

The background of the cover features a network diagram on the left side, consisting of interconnected circles and lines. A large, curved green band with a pattern of small circles runs diagonally across the center. The right side of the cover is a solid dark blue color.

CONNECTING WITH OUR MEMBERS

ANNUAL REPORT

2014-2015



ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL EXECUTIVES
OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA



The Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX) is an independent, not-for-profit national organization. Our mission is to promote a quality Public Service by strengthening leadership excellence, promoting the health and well-being of executives and their working environments, and developing an active, engaged and growing national leadership community of practice that supports executives in their quest for high performance, productivity and professional growth.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Friends and colleagues,

At the 2014 APEX Induction Ceremony, the Clerk of the Privy Council welcomed new leaders to the executive ranks. She underscored "speed, complexity and change as defining the new, modern, operational context for all of society, and noted that the Public Service must be prepared to respond by being increasingly nimble, collaborative, resilient, and flexible.

Since its inception in 1984, APEX has supported major Public Service renewal efforts and we are proud of what we have achieved in 2014-2015 in support of executives who are leading change.

APEX **connects** with its members through ongoing consultations in order to ensure we are meeting the changing needs of our members, particularly those new to the executive cadre. We continue to advance the views and interests of executives through a variety of means. For example, in January 2015, APEX made a presentation to the newly reconstituted Advisory Committee on Senior Level Retention and Compensation based on executive feedback received from various consultation initiatives.

APEX also offers opportunities for executives to **connect** with one another, exchange ideas and best practices and create valuable professional networks. Our annual Symposium is one example, in 2014, the event was attended by over 550 executives from across the country and focused on the future – moving towards a new vision for the Public Service. The Symposium was about seeing our challenges in a new light. It was about recognizing our potential, considering insights from others and knowing that, as leaders and executives, our efforts play a critical role in creating the future we want for ourselves and Canadians.

We invite you to review this annual report which outlines the activities and initiatives of the Association on behalf of its members over the course of 2014-2015. We look forward to working with our members to build on our achievements in the year ahead, and to continue to respond to the needs of our membership as the senior leadership team of a world-class institution.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Donna Achimov'.

Donna Achimov
Chair, APEX Board of Directors

DEFINING OUR DIRECTION

APEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2015

APEX's three-year Strategic Plan sets out the organization's priorities, objectives and overall direction. It is reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure that APEX is well positioned to respond to the evolving leadership needs of its members.

The activities and initiatives undertaken in 2014-2015 and highlighted in this report, flow from the following three strategic objectives:

- Members sought **support for executive health and wellbeing**, including access to confidential advice and guidance;
- They were also seeking ways to **maximize executive leadership excellence** – through access to tools, skills and learning opportunities;
- They wanted to be part of a **dynamic and active national community of leadership practices** that offered opportunities to come together to learn, share their views and experiences and find new and innovative ways of dealing with workplace challenges.

APEX is proud of what it has accomplished to date and will continue to build on the success of the past three years as it develops its Strategic Plan for the next three years.

The Strategic Plan for 2015-2018 will be built around the feedback from its members, as well as other external and internal issues which are expected to affect APEX and its members in the coming years.

Public Service executives will be called upon to play increasingly demanding roles as they implement the Blueprint 2020 vision. APEX also needs to set a course to define where it wants to be in 2020 - to remain relevant to its members and stakeholders.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1: PROMOTING EX HEALTH AND WELLBEING

ADVISORY SERVICE FOR EXECUTIVES (ASE)

The *Advisory Service for Executives* provides confidential support and/or referral services to executives across the Public Service, including those in the regions and abroad. This service was established in 2003 with the generous support of the Deputy Head community.

Two hundred and twelve executives made use of the ASE service in 2014-2015. However, the total number of client interactions reached a high of 382; 68% were one-time only visits; 22% of clients came two or three times; and the remaining 10% used the service four to 11 times during the fiscal year. This represents an increase of 27% of repeat visits and can be attributed to a number of reasons: the level of satisfaction of clients for the service; the increased complexity of issues; and the need for moral support of clients facing very difficult situations - particular around cases of harassment, investigations and extended sick leave. There continued to be a representative mix of departments, with executives from 62 organizations contacting the ASE, compared to 56 the previous year and 62 the year before.

