

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Public Service Pride Network (PSPN)



UNITY IN DIVERSITY:

Celebrating Our Collective Strengths in a Year of Impact

UNITY IN DIVERSITY: CELEBRATING OUR COLLECTIVE STRENGTHS IN A YEAR OF IMPACT



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Message from the champion

I'm pleased to share the 2023 Annual Report of the Public Service Pride Network (PSPN or the Network).

This year marks a significant milestone for our network as we assume a more prominent and influential advocacy role, focusing on culture change and enhanced support for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in the federal public service.

Canada has long been celebrated for its equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). However, in recent times, there has been a growing wave of anti-2SLGBTQIA+ rhetoric in both media and society at large. Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse individuals are facing increased discrimination, prejudice, and threats to their rights and safety. This report aims to highlight the gravity of the situation, emphasize the need for collective action, and showcase how our network is contributing to change.

In May 2023, the PSPN issued an [open letter](#) calling on all deputy ministers to actively engage with Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse employees and ensure an inclusive workplace. The impactful letter has resonated widely, leading to the development of numerous departmental 2SLGBTQIA+ action plans and the establishment of two interdepartmental working groups led by the Network focused on name and gender marker changes in IT systems across the public service and inclusive washrooms. The letter also led to a substantial influx of consultation requests from deputy ministers, departments, agencies, departmental pride networks and employees.

In support of broader EDI objectives within the Government of Canada (GC), including the Clerk's recent update to the [Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service](#), the PSPN released its first-ever multi-year [Strategic Plan 2023-2025](#), providing a clear roadmap for fulfilling its mandate. In it we outline how we intend to advocate for greater EDI for 2SLGBTQIA+ public servants, inspire leaders, and drive change within the public service.

The past year has demonstrated the Network's growing influence. Our efforts are creating significant impacts beyond the federal public service as we engage with provinces, territories, and municipalities to explore potential partnerships for initiatives that align with our missions. Additionally, the PSPN has captured the attention of international governments, and presented to hundreds of influential leaders from 12 countries at the [Government Transformation Summit](#) in London, UK, in November 2023.

Together, we have the power to achieve even more and foster greater unity. That's why this report is signed by many departmental pride champions. Indeed, while this is the PSPN's annual report, it reflects the spirit and contributions of pride advocates throughout the federal public service.

We will continue to work collaboratively to create positive change and amplify our impact. In doing so, we are building a more inclusive and equitable society for everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Bett', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jason Bett
Champion, Public Service Pride

As departmental Pride Champions, we are fully aligned with the PSPN in our shared dedication to promoting EDI for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in the federal public service. We take great pride in co-signing this report and offer our unwavering support to all those working to promote equality and acceptance. Together, we create a more inclusive and equitable public service for all.

Vidya ShankarNarayan (she/her)

Co-Champion, Diversity and Inclusion
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Shannon Nix (she/her)

Co-Champion, Diversity and Inclusion
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Daryell Nowlan (he/him)

2SLGBTQIA+ Champion
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

Jesse Stewart Herbert Fleming (he/him)

CBSA 2SLGBTQI+ Advisory
Committee
Canada Border Services Agency

Kelly Wolfslehner (she/they)

CBSA 2SLGBTQI+ Advisory
Committee
Canada Border Services Agency

Victoria Frost (she/her)

CBSA 2SLGBTQI+ Advisory
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Canada Border Services Agency

David Beamer (he/him)

National Chair, Pride Network
Canada Revenue Agency

Aaron Stevens (he/him)

2SLGBTQIA+ Employee Network
Canada School of Public Service

Nathalie Laviades Jodouin (she/her)

Champion, Equity, Diversity
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Canada School of Public Service

Charles Cardinal (he/him)

Co-Chair, PCH Pride Committee
Canadian Heritage

Charles Cardinal (he/him)

Co-Chair, PCH Pride Committee
Canadian Heritage

Peter Linkletter (he/him)

Positive Space and
2SLGBTQIA+ Champion
Correctional Service Canada

Gena Marshall (she/they/nekm)

2SLGBTQI+ Employee Co-Champion
Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern
Affairs Canada

Dre Polgar (they/them)

2SLGBTQI+ Employee Co-Champion
Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern
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Guy Genest (he/him)

ESDC Employee Pride Network Champion
Employment and Social Development
Canada

Marc Labrèche (he/him)

ECCC Pride Network Co-Champion
Environment and Climate Change Canada

Andrea Monrad (she/her)

ECCC Pride Network Co-Champion
Environment and Climate Change Canada

Chris Henderson (he/him)

Co-Champion, Diversity and Inclusion
Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the
Canadian Coast Guard

Linsey Hollett (she/her)

Champion, Gender and
Sexual Diversity Network
Health Canada

Emmanuelle Deault-Bonin (she/her)
Pride@IRCC Network Champion
Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

Nathalie Bertrand (she/her)
Designated Senior Official, Employment
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Infrastructure Canada

Tanzeel Merchant (he/him)
2SLGBTQIA+ Champion
Innovation, Science and Economic
Development Canada

Lisa Smylie (she/her)
2SLGBTQI+ Co-Champion
Indigenous Services Canada

Rhonda Laboucan (she/her)
2SLGBTQI+ Co-Champion
Indigenous Services Canada

Daniela Gasca (she/her)
2SLGBTQI+ Champion
Justice Canada

Jessica Stillman (she/her)
National Civilian Co-Chair,
Defence Team Pride
National Defence

Bart Bilmer (he/him)
Co-Chair, Pride Network
Natural Resources Canada

Marcia Morash (she/her)
Pride Network Co-Champion
Parks Canada

Andrew Campbell (he/him)
Pride Network Co-Champion
Parks Canada

Sundeep Cheema (he/him)
Positive Space Champion
Prairies Economic Development Canada

Kailli Levesque (she/her)
GBA+ and 2SLGBTQIA+ Champion
Privy Council Office

Stephen Bent (he/him)
Champion, Gender and
Sexual Diversity Network
Public Health Agency of Canada

