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FBEC • CEFN

Federal Black Employee Caucus
Caucus des employés fédéraux noirs



**INTERNATIONAL
DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF
AFRICAN
DESCENT**
2015 - 2024

**Progress Report
April 1 to December 31, 2019**

January 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With this report, our goal is to provide members and allies with information on our engagements with senior leaders and accomplishments to date and to identify challenges, opportunities and what we've learned in the process. We are also dedicating a portion of this report to provide recommendations on how we can move forward on the realization of our key priorities.

Since January 2018, our team has supported efforts at the national, regional, and local levels to address issues faced by Black federal public servants, focusing primarily on the collection of disaggregated employment equity data to better understand what's happening to Black federal public servants and where they are employed and supporting the mental health of Black employees by reducing harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

We are a rotating team of core organizers working hard to highlight your concerns, communicate and collaborate with departments and agencies and ensure the government meets its commitments under the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent (UN-DPAD). We also have a contingent of volunteers who assist with communications, strategic planning, strategic engagement and data analysis.

FBEC is a flat organization, meaning that we have few levels of management. Our team prefers to allow employees the opportunity to flex their expertise and lead their files, emphasizing less supervision and promoting increased involvement in the decision-making process. This approach has enabled us to make great headway towards the achievement of our priorities. Over the last nine months, we have met with over 20 departments and agencies, met with the Clerk of the Privy Council and presented at the Public Service Management Advisory Committee (PSMAC), held five member meetings, engaged with several visible minority networks including a presentation to the Visible Minorities Chairs and Champions Committee (VMCCC) and, as of December 2019, opened four FBEC chapters in the regions (Pacific, Western, Quebec and Atlantic).

We are excited about what we have been able to achieve and the work that lies ahead. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to this work and look forward to our continued partnership.

- FBEC Team

WHO WE ARE: OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

OUR VISION

To be the national voice and face of Black employees within the federal public service.

OUR MISSION

The Federal Black Employee Caucus (FBEC) believes that, as the largest employer in Canada, the federal government should set the example for all Canadian employers by putting in place the processes and policies required to meet the needs of a diverse, inclusive and representative workforce.

FBEC strives to support efforts to deliver on the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent (UN-DPAD) commitments through existing and future equity, diversity, inclusion and GBA+ objectives of the federal government while raising the profile and seeking resolutions for the issues and challenges faced by employees of African descent working in the federal public service.

OUR VALUES

FBEC's values are aligned to the statement of values outlined in the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service including Respect for Democracy, Respect for People, Integrity, Stewardship and Excellence.

FBEC also follows these essential values:

- Inclusiveness in the way we embrace all within our African Diaspora family mosaic;
- Integrity in the way we treat others within our African Diaspora family mosaic;
- Teamwork defines how we work together, favouring the realization of our common goals over any personal objectives; and
- Responsiveness is key to how we work with each other and our members.

INTRODUCTION

2019 has been a successful year for the Federal Black Employee Caucus (FBEC). We have made great progress towards our key priorities through our engagements with senior leaders and allies. From meeting with senior leaders within federal departments and organizations to developing a website to communicate our activities and progress, we have begun the work necessary to raise awareness of the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent (UN-DPAD) as well as FBEC's priorities within the federal public service. We will continue to spread the message regarding the need for disaggregated data and the need to address the mental health issues arising from anti-Black racism, while advocating for action to combat the root causes. FBEC's message has been well received by the Deputy Minister community and workplace bargaining agents and allies; and we have been recognized as a Diversity Network within Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC).

Early this year, January 23, 2019, FBEC hosted its first symposium¹ in partnership with the Institute on Governance. Over 100 participants and speakers from public and private institutions, including bargaining agents, came together to discuss issues affecting Black employees within the federal public service and to identify solutions. Through meetings like these, we had the opportunity to meet and speak with Black federal employees who shared with us their experiences of harassment and discrimination in their workplace. Unfortunately, their experiences are not unique nor are they uncommon, as normalized, systemic anti-black racism continues to go unseen and unchallenged in the places where we work as in society at large.

