

Implementation of the Universal Classification Standard (UCS) is now upon us. It is a government-wide exercise that is expected to produce a single universal classification standard, free of gender bias, to replace the individual classification standards which now exist for each of the 72 Public Service occupational groups. The simplification of our classification system will streamline many aspects of our staffing, development and compensation programs and should eliminate a number of long-standing inequalities in our workplace. We are fully committed to this exercise and have dedicated substantial resources to ensuring that it is done properly.

The basic competencies of individual employees are the building blocks of departmental capability. Our work on the HR strategy has convinced us that the development of a full competency-based HR system is central to many of our planned reforms. Competency-based management is a new approach which links human resources activities (resourcing, learning and development, performance management and human resource planning) to a competency profile. We believe that such a system will strengthen the alignment of HR processes with departmental and Public Service strategic business objectives; promote a more open, more transparent culture; improve our ability to manage rotational and non-rotational staff; and involve employees more directly in planning their careers. In July, we launched a pilot project to build and test the competency-based HR system we require.

We have started with a few key initiatives but there are many parallel projects under way and these are summarized in the action plan in Appendix B. We are committed to keeping you informed and will report to you annually on implementation progress.

You are at the heart of the HR strategy. Without your willing contribution it cannot succeed. You can influence the course of our department and construct an organization that will build on our tradition of excellence well into the next century. This remains a living strategy - one that will continue to evolve over the years to come through close consultation with all of you. It is very much a work in progress.

We will be seeking your counsel and active support in a variety of ways throughout the year. Many of you have already helped make the strategy better through your comments and engagement. We ask you to sustain and extend that involvement as we move ahead.

Robert G. Wright  
Deputy Minister for International Trade

Donald Campbell  
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs