

ALBERTA PUBLIC SERVICE PRIORITIES AND PROGRESS

RON HICKS SPEAKS ABOUT VISION AND VALUES

Alberta's Deputy Minister of Executive Council has some clear priorities in mind when it comes to the public service.

Ron Hicks' commitment to clear the underbrush that can stall public service employees in their work, to reinvigorate the public service, and to help ensure people are having fun while they work, is steadfast.

The heart of the matter

For Hicks, meeting these priorities really begins with the vision and values of the Alberta Public Service.

"An organization needs rules and systems in place to function but too many rules build underbrush," says Hicks of his view of organizational design.

"Instead of a rule for every situation we should have a single vision and a clear statement of our values that speak to each member of the public service team. Moving from a culture of rules to a culture of values gives employees the tools and the power to make better decisions and provide better service."

The current vision and values are coming up on their tenth anniversary in 2006. Hicks says it's time to refresh the spirit that guides us.

When asked how the vision and values could better serve the public service of the future, Hicks suggests the vision could be "a little shorter, a little more appealing," while the values can incorporate thoughts on the types of behaviour we would want to see in any government department.

"I want staff to have an opportunity to provide input to the renewed vision and values, letting us know if it reflects the values of the type of organization they would be proud to work for," Hicks says, speaking with conviction and a sense of purpose.

"I expect all public service employees to behave according to our values, but it's especially important for managers, since people take their cues from them."

Clearing, reinvigorating, and having lunch

Verbalizing our shared values brings a renewed sense of purpose to existing staff, as much as it helps to define the government as an employer of choice, says Hicks. As for having fun, he sees this as an occasion for personal leadership to shine through.

"Our workloads are still serious considerations and we should be searching for ways to work smarter, but we also need to look at what we are doing and question if there are some things no longer useful or necessary," he says.

If we don't pay close attention to building healthy workplaces — and this means enjoying our time at work — it's just not going to happen."

Hicks suggests that employees take the time for recognition and for "laughing at ourselves now and again."

Managers are encouraged to take inspiration from employees who find ways for team building, like going out to lunch for no reason.

"We've studied workplace health and have incorporated it into our HR strategy," says Hicks.

"What we need to do is let it happen."