

TAKING STOCK

ANNUAL REPORT
2015-2016



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.

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.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Friends and colleagues,

In 2015, the Federal Government underwent significant change as the federal election brought a new Government to Ottawa in the latter part of the year. This represented an opportune time for Public Service executives to step-up, brief our new leaders and provide transition advice as the new government established itself and its mandate.

The Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX) was also marked by change in 2015. The Board of Directors welcomed a new Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Michel G. Vermette, in September, 2015. Michel is an accomplished leader specializing in public administration and issues management. His most recent position prior to taking on the CEO role at APEX was as a Deputy Commissioner at the Canadian Coast Guard. Michel brings a great mix of leadership, inspiration, operational experience, technical breadth, and passion to his role as CEO of APEX.

In addition to welcoming a new CEO, APEX also saw a turnover of two-thirds of its personnel during the 2015-2016 year: Mario Baril was appointed as the new Senior Director of Operations; Jennifer Clark joined APEX, replacing France Perron who took a well-deserved retirement after twenty years with APEX; and the Association saw the departure of six Visiting Executives, and the arrival of six new Visiting Executives. Notwithstanding the significance of these changes, APEX services and activities continued unabated.

I invite you to review this annual report which outlines the activities and achievements of the Association on behalf of its members over the course of 2015-2016 and provides a glimpse of what's to come in 2016-2017.



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

Donna Achimov
Chair, APEX Board of Directors

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear members,

My arrival in September was another step on a fantastic career path which the federal public service has afforded me since the 1980s. I want to start by thanking the APEX Board of Directors for providing me with another exciting opportunity on that path. APEX really is the centre of the federal executive community, and it is a privilege for me to lead our Association.

The year that has just passed has not been without challenges as APEX underwent a significant turnover of personnel and faced a tight financial situation. You will see from our audited financial statements that 2015-2016 ended in a deficit situation. Increased costs to deliver the 2015 Symposium coupled with the lowest attendance in over 20 years, as well as continuing the ongoing Business Transformation initiative (new information technology and systems) to better serve members, led to higher expenditures and lower revenues.

I am confident that despite these challenges, we have built a strong team to deliver the services you expect from us. We ended the fiscal year looking forward to a brighter future. The Board of Directors, our staff and I are committed to assisting you in your professional and personnel growth.

For the first time in four years, at the end of March 2016, APEX had more members than the previous year. This is encouraging, and we take as a sign of your confidence in the Association.

Finally, since its inception, APEX has been the *Voice of Executives*. Membership in our Association carries an obligation: we need to hear what is on your minds. In order to continue our important advocacy role, and to focus our service offerings we need to hear from you. Please take the time to let us know how we can help you. In turn, I commit to regularly letting you know what we are up to and how you can be involved.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michel G. Vermette'.

Michel G. Vermette
Chief Executive Officer

DEFINING OUR DIRECTION

APEX STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2018

The **Strategic Plan for 2015-2018** was published in July 2015, incorporating feedback from its members and takes into consideration the internal and external environments and the issues which are expected to impact upon APEX and its members in the coming years. APEX's Strategic Plan sets out the organization's priorities, objectives and overall direction. APEX activities and initiatives are purposefully aligned to support the three strategic objectives identified in the Strategic Plan:

1. Provide Executives with opportunities to develop a strong community of practice.

APEX is the primary forum that brings executives together to share information and experiences and to learn from one another.

2. Promote the physical and mental health of Executives

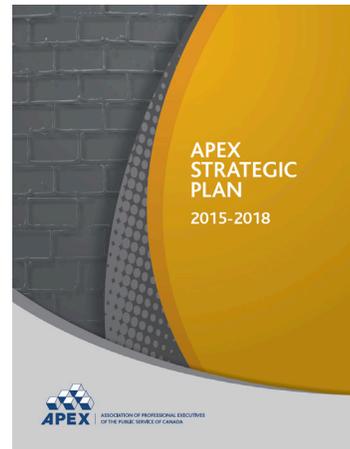
APEX is a centre of expertise on the health of executives whose advice on measures to address workplace health issues is sought and valued. APEX is invited to contribute to government-wide initiatives aimed at improving workplace health.

3. Support executive leadership excellence

APEX consults and engages the executive community to identify issues, to develop advice and tools to support executive leadership, and to play an effective broker role between executives and central agencies and the DM community.

In addition to undertaking initiatives to support the delivery of the Association's strategic objectives, the organization is also accountable to manage resources: human, financial, and information. In 2015-2016 the Association made a strategic investment in information management systems (client relationship and financial management platforms). Additionally it experienced a significant turnover of staff, and it will welcome six new Board members in 2016-2017.

