A Strong Foundation is the report of the Task Force on Public Service Values and Ethics, one of nine Task Forces led by Deputy Ministers that were established by the Clerk of the Privy Council in 1995. This task force took the form of a Study Team established by the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD) and led by John Tait, former Deputy Minister of Justice and then a Senior Fellow of CCMD. The membership of the Study Team is included in this summary of its report. The full report (and those of the other Task Forces) is available on the CCMD website.

The purpose of A Strong Foundation is to help the public service think about and, in some cases, rediscover and understand its basic values and recommit to and act on those values in all its work. We did not start with a predetermined values framework, nor was our goal to produce one. Instead, we began by asking about problems and issues on the minds of public servants today – concerns such as these:

- evolving conventions about the accountability of ministers and public servants
- tension between old values and new
- ethical challenges emerging from new service and management approaches
- leadership and people management in a time of change.

The result was a learning process that worked through contemporary problems, listening to voices and perspectives within the public service. The topic itself challenged us to demonstrate some of the key public service values that emerged from our discussions: honest dialogue, speaking truth to power, acknowledging conflict, aiming for balance, equity and synthesis.

Summarizing the results of this work risks oversimplifying issues that are neither simple to begin with nor amenable to simple solutions. Nor can a summary make room for full and balanced consideration of various perspectives on the issues. With these caveats in mind, this summary traces the...
Democratic values and accountability

Current issues:
- conventions of public service anonymity
- accountability in new organizational forms (agencies)
- congruence between political and public service values

Values discussed:
ministerial responsibility
public service anonymity
rule of law
non-partisanship
candour
accountability of public servants
loyalty

Democratic values and accountability

The theory and practice of responsible government occupied a great deal of our time and attention. Almost every issue we examined led back to the principles of democratic life in a parliamentary system. We looked at three main issues: the conventions surrounding public service anonymity; the accountability issues arising from new ways of organizing and delivering government programs and services; and questions about congruence between political and public service values.

Public service anonymity and ministerial responsibility

Many of us take for granted that the role of public servants is based on an implicit bargain or "deal": public servants give governments their professionalism, discretion and non-partisan loyalty in exchange for anonymity (public servants are not publicly accountable) and security of tenure (lifetime employment). These assumptions are a source of much uncertainty: when they were severely challenged by recent events many other public service values seemed to be put in doubt. As far as anonymity is concerned, the so-called "old deal" seemed to have been eroded by incidents such as the Al-Mashat case or certain high-profile appearances of public servants before parliamentary committees.

On the other side of the coin, ministers have sometimes seen public service anonymity as protecting public servants at ministers' expense. Why should ministers accept the consequences for problems caused by someone else? Why should they explain or defend actions of which they were unaware or with which they disagree?
Our discussions helped us to realize that public service anonymity is not an absolute. In the British civil service, the deputy minister is directly accountable to Parliament for financial management of the department; in Canada, public servants in Crown corporations and arm's-length regulatory and funding agencies make decisions and are directly accountable for them; and court decisions have qualified the principles of neutrality and anonymity by allowing public servants to engage in partisan politics (within certain limits).

Officials can and do appear before parliamentary committees to provide information or explain their actions without injuring responsible government. Indeed, these functions are fundamental to responsible government. The only limit is that parliamentary bodies cannot instruct officials – instructions must come from ministers – nor should they attribute responsibility improperly or ask officials to comment on policies, actions or advice in ways that are incompatible with their accountability to a minister. Public service anonymity, even in mitigated form, continues to serve two great purposes: protecting the authority of ministers – and thus the democratic principle that government should be carried on by elected representatives, not unelected officials; and preserving the neutrality of the public service and its ability to give candid and frank advice to ministers. But anonymity is a more elastic principle than it first appears, and there is clearly room for Canada to qualify it further without undermining the values of parliamentary government. We believe there should be ongoing analysis and dialogue on the evolution of the concept, keeping in mind the purpose it must serve.

Dialogue on public service anonymity and accountability helped us become aware that there is confusion about the nature of the public service employment bargain. This has been compounded by confusion about the nature and meaning of terms sometimes used interchangeably with accountability (see box, next page).

Responsibility is a positive concept. It works every day in a quiet, positive way, and at all levels of an organization, within the public service as well as for ministers. It involves day-to-day direction to departments and the correction of problems that may arise. It does not mean being aware of everything that happens every day, or that one is to blame for everything that goes wrong. It does mean that when problems emerge the person in charge is responsible for dealing with the situation.

