times a year to discuss recruitment strategies, the 'sponsoring of high potentials', and talent management initiatives including 'managed moves', loans and secondments, and cross-government assignments.

#### **UK Government IT Talent Management Strategy**

*"A cross-government, profession wide approach to Talent Management and succession planning to develop and retain high calibre IT Professionals capable of delivering future IT strategies across the Civil Service"*

*"End benefits [include] increased capability, flexible resources, increased retention, reduced costs . . ."*

*"In line with Civil service reform, government wide assignments, moves and promotions help create a culture of a Civil Service IT Profession"*

*"[The strategy] identifies development needs, provides IT professionals with a range of development opportunities, including Managed moves, Loans and Secondments, Cross government assignments, Leadership programmes . . ."*

*"The aim of the Senior Leaders Development Programme is to deliver sustainable talent development schemes to raise the competence levels of IT professionals at Grade 6s and 7s and SCS across government to prepare them for the biggest and most senior roles . . ."*

*"[It] enhances the portfolio of IT professionals, offers [them] opportunities of further career development into senior roles, [and] creates the opportunity to network with other IT professionals from other government departments, the wider public sector and the private sector"*

Cross Government IT Talent Management

It is also important to note that, while the overall intention of the UK IT Talent Management Strategy is to develop a more professional IT community, with established standards and expectations, there is also recognition of an underlying need to develop the managerial capabilities of senior IT staff. IT services are increasingly being outsourced; IT staff will be more and more called upon to negotiate and manage external contracts with the private sector; they will need commissioning and project-management skills, negotiating skills and the ability to work with clients and stakeholders. Accordingly, it is recognized that professional development even in functional areas like IT cannot be too 'technical'. Future IT leaders, it is felt, will need to be more professional, but not in a *narrow* sense.

A final noteworthy difference between Canadian and UK experience, is the extent to which there appears to be a very strong sense on the part of executives in the UK Senior Civil Service of being a corporate resource and part of a management cadre. This can be contrasted with the reported weakness of such sentiments on the part of Canadian ADMs, as noted earlier.

The UK civil service has taken a number of initiatives to foster and encourage this sense of belonging to a corporate senior-management cadre. Leadership has come from the very top of the civil

service, with the Head of the Civil Service and the Cabinet Secretary making their expectations clear, setting for example the goal that DGs should work towards spending 50% of their time on corporate issues, and encouraging the establishment of groups or teams of DGs to work on corporate questions, including civil service reform itself. Greater efforts have also been taken to foster cross-government interventions for policy and program development initiatives, and to encourage corporate assignments and 'managed moves' (principally, lateral moves).

The expectation of this corporate sense is now embedded in the performance management system, for both DGs and Permanent Secretaries, with it being understood that if a DG is 'ambitious', seeking promotion, he or she must demonstrate a real corporate profile.

*"There has been considerable success in bringing DGs to see themselves as a corporate resource across government. It is important to distinguish between corporate and 'The Centre' . . . corporate means working together as a whole entity, not centralization . . ."*

*"There is a real sense of corporate community among DGs. Of course, the senior management group is small enough that it can still meet residentially. And those meetings, often with the PM as well as the Secretary to Cabinet in attendance, are prepared by 'pre-event events', seminars and workshops on specific themes or issues, in advance"*

UK key-informant interviews

As well, one of the proposed principles of civil service reforms is the expectation that DGs have a wider variety of experience before appointment to that level, with a minimum of at least two years' experience in each of several different areas. The expectation is also that individuals being promoted would have a solid track record in terms of achieving efficiencies and savings.

While determination of terms and conditions of employment for civil servants below the executive ranks is delegated to departments and agencies, with considerable variation among them, a more corporate approach has been taken for the senior management cadre. There is a *single civil service contract* for the Senior Civil Service for all levels and positions, although there is still some flexibility within pay bands. The intention of the common service contract is to encourage the sense of being part of a corporate executive cadre, and to facilitate the movement of senior personnel across the civil service. A mobility clause specifically provides for senior civil servants being moved to different positions, departments or locations as need and circumstances may require. Promotions, as well as the appointment and appraisal of DGs, are not managed corporately; however, new appointments and promotions are subject to a formal competitive process in almost all cases.

A Senior Leadership Committee (SLC), chaired by the Head of the Civil Service and including representation from the Civil Service Commission (a statutory body responsible to ensure merit and non-partisanship), provides central oversight to the creation of new DG positions in order to ensure broad consistency in terms of roles and scope, staffing through internal or open competition, and proposed salary levels. The SLC also takes a corporate overview of the DG cadre, notably with regard to *strong performers*, and a Talent Review Board plays a similar role at the Director level.