The specific activities and initiatives undertaken in 2015-2016 are highlighted in this report and they flow from the direction we received from members.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1: DEVELOP A STRONG COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

MEMBERSHIP

Membership stood at 2,186 as of March 31, 2016, including 313 Associate Members. Executives outside the National Capital Region (NCR) (both in Canada and abroad) represent approximately 29% of overall paying membership, with the remaining 71% of members working in the NCR. This distribution is consistent with the overall distribution of federal Public Service Executives.

Approximately 55 APEX members continue to serve as the liaison point between APEX and the executive community in their respective organizations. These **Organizational Representatives** provide valuable insights into the issues of concern to executives within their respective organizations. Additionally, they encourage their colleagues to take advantage of the benefits of membership and the services offered by the Association. Members of the **APEX Board of Directors** play a key role in the Governance of the Association. APEX wishes to acknowledge these individuals' important contributions to the executive community. They play an important role in supporting APEX's ability to keep its finger on the pulse of the executive community and to respond to meet its evolving needs.

APEX RECOGNITION OF ENTRY TO THE EXECUTIVE RANKS

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 416 public servants joined the executive ranks in 2015-2016. Of these, APEX welcomed 279 new executives from 42 organizations at the **Recognition of Entry to the Executive Ranks Ceremony**. This was the largest such ceremony since APEX began hosting the event more than 20 years ago. We are also pleased to report that new executives from every region in Canada attended. All of the 416 new executives received a free one-year membership to APEX.

The Recognition of Entry to the Executive Ranks 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

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS REFLECTED UPON THE EVENT AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO THEM..

"Thank you. Great opportunity to meet other new executives. Sessions were comforting. Good stories and anecdotes. The venue made us all feel appreciated and welcomed. Memorable event that I will always remember."

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"I am very grateful for this event. I had the opportunity to meet a lot of people, network and meet my DM and the Clerk. The ceremony was perfect. I am looking forward to more events organized by APEX. Keep doing such great work."

Heads and Associate Deputy Ministers – more than 50 participated in 2015. The event not only marks an important milestone in a leader's career but serves to reinforce pride in the Public Service.

Highlights of the 2015 program included a session on Being an Executive: The Unique and Vital Role of Executives in the Public Service with **Anne Marie Smart**, *Chief Human Resources Officer, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat*; a session with recent inductees to the executive ranks; and an Ask A Deputy discussion with **Karen Ellis**, *Associate Deputy Minister, Veterans Affairs Canada* and **François Guimont**, *Deputy Minister, Public Safety Canada* on what it takes to be a stellar leader. Inductees also heard from the Clerk of the Privy Council, **Janice Charette**, and from the Chair of the Board of Directors of APEX, **Donna Achimov**.

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 at Treasury Board, EX Services teams within departments and agencies and departmental networks within federal bodies, the Human Resources Council, and other member-driven associations.

During the year, the APEX CEO met regularly with Deputy Heads, Heads of Agencies and key central agency officials at Treasury Board Secretariat, the Privy Council Office and the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO) 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 sponsors. Departments and agencies cover the salary of the Visiting Executives who come to APEX on interchange assignment. The funding provided by sponsors, although reasonably modest in context of the overall APEX budget, helps the Association cover some of its costs, particularly for the APEX Symposium. We invite you to review the 2015-2016 financial statements which provide more information about our sources of income and our expenditures. The statements are available on the APEX members only website.

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

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*"Thank you for a great day!
It's sometimes hard to appreciate the importance of our work while caught in the daily grind, but events such as these provide a good reminder and pause for reflection about our role and push us to be better at what we do. I feel energized back at the office this morning!"*

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This year, APEX built on this success and held several follow-up learning events specifically for the 2015 cohort.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #2:

PROMOTE THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF EXECUTIVES

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 outside the National Capital Region. This service was established in 2003 with the generous support of the Deputy Head community.

Three hundred and sixteen (316) executives made use of the ASE service in 2015-2016, while the total number of client interactions reached 820, as a number of executives took advantage of multiple contacts with the office. This represents an increase of 49% of executives who sought advice and an increase of 114% repeat visits compared to last year. There are a number of reasons that can be attributed to this year's high numbers: an increase in complex situations that often require a disproportionate number of client interactions (i.e. harassment complaints and dismissals); referrals from other satisfied clients, and increased awareness of the services of the ASE.

Both the previous and current Clerks of the Privy Council have made workplace well-being a priority. This may have given executives a sense of safety in coming forward and seeking support for workplace issues of all types, including those affecting their mental health.

Most executives sought advice from the ASE for more than one reason. The top eight reasons, in order of frequency, for which executives sought support and advice of the ASE during the fiscal year, were:

- (1) career management;
- (2) relationship with their superior;
- (3) harassment;
- (4) health;
- (5) retirement;
- (6) performance management;
- (7) terms and conditions of employment; and
- (8) dismissal.

