

## Canada's statement of values: Values-based culture of sound public governance

**Title of the governance practice:** Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector

### **Summary of the governance practice**

The Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector came into force in Canada on April 2, 2012. The Public Sector Code outlines the values and expected behaviours that guide public servants in all matters related to their professional activities. Committing to these values and adhering to the expected behaviours allows public servants to strengthen the ethical culture of the public sector and enhance public confidence in all public institutions.

### **Short Description of the governance practice**

The Public Sector Code lists five values: respect for democracy, respect for people, integrity, stewardship and excellence. The Code states that: "These values are a compass to guide public servants in everything they do. They cannot be considered in isolation from each other as they will often overlap. This Code and respective organizational codes of conduct are important sources of guidance for public servants. Organizations are expected to take steps to integrate these values into their decisions, actions, policies, processes and systems. Similarly, public servants can expect to be treated in accordance with these values by their organisation." While ethics are not defined in the public sector code, the code states that by adhering to the 5 guiding values, "public servants strengthen the ethical culture of the public sector and contribute to public confidence in the integrity of all public institutions". A breach of these values or the expected behaviours may result in disciplinary measures and may include the termination of employment.

### **Achievement/Outcome of the governance practice**

The Internal Audit and Evaluation Bureau conducted an evaluation of the Values and Ethics programme at the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat between April and December 2017. Part of the Values and Ethics programme's objective is to promote the application of and adherence to the Values and Ethics Code from the Public Sector. According to this evaluation, in the long term the Public Sector Code can be expected to contribute to a public service that is professional, non-partisan, and highly ethical and that maintains public trust.

A letter of offer that refers to the public sector code and sets out the requirement to adhere to this code is provided to each new or existing public servant before they start a position. According to the evaluation, this method of communicating the requirements were unlikely to result in a reasonable awareness of the public sector code. On the other hand, requirement to adhere to the public sector code was better communicated through advice and recommendations. Indeed, the evaluation found that advice and recommendations promote awareness of and adherence to the public sector code. Additionally, subject matter experts found that classroom training was needed in order to define and contextualise the application of the public sector code.

*Source: Canada Treasury Board (2012) Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector, <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=25049> ; Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2017) Evaluation of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat Values and Ethics Program, <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/corporate/reports/evaluation-tbs-values-ethics-program.html#toc1> ; Example of country practice provided by the Government of Canada as part of the Policy Framework's consultation process*