*“There has been significant change in recent years in the number, roles, and profile of the DG cadre in the UK civil service . . .”*

*“Earlier, there had been considerable growth in the senior ranks, as well as ‘grade inflation’. The number of DGs has been reduced in the last 2-3 years, particularly in those departments where the number of DGs was seen as being ‘disproportionate’ ”*

*“DG jobs have become, by-and-large, a different kind of job. For one thing, they have become much more massively operational. There was a recognition that management skills were weak. It was critical to change what was valued, which meant investing in line-management quality . . . The UK had gone too far towards the cult of the generalist, the civil servant who can ‘do anything’. The ‘system’ tended to over-value policy work, as well as generalists”*

*“The composition of the DG community has also changed and become more diverse, with external recruitment. Overall, there has been considerable churn and turn-over in the DG ranks”*

*“Efforts have been made, particularly in the last five years, and have been largely successful, in instilling a more corporate sense among DGs. Leadership from the top – the Cabinet Secretary and the Head of the Civil Service – has been instrumental”*

*“There is also now a strong sense that experience is what matters, that senior leaders are developed by working on ‘something real’, something that ‘matters’ . . . including much more cross-departmental work on important files”*

*“In times of severe restraint, salary freezes, and cutbacks, the rewards system for the senior ranks has had to change. Rewards are also about high profile work, and recognition, ‘air time’ with Ministers and Secretaries of State, cross-government assignments. There has been a real effort to get senior people, even just two or three, working together on important files and issues, on stuff that matters, with accountability, incentives, and rewards . . . and ‘free help’ from the Centre, that is how the Centre adds value. But there is a key difference between ‘corporate’ and ‘centralization’ ”*

UK key-informant interviews

In summary, the UK government is facing very formidable challenges in the current context, and has been taking aggressive action to reform and re-shape its civil service to help address them. The situation of the UK public administration is certainly not without its issues and problems, and still has a good distance to go in its civil-service reforms, including with regard to the development and management of its senior-executive cadre. A June 2013 report on the Senior Civil Service by the National Audit Office, for example, states that “the greatest challenge involves changing the long-standing culture of the SCS to create a leadership group that can lead change and think across traditional departmental boundaries”, noting that while there has been progress with the Top 200 in this regard, difficulties remain with respect to the deputy director level. The report also notes that the different professions are at widely varying stages of development.

The Canadian context is of course distinct from that of the UK. But it is also true that many of the issues and challenges faced by the two countries appear similar. The UK does not offer a model as such for the Canadian Public Service, but its experience offers a potential source of ideas and directions in shaping reform in Canada, and Canada could usefully consider the UK experience as it looks to the leadership future needs of our own Public Service.

*“We need the whole machine to be more agile, more focused on delivery and on getting results”*

Rt Hon David Cameron, Prime Minister

*“The Civil Service of the Future must look radically different”*

Sir Bob Kerslake, Head of the Civil Service

(Quoted in [The Civil Service Reform Plan](#))

## Conclusions and recommendations

The story of the Assistant Deputy Minister community over the last quarter-century has been one of growth, continuity and stability. ADMs have served Canada and the Public Service well.

But the world has changed. Canada has changed. The Public Service has changed, and it will need to change more in the future, in terms of *what* it does and *how* it does it.

The ADM community will also need to change, if ADMs are to lead the Public Service of tomorrow.

The findings of this study regarding the profile and evolution of the ADM community, and the important issues and concerns that have emerged, point to the need for action in a number of key areas.

Our conclusions and recommendations in these areas are offered below. A number of assumptions underlie these conclusions and recommendations:

*The Public Service will continue to be transformed by the impacts of globalisation and technology, the increasing inter-connectedness and complexity of public policy issues, and growing and changing public and political expectations.*

*The Public Service will be smaller. It will need to be more flexible and responsive, more innovative. It must embrace a culture of frugality, economy and efficiency, focusing on results and value-for-money. It will need to demonstrate excellence in policy advice and program and service delivery.*

*Different times will require different skills. The Public Service of the future will need the right kind of ADMs, with broader experience and knowledge, a wider range of skills, and stronger leadership and management capabilities.*

*The primary challenge for ADMs for the next few years will be to go beyond managing downsizing and to lead in the transformation and re-design of the Public Service.*