Most executives sought advice from the ASE for more than one reason at a time with career management being the top reason. The top eight reasons, in order of frequency, that executives sought support of the ASE during the fiscal year were: (1) career management; (2) relationship with their superior; (3) health (not including re-entry/duty to accommodate); (4) performance management; (5) terms and conditions of employment; (6) transition; (7) staffing; and (8) retirement. The top four issues were raised in 30% of cases and the bottom six in 40% of cases.

For a more detailed account of the ASE, please refer to the *2014-2015 Annual Report, Advisory Service for Executives*, available on our website.

EXECUTIVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

APEX has worked diligently since 1997, with the launch of its first health survey, to ensure that the health and wellbeing of executives remains a key priority issue. The mental health and wellbeing of employees are key contributing factors to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Public Service.

Over the years, through the health surveys it conducts every five years, health summits, presentations to the *Advisory Committee on Senior Level Retention and Compensation* and other initiatives, APEX has emerged as a driving force for improvements to the workplace that will improve individual health outcomes and maximize organizational performance. The Association is known as an important contributor to the

A FEW QUOTES FROM EXECUTIVES WHO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE ASE.

"Thanks so much for being there when I was facing a very difficult situation at work I am truly grateful".

§

"I am happy to let you know that I found a new position. Thank you for the sound advice".

§

"Thank you for everything - for being there - for listening. I hope you realize how valuable your service is to the executive community".

body of research on workplace health. Its advice on measures to address workplace health issues is sought and valued. Our studies have been cited in reports on the determinants of health done by the World Health Organization.

APEX was the first to urge the government to adopt the Mental Health Commission of Canada's *National Standard on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace* in its Blueprint 2020 submission to the Clerk of the Privy Council. It strongly argued this should be a key piece of the Blueprint 2020 vision to modernize the Public Service, so that departments/agencies would be obliged to take a hard look at the policies and practices that are making employees sick. The Standard provides a systematic approach to developing and sustaining healthy workplaces.

On March 27, 2015, the government and the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) announced that they had reached an agreement to establish a joint task force that will examine mental health in the workplace. The Treasury Board Secretariat extended an invitation to APEX to join the task force. This is a great opportunity for APEX and its members - we look forward to contributing and supporting the important work of this joint task force.

The responsibilities of the task force includes reviewing the practices from other jurisdictions and employers that might be instructive for the Public service. A **Health Working Group (HWG)** composed of a dozen representatives from various organizations and regions was established by APEX in 2014 to produce practical tools that executives can use to help themselves and their organizations. The Working Group produced a **Compendium of Healthy Workplace Practices** that will give departments and agencies a sense of what others are doing and ideas for improving organizational health. APEX is working in close collaboration with the Mental Health Commission of Canada to fine tune the Compendium and will be sharing it with the task force once it's finalized.

The Mental Health Commission's Standard is built on 13 factors that define a "psychologically healthy workplace". Earlier this year, APEX commissioned two white papers to address two of those factors, civility/respect and engagement.

In addition, the APEX CEO participated in a number of media interviews to underscore the importance of the health and wellbeing of federal public service executives. Healthy executives have a positive impact on the health of organizations and employees. This translates into higher productivity, engagement and, ultimately, better business results for Canadians.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #2: SUPPORTING EX LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

ANNUAL APEX LEARNING SYMPOSIUM

Since 1988, APEX has hosted an annual Learning Symposium to examine timely issues and topics of interest to the leadership of the Public Service. Under the theme **Transformational Leadership: Challenge, Creativity and Vision**, the 2014 Symposium focused on the future – moving towards a new vision for the Public Service. The Symposium was about seeing our challenges in a new light. It was about recognizing our potential, considering insights from others and knowing that, as leaders and executives, our efforts play a critical role in creating the future we want for ourselves and Canadians.