Accountability can be thought of as enforcing or explaining responsibility. Accountability involves rendering an account to someone, such as Parliament or a superior, on how and how well one's responsibilities are being met, on actions taken to correct problems and to ensure they do not reoccur. It involves accepting personal consequences, such as discipline, for problems that could have been avoided had the individual acted appropriately.

“Answerability” describes a key aspect of accountability, the duty to
inform and explain. Answerability does not include the personal consequences that are a part of accountability. For example, public servants are answerable before parliamentary committees, not accountable to them.

Public office holders are responsible for all that occurs within their authority but are not always subject to "blame" for problems that occur. The issue and degree of blame depend, among other things, on whether office holders were personally involved in activities, or should have been; that is, on a fair assessment of whether they could have avoided the problem, or ought to have taken steps to correct it.

**Four Concepts: Related but Distinct**

*Responsibility:* identifies the field within which a public office holder (whether elected or unelected) can act; defined by the specific authority given to the office holder (by law or by delegation)

*Accountability:* the means of enforcing or explaining responsibility; it involves
- rendering an account of how responsibilities have been carried out and problems corrected
- accepting personal consequences for problems the office holder caused or problems that could have been avoided or corrected if the office holder had acted appropriately

*Answerability:* a duty to inform and explain
- it is part of accountability but does not include the personal consequences associated with it
- public servants are answerable before parliamentary bodies but not accountable to them
- ministers are answerable to Parliament for Crown corporations and independent tribunals but are not accountable for their actions/decisions

*Blame:* office holders are
- responsible for everything that occurs under their authority
- but whether they should be subject to personal consequences such as discipline or blame depends on the circumstances in any particular case
- the key consideration is whether an office holder caused a problem, or ought to have taken steps to avoid it.

Clarifying the meaning of these terms and using them appropriately may help to avoid the undue emphasis on blame and resignation that often characterizes public debate, and clarify the purpose and limits of public service anonymity, while helping to dispel the sense that ground rules have changed or bargains have been broken.

Parliamentary government is an inherently evolutionary form of government. It can accommodate new practices in the visibility and answerability of officials while preserving the essential features and benefits of responsible government and related public service values such as neutrality, discretion,
professionalism and loyalty to the government of the day. In fact, such evolution may actually enhance public service values while strengthening the democratic accountability they are intended to serve.

For us, what is important in the conventions of ministerial responsibility and public service anonymity is the democratic principle that lies behind them. Above all, they maintain ministerial authority over officials. While it is often assumed that ministerial responsibility protects public servants by enabling them to avoid public accountability for their actions, the truth is the opposite: the doctrine protects the authority of ministers.

Accountability and new organizational forms

One example of the new environment for public service values is the advent of alternative organizational models for delivering programs and services, such as distinct service or program delivery agencies. We wanted to understand the potential effects of such models on public service values, and the design features that could support or enhance important public service values.

As we proceeded, we came to appreciate that separate service delivery agencies need not involve any fundamental change in ministerial responsibility. Ministers can delegate some of their authorities—formally and publicly—to agency CEOs. A CEO would still be accountable to a minister, and the minister would still be accountable to Parliament. But now the CEO's delegated authority and the minister's expectations with regard to agency performance and results would be set out formally, precisely and publicly.

Unlike Crown corporations and regulatory agencies, service delivery agencies need not be at arm's length from government, particularly where their activities are clearly governmental in nature or where ministers want to remain closely connected to specific functions. Recognizing the importance of assuring accountability in these circumstances, it may be more helpful to think of them as a new kind of department—operational departments with wider, more explicit, and more public delegations of authority and performance targets.

Experience elsewhere suggested to us that careful attention will need to be given to clear, precise agreements spelling out what authority is delegated and what is retained, and what service standards and results are expected. If these and other features of operational departments (particularly the human resource regime) are carefully designed and implemented, and if attention is paid in organizational design to supporting and strengthening public service culture in the new agencies, our discussion concluded that there is no necessary conflict between these new organizational forms and traditional public service values. In fact, some research suggests accountability can be significantly strengthened by such arrangements.
Political and public service values

In the course of our work, we heard two concerns. First, we heard doubts, particularly from outside the public service, about whether the senior public service is able to give loyal support to each succeeding government; these doubts give rise to calls for a U.S.-style public service, with each government appointing its own senior officials. The second view, heard mainly at middle and lower levels of the public service - and diametrically opposed to the first - is that the senior public service is all too eager to serve the government of the day, failing at times to make clear the risks or drawbacks of policy options or to communicate fully the concerns of those on the front lines of service delivery.

