

**Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC)  
National Union-Management Consultation Committee (NUMCC)  
June 7, 2018 Minutes**

**Present:**

**Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC)**

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Chris Forbes      | Deputy Minister   |
| Lisa Foss         | Corporate Secretary   |
| Fred Gorrell      | ADM, International Affairs Branch                               |
| Brian Gray        | ADM, Science and Technology Branch                              |
| Pierre Leduc      | DG, Communications Services, Public Affairs Branch              |
| Michel Lessard    | CIO, Information Systems Branch                                 |
| Tom Rosser        | ADM, Strategic Policy Branch                                    |
| Gilles Saindon    | Associate ADM, Science and Technology Branch                    |
| Kimberly Saunders | DG, Office of Audit and Evaluation                              |
| Frédéric Seppey   | ADM, Market and Industry Services Branch                        |
| Jane Taylor       | A/ADM, Programs Branch  |
| Pierre Corriveau  | ADM, Corporate Management Branch                                |
| Andrew Goldstein  | DG, Human Resources, Corporate Services Branch                  |
| Scott Aughey      | A/Executive Director, HRD, Corporate Services Branch            |
| Chris Thompson    | Senior Human Resources Advisor, HRD, Corporate Services Branch  |
| Laura Sanford     | Senior Labour Relations Advisor, HRD, Corporate Services Branch |
| Kayla MacCullough | Student, Labour Relations, HRD, Corporate Services Branch       |

**Agriculture Union (PSAC)**

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Fabian Murphy      | National President                       |
| Rick Cormier       | First National Executive Vice President  |
| Milton Dyck        | Second National Executive Vice President |
| Patrick St-Georges | Third National Executive Vice President  |
| Melanie Desrosiers | Fourth National Executive Vice President |

**Professional Institute of the Public Service Canada (PIPSC)**

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| Catherine Keir | President, AAFC National Union-Management Consultation Team |
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**Association of Canadian Financial Officers (ACFO)**

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| Danielle Viel | Labour Relations Advisor ( <i>by teleconference</i> ) |
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**Canadian Association of Professional Employees (CAPE)**

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| Patricia Hoy | Vice President, AAFC – NCR Local 507 |
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**Regrets:**

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| Carole Bidal          | Executive Director and Senior General Counsel, Legal Services, AAFC/CFIA |
| Jean-François Prigent | Employment Relations Officer, PIPSC                                      |
| Bertrand Myre         | Labour Relations Officer, CAPE   |
| Paul Cameron          | Assistant Business Manager, IBEW   |

## Agenda Item

## Summary and Action

## Accountability

### 1. Introduction and opening remarks C. Forbes

The Deputy Minister (DM) welcomed all participants and provided an update on changes to the AAFC senior management team since the last meeting.

A brief update was provided on the Phoenix pay system. It was noted that as a department, AAFC is deeply concerned about the impact on its employees and acknowledged the support the union is providing to their members, as the department continues to work with the Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), the Pay Centre, and other government departments to address employees' situations and resolve their pay issues.

It was noted that, in his Annual Report to the Prime Minister earlier this year, the Clerk identified addressing pay issues as his top priority for 2018-19. The department will continue to invest capacity to support employees with pay issues and will keep pay stabilization as a top management priority. In the last month, AAFC has been invited to join the DM and Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) level Committees charged with overseeing pay stabilization efforts. This will enable greater ability to influence development and processing priorities, and increased access to information which will improve understanding of the issues and opportunities that exist to stabilize pay.

S. Aughey noted that the Pay Transfer team is working closely with PSPC. As of early June, the Pay Transfer team is being assigned distinct pay files by PSPC that can be processed and resolved at the departmental level which will reduce caseloads. The department will not be assigned files where PSPC has dedicated resources to particular pay matters (i.e. maternity leave, disability). The department will continue to provide emergency salary advances and priority payments to those experiencing hardship.

F. Murphy, R. Cormier, and P. Hoy thanked the department and S. Aughey for the effort and resources put forward to resolve pay issues within the department. P. Hoy inquired about what information they can communicate to members, now that the Pay Transfer team will be processing distinct pay matters. S. Aughey committed to preparing an information bulletin outlining the new processes that have been implemented by PSPC.

#### **ACTION ITEM**

Prepare an information bulleting updating employees on the new processes that has been implemented by PSPC.

