

**“Valuing Authenticity in the Public Service”:
Annual Report of the Public Service Pride Network, 2022**

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRIDE CHAMPION

To the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council:

As Champion for Public Service Pride, I am pleased to submit the 2022 Annual Report of the Public Service Pride Network (PSPN / “The Network”).

Since its inception in 2018, the Network has brought together members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities from across the public service – creating a safe space for them to be their authentic and true selves at work, in support of broader diversity and inclusion objectives in the Government of Canada (GC).

As outlined in the 2022 report, a soaring number of public servants across Canada and abroad participated in the Network’s panel discussions, mentoring sessions, and Pride Week events, to name only a few examples. This would not have been possible without the support of countless colleagues, allies and individual leaders at many levels across a growing range of departments and organizations. Their support has been particularly helpful as we extend the reach of the Network.

As we heard repeatedly over the last 12 months, employees feel increasingly at ease in reaching out to the Network on an ever-widening range of personal and career issues and feel empowered to be open and authentic at work. At the same time, the public service is embracing the value of that authenticity.

The Network has identified key areas where there remains inclusivity gaps for members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities within the federal public service. Many of our members feel emotionally isolated within their workplace, and some even fear their careers may suffer from personal disclosures.

Likewise, there remains policy challenges that need addressing. For example, members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are not currently a designated equity group under the *Employment Equity Act*. While there is still limited data when it comes to 2SLGBTQIA+ employees, we know that they encounter discrimination and harassment. Community members can be assured that the Network will continue its advocacy for a culture change to get us to a place where all public service leaders and employees work together to deliver outcomes consistent with the Clerk’s [Call to Action](#).

As the Network continues to grow in numbers and influence, it also faces an increasing scope of needs. The Network’s success means demands are exceeding its ability to keep up with service requests: **the Network has proven its raison d’être**. However, as a volunteer-led organization with a volunteer leader, the future of the Network’s activities is limited.

While the benefits of employee networks in fostering inclusion and providing supportive services are largely recognized by both employees and leaders in the public service, the lack of funding restricts the ability of networks to fulfill their respective mandates. In our case, the Network’s very survival is in question. How – or perhaps even if – the Network moves ahead into 2023 and beyond will largely depend on stable and predictable funding, and on

the continuous commitment of senior management to support 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in the public service.

It is our hope that the Network can continue to blaze a bold path forward, and make the Government of Canada an employer of choice for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities from coast to coast to coast.

Sincerely,

Jason Bett
Champion, Public Service Pride

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report outlines the major activities of the Public Service Pride Network over the course of 2022. These activities include the creation of the 2SLGBTQIA+ Executive Network, the fourth annual Public Service Pride Week, the second Public Service Pride Awards, the launch of an exciting new mentorship pilot and a series of events and panel discussions on key issues of importance to 2SLGBTQIA+ employees and allies in the public service.

The Report illustrates two powerful trends:

1. Significant increases in the scope and number of active participants across the public service, in Canada and abroad.
2. Growing demand for Pride-related services and events across departments and agencies, and the limited capacity of the Network to answer those expanding needs.

In light of rapidly increasing demand for the Network's activities and advocacy, the report's conclusion identifies opportunities and reveals the pressing needs for stable and predictable funding together with the continuous support of senior management to make the Government of Canada a workplace of choice for all.

The Network's future could be jeopardized if we do not secure sustainable and consistent funding. By contrast, financial support will stabilize the Network, and allow it to continue its activities while positively contributing to the attraction and retention of talent that is more representative of the Canadian population, strengthening the public service as an employer of choice, and improving mental wellness for 2SLGBTQIA+ employees.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC SERVICE PRIDE NETWORK

Pride initiatives in the public service date back decades, and the Network acknowledges the path blazed by Pride pioneers including the brave public servants who worked to end the discriminatory policies of the LGBT Purge. In 1971 the first Pride protest was organized among public servants and, in 2021, the public service commemorated the protest's 50th anniversary. As well, the Network has been building upon activities in the late 1990s, in which public servants from various departments collaborated to create what was first called "Pride at Work". Today, the PSPN pursues the work of building a strong, diversified, and inclusive public service.

FOUNDED IN 2018, the Network began as a small group of federal employees **committed to making the public service a diverse, safe, respectful, and healthy workplace for 2SLGBTQIA+ public servants**, and since then it has been led exclusively by volunteers.

THE NETWORK IS NOW viewed by a growing number of public servants as **the trusted, go-to resource for a wide range of services and advice relating to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities**. In some cases, people are by-passing other services within the public service and coming directly to the Network for support.

Membership overview

The Network has grown exponentially, representing thousands of 2SLGBTQIA+ public servants and allies across 70 federal departments and agencies across Canada and in missions abroad.

2022 IN REVIEW

The solid foundation and expanding reach of the Network created many more opportunities to provide year-long events, discussions, and support to an increased number of people across the public service. The following are a few highlights in the Network's most-active year to date.

1. 2SLGBTQIA+ Executive Network

In January 2022, the PSPN Executive Network was established to increase the professional development and visibility of 2SLGBTQIA+ executives through dialogue, peer support as well as mentoring and coaching. With more than 50 members, the Executive Network also serves as a much-needed platform where aspiring leaders from 2SLGBTQIA+ communities can see themselves reflected at the senior management level.

2. Safe Space Discussions

Throughout 2022, members of the Network organized a series of safe space discussions for 2SLGBTQIA+ public servants and allies. These dynamic conversations – held in breakout rooms of 20 people to allow for greater participation – covered a wide range of topics. The experience allowed members of our communities to connect and share their lived experiences in an open and healthy environment. More than 500 people in total attended these sessions.

“Participating in amazing events like the Public Service Pride Network’s safe space discussions has had a huge impact on me, and at times moved me to tears. Listening to folks talk openly about their experience as members of [2SLGBTQIA+] communities has prompted me to come out and be my authentic self.”

- Darlene Mulcahey, Canada Border Services Agency

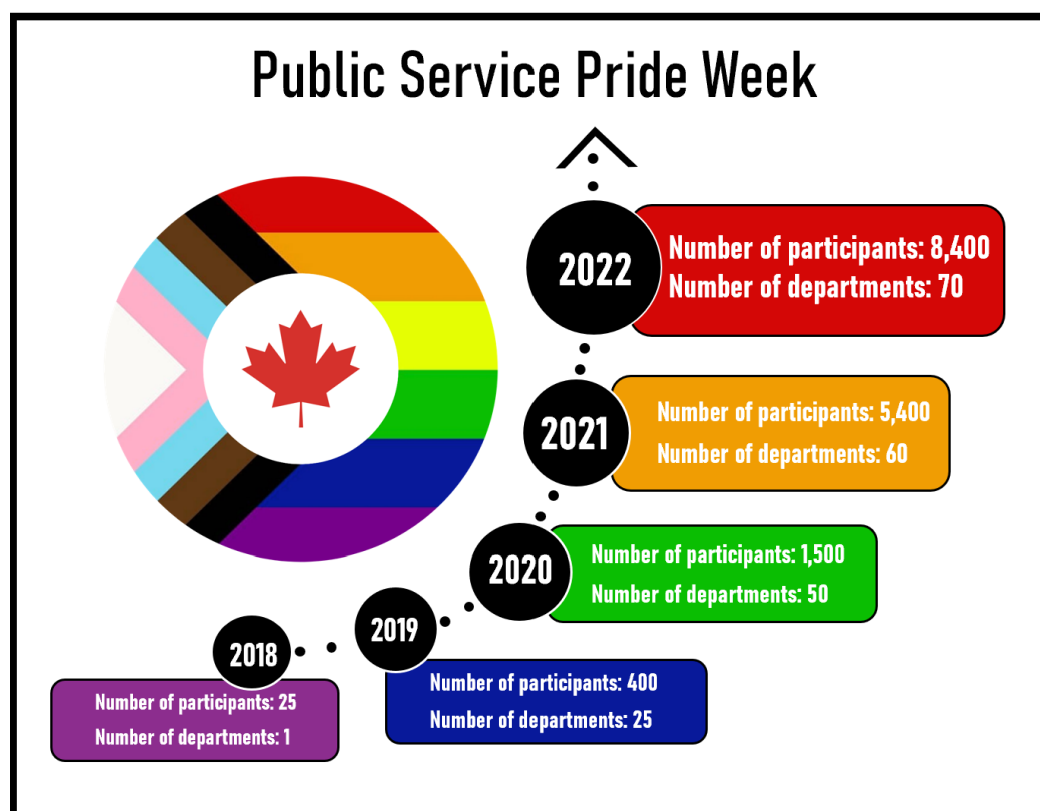
3. Public Service Pride Week (August 22 to 26, 2022)