With regard to the first concern, we were not persuaded. It is entirely appropriate to safeguard against a public service having its own agenda, or being inward-looking and unresponsive to democratic will. But the proposed remedy is wrong: the evidence we examined suggests that not only is a professional public service equipped and able to support the program of every duly elected government operating within the law and the Constitution, it is the best means available to do so. Indeed, a professional public service is an important national institution in the service of democracy. Nevertheless, this first concern highlights the great importance of public service values such as loyalty and responsiveness to the democratic process.

Several insights and challenges emerge from the second concern. One is the importance of speaking truth to power - making ministers and senior officials fully aware of the options for action and the potential consequences, even if this means providing information they find unwelcome. This is one of the chief duties of a public service dedicated to support of the democratic process, and it is one that should be observed not just at the top, but at all levels in the public service, wherever there are employees and supervisors.

At the same time, after professional advice has been tendered and democratic deliberation completed, faithful execution of the decisions of elected officials is what a public service is for. Once public servants have done their best to advise, they must accept the legitimate decisions of ministers.

Finally, to reinforce democratic values, there appears to us to be a twofold challenge of communication: senior public servants need to reflect on whether and how well they are explaining political decisions to their subordinates and demonstrating that public servants’ views and analysis are being conveyed to ministers.

Employment and values

Who should be employed in the public service, how that employment should be arranged, and the conditions under which it should continue – in short, the employment regime – is at the heart of public administration, and
the issues raised by the choice of an employment regime are closely connected to values.

The concerns we heard fell into three groups: the distress and uncertainty arising from downsizing; the employment issues raised by organizational experiments discussed in the previous section; and the issues of non-partisanship and merit in the public service of the future.

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**Downsizing: how it was done**

For many public servants, downsizing appeared not only to contradict values statements such as “people are our most important resource” but also to undermine the employment security bargain. Public servants found their faith in public service values shaken by both the fact of downsizing and the way they saw it being carried out: some processes were seen as punitive, secretive and capricious; ruthlessness appeared at times to be permitted and even rewarded; a focus on short-term results sometimes seemed to crowd out concern for public policy purposes and values.

These perceptions are important for their impact on public service values, even though in some departments senior managers were more considerate, respectful and caring in their approach to downsizing: open, honest and fair in announcements and processes, involving those affected by decisions, and remaining focused on serving the public interest.

Falling short of a stated ideal does not seem to us to invalidate the goal; instead it demands renewed efforts to close the gap, to do better in future. To live up to assertions about the value of people, we believe public service leaders and managers should be held accountable not only for results but for the way they are achieved. They should be evaluated not just for organizational performance but for whether their organizations are good places to work, whether they nourish sound public service values and a spirit of dedication to the public good. This will also require review and alignment of all people management systems to support public service values and reward behaviour that promotes them.
Downsizing and the employment contract

The closer we looked at the impact of downsizing on public service values, the more we were persuaded that the belief that downsizing broke an old bargain – security of tenure in a career public service – is based on a mistaken assumption about what security of tenure means in the Canadian public service. We concluded that it does mean protection from partisan dismissal, but it does not mean a guarantee of permanent or lifetime employment. It cannot, for the size of the public service and the amount of public resources devoted to it are matters of public policy, to be determined by democratically elected governments and implemented by the public service.

Although the public service employment regime cannot be based on a guarantee of lifetime employment, it should nevertheless foster a professional public service. A professional public service may not be equated with a guarantee of permanence, but neither is it consistent with the notion of employment as short-term or contingent. Some length of time is normally required to gain the knowledge, skills, sensitivities and outlook the profession requires. A professional public service should therefore be built on long-term rather than short-term employment, a sufficiently long apprenticeship to acquire the skills and culture of professionalism.

The problem with the alternative vision of the public service as a much more porous institution is that the values of loyalty are at the heart of what it means to be a public servant. In a public service where employment is more contingent and short-term, public servants would necessarily be encouraged to use their current role to advantage themselves and position themselves for future employment. The public service employment regime should be designed instead to support and nourish the values of loyalty to the public good and to the public trust.

Loyalty to the public interest – as expressed in law and the Constitution and as represented and interpreted by democratically elected governments – is among the fundamental values of public service. But loyalty is a two-way street. The government, as employer, must demonstrate the loyalty of the institution to its employees through humane leadership and management and by building a professional public service based on long-term rather than short-term relationships with employees, even if it cannot (and should not) guarantee lifetime employment.