**S. Aughey-  
CMB**

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|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| <p><b>2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes</b><br/><b>C. Forbes</b></p>   | <p>The meeting agenda was approved, with minor corrections to be made; C. Forbes noted that the minutes will be changed accordingly. The minutes for the meeting held on December 19, 2017, were approved. C. Forbes committed to the minutes being posted on the AgriSource Labour Relations page for review within one month of the meeting.</p>   | <p><b>No follow up required</b></p> |
| <p><b>3. Action items from December 19, 2017 meeting</b></p>   | <p>P. Corriveau provided an update on the five action items that have been completed following the last NUMCC meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the December 19, 2017, meeting minutes were posted on the AgriSource Labour Relations page on May 29, 2018;</li> <li>2) an overview of AAFC's Official Language training program was presented at HRUCC on April 17, 2018;</li> <li>3) an update of the PAB PSEAS results to be provided during this meeting;</li> <li>4) the department has hired a Departmental Harassment Coordinator, one full-time and one part-time Conflict Resolution Practitioner, and has launched several staffing processes to secure resources in Labour Relations and Workplace Wellness; and</li> <li>5) the department has researched interpretation services options for future NUMCC meetings, as the services are not readily available within AAFC.</li> </ol> <p>F. Murphy underscored the need for translation services at the meeting, to ensure all members understand the content of the meeting. A. Goldstein noted that the department is currently determining the best way to arrange translation services for future meetings.</p> <p><b>ACTION ITEM</b></p> <p>Continue to explore simultaneous translation options for future NUMCC meetings.</p> | <p><b>DG-HR, CMB</b></p>            |
| <p><b>4. AAFC Plans and Priorities 2018-2019</b></p> <p><b>i) Strategic Policy Branch (SPB)</b><br/><b>T. Rosser</b></p> | <p>T. Rosser provided an overview of SPB's key priorities, highlighting the continued work with other government departments to develop the Food Policy. The branch will release a mandate letter within the next few weeks outlining the Food Policy.</p> <p>T. Rosser noted that the demand for skilled workers in the agriculture and agri-food industry is increasing as businesses become more complex and new technologies are introduced. For this reason, labour shortages are at an all-time high priority for the sector, the department and for SPB. The branch works closely with federal partners as well as provinces and territories to promote efforts that match today's skills training and education programs to align with the jobs of the future.</p>   | <p><b>No follow up required</b></p> |

F. Murphy inquired as to what options the department is considering, other than the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, to address the skilled labour shortage. T. Rosser noted that industry wide special consideration is being given to the challenge of improving the marketing of careers in the agricultural sector to the younger workforce, including university students. There is also an ongoing review of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program; AAFC is a close partner in this Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)-led initiative.

T. Rosser noted that a summary of the consultations and next steps for the Food Policy will be released in the coming weeks. M. Dyck inquired if further consultations will be held on the Policy. T. Rosser noted that any further consultation will be done in a different lens; the focus being on identifying priorities and gaps and how they align with other government priorities and programs, identifying where additional federal action can take place, and where there is opportunity to make a meaningful difference.

**ii) Science and  
Technology Branch  
(STB)  
B. Gray**

B. Gray presented STB's plans and priorities, noting the focus on bolstering scientific capacity in new and developing areas, including addressing agri-environmental challenges, and emerging priorities such as climate change, water and soil conservation. The focus is on sustainable intensification of agriculture; not just reducing the sector's footprint, but improving it.

**No follow up  
required**

In addition, the branch continues to focus on aligning with AAFC's People Strategy, as well as establishing a renewed STB Engagement Strategy and Action Plan to address the findings of the 2017 PSES. Though the 2014 PSES results for STB were not ideal, through the branch's 2014 PSES Action Plan, the branch has made the most positive improvements in the department, as captured in the 2017 results.

A conversation was had with regards to whether the branch would have sufficient resources to manage the increased workload and funding related to the Minister's mandate letter commitments on climate change and soil and water conservation. B. Gray noted that the branch has signed a Memorandum of Understanding and established a governance committee with Environment and Climate Change Canada that meets regularly to ensure proper collaboration on the file.

**iii) Market and Industry  
Services Branch  
(MISB)  
F. Seppey**

F. Seppey provided an overview of MISB's key priorities, such as enhancing the competitiveness of the agriculture and agri-food sectors, both at home and abroad. It was noted that in January 2018, MISB and the International Affairs Branch (IAB) became two individual branches, and that the two branches continue to collaborate very closely. F. Seppey also provided

**No follow up  
required**

an update on staffing changes at the EX level within the branch.

The MISB integrated Human Resource Plan issued in 2016 has been implemented and progress continues to be made on a number of identified issues. MISB continues to support programs such as the ECDP, the MLDP, and the ARDP. A similar program for the Audit, Commerce and Purchasing (CO) Group is currently in the development stages. The branch continues to encourage the use and training of both official languages in the workplace, and will be piloting an in-house language training program in the fall.