What we know for sure is that our numbers are growing. In the last 20 years, the Black population in Canada has doubled to 1.2 million making up 15.6% of the visible minority population as of 2016. We are also the

OUR EXPERIENCE

"I complained about harassment and subsequently received an assessment of poor performance."

"I train new white junior employees only to become their employee."

¹ <https://iog.ca/research-publications/publications/connect-empower-progressing-a-report-on-the-inaugural-symposium-hosted-by-the-federal-black-employee-caucus-with-the-institute-on-governance/>

fastest growing demographic and youngest cohort in the National Capital Region seeing a 73% increase in population between 2006 and 2016.² In light of these facts, it is incumbent on the Government of Canada (GoC) to lead actions to counter racism, not only in Canadian society but also within its departments, and ensure that, “all barriers to full and active participation and opportunity are eliminated,” as articulated in the 2005 Canada Action Plan Against Racism (CAPAR).

On June 25, 2019, the GoC unveiled its newest Anti-Racism Strategy. This three year strategy includes the establishment of an anti-racism secretariat to lead a whole-of-government approach to combat racism and discrimination and will focus on three guiding principles: demonstrating federal leadership, empowering communities and building awareness and changing attitudes. However, it does not specify whether or how it will address racism and discrimination within federal departments nor does it speak to the importance of addressing anti-Black racism. FBEC feels this is important within the context of the UN-DPAD.

On the other hand, the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO) has a diversity and inclusion program. However, it does not look at the ways in which sub-groups of the visible minority (VM) category experience racism, resulting in initiatives that approach VMs as a homogenous group. This, despite the fact that numerous federal entities have concluded that a review of the *Employment Equity Act* and the disaggregation of data on VMs is needed in order to accurately assess what is happening to Black employees within their workplaces and to develop meaningful solutions to challenges that they face. For example, in their 2017-18 Employment Equity Report, the Visible Minorities Champions and Chairs Steering Committee (VMCCC) made it a priority to revisit the term “visible minorities” and the language used in the *Employment Equity Act*.³ The Joint Union/Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion echoed this sentiment in its final report entitled, *Building a Diverse and Inclusive Public Service*.⁴

² Diversity of the Black Population in Canada: An Overview, Statistics Canada, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2019002-eng.htm>

³ 2017-18 TBS Employment Equity Report, Visible Minorities Champions and Chairs Committee (VMCCC), <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/employment-equity-annual-reports/employment-equity-public-service-canada-2017-2018.html>

⁴ 2017-18 TBS Employment Equity Report, Visible Minorities Champions and Chairs Committee (VMCCC), <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/employment-equity-annual-reports/employment-equity-public-service-canada-2017-2018.html>

This is why our work is so important!

FBEC is committed to raising the profile and seeking resolutions for the issues and challenges faced by employees of African descent. By working in collaboration with senior leaders, unions, central agencies and employees, FBEC is working to improve and leverage existing policies and initiatives, as well as develop new ones that will advance the elimination of anti-Black racism within federal workplaces. We are defining what "Black Inclusion" truly looks like in policy and practice within the federal public service.

BACKGROUND

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly proclaimed 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent. With the theme, “People of African descent: recognition, justice and development,” the UN cited the need for an intergovernmental and international focus to ensure that people of African descent obtain full economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights in all aspects of society.

From October 17 to 21, 2016, the UN Working Group of Experts visited Canada in order to assess the condition of people of African descent, identify issues and provide recommendations on the types of solutions that could be put in place to resolve the issues observed. The working group met with various federal government departments, ministries, provincial and municipal service organizations and non-governmental organizations in Ottawa Toronto, Montreal and Halifax to collect information on: *racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, afrophobia and related intolerance faced by people of African descent... and the efforts undertaken by the authorities to protect people of African descent from violations.*⁵ Following the visit, a [summary report](#) of their findings was prepared and in August 2017, was presented to the Government of Canada, citing 42 recommendations for action.

FBEC ANNUAL MEETING

On February 24, 2020, FBEC hosts its Annual Meeting. We are preparing an exciting day of workshops, inspiring discussions and networking. We look forward to seeing you there.