Five hundred and fifty executives, from more than 66 departments and agencies, attended the 2014 Symposium. Executives from the regions accounted for 17% of participants, with representation from every province. Approximately three quarters of attendees were members of APEX.

Year after year, the first class reputation of the Symposium has allowed APEX to attract high quality speakers from the worlds of academia, for profit and not-for-profit enterprises as well as internationally recognized Canadians.

The Symposium co-chairs, **Yaprak Baltacioğlu**, Secretary of the Treasury Board and **Serge Dupont**, Deputy Minister, Natural Resources were described by participants as dynamic, inspirational leaders. Program details are available at apex.gc.ca.

A BIG LEAP IN 2015

Planning for the APEX Symposium 2015 began immediately following the 2014 event. The theme selected – from **Ideas to Action: Leading Continuous Renewal** is about translating ideas – our own and others – into concrete action. It is about moving forward - taking small steps or big leaps – without a guarantee of success. It is about leading and working differently in a fast-moving and hyper-complex-world.

APEX took a big leap and risk in an attempt to reach out to executives across the country through an innovative delivery model. For the first time ever, the APEX Symposium 2015 will be rolled out across four different locations, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Final participant evaluations will determine APEX's level of success.

A GLIMPSE OF WHAT APEX SYMPOSIUM 2014 PARTICIPANTS HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE EVENT.

"Overall, the program was very strong. Speakers were very engaging. Topics were timely and appealing to all. Well done."

§

"The quality of the speakers was wonderful, as usual, and the common thread of wellbeing as a theme was artfully done.

APEX continues to be a great value for executive learning".

§

"Enjoyed the forum overall. Well done – to all of those who planned and coordinated the event. Excellent co-hosts".

APEX AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Every year, APEX highlights the leadership excellence of federal Public Service executives through its Awards of Excellence program. APEX believes that recognizing executives who demonstrate excellence within the EX cadre is an important way of celebrating individual and collective achievements.

The recipients of the 2014 APEX Awards of Excellence clearly demonstrated that they have the commitment, vision and leadership needed for the Public Service to serve Canadians at the highest possible level – well into the future. In their own unique way, they have made a significant contribution to the collective wellbeing of Canadians.

The 2014 winners were recognized at an awards banquet hosted by APEX on the eve of the Symposium. The recipients were interviewed on camera that evening and a 10 minute video was produced and shown at the Symposium the following day. The award recipient video is a source of inspiration for Symposium participants and all public servants.

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

APEX is entering its 31st year of operation in September 2015 which speaks volumes to the organization's responsiveness and ability to re-focus its efforts to meet the evolving needs of executives. APEX has a long history of providing professional development offerings and information sessions in support of its membership. It prides itself on being able to develop and deliver tailored offerings in a timely manner.

Last year, APEX focused its efforts on newly appointed executives. The needs of new inductees were identified through a survey and programming was developed to fill the gaps.

The *Learning the Ropes* new action learning group provided executives who had been appointed within the last three years, with an opportunity to develop new skills while working with peers from different departments/agencies within the Public Service. For most, the move to an executive position constitutes a major transition. This shift, perhaps more than any other involves change on multiple levels.

In the exciting *Leaders Leading Leaders* action learning group, participants engaged in a series of exercise that provided insights, practices and tools that led to new thinking, new actions and new results. Exercises dealt with such topics as: discovering your unique voice as a leader, leveraging your strengths; leading full out; and managing your relationship with your peers and senior management.

The *Leading for Passion, Purpose and Possibility* program offered participants the opportunity to explore the challenges of leading in an era of profound change in the Public Service.

The *Effective Leadership through Self-Awareness* program enabled participants to become self-aware allowing them to develop ways of leveraging their strengths and mitigating their weaknesses, ultimately making their organizations more successful.

APEX also offered a host of other executive development programming. However, there was a significant drop in participation throughout the fiscal year for a variety of reasons and APEX made the decision to suspend programming in the coming year.

Together with our partner, the *Telfer School of Management's Centre for Executive Leadership*, we continued our no-cost quarterly series of *Leadership Forums*. These 90-minute inspirational sessions, open only to APEX members, have proven to be extremely popular and have been filled to capacity on the same day invitations are sent out.