Employee engagement remains a priority. The branch is working in collaboration with other branches on the development of a departmental People Strategy to prepare the workforce for the future and deliver continuously improved service to Canadians. MISB is committed to delivering ongoing branch mental health activities in coming months. Examples of activities include workshops, training sessions, guest speakers, and team building events.

**iv) International  
Affairs Branch  
(IAB)  
F. Gorrell**

F. Gorrell provided an outline for IAB's priorities for 2018-2019. With the creation of the new branch, there has been increased opportunity to be strategic in IAB's approach to international activities. Due to increased collaboration and more efficient use of resources, CFIA and AAFC have aligned to ensure that there were no staff reductions, with an increased focus on career development.

**No follow up  
required**

A key initiative includes supporting the \$75B export target recommended by the Advisory Council on Economic Growth and included in Budget 2017, which will require a focussed approach to AAFC's markets and trade activities. CFIA and AAFC have distinct but complementary roles to play in international trade; while AAFC focuses on advocacy and engagements activities, CFIA provides technical expertise needed to open, maintain, and facilitate access of Canadian agricultural and agri-food exports to international markets.

F. Murphy inquired how the branch is dispersed within NCR and the regions. F. Gorrell noted that there are no regional employees; employees are located in the NCR, and that there is also locally engaged staff in various countries.

**v) Programs Branch  
(PB)  
J. Taylor**

Over the next year, PB will work on branch-specific priorities, organized under 3 pillars: Programs, Services and People.

**No follow up  
required**

Program priorities include the implementation of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) which launched on April 1, 2018, implementation of programming related to trade agreements, and encouraging greater participation of under-represented groups in agricultural programming.

Service priorities include the design and planning of the implementation of a new grants and contributions platform, the implementation of the branch Information Management (IM) Action Plan, streamlining of the administration and processes to improve program delivery, and the improvement of the collection, analysis and reporting of results.

People priorities include supporting a healthy, inclusive and harassment-free workplace, the recruitment, retention and development of employees, and the creation of a culture of open communication that is engaging, empowering and rewarding.

F. Murphy inquired if efforts for a harassment-free workplace were done at a local level. J. Taylor outlined that efforts have been made at a branch and directorate level, including in Winnipeg. It was noted that many initiatives have been implemented, such as training and PSES results sessions, thereby raising awareness amongst employees, and therefore perhaps increasing in comfort to speak out about harassment and workplace violence.

D. Veil requested to be consulted on any changes to classification matters during the upcoming review exercise. J. Taylor confirmed that the union will be consulted on these matters.

**vi) Information  
Services Branch  
(ISB)  
M. Lessard**

M. Lessard provided an overview of ISB's four key priorities in 2018-19. The first is to enhance and modernize core services and tools through the continuing rollout of new IT workstations, upgrading all AAFC workstations to Windows 10 and Office 2016, and working with Shared Services Canada (SSC) to conduct assessments of AAFC regional sites. A second key priority is to support the implementation of GC enterprise solutions through the initiation of the multi-year migration effort to move AAFC from AgriDOC to the GCDOCs/Knowledge Workspace platform, expanding the use of Government of Canada Secret Infrastructure (GCSI) in selected AAFC locations, fully migrate AAFC email accounts to @canada.ca when SSC resumes the Email Transformation Initiative (ETI) migration (targeted September 4, 2018), and to plan to transition from Blackberry to Android mobile devices as part of the GC Enterprise Mobile Device Management (EMDM) initiative. Thirdly, ISB will continue to advance and mature AAFC's data management practices by preparing for migration of business information to corporate repositories (new employees no longer receive P: drives as of April 1, 2018, and existing employees' access to P: drives will be removed by end of FY 2018-19), and providing end-user support to employees in their adoption of Knowledge Workspace (SharePoint) and other IM tools.

**No follow up  
required**

Other branch priorities include completing a second round of

Talent Management. Going forward, ISB will assess its EX feeder group on an annual basis and non EX feeder groups bi-annually. ISB plans to create a pool of qualified candidates for managerial positions through a CS-04 competitive staffing process. The branch will continue with official languages training. Additionally, ISB will continue to promote a healthy workplace through mental health awareness initiatives, work/life balance, wellness programs, and return to work training.

