

Chapter 11

Public Service Commission—Advancing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion in Ministries

1.0 MAIN POINTS

Workplace diversity and inclusion can lead to greater innovation, employee retention and productivity, and the ability to meet client needs.

By November 2024, the Public Service Commission implemented one of the six recommendations we first made in 2022 relating to advancing workplace diversity and inclusion in ministries.

The Commission still needs to establish clear indicators, analyze relevant data, and then report progress toward achieving cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion goals. This will not only show commitment and promote transparency, but also will help legislators and the public hold the Commission and ministries accountable for results. Although the Commission updated its Employment Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy in June 2024, the percentage of ministerial staff who self-declare as disabled, Indigenous, or racialized (e.g., visible minority) continues to be below Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission targets.

The Public Service Commission still needs to:

- Establish clear performance indicators to measure and report progress toward achieving cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion goals (e.g., set targets for employment satisfaction scores and employee retention rates for different demographic groups)
- Expand its inclusion toolkit (i.e., guidance for managers) to consistently embed key diversity and inclusion concepts and align it with its updated Employment Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
- Monitor ministries' inclusion plans and progress reports to identify where to assist individual ministries with implementing effective actions for increasing diversity and inclusion in their workplaces
- Conduct sufficient analysis of diversity and inclusion data to assess progress made toward key cross-ministerial goals and objectives (e.g., analyze reasons why certain ministries are not achieving Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission employment equity targets) and report diversity and inclusion results to senior management and the public

By measuring and tracking key diversity and inclusion data, the Commission can determine whether actions to increase diversity and inclusion in ministries work as intended. Effective processes for advancing workplace diversity and inclusion can assist ministries to better innovate, problem solve, and provide better services to the public.



2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

The Public Service Commission is responsible for working with ministries on workforce management by supporting the delivery of foundational services such as payroll, staffing and classification, and strategic support including labour relations and organizational development. The Commission also works with ministries to support workplace diversity and inclusion.

In 2023–24, the Commission had 289 full-time equivalent positions in Regina and Saskatoon with a total budget of \$34 million (2023–24 actual: \$33.9 million).^{1,2}

Diversity refers to how each person is different and unique. These differences can include factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, or having a disability. Inclusion is how a person feels they belong. An inclusive workplace creates an environment where employees of every demographic feel safe, supported, welcomed, and able to succeed.³

Workplace diversity and inclusion involves taking steps to try to represent all people at all levels in the workforce. It is designed to eliminate barriers faced by designated groups who are not employed in the same proportions in which they are available in the working age population (i.e., ages 15–74).⁴ Designated groups include:

- Individuals reporting an Indigenous identity
- Members of a visible minority (e.g., racialized) group
- Individuals reporting a disability
- Women in underrepresented occupations (e.g., heavy equipment operator)

In 2016, the Government of Saskatchewan created an Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan to leverage an inclusive workplace as a means of attracting and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce.

2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our first follow-up audit of the Commission's actions on the recommendations we made in 2022.

We concluded, for the 12-month period ending January 31, 2022, the Public Service Commission had effective processes to advance workplace diversity and inclusion in ministries, except in the areas of our six recommendations.⁵

¹ *Public Service Commission Annual Report for 2023–24*, p. 16.

² *Public Service Commission Plan for 2024–25*, p. 9.

³ taskroom.saskatchewan.ca/employee-resources/workplace-diversity-and-inclusion (8 January 2025).

⁴ saskatchewanhumanrights.ca/employment-equity-targets/ (8 January 2025).

⁵ *2022 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 4, pp. 45–66.

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Commission's progress toward meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. Commission management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To carry out our follow-up audit, we discussed actions taken with management. We met with key Commission staff responsible for advancing workplace diversity and inclusion and examined key documentation (e.g., policies, ministries' plans, reports, spreadsheets) relating to workplace diversity and inclusion in ministries.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at November 30, 2024, and the Public Service Commission's actions up to that date.

3.1 Employment Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy Modernized

We recommended the Public Service Commission modernize the Employment Equity Policy to align with good practice. (2022 Report – Volume 1, p. 52, Recommendation 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 6, 2022)

Status—Implemented

The Public Service Commission updated its equity and diversity policy in June 2024. The Commission modernized its policy after researching good practice and consulting with interested parties.