The APEX "Infobytes" series offered via webinar or in person on a regular basis during the lunch hour also proved to be extremely popular with members from across the country.

PRESENTATION TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SENIOR LEVEL RETENTION AND COMPENSATION

On January 16, 2015, APEX was invited to meet with the *Advisory Committee on Senior Level Retention and Compensation* headed by Mr. Vijay Kanwar. The results of the 2014 survey of executives on their evolving work, as well as the findings of the 2012 Survey on Executive Work and Health, feedback from clients of our Advisory Service for Executives, and input into the APEX Blueprint 2020 report provided by members across the country were used to inform the presentation made to the Committee. The presentation can be found on the 'members only' section of our website.

APEX argued that top executive talent is needed more than ever to position the Public Service for the future and that the right conditions must be in place to attract and retain top executive talent. These conditions include:

- A positive public perception of the Public Service
- The scope to lead and make a difference
- A healthy workplace environment
- An effective performance management program
- Structured executive development programs
- A real distinction between executive and non-executive compensation
- Compensation that is competitive with other sectors.

APEX based its presentation to the committee in part on the results of the 2014 survey it conducted to get the pulse of executives on how their work had evolved. More than 1,000 executives completed the survey and provided well over 5,000 comments, many extensive. The work of an executive in the federal Public Service has changed and will continue to evolve as we move towards the implementation of the Blueprint 2020 vision.

The APEX Blueprint 2020 report submitted to the Clerk of the Privy Council in February 2014 focused on issues it believes to be of strategic importance and where public service leaders can make the most effective contribution to the goals of Blueprint 2020. It outlined a six-point strategy for improving the Public Service and ensuring that it remains a world-class institution.

- Strengthening mutual respect and confidence between ministers and public servants.
- Increasing the efficiency of enterprise-wide management systems.
- Strengthening sound, strategic, nonpartisan advice to ministers.
- Increasing the efficiency of service delivery to meet Canadians' needs.
- Fostering new leadership for 2020 and beyond.
- Improving the quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of workplaces.

APEX will continue to advance its six-point strategy in 2015-16 through a variety of means.

APEX has long conducted surveys of its membership and other public service executives as part of its commitment to promoting leadership excellence, listening to leaders, and making their voices heard in the public service community. We will also be keeping in touch with the Committee and will continue to represent the interests of executives.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #3: DEVELOPING A NATIONAL COMMUNITY OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

MEMBERSHIP

Membership stood at approximately 2,180 as of March 31, 2015 including 383 Alumni members. Executives in the regions and abroad represent approximately 24% of overall membership. Seventy six (76%) of members are in the national capital region which is consistent with the overall distribution of federal Public Service Executives. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of executives are members of APEX.

Last fiscal year, APEX revised its membership eligibility criteria. Employees who have been acting in an EX position for six months or more are now eligible to join APEX. Employees often occupy EX positions on an interim basis for significant periods before being appointed on an indeterminate basis. We continue to believe that these employees will benefit from the support and services APEX provides and be better equipped to fulfill their new responsibilities.

During the same time period, APEX also reached out to its Alumni members to determine how it could better meet their needs and explored ways of engaging them for the benefit of all APEX members. More than 50% of alumni members responded to a survey conducted by APEX. The results of the survey are posted on our website and will be used to inform APEX'S 2015-18 strategic plan.

Approximately 60 APEX members continue to serve as the liaison point between APEX and the executive community in their respective organizations. These **Departmental and Agency Representatives** provide valuable insights into the issues of concern to executives within their respective organizations. APEX wishes to acknowledge their important contribution to the executive community. They are one of the key reasons APEX is able to keep its finger on the pulse of the executive community and to respond quickly to meet its evolving needs.

APEX INDUCTION CEREMONY FOR NEWLY APPOINTED EXECUTIVES

Every fall, APEX welcomes new leaders into the executive community on behalf of the Clerk of the Privy Council, departments and agencies. A total of 381 public servants joined the executive ranks. This year, APEX welcomed 221 new executives from 43 organizations, and from every region. All new executives, including those who were unable to attend the ceremony received a free one-year membership to APEX.