Natalie Ripley (she/her)
Co-President, Positive Space Sub-Committee
Public Service Commission

Elsbeth Urquhart (she/her)
Co-President, Positive Space Sub-Committee
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Lorenzo Ieraci (he/him)
Co-Champion, Diversity and Inclusion
Public Services and Procurement Canada

Alexia Touralias (she/her)
Co-Champion, Diversity and Inclusion
Public Services and Procurement Canada

Nadine Huggins (she/her)
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Champion
Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Tahanee McKnight (she/her)
Designated Senior Official, Employment
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Johanne Fulford (she/her)
Pride Network Co-Champion
Shared Services Canada

Jay Amdur (he/him)
Pride Network Co-Champion
Shared Services Canada

Dominic Cliche (he/him)
Lead for 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities and
Positive Space Network
Transport Canada

Cyd Courchesne (she/her)
2SLGBTQI+ Champion
Veterans Affairs Canada

Marc-André Millaire (he/him)
Director General, 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat
Women and Gender Equality Canada

Executive summary

Over the past year, the PSPN has been at the forefront—along with departmental pride champions—of promoting EDI within the federal public service and thus creating a more inclusive environment for 2SLGBTQIA+ colleagues. With the steadfast support of senior leadership, we anticipate our influence will only continue to grow.

There are three main beneficiaries of our ongoing commitment to promoting inclusivity: 2SLGBTQIA+ federal public servants, the federal public service as a whole, and Canadians at large—in other words, all of us.

This report serves as a testament to our accomplishments, a record of ongoing challenges, and a roadmap for the future. It showcases our impactful events and achievements within the public service, both at home and internationally, and underscores the significance of our efforts.

It does so by highlighting five key themes:

- 1. Celebrating diversity, inclusion and pride**
- 2. Nurturing and supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ public servants**
- 3. Supporting Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse communities**
- 4. Expanding impacts through increased support from federal organizations**
- 5. Engaging and uniting with partners at home and abroad**

The report concludes with reflections on several challenges facing 2SLGBTQIA+ colleagues, and offers three recommendations to collaboratively overcome those challenges.

Evolution of the PSPN

Since its inception in 2018, the PSPN has grown from a grassroots network of 25 federal volunteers to an organization so impactful that it is being called upon to represent thousands of 2SLGBTQIA+ employees within the federal public service in Canada and abroad. It is now seen as a leader in the field and has influenced the development of several interdepartmental initiatives that will advance the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ employees.

The Network is committed to driving a cultural shift by eliminating systemic barriers for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and by promoting unity within diversity. Currently, it represents thousands of employees and allies in 80 federal organizations throughout Canada, extending its presence to include some Canadian missions abroad.

With a strong commitment to EDI, the PSPN's [Strategic Plan 2023–2025](#) proactively advocates for its members through community-building initiatives, knowledge sharing, advocacy, and support. Collaboration with other employee-led networks is vital in achieving common goals for enhanced EDI. To address the far-reaching impacts of intersectional minority oppression and discrimination, we created the Policy and Outreach Action Committee with the aim of advancing the PSPN's

partnerships with other employee-led networks, organizations, unions and action committees.

In today's society, hate towards 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, including transphobia, is on the rise and is alarming. From a growing number of anti-transgender laws in Canada and around the globe to increasing harassment and discrimination, transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse people face many barriers in their daily lives. For example, a [2022 JusticeTrans report](#) found that at least 73% of trans individuals surveyed had experienced targeted discrimination and harassment.

Rising harassment and discrimination are a significant concern for the workplace health and safety of federal public servants. According to the [2022 Public Service Employee Survey](#), 22% of transgender employees experienced harassment related to their gender identity or expression in the past year, and 37% reported that discrimination had some impact on their professional advancement during the last year.

Our members are taking concrete steps to mitigate the impacts stemming from this adversity by highlighting and promoting the many benefits of a diverse and inclusive workplace from coast to coast to coast.

Fostering unity in diversity: A year of impact

Achieving a truly representative and inclusive public service is not merely a goal, but a fundamental imperative. It is the key to unlocking the full potential of our country and aligning with the core values that underpin our public service: democracy, respect for people, integrity, stewardship, and excellence. Fostering unity in diversity among colleagues in the public service will unlock that potential.

This compelling mission drives the very essence of the PSPN. Our raison d'être lies in uniting individuals from diverse backgrounds to engage in meaningful dialogues, advocate for inclusion, and celebrate 2SLGBTQIA+ culture and identity.

It's important to reflect on the progress made as we continue to foster unity in diversity.

1. Celebrating diversity, inclusion and pride

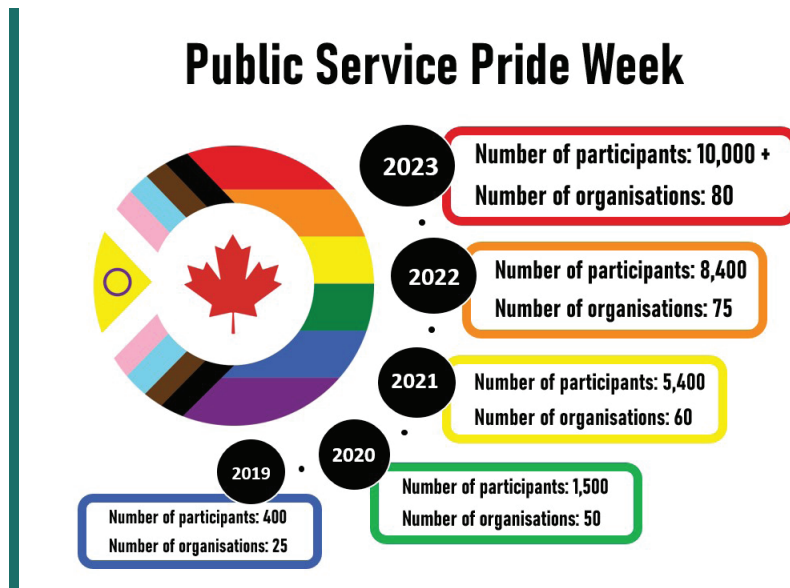
Over the past 12 months, the PSPN's dedication and hard work have been remarkable. The far-reaching impacts of our individual and collective efforts are both extensive and profound.