## KEY AREAS FOR ACTION

- I. **AS THE PUBLIC SERVICE BECOMES SMALLER, AND THE NATURE OF ITS WORK CONTINUES TO UNDERGO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE, THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO RETHINK THE ROLES OF PUBLIC SERVICE EXECUTIVES, AND TO SIMPLIFY AND DELAYER THE ORGANIZATION. AS PART OF THIS, ADMS CAN TAKE ON BIGGER ROLES FOCUSED ON LEADING CHANGE AND DELIVERING RESULTS. OVER TIME THIS WILL PERMIT A REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF ADM POSITIONS.**

However we interpret changes over the past generation in the role of ADMs, whether we see what has occurred as yielding smaller or just different jobs, the challenges of the future call for ADM leadership of a high order. Shaping the strategy for change across a substantial piece of a department; forging the plan for transformation; enlisting the support of Ministers, staff, colleagues across government, and stakeholders; building their teams; and ensuring successful execution of change while delivering on mandated services are tasks that constitute a big job.

By implication, the future ADM cannot be the person who knows everything in his or her domain, nor the one who personally stickhandles current issues at the expense of the bigger change agenda. ADMs will need to be given the space to lead on substance and implementation, trusting subordinates to master their own pieces of the action and to speak authoritatively as needed. Focusing ADMs in this way would create room for Directors General and Directors to play larger roles as well.

Thus clarifying the roles at each level of management is essential to successful delayering. Adapting to such arrangements would require DMs, central agencies, Ministers, and Ministerial staff to adjust their expectations. This may well prove difficult in an era of mistrust and intense sensitivity to communications issues. Care would be needed to understand fully what the challenges are, and how they might be managed so as to free more ADM time to focus on larger and longer-term reform. Care would also have to be taken to make sure that ADMs' jobs were "doable" and that individuals were able to maintain a healthy life balance.

The payoff from such change in terms of better results overall and a more streamlined management hierarchy can be substantial, at the same time offering public service executives at all levels greater job satisfaction and accelerated personal development.

Some delayering has already occurred, as a consequence of Strategic Review and the Deficit Reduction Action Plan. But there is an opportunity to do more, in a carefully considered way that re-energizes the public service leadership by helping them to focus on what is important. Simply cutting executive positions, including ADMs, without a careful rethinking of roles and responsibilities will merely overload and frustrate those who remain in these jobs and weaken the institution, with negative consequences for effectiveness and sustainability.

Departments and organizations should review and determine the structure of their senior management regime. Appropriate guidelines should be provided for this purpose. These could include, for example, suggestions concerning the 'room' between different management levels (e.g., between ADMs and their DGs and other direct reports and between EX3s and 2s and 1s), and the use (or, most likely, not) of Associate positions at the ADM and DG levels.

Expectations regarding the establishment of Associate DM positions, and their roles *vis-à-vis* ADMs, would also need to be clarified. For example, the creation of Associate DM positions could be restricted to situations where they were required for special and temporary tasks, or for a short transition period in cases of appointing the 'heir apparent' to succeed the DM.

These would be guidelines, not *hard-and-fast* rules. Each department and organization would need to carry-out a review of its senior management structure and levels, and the structure that suits its business and organizational culture.

The overall objectives, however, must be to achieve a de-layering and flattening of organizational structures, to clarify roles and expectations, and to position ADMs to *lead* in a more forceful way than at present. There would be *larger* ADM jobs, and, over time, fewer ADMs.

**Recommendations – Addressing the structural issue and right-sizing ADMs’ jobs**

*All Public Service departments and organizations should review their senior-management layers and levels with a view to streamlining and flattening the structure and clarifying roles, responsibilities and accountabilities*

*The reviews should include Associate Deputy Ministers, Assistant Deputy Ministers and Associate ADMs, Directors General and other direct reports to ADMs, and Directors*

*Clear guidelines and a specific timeframe should be provided to departments and organizations for these reviews*

**II. THE ADM RANKS NEED ‘NEW BLOOD’, SUPPLEMENTING THE EXISTING, WELL-PROVEN INTERNAL PIPELINE WITH THOUGHTFULLY SELECTED AND SUPPORTED EXTERNAL AND YOUNGER CANDIDATES. AND THE MAKE-UP OF THE ADM COMMUNITY NEEDS TO BETTER REFLECT THE CHANGED AND CHANGING SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, AND REGIONAL REALITIES OF CANADA**

Recruited almost exclusively from within the Public Service, and often from within the same organization where the individual appointed to ADM had been working, the ADM community has seen too much *like-recruitment* and is at risk of being too *insular* for the Public Service of tomorrow.

