

**HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Tuesday, December 12, 2017**

**COMMITTEE ROOM**

**Youth Retention in the Public Service  
&  
Appointments to Agencies, Boards and Commissions**

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES**

Mr. Ben Jessome (Chairman)  
Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft (Vice-Chairman)  
Mr. Chuck Porter  
Mr. Bill Horne  
Ms. Rafah DiCostanzo  
Hon. Pat Dunn  
Ms. Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin  
Hon. David Wilson  
Ms. Claudia Chender

[Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft was replaced by Mr. Brendan Maguire]  
[Ms. Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin was replaced by Mr. John Lohr]

In Attendance:

Ms. Judy Kavanagh  
Legislative Committee Clerk

Mr. Gordon Hebb  
Chief Legislative Counsel

**WITNESSES**

**Public Service Commission**

Mr. Steven Feindel - Executive Director, Client Service Delivery  
Ms. Kim Aselstine - Managing Director, Client Service Delivery  
Ms. Anne Bedard - Director, Employee Engagement



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2017**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES**

10:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN  
Mr. Ben Jessome

MR. CHUCK PORTER (Chairman): Good morning everyone. Welcome to the Human Resources Committee. We'll get started here with just a couple of quick announcements before we begin. Please make sure all your cellphones are turned to vibrate and/or off.

We'll start with introductions.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. I'm Chuck Porter, I'm filling in this morning as the chairman and Mr. Jessome is going to ask a few questions, I guess.

We'll get started with appointments to the ABCs and Mr. Horne.

MR. BILL HORNE: Mr. Chairman, for the Advisory Board of the Public Archives, I move that the following appointments be approved: Ronald Caplan, member, public at large; Hansel Cook, member, recommended; and N.M. Crossman, member, public at large.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Just for clarification, that was under the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

Under the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, Ms. DiCostanzo.

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Chairman, for the Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Council we have eight people and they are all member, employee reps - I won't repeat all of it - I move that the following appointments be approved: Jerry Aguinaga, David Campbell, Ernie Dalton, Jacqueline Fahey, Lisa Fitzgerald, Lissa Gaudet, Marc-Andre Lavoie, and Trisha MacIsaac.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Mr. Jessome.

MR. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Chairman, through you, for the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission, I move that the appointment of Victoria Harnish as vice-chair and member be approved by this committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

That will be it for the ABCs. Just before I move on, I think we've covered everything else. Mr. David Wilson will join us in a bit. He is delayed this morning, just for the record and for Hansard.

Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I'd just like to make mention - I don't believe it was clarified in our last meeting - with respect to the Progressive Conservative topic on child care associations. I would put forward that we clarify additional witnesses for that meeting. We'd like to suggest that Janet Lynn Huntington, executive director of the Early Years branch and Vicki Elliott-Lopez, executive director of Child Care and Licensing, from the department, be included in that meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. I know we had some discussion at the last meeting, I guess moving forward that we would agree to that topic. Mr. Dunn, do we have agreement? I know you were at that meeting as well.

HON. PAT DUNN: It's the festive season, why not?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll take that as agreement. Thank you, Mr. Jessome, thank you, Mr. Dunn.

Moving on, let's welcome our witnesses this morning. I will call on Steven to introduce the ladies on either side who apparently have never been to committee before - a first for them so it should be fun. Mr. Feindel.

MR. STEVEN FEINDEL: I'm the Executive Director of Client Service Delivery at the Public Service Commission. To my right I have Anne Bedard, who is our Director of Employee Engagement and Innovation. To my left I have Kimberley Aselstine, who is our Managing Director of Client Service Delivery.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Feindel. If you or your staff with you would like to give your presentation that will be fine, and then typically we'll move on with some questions from members around the table.

MR. FEINDEL: Okay, we have just a few opening remarks. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. We're here to talk to you about an exciting topic for us and hopefully to you as well, the retention of youth in the Public Service.

First, we'd like to give you an overview of some of the things we're doing to recruit and retain younger workers in government, and then of course we'll be happy to take questions from there.

Along with many other factors, the One Nova Scotia Report brought into sharp focus our need to do more to support youth employment. To stem the out-migration of youth we, as a province, need to create opportunities that will give young people confidence that they can achieve their career and family aspirations at home.

Labour and Advanced Education has taken the government lead on provincial initiatives and they lead an interdepartmental committee of which the PSC is part, that is helping to achieve some great results. While we're seeing the fastest two years of population growth in Nova Scotia since 1990, our youth population is growing at an even faster rate and a focus on immigration has helped gain more than 4,000 youth in the past two years. The province has also had a positive net interprovincial migration of youth for the past two years in a row now and that's something that hasn't happened in the past 32 years.

As I mentioned, Labour and Advanced Education is leading provincial youth initiatives, along with other departments, agencies, universities, community colleges, and a host of other partners. Our role at the Public Service Commission is to lead efforts within the Public Service and, as government and as one of the largest employers in Nova Scotia, we have an important role in creating opportunities for our younger workers.

Our focus is on revitalizing the Nova Scotia Public Service by hiring and retaining more younger workers and to provide opportunities for younger workers to gain necessary work experience so they can compete for jobs anywhere, including government. So why would a young person want to work in government, you might ask? Well, working for government has changed over the years. Contrary to the stereotype of being a 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday desk job, there are many challenging opportunities in varied positions throughout government.

The Nova Scotia Public Service offers exciting jobs all around the province in a wide range of sectors, from research and communications, business and community development, technology, social work, agriculture, and many other sectors that serve our citizens. There are hundreds of career paths possible in the Nova Scotia Public Service today. For new graduates and young Nova Scotians who have been working away and want to come home to start their careers, now is the time to join the Public Service. Younger workers - and by that, I mean 35 years and under - bring new ideas, enthusiasm, and creativity to their workplaces. That insight and perspective is exactly what we need to build talent and innovation capabilities. As we all know, getting that first job is all-important to keeping young people in our province.

We are seeing a shift happening towards more younger workers in government. Since the Fall of 2013, more than 2,100 Public Service positions have been filled by younger workers. Currently about 18 per cent of government's total workforce is age 35 or under. Since the beginning of this current fiscal year, 47 per cent of all those we've hired in the Public Service have been 35 or younger. That's a total of 616 hires in that age demographic since last Spring; 63 per cent of them still work in government, 13 per cent on a full-time basis, while the rest are gaining valuable experience through casual, seasonal, and relief positions.

These numbers have surpassed our initial targets, thanks to a host of youth-focused efforts under way. They include everything from changing how we do recruitment and selection, providing opportunities for learning, development, creating a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming environment, and fostering innovation and engagement. These are all things that make a workplace appealing to younger workers.