Culture and critical mass

A professional public service does not need to be, and should not be, a closed shop. New public servants bring with them new skills, perspective and energy. But in order to become themselves professionals, new arrivals need to enter into a well-developed public service culture. This implies two things: First, that the instincts, competencies, values and standards of public service be well developed and continually nourished. And, second, that
these values be embodied in a critical mass of persons. For us, the notion that the public service of the future could be a set of principles rather than a group of persons and the systems that regulate them is implausible. Values cannot be disembodied. We do not think the values of public service are likely to endure in a vigorous spirit unless there is a sufficient proportion of public servants (certainly the majority) who have spent significant time acquiring the skills, knowledge, reflexes and standards of public service – who are, in short, professionals.

We think that public service values can be enhanced by critical mass and by the sense that values are rooted and shared in a common public service community. The employment regime should therefore also facilitate a reasonable ease of movement within and between public service organizations, including between departments and service agencies. Policies or systems that would lead to excessive fragmentation, or to a series of employment ghettos, would not, in our view, support strong public service values and a broad public service culture.

Diversity of organizational form and culture are essential features of the public service and vital to the performance of particular programs and services. But over and above the values of individual organizations, there are overarching values that belong to all public servants and are sustained by systems or policies that support unity and mobility within the public service. This will be particularly important as new organizational forms are explored. Common values for agencies and departments can be promoted through shared experiences made possible by internal mobility, networks and common training experiences.

Non-partisanship and the merit principle

Our conversations and research convinced us that there is a need to reassert neutrality and non-partisanship and merit as fundamental values of the public service and to give close attention to the practices, institutions and conditions that enhance or undermine them. As much for new service agencies as for traditional departments, Parliament needs an independent body that can assure it about the non-partisan character of appointments – especially initial appointments – so that patronage appointments do not threaten the integrity or professionalism of the public service. Bureaucratic patronage is no more acceptable than partisan appointments, and staffing based on merit was designed to preclude both the appearance and the reality of favouritism, whether internal or partisan.

Recent public service reforms have aimed to reduce complexity and rigidity in contracting, procurement and appointment processes. Yet it seems to us that public organizations must maintain a careful balance: they should protect merit, equity and neutrality, even as they pursue efficiency, responsiveness and organizational performance. A public organization does not and
cannot enjoy the "flexibilities" of private sector organizations. It will always have to meet higher standards of transparency and due process in order to allay any fears of favouritism, whether internal or external. For this reason, neutrality and merit remain values fundamental to maintaining confidence in the public service as a great Canadian institution serving the common good.

**Values, old and new**

In our conversations with public servants, we discovered that some of the current unease with public service values arises from the emergence of new values that have not yet been adequately reconciled with the old. The new and the old rub shoulders awkwardly, and sometimes uncomfortably, awaiting an adequate synthesis or reconciliation. Do new ways of doing things conflict with existing values? Are the so-called "new" values merely old values in contemporary dress?

Much of the discussion we heard takes the form of a debate about two approaches to the public sector: the "new" public management approach and the "old" public administration approach. These perspectives do not always coexist easily:

- From a public administration perspective, public management pays too little attention to the democratic, parliamentary, political and public context, treats public goods as if they were private, ignores the complexities and trade-offs that characterize the public sphere, and downplays the importance of due process, vertical accountability, and the ultimate importance of the public interest or the common good.
- From a public management perspective, public administration neglects the real life of organizations, pays too much attention to due process while ignoring results, gives short shrift to the real users of public services and the quality of their interactions with government, and has little or nothing to say about the concrete tasks needed to transform public organizations.

### Public Administration and Public Management

- The **public administration perspective** tends to see government from the top down, emphasizing decision-making processes and institutions, the senior public service and its interaction with ministers and Parliament, law and regulation, accountability, government organization, public policy.
- The **public management perspective** tends to see government from the bottom up, focusing more on the quality of life and work in public organizations and seeking to understand and improve features of organizational life such as leadership, strategic management, organizational climate, service quality, innovation, performance, client satisfaction.

Acknowledging the tension between these two perspectives seems to us the necessary first step in laying the groundwork for a new synthesis
between the direction embodied in the public management approach, with its emphasis on users, customers and clients, and the more holistic direction represented by the public administration perspective. There is tension between them, but this can be a dynamic and creative tension, with both risks and benefits, as illustrated by a key point of debate in today's public service—the distinction between clients (or customers) and citizens.