Organized annually since 2019, Public Service Pride Week (PSPW) is designed to educate and celebrate 2SLGBTQIA+ public servants across Canada and in missions abroad. Held in

2022 from August 22 to 26 with the theme **Being your Authentic Self at Work**, PSPW was a tremendous success. We had more participation in the first three days of PSPW this year than we did over the entire week last year. The final 2022 numbers – 28 events with 8,400 participants from 70 departments/agencies – were simply astounding and effectively demonstrated the reach of the Network: it was a prime example of the inclusivity of the GC environment.

The expanded depth and breadth of participation throughout this past year also very clearly demonstrates measurable and growing interest in – and the rising importance of – the Network in the minds of public servants in Canada and abroad. Individual Executive-level colleagues also actively participated during PSPW, which we greatly appreciated.

This year the number of Progressive Pride Flags flying on federal properties rose to 140 properties in Canada and abroad, sending a strong message that members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are valued for their countless contributions to the federal public service.



“Public Service Pride Week’s theme this year, ‘Being your authentic self at work’, was very inspiring. It invited each of us to reflect on who we are, our identities, and how we wished to be addressed in the workplace. We were very happy to celebrate PSPW in Brussels by showing support to everyone [in 2SLGBTQIA+ communities], and by flying the Progressive Pride Flag from our embassy. The conversations we had as a result of the voluntary training and panels offered also improved team awareness, and was fantastic for team spirit.”

- Dr. Ailish Campbell, Ambassador of Canada to the European Union

4. Second Annual Public Service Pride Awards

Celebrated for the first-time in 2021, [the Public Service Pride Awards](#) – co-championed by Deputy Clerk Nathalie G. Drouin and Jason Bett, Public Service Pride Champion – recognize public servants who promote and strengthen 2SLGBTQIA+ diversity, inclusion, and pride in the federal public service. This year we had 56 nominations from 25 departments and agencies, with [winners](#) from different regions across Canada.

This celebration also recognized the extraordinary and courageous leadership of Michelle Douglas by presenting her with the Public Service Pride Pioneer Service Award. General Wayne Eyre, Chief of Defence Staff of the Canadian Armed Forces, and Bill Matthews, Deputy Minister of the Department of National Defence, presented Michelle with this important award. As General Eyre said, Michelle’s “courage, resolve and determination and profound sense of justice have made our armed forces a more inclusive organization, the public service a better employer, and Canada a better country.”

Again this year, the Awards video was produced by the video team at Innovation, Science and Economic Development. Their professionalism and creative work was well received by viewers and the Network thanks them for their contribution to this important recognition event.

“I’d like to congratulate everyone involved in the production and realization of the Public Service Pride Awards. They are probably the smoothest, most polished public service product I’ve seen. I am beyond impressed.”

- Julie Crabtree, Canada Border Services Agency

5. New Pride Mentoring Pilot

In early 2022 we hosted a series of group mentoring sessions, facilitated by the PSPN’s Executive Network. After four “sold out” sessions, it became very clear there was a desperate need for relatable leadership for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in the public service. Leaders addressed career advancement and professional development and issues that are more specific for these communities. These issues include, but are not restricted to, coming out at work, and dealing with difficult work situations related to being 2SLGBTQIA+.