The shift begins with recruitment. In 2015, government rolled out its Experience Through Opportunity program which designates entry-level positions within the civil service, as well as a commitment to recruit younger workers, as at least 5 per cent of its new hires per year over the following five years. We focused on removing as much of the experience requirements as possible for entry-level positions to make more opportunities available to graduates or skilled youth with little experience. Two years later, we're tracking at 47 per cent year to date against the annual 5 per cent target.

Last January the PSC launched a new online recruitment website - Jobs.NovaScotia.ca. To better market our jobs in the Public Service, the site includes a specific section for entry-level positions. Once a new employee is hired, this new website also helps make the onboarding of the new hire much more seamless, something we know is important to offer for younger workers.

Shortly after, we launched the first wave of a new marketing campaign, called “do big things.” The campaign profiled some of the province’s exciting and creative jobs, showcasing careers that break the mould often associated with government employees. As part of this, we’re also amping up our recruitment strategy to reach youth wherever they happen to be - through high schools, job fairs, and on social media as examples.

As I have mentioned before, we’re not solely focused on creating full-time permanent positions within the civil service. Young people today want to gain experience, try things out, and find their best fit. That’s why we have also placed a big focus on hiring youth through summer programs, co-op placements, and internships. These positions help students gain valuable work experience needed to launch their careers. Of course, we in government benefit big time by learning from the creative ideas and enthusiasm students bring to the workplace. Summer student positions attract university, college, and high school students. Over the last two years, we have hired about 200 summer students.

We want to reach youth wherever they are and at various points in their education to make sure they know about opportunities in the Public Service. For example, every year, we host Take Our Kids to Work Day in government. During these events, Grade 9 students have a chance to attend a mini career fair to speak with public servants from across departments and government about the work that they do. This day with our employees’ children lets us show these young minds that a career in government is full of opportunity and a lot of interesting work. We’re also reaching university students through partnerships with post-secondary institutions like Dalhousie, Saint Mary’s, St. F.X., Acadia, Mount Saint Vincent, and now Nova Scotia Community College. We also work with groups such as Immigrant Student Services as well.

It’s one thing to hire younger workers. It’s another entirely to have the right work environment that will keep them interested and engaged. We’re always trying to make it easier for young people to progress in their careers in the Public Service by enhancing opportunities for learning and development. At the Public Service Commission, we take a broad view that includes more than traditional ways of development such as orientation, training, and formal education, to more modern forms like webinars, temporary work assignments, collaboration labs, e-training, and mentorship.

We coordinate special orientations in the Spring and summer for new employees, including interns and co-op and summer students. We offer career development services online and in groups, or individual career coaching with certified career development practitioners. We host an e-learning program focused on generations in the workplace. This

program recognizes the values, perspectives, and diverse strengths each generational group brings to our work environment.

Of course, we have a full learning and development calendar which offers a wide range of formal employee development options such as courses, certificate programs, and leadership development to promote career growth.

Two years ago, we launched a variety of certificate programs designed to fill a gap for individual contributors who wanted to further their development in programs not specifically geared towards leadership. Many of our younger workers are working towards these certificates. Topics include diversity and inclusion development, communication, personal leadership, innovation and business excellence, occupational health and safety, administrative professional program, and manager fundamentals.

We partner with GoverNEXT - government's employee network - to offer programming relevant to all workers, including the career explorer series of workshops for early career employees with 10 or fewer years of experience. It focuses on building careers by helping employees explore their strengths and interests and decide and plan next steps. We have also partnered with the NSGEU on a memorandum of agreement for interns in bargaining unit positions.

Recently, we relaunched the iNSpire mentorship program which was piloted in 2015 and is planned to be available to all employees in the Spring of 2018. A formalized mentorship program is an important way to ensure all employees can access mentorship for their career development, and it responds to a gap identified in our How's Work Going survey around the need for greater professional and career growth, empowerment and innovation, and workplace tools and supports.

[10:15 a.m.]

The last important area I wanted to touch on today is the work environment. Having a workplace that is diverse, inclusive, welcoming, and engaging is important to all employees, perhaps even more so for younger workers - they expect it. We have several corporate strategies that support this including Raising the Bar, our diversity inclusion strategy, and Pride in the Public Service, our engagement strategy. We believe the Public Service should reflect the diverse community it serves across Nova Scotia. We seek diversity of people and of thought, and we're striving to apply a diversity lens to everything we do.

There are dozens of great initiatives that have been implemented from these strategies. Government has a Diversity Round Table, several committees, and six employee-led networks focused on diversity and inclusion. These networks are: the African Canadian Women in the Public Service, the Nova Scotia Disability Employee Network, the First Nations/L'Nu Network, the LGBTI Network, the immigrant/newcomer network and, as I referenced earlier, GoverNEXT.



We at the PSC are proud of our focus on diversity inclusion and our ongoing efforts. We know it's an important factor for younger workers too. They want to be proud of where they work, and diversity certainly plays a part. We're also working to create a more modern work environment with the launch of FlexNS. Work flexibility is a concept that is growing in popularity in workplaces worldwide and is also a strong attraction for younger generations who value work-life balance and a more collaborative work environment.

FlexNS is about creating the working conditions that allow people to leverage technology and work collaboratively and flexibly to do their best work. It's all about aligning our physical space to our work needs; redesigning when, where, and how the work is completed; and focusing on the outcome of ensuring quality services to our citizens. We believe it can improve both client service and the health and well-being of all our employees. It will help us recruit and retain more younger workers over the long term.

In closing, I want to say again that we at the Public Service know we have a critical role to play to help prepare the workforce of the future. We're making progress and we believe the best and the brightest can continue to find government a challenging and rewarding place to work. As government, we need to keep walking the talk and leading by example if we want our younger worker statistics to keep rising and retain those bright minds. We're keeping our youth-focus lens top of mind all the time and building it into everyday opportunities so it will become part of our culture.

On that note, we'd be happy to take your questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Feindel, for that presentation. We'll start with Mr. Dunn.

MR. DUNN: Thank you for your presentation. Perhaps the first question is - well anything that we can do to engage our youth, keeping them here, and bringing them back is certainly a plus, it's wonderful.

Putting aside the summer employment, the types of jobs that we are hoping that might happen in the province, are they all permanent? Are some of them permanent and some of them temporary types of jobs?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Feindel, just for the purpose of Hansard, I'll recognize you and then you can please give your answer. If it were up to me, it would be very casual. Carry on.

MR. FEINDEL: Are you talking about the total number of positions that are offered by government? There's a range of positions from term, casual, relief, and permanent positions that would be part of the mix for younger workers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dunn, I should have just clarified, we'll go one question, one supplementary, and then we'll move on so that everyone has an opportunity to get in as many questions as we can today. Mr. Dunn, with your supplementary.

MR. DUNN: My understanding is that 5 per cent of that youth employment is dealing with no experience - workers coming with no experience at all into the workforce. I just assume that there will be mentors for them, wherever that might be in the employment range.