The revised policy—now called the Employment Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy—includes a section for key definitions (e.g., inclusion, barriers, equity, diversity) and sets out clear roles and responsibilities for the Commission as well as ministry senior management, ministry managers and supervisors, and ministry employees. Research on good practice (e.g., Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion) and consultation with a variety of interested parties (e.g., Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, Saskatchewan Visible Minorities Employee Association) appropriately informed the key definitions. Further, the Policy now contains updated language, terms, and definitions to match current equity, diversity, and inclusion language.



The Commission utilized the Corporate Inclusion Community of Practice, which meets six times a year, to educate ministries on the updated Policy.⁶ It shared the updated Policy with ministries and the public online, and on Staffroom.^{7,8} The Commission also sent a letter from the Chair of the Commission to each Deputy Minister outlining the Policy's changes.

An updated policy for equity, diversity, and inclusion outlines equitable treatment for all ministry employees and intends to improve the ability of ministry managers and employees to support an inclusive and diverse workplace culture.

3.2 Inclusion Strategy Needs Clear Indicators for Measuring Progress

We recommended the Public Service Commission set clear indicators for measuring progress and a timeframe for its inclusion strategy. (2022 Report – Volume 1, p. 55, Recommendation 2; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 6, 2022)

Status—Not Implemented

The Public Service Commission has not yet established clear indicators (measures of success), or an end date for its inclusion strategy.

We found since our original audit in 2022, the Commission focused on establishing its new Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Unit within the Employee Wellbeing & Inclusion Branch and formulating the new Employment Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy. The Commission hired a Director and Senior Consultant for the Unit during 2024–25. Overall, the Branch had 13 Commission staff as of January 31, 2025.

The Commission expected to update its inclusion strategy during 2025–26. We expect the strategy to not only have a long-term time horizon but also to have a specific timeframe (e.g., end date) set to help support periodic review of the strategy.

The Commission last updated its inclusion strategy in 2021, which lacked clear indicators and targets for measuring success related to key diversity and inclusion goals and objectives. For example, the strategy could include performance indicators and targets such as:

- Employee satisfaction scores by designated groups
- Number of self-declarations from new hires
- Time to advance into senior positions for designated groups compared to all employees

⁶ Led by the Public Service Commission, the Corporate Inclusion Community of Practice (ICoP) is a forum for sharing, learning, and taking action to support embedding and creating an inclusive workplace culture within the Government of Saskatchewan. The ICoP acts as a liaison between ministry diversity and inclusion committees and leverages each of these ministries' knowledge and resources.

⁷ taskroom.saskatchewan.ca/manager-resources/human-resource-manual/section-1000-employment-equity/section-1001-employment-equity. (26 March 2025).

⁸ Staffroom is a Government of Saskatchewan internal website utilized by the Public Service Commission to communicate key information to staff.

- Number of separations attributed to a non-inclusive or non-supportive workplace according to exit interviews/surveys
- Complaints by designated groups
- Employee retention rates for designated groups

The absence of clear indicators for measuring progress of key diversity and inclusion strategies make it difficult to hold the Commission and ministries accountable for results and increase the risk that strategies may not be working as intended.

3.3 Inclusion Toolkit Requires Further Expansion to Support Ministry Workplaces

We recommended the Public Service Commission expand its inclusion toolkit to embed diversity and inclusion concepts consistent with good practice. (2022 Report – Volume 1, p. 56, Recommendation 3; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 6, 2022)

Status—Partially Implemented

The Public Service Commission made some amendments to its Inclusion Toolkit between September 2022 and November 2024. However, further updates are still required to embed diversity and inclusion concepts consistent with good practice.