Our response to this clear need was the Pride Mentoring Pilot, created by our communities, and for our communities.

The Pilot – which is scalable depending on interest and resources – is unique because it builds on feedback received from Network members at all stages of their careers. For example, mentees will benefit from monthly 1:1 mentoring meetings, group mentoring, networking events and a dynamic curriculum of recommended courses by the Canada

School of Public Service. Topics for discussion include: coming out/being out at work; dealing with challenging colleagues and work environments; career planning and advancement; navigating unique challenges of being 2SLGBTQIA+ in the federal public service (i.e., feelings of isolation and discrimination); and professional development. The Pilot will be entirely virtual, allowing for full participation of successful applicants from across Canada and abroad.

Response to this new Pilot was immediate, widespread, and very positive. We received 72 applications from 27 departments and agencies across the public service. Support came from within our communities and from allies across the public service. This includes a very welcome tweet from Michael Keenan, Deputy Minister, Transport Canada. We also heard from a range of HR specialists and learning teams throughout the public service who wanted to learn about our Pilot and find ways to collaborate with us.



Starting in January 2023, our Pilot will match 13 mentees with 13 pre-selected 2SLGBTQIA+ mentors who are ready to support the next generation of future 2SLGBTQIA+ leaders. Mentors were themselves mentored this fall by three senior members of the federal public service. We would like to thank Shawn Tupper, Christiane Fox, Deputy Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and Ross Ermel, Assistant Deputy Minister, Office of the Chief Information Officer and former Brigadier-General, for their enthusiastic engagement in helping to launch the Pilot and mentor our mentors.

6. Policy Advocacy

In having a public sector-wide perspective, the Network is proactive in identifying, addressing and influencing policy issues that affect 2SLGBTQIA+ employees across departments and agencies.

For example, in spring 2022, the Network and Innovation, Science and Economic Development led an experimentation, in support of the *GC Directive on Employment Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*, enabling employees to display their personal gender pronouns to the name display fields in MS Teams and Outlook.

As a result of other adopters, in June 2022, the Government of Canada's Chief Information Officer, Catherine Luelo, provided a clarification to the Services Configuration Requirements on Email Management section under the Treasury Board (TB) Policy on Service and Digital

suite, that now provides the flexibility for employees to add their personal gender pronouns to their email display name.

This work, initiated by the Network, influenced changes to workplace policies across a number of federal departments and agencies. As of the publication of this report, at least ten departments and agencies have all adopted this change. They include:

- **Innovation, Science and Economic Development**
- **Canadian Food Inspection Agency**
- **Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada**
- **Global Affairs Canada**
- **Veterans Affairs Canada**
- **Environment and Climate Change Canada**
- **Canada Revenue Agency**
- **Transport Canada**
- **Canadian Energy Regulator**

The Network is expecting other departments and agencies to also take this important step over the coming months.

The impact of this policy change cannot be overlooked. For many trans and gender-diverse people, instances of misgendering are distressing experiences. Being misgendered is associated with negative mental health factors, including increased depression and anxiety. Allowing for employees to display their pronouns in digital communications will mitigate instances of misgendering, thus leading to a more inclusive workplace.

Another example of the Network's policy work includes our work on the Employment Equity Act review. The *Employment Equity Act* is in the process of being updated to reflect changing demographics and the current understandings of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. In March of 2022, members of the Public Service Pride Network delivered a passionate and powerful presentation to the Chair and members of the Employment Equity Act Review Task Force on why 2SLGBTQIA+ communities should be included under the Act as a designated group.

Throughout the summer of 2022, the Network participated in consultations hosted by the Centre of Diversity and Inclusion to create more inclusive questions for the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES). The changes to the PSES questions will allow for more robust data on 2SLGBTQIA+ employees, including data on gender identity and expression as well as data on discrimination and harassment faced in the workplace.



