



Third Annual Report on the APEX's Advisory Service for Executives Highlights

- **The Advisory Service for Executives (ASE) was launched on January 30, 2004.** Available free of charge to all federal executives at all levels across the country and abroad, it provides a discreet and confidential sounding board, a safe place to discuss sensitive issues and a single window for advice and referral to specialized services available to the executive community.
- This is a **highly efficient service, managed and delivered by a sole advisor.**
- Since its inception, the ASE has **helped 582 clients**---196 in 2004, 187 in 2005 and **199 in 2006, from 85 different organizations, located in all regions of the country and abroad.**
- Information on client satisfaction is gathered through a formal questionnaire. Clients gave the service **rave reviews on dimensions such as timeliness, relevancy, accuracy, professionalism, etc.**
- **The demographic profile of the clients served in 2006 closely parallels that of the entire executive community.**

For 2006, the most frequent reasons for referral to the ASE were:

- **Career Management: 31% of clients consulted the Advisor on career management issues.** Even though it is recognized that career management is primarily the executive's responsibility, it remains difficult for executives to locate information and assistance in identifying positions for which they might be qualified and to access the "hidden job market". APEX has consistently raised the **need for a centralized service dedicated to assisting executives in seeking positions in the Public Service.**
- **Relationship with a Superior:** Thirty EXs (15%) accessed the ASE on matters related to their relationship with a superior. Executives most often spoke about being treated with disrespect, humiliated in front of others and generally bullied by superiors who lacked basic people skills. This is an issue that APEX takes very seriously because its members are on both sides of the coin. They are both the "bullies" and the "bullied". APEX believes that **every executive must take responsibility for resolving this issue. EXs have a duty to develop their skills in managing people and communications** in order to avoid these situations to the greatest extent possible. Moreover, **those in authority must place a high value on people management and take swift, concrete corrective action when they are made aware of situations of abuse.**
- **Reorganizations:** In 2006, 26 executives (13%) contacted the ASE on this issue, roughly the same as last year. They often felt powerless and **lacked basic information about their rights and options in cases where their position was affected by reorganization.** Some felt that they were being targeted because of their age; others held

the view that the reorganization was merely an excuse to remove them from their positions. In this period of constant change, **APEX recommends that deputy ministers introduce more transparency in the decision-making process, communicate all decisions promptly and put in place the mechanisms required to allow their affected executives to understand their options and leave the Public Service with dignity, should they choose to do so, or to actively help them land suitable employment elsewhere.**

- **Performance Management**: 12% of clients (down from 15% last year) had concerns in this area, suggesting a slight improvement in this category. In most cases, they told the Advisor that they had received no advance notice that their performance was lacking. In addition, there was no plan in place to help the executive redress his or her performance. **APEX continues to highlight the need for a more rigorous application of the PMP, due process, and a fair and transparent approach.**
- **“Dismissals”**: This year, 18 executives (9% of all clients) fell into this category, down from a peak of 12% last year. In most cases, executives were abruptly told they were being removed from their positions with **no prior warning**. They then appeared to be left to fend for themselves, receiving little or no assistance from their department. APEX recognises that there are cases where EXs must be shuffled. When this occurs, **they must be treated fairly and with dignity**. APEX recommends that **deputy ministers recognize the trauma associated with these situations and provide all available assistance to their EXs over the course of their transition to a new position.**
- **Health**: This category comprised 8% of all clients, and included client support and subsequent referral to professionals in the community dealing with mental and physical health issues such as depression, substance abuse/addictions, stress, burnout, workplace reintegration following extended disability/sick leave and issues related to significant work life imbalance.
- **Harassment**: Over the course of the year, the ASE assisted 14 executives (7%) formally accused of harassment by their subordinates. **Executives have repeatedly told the Advisor that, once an accusation is brought against them, they feel abandoned by their organizations, left alone and unsupported.** While APEX recognizes that it only hears one side of the story, it has nonetheless become apparent that the Harassment Policy, as it is currently worded and applied, is not appearing to have the intended results for individuals and the system as a whole. **APEX continues to recommend that the CPSA finalize the current review of the existing policy and its application, and implement the necessary changes as quickly as possible; the network of advisors to assist unrepresented employees be reactivated, supported and maintained; and beyond the limitation of the current Indemnification policy, deputies exercise their discretion to authorize the reimbursement of legal fees for executives accused of harassment, especially in cases where the complainant is supported and represented by a union.** This is simply a matter of levelling the playing field.
- **The third year of operation of the Advisory Service for Executives has once again been busy and successful.** It has proven itself as a credible and accessible resource to executives in distress or in need of information and advice. **The numbers make it clear that the ASE provides a valued service that is not duplicated elsewhere.**