

# Public-sector productivity Canadian style

The APO organized a study mission on public-sector productivity to Canada to benchmark against its public-sector innovation excellence framework and practices including relevant federal and local government policies, 23–27 August 2010. The mission was attended by 12 participants from seven member countries including NPO heads from the Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia. Canada was chosen as the benchmark because its model is considered a prime example of a well-planned, evolving public-sector modernization initiative emulated by many other countries. In recognition of its achievements, Canada received the UN Government Innovation Award 2005, which has inspired more governments to follow its lead. For the APO, this mission represented a continued collaboration with the Canadian government to support public sector-related initiatives which began in 2009 with the study meeting on Public-sector Productivity in the Republic of Korea and Workshop on Benchmarking Service Quality in the Public Sector in Indonesia. The APO also organized an expert group meeting in February 2010 to identify areas for public-sector productivity improvement in the region. That meeting identified four major players, central government, local governments, public-service agencies, and public enterprises, with huge potential to enhance productivity. This study mission to Canada was a follow-up endeavor covering all four major players and will serve as a significant source of information in setting the APO's future strategy to promote public-sector productivity and innovation, in addition to helping participating member countries to strengthen their own public services. One of the participants contributed the article below.


**F**irst, I would like to congratulate the APO on its successful study mission to Canada. It was a productive experience with the effective facilitation of APO Program Officer K.D. Bhardwaj and Resource Person Richard Clarke, Director of Transformation, Innovation, and Excellence, Modernization Division, Ontario Ministry of Government Services, who did a great job of making our stay absolutely hassle free. I also appreciate their goodwill and friendliness.

Actually, the information offered was a bit too much given the limited time of one week. The schedule, although tight, covered helpful topics. Notable among them were the Management Accountability Framework, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's balanced scorecard application and its impact on citizens and stakeholders, Service Canada and its concept of single-window service delivery, and especially the City of Ottawa-Citizen's Access Initiatives. The latter two are best practice policies we can adopt in the Philippines at the national and local government levels. The Philippines already has in place, although to a limited extent, shared services or one-stop services. I believe that we can enhance these after learning the beneficial features of Canada's model of enhanced citizens' access programs.

Another valuable take-home point was the public sector service value chain (PSSVC), as discussed by Senior Advisor Brian Marson of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. It brings to the fore the important bidirectional relationships between employees/staff and satisfaction with public service, public trust, and confidence in public institutions. It was explained how the PSSVC significantly increased public approval of and satisfaction ratings for government services. The presentation on the PSSVC also touched on expectations of timely service in routine transactions in Canadian public services such as:

- Five to nine minutes, the maximum time to wait in any government office;
- Two people, the maximum number a citizen should have to deal with to receive the desired service at an office; and
- 30 seconds, an acceptable time to wait on hold on the phone before speaking to a person.

I was also inspired by the incisive presentation of former Administrator of the Ontario Restructuring Secretariat Art Daniels on Ontario's public service modernization journey. He clearly characterized the evolution of public-service reforms in Ontario from the period of a highly regulatory administrative regimen in 1945 to leading and managing, to transformation, and finally to leading collaboration today and into the future as Ontario's public-service reform initiatives continue. It would be useful to compare the evolution of our own public service development and reforms with those of Ontario's, see where the differences lie, and decide what adjustments are needed to hasten reform.

I would like to stress that the chosen topics were all interesting examples of best practices and readily applicable in APO member countries, which are in varying stages of public service reform. Finally, I suggest a study mission to one or more APO member countries in the future. Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines could host missions. Noteworthy best practices in providing quality public service abound in many APO members. Inter-Asia-Pacific learning opportunities and exchanges of best practices should be facilitated by the APO. 

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