

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

2018-2019



Respect Bureau



Environment and
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Canada

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FIRST ANNUAL REPORT
2018-2019

Respect Bureau

A Word From Your Respect Liaison Officers

It is our great pleasure to present the Respect Bureau's first Annual Report. This report is an opportunity to share our activities from our official launch on February 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

We have worked wholeheartedly to establish the Respect Bureau, creating a safe space where all employees can discuss workplace issues, in a confidential environment, without fear of judgment or reprisals. We promoted this new space widely so that employees would know how to access it when they needed it and we continue to build effective, trusting relationships with unions, managers, champions and employee committees enabling us to work with them to influence change within our workplaces.

We travelled across the country to promote and deliver the services of the Respect Bureau, and it has been a privilege getting to know the people of ECCC. We were amazed by the diversity and richness of the work they accomplished. It is evident that ECCC employees share the same needs and expectations of their workplace. They want to bring their best to the job every day and they want to feel respected, empowered and be appreciated for their contributions.



The Respect Bureau's first year has been exciting for us. We feel we have been able to provide direct support to employees through individual discussions and that we have also been able to raise awareness on broader issues within the organization. We have tried to reflect this in our first annual report. We hope you will find it both informative and helpful.

Sincerely,

Corinne Boudreault *Sylvie Richard*

Corinne Boudreault and Sylvie Richard



Did you know?

The picture chosen for the visual element of the Respect Bureau was taken by Sylvie in the Gran Paradiso National Park, illustrating two mountain violets, *Viola calcarata*, living approximately at 2732 m altitude in the Italian Alps. This picture reflects that even though you might find yourself in a difficult environment, with the proper support and resources, you can always find a way to build resilience and shine through.

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Getting to Know the People of ECCC

● February 2018

Moncton, Sackville, Mount Pearl,
Downsview, Burlington

● April 2018

Saskatoon, Winnipeg

● June 2018

Montreal, Dorval, Saint Helen's Island

● October 2018

Gatineau, Ottawa, Victoria, Vancouver,
North Vancouver, Delta, Richmond

● December 2018

Regina, Calgary, Yellowknife, Edmonton

● January & February 2019

Dartmouth, Halifax, Fredericton,
Oromocto

● March 2019

Quebec, Cap-Tourmente



The Respect Bureau

A Safe Space

The Respect Bureau provides a safe space where all employees, regardless of rank and tenure, can informally discuss workplace issues without fear of judgment or reprisal. The Respect Bureau operates under four guiding principles:

Confidentiality

The Respect Bureau does not disclose information shared by a visitor without his or her permission, except where there may be an imminent risk of serious harm to an individual's safety or the workplace.

Impartiality

The Respect Bureau does not advocate for any party to a dispute. They advocate for productive communication and fair processes.

Informality

The Respect Bureau does not participate in formal processes and does not conduct investigations. Speaking with a Respect Liaison Officer is not an official notice to the Department of an issue.

Independence

Although it reports to the Associate Deputy Minister, the Respect Bureau is independent in structure, in function, and practice, both real and apparent.

A Change Agent

The Respect Bureau plays an important role as a change agent by raising organizational awareness of systemic issues and trends. To be effective, it is important that we meet with employees and with our partners to build relationships and foster trust. Together, we can effect change.

We made 104 presentations to more than 2,500 employees in 32 different locations across the county. During these information sessions, branch management tables, and team meetings we talked about what we do, listened to workplace issues, and heard employees describe what a healthy and respectful workplace was to them.

We also held over 75 engagement meetings with:

- managers
- union stewards and presidents
- departmental champions
- network representatives
- other workplace well-being groups

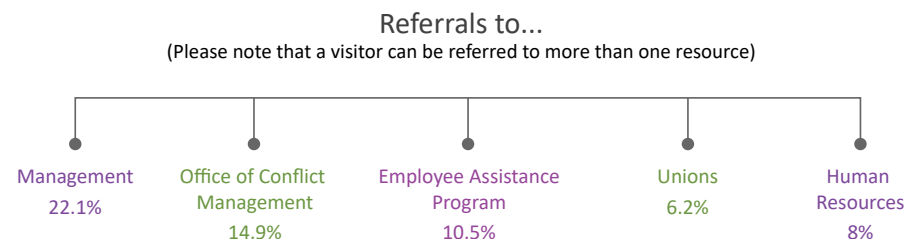
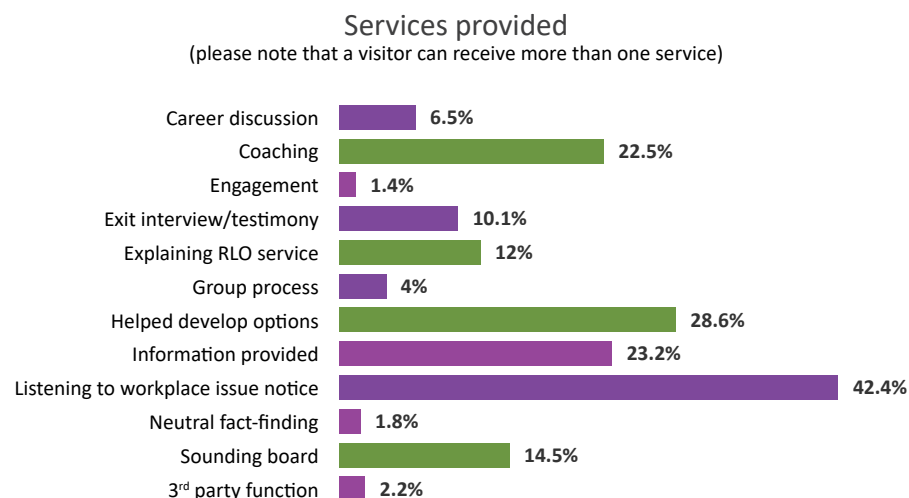
What to Expect

Employees can expect that the Respect Liaison Officer will:

- Help them clarify their issues and their goals by exploring different perspectives
- Provide information on available resources and tools, programs, policies, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and formal recourse mechanisms and how to access them
- Be a neutral sounding board while they consider their options and next steps to meet their needs
- Refer them to existing services that can help them address their issues

While employees consider their next steps, the Respect Liaison Officer may also take certain actions to help effect change within the organization:

- We may raise the issue with someone in the organization if the employee has permitted us to break confidentiality
- Although we do not conduct formal investigations, we may decide to conduct informal fact-finding activities
- If we detect a systemic issue, we will share our observations and make recommendations to those who have the authority to act
- We will act as a neutral sounding board with managers as they explore strategies to address the issues that we bring to their attention. We may also refer them to available resources and services
- To help branches understand their workplace risks, we will provide information on the psychosocial factors that seem to be at play in the issues brought forward by our visitors



Confidential Meetings

276 visitors

representing approximately 4% of total ECCC employees

As of March 31, 2019, the Respect Bureau had held 445 confidential discussions with 276 employees. Although many employees requested only one meeting to discuss their workplace issue, some met with us multiple times to better clarify their needs, to explore their options and to develop courses of action.

58% of our visitors

had at least one confidential discussion in person

It is important that the Respect Bureau be available to ECCC employees wherever they are located. Thanks to our outreach efforts across the country, 47% of our visitors were from our regional offices. Our confidential meetings occur in person, by telephone, via Skype, or by videoconference. When we travel to regional offices, we make time for face-to-face discussions with employees who want to speak with us.

We are pleased that employees, regardless of rank or tenure, felt comfortable meeting with us. When managers, including executives, call on the Respect Bureau, we gain a more holistic overview of our workplace. We can identify systemic issues faster while building effective relationships with those who have the authority to effect change.

The Respect Bureau encourages employees who are changing units or leaving the Department to complete ECCC's online [exit questionnaire](#) to provide feedback on their employee experience. We complement this process by offering employees a safe and confidential place to raise specific issues that they would prefer to share in person. This year we conducted 28 exit interviews.

The Respect Bureau evaluates the effectiveness of its services by asking visitors to complete an appreciation survey. These surveys are anonymous and provide important feedback to help us offer better support in the future. The feedback received has indicated that visitors feel safe during our discussions and appreciate the confidentiality and impartiality of our services.

% per region

ALT —●— 6.2

NCR —●— 53.2

ON —●— 8

PNR —●— 13

PYR —●— 12.7

% per position type

Casual / Student / Unknown 7.6

Employee 57.6

Executive 15.2

Manager / Supervisor 19.6

“Doing business with the Respect Bureau has been an excellent strategy for me to resolve my workplace issues and in addition to contributing greatly to my well-being. In talking to the Respect Liaison Officer, allowed me to gain a different perspective...”

“I witnessed behavior in the workplace that was not acceptable or respectful. I thought I was helpless to aid in making sure colleagues were treated professionally and respectfully. The Respect Bureau helped with resolving my feeling of helplessness and provided a venue to listen and provide options in reference to courses of action I could take to improve the situation...”

“I wanted to thank you for taking the time to sit together and discuss a few of the issues that continue to bother me. It's not always that easy to discuss such things, but you made it very comfortable and easy to do so and for that I thank you.”

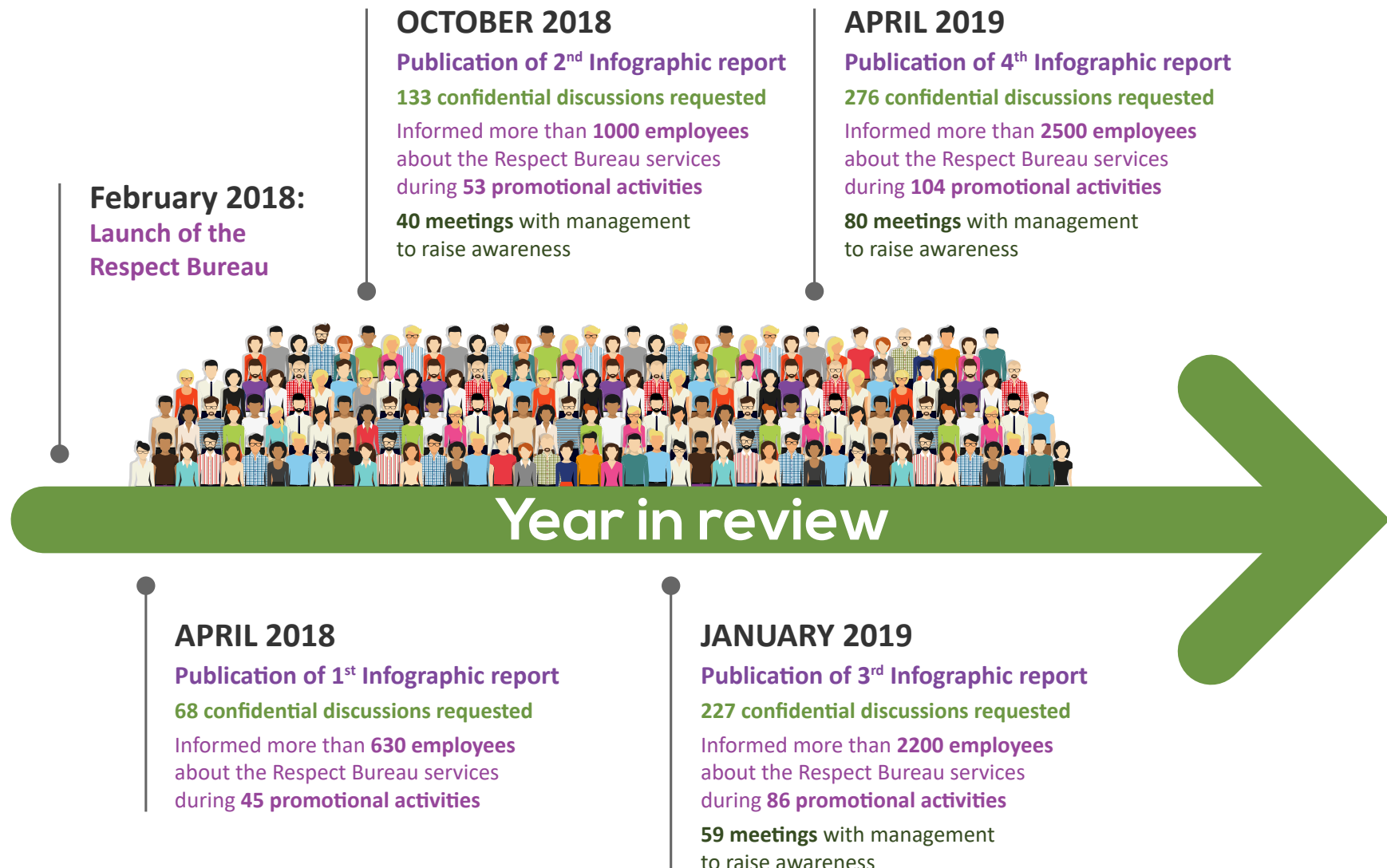
“I think this is a superb resource! I have already seen management refer to and use this resource when issues come up in our workplace!”