MR. FEINDEL: Yes, the objective was set for 5 per cent of our hires to be younger workers, in that age 35 or under category. We provide a range of supports for them, from orientation as they arrive in the government, as well as mentorship and many other programs that we provide in our employee engagement side of things. Learning and development is important, so even if they're with us a short time, there are opportunities for training and development. Give them the maximum experience, regardless of whether the job is tracking towards permanency, they're getting experience not only for other jobs that they might want outside of government but other positions that may come up over time within government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I'd just like to say I certainly appreciate the consciousness to hire young people and bring and retain more young people to the Public Service. The cross-departmental effort is evidently intentional and I certainly appreciate the work that you folks are doing and definitely appreciate some of the numbers that you've mentioned here today about the successes that are beginning to take place. I think we're certainly all on board to see those numbers continue to sustain and increase. I just wanted to make sure I said that.

Pertaining specifically to the program, Experience Through Opportunity - I guess to set aside entry-level positions - how are you working with hiring managers to ensure that those positions are, as I believe, intended to target young people?

MR. FEINDEL: There's a very active effort working with the departments and their managers, making sure that we are reducing some of the barriers that younger workers might experience coming into government with regard to applying for jobs, going for interviews and that kind of thing. It has been very much a proactive effort to reduce those artificial barriers, I'll say, that sometimes got introduced into job postings.

Sometimes people would say, well, I need five years' experience. Those really weren't a job requirement. Working with departments and managers across government,

our team at the PSC has been working over the last couple of years and we continue that work to make sure that all opportunities that are possible for young workers to apply for are there.

MR. JESSOME: Along those lines, is there kind of a recipe for a young person to enter the Public Service? Is there a trend that if an individual took career path X they are more likely to end up in a role within the Public Service - I guess I'll take it a step further - and not just a temporary position?

MR. FEINDEL: There's such a wide range of job opportunities in the Public Service that I think while there are some topical areas like technology and engineering, there are opportunities for a wide range of potential employees and, in particular, younger workers who have a range of educational backgrounds to bring to the table.

Having said that, as I say, the opportunities around technology and some of the trending sectors are certainly there and prevalent, but we have a wide range of needs across all the departments for a wide range of skills and knowledge.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Lohr.

MR. JOHN LOHR: I certainly do appreciate the effort to hire more young people. I guess I'm interested in your statistics, and maybe I was not listening carefully but I think I heard you say that you had hired 616 people less than 35 years of age in the last two years.

I have two different sets of interest. I wonder, how many in total did you hire in the last two years? Does that represent 10 per cent of the total of government hires, or 50 per cent? I have no idea. That would be my first question.

MR. FEINDEL: That 616 has been since last April of this current fiscal year. It's roughly about half, so those 616 represent 47 per cent of the hires that we've done across government.

MR. LOHR: The other question - I know some of these, I presume, are provincial park positions during the summer and things like that. Of that 616, what would have been typically those types of summer jobs and what do you see as permanent positions out of those 616?

MR. FEINDEL: I don't have the specific breakdown but I can tell you that 13 per cent of those were permanent positions in a range of departments, so there certainly would be a mix of different types of opportunities - the parks jobs that you mentioned. But there's a wide range for summer employment internships which quite often involve working in the policy areas of departments when we have folks who are doing their Masters in Public Administration, for example.

It is a range, but the opportunity to perhaps get that initial position in government is also part of the mix there. While the initial jobs may not always be permanent, there are positions that allow them to get that experience that helps them with government, or in other positions they might seek outside of government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Chender.

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Lohr beat me to the punch there, I was going to ask a similar question. It's a bit dispiriting to sort of note that that trend of maybe 77 per cent being temporary or insecure job positions for folks under 35 mirrors a lot of what we see in the private sector. I know in your presentation, you took the glass-is-half-full approach of people wanting to gain experience. But we also know that there's another side of that, which is job insecurity and a difficult time for young folks to find a foothold.

You mentioned in your presentation something about jobs that are tracking towards permanency. I wonder, is there a system whereby those jobs track towards permanency? I know there's experience, like someone gets a little bit of experience, but do you have a system inside the Public Service where when somebody does get one of those temporary or insecure jobs, they then have a better opportunity to move into a full-time position?

MR. FEINDEL: I might ask my colleague, Kim Aselstine, to respond to that one.

MS. KIM ASELSTINE: I am a member of the interdepartmental group that is working with LAE that Mr. Feindel mentioned earlier. We are now formally gathering all the different programs - you mentioned a system - but the various programs that different departments are using.

For example, Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal hires engineers. They have a program whereby they go into the engineering schools and hire engineers of various disciplines, initially for summer student employment, and they rotate them through the various types of engineering roles that they have. While I don't have specific statistics on that, my understanding is that it's a very successful program, and with that exposure, very often they're able to hire.

Anecdotally I will say that in kind of the vein of walking the talk - on my own team, part of my team is responsible for recruitment and selection for government. We hired a younger worker straight out of school, as an associate HR business partner on a recruitment team. She was initially hired into a one-year term position, which was extended, and then she was offered a permanent position. While that wasn't necessarily set out at the very beginning, there was an opportunity for that to happen. I think it's fair to say that that's happening in other departments as well. I'm not sure if that answers your question.

MS. CHENDER: I guess it partially answers my question. Maybe I'll follow up with - I think you mentioned something about the interns had been connecting with the NSGEU around bargaining. What I'm trying to get at here is job security for young people. We know that's a huge issue, we hope that's an issue that the Public Service could take a leading role in, but I'm sort of not convinced by the statistics that we're hearing around job security that that's the case. Maybe you could speak a little bit to that.

[10:30 a.m.]

MR. FEINDEL: I think the best way to articulate an answer to that would be to provide an example where we are working with the NSGEU more collaboratively, and there's some further work that's planned there. The majority of our employee base is actually NSGEU, so we do follow a collective agreement. But we have had discussions and have been successful in establishing getting the younger workers with perhaps limited or less experience into positions. Then they are eligible to apply as internal candidates for other positions, whether they be term positions or permanent positions.

I don't know that we're unlike other organizations out there. I think we are trying to provide that leadership role so that at the very least, as I say, the younger workers that we bring in do gain the experience. But it is more than that. We have an opportunity for them to apply for other positions once they're in some of these roles. That does give them an opportunity to look for permanent opportunities as they open up over time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before I go to Mr. Horne, just so the committee is clear, I'm not going caucus by caucus. If you have a question, please indicate that you wish to ask it. I will add you to the list, and we will go in the order that I form. Mr. Horne.

MR. HORNE: First of all, I would just like to say it's great to see such diverse programs being offered for youth. I think it's important that we try to retain youth. Obviously, what has been happening out West is that not as many young people are - either they're coming back or they're not going out there and staying in the community.

I think one of these programs is FlexNS. I would just like you to go into a little more detail on how that works and how it will help youth retention.

MR. FEINDEL: I'll ask Anne Bedard, who's our resident expert on the Flex program to answer that question for you.

MS. ANNE BEDARD: FlexNS is a program that started about two years ago, in 2015. Working collaboratively with departments across government, we also engaged with other jurisdictions to determine what they were doing to create a work environment that would allow more flexibility while sustaining or improving citizen service, because that's always at the forefront.

At the moment, FlexNS is a partnership of three departments: the Public Service Commission; Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, through its facilities management group; and Information, Communications and Technology Services - ICTS - of ISD. Working collaboratively with those three departments, our team will meet with either an entire department or work units within a department that is really interested in modernizing its workplace from the perspective of making sure that they're taking full advantage of the technology and that their work is digitized as much as possible, enabling people to work in different locations and potentially in a smaller workspace than some of us have been used to over our careers and with fewer walls, which can encourage greater collaboration. It's really reimagining where, when, and how people work.

We have several locations around the province, buildings the province owns - one in Kentville and another one in Truro - which have office space available, and any provincial government employee can book that office space. With a laptop computer, if they live in Truro, they may be able to work out of the Truro location either one day a week or on a more ad hoc basis if that space is available.

I think it's meeting the needs of our younger workforce, which is looking for more flexibility. It's encouraging our managers to manage differently, always keeping in mind citizen service.

MR. HORNE: Is there any concrete evidence that this is working well with the young people, and maybe older workers too?

MS. BEDARD: We are very committed to evaluating the benefits of this program. Within six different departments, working with approximately 16 different workgroups, we do a baseline evaluation before we begin working with the department. Once the department begins to work differently, people may be working from home one day a week, they may be working from a space in Truro one day a week. Six months in, we do a mid-term evaluation and we do a 12-month evaluation.

We have one workgroup out of Internal Services that has completed its first 12 months in the summer of 2017 and I can tell you that we were seeing impacts at all age groups of people feeling they were communicating better as a team, that their client service was either being sustained or improved and on a personal level, they were able to reduce their commuting costs so they were seeing significant benefits.

We will continue to measure. We will be doing a broader evaluation next year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wilson.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Thank you for your presentation. It's no secret that over the last couple of years there has been quite a bit of tension between the unions that represent workers and the Public Service Commission and the government, especially when we see bills like Bill No. 148. In your opinion, has it been a challenge to get to a

point where you're seeing positive results in the relationship with unionized workers - the majority of them are unionized - with the atmosphere and that tension that has been going on for a number of years? Has it been difficult to succeed in some of the program implementation that you've brought forward over the last couple of years with that tension that has been boiling over at times, over the last four years at least?

MR. FEINDEL: As you point out, there are some challenging things going on around us. The folks who are working day-to-day with our employees and our departments are very much working in a collaborative way. I would point to some of the results that we've seen recently from the How's Work Going survey where one of our departments - Service Nova Scotia - has had some very significant increases in engagement there. As you may know, they've certainly had their share of challenges.

Communication and having programs like we're talking about here this morning - working on diversity inclusion, having flexible work options and communication - is by far and beyond the thing that I think keeps things moving forward. On the ground, my observation would be that we continue to work collaboratively with our union partners. I know there's more discussion happening around what more we can do, particularly with younger workers. I think that remains kind of a constant in spite of things that might be going on around us.

MR. DAVID WILSON: That relationship is extremely important when you look at recruitment and retention of employees. You see it in other sectors when it has a huge effect on the ability of that organization to seek out and find experienced people. I know we're talking about trying to open the door for non-experienced people, but for the most part to have a successful service you need those experienced people.

Is there a specific area within government that you find challenging, or services on that recruitment and retention? Let's say the limelight right now - a lot of spotlight and attention around doctor shortage in the province, for example, but within the Public Service Commission, is there a specific area where there's a challenge in recruiting qualified people for the job? We don't hear much about that so I'm just wondering if you can maybe let us know if there are specific areas that you're putting a little more attention on because of the challenge of maybe recruiting experienced workers to fill the positions.

MR. FEINDEL: I think one of the reasons we created - we now have a recruitment and selection group within the Public Service Commission which focuses on supporting our departments and managers but also in the reach-out programs that we have to our partner organizations - like universities, et cetera - it's a very combined, concentrated effort that it takes for many positions.

Perhaps for computer technology, a little bit more or less needs to be done there, but an example that comes to mind that we see from time to time is recruiting veterinarians in the rural areas.

By having a recruitment and selection group, they can provide a little bit of specialized service to our various departments. We find that we can have some consultation up front, knowing that there may be a challenge in trying to hire for a particular position and getting the right person in it, whether it be a younger worker or not, and making sure there's a collaborative effort with that department to identify different ways we can recruit - and not just posting on the government website, but perhaps reaching out to professional organizations, working with the local communities in the work centres through the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

Those are some of the things we're starting to do to address some of those harder-to-fill positions, and I think there's a lot more that can be done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I want to go along the lines of, we want to foster as many opportunities for exposure within the Public Service and for hiring managers and folks that new entrants would report to. We want to foster as much exposure as we can to instill more confidence in hiring young people. I guess I would anecdotally say that the more experience people have with one another, the more confidence they can have in relying on, in this case, a younger employee to do a credible, capable job.

Along those lines, I just wanted to clarify - we talked about co-op and summer employment. Do you have a specific number or a succession rate of individuals? Ms. Aselstine cited an example at TIR, but do you have a broader understanding of that succession rate or consistency rate of part-time summer employment transitioning to full-time employment in the Public Service?

MR. FEINDEL: We're working constantly with departments through their business plans and supporting resource plans to look at the departmental requirements they have to support the services they provide to citizens. We're constantly working throughout the year - in particular during the business planning process - to make sure that departments have identified areas of the workforce that might need further development or areas where they may need to put some succession plans in place, whether it be from retirement or retention challenges they're having or whatever the case might be.

That's where things like our How's Work Going survey - where we're measuring some of these things within the workforce. We also provide analytics to departments to give them an idea what the retirement trends are, what the retention trends are, so they can have plans accordingly around that.



With regard to, I guess, the confidence factor in employees - younger employees in particular - we're working with managers to support them in how they can orient and bring the younger workers into the workplace successfully. We know that the experience these younger workers have - whether it be from a co-op internship or summer program or their first job - is extremely critical to make sure they get off on a good footing. The managers sometimes need support with that and how they can put programs in place to support their learning and development, because typically what I would observe is that younger workers can catch on pretty quick.