In January 2018, on the heels of the first National Black Canadians Summit, the Federal Black Employee Caucus (FBEC) was formed by a group of Canadian federal public service (PS) employees, to support efforts to deliver on the UN-DPAD and address issues of concern to Black employees within the federal context. These founding members recognized that Black employees remain vulnerable to racism, harassment and discrimination, and artificial barriers that restrict career development. As a starting point, FBEC has prioritized the collection of disaggregated

⁵ United Nation Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, Country Visits, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/WGAfricanDescent/Pages/CountryVisits.aspx>

employment equity data; and supporting and improving the mental health of Black employees by working with government and bargaining agent stakeholders to reduce harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

On January 30, 2018, the Government of Canada endorsed the UN-DPAD and committed to learning more about the issues affecting Black Canadians which included a commitment to improve research and data collection. The announcement acknowledged, for the first time, Black Canadians as a distinct group and the prevalence of anti-Black racism in Canadian society. Subsequently, the federal government made Budgets 2018 and 2019 commitments to address issues affecting Black Canadians and pledged to work with community organizations to advance positive change.

2017-2019 Timeline

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Federal Black Employee Caucus
Caucus des employés fédéraux noirs

Dec 2017

National Canadian Black Summit: Over 400 (including FBEC founders) gather in Toronto to mark, plan and strategize around UN International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024).



Jan 2018

Black employees at Public Services and Procurement Canada start organizing the Federal Black Employee Caucus and later open door to employees in all federal departments and agencies. Prime Minister announces Canada's commitment to the DPAD.

Feb 2018

FBEC membership begins to meet regularly by teleconference and WebEx to discuss our way forward: updates, issues, objectives, and desired outcomes.



Aug 2018

FBEC members meet with Parliamentary Black Caucus at Ottawa Public Library to share personal experiences and discuss a road to progress for Black public servants.



Jan 2019

FBEC hosts a full capacity gathering for its symposium in Ottawa. Topics: mental health, discrimination, Black women, data and representation. Media spotlight on FBEC and issues of representation in the public service (CBC, Radio Canada, CTV, Hill Times). FBEC meets Clerk of the Privy Council and President of TB.

Connect-Empower-Progress: A Report on the Inaugural Symposium hosted by the Federal Black Employee Caucus with the Institute on Governance



Feb 2019

FBEC releases Symposium report; and contributes to preparation for Senior Leaders Learning Session on anti-Black racism. FBEC begins its departmental road shows: PSPC, GAC, NRCan, National Defence, Agri-food and Agriculture, RCMP, SSC, etc.



Apr-May 2019

FBEC meets with President of the Public Service Commission and the Chief Human Resource Officer (TB). Topics include mental health, self-identification, representation.



June 2019

Joyce Murray, Treasury Board President, addresses FBEC membership. FBEC provides updates on ongoing work to help achieve the government's diversity and inclusion goals. FBEC launches its self-identification campaign for PSES 2019.



July-Sept 2019

FBEC meets with Clerk of the Privy Council to discuss how to make progress in addressing the unique challenges facing Black employees. FBEC departmental roadshows continue: StatsCan, Canadian Human Rights Commission, Health Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, Department of Justice.



Oct-Dec 2019

FBEC presents at the Public Service Management Advisory Committee, Visible Minority Champion and Chairs Committee and DND's Union Management Committee. FBEC establishes a joint FBEC-Union Advisory Committee; and joins the advisory panel for 3rd National Black Canadians Summit.



PROGRESS SUMMARY

KEY PRIORITIES

To realize the spirit of UN-DPAD within the FPS, our focus is on the following key priority areas:

- 1) The collection and analysis of disaggregated employment equity data, critical to understanding what is happening to Black employees within the FPS, and
- 2) Addressing the root causes of the mental health issues experienced by Black employees in the workplace and supporting employees.

In our Terms of Reference, we highlight 6 key goals that will help us make progress towards our priorities. These key goals are as follows:

Goal #1	Progress Status: ↑
Engage with departmental senior officials, EE and Diversity committees to raise awareness of the UN-DPAD as well as challenges faced by Black public servants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with and garnered support from NCR Deputy Ministers and senior officials from: Public Services and Procurement Canada; Shared Services Canada; Health Canada; RCMP; StatsCan; Canadian Heritage; Environment and Climate Change Canada; National Defence; Employment and Social Development Canada; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada; Fisheries and Oceans; Justice Canada and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. We continue to schedule meetings with other departments. • Met with, and continue to meet with various Interdepartmental Visible Minority Networks to discuss how we can work together on issues important to Black and visible minorities. • Scheduled to meet with DMs of the six Regional Federal Councils.

