

- comptrollership is an integrating function,
- comptrollership is management-centred but should also contribute to effective governance,
- comptrollership must be embedded in the management culture, and
- comptrollership needs to be strong at the departmental level and at the centre.

A key recommendation of the report is that the Government promote a move from the current “command/control” management orientation to the “loose/tight” orientation pioneered successfully by the high-tech industry, where organisational nimbleness is the key to survival. The “loose/tight” orientation combines a strong commitment to central standards and values and achievement of planned results, with flexibility regarding process and operational approaches.

DFAIT has some hard experiences with past risk-taking experiments whose painful results are still sharply etched in organisational memory. These illustrate just how difficult this shift will be. While the recommended direction is not new, the energy mobilising behind the comptrollership initiative, and the intelligently-opportunistic, measured and sensible implementation approach that seems to be emerging, offer some new hope that real progress can be made this time around.

At the end of the day, modern comptrollership will only be achieved through people. The report calls for a quantum leap forward:

That leap forward will be mostly centred on achieving in practice the notion of management-centred comptrollership and will have to be accompanied by a commitment to new responsibilities. The challenge will lie in managerial and professional capacity development, the acceptance of new responsibilities and the development of maturity in acting on these responsibilities.⁴

Such changes require sustained leadership and enabling changes to our people practices.

The Treasury Board Secretariat has reorganised a number of its functions to support the implementation of the report’s recommendations. All indications are that the federal government has chosen to take the path advocated by the Panel.

The Panel’s report identifies as key management challenges the same issues as we have identified in our own business planning. It looks to the people of the Public Service for a stronger business focus, improved leadership, integration of relevant information in the hands of decision makers, a new culture of stewardship and intelligent risk management, a bias for action and ethical behaviours – all key elements of our HR strategy. Accordingly, the theme of modern comptrollership can serve as a useful bridge to link our

⁴ Ibid.