It's really how you support them in the early days and support those managers and those supervisors that are providing support for them in the work tasks that they're trying to do, but also in the other kinds of supports that they would need in the workplace. That's why our mentorship programs are so important and the learning and development pieces that I've mentioned where we do career assessments and support any of the younger workers, or the other workers that we have in the workplace, with career counselling practitioners. I think that the confidence piece will come over time. Younger workers are as capable to learn quickly and get those jobs done.

[10:45 a.m.]

We certainly have to be sensitive to the fact that some of our workers who are leaving the workplace are taking knowledge and information with them that's critical to running a department's business. That's why the proactive planning piece that I referenced earlier is so necessary and so critical to make sure that that knowledge gets to a younger worker or others in the workplace before they retire or leave.

MR. JESSOME: Thank you for that broader description. I would just humbly suggest that it's important to track the numbers of youth who are transitioning from part-time summer employment to full-time employment, with respect to us making decisions to reinforce certain programs or do away with other ones that may not be as effective in accomplishing that sustained quality employment for the next generation.

Along that line, could you speak to the present part-time summer employments that are on the horizon within the department? Are those positions consistent with the number that would have been allotted from previous years? Is there an inclination to expand or sustain that number?

MR. FEINDEL: In reference to one of your comments about it being important to measure, you're absolutely right. We are putting more and more measures in place so that we understand when we bring younger workers or any worker into the workplace - whether it's through exit interviews if they happen to leave or our How's Work Going surveys - we can identify the engagement level of employees who are in our workforce. It is important to measure, and we are putting more of those things in place.

I mentioned analytics before. We do have certain numbers that we can generate. I referenced that 63 per cent of the younger worker hires that we have made are staying with government. That's an important piece for us to keep an eye on. But you're absolutely correct that it goes deeper than that, and we need to understand what those dynamics are in terms of them staying with the workforce and continuing to get experience.

The other avenue there is that continuous learning piece where we need to make sure that we support them with the career development aspect. Those all kind of tie together in terms of making sure that we retain as many as possible who come in and provide them opportunities to grow as citizens of the province no matter where they're working.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Lohr.

MR. LOHR: I would like to go back to the numbers. I think you said, Mr. Feindel, that 616 represented 47 per cent of the hires since April, so I'm assuming that's about 1,300 people approximately. I'm wondering, what is the total size of the civil service in Nova Scotia? Would you say that those 1,300 hires represent a growth in that number? If it is a growth in the total number, which departments are growing? It's a lot of questions, I'm sorry.

MR. FEINDEL: I think it's fair to say the government is not growing dramatically. The positions that we are offering are within government's range of complement of positions and head counts. The numbers that we have shared with you this morning are really just a portion of the overall head count.

As of the end of September, we have approximately 11,600 employees from a head-count perspective in government. About 75 per cent of those are unionized, as I was alluding to earlier, and 87 per cent of those are permanent positions, with about 13 per cent being non-permanent.

We do have a fair amount of information. Our attrition rate is around 2 per cent so we're actually hiring and replacing in excess from whether it's retirements or people choosing to pursue other careers outside government.

MR. LOHR: I suspected that the number was simply attrition and you were hiring to replace.

I guess my second follow-up question is more about demographics in general. Are you looking at the next five years, the next 10 years? I know we're kind of all in this sort of tail end of the baby boom - have you looked at the demands on replacing workers, with the demographics in your group of 11,000 people? Do you know if there will be a much bigger demand coming within the next five years for new hires? Are you studying that?

MR. FEINDEL: Absolutely. We know younger workers are a critical aspect to looking at some of the challenges we have ahead. We have more workers over age 60 than we do under age 30, so we know that's a challenging area. We're not that different in government from other organizations - whether it's the baby boom or post-baby boom, we do have a number of workers. Workers are staying longer in the workplace so it's a balance of doing succession planning with the various departments that may have different profiles of where the demographics for their workforce are. We are very much intently looking at actively working with the departments on those topics.

One of the things we can't predict exactly is how many people are going to retire, for example, in a year or how many people are going to leave government. What we can look at is the trends, though, and we do that so we can give some ideas to the departments of what they might expect.

That's where employee engagement comes in, if we're losing employees because they're not happy in the workplace or they're looking for more challenges. We know that's a piece for younger workers, they want to be challenged in the workplace. Having all those factors is part of our discussions with the departments and their workforce planning is very important and we do spend a lot of time looking at the numbers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Chender.

MS. CHENDER: We've talked about wanting and needing young people to stay in Nova Scotia, but I also think it's important to look at making sure that those young folks who are in Nova Scotia participate in the labour force.

You mentioned the kind of demographics, that there are more youth entering the labour force, but we know there are even more youth in general who identify in racialized communities in Nova Scotia. There are more First Nations youth in that demographic who are coming up and also with African Nova Scotians. I guess I want to talk about that area a little bit.

I know you have a diversity hiring panel so I'd love to hear a little bit about that, I guess. You mentioned some partnerships at the beginning so I'd would love some more specifics on what the Public Service is doing to make sure we work with making sure that folks in those communities have access to gainful employment and are supported in the ways they need to be to move forward.

MR. FEINDEL: I'll ask Anne Bedard to step in on that.

MS. BEDARD: I think we have a robust approach to supporting diversity in our workplace. We have the Raising the Bar strategy which came into being in 2014. It is a multi-pronged approach to ensure that ultimately the population of our employee group would reflect the population breakdown in Nova Scotia. We are working towards that.

Mr. Feindel has mentioned a number of employee networks that exist. Several of those are specifically networks that support the work and encourage collaboration within some of the groups themselves. We have a program called Pathways to Advancement which is specifically only for employees in one of the designated groups. The designated groups include African Nova Scotians, other visibly racial minorities, Aboriginal Nova Scotians, and persons with disabilities.

The Pathways to Advancement program, I believe we have approximately 20 participants in it this year. Every year we engage a new cohort of people who work with their managers and identify in their own career development plan that they would like to move from the position they're in to a more senior position, or future senior positions within government. We have a very targeted development and mentoring program with that group and we graduated a group last year and this year, as I mentioned. That group was a little smaller in our initial year and this year we have approximately 20 participants in that group.

We have a Diversity Round Table which includes representatives from all levels across government. It includes members of the employee networks that Mr. Feindel mentioned, as well as union representatives, to address a number of issues on diversity. Biennially, every two years, we hold a diversity conference. The next conference will be in the Fall of 2018.

Our approach to training and development includes what's called a competency framework which simply means that we define a full range of competencies that employees need in order to be successful in the workplace, things like impact and influence and communicating effectively. We recently introduced a diversity and cultural competency - I think I have a word wrong there - and we provide cultural competency training as well for managers and employees. For the LGBTI community, we offer a series of training programs from Positive Spaces, which encourages people to understand gender differences better and those communities, as well as Becoming an Ally.

We recently introduced this year transgender guidelines in the workplace and are very proud that we are working with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to ensure we have gender-neutral washrooms available around the province and that those are well identified. That's just a sampling of some of the things we're doing.