Citizens are bearers of rights and duties in a framework of community; citizens work in concert with others to achieve the common good, so citizenship is not something isolated or purely individual. Customers, as customers, do not share common purposes with a wider community but seek to maximize their individual advantage. Dissatisfied customers are free to seek goods and services elsewhere; citizens are expected instead to work with others, through democratic means, to alter the unsatisfactory state of affairs.

Clearly, using either term to the exclusion of the other has significant consequences. Citizens in a democracy are equal bearers of rights and duties, bringing principles of equity and balance to the forefront and pushing the public service in the direction of consistency, standardization and due process and away from favouritism, preferential treatment and corruption.

At the same time, an emphasis on serving customers or clients has re-invigorated the idea of service. Service has always been a public service ideal, but one too often obscured by the complexity of government objectives and processes. The great contribution that the vocabulary of customers and clients imported from the private sector has made to public administration has been to refresh and re-invigorate the idea of service in the public sector. It has served to remind public servants that the people they serve are not some abstraction but real flesh and blood people, with real needs and wants, citizens for whom the quality of their daily interactions with government can either enhance or diminish their sense of citizenship. Adopting the vocabulary of client and customer has helped revitalize public service by encouraging managers to

- find out what recipients of services really want or need
- measure outputs and their value to clients
- streamline and orient processes in ways that support service delivery
- see that they have internal clients as well, in their own organization or elsewhere in the public service.

At the service-wide level, this approach has helped the public service become more responsive to clients and make policies more responsive to citizens. The public service has become more service-oriented, adaptable, flexible and open, less insular and hierarchical.

Emphasizing outputs and services has also encouraged horizontality and a "whole of government" approach. It helps to overcome the vertical stove-
pipes that divide government somewhat artificially into separate domains either of service delivery or of policy, and to knit them up again in a holistic fashion that reflects the real life of real people and the connectedness of the real world. The challenges of horizontality, both in service delivery and in policy development, are rooted in values – both old and new – and will not be met without a strengthening of public service-wide values. A “whole of government” approach requires public servants to look outward to the public interest, to view formal mandates as means to achieve larger ends, and to keep the focus on these larger ends. And perhaps most of all, it requires a commitment to partnership and teamwork.

Finally, the public management approach has highlighted the importance of “managing down” – paying as much attention to the quality of organizational life and performance, including the quality of people management, as to the traditional public service skills of managing up, or assisting superiors to serve ministers and the political process.

Each of these benefits of the new client-centred management approaches has its own set of tensions, however, and demands its own efforts to get the balance right. Managing down should not lead to neglect of the need to serve ministers and the political process. Horizontality should not be achieved at the expense of individual accountability. Service to the public and serving the public interest are not always synonymous, and government is much more than service to individual customers. The vocabulary of customer service should not obscure the fact that clients are also citizens, with all the rights, duties and shared purposes that implies. The true role of public servants is not just to serve “customers” but also to balance the interests and preserve the rights of “citizens.” It is the sum and balance of these interests, democratically determined, that may add up to something that could be called the public interest. If we were to allow the metaphor of customers to supplant or obscure the reality of citizens, we should diminish the whole concept of democratic government, and the public service values that support it.

In summary, renewal of the public service does not mean choosing between the “traditional” and “new” values. Rather, serving the public interest, in some instances, means finding the appropriate balance between them. This synthesis of old and new values is both possible and necessary, and together they will help create an even stronger culture of public service – not necessarily a new culture but one that has rediscovered itself and gained thereby new life and strength.

**New ethical challenges**

Our discussions with public servants revealed new ethical challenges arising from some of the emerging values and new circumstances of the public service. Public servants told us they need guidance about how service-
oriented, market-driven public services can treat all clients equitably and how the paramountcy of the public interest can be maintained. These questions apply whether public servants are working in economic and industry-related departments or in social programs.

Sources of Ethical Challenges

- client-oriented services
- empowerment and discretion at front lines of services
- decentralization and delegation in staffing, contracting, partnerships

With individual public servants being asked to exercise more judgement and discretion in program decisions and decisions on individual cases, and with greater decentralization and delegation of authority in staffing, contracting and partnerships, public servants are concerned that, in the absence of adequate ethical and accountability frameworks and proper safeguards, the door could be opened for accusations of bureaucratic patronage, favouritism, and conflict of interest.

In the grey area between behaviour that is clearly forbidden and behaviour that is clearly honest and ethical, codes of conduct and ethical rules are particularly useful, to reassure the public and to protect public office holders themselves.