**vii) Office of Audit and Evaluation (OAE)  
K. Saunders**

Priorities within OAE were elaborated on by K. Saunders. The first priority is strengthening the governance and quality assurance processes within OAE. The second priority is to improve OAE information management through the use of TeamMate to improve audit and evaluation project management, and to work with ISB to develop an OAE Knowledge Workspace site. The third priority is to strengthen and enhance the OAE in-house capacity to deliver on the Treasury Board policies for audit and evaluation through professional and leadership development opportunities. In the upcoming months, OAE will identify actions to respond to the challenges and opportunities noted in the PSES and PSEAS results.

**No follow up required**

M. Dyck inquired on the status of current departmental audits, and which ones are planned for the next few years.

K. Saunders noted that audits and evaluations are planned in consultation with senior management and TBS requirements.

K. Saunders also confirmed that she will look at OHS as a potential audit to be added to the Integrated Audit and Evaluation Plan during the next planning cycle.

**viii) Public Affairs Branch (PAB)  
P. Leduc**

P. Leduc explained that PAB is an internal service and provides communications advice and support to the Minister, DM and all branches on departmental services and program delivery, including the management of access to information and privacy. PAB's priorities are therefore aligned with all departmental priorities and were updated on April 1, 2018, which include the following:

**No follow up required**

1) develop and implement a branch People Management Plan;  
2) promote and raise awareness of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership;

3) lead the departmental implementation of Bill C-58;

4) support the development of and promote the Food Policy for Canada;

5) promote NAFTA and CPTPP trade agreements and related initiatives;

6) promote and raise awareness of AAFC's initiatives to rebuild discovery research and science, including the investment of \$70 million; and

7) develop a public trust lens and incorporate it into communications activities.

Internally PAB is placing an emphasis on building a healthy, respectful and diverse workplace with a focus on mental health and inclusiveness. Initiatives such as Tea and Ted Wellness sessions, Positive Space sessions, and a walking club, are already underway. The positive PAB results in the most recent PSES survey demonstrate that in response to a question about whether the department raised awareness of mental health, 90% of PAB staff had positive answers.

To follow-up on an item from last meeting in reference to PAB's 2017 PSEAS results, P. Leduc stated that while work remains to continue to improve, the AAFC IS community performed significantly better overall than the Public Service IS community in workplace wellness, reduced harassment and discrimination and the My Workplace questions.

**ix) Corporate  
Management  
Branch (CMB)  
P. Corriveau**

P. Corriveau provided an overview of the CMB priorities. Mental health in the workplace continues to be a government-wide priority, as expressed in the Clerk's most recent report. The branch had generally positive scores in the PSES, and any areas of concern will be addressed in the People Strategy. It was specifically noted that a tailor-made approach to addressing the results on harassment will be developed. Phoenix and pay support is another key area of focus, noting that the department has joined the new POD system at PSPC. The department has expanded the Pay Transfer team's role to include Compensation Advisor functions and direct access to caseloads assigned by the Pay Centre. P. Corriveau highlighted that the Classification Reset initiative continues, and that the PA group will be the next cluster for review. The Staffing Refresh exercise also continues, noting that there is particular focus on flexible and innovative approaches to achieve better outcomes and meet client needs. Attracting, retaining and developing professional and diverse FIs is a key initiative, through the review of the FIDP and leveraging of external staffing mechanisms such as FORD, FSWEF, etc. It was also noted that there is support and encouragement of staff to pursue professional development (i.e. CPA designations, ACFO-OCG Joint Career Development Program, and FMI). P. Corriveau also discussed the Community Pastures Program, noting that this is the final year of operation for the three remaining pastures. Any further pasture related operations will be under the administration and control of either Environment and Climate Change Canada or the provincial Ministry of Agriculture. It was also noted that the Executive Director, Steve Suttie, will soon retire from the CPMA, allowing for two four-month acting opportunities in this role until it is staffed indeterminately.

**No follow up  
required**



**5. National Public Service Week Activities**

**A. Goldstein**

A. Goldstein provided an overview of the departmental activities planned for the upcoming National Public Service Week (NPSW). NPSW, designed to promote pride and recognition of Canada's PS, will run from June 11 to June 15, 2018, under the permanent TBS theme "Proudly Serving Canadians." All week the department will offer Appreciation-O-Grams, cards upon which employees can write words of gratitude for their colleagues. For the launch, a make-your-own-sundae celebration will be held for all NHCAP employees. The Awards Team in HR is planning the Departmental Awards Ceremony, which is scheduled for June 12, 2018. This year's Wellness Day will feature new activities including a lunch time yoga session, meditation activities, and an EFAP overview session. The Diversity and Inclusion Team will host a "Living Library," which is a series of conversations that will take place between a Living Book (an employee with a story to tell), and interested readers. As in previous years, one day of the week is dedicated to branch team building activities, which will be on the final day of NPSW.