MS. CHENDER: Thank you for that information. I have lots of follow-up questions but I'll try to pick one. I guess what I'd love to know is what, if any, of all those things you mentioned are specifically targeted towards youth entering the workplace? As part of that, I guess I'm wondering whether the department has considered things like a blind hiring process, which we know in other contexts have worked really well. If you could speak to those, that would be great.

MS. BEDARD: I can't speak to the blind hiring process. My colleague may be able to answer that question.

I think all our programs are inclusive so we do have our youth hiring programs that Mr. Feindel and Ms. Aselstine have already referred to this morning. I think our other programs are attractive to younger workers. I've certainly seen that anecdotally by the profile of people I've seen participating in them. They are inclusive of all employees, regardless of age, all of those diversity ones.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Did somebody else want to comment? Ms. Aselstine.

MS. ASELSTINE: With respect to your question about the blind hiring process, it's still early stages but that is something that my team and I and others have discussed.

I think you mentioned the panel, you referred to a diversity panel. We have trained people who have self-identified as a member of one of the designated groups who will make themselves available to sit on a hiring panel so that if we are interviewing people of different communities, that there will be some representation there. We also help our hiring managers review the interview questions they're asking and try to ensure that they are as fair to all those communities as possible in that we don't have any unintended biases in the questions we're asking.

What I'd really like to say is that with our new recruitment and selection team, which has been in place for a couple of years now - it's centralized, it used to be decentralized and sat with our client groups - we are placing a tremendous focus on proactively and actively recruiting in a new way so that we are very actively engaging in networks and partnerships with different communities, universities, and high schools. Instead of hoping that people will want to apply for government positions, we're getting out there and promoting ourselves. There's much more use of social media. There was an initial campaign when our new technology was first launched. That recruitment campaign is now becoming a strategy.

[11:00 a.m.]

We are not taking anything for granted. The diversity lens and the youth lens apply to everything we do. I know a comment that Mr. Feindel made earlier was something I have found myself saying - it is sincerely part of how we think and how we do our everyday work. There's a tremendous focus placed on youth.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. DiCostanzo.

MS. DICOSTANZO: I have a couple of questions about your summer programs. I have two daughters. One is finishing pharmacy soon, and when she entered into pharmacy, there were plenty of jobs, and now there are no jobs or very few. It has changed within the four years. She would love to stay here. New Brunswick has a lot of opportunities, and other provinces have opportunities, but she's really trying.

I'm listening to you, and I'm thinking, she has never mentioned working for the province, or her friends when they're sitting and talking, in that field. When do the summer jobs come out? When do you advertise them?

It would be a wonderful opportunity for them to get in. Professionals don't think of going to the province. Where do they look for these jobs, even if it's summer, just to see if that would be something that they would be interested in? How many students do you take? What kind of jobs will they enter? If you can just elaborate on those, I'll go home and tell her about that.

MR. FEINDEL: To my knowledge, I don't believe we have any pharmacy jobs in the Public Service, but certainly our partners in the health community would. We can reach out to students and younger workers through our outreach initiatives with universities, but they can also reach out to us. Our teams would always be willing to try to point those younger workers or others in the right direction, in terms of where the opportunities lie.

To speak to your questions about when these things happen - in the last couple of years, we have done a more coordinated approach to the summer student and co-op hiring, and that has been very successful because it gathers a whole bunch of resources around supporting our managers and that. It also brings its own visibility in social media to awareness that government has these opportunities. We plan to stay on that course.

Typically, it will probably be a February time frame when we would be looking to have the departments ready. The departments are the ones that really define the opportunities with the available positions and financial budgets that they have available. We also have some corporate initiatives around making sure that there are positions available that we have to offer for summer students because it's important that this is a way to get experience and perhaps try a different career than they might have actually had training for.

I can't say an exact date because we haven't set anything yet, but typically it would be in that time frame of February or so because we know that in order to attract summer employees, we need to make sure that they know about us and that we're part of their thinking as they start to look. Whether it's the end of their graduate status at a university or whether they're in high school, that is the time of year. We're starting to gather that together with our departments now.

As to the number of positions, it's hard to say until we get closer to the mark. Typically, that number doesn't present itself until we get further down working with the departments on that.

MS. DICOSTANZO: Some years you have a lot more than others? It's not a set number of positions that you're trying to get every summer? It depends on the needs of the departments. Is that what I understand?

MR. FEINDEL: Yes, it does. However, I would say that the attention and focus that all of us are trying to present, on maximizing the opportunities to have government show leadership in this area as well as change the culture around accepting and presenting opportunities for younger workers, is gaining momentum. While we don't have any set targets in mind, other than the 5 per cent of hires shall be - in terms of postings, we're very actively working with departments to make sure they are encouraged and using all available resources to have this as one of our primary initiatives every year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dunn.

MR. DUNN: Something that Ms. Bedard mentioned earlier piqued my interest in dealing with some employees being given the opportunity to work a day at home, work in a satellite office or whatever. We certainly have young people who like to work near home. I mean you could be in Bridgewater, Windsor, Kentville, Brookfield, Truro, or wherever. Have there been any discussions or will there be going forward with the possibility of employees having the opportunity to work from home or a satellite office a couple days a week, going forward over the next five to 10 years?

MS. BEDARD: Yes, I think there are and perhaps I could have explained the program a little better. We have almost 1,000 employees now engaged in the program. We define positions as either being anchored, which means they can typically only be conducted from the place of business - if you think of a receptionist or an employee who might work in a Service Nova Scotia Access Centre, those positions must be performed in those locations - however, probably the majority, and I don't have a number, of the positions within the civil service do lend themselves to working off-site, whether that be from home or a satellite office, one to two days or longer per week.

We actually define positions based on the department needs and the department does that. When I say "we," forgive me, that's a bit of an HR term - the department defines whether a position may be available to be internally mobile, which means it works in the place of business at least half of the week, or externally mobile, which means it works outside of the place of business more than half of the week.

We already have some positions that are externally mobile. We know that some of our inspectors with the Department of Environment or some of the positions in the Department of Natural Resources don't have a fixed office. They may be in an office for an hour at the beginning of the week to organize themselves and prepare their work plan for the week and then their work is conducted around the province.

Some of that is already in place and we are beginning to see this program being implemented at the request of each department. As we're approached by either a deputy minister or an executive director within that department, we work with the senior leadership team and our department partners at Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and ICTS to ensure that the department has a good, solid plan going forward for both how they're going to plan the work and how they're going to ensure the work is executed effectively, regardless of where the employee may be conducting it. We make sure that all of the occupational health and safety requirements are met, as well as the employee has proper first aid training.