We reviewed the current conflict of interest guidelines and post-employment code and found them basically sound but in need of supplementation in at least three ways:

- guidelines for each department and agency tailored to meet its particular challenges and circumstances
- a more developed central agency capability to counsel individual public servants and their leaders in matters of ethics and values
- better training and information about existing codes.

Ethical decisions in the new public service environment are often complicated by tensions of the sort discussed earlier and shifts in the balance between values, rules and results - for example, emphasis on results versus emphasis on rules, innovation and risk-taking versus probity and prudence. We found that further work is required to get this balance right, for example,

- by ensuring that rules are written to focus on their substantive purpose and are not overly bureaucratic
- by enriching the concept of empowering public servants by re-emphasizing that delegation confers specific and concrete authority to act and thereby implies accountability for specific and concrete results, as well as compliance with rules and procedures
by reaffirming the primacy of law, the Constitution, regulation and due process as essential pillars of public administration and of the good society; and
by developing a comprehensive ethics regime, including appropriate recourse mechanisms both within departments and for the public service as a whole.

Elements of an Ethics Regime

- a public service code or statement of principles
- department- and agency-specific codes to adapt and supplement service-wide code
- counselling and recourse mechanisms for public servants facing a conflict of interest or ethical difficulties

There must be means, consistent with public service values, for public servants to express concern about actions that are potentially illegal, unethical or inconsistent with public service values, and to have those concerns acted upon in a fair and impartial manner. From our own conversations with public servants, we know that unless some practical recourse mechanisms are created many of them will consider all the talk about values and ethics in the public service as so much hot air.

Leadership in a time of change

Throughout our discussions, the theme of leadership emerged with great force. Leadership in the public service – already challenging because of the complexity of issues, roles and accountabilities facing senior managers – has become especially difficult in a time of downsizing, cutbacks and new directions. Yet it has never been more important, because it is through leadership, above all, that values are transmitted, nourished and reinforced.

Our dialogue with public servants revealed to us a certain divide between levels in the public service, perhaps especially where public service values are concerned. Many at the middle and lower levels of the public service do not feel well connected to the senior levels, and they are not sure whether they necessarily share the same values as those at senior levels. These feelings have a variety of sources. This "fault line" in the public service can occur at the highest levels. Even ADMs and DGs, whom others perceive as the departmental leaders, also sometimes express the conviction that they have no influence over the course of events, or do not have a full opportunity to contribute.

The existence of this fault line suggests to us that there is an important leadership challenge for the public service. As we studied the leadership challenge, it seemed to be defined by four interrelated themes: fostering a culture of leadership at all levels; speaking truth to power; accountability for
humane people management; and the importance of role models and leadership by example.

A fault Line in the Public Service
- perception that senior managers do not “walk the talk”
- tension between customer accountability and political accountability
- perception that responsibilities are delegated without adequate values framework or assurance of support/backing from superiors
- perceived lack of participation in decision-making processes
- fault line can occur at highest levels – perceptions sometimes shared by ADMs and DGs

Given the structure of political authority and accountability, public service management will probably always involve a substantial top-down element, but, if so, this makes sound people leadership even more crucial. Opportunities for leadership exist at all levels. Managers do not have to wait for a signal from the top to undertake the great tasks of leadership: exercising imagination, creativity and vigilance for the public good and caring for the people entrusted to their charge.

Similarly, speaking truth to power does not mean only conveying information and advice to ministers and senior officials. It also means creating and nourishing a climate that encourages dialogue and the constructive expression of honest views at all levels. The public service’s contribution to good government depends as much on the wealth and vigour of its intellectual and moral capital as on its powers of execution.

Third, because leadership is a principal means of transmitting, nourishing and reinforcing values, the quality of people leadership is an important touchstone of the general ethical tone and health of the institution. At the root of humane leadership is the conviction that people are important: they are not means to an end but are valuable in and of themselves. But this conviction carries little weight if it does not permeate the culture and habits of public service management. This means aligning systems and practices to support humane people leadership, assessing its quality, exacting accountability for it, and recognizing its accomplishment through appointments, promotions and reward systems.

Finally, the leadership challenge lies in exemplifying the values we want to permeate public service culture. People learn to hold and to live values not by reading a rule book but by seeing how others behave and observing what kinds of behaviour are valued and rewarded. For this reason, nothing seems to us more important for the future of public service values than the quality of leadership in the public service. For us this means at least three things: first, leaders at all levels must be selected not just for effective performance but also for the degree to which they exemplify the highest public
service values; second, the extent to which leaders demonstrate values and model them for others should have an important role in evaluations, rewards and promotions; third, the theme of public service values should be continually reinforced through all activities that influence and shape the culture of the public service.