**No follow up required**

**6. 2017 Public Service Employee Survey Results (CMB)**

**C. Thompson**

C. Thompson provided an overview of the PSES 2017 results. Results at the departmental level were made available at the end of March 2018, and results at the organizational unit level were released at the end of April. AAFC's response rate for the 2017 PSES was 61.1%, while the Public Service (PS) average was 61.3%. Although this is the lowest response rate in recent PSES surveys, for both surveys in 2017 the AAFC response rate has been close to, or even above the PS average. Analysis of the lower response rate in 2017 was performed by OCHRO, and the most common reason provided for non-completion was attributed to workload or work pressure, and not survey fatigue (4%). It was noted that this will be something to monitor as the survey shifts to an annual exercise going forward. Overall, the PS trended positive from 2014 to 2017, with increases in many of the same areas as AAFC. PS employees are more positive than in 2014 about empowerment, having opportunity for better work-life balance and their ability to manage their workload. More than 4 out of 5 also feel their job is a good fit for their skills/interests and most employees feel they work in a respectful workplace; although 18% indicate having been harassed.

**No follow up required**

Looking at AAFC's 2017 results in relation to 2014, AAFC has continued to improve both in comparison to results for 2014 at AAFC, and against the PS average overall. The department also performed more positively in comparison to organizations of a similar size and similar mandate. The area of empowerment and support for innovative behaviour had traditionally been an area of strength for the department, and it continued on this survey. There were solid gains also made in the area of perceptions of employee development and access to opportunities. The context of fiscal restraint in 2014 may have contributed to this improvement. While the pay system and employee experiences with pay were a major source of

stress within the organization and across the PS, the one positive taken from the results on pay and compensation is that employees seem to recognize the internal supports being provided, relative to the experiences being observed in other departments. Additionally, harassment results improved for all Employee Equity (EE) groups in comparison with 2017 PSEAS results, and improved for visible minorities and indigenous employees in comparison with 2014 PSES results. With the organizational unit level results available, early analysis is showing that improvements against the 2014 PSES for STB are a key driver of the general positive trend observed for the department as a whole.

The largest negative gap between AAFC and the PS results is 5% - related to supervisors' perception of support required to address poor performance. AAFC was also 2% lower than the PS average regarding too many approval stages as well as perceived opportunities for promotion. C. Thompson noted that while some of these variances may not appear statistically significant, though the department is performing better than the PS on many questions, it doesn't imply that the department is satisfied with the results. Looking more closely at harassment and discrimination results, on the last couple of surveys, AAFC has led the PS average for harassment and discrimination, but the rate is now equal to the PS average. Another area where AAFC would also like to drive continuing positive change is workplace wellness. Results also trended slightly downward with regards to respectful workplace and employee satisfaction with how interpersonal issues are resolved.

The department will continue with analysis of PSES 2017 results and support branches and employee networks with results summary packages. The existence of branch differences suggests that a combination of branch/local measures and department-wide approaches will be the best way to respond to employee interests. As a first step towards developing these plans, detailed results packages have been provided to branch heads for their branches, as well as for all Director General level organizations within their branches, and for all research centres. The goal of providing this information is to inform and enable transparent discussions of the results with all employees. An annual PS survey will launch in August 2018, allowing monitoring of trends over time in responses.

**7. IT Performance Issues, carryover item (ISB)**  
**M. Lessard**

M. Lessard provided an update on recent and ongoing activities to improve performance issues. Improving network services and desktop file access for employees nationally continues to be a priority, and ISB has requested the internet speed be increased. The branch is on track for the 5 year lifecycle renewal plan, as they will have replaced more than five thousand workstations by 2019. ISB is in the testing stage of the upgrade to Windows 10 and Office 2016 for approximately 7200 network connected workstations. Deployment is targeted for completion at the end of Q2 2018-

**No follow up required**

2019. The branch also continues to address the need for storage solutions for science, working with STB to procure Direct Attached Storage (DAS) devices, as well as exploring Cloud storage capacity.

As of April 2018, 30% of AAFC user accounts have migrated to @canada.ca, with the remaining user accounts continuing to have an @agr.gc.ca address. ISB is continuing to maintain the dual e-mail environments, as SSC has committed to completing the migration of the remaining AAFC email accounts. AAFC had requested that this activity resume as soon as possible and SSC has recently confirmed that the migration is planned to start in September 2018, and be completed in approximately 3 weeks. Lastly, a cleanup procedure for inactive email accounts is also in place.

**Next meeting**

Next meeting date to be confirmed and scheduled.