The Inclusion Toolkit is intended to support ministry managers with embedding diversity and inclusion in their workplaces. The Toolkit has four primary purposes:

- Getting Started: Building knowledge on diversity and inclusion
- Acquire: Build an inclusive workplace by attracting diverse, talented employees
- Engage: Connecting employees to teams, work, and organization
- Grow: Support employees to innovate and grow in their careers

We found the Public Service Commission linked its Inclusion Toolkit to a glossary of terms sourced from the Canadian Center for Diversity and Inclusion to assist in defining key terms such as inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. These definitions will help ministry managers and employees adequately understand key inclusion and diversity concepts. The Commission also added content relating to Gender Transition Guidelines since we completed the original audit.⁹

⁹ These Guidelines were developed to support people who are transgender and gender diverse as they transition to their authentic selves in the workplace. Transgender describes someone whose sense of personal identity does not correspond with their sex assigned at birth. Gender diversity refers to an array of labels that people may apply with their gender identity, expression, and perception of themselves that does not align with the norms and stereotypes that others may expect.



However, the Public Service Commission has yet to update its Inclusion Toolkit to align with the definitions it now uses in its updated Employment Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy. Also, it has yet to expand other key areas of the Toolkit we expected in our 2022 audit, such as:

- Additional Indigenous-related content and links to other high-quality, Indigenous-sourced materials
- Relevant content about accessibility and neurodiversity in the workplace to support accommodation practices
- Further case studies on bias to make definitions more meaningful and memorable, and help employees find ways to disrupt bias

An expanded toolkit reflecting evolving good practice can help the Commission to provide managers and employees with adequate understanding and support to achieve cross-ministerial inclusion and diversity goals. Without sufficient content in its Inclusion Toolkit, ministries may be less likely to achieve key diversity and inclusion goals and initiatives.

3.4 Ministry Inclusion Plans and Progress Reports Require Better Oversight

We recommended the Public Service Commission monitor ministry diversity and inclusion plans and progress reports to help ministries increase diversity and inclusion in their workplaces. (2022 Report – Volume 1, p. 60, Recommendation 4; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 6, 2022)

Status—Partially Implemented

While some improvement occurred, the Public Service Commission still has not received annual diversity and inclusion plans from most of the ministries it oversees, and has yet to receive periodic progress reports from ministries.

We found the Commission continues to utilize the Corporate Inclusion Community of Practice to discuss key diversity and inclusion initiatives, such as ministry diversity and inclusion plans. The Corporate Inclusion Community of Practice provides direction and a community for all 18 ministries to learn and share tools, practices, ideas and resources relating to inclusion.

The number of annual diversity and inclusion plans received by the Commission from the ministries did increase from four in 2023–24 to six in 2024–25. However, the Commission had yet to receive a diversity and inclusion plan as of November 2024 from the majority (67%) of the ministries it oversees.

We found the Commission also continued to lack a structured process to collect and assess any progress reports or to provide formal feedback to ministries. The Commission gave no formal feedback to the ministries that provided diversity and inclusion plans. In addition, Commission management did not receive any progress or summarized reports about ministry diversity and inclusion plans during the year.

The Commission has yet to establish formal guidance (e.g., template) for the annual ministry diversity and inclusion plans. We assessed each of the plans received by the Commission during the year and found they lacked consistency. For example, some plans have a vision statement, goals, key actions, expected completion dates, and measures and targets, while others lacked items such as targets and timeframes. For example, one diversity and inclusion plan submitted included a goal to celebrate Pride Month and increase knowledge on the diversity of gender identity. The ministry planned to host a virtual 'Thinking About Gender' presentation from the Pride Alliance Network and planned to track the number of attendees to measure success.

Inconsistency makes it difficult for the Commission to effectively evaluate each ministry's planned and actual performance or allow the Commission to identify potential trends across ministries.

Without a consistent method (e.g., template) or process to analyze ministry diversity and inclusion plans and reports, the Commission cannot sufficiently monitor the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion initiatives across ministries and may not identify or offer sufficient support to ministries where challenges appear to exist.

3.5 Better Analysis and Reporting of Diversity and Inclusion Data Required

We recommended the Public Service Commission sufficiently analyze diversity and inclusion data to identify and address risks that may prevent ministries from achieving cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion goals.