Public Service Pride Week

Public Service Pride Week (PSPW) is an annual event of great significance. It serves as a testament to our commitment and achievements in promoting inclusivity within the public service. This year's PSPW, held from August 21 to 25, celebrated a historic milestone with over 10,000 public servants participating, marking the highest participation in the Network's history. They joined to learn more about EDI topics and celebrate Pride.

The event also saw increased support from senior leaders, including the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council, as well as several deputy ministers. These leaders came together to promote the PSPN’s goal of fostering a more inclusive workplace.

In addition to an increase in participation in PSPW events from both employees and senior leaders, the PSPN coordinated the raising of hundreds of pride flags across numerous GC buildings in collaboration with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC). This symbolic action further emphasizes the GC’s commitment to fostering inclusivity.



This year marked yet another significant milestone for PSPW. We partnered with the Canada School of Public Service (the School) to host marquee events covering vital topics such as safe and inclusive washrooms, name and gender marker changes in GC systems, intersectionality, allyship, and exploring the recommendations from the [Emerging From the Purge](#) report. These partnered events, which were virtual, garnered a total of 3,605 views.

In addition to the School’s main events, approximately 25 other events were organized by different departments and agencies, all in alignment with this year’s theme, “Taking Action to Create a More Inclusive Public Service.” These activities, combined with the third edition of the [Public Service Pride Awards](#), hosted by the School, underscored the commitment of the public service to fostering EDI. Additionally, a noteworthy event took place—the PSPN Social. Held at Queen St. Fare in Ottawa, this gathering attracted over 340 participants, among them **Frances McRae**, Deputy Minister of Women and Gender Equality Canada, and **Chris Forbes**, Deputy Minister of Finance. The event provided a dynamic platform for public servants to connect, collaborate, and build meaningful relationships.

During PSPW, from August 20 to 26, 2023, a total of 6,700 unique users visited www.publicservicepride.ca.



Some notable events and activities included:

- Participation in the National Film Board of Canada PSPW Short Film Festival, showcasing films like “Woman Dress,” which highlights a Two-Spirit story, by filmmaker **TJ Cuthand**.
- A Guiding Light to Inclusion event, featuring **Dakshima Haputhanthri** sharing her experiences as a 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomer to Canada.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation hosting a discussion with Fondation Émergence focusing on the realities of and issues facing sexually and gender-diverse seniors.
- An event organized by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Indigenous Services Canada’s 2SLGBTQIA+ Network, which brought together queer and gender-diverse representatives from Indigenous, Two-Spirit, and Métis communities.
- An event hosted by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada featuring **Albert Beck**, who shared his experiences and contributions to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People National Action Plan.
- A conversation hosted by Veterans Affairs Canada with **Chris Cochrane** (aka Elle Noir), a trans Black former Canadian Armed Forces member who is now a community activist and educator.
- The Positive Space Initiative at PSPC Atlantic with the support of the Atlantic Federal Council coordinated interdepartmental participation at the 2023 Moncton Pride Parade. Participating departments and agencies included Parks Canada, Canada Revenue Agency, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).
- The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency’s 3rd Annual Virtual Pride Parade, in collaboration with ESDC, was held during Public Service Pride Week this year (rather than in June) and garnered over 200 participants (nearly doubling its usual number).

Public Service Pride Awards

The 2023 Public Service Pride Awards, co-championed by **Nathalie G. Drouin**, Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council and Associate Secretary to the Cabinet, took centre stage during the fifth annual PSPW on August 24. These awards shine a light on individuals, teams, and organizations that have exhibited exceptional leadership in advancing 2SLGBTQIA+ EDI and pride within the public service. In so doing, the Awards serve as a unifying force, bringing together individuals and teams to spotlight profoundly significant work that enhances inclusivity across the public service. The Awards also featured prominent Two-Spirit community champions **Charlotte Nolin**, **Anthony Johnson** and **Dr. James Makokis**.

This year, with the introduction of the new Department/Agency Award for Excellence in Pride Leadership, a total of five awards were presented, honouring nine individual winners selected from a pool of nominees who each had their own inspiring stories to tell.

A notable example is **Justice Canada**, which received the newly established Department/Agency Award for Excellence in Pride Leadership. Their initiatives are meticulously designed to bring about systemic change by addressing the challenges encountered by 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. This includes the collection of disaggregated representation data through consent forms, laying the groundwork for more concrete and systemic changes such as intentional recruitment and enhanced talent management for 2SLGBTQIA+ employees. Women and Gender Equality Canada has taken similar action. All this has a hugely positive impact on our members.

The production of these awards was skillfully executed by the School, further highlighting the collaborative efforts in promoting EDI and pride within the public service.

“I’ve recently won the Agent of Change Award and I’m extremely happy and grateful for this recognition! I really hope this award will encourage others to stand out and express their true colours despite all challenges.”

Amér Mubaslat, Program Assistant, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Embassy of Canada, Amman, Jordan



Pride parades

We also came together to participate in Pride parades, demonstrating to Canadians that their public service is diverse. In August, the Capital Pride Parade in Ottawa featured a prominent presence of deputy ministers, including the Clerk of the Privy Council, marching for the first time. There was also a strong representation of federal public servants across several Canadian cities and even some Canadian missions abroad, including Chicago!



Employees of the Privy Council Office marching in the Capital Pride Parade in Ottawa in August.

From left to right, **Arun Thangaraj**, Deputy Minister of Transport, along with **Dominic Cliche**, Transport Canada's 2SLGBTQIA+ Champion, and Transport Canada employee **Jamie Nadeau**, participated in the Capital Pride Parade in Ottawa in August.