In short, and to state it bluntly, the traditional *gene pool* for recruiting ADMs is *too shallow* and *too narrow*.

The ADM community of the future will need some *new blood* – leaders with a wider variety of backgrounds, experience, and knowledge; with different perspectives and networks; and with a more diverse and different set of skills and leadership abilities.

This should include recruiting more people for ADM jobs who come from *outside* the Public Service – from provincial/territorial, and regional, municipal, and local governments; from the private sector and the not-for-profit and para-public sectors; from the academic world and think-tanks. This would have to be done, of course, in a way that full respects the merit principle and the non-partisan character of the Public Service.

This is not meant to suggest a radical change in the overall composition of the ADM community, such as raising the proportion of ‘external’ recruits to that in the UK (around 40% a few years ago). But even a small increase in the number and proportion of external recruits, bringing it to perhaps between 10% and 15% of all ADMs, could be beneficial in terms of broadening and enriching the ADM community, as well as addressing emerging and specialized needs.

This will require well thought-out strategies and a strong system of supports, including orientation, mentoring, and coaching, to ensure success.

A further strategy should also be to bring in promising people at a level or two below ADM in order to help them to *acclimatize* and integrate public-service management experience before assuming ADM-level roles.

The question of the composition of the ADM community in the future is not, however, just a matter of more external recruitment. The great bulk of ADMs will no doubt continue to come from within the ranks of the Public Service, and key to building the ADM community of the future will be developing and preparing the future leaders that will be coming from *within*, from the EX 1 – 3 ranks and below EX.

This means that more must be done to ensure our future leaders acquire the breadth and depth of experience and knowledge and the skills they will need, and that the ADM cadre better reflects changing Canadian society and new regional, social, economic and demographic realities.

This includes giving a real priority and adopting pro-active strategies to recruit and develop persons from under-represented groups in our society, including Visible Minorities, Aboriginal Canadians, and Persons with a Disability.

It also means appointing *younger* ADMs, by fast tracking, developing and promoting more promising leaders in their early 40s or even mid-to-late 30s. Successfully executed, this approach would permit such ADMs to spend longer in their positions as ADM, as well as earlier appointment to the DM level for the most accomplished. Seeding in younger top leaders could also be expected to foster new energy and imagination within the ADM community as a whole.



Critical to strengthening the ADM community is focusing talent management much earlier in the careers of promising public servants. By the time people reach the level of ADM, typically now at age 50 or older (often with retirement without penalty within sight), the scope for meaningful talent management is greatly diminished. Ensuring that future ADMs develop the requisite breadth and depth of experience, and that they are tested by tough challenges on their way to the top, is the work of a decade or two, not a few years.

#### **Recommendations – Bringing in ‘new blood’**

*The Public Service should increase external recruitment into the ADM ranks, aiming for something like 10% - 15% of all ADMs. This will require targeted recruiting strategies and a strong system of supports*

*A similar increase in external recruitment should be pursued at the EX 1 – 3 levels*

*Increased recruitment of Visible Minorities, Aboriginal Canadians, and Persons with a Disability to the ADM ranks should be an immediate priority, at least to bring their participation up to workforce availability rates*

*The Public Service should also seek to bring younger individuals into the ADM ranks. Strong development programs should be put in place for younger potential future ADMs from within Public Service to broaden and strengthen their skills and range of experience*

*Effective talent management will have to begin earlier and actively reach further down in the ranks of the Public service*

*The overall objective for future recruitment to the ADM cadre should be to broaden the ADM community to meet the changing demands on the Canadian public sector, and to better reflect Canadian society and changing social, economic, cultural, and regional realities.*

**III. DIFFERENT SKILLS ARE NEEDED FOR DIFFERENT TIMES. THE PUBLIC SERVICE WILL NEED THE RIGHT KINDS OF ADMs FOR THE FUTURE. MORE VALUE SHOULD BE PUT ON ADMs WITH KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE IN THEIR AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY. AND FUTURE ADMs WILL NEED WIDER AND DEEPER EXPERIENCE AND DIFFERENT SKILLS SETS AND LEADERSHIP QUALITIES**

As with the question of the number of ADMs, there is no simple single answer about what *kinds* of ADMs the Public Service will need in the future in terms of the different types of ADM positions – how many ADMs should be in Policy, Programs, Corporate Services, Central Agency, etc.. The Public Service is simply too big and the context and situation of its many different departments and organizations too diverse for easy *across-the-board* answers and solutions.