A FEW QUOTES FROM EXECUTIVES WHO CONTACTED THE ASE.

"I would really like to thank you for your assistance and moral support throughout the process. You really made a difference for me and I will certainly continue to recommend you as a key advisor to those who need to consult APEX".

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"Thank you for all your help, advice and guidance throughout this process - it was invaluable and was the kind of support I could not find anywhere else".

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"Appreciate the ideas and advice you shared with me, as it will certainly help me to sort out next steps".

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For a more detailed account of the ASE, please refer to the **2015-2016 Annual Report, Advisory Service for Executives**, which is available on our website.

EXECUTIVE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Starting well before the 1997 launch of its first health survey, APEX has worked to ensure that the health and well-being of executives remains a key priority issue.

Through the *Executive Work and Health Survey* it conducts every five years, as well as presentations, focus groups and other initiatives, APEX is a driving force for a better workplace that improves individual health outcomes and maximizes organizational performance. The Association is known as an important contributor to the body of research on workplace health, especially as it relates to executives. 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, and used as reference material for federal workplace health initiatives.

Over recent 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 action needs to be taken to boost employee engagement and avoid common mistakes that can sow the seeds of disengagement. The inclusion of workplace health among the executive performance agreement expectations for 2015-2016 underscores the importance of building and sustaining a respectful Canadian Public Service. Executives play a crucial role in addressing this issue: they need to be self-aware, and model the culture they want to see in the workplace. They also need to take immediate action when witnessing disrespectful behaviour.

This is why APEX decided 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. Published in summer 2015, the white papers on **civility** and **employee engagement** address two of the 13 factors that define a "psychologically healthy workplace", as identified in the Mental Health Commission of Canada's (MHCC) *National Standard on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace* (the Standard). These two papers were shared with executives across the Public Service.

APEX was the first to urge the government to adopt the MHCC's standard 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 would examine mental health in the workplace. In 2015, the Treasury Board Secretariat extended an invitation to APEX to join the Technical Committee of the task force.

On December 2, 2015, the President of Treasury Board, the Honourable Scott Brison, welcomed the release of a report by the ***Mental Health Joint Task Force***. The report represented a first step towards the adoption of a comprehensive psychological health, safety and well-being strategy for the federal public service. APEX is proud to have contributed to this important work on behalf of its members and applauds the Government's ongoing commitment to this important issue. We continue to be a member of the Technical Committee of the Joint Task Force on Mental Health.

The mental health and well-being of employees are key contributing factors to the effectiveness and efficiency of the public service. Healthy executives have a positive impact on the health of organizations and employees. This translates into higher productivity, engagement and, ultimately, better results for Canadians and Canada. As part of its ongoing engagement to support the executive community, APEX delivered many presentations to executives related to civility in the workplace during the year.

APEX will have another opportunity to assess progress with respect to the health of executives in the next APEX Executive Work and Health Survey which will take place in 2017.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #3: SUPPORT EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

ANNUAL APEX SYMPOSIUM

Since 1988, APEX has hosted an annual Symposium to examine timely issues and topics of interest to the leadership of the Public Service. Under the theme *From Ideas to Action: Leading Continuous Renewal*, the 2015 Symposium focused on translating ideas – our own and others' into concrete action. The Symposium was about moving forward – taking small steps or big leaps - without a guarantee. It was about sustaining a high-performing and productive public service leadership capable of working differently in a fast-moving and hyper-complex world.

Four hundred and eighty-five (485) executives, from more than 50 departments and agencies, attended the 2015 Symposium. Executives from the regions accounted for 20% 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, **Marie Lemay**, Deputy Minister and President of Canada's Economic Development for the Regions of Quebec and **William Pentney**, Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General of Canada were described by participants as inspiring and engaged leaders.

APEX sought to reach out to executives across the country through an innovative delivery model. For the first time ever, the APEX Symposium 2015 was rolled out across four different locations: Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Although the 2015 distributed model for the Symposium was unprecedented (or a pioneering effort) and the technology worked smoothly, the cost nonetheless was high. The expense and complexity of the distributed model made it difficult to support the approach in the long term.

Over and above the content and important ideas on which the Symposium focussed, participants consistently emphasized the importance of networking at the only annual event which focuses entirely on the executive community. While they appreciated that innovation of the regional model adopted in 2015, they noted that it did not facilitate networking in the same way as a single venue does.

Here is a glimpse of what APEX Symposium 2015 participants had to say overall about the event and about the various concurrent sessions. APEX reviews all comments and takes them into account when planning the subsequent year's Symposium program and logistics.

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"Excellent presentation – brings a different perspective to management and leadership. Really appreciated bringing in the human side of leadership, well done."