The Correctional Service Canada (CSC) continued its participation in Pride events across the country. Members of the CSC Pride Network, led by Commissioner **Anne Kelly**, are shown preparing for the Capital Pride Parade in Ottawa in August.

The ESDC Employee Pride Network, dressed in red and white, united other departments at the Montreal Pride Parade. They marched 2.9 km, from downtown to the Village, spreading joy and acceptance. This moment epitomizes unity and celebrates diversity and inclusion within the GC. It's a powerful message of togetherness and progress.



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Meghan Chen (Fisheries and Oceans Canada) and **Umair Parvez** (Public Services and Procurement Canada), Co-Chairs of the Pacific Region Interdepartmental Pride Network.

Not in order, **Diane Wade** (she/her), Regional Director, Procurement, and Provincial Director, New Brunswick; **Dominic Melanson** (she/her), PSPC PRIDE at Work Network Interim Chair and Positive Space Initiative Ambassador; **Liette Lavallée** (she/her), Positive Space Initiative Coordinator; and **Jenny LeBlanc** (she/her), Regional Human Resources Advisor, EDI, participated in the Moncton Pride Parade along with colleagues from other departments.



On June 25, members of the Consulate General of Canada in Chicago marched in the 52nd annual Chicago Pride Parade, one of the largest in the United States. The delegation included mission staff, expats, friends and family. The group wore t-shirts and distributed inclusive stickers—all of it emblazoned with the PSPN visual identifier—to an enthusiastic crowd along the route.

2. Nurturing and supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ public servants

Achieving a workforce in which 2SLGBTQIA+ people feel that they belong, especially in a large employer like the federal public service, doesn't just happen overnight. It was only decades ago members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities were not welcomed, and indeed were actively sought out and removed. It takes time, attention, and resources to develop, and it will naturally develop at different rates across various organizations. The Network does its part by nurturing and supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ colleagues in a number of ways.

2SLGBTQIA+ Executive Network

Established in 2022, the 2SLGBTQIA+ Executive Network aims to enhance the visibility, networking opportunities, and professional development of 2SLGBTQIA+ executives through dialogue, peer support, mentoring, and coaching. As of the fall of 2023, the network boasts more than 140 members, making it a much-needed platform for leaders from 2SLGBTQIA+ communities to find representation at the senior management level.

Members of the Executive Network played a vital role in developing the PSPN's first [Strategic Plan 2023–2025](#), and have been actively involved as 2SLGBTQIA+ mentors in the Pride Mentoring Program. Additionally, the Executive Network plays a crucial role in providing validation and consultation on the development of strategy, planning documents, and policies that impact the community.

Pride Mentoring Program

In 2022, we introduced the [Pride Mentoring Program](#), a pioneering initiative in the public service dedicated to nurturing the next generation of 2SLGBTQIA+ leaders, while fostering a stronger sense of unity within the community. The program is unique because it builds on feedback received from PSPN members at all stages of their careers. Members are looking for relatable leadership support, ways to overcome barriers to career advancement due to sexual orientation and gender identity, and advice on how to navigate other unique challenges of being 2SLGBTQIA+ in the public service (such as feelings of isolation and discrimination).

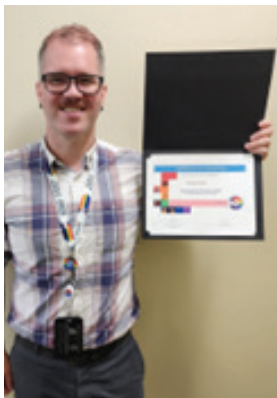
The first cohort, which began in January 2023, successfully matched 13 mentees with 13 executive mentors from 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. All mentors are active members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ Executive Network and are thus fully immersed in the communities served by our mentorship program. This lends itself to having authentic and impactful conversations about being part of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in the context of career development.

The program's popularity has surged, and the upcoming second cohort will run from January to June of 2024. The cohort has more than doubled in size, with 34 mentors and 34 mentees.

Moreover, the mentorship program will continue to benefit from the guidance of senior leaders. In the first cohort, three remarkable senior leaders—**Christiane Fox**, Deputy Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, **Shawn Tupper**, Deputy Minister of Public Safety Canada, and **Ross Ermel**, a former Brigadier-General—served as mentors to those guiding the mentees. Their insights have been invaluable.

In support of the next cohort, **Frances McRae**, Deputy Minister of Women and Gender Equality Canada, **Taki Sarantakis**, President of the Canada School of Public Service, and **Paul Ledwell**, Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada, have already shared their wisdom with mentors.

The importance of this program is immeasurable. It underscores the significance of having full representation in leadership, and sends a message to employees that being 2SLGBTQIA+ should not be a barrier to career progression. Our mentorship program became a model for future initiatives in its very first year. Other federal organizations are expressing keen interest in adopting similar programs, while organizations outside of the public service are eager to learn more about this transformative approach.



I was interested in the pilot mentorship program as it gave the opportunity to work with an executive level manager that is a member of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Visibility matters!

I came in with the idea that I could better develop my communication skills as well as identify growth opportunities for myself.

I was paired with a fantastic executive mentor from the Privy Council Office. What I enjoyed most is that we were able to have open and candid communication about my goals, and my mentor provided me with new tools and ideas to help me to address the areas that I struggle in. These tasks put me out of my comfort zone but have changed how I interact with people for the better. An unexpected benefit of these conversations was that it made me think about relating my passions to my career and not just where my skill set lies. Based on our talks, I have started taking French language studies so that I can strive to reach future career goals.

Thanks to my mentor and the PSPN for giving me this rare opportunity!

Greg Hues (he/him)
Canada Revenue Agency



It was an absolute pleasure to be part of the first cohort of mentees in the Public Service Pride Mentoring Program. I have participated in excellent mentorship programs in the past, but this program created one of the warmest and most supportive learning environments I have ever experienced.