However, in the context of an overall smaller Public Service, some general orientations can be suggested.

Programs and Services/Operations ADMs will doubtless continue to be, proportionately, the largest number of ADMs. One can expect that fewer Corporate Services and Central Agency ADMs will be needed. While the number of Regional ADMs today seems disproportionately low, how many ADMs *should* be located in the regions will depend on future approaches to the organization and delivery of services to Canadians.

How many Policy ADMs will be needed may be a subject for debate, and is linked to the role envisioned by Governments for the state in society and the economy. Arguably, however, the Public Service will need more ADMs focused on *strategic* and *long-term policy* than is the case at present, as well as more ADMs with specific experience and knowledge in some areas. For example, some study participants and Public Service observers were surprised that the number of science and technology ADMs had not increased in recent years, and expressed the view that the Public Service should have, relatively speaking, more ADMs with this focus in the future.

Looking at the kind of ADM that the Public Service will need in terms of the question of *generalists* and *specialists*, it is obvious that a diversity and

balance of talents and competencies among ADMs, will be necessary, including a mix of both generalist-managers and subject-matter experts.

That said, the conclusion of this study, reflecting the views of many study participants, is that the Public Service has moved too far in recent years towards '*generic*' managers and that greater emphasis and value should be placed in the future on ADMs having strong knowledge and expertise in the content of their area of responsibility – whether that be in policy or program management, service delivery or in human resources or 'IT' or communications.

This should be understood to be part-and-parcel of having a *professional* Public Service, led by senior people who are themselves professionals in their own areas.

It is also clear that, as discussed earlier in this report, the Public Service of the future will need to value and emphasize different kinds of skills and leadership abilities among ADMs.

In addition to specific skills or expertise, future ADMs should be expected to demonstrate capacity in three important areas: *visioning* and *strategic* thinking; the ability to *get stuff done*, with a focus on results, effectiveness, and economy; and *soft skills* including people management, inter-personal relations, communications, negotiating, and working horizontally and with partners and stakeholders.

Overall, ADMs will need broader and deeper experience in a greater diversity of fields and endeavours. The expectation should be that candidates for ADM should have a wide range of 'real' knowledge and experience; for example, experience in service delivery; experience outside their 'comfort zone' (department or type of work, policy or corporate, etc.); experience in regions; experience in private and other sectors; international experience; etc.

This does not mean that every individual must have had experience in all of these areas or in any one specific area. Indeed, if anything, EXs and ADMs change jobs too frequently, so a scramble to check off a rigid list of ‘essential’ experiences would be counter-productive. Rather, the expectation would be that candidates would have to demonstrate a breadth and depth of experience and learning. For example, individuals should not have worked only in the same department, or only in Central Agencies, or only in one field. Except in filling very specialized jobs, few candidates would be appointed whose experience had been limited to only one department or area or type of work.

**Recommendations – Raising the bar for appointment to ADM**

*The Public Service should describe more fully what is required to serve successfully as an ADM*

*Guidelines should emphasize breadth and depth of experience and knowledge and a broad range of skills and key leadership abilities*

*These should include: visioning and strategic thinking; a focus on results, effectiveness and economy; and strong people management and interpersonal skills and the ability to work collaboratively in a complex environment”*

**IV. THE ISSUE OF ADM CHURN MUST BE ADDRESSED. ADMs ARE MOVING TOO FREQUENTLY AND ARE NOT NECESSARILY MAKING THE 'RIGHT' MOVES**

If there was a single issue regarding ADMs on which there was virtual unanimity of opinion among participants in the study, reinforced by current and historical data, it is that there is too much movement among ADMs, to the detriment of their own organization, the broader Public Service, and ADMs themselves.

*ADMs are changing jobs too frequently.* They are simply not staying in a position long enough to master the content of their job and to be able to effectively lead their organization and deliver on important issues.

At the same time, too much of this ADM movement appears to be *within* the same organization and doing the same kind of job, so that ADMs may not be broadening and deepening their experience, knowledge and skills as much as should be the case.

There need to be *clear expectations* set out on the time that ADMs will *normally* stay in a position. There can be no hard-and-fast rule here, as the context and situation of different organizations and individual ADM jobs can change too quickly and result in other imperatives that require ADMs to move. But there should be an expected *norm* – many participants suggested *three years* – for the expected *minimum* time for an ADM to be in a position.