(2022 Report – Volume 1, p. 63, Recommendation 5; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 6, 2022)

Status—Not Implemented

We recommended the Public Service Commission implement a written policy for reporting diversity and inclusion results to its senior management and to the public to demonstrate accountability and commitment for workplace diversity and inclusion. (2022 Report – Volume 1, p. 64, Recommendation 6; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 6, 2022)

Status—Not Implemented

The Public Service Commission has yet to develop a policy for reporting diversity and inclusion results to its senior management and the public. The Commission is waiting on the development of the new Government Enterprise Management (GEM) system for a more robust process to analyze diversity data. As a result, the Commission currently performs limited analysis each year relating to diversity and inclusion data consistent with our original audit findings.

At November 2024, the Commission continued to use employee data to obtain the percentage of ministry employees who self-declared as Indigenous, persons with disabilities, members of visible minorities, or women in middle or senior management. We found it consistently provided semi-annual reports on these statistics to Commission senior

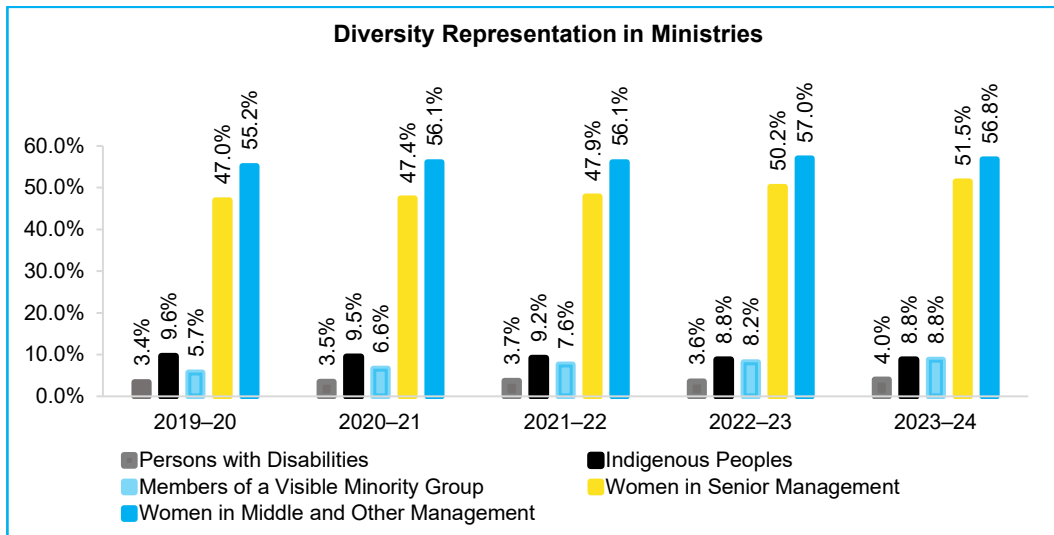


management. For example, this reporting showed 8.8% of ministry employees self-declared as Indigenous at September 30, 2024. This percentage was below the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission target of 15.2% and had not increased in the past couple years. The reports lacked sufficient analysis explaining why the number was not increasing.

The Commission's internal analysis and reporting still did not routinely analyze hiring or retention rates of designated groups or use exit interviews to gather additional information that may indicate issues.

For the first time, the Commission's 2023–24 public annual report included the five-year trend (see **Figure 1**) percentage of ministry employees who self-declared as belonging to one of the following groups: Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, members of visible minority groups, and women in middle and senior management.

Figure 1—Diversity Representation in Ministries



Source: Public Service Commission 2023–24 Annual Report, p. 11.

The Commission's annual report did not provide any targets for the public to determine whether the Commission is successful in achieving its diversity and inclusion goals. For example, as at March 31, 2024, the percentage of Indigenous Peoples was 8.8% according to **Figure 1**, which is below the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) recommended target of 15.2% but the Commission's annual report did not provide a target. Persons with disabilities and members of a visible minority group percentages were also below SHRC targets, which are 27.7% and 14.0% respectively.

Good practice suggests the Commission should publicly report meaningful indicators for diversity and inclusion goals, such as progress toward SHRC targets, and trends in retention and survey satisfaction results of employees belonging to designated groups compared to all employees. Having, analyzing, and reporting progress toward specific targets helps provide clear expectations and direction, and enables appropriate assessment of progress.