My mentor provided practical advice about professional development and career advancement in the public service. But she also listened empathetically and created a comfortable space for me to talk about my experience as a queer Black person in the public service. Unlike other mentorship programs, this program helped me build connections with other mentees. My fellow mentees were passionate and engaged, and I'm grateful to have met them.

The program would benefit from having a greater diversity of voices, both as mentors and mentees. I cannot recommend this program enough!

Leah Thompson (she/her)
Privy Council Office

It has been my true pleasure to participate in this program! I've really enjoyed my time with my mentee over the past months. My mentee and I are going to continue on in our mentoring relationship. I would have loved to have access to this type of program when I was first coming up the ranks, so am very happy to contribute or support in any way I can. This program is important and makes a difference.

Murray Jones (he/him)
Assistant Deputy Minister
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada



I have so enjoyed participating in the first cohort—what a fabulous program! I cherished the opportunity to work with a mentee over the last six months, and I feel that I have been able to learn so much from them as a new public servant. They look to lead by example and work collaboratively with others. Their passion and desire to build a diverse and inclusive public service shows me that the future is bright!

Teresa/TJ Joudrie (they/them)
Director, Culture, Inclusion and Development
Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions

Onboarding 2SLGBTQIA+ employees

Earlier this year, the [Clerk's 30th Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada](#) highlighted the priority of recruiting with intention so that the federal government can build “a workforce that represents the public we serve and has the right mix of skills, expertise and experience to meet the changing needs of Canadians”.

Inspired by that intention, PSPN engaged with the Office of the Chief Information Officer of Canada as a key partner in their GConboard! initiative, which is an experiment to establish a better sense of belonging with new employees, and actively work to boost diversity and retention across the public service. PSPN published an [FAQ](#) this year specifically dedicated to onboarding for 2SLGBTQIA+ employees in the federal public service and will continue to find ways to support their sense of connection within the GC.

3. Supporting Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse communities

The PSPN really focused on supporting our Two-Spirit, transgender, gender-diverse, and non-binary colleagues this year to help combat the rising levels of hate outlined above. This manifested in several impactful initiatives that have positively affected the lives of employees.

Open letter to deputy ministers

The PSPN has been firmly advocating for the rights and inclusion of the transgender community within the public service. In May, our [open letter](#) to deputy ministers became a pivotal milestone, offering a comprehensive set of practical recommendations to create a safer and more inclusive environment for Two-Spirit, transgender, gender-diverse, and non-binary employees.

The impact of the letter extended well beyond its written words. It received immediate attention from Janice Charette, former Clerk of the Privy Council, and resulted in widespread commitments to action. This included an invitation for the Public Service Pride Champion to present at the deputy minister weekly meeting, scheduled to coincide with the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (May 17). The invitation underscored the urgency and importance of the issues. After that session, the Clerk mentioned the open letter at the annual Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service (APEX) conference in May, stressing the need for all executives to read it and take concrete actions.

To date, over 25 deputy ministers have contacted the PSPN to discuss the urgency of implementing the recommendations. This letter also led to very valuable discussions about brave spaces and mental health in light of anti-trans protests.

Gender Identity and Expression Action Committee

In September, we launched our latest achievement: the [Guide for Two-Spirit, Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender-Diverse Employees in the Federal Public Service](#). This guide's release marks the culmination of collaborative efforts from

47 different federal organizations, all contributing their lived experiences to create this invaluable resource.

What's truly remarkable is that this initiative was led by our Gender Identity and Expression Action Committee, a group that brings together Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse public servants.

Members of this committee have worked tirelessly to support and advocate for their diverse communities. For example, they've shared their lived experiences and expertise with the School, the Treasury Board Secretariat, various interdepartmental working groups and deputy ministers. They collected, collated and analyzed data related to the Public Service Health Care Plan in order to advocate for the inclusion of gender-affirming care. Lastly, they provided safe spaces to the trans community and allies alike through panel events, monthly coffee chats and brave space discussions.

This committee has grown to include more than 138 members, and we owe them a huge debt of gratitude for this incredible resource.

Policy and Outreach Action Committee

The PSPN continues to support the queer and trans communities currently leading the charge on critical issues through the Policy and Outreach Action Committee. This includes advocating for central guidance on inclusive washrooms, the use of pronouns, gender markers and name-change processes, as well as career development through training and sponsorship. We believe that these are fundamental aspects of creating an environment where everyone can thrive, regardless of their gender identity.

Inclusive washrooms

Safe, inclusive washrooms are a fundamental human right, not just a policy matter. Our advocacy reflects our deep commitment to preserving the dignity and well-being of every employee, and fostering safety, belonging, and authenticity. Inclusive washrooms are an intersectional issue that affects many of our networks, and something we take great pride in advocating for.

Since our open letter, interest in this crucial issue has been on the rise. Organizations are reaching out for guidance on how to implement short-term solutions to existing infrastructure, such as standardized signage that fosters inclusivity. They are also looking for input on how to renovate existing spaces and design newly constructed facilities with inclusion in mind. A desire for centralized guidance on these issues comes to us from both GC- and Crown-owned buildings, as well as leased spaces.

Our leadership on this topic has resulted in significant progress. Inclusive washrooms were a prominent focus during PSPW this year. The School organized a major panel discussion on access to safe and inclusive washrooms, drawing over 825 public servants. This reflects the growing interest in and awareness of the importance of inclusive facilities at work.

As well, we have closely collaborated with senior leadership at PSPC on inclusive washrooms, having held productive discussions with individuals from headquarters

and the regions, including the newly appointed Deputy Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada, **Arianne Reza**. Implementing inclusive washrooms is a challenging task, and PSPC is committed to taking meaningful action. Several pilot projects are currently under way to convert gendered washrooms into inclusive multi-stall washrooms, including at PSPC offices in Gatineau (22 Eddy Street), Ottawa (111 Sussex Drive), Halifax (1713 Bedford Row) and Toronto (25 St. Clair Avenue East). Given the numerous projects across the country, sharing this information through inclusive washroom mapping in federal buildings could benefit all employees.