MR. DUNN: Just a follow-up to anyone. I'll try to give you perhaps a scenario - from my experience, this has been the trend in various levels of employment. You may have a young employee, somewhere between the age of 22 and maybe 35 and they're well-educated, trained, very capable, and they are wishing to get into a management level. However, it has been my experience that the people making the decisions are much older than this 33-year-old; therefore, they feel they don't exactly have the confidence or they're a little skittish as far as hiring someone for a management-level job, at the young age of 33, 34, 32, or whatever.

I guess my question is, do you think this trend will just continue or will there be opportunities for some of our youth who are very capable and educated, to obtain some of these management jobs going forward?

MR. FEINDEL: That's exactly why we've instituted a lot of the supports for younger workers, in particular, to be able to get training and support, whether it's leadership or management. We have a management track and certificate that's available to younger workers and others.

We know that some of those - I'm going to call them stigmas, but certainly the younger worker and how they're received in the workplace is critical to their engagement but also to the overall success that we have. Having younger workers or members of our management teams that are younger is very critical because that's where the new ideas - I mean, government is very much trying to be more horizontal, breaking down silos with departments and being more innovative. We need new ideas and thinking to be brought to the table. The younger workers are very important to that.



We do have programs that support them, whether it be through our learning management side - one example is, Service Nova Scotia has instituted a management trainee program which is really targeted right at the very thing that you're referencing here today, so we make sure the departments have identified those up-and-comers that are in the organization, making sure that they have visibility but also have the chance to cut their teeth on other things, other than just individual contributor jobs. Whether that's temporary opportunities to act for a manager, training to make sure that they're gaining the skills for that, there's a real mix of different types of programs that we have available to all our employees that allow them to progress, because we know for younger workers in particular, progression within the organization is absolutely critical to them.

We don't want them leaving and going to the next employer. We want to make sure they are happy with the way the work environment functions and make sure they see opportunities in the organization. That's why we have a number of these programs, making sure that that's present.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Maguire.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: How do you keep track of productivity of individuals who will be working from home, and what kind of impact do you think this will have on front-line services and service delivery in general? Have you looked at, has this had a positive or negative impact? Have you worked with other industries to see if they have done anything similar? What's the philosophy behind all this?

MR. FEINDEL: Perhaps I'll start and then I'd ask Ms. Bedard to step in as well, if she has any supplemental information. The anecdotal evidence right now is that our employees are as or more productive in some of these flexible work arrangements. In fact, we know there's a direct linkage between having flexible work arrangements - whether that be you work from home or a slight adjustment to your working hours - to the engagement of the employee. We know engaged employees are more productive, the research bears that out very strongly.

We do work with our fellow jurisdictions around a lot of this work, in terms of the measurements that we're doing, the programs. I think Nova Scotia is one of the leaders around the flexible work option and certainly productivity was one of the areas that we had to work with the departments and managers about understanding - how do I manage someone I can't see? That's something that we're working with managers on because we know that if the employee is getting flexibility and something that adds to their work-life balance through the arrangement, they are more productive and they are more engaged. We just have to make sure that we put the management practices around that to allow that to flourish, and obviously manage to make sure that it is productive.

Not all positions, as we've mentioned already, would reflect the ability to kind of be working away from the workplace, but where that's possible, I think we've seen positive results. I would ask Ms. Bedard to add anything.

MS. BEDARD: I mentioned the plan that we work with departments and business units on when they're entering into a FlexNS arrangement. Part of that plan includes training for the managers on how to manage a distributed workforce. A big part of that is ensuring that they take an effective approach to performance planning or work planning, so that they're managing work towards outcomes, as opposed to activity, if I may.

[11:15 a.m.]

There can be challenges around managing people that you can't see, and I in no way mean to be flippant, but there are also challenges in managing people you can see. Without a robust performance plan, regardless of where or how someone works, it can be challenging to know if you don't have outcomes that you're looking for. As Mr. Feindel mentioned, the work groups and departments that are engaged in flex now are reporting sustained or improved citizen service and outcomes.

MR. MAGUIRE: I think one of the bonuses is that they can work from home in their jogging pants and sweaters. (Laughter)

How do you determine who can work from home and who can choose flex hours? This isn't going to be me going into Service Nova Scotia and there being two employees there, obviously. How are you going to determine who can do what so that it doesn't have an impact on the front-line services and the delivery of services?

MS. BEDARD: We work with the department. There's a fair bit of groundwork the department does before it turns flex on, if you like. Typically we see ourselves working for four to six months with the department to get them ready for that change. We start with the leadership - so we start with the executive table, and then we work with directors and managers to ensure that there's a good degree of comfort and understanding of how this might impact, what it might look like in a particular department. It looks different probably in each of the 16 groups that I mentioned earlier. That is up to the department. That is not something the Public Service Commission determines.

We encourage people to address performance issues throughout. That has been a mainstay of our work in the Public Service for a long time. The employee has to be able to determine how this will impact their work, if they're going to work off-site. We ask the employee to do some self-reflection: does my job lend itself to being internally mobile? What do I need? Who do I need to work with? The manager and the employee work together to make sure that that will happen.

Each department needs to ensure that they have enough people staffing the phones, staffing the front lines at any point in time so that either client service - if they're serving another department within government - or citizen service doesn't suffer.

MR. MAGUIRE: Have you looked at a job share program?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order, please. Mr. Maguire, perhaps a math lesson will follow after committee. We'll move on to Mr. Horne for a question. Before we do that, we'll shift to one question per member without a follow-up in an effort to get some more in. It is already near 20 minutes past the hour of 11:00 a.m. We'll come back to you, Mr. Maguire, if you would like to be added to the list for another question. Mr. Horne.

MR. HORNE: I know you have a lot of flexibility in the types of programs you're offering to hire young people and employees in general in the Public Service. I'm just wondering what programs are being thought of or brought up to help immigrants and international students stay in Nova Scotia after they graduate from universities.

MR. FEINDEL: I'll ask Ms. Aselstine to take that.

MS. ASELTINE: What types of programs, you asked - just to clarify - do we have to keep youth within the province? I can only speak specifically to the Public Service, but I do know that my colleagues in other departments, including Labour and Advanced Education, are doing a lot of work focused on keeping youth in the province with other employers. As a Public Service employer, we're in the process of exploring some different types of programming. Definitely the partnerships and relationships that we're building with high schools, universities, and the community college, in addition to other associations within the province, will be something that would be helpful, I believe.

I'm feeling like I'm not answering your question, though, so I want to make sure I'm hearing it clearly.

MR. HORNE: Maybe I'll say it over again, or similarly anyway. I think our government has been trying to encourage graduate students and international students, people outside of Nova Scotia in either Canada or internationally, to stay in Nova Scotia after they graduate.