It should also be made clear that staying in a position for a reasonable length of time and demonstrating mastery and leadership in it will be a part of the overall performance assessment for ADMs, and that managing their ADMs so that they do so will be part of DMS' overall assessment.

The extent and nature of ADM movement points to the need for a more corporate and hands-on approach to be adopted with regard to *managing ADMs'* assignments. The objective should be to provide opportunities that will both deepen the individual's experience, knowledge and skills *and* help respond to identified needs and priorities of the Public Service as a whole,

i.e. meeting specific leadership needs, putting the best available resources on priority files, and addressing gaps in senior executive leadership within the Public Service as a whole.

Rapid turn-over among ADMs is also partly the result of 'late arrival' in the ADM ranks, as so many ADMs are appointed at or after age 50 after many years of service, and have relatively few working years left, raising once again the need to look at ADM recruitment strategies and practices.

All these issues, therefore, need to be addressed as part of an overall strengthened regime for ADM management and development.

**Recommendations – Reducing ADM 'churn' and deepening ADMs' skills and experience**

*Clear expectations must be established and communicated to DMs and ADMs on the expected minimum time an ADM will remain in a position, for example making three years the norm*

*The overall performance assessment for both ADMs and DMs should include ADMs staying in position for a reasonable length of time and demonstrating mastery and leadership in it and achieving results*

*As part of a strengthened management regime for ADMs, a more pro-active and corporate approach should be taken to managing ADM assignments, with the objective of broadening and deepening ADMs' experience and skill sets and responding to the priorities and needs of the Public Service as a whole*

**V. THE PUBLIC SERVICE NEEDS TO ADOPT NEW STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT, DEVELOP, AND 'MANAGE' ADMs IF IT IS TO GET THE ADM LEADERS THAT WILL BE NEEDED IN THE FUTURE. AND IT NEEDS TO FOSTER A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND OF CORPORATE ATTACHMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY AMONG ADMs**

The key issues that have emerged from this study – the increased number of ADMs and the decreased scope of ADMs' roles and responsibilities; the same-source recruitment of ADMs and the profile of an ADM community whose composition does not adequately reflect the changing realities of Canadian society; the high frequency and restricted scope of ADM job changes; the need for broader and more diverse experience and skill sets and stronger leadership qualities among our future ADM leaders; the lack among current ADMs of a strong sense of community and of attachment to the wider Public Service – all suggest that strong leadership will be needed to develop, plan and implement effective strategies and measures to ensure the Canadian Public Service will have the future ADM leaders it will need.

How best to move forward to address these questions is a real challenge, given the size and diversity of the ADM community and the need to balance the interests of ADMs themselves, their DMs, and the Public Service a whole.

As well, the Treasury Board Secretariat only recently (late 2011) announced a modified *ADM Collective Leadership* model that is still relatively early in the process of implementation.

Nonetheless, it seems clear that a strengthened and more corporate regime is needed.

On the one hand, it would seem critically important to have a central *focal point* to establish a unified vision, leadership and direction, and a coordinated, corporate approach to developing and promoting senior talent across the Public Service. Leadership in this regard must come from the Centre and from the very top of the Public Service, the Clerk of the Privy Council. A number of different mechanisms could be considered – an enlarged role for COSO (the Committee of Senior Officials); a sub-committee of COSO on talent management; the appointment of a very senior official reporting to the Clerk; or other means.

At the same time, ‘corporate’ does not necessarily mean ‘centralized’, and it would also be highly desirable to involve ADMs themselves, encouraging as well their sense of community and of belonging to the wider Public Service.

For example, Canada might well give consideration to developing a model similar to that adopted by the UK, based on the recognition of different *streams* or *clusters* of ADMs – Policy, Programs, Service Delivery, Corporate Services, Regional, Legal, and International, etc.. The objectives would be, within each grouping, to examine the current and future needs of the Public Service as a whole; identify skill gaps, strengths and weaknesses, and develop measures to address them, including recruitment strategies, learning and development opportunities, and assignments to broaden experience or to meet specific Public Service needs; and foster opportunities for dialogue and networking among ADMs and exchange across the different streams or clusters of ADMs.

This model could also be combined with a *Heads of Profession* approach similar to that adopted by the UK, in order to foster greater professionalism within the different clusters. It would be critical to involve senior leaders themselves, not just ‘The Centre’.



As already noted, the issue of how to develop and manage our future ADMs has broader implications within the Public Service, notably for the EX 1-3 group that is the principal feeder group for ADMs. There is some evidence, for example, as noted earlier, that the current cohort of this group may have somewhat less depth and breadth of experience than previous cohorts, raising the question of whether enough of them will *ADM-ready*.