Core values for the public service

Although we did not set out to draft a list of values, four overlapping families of core public service values emerged from our consideration of problems and issues on the minds of public servants today.

Democratic values

We rediscovered that the most important factor defining the role and values of the public service is its democratic mission and public trust: helping ministers, under law and the Constitution, to serve the common good. What distinguishes the Canadian public service from other organizations is that all its actions are shaped by the requirements of Canada’s particular brand of parliamentary democracy. The principles of responsible government and the relationship between elected officials and public servants form the foundation of public service values. For example,

- the relationship with ministers under responsible government establishes the public service values of being fearless in advice, loyal in implementation and accountable to ministers
- loyalty to the public interest, as represented by the democratically elected government and expressed in law and the Constitution, is one of the most fundamental values of public service, and many other values (such as integrity, neutrality, equity, fairness, impartiality) are linked to it or draw their strength from it.

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Professional values

The family of “professional values” we encountered includes both traditional and “new” values. Some of the “new” values are in fact but a new
A STRONG FOUNDATION — SUMMARY

way of expressing old values, or new means to achieve traditional ends. These ends have not changed: information must still be accurate, advice must still be objective and candid, service must still be even-handed. Innovation and creativity have not supplanted equity, impartiality, fairness and balance as values on which to base action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Traditional&quot; Professional Values</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>neutrality/non-partisanship</td>
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<tr>
<td>merit</td>
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<td>excellence</td>
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<td>effectiveness</td>
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<td>economy</td>
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<tr>
<td>frankness</td>
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<tr>
<td>objectivity and impartiality in advice</td>
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<tr>
<td>speaking truth to power</td>
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<tr>
<td>balancing complexity</td>
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<tr>
<td>fidelity to the public trust</td>
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<th>&quot;New&quot; Professional Values</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>quality</td>
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<td>innovation</td>
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<td>initiative</td>
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<td>creativity</td>
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<tr>
<td>resourcefulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>service to clients/citizens</td>
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<td>horizontality</td>
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<td>teamwork</td>
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Similarly, rather than aiming to replace or supersede "old" values, the "new" values actually offer ways to refresh and give new life to traditional values, such as "service," that have always been part of the public service culture, ethic and motivation.

Finally, "new" values help to remind public servants that their advice and actions have real effects on real people and to challenge "old" behaviours – such as turf protection and rule nit-picking – that were never in keeping with traditional values and that hampered the pursuit of excellence when they were allowed to persist.

Ethical values

Ethical values in public service – we could cite integrity, honesty, trustworthiness, and discretion among others – are in many ways no different from ethical values in other parts of society. What makes them distinctive is the intersection with the democratic and professional values of public service. Integrity, for example, is required in all professions. Its distinctiveness
in the public service lies in the capacity to hold a public trust and to put the common good ahead of any private interest or advantage.

**Ethical Values**

- integrity
- honesty
- probity
- prudence
- impartiality
- equity
- disinterestedness
- discretion
- public trust

**People values**

People values seem to us an important key to promoting other public service values. Those who are treated with respect, concern, fairness, civility and integrity are more likely to display these values in their own conduct, across the whole range of public service functions, than those who are not. The quality of leadership and role modelling has a tremendous impact on organizational culture and individual behaviour, because it is only through leadership that the people values of the public service can be put into action, and trigger the wider range of public service values. To fulfil its functions effectively, the public service must attract and develop people who can work together, with shared values and toward common goals. Just as public servants must be seen to be fair and respectful in their dealings with those they serve, public servants themselves must be treated fairly and with respect.

**People Values**

- respect
- concern/caring
- civility/courtesy
- tolerance
- openness
- collegiality/participation
- fairness
- moderation
- decency
- reasonableness
- humanity
- courage

The public service should display the same values of courtesy, of caring, and of concern for its own employees that it aspires to offer to other citizens of Canada. A professional public service requires a critical mass of dedicated
career public servants who share public service values, new recruits who bring fresh ideas and energy, a human resources regime that is fair, transparent and based on merit, that promotes continuous learning and improvement, and that holds people accountable, recognizes excellence, admits and learns from errors, and celebrates success.