From left to right, **Jason Bett** (he/him), Public Service Pride Champion, **Arianne Reza**, Deputy Minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada, and **Jo Cole** (they/them), PSPN Policy Advisor, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

The PSPN has also established an interdepartmental working group, co-chaired by PSPC, to facilitate collaboration among various organizational leads working on inclusive washroom initiatives within their respective departments and agencies. Recognizing and respecting the diverse needs of employees and collaboratively developing a clear path forward to provide safe and equitable access to washrooms will result in meaningful change.

Beyond physical infrastructure, cultural learning is equally important. As part of this initiative, the PSPN is exploring educational opportunities to enhance understanding and foster inclusivity within the public service.

The Real Property Hub

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) is working towards providing its employees with flexible, mobile, inclusive and accessible workplaces, as seen on their Real Property (RP) Hub. The RP Hub is frequently updated with important details for employees, including an everything-you-need-to-know page about all-access washrooms.

An interactive sorting tool allows users to view the number of all-access washrooms available to ESDC employees across the country. The tool does not limit search results to office spaces. Users can also find details about where all-access washrooms can be found in service and public spaces that ESDC staff share with other departments and agencies.

The ESDC Diversity Networks have worked alongside RP to ensure that physical spaces are inclusive and accessible.

Pronouns and name and gender marker initiatives

The PSPN believes in, and strongly defends, the right of everyone to define their own gender identity. Trans people should be recognized and affirmed under the gender they live in, regardless of whether their identity documents are up to date.

Adapting the GC's information management and security practices to enable employees to affirm their gender identity through their chosen name, gender, and pronouns is therefore an imperative step towards EDI for transgender employees.

As with inclusive washrooms, we have seen positive, measurable progress on pronouns and gender markers.

Pronouns

PSPC, for example, took huge step forward recently by releasing their Learn about [Pronouns guide](#), which we put on our website. Response to that guide was unprecedented! The PSPN has never had more engagement on any single communication resource in the Network's history, and we deeply thank PSPC for their leadership on this really important matter.

Following the open letter, dozens of organizations have taken action to implement measures aimed at including pronouns, either by adding them to their employee cards or by displaying them in MS Teams and Outlook.

Despite these advancements, many organizations are looking for central guidance on the issue to ensure consistency in usage across the public service.

Name and gender marker changes

This year's PSPW included a panel on name and gender marker changes within GC systems that drew attendance and support from over 1,000 participants. This panel led to requests for consultation from many federal organizations.

However, this is not nearly enough. Significant inconsistencies remain in the availability of these affirmations of chosen names and gender markers across departments and agencies, leading to frustrations for all involved.

With the dedication of several federal organizations, PSPN advocates for a transparent and simplified processes for changing names and gender markers across all GC IT systems, regardless of legal documentation of the chosen name. The Government of Canada has legal obligations to ensure public service workplaces are free from harassment and violence, and uphold human rights. This is set out under the Canadian Human Rights Act, which protects against both harassment and discrimination in the context of employment on the basis of gender identity and expression. Given the adverse impacts of deadnaming for Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary employees on the basis of their gender identity, there may be obligations on the government as an employer to take measures to address and prevent practices that would amount to discrimination. The Treasury Board of Secretariat Directive on the Duty to Accommodate is also relevant, as it set outs the obligations on managers and supervisors to accommodate the needs of their employees where these are tied

back to a prohibited ground of discrimination set out under the Canadian Human Rights Act, like gender identity and expression.

In October, the Office of the Chief Information Officer of Canada asked all chief security officers and deputy chief security officers to ensure that “security policies and practices do not serve in any way as barriers to inclusivity.” It also stated, “In areas such as facilitating the change of an employee’s name or pronouns in departmental systems and records, as well as retaking a photo for an identity card, neither Government of Canada nor departmental security practices should be interpreted as obstacles.”

Nevertheless, federal organizations are seeking specific central guidance on how to implement these changes, and an allocation of resources that reduces redundancies in organizational efforts. With this, the PSPN has created and launched the Interdepartmental Working Group on Modernizing Chosen Name and Gender Marker Practices comprised of leaders in IT, Human Resources, Security and Policy development to facilitate a coordinated approach to finding solutions on this matter. Our first Working Group meeting was attended by 54 participants and was characterized by a sense of great optimism. Leaders from across the federal public service are committed to working together, and with transgender and gender-diverse employees, to craft solutions to overcome these barriers.

These tangible steps forward aim to ensure that all employees are treated with equity, dignity, and respect. The PSPN’s resolute advocacy for the rights and inclusion of the transgender community within the public service has resulted in actions and commitments made by deputies and organizations, emphasizing a shared commitment to promoting greater inclusion. We believe these are fundamental aspects of creating an environment where everyone can thrive, regardless of their gender identity.

This is an intersectional issue that includes but can also go beyond gender, because there are many reasons why people want to use their chosen name. For example, some Indigenous employees want to reclaim their traditional names which can better connect them to their identity and Indigeneity.

4. Expanding impacts through increased support from federal organizations

Funding plays a vital role in advancing our mission on behalf of our members, allies and all Canadians. Several federal organizations have provided micro-assignments to the Network, allowing us to maximize our impact. Others have gone a step further to establish crucial roles for 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion.

Over the course of this year, the following federal organizations provided micro-assignments to the Network:

Infrastructure Canada • Veterans Affairs Canada • Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada • Employment and Social Development Canada • Health Canada • Shared Services Canada • Transport Canada • Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Micro-assignments

All I ever wanted was to make a difference with the work I was doing. The PSPN has given me an opportunity to do just that! I am so blessed to work with such an amazing and diverse group of people getting this important work done and gaining new skills and competencies in the process!

Debi Daviau (she/her)

Director, Strategic Planning, and Executive Network Lead, PSPN

On micro-assignment from Shared Services Canada

I never thought I'd be able to put forward my sexual orientation as part of my job. The Public Service Pride Network allows me to act as a beacon for my fellow public servants in my community, and I'm extremely fortunate to be able to pave the way for future generations for whom, I hope, inclusion will be easier than it has been for generations of public servants over the last few decades.

Olivier Mercier (he/him)

Project Management Advisor, PSPN Mentoring Program

On micro-assignment from Canadian Food Inspection Agency

My journey with the Public Service Pride Network has been transformative for my career. Taking part in a micro-assignment has opened doors to experiences that I never would have had access to in my day-to-day job. The opportunity not only allowed me to develop valuable skills but also allowed me to expand my professional network, connecting with inspiring individuals dedicated to creating a workplace where everyone feels that they belong.

Sean William (he/him)

Manager, Talent, Learning and Events, PSPN

On micro-assignment from Veterans Affairs Canada

My experience working on a micro assignment with PSPN was truly transformative. The support of our champion and the warmth of the team motivated me to be able to perform better than I ever have before. It was like being mentored by a set of EDI superheroes who always had your back, no matter what. Because of the structure of our organization and its non-conventional place within government, I was able to make connections and work alongside of senior leaders who would have otherwise been completely out of my reach. These invaluable connections not only expanded my professional network but also provided me with profound insights and mentorship. On top of this, I think it is noteworthy to mention that, as a transgender person, the team provided me with a sense of belonging that I have never felt before. I cannot thank them enough.

Jo Cole (they/them)

Policy Advisor, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, PSPN

On micro-assignment from Employment and Social Development Canada

In addition to these assignments

- In May, the **Canada School of Public Service** took a significant step by establishing the role of Visiting Senior Advisor for 2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusion in addition to solidifying the Champion of the PSPN role.

- In November, **Infrastructure Canada** generously supported the Network for a two-year period, enabling the hiring of an EC-06 position. This role is crucial for our ongoing advocacy work, focusing on policy development and updates from a central and strategic standpoint, ensuring our commitment to a more inclusive workplace is reflected in the policies of our workplace.
- The **Office of the Chief Information Officer of Canada** also provided funding that covered a secondment, which concluded in July 2023.

Funding for operations

- **Transport Canada's** commitment to PSPN is truly remarkable. They took the lead by becoming the first department to sign a memorandum of understanding with PSPN. Their initial contribution of \$25,000 for three consecutive years will amount to a total of \$75,000 dedicated to operational and maintenance needs.
- **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada** has reaffirmed its commitment by confirming \$10,000 for two consecutive years, covering the period of April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2026.
- **Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada** has significantly contributed to rebranding efforts by providing design and creative services for the refresh of our visual identity and associated products.
- **Women and Gender Equality Canada** has provided access to a \$40,000 contract for writing services.

5. Engaging and uniting with partners at home and abroad

The impact of our activities does not stop at any given border. We are expanding our reach and our connections across Canada and around the world to a variety of individuals and organizations who share our view that there is unity in diversity. This outreach is driven by the conviction that diversity is catalytic in fostering safe and welcoming workplaces and societies for everyone.

Collaborating with other networks

Over the past year, the PSPN has fostered meaningful connections and exchanged insights with diverse federal networks and employee resource groups. These include networks focused on a wide range of issues, not simply those with a pride-related mandate.

This year, our outreach was extensive, encompassing collaborations with diverse groups such as the Community of Ombuds, the National Managers' Community, the Black Executives Network, the Infinity Network, Federal Regional Councils, the Executive Leadership Development Program, the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC), the Office for Federal Employees with Disabilities, the Employee Assistance Program at Health Canada, and the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service (APEX), among others.

The Network of Asian Federal Employees (NAFE) is also an invaluable connection to PSPN. Like us, they support the public service in cultivating an inclusive workforce and embracing a culture where diversity and intersectionality are valued. In solidarity

with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, NAFE changed their visual identifier on social media to the pride flag colours during Pride Month 2023, as well as post anti-trans protests across the country. In addition, on NAFE's GCconnex, members discussed what Pride meant to them and members were provided with resources, one of which is to contact and join the PSPN. Lastly, NAFE volunteered in the PSPW virtual flag raising ceremony that PSPN led, and promoted PSPN's micro-assignments with members.



The PSPN has also played a pivotal role in the recent launch of the 2023 Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC), the largest workplace charitable campaign in Canada. GCWCC involves federal public service employees and retirees working together to raise funds and donate time to help those in need. This campaign is important to the PSPN because the funds it raises make a positive impact on local 2SLGBTQIA+ communities across the country.



From left to right, **Jason Bett** (he/him), Public Service Pride Champion, actively participated in the official launch along with **Francis Bilodeau**, Associate Deputy Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and GCWCC Chair; **Ray Edwards** of the Black Executives Network; **John Hannaford**, Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet; and **Christiane Fox**, Deputy Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and Champion of the Federal Youth Network.

Engaging across Canada

The PSPN has been supporting regional and departmental 2SLGBTQIA+ networks by providing umbrella policy leadership and advocacy that we, in turn, leverage and support through our more tailored activities.

In September of 2023, PSPN delivered a compelling presentation to the Quebec Federal Council. The presentation helped to raise awareness of the PSPN and offered a deeper understanding of our mission. As a result of this presentation to managers and leaders in Quebec, we were invited to increase our presence and knowledge of the PSPN in Quebec.

PSPN also embarked on an impactful visit to the Atlantic region in October, engaging with senior leaders from Environment and Climate Change Canada, Transport Canada, Halifax Regional Municipality, and the province of Nova Scotia. We also initiated dynamic conversations with HR teams and employee networks that set the stage for several collaborative endeavours including the establishment of PSPN Atlantic.