MR. FEINDEL: As I mentioned in my opening remarks, we're working with groups like immigrant student services, the universities. The importance of our diversity and inclusion strategy and how it works throughout the workforce is extremely critical to younger workers particularly in the immigrant community, where we are actively making sure they're welcomed in the workplace but also that barriers within our hiring process are removed, whether it be language related, culture related, whatever. We're working very strongly on our recruiting process to make sure that all groups - diversity, visible minorities, immigrants - are all on a level playing field. We're looking for the best candidates based on merit, and really the other pieces should not come into play.

We're working on processes and recruitment strategies that reduce those barriers, communicate to diversity groups - including immigrants - how they can work to get positions in government, support them in every way possible throughout the process, from the start all the way through.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I think class will be full at the end. Mr. Wilson.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I know the Public Service Commission in the Spring conducted a survey of all government employees. These are the hard-working people who develop and implement the programs that so many Nova Scotians depend on, yet only 46 per cent of those employees said they felt valued by the Government of Nova Scotia. On the flip side, about 54 per cent probably feel undervalued by the government.

I would assume - and nobody should assume but I would assume - that those percentages are not acceptable. I guess a twofold question, what are you doing to change that? More importantly, have you seen an effort from the elected government to change that relationship - that so many of the employees feel undervalued? There are over 11,000 Public Service employees so there are a lot of people who are feeling undervalued. I wonder if you could make a comment on that.

MR. FEINDEL: I'll ask Ms. Bedard to speak on that one.

MS. BEDARD: Yes, we did conduct our How's Work Going survey again this year, which we've been conducting a number of years. I think that not unlike other jurisdictions across Canada, that question, which is a common question that we share with federal, provincial, and territorial jurisdictions, is lower than any of us would like to see.

We do what we can as an employer to involve people in helping us understand better what some of those things might be, so we're working on a number of fronts. We've been meeting with departments. We actually have about 14 departments and agencies, I think, that do report that overall employees are feeling engaged. But that one particular score is lower than we would like.

I think that we involve employees in action planning. It differs from department to department. As was mentioned earlier, a number of departments are going through transition. I think that by asking people to come to the table and tell us and be honest with us about the things that we can do to improve the workplace and how we can celebrate the good work that civil servants are doing every day across the province - we're continually looking for ways to do that.

I have been a civil servant for almost six years now - I am not a career civil servant - and I can tell you that on a personal level, it has been incredibly eye-opening and gratifying to me to understand how committed each and every one of my colleagues is to making it better for Nova Scotians, so we do try to focus on that. We work with people by

offering programs that help them to have a positive work experience and give them lots of opportunities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I guess I'd like to hear some commentary on - suggesting that we have an aging workforce, what type of succession planning is going on at the department? I guess I'm looking at this from the perspective that there could be a more significant opportunity for new entrants or youth entrants to the workforce as the workforce continues to age.

MR. FEINDEL: I did make earlier reference to the fact that we do work very proactively with each department. As part of the business planning process annually, the Public Service Commission provides consulting, advisory support, as well as analytic support to departments so they can understand from a metrics perspective and a qualitative perspective to assess their workforces around succession planning. That may be assessing who is eligible to retire, what kind of skills will we need to kind of bring behind that person who is retiring, and also where the needs are within the department to meet the mandate that that department has servicing the citizens of Nova Scotia.

There are a whole bunch of elements that go into play with workforce planning. Analytics is a very important part of that, and we continue to work with departments around different elements of the succession planning that they have to do.

Also, we have various programs now that we're working on with departments to look at ways they can innovate and be approaching their business and service to citizens in a different way, and looking at reallocating the knowledge and the expertise they have in their workforce. Sometimes it's not as much about bringing new workers into those elements, it's really about retooling.

Having said that, obviously people who are retiring, or leaving government, are leaving opportunities open for others existing in the departments or for these new, younger workers who can bring these new ideas and skills to the table. It's really a very mixed approach and each department having its own unique business, that's where we have our professionals in the Public Service Commission working with those senior management teams and those departments, making sure they fine-tune their approach around areas like succession management.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Dicostanzo.

MS. DICOSTANZO: As a follow-up to Mr. Horne's question regarding international students, I think what Mr. Horne was trying to get to and actually I would like to know as well - we have the new immigration program for international students. Once they finish at least two years at a university or a college, if they find a job, they are allowed to stay or have permanent residency. However, for that year, until they find a job, they're

here on a student visa. Are they allowed to work for the province? What are your limitations? Do they have to be permanent residents, citizens? Do you have any of those on the applications?

MS. ASELSTINE: When applicants are applying to positions, any position in government, they are asked a series of questions, including diversity and if you're a current member of the bargaining unit. One of the questions asked is, are you legally eligible to work in Canada? So depending on the answer to that question, if the answer is no then it's unlikely that the application will go any further. However, if we're working with immigrant student services at universities and at colleges where there is a way for us to try to facilitate something like that, then we would be able to explore that.

I do know - and I can't say for sure that it was a younger worker but it may have been - there was someone who approached us about a year ago, someone we were very interested in hiring. We worked with them and with the federal government to try to make sure that everything that needed to be done to follow proper process was done to permit this individual to apply for our position. I shouldn't say but I'm pretty sure we did end up hiring him and everything was all in accordance with the proper laws and such. It was a little bit of an extra effort, which we're more than happy to make.

I would say that while it's not specific to younger workers, we are also very involved and engaged with ISANS and we have representatives from that group make presentations, basically, to various departments and groups. We're trying to do our best to make sure that our hiring managers are made as aware as possible of the opportunities and the partnerships that are available. I would say that has also been very successful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. We have actually reached the end of our speakers list. I would invite you, Mr. Feindel, or one of the ladies on either side of you to offer some closing comments. That would be fine.

MR. FEINDEL: Sure. First of all, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and committee members here today, for engaging us in a good, full discussion around youth retention. It is an area of passion for all of us at the Public Service Commission. The future is the young people coming in to government.

We're very focused on making sure that that's a critical element of everything that we're doing. We know it's important not just to the Public Service but to all of us here in Nova Scotia that our young people have opportunities to thrive within the province. We're there to support that as a major employer in the province. We know that our programs can make a real difference.

Elements of inclusion and diversity, we know that those are fundamental. FlexNS - these programs all apply to areas of our workforce. They really speak to younger workers and the ability to attract them and then retain them over time.

We think we're on the right track. We have a tremendous amount of work to do, but it's work that's very fulfilling because the results are that we see more young people in the workplace now. We plan to stay on track and stay accountable for the things that we're doing to make improvements in that area.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for being with us this morning. Thank you to committee members.

Our next meeting is Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup> - it says 2017, but I would be willing to say that's probably 2018; a bit of a clerical error, but that's okay - from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. Our witness is Mr. Byron Rafuse, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Finance and Treasury Board. The topic is Nova Scotia Employment Trends, 2008-2017.

There being no further business, we stand adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:32 a.m.]