“The Respect Bureau really helped me focus on which actions were the best options for me to take, in my specific situation. This allowed me to save a lot of time and take the right type of action more quickly.”

“I would strongly recommend using the services provided by the Respect Bureau as it have provided me with a safe place to discuss issues I was experiencing and also some possible course of action to help me with my situation...”

The Respect Bureau held over 80 meetings with management to share observations and make recommendations regarding workplace issues. We recognize that it can be intimidating when the Respect Bureau requests a meeting to discuss issues and are thankful for the welcome we have received. The Respect Bureau plays an influential role in the organization, which means we rely on the willingness of management

and persons with the authority to take action on the issues raised. We appreciate the seriousness with which managers considered our feedback and took action. These actions illustrate the organization's commitment to providing a healthy, respectful and inclusive workplace for everyone.

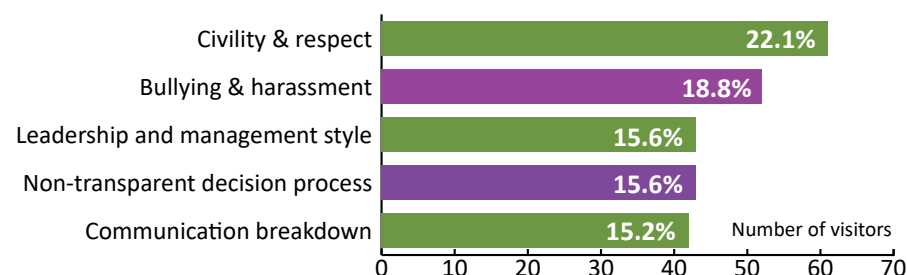


Observations

Visitors called the Respect Bureau to discuss a variety of issues. Some visitors had questions about policies or programs; others were dealing with difficult workplace dynamics and were seeking information about available support services. Although each story was different and had its own set of circumstances, there were recurring themes. Sharing them is an opportunity for us to raise awareness within the organization. We encourage you to talk about these themes within your teams and to think about how we can all contribute to improving our workplace.

Top reasons for confidential discussion request

(please note that a visitor can have more than one)



1. Telework

Where operationally feasible, telework arrangements can support the organization's objectives and create a healthy workplace where employees can achieve work-life balance. It also complements the organization's evolving accommodation strategies and contributes to reducing our carbon footprint.

The Respect Bureau heard from visitors who were frustrated that their teams had no access to teleworking arrangements while other teams with similar roles did. Inequity within teams also came up. In some instances, visitors feared they would be labelled as lazy or considered less committed to their work if they requested to telework.

We have observed that, within our organization, there are different levels of comfort with teleworking arrangements. Certain branches have implemented them widely; for regionally dispersed teams who connect virtually every day, teleworking appears easier to implement. However, there remain areas within the organization where there is an unwillingness to even discuss telework. Sometimes, the resistance to implementing telework seemed to stem from discomfort in managing employees remotely.

The Canada School of Public Service offers online and accessible courses such as "Encouraging Team Communication and Collaboration (CO52)" and "Managing Virtual Teams (X027)", which could help alleviate certain management concerns in these situations. Teams who are interested in exploring telework should turn to the [Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat Telework Policy](#) and ECCC's [Telework Guidelines](#) (revised January 2019) for relevant information to support informed discussions.

2. Official languages

One of the fundamental values of Canada is its linguistic duality. The *Official Languages Act* aims to ensure the respect for English and French as the official languages of Canada and to establish equality of status and equal rights and privileges for their use in all federal institutions.

Visitors who reached out to the Respect Bureau spoke of issues related to the respect of their linguistic rights in their workplace. They were exasperated with the lack of tools to help them communicate with team members or colleagues who work in different regions and have different linguistic profiles. They also had many questions about their rights to obtain written communications in the language of their choice. They shared that not having access to information in their language of work was limiting their ability to perform their work effectively.

[ECCC's Official Languages Action Plan 2019–2020](#) addresses many of the issues that have been raised with the Respect Bureau. In particular, the awareness campaign on the language of work requirements will help improve everyone's understanding of their rights and obligations under the *Official Languages Act* and will foster respect in the workplace.

Have you seen this icon?