This ceremony includes a half day learning event focused on the roles, responsibilities and key challenges facing new executives. It is followed by a reception and dinner which is attended by the Clerk of the Privy Council and a large number of Deputy Heads. It not only marks an important milestone in a leader's career but serves to reinforce pride in the Public Service.

Highlights of the 2014 program included an insightful conversation with **Daniel Watson**, Chief Human Resources Officer, Treasury Board Secretariat; a session with senior executives who shared their personal experiences on becoming a leader in the Public Service; and an Ask A Deputy discussion with

INDUCTION CEREMONY
FEEDBACK FROM
PARTICIPANTS WAS
OVERWHELMINGLY
POSITIVE.

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"I want to thank the organizers, senior executives, and Deputy Heads/VPs who took the time out of their busy schedules to make me a priority. I won't let you down!"

A STRONG SENSE OF PRIDE
AND PURPOSE SHINES
THOUGHT THE COMMENTS
RECEIVED IN THE POST
INDUCTION SURVEY.

§

"I think the concept of this is fantastic. Many of us may have been acting in our positions for a length of time before permanent appointment happened so it occurred with no real fanfare, despite the fact that what we have accomplished should make us all very proud. Just participating in the afternoon sessions, hearing from the speakers and being part of that group allowed the opportunity to really take in what we are doing, why we are doing it, and how important it is to the whole of the federal Public Service and Canadians. APEX certainly made that memorable. Great job!"

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"I was shocked and honoured by the level of engagement that senior leaders demonstrated. I didn't appreciate before how instrumental they view our role in our respective organizations. It was also an excellent networking opportunity, which as busy public servants, we do not take enough time to do. It was an amazing evening."

Karen Ellis, President, Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario and *Louis Lévesque*, Deputy Minister, Transport Canada on what it takes to be a stellar leader.

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

APEX works closely with a broad range of stakeholders inside and outside the Public Service. This includes Deputy Heads, the Privy Council Office, the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, EX Services groups and departmental networks within federal bodies, the Human Resources Council, and other member-driven associations.

Over the course of the year, APEX played an active role in supporting and advancing government initiatives. APEX members and executives at large participated in the Association's online consultation initiative on the Work of Executives. The results of APEX's executive consultation processes were shared with the Clerk of the Privy Council Office, the Office of the Chief Human Resource Officer.

As in past years, the APEX CEO met regularly with Deputy Heads, Heads of Agencies and key central agency officials at the Treasury Board Secretariat and the Privy Council Office to highlight and discuss issues of importance to the federal executive cadre.

As an independent, not-for-profit organization, APEX relies heavily on the support of Deputy Heads and corporate sponsors. The Deputy Head Community covers the salary of the CEO, Deputy CEO and Senior Advisor positions. Departments and agencies also pay the salary of the Visiting Executives who come to APEX on assignment. The funding provided by a long list of corporate sponsors helps APEX organize its annual Symposium, the premier learning opportunity for federal executives.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank the Deputy Head community and our corporate sponsors for their generous support.

APEX CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

APEX made a \$5,000 contribution to the **Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC)**: \$3,000 was allocated to the Ottawa-Carleton campaign and \$2,000 to the Outaouais campaign. APEX has been contributing to the Charitable Campaign since 1986 which is evidence of its ongoing commitment to the broader community.

OTHER MATTERS

GOVERNANCE

APEX BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES

The 15 members of the **APEX Board of Directors** are elected by, accountable to and responsible for representing federal executives from across the country. The Board includes nine members from the National Capital region, one member from each of the five regions and one alumnus.

The full Board met seven times in 2014-2015. Board members also sit on committees which meet several times a year. APEX's governance structure includes three standing committees (Governance, Audit, and Nominations) and two ad hoc committees (Business Transformation and Health).

The Association launched a **Business Transformation Initiative** in 2013/14 with a view to modernizing the way APEX does business, communicates, and delivers value to its members. A modern digital platform that allows access – when executives wish to connect, through multiple channels, seamlessly across remote locations – is essential for APEX to demonstrate relevance and respond to the evolving needs of its membership.

We have replaced our infrastructure and migrated our data and applications to a cloud computing environment. New Client Relationship Management (CRM) and Financial Management systems will be rolled out in 2015/16, and a website redesign and launch will ultimately complete the transformation exercise. With a solid foundation in place APEX aims to be the primary forum that brings federal executives from across the country and abroad together to share information and learn from each other, creating a hub for leadership excellence in the Public Service.

A Bylaws Committee was struck last year for the express purpose of reviewing the Association's bylaws in light of the introduction of the *Canada Not-For-Profit Act*. The Committee reviewed and updated the Bylaws which were submitted to the Board of Directors for final review. This was followed by a General Meeting seeking membership approval of the proposed Bylaws. The Bylaws were approved.

THE APEX ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

The **APEX AGM** was held on September 30, 2014. A slate of candidates was nominated and adopted. Three new members were elected to the Board of Directors: **Treasure Ducharme** (Prairies); **Piero Narducci** (NCR); and **Jeannine Ritchot** (NCR).

A new Governance Committee was selected: **Donna Achimov/CHAIR**; **Michael Hudson/VICE-CHAIR**; **Sandra LaFortune/ SECRETARY**; **Kent Estabrooks/TREASURER**; and, **Jackson Mckiee, (ongoing) OFFICER AT LARGE**.

The Chair thanked the APEX Board and Secretariat for its sound financial management, and the motion to approve the audited financial statements for the period ending March 31, 2014 was unanimously carried. The CEO provided highlights of the 2013-2014 Annual Report.

The financial statements for 2014-15 will be made available on the APEX website under the *About APEX – Annual Report* section following the September 30, 2015, AGM.

LOOKING FORWARD

Given the climate of fiscal restraint, the new mandate of the Canada School of the Public Service, and the fact that executives take little time for professional development as contributing factors, APEX has made a conscious decision to suspend professional development offerings in the coming year.

APEX will however continue to offer quarterly **Leadership Forums** in partnership with the *Telfer School of Management's Centre for Executive Leadership* and our "Infobytes" series on a wide range of topics of interest to executives on a regular basis. These free events, available to members only, are great opportunities to learn and come together as a community.



Public Service executives will continue to be called upon to play increasingly demanding roles as they implement the *Blueprint 2020 vision*. As executives move towards implementation, their work will continue to evolve - they must be prepared to respond by being increasingly nimble, collaborative, resilient and flexible. APEX is proud of its track record in supporting the executive cadre within the federal Public Service, and contributing to government initiatives aimed at modernizing the institution in a continually evolving environment.

Over the last several years, multiple surveys have highlighted that disrespectful behaviors are disturbingly common across all levels of government and are on the rise. The impacts of incivility are far-reaching and have damaging effects on the workplace. Employee engagement is dropping and has emerged as an increasingly important issue. This is why APEX decided, earlier this year, to commission two white papers to assist executives in their quest to achieve leadership and organizational excellence while supporting and growing the people and organizations they serve.

The white papers on civility and engagement address two of the 13 factors that define a "psychologically healthy workplace" identified in the Mental Health Commission of Canada's Standard and will be shared broadly.

We are also exploring reform efforts undertaken in the U.K., Australia and New Zealand to see if there are ideas that could usefully be applied in Canada.

APEX will continue to promote executive and organizational wellbeing as a key success factor. We look forward to working collaboratively with departments, agencies and central agencies in developing innovative approaches that will enable the Public Service to meet the challenges in the year to come.

We remain committed to **connecting** with our members and bringing executives together with a view to developing a national network of leaders who can work together to deliver on the Clerk of the Privy Council's *Blueprint 2020* vision as well as the Government's agenda.



Our vision is to inspire leadership excellence, honesty and trust in the Public Service for the benefit of Canada and all Canadians. As the voice of the federal executive community, APEX is a dynamic national organization whose advice on critical Public Service issues is valued and acted upon by key decision-makers.



ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL EXECUTIVES
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