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"It was interesting to hear the comparisons (of private sector) against the public sector. We often hear comparisons, often in a negative light. It was good to hear what we do well."

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"I am so impressed with the overall logistics, venue, etc. This event competes with other large events from the private sector and demonstrates our ability to innovate".

During 2015-2016 significant efforts and planning was undertaken to ensure a successful 2016 Symposium: Leadership Action for Excellence, Innovation and Health.

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 2015 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 well-being of Canadians.

The 2015 winners were recognized at an awards ceremony hosted by APEX on the eve of the Symposium. The recipients were interviewed on camera that evening and the resulting video was shown at the Symposium the following day. The names of the 2015 recipients are available on the APEX Website.

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND NETWORKING

APEX entered its 32nd year of operation in September 2015. APEX has a long history of providing learning and development offerings and information sessions in support of its membership. It prides itself on being able to develop and deliver tailored, relevant offerings in a timely manner.

In 2015-2016, APEX hosted eight webinars on a variety of topics including *PSC New Directions in Staffing; Key Leadership Competencies; Mental Health in the Workplace, How to give and Receive Feedback*, and *Whistleblowing in the Public Sector*. Access to previously recorded webinars is now available on our member-only site.

In 2015, APEX also launched its Executive ConnEXions Series, a thematic series of discussions to address areas of high interest to the Executive Community. These sessions provide opportunities to exchange views with senior management. Our aim through this series is to support the learning, development and networking of our membership across the federal public service. The Executive ConnEXions series events in 2015-2016 included: *Reinforcing the Policy Community in the Federal Public Service*, and *The future of Communications in the federal Public Service – Challenges and Opportunities*.

APEX also organized two networking events for the most recent cohorts of new executives, one for the 2014 cohort and another for the 2015 cohort. APEX also held two learning events focused on helping the 2015 cohort navigate the performance management process in areas such as setting performance objectives, competencies, learning plans and feedback, led by former Assistant Deputy Minister **Ross MacLeod**, a retired Assistant Deputy Minister from Treasury Board Secretariat.

OTHER MATTERS

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 Regular members from the National Capital region, one Regular member from each of the five regions and one Associate member.

The full Board met seven times in 2015-2016. Board members also sit on committees which also meet several times a year.

THE APEX ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

The APEX AGM was held on Wednesday, September 30, 2015. A slate of candidates for the board of director vacancies was nominated and adopted during this meeting. The candidates elected to the Board by vote at the AGM were **Christine Burton** (National Capital Region); **Kent Estabrooks** (Atlantic Region); **Brigitte Goulard** (National Capital Region) and **Jackson McKie** (BC and Yukon Region).

The Treasurer reported that the year saw the continuation of some important investments relative to IT infrastructure and systems that will mitigate IT risks and position the Association to better serve its members and therefore better deliver on its mandate in the future.

New Client Relationship Management (CRM) and Financial Management systems were rolled out in 2015-2016. Future initiatives will focus on website redesign now that our primary information technology risks have been addressed.

The Chair thanked the outgoing CEO, **Lisanne Lacroix**, for her contribution and wished her well in her retirement. She also thanked **Rick Séguin** and **Sandra LaFortune** for their significant roles as Board members. Incoming CEO **Michel Vermette** thanked the Chair and the staff for the great welcome he received. He noted the important financial challenges that the Association was facing and the need to make APEX more financially sustainable. He invited members to come and meet the team at APEX and noted that he wishes to encourage dialogue and emphasized the importance of getting feedback from members.

A motion to approve the Audited Financial Statements for the period ending March 31, 2015 was moved, seconded and unanimously carried. A motion to re-appoint auditing firm Marciel Lavallée for the 2015-2016 fiscal year was also unanimously carried.

The *audited financial statements for 2014-2015* were made available on the APEX Members Only website.

A GLIMPSE OF WHAT'S TO COME

APEX will continue to promote executive and organizational well-being as a key factor to its success. APEX will continue to raise awareness of executive and workplace health through the annual APEX Symposium and other offerings, and support executives who are dealing with workplace related issues.

We look forward to working collaboratively with departments, agencies and central agencies to develop innovative approaches that will enable the Public Service to meet the challenges in the years to come in areas like corporate commitments, performance agreements, and results and delivery.

In 2016-2017, APEX will also continue to engage executives in dialogue on what is important to them and how that should shape APEX's future. It will also provide regular opportunities for members to come together as a community, in person or virtually, and will work with a number of organizations / channels, including the media, to obtain positive coverage of the achievements of APEX and its members.

Finally, the Association will continue to instil pride in the Public Service in a variety of ways, including celebrating excellence of public service executives through the Annual APEX Awards of Excellence.



ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL EXECUTIVES
OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

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