Apprenti – J'écris dans ma langue seconde

[ECCC's Learning and Development Team](#) promotes a practical tool to help employees write messages in their second official language. Inserting this icon at the beginning of your informal emails to colleagues to identify that you are writing in your second language can reduce the fear of making mistakes.

For more information on official languages and to find useful tools visit:

- [ECCC's Official Languages Network](#)
- [ECCC's Human Resources Branch—Official Languages](#)
- [The Office of the Commissioner of Official Language](#)

3. Managing Change

Visitors across the country talked to the Respect Bureau about their frustrating experiences preparing for moves and adjusting to new workplace settings. Many felt the nature of their work did not lend itself to the open concept of Workplace 2.0. They feared their new work environment would affect their ability to concentrate and produce written documents. They feared collaboration would decrease if everyone limited their conversations in their new open workspace out of concern for disturbing their colleagues. Many could not easily explain why the change was occurring and felt it was both financially and environmentally wasteful. They were frustrated with the lack of timely information and updates throughout the planning process and the lack of opportunity to raise issues and be engaged in finding innovative solutions to address them. To complicate things, the roles and responsibilities of the different parties involved (i.e. Accommodations, Branch Management, Regional Executive Committees, Senior Building Officers, Public Services and Procurement Canada, etc.) were not always clear.

Visitors also spoke with the Respect Bureau about the lack of consideration and respect they felt when they were told by their manager to move out of their work station to make room for someone else. Often, these requests came abruptly, with little notice or explanation and no opportunity for conversation. These kinds of events in the workplace contribute to employees feeling unappreciated and reduced to being no more than a cog in the wheel. Each visitor was clear that what was hard to accept was not being asked to move, but rather how they were treated with such little regard.

Already “doing more with less,” visitors felt they were treated with a lack of respect when they had to adjust to the implementation of multiple different systems concurrently (e.g. SAP, My GCHR, HRG, Phoenix, email initiative, etc.). Managers, their support staff, and employees have criticized the insufficient training and supporting resources and the lack of access to expert advice. They are also overwhelmed with the increased administrative burden they feel was dumped on them, without consideration for their regular workload. More specifically, those who have endured pay issues, and managers who have spent countless hours supporting their employees to help resolve their pay issues, felt betrayed by their employer.

When implementing change...

- Plan regular meetings with your employees to discuss why these changes are needed, why now, the desired outcome, and how they can participate in effecting this change.
- Engage with your team early in the process to hear their issues and concerns and together find innovative ways to address them.
- Check in regularly and adjust the strategy as necessary.

4. Respect in the Workplace

Respect in the workplace is everyone's responsibility. It is at the foundation of an effective, healthy, inclusive and motivating workplace. Each small gesture counts.

The Respect Bureau heard from visitors that there was a lack of civility and respect in their workplace. Incivility took the form of offensive remarks, rude behaviours, gossiping, and yelling. It created stress and anxiety in the workplace; employees felt unappreciated and were disengaged. In spite of the negative impacts of this incivility on employees and their workplace, we observed that employees were quick to normalize and excuse some of these behaviours, especially when displayed by their superiors. We found that employees sympathized with their superiors' heavy workload and the high level of stress they endured daily. Unfortunately, tolerating and excusing these behaviours in our workplace also contributes to a culture of incivility.

Visitors spoke of bullying and intimidation in their workplace when they felt unfairly treated, excluded, or ignored by their supervisor. They spoke of being targets of demeaning remarks and being blamed where others should have accepted responsibility. There were also incidents between colleagues and between internal service providers (e.g. Finance, Human Resources, etc.) and their ECCC clients. Some visitors felt their supervisors did not have the emotional intelligence to be effective in their role and had the impression that the organization valued achieving its results over the well-being of its people. We observed that fatigue and stress can make it more difficult for supervisors to support and respond to their employees with empathy.

Managers themselves spoke of having the best intentions but feeling ill-equipped to handle some of the people management issues they were facing. They also felt that between meeting their deliverables and dealing with a heavy administrative burden, they had no time left to dedicate to people management. This highlights the need for managers to be better trained, on-boarded and supported when they move into their first, and subsequent, manager roles. Indeed support is needed at every step of the leadership ladder.

