

Blueprint 2020 – Submission by the CFVM

The Clerk of the Privy Council has initiated a process called Blueprint 2020 which proposes a new vision for the public service: “A world-class Public Service equipped to serve Canada and Canadians now and into the future;” and requests feedback to the following three questions:

- What does the vision mean to you?
- What is needed to make the vision a reality?
- What can you do to help achieve the vision?

This paper responds the Clerk’s objectives from the standpoint of the Community of Federal Visible Minorities (CFVM) and its mission “to provide an independent forum for visible minorities to organize, discuss issues, and advance their concerns with respect to individual and collective well-being, professional advancement, and representation within the federal public service.”

What does the vision mean to you?

The CFVM fully supports the Clerk’s leadership on Blueprint 2020. It provides an excellent framework to position the public service to be the best it can be. The vision statement covers the right areas for change and is a sound clarion call for action to transform and modernize the public service. It is however somewhat distracting in its use of terms such as “world-class” and “equipped,” for example:

- “World-class” is not defined by Blueprint 2020, but at a minimum it cannot mean equivalent to European countries, which have not made the same strides as Canada on issues of diversity, employment equity or multiculturalism. It is therefore suggested that the term “world-class” be replaced with “truly representative and highly-productive” so that the current Canadian model is acknowledged as a success and then the vision modified to push the public service to do even better - against its own yardstick, not against other potentially inaccurate measures.
- Similarly, the term “equipped” could be read to imply a transactional notion to public services related perhaps to technologies and tool boxes. The word “possesses” may be better suited instead to shift the nuance to mean that public servants themselves, the individual employees, ought to have the competencies and policy-capacity to serve Canadians; that rather than being equipped with supporting technologies, they themselves in fact have a ready instinct for the changing demographics, and the evolving needs and identity of Canada and Canadians.

What is needed to make the vision a reality?

Turning a vision into reality requires inspired employees, accountable leadership and supportive organizational cultures. In this regard, the CFVM believes that there is still some work required to create an environment where all employees feel included. For example, the recent Public Service Employees Survey found that on the metrics of workplace discrimination, visible minorities have a significant departure from their non-visible minority counterparts. Some of the feedback received by the CFVM suggests that this may be due in part to the following:

- Minorities are frequently expected to fit into the status-quo culture, rather than to change it;
- Visible minorities continue to be seen primarily as immigrants or from outside of Canada;

- Many managers are often overly cautious of issues of diversity and tend to avoid such subjects;
- Visible minority executives commonly experience upward bullying from junior employees;
- Far too often minorities are quickly labelled as poor communicators or as being aggressive;
- Visible minorities sometimes experience subtle forms of exclusion and social-isolation;
- Minority executives are normally held to higher standards than non-visible minorities; and
- A visible minority making an error on the job is forgiven less than a non-visible minority.

In the continuum of organizational evolution the public service may be described as being at a stage where leadership is by and large engaged and policies are implemented to address the concerns of visible minorities – however, this is only at an elementary level of what the Canadian Human Rights Commission calls the Maturity Model. To fulfil the vision of Blueprint 2020, new models of leadership are needed to demonstrate hard commitments to cultural evolution as well as policies and processes that foster changes in areas beyond short-term or individual or economic interests.

Deputy heads should be better engaged to recognize that the visible minority issue is a permanent and positive Canadian phenomenon. Therefore for meaningful change to occur the public service must broaden its scope from simple notions of employment equity to rewarding new behaviours and decision-making that promote diversity and innovation – to evolve both the what and the how to the next level.

What can you do to help achieve the vision?

As an organization of public servants committed to the betterment of our federal institutions, the CFVM is ready to provide support to the Clerk and the Deputy Ministers' community in whatever capacity desired. While a detailed dialogue is invariably needed, it is recommended that initially the following suggestions be considered to set the momentum for action:

- Better use of information technology and big data, particularly on workforce availability to understand and explain why the private sector, and indeed the political sector also, consistently outperforms the federal public service in addressing barriers faced by visible minorities;
- Implementation of tools such as a visible minority lens to measure the performance and the accountability of both the organization as a whole and of the leadership – not just in terms of representation but also of organizational culture, systems, public policies and programs;
- Specific and quantifiable metrics to improve the experiences of visible minorities, particularly as they relate to the vision of Blueprint 2020. This will be critical in improving the status quo but more importantly for bringing about a measurable organizational change and productivity; and,
- The establishment of a federal advisory council for visible minorities comprised of public servants and perhaps experts from the private sector, working with the Privy Council Office or the Treasury Board Secretariat, to help monitor and guide the organizational change process.