* * *

Together these core values form a solid foundation on which renewal can take place and a stronger public service can be built. Democratic, professional, ethical and people values should be a unifying force for the public service, even if the emphasis and balance among them and the way they are applied or expressed vary from one department or agency to another. Common public service values are quite compatible with a growing variety of public service sub-cultures, as new departmental or agency forms are created. Every public sector organization – traditional departments or new agencies – should respect those core values and be accountable for them. Such values can conflict, as values often do, and difficult choices may sometimes have to be made to achieve the right balance between them. But, even in dynamic tension, they reinforce and support each other, and taken as a whole, they are essential to the public service’s role in the wider democratic process. In fact, in a time of change, these core values, rooted in the democratic mission of government, are the bedrock, the solid foundation on which renewal can take place and on which a stronger public service can be built.

A statement of principles

As the problems and issues public servants discussed with us make clear, these core values are under pressure from many directions. To call this a crisis would be incorrect: it would not do justice to the overwhelming majority of public servants who are living and representing sound public service values every day, often in very trying circumstances. We have deliberately refrained from doing so. However, in the eyes of the study team, we are at a turning point where action is needed to clarify and reaffirm public service values.

As emphasized throughout this report, abstract values statements are less powerful than living models and broadly shared practices. But such statements have their place and are even essential at times. At the end of our journey of discovery, we concluded that this is one of those times. We see a need for a new moral contract between the public service, the government and the Parliament of Canada.

The Study Team recommends a year of broad discussion inside and outside the public service (mirroring the honest dialogue of our study team process), following which the government and Parliament of Canada should adopt a statement of principles for public service. The statement should be succinct, dignified in tone and expression, and focused on the principles of responsible government, and should relate the duties of public servants to
these first principles. The statement should not focus on conflict of interest or other ethical issues – conflict of interest and post-employment guidelines already exist (although they could be better known).

Following this, a series of mutually supportive actions should be undertaken at the service-wide and departmental levels, initiatives that include an interpretation of the statement of principles for the culture and circumstances of each department and agency, and a service-wide office with responsibility for

- advising public service leaders and managers on matters related to values and ethics
- collecting information and coordinating administration of the principles
- providing a confidential recourse or appeal mechanism to support and counsel public servants who believe they are being asked to take actions that conflict with public service values and ethics, similar to what the Study Team has proposed for individual departments.

There is also a need for continuing research, particularly on the experience of other parliamentary countries, and for training and development at all levels, through service-wide and departmental programs, including initial orientation of new recruits and in-service training of employees.

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<th>Training and Development</th>
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<td>Should focus on</td>
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<tr>
<td>- how to think about values and ethics</td>
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<td>- how to discern values and ethical issues in the public sector</td>
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<td>- how to deal with moral dilemmas and conflicts</td>
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<td>- specific governmental context of values, relating values and ethics to public-trust role and principles of responsible government</td>
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**Countering scepticism through honest dialogue**

In the past, efforts to define or promulgate values through formal mission or values processes have led to scepticism and cynicism

- when values or principles and their implications have not been thought through or articulated adequately
- when gaps became apparent between the intentions declared in values statements and the reality of people’s actions
- when discourse on values has not been sufficiently clear and honest about conflicts between values
- when the complexities, difficulties and tensions inherent in values issues have not been acknowledged or have been treated too lightly.
The process we followed, and that we now propose for the public service at large, offers a chance to avoid these traps by acknowledging and understanding how values conflict and interact in dynamic tension and engaging in honest dialogue about them. The cynicism and scepticism we encountered does not seem to run deep—more often it appeared to be a crust covering a strong vein of idealism waiting to be tapped and channelled into firm commitment by consistent leadership. If leadership and example from the top are forthcoming and sustained, they will meet a strong and welcoming response.

Professions based on high ideals—and public service is one—are bound to experience moments of discouragement or disillusionment: people are not perfect, choices are difficult, the way ahead is not always clear, policy making is often messy and sometimes raw, and pressures are great. But a strong public service community, well grounded in its values, will be able to surmount these moments of testing, recover its balance, and renew its calling.

This report is not the end of a process but one step in a long process of renewal in the Public Service of Canada. That renewal must come from within: from values held consciously and enacted daily, from values rooted deeply in our system of government, from values that help give the public service confidence about its purpose and character, from values that help us regain a sense of public service as a high calling. This is the solid foundation on which we can build the public service of the future, a great national institution dedicated, as in the past, to the service of Canadians and their form of democratic government.

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2Joined on 20 November 1995 / Devenue membre le 20 novembre 1995
3Member from November 1995 to May 1996 / Membre de novembre 1995 à 1996