

GUIDING US INTO THE SECOND CENTURY

RENEWED PUBLIC SERVICE VISION AND VALUES ARE INTRODUCED

Excitement and enthusiasm filled the room as members of executive committees from across government gathered for the unveiling of a vision and values that will guide the public service into its second century.

The need to embrace the task of bringing the renewed vision and values to life was a message delivered during the introduction of the vision and values at the Westin Inn in Edmonton on June 2.

Those at the meeting heard how having a shared vision and values for all provincial government employees can help ensure employees are able to do their best work because it gives them a common understanding of where they are headed as part of a larger public service team.

A common understanding

Having a shared perspective of the behaviours that public service employees agree guides their work and the kind of organization they want to become is important to the future of the public service, explained Deputy Minister of Executive Council, Ron Hicks.

Hicks spoke to executive committee members after they had viewed a video message from Premier Klein. The Premier explained that the strengthening of the public service through the adoption of a common vision and values would be something he would consider a significant accomplishment during his time as premier. Hicks expanded on those comments.

“We’re going to have a new leader by the end of the year and that creates some uncertainty, but that kind of uncertainty has always been a part of the nature of the work we do in the public service. It doesn’t mean we stop working, providing services, or striving to improve,” said Hicks. “That’s why the commitment to the vision and values is especially important right now. They will serve as a foundation through the transition and into the future of a new administration.”

The unveiling of the vision and values follows several months of work by a deputy minister steering committee established last December.

The vision and values development process included giving employees across the province a chance to share their thoughts and ideas through employee focus group discussions and a survey earlier this year. The result is a concise and meaningful vision statement and four values.

“Our vision is about what we do, why we are here, and where we are headed in the future,” said Hicks. “Our values are about how we do it.”

Hicks noted that the public service already has a proud tradition of excellent work based on these values, adding that making them common across government will “make a great organization even better.”

Bringing the vision and values to life

Hicks encouraged executive committee members and managers throughout the public service to strive to make the vision and values part of the way they and those they supervise work on a daily basis. That theme was echoed in a presentation at the meeting by one of the co-chairs of the deputy minister steering committee, Public Service Commissioner Shirley Howe.

“Employees told us quite passionately during the employee focus groups that to be meaningful, the vision and values we say we believe in must be seen to match up with our actions,” said Howe. “In order to do their best work, employees have to see managers ‘walk the talk.’”

Howe pointed out a number of benefits that come with having common vision and values, including helping establish a government-wide leadership approach, encouraging innovation and excellence, and guiding policies and practices around orientation, training, performance management, and rewards and recognition.

“One of the strengths we should be leveraging as an employer is being able to offer our employees career advancement opportunities while still letting them know that no matter which ministry they are in, they will know what to expect and what’s expected of them.”

Now that the renewed vision and values have been introduced, the next step is translating words into action. Howe let executive committee members know about a wide range of resources and supports in place or under development to help managers and employees make the vision and values part of the way they work, including:

- A variety of printed materials that can be displayed in offices or at external events such as career fairs, including wall posters, postcards, greeting cards, and tabletop cards.
- Handbooks for managers with tips about integrating the vision and values into the workplace.
- Desktop wallpaper that employees can download to their computers.

The vision and values are also being made the focus of future learning and development opportunities and in presentations during courses and training.

Vision and value resources and supports are being gathered and posted on the new Alberta Public Service Vision and Values Website at www.pao.gov.ab.ca/apsvisionandvalues.

Public service employees have also been introduced to the renewed vision and values during staff sessions being held in seven communities across the province, hosted by Hicks.

The work begins

The executive committee meeting wrapped up with participants getting together in their executive teams to discuss what the vision and values mean to them as individuals and to their ministries.

Executive committee members shared their ideas with each other informally during a session facilitated by deputy ministers Eric McGhan and Fay Orr.

McGhan, who co-chairs the deputy minister steering committee, encouraged executive committees and all managers to make this discussion the first of many to come.

Hicks reiterated that message in his closing comments and again stressed the important role that managers have “modeling the way.”

“If you are like me, one of the reasons you work in the public service is the chance to make a difference,” said Hicks. “I can’t think of a better way to do that than having a positive impact on the public service itself and its ability to make a lasting difference in the lives of Albertans.”