

What We've Done to Date:

A status report to employees on progress made on the 2004 employee survey

One year ago, the results of the first employee survey were released and government made some commitments in response to employees' concerns about their workplace, as expressed in the survey.

The 2004 baseline survey measured ten dimensions of the work environment:

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|---------------------------|------------------------|
| • leadership | • quality of work life |
| • communication | • employee involvement |
| • compensation & benefits | • diversity |
| • personal growth | • teamwork |
| • recruitment & retention | • safety & security |

The survey was analysed and the results were reported back to employees last summer. The following is a list of the **recommendations** found in the report, government's **response** and commitment to action, and the **status** of each of the promised actions.

1. **Recommendation - Celebrate and Continue to Build on Identified Strengths**

There were 20 questions which had a favourable response from employees. Many of employees believe that their supervisors listen and that they can speak openly to their supervisors, that training and development opportunities are available to them and that their workplace is safe.

- **Response:** Government will sustain its commitment to making training and development opportunities available to all employees and to ensuring a safe and supportive workplace - by meeting and, where possible, going beyond compliance with OH&S legislative regulations, policies and best practices.
- **Status:** A strategic framework for a Healthy Workplace Program has been developed based on the National Quality Institute's guidelines. A research initiative on healthy workplaces was launched in partnership with the Atlantic Health and Wellness Institute has been launched at the Department of Justice, and tools to support the implementation of healthy workplace programs in all departments will be available this September.
- The link between performance management, individual development plans and training continues to be strengthened as a way to focus career opportunities for all employees.

2. Recommendation - Commit to Action and Follow up

- **Response:** Government is committed to consistent and coordinated action in response to this employee survey. Government is also committed to providing regular reports to employees and to communicate on progress.
- **Status:** Although 69 per cent of employees responded, in the 2005 mini survey, that they received information about the employee survey, we haven't been as consistent at communicating our progress as we should be. We're working at doing better. As for action, consider the work that has been done including: setting up departmental working groups, undertaking an audit of government hiring practices (results available in September,) and the development of the *Corporate Human Resources Plan*. For more details on corporate and department-level action, please refer to the accompanying fact sheet on what's been happening across government.

3. Recommendation - Create an Advisory Committee

- **Response:** An Employee Survey Advisory Committee will be established to monitor government's actions in response to the 2004 employee survey.
- **Status:** An advisory committee was established with representation from across government and is chaired by Howard Windsor, deputy minister for Treasury and Policy Board and the Office of the Premier. This committee has received regular updates on government's efforts to respond to the 2004 survey. Its work will be strengthened by establishing regular meetings and communicating the outcomes of the meetings.

4. Recommendation - Use Results to Guide Corporate Human Resources Strategy Plan

- **Response:** We are committed to completing and implementing, a corporate human resources plan - as proposed in government's 2004 - 2005 business plan. This plan will contain specific references to the employee survey findings and responses in such areas as recruitment, hiring practices, valuing diversity, succession and career planning, wellness, and recognition for employees.
- **Status:** Complete. Survey results helped to inform the creation of the *Corporate Human Resource Plan* which is now complete. The plan is being distributed and communicated this summer and early fall and a number of departments have already established their implementation processes. For a copy of the plan or summary, please go to www.gov.ns.ca/psc/CorporateHumanResourcePlan.

5. Recommendation - Survey Regularly

- **Response:** Employee survey, (focused and organization-wide), will be conducted regularly in future years.
- **Status:** Regular surveys are in place. A mini survey was completed in 2005; another will be conducted in February 2006 followed by a government-wide survey in February 2007. It is anticipated that government-wide surveys will then occur every three to four years.

6. Recommendation - Examine Reasons for Concerns about Hiring Practices (Merit) and Career Advancement

Some employees (40 per cent) expressed the opinion that government does not hire on the basis of merit (or candidate qualifications) and 44 per cent report that career opportunities in the public service may be limited. (38 per cent of employees feel that hiring is based on merit, and that career advancement opportunities are available).

- **Response:** Career and succession management strategy - Government's human resources plan will include a comprehensive career and succession management strategy aimed at attracting new talent and preparing current staff for career opportunities that will arise in the next five to 10 years.
- **Status:** A succession management toolkit is one of the strategies to help achieve this goal. The toolkit has been developed and will be available to all government departments this fall.
- **Response:** Merit/staffing audits - The Public Service Commission has included merit/staffing audits in its 2004 - 2005 business plan and this review will take into consideration employee perceptions of hiring practices that were outlined in the employee survey results.
- **Status:** Complete. A merit audit has been completed. Results are now being analysed and will be available in September.
- **Response:** Diversity-hiring practices will also be reviewed with a stronger emphasis on valuing diversity in our environment and in the public service.
- **Status:** The Affirmative Action Inventory has been strengthened as a source of qualified diversity candidates. All departments have established affirmative action plans and government is in the process of completing its second *Progress Report on Diversity/Affirmative Action*. Processes to incorporate diversity into the hiring practices will be developed in winter 2005.

7. Recommendation - Examine Ways to Encourage Employees to Remain in Public Service

Almost 50 per cent of government employees anticipate leaving the public service in the next five to 10 years. (While almost 50 per cent would stay in public service even if offered a similar job with slightly higher pay elsewhere in their community).

