



DM Ally for the UN Decade for People of African Descent announced at the Second Annual FBEC meeting, February 24, 2020

On Monday February 24, 2020 the Federal Black Employee Caucus (FBEC) hosted our second annual meeting in Ottawa, Ontario. Under the theme of Black Inclusion, the meeting brought together public servants, allies, unions and senior government officials to discuss issues facing Black federal public servants including workshops on career progression, self-advocacy, anti-oppression for allies.

FBEC leadership shared progress on its priorities of collecting disaggregated Employment Equity data, and bringing awareness around the conditions that exacerbate the particular mental health issues that Black employees face in our federal workplaces.

“We have heard you tell us that there is a need to have a conversation about Diversity and Inclusion that includes Black Inclusion - in effect applying a Black lens to our policies and programs, hiring and promotion practices” said Richard Sharpe, Core group member of FBEC.

“As President of the Treasury Board, I will work in close collaboration with the secretary and all Deputy Ministers to remove the remaining barriers and facilitate the access of visible minorities to senior positions in our public service,” said Jean-Yves Duclos during the keynote address.

Building on this, Bill Matthews, Deputy Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Deputy Receiver General for Canada, announced his new role as the Deputy Minister Ally for the UN Decade for People of African Descent (UNDPAD) within the federal public service.

“As leaders, we have an obligation to create a healthy, respectful, inclusive, productive workplace. We have to create a tone that sets an environment where people can talk about the workplace that they want,” said Matthews. “We have employees who were not comfortable asking their manager for permission to even attend this event. That says something. The fact that people weren’t even comfortable having a discussion, tells you how much work we have to do on that front.”

FBEC looks forward to working with DM Matthews, other deputy ministers, senior public service union leaders on issues important to Black federal public servants including collecting [disaggregated employment equity data](#) and supporting the [mental health of Black employees](#) by working together to reduce harassment and discrimination in the workplace. There was also excitement about the fact that the new DM Ally will support the promotion of the UNDPAD principles of recognition, justice and development across the federal public service.

“Conversations like this are how progress takes shape and I cannot think of a more vital subject than racial equality in Canada,” said Marie-Claude Landry, Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission while participating in senior leaders’ panel discussion.

Landry went on to discuss initiatives at the Canadian Human Rights Commission looking at the representation of racialized people in senior levels positions across the federal public service with the aim of identifying employment equity gaps and barriers faced by racialized employees.

The senior leaders' panel discussion also included the first Black Deputy Minister: Caroline Xavier, Associate Deputy Minister at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; Jody Thomas, Deputy Minister at the Department of National Defence; and Patrick Borbey, President of the Public Service Commission.

"There was a time in my career when I thought I was doing the right thing by saying 'I'm blind to gender. I'm blind to colour. I'm blind to religion. I just look at talent,' said Thomas. "But I'm failing people by not being mindful and precise in the decisions that I make and the decisions I encourage my leadership to make. We must make precise and mindful decisions. We have to be intentional in our staffing actions. We have to be intentional in our policies. We have to be intentional in our inclusion strategies. And that is my commitment to you and to FBEC as we go forward."

Over 200 people attended the event in person and over 200 watched the live stream online with public servant participants from 36 federal departments and agencies.

FBEC will be releasing a report of the AGM proceedings in the coming weeks.

A recording of the second annual meeting is available [online](#).

Black employees and allies are encouraged to [sign up](#) to be part of FBEC information notifications.

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Media:

Globe and Mail - [Ottawa urged to increase diversity in senior ranks of public service](#)

National Post - [Government urged to increase diversity at top of federal public service](#)

CBC Ottawa Morning with Robyn Bresnahan - [Second annual Federal Black Employee Caucus meeting](#)

Treasury Board of Canada News Release - [Minister Duclos addresses annual meeting of the Federal Black Employee Caucus](#)

Lethbridge News Now - [Government urged to increase diversity at top of federal public service](#)