In November of 2023, our visit to Edmonton included a presentation to the Prairies Federal Council followed by meetings with the Regional HR Council leaders, the Royal Canadian Mounty Police and the Alberta public service. We also visited the 3rd Canadian Division Support Base Edmonton where we engaged with employees including Major John McDougall O.M.M., C.D., the last Purge survivor still service in uniform. During this visit, we had the honor of presenting the Pride Network of the Year Award and engaging with Colonel R.D. Dove, Base Commander, and Chief Warrant Officer Y.M. Drolet, Group Sergeant-Major. Our conversations delved into strategic initiatives aimed at advancing 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion and showcasing and disseminating the commendable work of the Edmonton base on a national scale. This multifaceted approach underscores our commitment to promoting diversity and recognizing outstanding contributions within the military community.

Additionally, a PSPN Social event was organized to foster connections with like-minded individuals, creating a vibrant community passionate about making a positive impact. This social initiative adds a personal and relational dimension to our visit, emphasizing the importance of building connections and collaboration beyond formal meetings.



From left to right, **Jason Bett** (he/him), Public Service Pride Champion with **Major John McDougall** O.M.M., C.D., the last Purge survivor still service in uniform.

Collaborating with external stakeholders

PSPN participated in the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) national conference in September 2023, and partnered with IPAC Nova Scotia and the National Managers' Community for a PSPN Social event in Halifax in October.

PSPN also met with other jurisdictions, including the Yukon, Alberta, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Ontario public services, as well as the cities of Ottawa and Toronto and Halifax Regional Municipality to explore future partnerships for PSPW 2024.

Expanding our influence

PSPN's influence extends beyond the federal government. For example, a [joint statement](#) by the Premier and Minister of the Public Service Commission of the Government of Yukon celebrated PSPW, emphasizing their commitment to inclusivity and support for 2SLGBTQIA+ employees.

- This year's theme for Public Service Pride Week is 'Taking Action to Create a More Inclusive Public Service' – a sentiment that is close to our hearts at the Government of Yukon.
- We are taking steps to make our workplaces more inclusive, including asking for and using preferred pronouns, using gender-neutral language and creating gender-neutral facilities. Additionally, the Yukon government Pride Employee Resource Group helps us to create and foster a safe and welcoming space for our 2SLGBTQIA+ employees and allies to come together, share their experiences and support one another.

The Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union [expressed](#) gratitude for the PSPN's inclusive public service efforts and linked to the PSPN's website.

The PSPN's influence now extends across the Atlantic. The Public Service Pride Champion attended the Government Transformation Summit in London, UK, on November 22, 2023, and spoke to hundreds of executives from 12 different countries, with the majority hailing from the UK. His presentation focused on Canada's efforts to build a more inclusive public service, particularly highlighting the impact of the PSPN in driving culture change across Canada's public service and beyond. [A feature article in Government Transformation](#) on the PSPN appeared in mid-October.

Connecting globally

As seen in this year's [raising the flag](#) video to help kick off PSPW, colleagues around the world are celebrating Pride and the inclusivity it stands for. It's a similar story with the Public Service Pride Awards, with one of the winners working in a Canadian mission in Jordan. Furthermore, a mentee in the first cohort of the Pride Mentoring Program was based in Vietnam. We're also actively engaged with senior officials posted abroad, such as the Canadian Ambassador to the European Union, in very positive conversations about the activities and meaning of Pride Week.

These global connections all send messages that Canada is a leader when it comes to 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, and we are collectively working to create a welcoming and inclusive workplace within the Canadian public service.

Confronting our ongoing challenges

These initiatives are of great significance, and we are actively engaged in planning more to address the ongoing challenges faced by members of our communities within the public service.

One prominent issue is the existence of silos that create a barrier to the advancement of EDI. Streamlining efforts by facilitating collaboration on an interdepartmental level would advance inclusion more efficiently and effectively.

Many federal organizations have suggested that central guidance on the issues mentioned above could circumvent the silos and create a streamlined approach that could be applied across all federal organizations. Such guidance could ensure that employees are receiving access to inclusive and equitable workplace policies regardless of their home organization.

Furthermore, at the time of publication, members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are not officially recognized as a group under the Employment Equity Act. On December 11th, 2023, A Transformative Framework to Achieve and Sustain Employment Equity – the Report of the Employment Equity Act Review Task Force, was released.

In the report, Professor Adelle Blackett, FRSC, Ad E, Chair of the Employment Equity Act Review Task Force, states in unequivocal terms, under recommendation 3.18, that “2SLGBTQI+ workers should comprise a new employment equity group under the Employment Equity Act framework.” This recommendation comes after extensive consultations with concerned stakeholders including with the PSPN. The PSPN and its membership fully support the implementation of this recommendation and encourage it’s adoption without undue delay.

Moreover, our funding currently relies on the generosity of a handful of departments and follows an ad hoc approach.

In addition to the challenges within the public service, we also acknowledge that ongoing challenges outside our control are continually evolving. Despite these external challenges, we remain steadfast in our commitment to supporting our colleagues—and other people coming to us for information, guidance and partnerships—to the best of our ability.

Looking ahead

We envision, and work hard towards fostering, federal public service workplaces that are safer and more welcoming for 2SLGBTQIA+ employees, through policies, programs, systems, and initiatives that demonstrate intersectional EDI.

To that end, and in the spirit of ongoing collaboration with senior management, the Network recommends the following three actions to further our mission:

1. **Include 2SLGBTQIA+ representation at the highest-level decision-making tables** to recognize that diverse voices and perspectives are crucial in shaping policies, initiatives, and strategies that directly impact the lives and performance commitments of all our colleagues.
2. **Prioritize the open letter recommendations** by transforming commitments into concrete actions with central guidance to establish a more equitable approach for all in the public service.
3. **Urge all departments and agencies to allocate funding** to bolster the PSPN’s vital work and the well-being of our 2SLGBTQIA+ colleagues.

These steps are essential for continuing the work to advance EDI within the federal public service.

Contact the Network

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Web Site: publicservicepride.ca

LinkedIn: [Public Service Pride Network](https://www.linkedin.com/company/public-service-pride-network)

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