- **Response:** Government's human resources plan includes programs and initiatives aimed at encouraging employees to remain with the public service as an preferred employer. These programs and initiatives also address the need to encourage both young and mature workers to join or remain with the public service.
- **Status:** The newly developed Corporate Human Resources Plan includes attraction and retention strategies. For more detail, please go to: www.gov.ns.ca/psc/CorporateHumanResourcePlan.

8. Recommendation - Examine Ways to Support Employees Who Wish to Discuss/Disclose Ethical Concerns

Of those who completed the survey, 46 per cent believe that they can report concerns related to workplace ethics or conflicts without fear of reprisal.

- **Response:** Government has announced its intentions to approve new regulations, which will give guidance and support to employees who wish to bring issues of wrongdoing to the attention of senior group officials.
- **Status:** Regulations and policy to provide processes and protections to employees who report wrongdoing in the workplace have been implemented. For more information, please go to the PSC's website at: www.gov.ns.ca/psc/ If you haven't yet heard about the new regulations and policy, watch your e-mail for more information heading your way in September.

9. Recommendation - Strengthen Leadership & Re-affirm Diversity Commitment

Many employees (36 per cent) express the perception that department leaders do not set a good example for staff, and 21 per cent feel their department does not place sufficient value on workplace diversity.

- **Response:** The Leadership Development Program will continue to focus on government's commitment to:
 - leadership competencies
 - consistent human resource practices
 - succession management and HR Development
 - valuing diversification
 - corporate code of conduct
 - valuing driven decision making and leadership

Leadership Development Programs will strengthen leaders' focus on conflict resolution, relationship building and communication in response to these employee perceptions.

- **Status:** The classroom-based leadership programs have been revised to include an additional option for staff with an interest in pursuing management and leadership roles in the future.
- **Response:** A valuing diversity initiative aimed at achieving a more diverse workplace, including full implementation of the Affirmative Action policy will be implemented by government, through the Public Service Commission.
- **Status:** Being a diverse workplace is one of the five goals in the Corporate Human Resource Plan. An additional resource has been added to this portfolio to help departments develop their affirmative action plans, the affirmative action inventory has been strengthened, and a Diversity Roundtable has been established. For other activities, please refer to the Corporate Human Resource Plan at:
www.gov.ns.ca/psc/CorporateHumanResourcePlan.

10. Recommendation - Organizational Effectiveness and Communications

A number of employees (27 per cent) don't believe that department goals and objectives are regularly achieved and others (35 per cent) report not receiving communication about department business plans.

- **Response:** Processes for development and for reporting progress on department (and corporate) business plans will be reviewed to encourage more staff involvement, and to ensure more effective tracking and reporting of progress and success.
- **Status:** Many departments have made additional efforts to involve staff in the development of, and progress on, their respective business plans.

11. Recommendation - Compensation and Recognition

Many staff (46 per cent) do not feel that they are fairly compensated for the work they do.

- **Response:** Government will continue to monitor the relationship between salaries in the public and private sectors, examining comparable rates. Government will continue to work with all staff to show that the public is getting good value for its investment in public services and public servants. Government will continue to bargain in good faith and representation of its unionized employees.
- New agreements, involving salary and/or benefits improvements, were achieved with some groups; non-bargaining unit employees were also granted salary and benefit improvements during the past year.

- **Response:** Government will research an organization-wide recognition program which will seek to properly recognize staff performance, service excellence and best practices throughout the Nova Scotia Public Service.
- **Status:** The *Corporate Human Resource Plan* focuses on employee recognition as part of its retention strategy. As one example, the Premier's Award of Excellence will be launched in 2005-2006. As well, a number of departments have already developed and launched formal recognition programs for their departments and a corporate recognition program is also being developed.

In summary, because government understood that one of the concerns of employees was that management would not respond to the results of the survey, it is our hope that this progress report will give you some sense of management's sincere commitment to improving the workplace and fostering a positive work-life experience for public servants.

Where to from here?

The results of the 2005 mini survey show us that – while we still have a way to go – government is making progress.

The survey shows that employees feel safe, believe they have the qualifications to meet the needs of their job and feel that the people they work with help each other out.

In addition, employees feel that they can provide input into decisions that affect their job, talk openly with their supervisor, share work-related information within their department (including business plans) and know how their work contributes to the department's priorities/purposes. They receive recognition and feedback from their supervisor and believe their department is respectful of employees' differences.

Areas of concern that arose in the 2004 baseline survey are reinforced this year. These include perceptions of merit-based hiring, opportunities for career advancement, and government's commitment to respond to survey concerns. In addition, managers expressed concerns regarding their ability to attract, recruit and retain qualified employees. Managers had not been previously asked this question.

We continue to work toward becoming a preferred employer and commit to providing you with progress reports. We'll measure our progress by touching base with some of you next year through another mini survey and by monitoring the impact of key human resource initiatives now underway. These include workplace health, diversity, succession planning, and employee recognition and orientation programs mentioned earlier in this update. In 2007, government will undertake a full employee survey as was done in 2004, to see what progress has been made.

Again, thank you for your contributions to the survey and follow up processes.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact either of us directly or, as always, please pass your input to your supervisor.

Thank you,

Original signed by

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