



May 1, 2024

**Subject: Follow up to the 2023 Open Letter to deputy ministers to take action to support our transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse colleagues in the federal public service**

Dear Deputies,

One year ago, I reached out to you on behalf of the [Public Service Pride Network](#) (PSPN) with a heartfelt plea, urging your immediate action to support Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (2SLGBTQIA+) communities within the federal public service, with particular attention placed on Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse colleagues who face compounded disadvantage.

In the [Open Letter](#), I asked you to engage with these public servants in your organization, support their career development, accelerate work related to inclusive washrooms and name-changing processes, and participate in Pride events. These six key areas were drawn from the [Emerging from the Purge report](#), advocating for intersectional approaches to improve inclusion and representation. They were framed through an intersectional lens—a reflection of the core value and expected behavior of *respect for people: Valuing diversity and the benefit of combining the unique qualities and strengths inherent in a diverse workforce*.

The Government's December 2023 intention to designate Black and 2SLGBTQI+ workers under the *Employment Equity Act* framework marks a significant milestone, highlighting the need for meaningful change from an employment equity perspective in response to the Open Letter.

The PSPN has also acknowledged that the [Deputy Ministers' Task Team on Values and Ethics Report to the Clerk of the Privy Council](#) and the [2024-2025 Corporate priorities](#) prominently featured references to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion and the need to combat hate towards these communities. These documents, with input from the 2SLGBTQIA+ Executive Pride Network, underscores the importance of addressing these issues from a values and ethics perspective.

As we mark the one-year anniversary of the Open Letter, the PSPN and our members have reflected on the successes achieved to make positive change in addition to the obstacles that our communities still face.



## 1. Recruiting and supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ employees

We recognize that many of you have engaged with Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse public servants. Your involvement, alongside initiatives like the PSPN's [Pride Mentoring Program](#) and the [2SLGBTQIA+ Learning Path for Executives](#), developed in collaboration with the Canada School of Public Service, represents important steps towards inclusivity at the executive role. Nevertheless, we need to improve the pipeline for Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse employees, providing them with the necessary support and resources to envision a path to executive positions while remaining true to their full authentic selves in the workplace.

- **What can you do next?** Take active steps to understand and support Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse employees. Learn about their lived experiences, their career goals, and the value they bring to your organization. Commit to sponsoring at least one employee, actively advocating for their career advancement to executive positions from an employment equity perspective. Establish measurable goals, timelines, and reporting commitments to track progress effectively, as recommended by the PSPN.

## 2. Inclusive washrooms

Creating safe, inclusive washing and toilet facilities remains a priority across the public service. Partnering with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), we are addressing gaps and ensuring 'design' meets the needs of all users, in their full human diversity (e.g., disability, age, race/ethnicity, religion and more), regardless of their gender identity, gender expression or sex.

PSPC's forthcoming *Inclusive Washroom Design Directive* (December 2024) will offer clear guidance for designing inclusive washrooms in both existing and new Crown-owned and leased facilities. Meanwhile, their [Functional Direction on All-access Washrooms](#) mandates single-use, enclosed, gender-inclusive, and accessible washrooms. As workplace design is discussed, deputy ministers should already be working with PSPC to prioritize All-access Washrooms in new constructions, major rehabilitations, or retrofits.

- **What can you do next?** Ensure your organization remains involved in the PSPN-PSPC Interdepartmental Inclusive Washroom Advisory Group to advance shared goals of inclusive washing and toilet facilities. If not yet a member, reach out for joining information. Ahead of the *Inclusive Washroom Design Directive* release, all federal real-property custodians should ensure that ongoing and future long-term portfolio planning already incorporates inclusive washrooms, as a baseline, alongside gender-designated washing and toilet facilities.

## 3. Pronouns, chosen names and gender markers

Recognizing and respecting individuals' chosen names and gender identities are essential to empowering employees and allowing them to bring their full authentic selves to the workplace. At last count, over 40,000 employees from more than 35 organizations voluntarily added pronouns to their digital usernames. Many challenges persist in implementing consistent processes across the federal public service despite notable progress made by the PSPN-led Interdepartmental Working Group on Modernizing Chosen Name and Gender Marker Practices, co-chaired by Environment and Climate Change Canada. Outdated workplace policies and certain system limitations—such as the binary man and woman gender options—remain a particular challenge for Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary and gender diverse individuals working within the Government of Canada.



- **What can you do next?** Understand how your organization handles requests for name changes and pronoun additions from employees. Assess if current processes truly empower employees to be their authentic selves at work. Are employees forced to repeatedly advocate for themselves, or does your organization offer a single point of entry for name change across HR, IT, and Security areas? Advocate for the removal of any unnecessary collection of binary gender data. While the PSPN works with central agencies for long-term policy-oriented solutions, organizations can take immediate steps to improve inclusivity.

### **Participation in Pride and 2SLGBTQIA+ activities throughout the year**

Thank you for your increased involvement in Pride-related events, demonstrating your commitment to recognizing and celebrating diversity. It may seem like a small step but it is an important one, on the path to full inclusion. For example, Ottawa's Capital Pride Parade in August 2023 witnessed several deputy ministers, as well as the Clerk of the Privy Council, marching for the first time. Across Canada, federal public servants showed strong representation in multiple cities, and internationally various Canadian missions participated in Pride activities. And there are other dates of significance year-round for the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities that are commemorated with activities through which you can show your support!

- **What can you do next?** Join us, and encourage your employees across the country to participate in Pride events. Significant Pride celebrations occur throughout the year, and the PSPN is here to support deputy ministers' representation. Additionally, use your voice and symbols of Pride in internal communications to raise awareness and show solidarity and acceptance on significant dates like International Transgender Day of Visibility (March 31), International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (May 17), and Public Service Pride Week (August 19-23).

### **Today's reality**

Despite notable progress in 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion within the federal public service, we recognize that the broader context largely remains unchanged, and in some cases, things seem to have worsened. Heightened levels of transphobia and homophobia persist towards 2SLGBTQIA+ communities across Canada and around the world, casting a wide shadow over the entire federal public service and the wellbeing of 2SLGBTQIA+ federal public servants.

- **What can you do next?** Deputy ministers should ensure there are processes in place to address cases/events in their organizations that encompass prevention, repercussions, and support for those who feel targeted.

If we aspire to cultivate a federal workplace where individuals feel empowered to be authentically themselves, respected, and valued for their contributions to Canada, then **elevating the actions in the Open Letter to the level of the Clerk's important [Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service](#) to include 2SLGBTQIA+ employees is an essential step forward.**

The time is now! As leaders, you have the power to actively drive change in both the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and our corporate culture; one in which diversity and inclusion is intentional, deliberate, and intrinsic to who we are and what we do.



We should all be proud of the progress we have made, but this is only the beginning. More must be done, and the PSPN is here to help.

Sincerely,

Jason Bett (he/him)

Champion