Consideration therefore must be given to new approaches and supports to help develop these future ADMs and ensure they will have the experience and skills that will be needed.

**Recommendations – *Managing ADMs and building community and attachment***

*A central focal point should be established, under the leadership of the Clerk of the Privy Council, to ensure a unified vision and coordinated approach to senior talent management in the Public Service*

*Canada should adopt a streams or clusters model, complemented by a heads-of-profession approach, to identify Public Service-wide needs and foster the development of current ADMs and future ADM leaders*

*Related strategies should be put in place for the development of future leaders at the EX 1 – 3 and other levels*

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The major conclusions and recommendations of this study, as outlined in the preceding pages, identify a number of possible initiatives and actions to address the key issues that have emerged in the course of the study.

This report does not attempt to spell out detailed processes, mechanisms and procedures to implement the recommendations in these various areas. That is for the Government and the leadership of the Public Service to consider, as they examine the findings of the study and decide on what action should be taken.

The need for action, however, is compelling, if Canada is to ensure that it will have the public-sector leadership it will require in meeting the challenges of the future.

## Summary — Conclusions and recommendations

As the Public Service becomes smaller, and significant numbers of ADMs and executives continue to retire, there is an opportunity to rethink and redesign the roles, responsibilities and relationships among levels of management.

The emphasis should be on building bigger ADM jobs, focused clearly on shaping change, delivering results, and motivating and developing their teams. This implies giving larger responsibilities as well to Directors General and Directors, thus streamlining the hierarchy, and giving everyone more room to grow and contribute. As the number of ADM jobs inevitably declines, such roles can become both more significant and more satisfying.

All departments should be required to review their senior management structure with the intended purpose of flattening and de-layering senior-management levels. The goal should be to grow ADM jobs, to increase the scope of ADMs' roles and their ability and authority to lead their organization and deliver on key issues

The current 'gene pool' for recruiting ADMs is too shallow and too narrow. The Public Service needs to bring in *new blood*, leaders with different backgrounds, experience and skills. It needs to recruit more ADMs externally, appoint younger ADMs, and build an ADM cadre that better reflect Canadian realities and diversity

The Public Service will need ADMs with a wider and deeper range of experience, and a *different* set of skills and leadership qualities, than in the past. Guidelines should be established about requirements for future appointments to the ADM ranks. And more value and emphasis should be placed on ADMs with *content* knowledge and expertise

Currently ADMs move too much, and too much ADM movement is internal. Clear expectations need to be established on the minimum length of time (perhaps three years) that ADMs should normally remain in a position

A stronger approach needs to be taken to manage ADM assignments in order to broaden and deepen ADMs' knowledge, experience and skills and help meet specific and priority needs of the Public Service overall

For talent management for ADMs to work most effectively, it needs to start as much as a decade or more before exceptionally promising public servants reach that level

A strengthened overall management regime needs to be put in place in order to manage and support the recruitment and development of future ADM leaders and foster a stronger sense of community and attachment to the broader Public Service

This should include the establishment of a central focal point, under the Clerk of the Privy Council, to ensure vision, leadership and a coordinated approach to senior-level talent management across the Public Service. A strengthened regime could also build on and adapt the streams or clusters approach and Heads of Profession model in the UK

## A last word

*“ADMs are an interesting entry point into the broader question of the Public Service today . . .”*

*“Answering the ADM question depends on the kind of Public Service we want, and that in turn depends on the role we want the state to play”*

*“If we want to keep and manage the status quo, then the current Canadian Public Service has the perfect structure for it, heavily-layered and with a managerial class of ADMs predominating . . . It’s a wonderful way to field a team of goalies . . .”*

*“If we want to transform the Public Service, what it does, and how it does it, we need a different model and approach . . .”*

Key-informant interviews

## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Includes ADMs in Core Public Administration and separate-employer organizations, but not the RCMP or Canadian Armed Forces. 'ADM' includes EX4s and EX5s or an equivalent classification level. The figures cited represent the total number of active ADMs of all tenure by substantive position (excluding acting positions). Treasury Board Secretariat, Regional Pay System data

<sup>2</sup> Treasury Board Secretariat, Regional Pay System data

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*. Includes substantive, active employees of all tenures (indeterminate, casual, term, student).