Being Mindful in the Workplace

- Acknowledging inappropriate behaviours and encouraging each other to do better, helps build team resilience and contributes to a culture of respect.
- Teams can push this further with the [guide](#) for having team conversations or by taking the ECCC *Building Civility* training

5. Staffing

Visitors spoke to the Respect Bureau about their concerns with staffing processes. They did not always understand the decisions made regarding staffing processes and appointments. Some felt there was favoritism and that the staffing policies and values had been broken. Employees wondered if ECCC valued their contributions and if there would be opportunities for them to progress in the organization. The result was an erosion of trust in management.

After some informal fact-finding activities, we realized that these issues were most often founded in a lack of information and understanding about the staffing rules. We noticed that employees did not understand some of the key elements of the federal government's staffing policy. For example, they did not know when it was appropriate for managers to use non-advertised processes, the distinction between essential and asset qualifications, the different rules for posting notifications, or how staffing pools worked. In the absence of information, employees assumed their managers had something to hide and were trying to break the rules. To regain employees' trust, managers must be more transparent in their decision-making, explaining to employees how jobs will be filled, and why someone was appointed.

Developing Staffing Strategies

- Consider your employees' career aspirations – you should be having periodic conversations with your employees about their interests and ambitions.
- Discuss short- and long-term staffing strategies with employees to let them know of future opportunities within your team.
- Balance your staffing strategies to provide opportunities to bring in new talent from outside the team as well as for your employees to compete for opportunities within the organization.

Recommendations

An important role of the Respect Bureau is to formulate recommendations to the Deputy Ministers that will help the organization address some of the trends and systemic issues we observed. The DMs invited us regularly to share our observations with them, the Executive Management Committee, and our union partners during different retreats and labour-management meetings. They demonstrated a keenness to take action on the early trends we brought to their attention. Given some of the actions already taken and the evolution of some of these trends, the Respect Bureau proposes the following recommendations.

1. Inform employees of the staffing policy's key elements.

The Respect Bureau recommends that ECCC provide training, tailored to employees, on the key elements of the *New Direction in Staffing* implemented in 2016. This will help employees understand some of the decisions being made by staffing managers, help them ask the right questions when they have doubts, and overall improve their trust in management. This will also enable employees to plan and manage their careers more effectively.

2. Use psychometric assessments to recruit, develop, and support managers.

The Respect Bureau recommends that ECCC use psychometric assessments to identify the character traits and aptitudes of effective people managers when staffing positions with supervisory responsibilities. These psychometric assessments should be integrated into selection processes at all levels of managerial responsibility.

- Front-line supervisors and middle managers should be selected with particular attention given the significant impact they have on employees' day-to-day well-being.
- Senior managers and executives should be selected just as carefully since they set the tone by modelling behaviours in their teams. They also have a responsibility to develop and mentor the front-line managers who report to them.

ECCC should invest in developing its pool of future leaders by making psychometric assessments available to employees who aspire to become managers so that they can develop their people management potential before they are assigned employees to manage.

ECCC should support managers in their current roles by encouraging upward feedback processes. Psychometric assessments such as 360-degree evaluations should be easily accessible for current managers to check in, obtain feedback, and hone their people management skills systematically every few years.

3. Make management coaches available to help build people management capacity in the organization.

The Respect Bureau recommends that ECCC hire or contract management coaches to provide support to our current community of managers as the organization builds its people management capacity.

Closing remarks

Our first year in operations has allowed us to meet with many employees who needed a safe space to discuss workplace issues. Thanks to all those who came forward we have been able to raise awareness in the organization on some common trends. The Respect Bureau will continue to meet with employees of ECCC and engage with managers to support the organization in addressing the trends and systemic issues we have raised.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the great people that we had the privilege to meet on our travels across the country when promoting the Respect Bureau's services. We met people passionate about the work they do at ECCC. They are also passionate about making a difference in their work environment.

We would like to thank all our visitors for their trust and for sharing their issues with us. We would not have been able to influence change in the organization without the valuable information that you chose to share with the Respect Bureau.

We thank branch heads, union presidents and union stewards, the Office of Conflict Management, the different human resources programs, the departmental champions, our dedicated communications team, and internal service providers for their continued support.

We would like to thank Associate Deputy Minister Dr. Martine Dubuc and Deputy Minister Dr. Stephen Lucas for entrusting us with the mandate to establish this new service for the Department. In particular, we appreciate their receptiveness to the feedback we shared and their willingness to take action when required.

In closing, we want to thank our Respect Bureau team without whom none of this would be possible.