Goal #2	Progress Status: ↑
<p>Work with bargaining agents to support the vision of FBEC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with union leaders from PIPSC, CAPE, PSAC and Canadian Labour Congress, to secure support for a holistic approach to addressing the issues Black employees face in the workplace. • Created an FBEC Union Advisory Team that serves to inform on FBEC's work. • Planning a "Union Learning Day" workshop for senior leaders of the major unions, in order to promote awareness and educate them on the unique experiences of Black Canadians within the PS.

Goal #3	Progress Status: ↑
<p>Engage with senior officials from central agencies to ensure compliance with EE and Human Rights legislation and policies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with and continue to garner support from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Treasury Board President; the Clerk of the Privy Council Office; the Chief Human Resources Officer; Chief Commissioner at the Canadian Human Rights Commission; and the President of the Public Service Commission of Canada.

Goal #4	Progress Status: ↑
Encourage Black employees to self-declare through EE and Public Service Employee Survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The collection and analysis of data is crucial to helping the FPS better understand the experience of Black employees. Through our self-identification campaign (May – September 2019), FBEC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoted the importance of “self-identification” to Black employees, members, affiliate groups, and other stakeholders, as to increase participation in the 2019 Public Service Employee Survey. - Developed appropriate language for DMs to send out to employees with regards to self-identification/PSES survey.

Goal #5	Progress Status: ↑
Analyze EE and PSES data to ensure accurate interpretation and focus, as well as encourage the use of this data throughout federal PS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a comprehensive Data Analysis plan which was designed to provide a roadmap on how FBEC intends to describe, interpret and analyze disaggregated PSES/EE data. • Working with Statistics Canada to discuss their role in the collection and analysis of disaggregated data on Black federal public servants. • Working with PSC and CHRC to collect disaggregated EE Equity data with regards to harassment and discrimination complaints for Black Public servants. • FBEC is currently awaiting the results from the summer of 2019 PSES to be released for analysis.

Goal #6	Progress Status: ↑
<p>Communicate the priorities, activities and progress of FBEC to the Black and wider communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged with members regularly throughout the year via in-person, video-conference or teleconference meetings. • Met with Parliamentary Black Caucus at the Ottawa Public Library to share experiences and discuss progress for Black employees. • Hosted our inaugural FBEC Symposium with members, unions, supporters and affiliate groups to discuss ways to address anti-Black racism in the FPS. • Launched the FBEC website and social media platforms (e.g. Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn). • Held our inaugural FBEC Picnic at Vincent Massey Park in August 2019.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ongoing engagement of FBEC with departments and senior leaders has created space in the system to raise our issues directly with deputy ministers across the public service, propose actions to resolve these issues and work collaboratively with departments. In the process, we've come away with many lessons learned that we have incorporated into how we work and organize ourselves as a team and how we approach meetings with senior leaders moving forward.

What we've learned

1. The UN-DPAD provides policy cover to support the implementation of focused engagements to address challenges.
2. In order to make real gains for Black public servants, commitments to addressing anti-black racism need to be integrated into ministerial mandate letters and the performance agreements of the executive cadre within the federal public service.
3. The Clerk of the Privy Council has the authority within the Policy Framework for People Management to identify and drive an issue as a public service wide priority. FBEC should work with the Privy Council Office to have anti-Black racism declared a priority issue within the federal government requiring demonstrated action and results.
4. There needs to be greater collaboration between FBEC and other networks in order to increase awareness of our challenges and priorities and support each other when the opportunity presents itself.
5. Many senior leaders have expressed a willingness and readiness to do the work required to address anti-black racism within the federal government, however the next steps are unclear. For this reason, a roadmap should be developed by black public servants and proposed to senior leaders as a way forward.