Siddika Mithani ✓
@CFIAPresACIA



.@InspectionCan proudly fosters a diverse and inclusive work environment. CFIA employees can now choose to display pronouns of their choice on our direct messaging and email systems, and be their authentic selves at work. #PSPW

3:01 PM · Aug 22, 2022 · Sprout Social

“I was a panelist on the PSPN’s International Pronouns Day event, and having come out just a month prior, I still didn’t have my name figured out or pronouns for that matter. I wasn’t doing very well at the time. But I thought sharing my story on this panel would be therapeutic. And I was right – it was! For anyone who wonders if the Network has an impact, I can tell you firsthand that it really does!”
- Zak Dezainde-Dubuc, Transport Canada

7. Collaboration

Throughout the course of the last year, many departments and networks within the public service regularly reached out to the Network to discuss a range of interesting collaborations, all of which helped us promote the core Pride values of justice, equity, accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. For example:

- In October 2022, the Network assisted Public Services and Procurement Canada during their Talent and Leadership panel discussion on executive leadership in their department by providing the perspectives of 2SLGBTQI executives.
- In November 2022, the Public Health Agency of Canada sought the Network’s advice regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ representation in an advertising campaign they will be running in support of mental health.

ACTION COMMITTEES

The PSPN's [Action Committees](#) worked on a wide variety of initiatives over the last 12 months, all of which fostered collaboration and engagement within and across departments and agencies.

The following are examples of the Action Committees' important and sought-after initiatives.

- Held an awareness-raising event in April at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada for International Day of Pink that attracted 230 participants, including their Deputy Minister Chris Forbes.
- Created and reviewed Pride-related communications products including graphics and social media content for the Network.
- Organized four group mentorship sessions in February and May to help 2SLGBTQIA+ employees with their professional development. Themes centred on “being your authentic self at work”, which was then selected as the theme for the 2022 Public Service Pride Week.
- Started data collection on Network members and events to help shape the way the new conceptualises “inclusion”.
- Held a post-Pride Week safe space discussion on September 7 with 23 transgender, non-binary, and/or gender-diverse colleagues, while also working on training materials designed to address gender identity and gender expression-related gaps in existing diversity, equity, and inclusion training offerings.

Events and Engagement

Members of this Action Committee take a lead role in planning and coordinating events to celebrate the resilience, spirit, and contributions of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Canada. They also promote dialogue across communities and create awareness of significant milestones for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

Communications

Members of this Action Committee plan communications for PSPN initiatives and activities. This includes consulting and developing comprehensive, consistent key messages and FAQs on 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in the public service for use and reference by all Government of Canada departments and agencies. They also have an active presence on social media platforms, communicate to all GC departments and agencies for specific messaging, and collaborate with other Action Committees on communication initiatives.

Professional Development

This Action Committee provides mentorships and professional development opportunities to 2SLGBTQIA+ employees across the federal public service.

Business Intelligence

This Action Committee operationally defines “inclusion” for the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in the public service. To that end, research is done on pre-existing data collections to uncover opportunities to measure inclusion and establish indicators that uphold the definition. The committee also does research regarding current scholarship on inclusion to advise the definition.

Gender Identity and Expression

Members of this Action Committee support and advocate for gender diverse public

MICRO-ASSIGNMENTS

To help with the PSPN’s increasing demand and subsequent workload, we created micro-assignments. Departments such as **Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Employment and Social Development Canada, Veterans Affairs Canada, Infrastructure Canada, Transport Canada, and Parks Canada** contributed a range of support for these micro-assignments, which last between six to twelve months.

This additional support has been greatly appreciated and is having a direct impact. An employee from Veterans Affairs Canada on micro-assignment was the project lead for our most successful Public Service Pride Week ever, while another employee from Parks Canada was instrumental in developing the Pride Mentoring Pilot for its very successful launch. These micro-assignments give employees the opportunity to develop and enhance skills and competencies in ways that may not be otherwise available during their respective careers within the public service.