<sup>6</sup> Privy Council Office

<sup>7</sup> See Peter Hicks, *Growth in the EX cadre*, for some comparative numbers for the United Kingdom and Australia, although the author cautions that reliable comparable data is not available

<sup>8</sup> Treasury Board Secretariat, *Assistant Deputy Minister Community Profiles, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012*

<sup>9</sup> Privy Council Office

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

<sup>11</sup> *Assistant Deputy Minister Community Profile at a Glance (2011-2012)*

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*. Employment Equity data is only for the Core Public Service

<sup>13</sup> Côté, André and Alyx Holland. 2007. *Is Deputy "Churn" Myth or Reality?*. Ottawa: Public Policy Forum

<sup>14</sup> Analysis of administrative data in *Assistant Deputy Minister Community Profile (2010-2011)*

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<sup>15</sup> Privy Council Office

<sup>16</sup> Application of 'taxonomy' of ADM positions to data provided by Treasury Board Secretariat on ADM positions and titles at five-year intervals since 1995

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>19</sup> Canada Public Service Agency, *Update in Overall Trends in the Workforce Profile of Executives*, October 2008. Data for Core Public Administration only, 1983 – 2008

<sup>20</sup> *Assistant Deputy Minister Community Profile at a Glance (2011-2012)*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>22</sup> Privy Council Office

<sup>23</sup> Data from responses to *Talent Management Questionnaire*, Treasury Board Secretariat (2010- 2011)

<sup>24</sup> Public Service Commission of Canada, *Study on mobility of public servants* October 2008. Data for Core Public Administration only

<sup>25</sup> *Collective Management of the ADM Cadre: Research on Other Countries and Jurisdictions*

<sup>26</sup> *Assistant Deputy Minister Community Profile at a Glance (2011-2012)*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>28</sup> Privy Council Office

<sup>29</sup> *Assistant Deputy Minister Community Profile at a Glance (2011-2012)*

<sup>30</sup> Privy Council Office

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Aucoin, Bernier, Bourgault, Bourgon, Jarvis, Kernaghan, Lindquist, Paquet, Peters, O'Flynn, O'Neil, Savoie, Thomas, etc., as well as articles in the Canadian Journal of Public Administration, Optimum, the International Journal of Public Service, the British Journal

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of Public Management, the International Journal of Public Sector Management, etc., and reports and studies by the Public Policy Forum, the Institute for Government, the Government of Canada, the Clerk of the Privy Council, the Canada School of Public Service, etc.

<sup>32</sup> Donald Savoie, *Whatever happened to the Music Teacher? How Government decides and why*, McGill-Queen's University Press (2013)

<sup>33</sup> See *Collective Management of the ADM Cadre: Research on Other Countries and Jurisdictions* for a comparative review of executive management regime in a number of different countries

<sup>34</sup> Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *ADM Collective Leadership* (October 2011)

<sup>35</sup> Kenneth Kernaghan, *The future role of a professional, non-partisan public service in Ontario*, Brock University (June 2003)

<sup>36</sup> Bryan Evans, Janet Lum, and John Shields, *Profiling of the public-service élite: A demographic and career trajectory survey of deputy and assistant deputy ministers in Canada*, Canadian Public Administration, Volume 50, No. 4 (Winter 2007). The findings of the study are based on a 2006 survey of 941 senior executives, at the DM and ADM levels, in the Public Service, all ten provinces, and the three territorial administrations

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>38</sup> Ted Glenn, *The state of talent management in Canada's public sector*, Canadian Public Administration, volume 55, no. 1 (March 2012)

<sup>39</sup> Gerald Bierling, Barbara Caroll, and Michael Rosenblatt, *Movers and Stayers: mobility patterns among senior public servants in Canadian provinces*, Canadian Public Administration, volume 42, no. 3 (fall)

<sup>40</sup> Glenn

<sup>41</sup> National Audit Office, *Building capability in the Senior Civil Service to meet today's challenges* (June 19, 2013)

<sup>42</sup> Institute for Government, *Leading major change in Whitehall departments*, November 2012

<sup>43</sup> HM Government, *The Civil Service Reform Plan: The context for civil service reform* (June 2012). The size of the UK civil service is cited as 435,000 at the end of March 2011

<sup>44</sup> Cabinet Office, *Corporate Talent Management in the UK Civil Service* (2013). The recent report by the UK National Audit Office cites somewhat smaller numbers for the Senior Civil

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Service, a total of 3,613 senior civil servants “in post”, including 32 Permanent Secretaries and 2,753 deputy directors.

<sup>45</sup> *Civil Service Reform Plan*



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