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6. Ignoring anti-Black racism within the federal government won't eliminate its existence nor its very real consequences. We cannot be afraid to raise these issues at the highest levels of government and ensure our voices are heard. That being said, we have experienced various levels of apprehension by Black employees to volunteering with FBEC and participating in FBEC meetings and events. To better understand this, research should be completed via a survey or focus group.

These lessons have resulted in the following proposed recommendations:

1. In meetings with senior leaders, demonstrate our support for a mandate letter commitment on anti-Black racism.
2. Provide the Privy Council Office with a statement indicating why the eradication of anti-Black racism within federal institutions should be a public service wide priority to support the Clerk with the evidence required to make such a decision.

Schedule regular meetings with diversity networks to learn of the work being conducted in their respective areas and raise awareness of the work and progress of FBEC, as well as determine how we can support one another.

3. Develop a roadmap, in concert with black public servants, to propose to senior leaders at the Human Resources Council as a way forward that can be implemented by departmental heads. The roadmap will address the collection of disaggregated data, mental health of Black employees and the implementation of positive measures to fundamentally transform the condition of Black employees within the federal government.
4. Develop an approach for a mini research project that will provide greater insight into the supposed/suspected apprehension of Black employees to volunteering or participating in FBEC activities on a regular basis.
5. DM Champion for employees of African descent to increase awareness and support movement on initiatives focused on the UN-

DPAD and to ensure senior leaders are addressing and maintaining a line of sight on anti-Black racism in their workplaces.

Overall, in order to attain true inclusivity within the public service, disaggregated data is needed to pinpoint how pervasive the issues are, where the bias exists and to monitor the outcomes of measures implemented to address the issues. Anecdotal evidence suggests high rates of discrimination, harassment and career stagnation; however, quantifiable disaggregated data would provide a complete picture allowing for the creation of policies, programs and processes that address key issues and challenges.

In order to improve the experiences and mental health of Black employees in the federal public service and take full advantage of the talent that they have to offer, meaningful and intentional actions need to be taken by our government. As our mission states, “as the largest employer in Canada, the federal government should set the example for all Canadian employers by putting in place the processes and policies required to meet the needs of a diverse, inclusive and representative workforce.” Moreover, we must ensure that we insert ourselves at every stage of the process, from policy/program review to ideation to policy/program implementation to reporting, so that we can all work in an environment where representativeness and equity reigns.

This is the push of the UN-DPAD and the goal of FBEC.

For more information please contact us at:

info@fbec-cefn.ca

APPENDIX

Over the course of the last nine months, we have met with over 25 stakeholders, including senior leaders from departments and agencies, diversity networks, committees and bargaining agents. We continue raise awareness of the UN-DPAD, identify key issues and challenges faced by Black public servants and outline requests that would significantly impact our key priorities regarding disaggregated data and addressing mental health.

Key Issues and Challenges

- Diversity and inclusion narratives mask what is happening to Black people in Canadian society, including in the Federal Public Service.
- The *Employment Equity Act's* focus on visible minorities makes targeted approaches to addressing the needs of Black employees difficult since this demographic is not recognized as a distinct group.
- Lack of disaggregated data also makes it challenging to pinpoint what is happening to Black federal public servants.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests high rates of anti-Black racism, discrimination, harassment and career stagnation among black employees.
- Current policies have proven inadequate to resolve complaints.
- Systemic racism has a profound effect on employee well-being, mental health and workplace productivity.
- Normalized, systemic racism goes unseen and unresolved without a diverse group of voices around the table to challenge the status quo.

Our Requests

- Send a message in support of the PM's endorsement of and commitments made to UN-DPAD.
- Send a message about FBEC to your department.
- Promote the importance of self-identification.
- Support in providing one resource to work with FBEC.
- Support recommendations to government regarding a review of the Employment Equity Act and the EE categories.
- Endorse the use of targeted recruitment processes and talent management strategies at the EX and working levels for black employees.

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- Facilitate and support the collection and use of disaggregated EE data.
 - Endorse FBEC having intervenor status in support of Black employees to address labour management issues dealing with racial discrimination/harassment.
 - Support FBEC, as voice and face of Black employees, in all federal departments and agencies.