“The opportunity to join the PSPN on a six-month micro-assignment afforded me a once-in-a-lifetime chance to design and lead a unique program inspired by the [2SLGBTQIA+] communities in the public service for [2SLGBTQIA+] people. The overwhelmingly positive response and interest has confirmed that this program is needed and much appreciated. I consider myself very fortunate to be able to bring my experiences and perspectives gained with the PSPN back to my work at Parks Canada.”

- Karen Raymond, Parks Canada

THE YEAR AHEAD

What's On The Horizon?

With members in mind, the Network continues working on a variety of initiatives into 2023, including:

- the management of the new Pride Mentoring Pilot;
- the expansion of personal gender pronoun use to the name display fields in MS Teams and Outlook to other departments and agencies;
- the access to gender neutral washrooms;
- the support of gender-diverse employees; and
- the onboarding of new and current 2SLGBTQIA+ employees.

Next year will also mark the **fifth anniversary of Public Service Pride Week**, to be held from August 21 to 25, 2023.

We're At a Crossroads

The Network provides high value for the limited resources we have been able to gather. This allows us to foster a diverse and inclusive environment that helps the Government of Canada be an employer of choice. However, our ongoing ability to serve 2SLGBTQIA+ communities across the public sector is constrained in light of funding challenges outlined earlier in this report. This constraint, in turn, could exacerbate mental health challenges among members of those same 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

We are at a crossroads, in other words. Decisions taken in the coming year will determine whether the Network can continue to move forward with confidence.

Departments and agencies are turning to the Network for an expertise that is not offered internally within their organization. They do not have an equal ability to support employees on issues specific to the members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities – such as feelings of isolation and concerns about mental health – and thus struggle in fostering inclusion of members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities within their organization.

The Network is there to close these gaps and support all Government of Canada employees. Steady growth observed over the previous years is expected to continue, meaning that **the Network's existence is not only justified, but required**. However, the volunteer-led format under which the Network has operated so far is not sustainable given the constant increase in demands, in numbers and range. What's more, many Network volunteers experience burnout due to the pressures of balancing commitments to the PSPN with their regular jobs within the public service.

Recognizing this increasing demand for the expertise of the Network, some departments and agencies have found temporary innovative ways to support the Network's activities. For

example, some organizations have helped over the last several years with a range of resources such as accessibility features for Network events, micro-assignments, translation services, a graphic designer, and a video team.

Over the course of this year, the following organizations provided temporary support to the Network:

- **Women and Gender Equality Canada**
- **Infrastructure Canada**
- **Veterans Affairs Canada**
- **Innovation, Science and Economic Development**
- **Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada**
- **Office of the Chief Information Officer of Canada**
- **Employment and Social Development Canada**
- **Transport Canada**
- **Parcs Canada**
- **Natural Resources Canada**

While this support has been instrumental in allowing the Network to conduct its activities, that support's temporary nature and our reliance on the goodwill of departments and agencies makes it difficult to plan for the future. A more sustainable approach is required.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUSTAIN OUR WORK AND FOSTER DIVERSITY

To continue our work in fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace for everyone, the Network recommends the three following steps be taken within the next three to six months, and be implemented in the next fiscal year.

1. **Secure and implement funding for the Public Service Pride Network** at the Government of Canada level for the next three years.
2. **Include representation of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities during decision-making**, specifically by committing to invite a Public Service Pride Network representative to meetings and discussions on any initiatives, issues and the co-creation of changes that would likely impact 2SLGBTQIA+ communities within the public service.
3. **Demonstrate sustained commitment and support from senior officials** for a federal public service that values diversity and inclusion, for example by expanding the implementation of the personal gender pronouns initiative to the name display fields in MS Teams and Outlook across all departments and agencies.

These times of economic and social challenges have demonstrated how certain groups within society have suffered, and how negatively 2SLGBTQIA+ communities have been affected. Concrete steps need to be taken urgently within the federal public service to support 2SLGBTQIA+ communities within the Government of Canada.

TO CONTACT US

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Web Site: publicservicepride.ca

Twitter: @PSPrideNetwork

¹ ISED, Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), Global Affairs Canada, Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), Parks Canada and the Canadian Energy Regulator (CER)