



MOVING FORWARD

2009-10 Annual Report of
the Advisory Service for Executives



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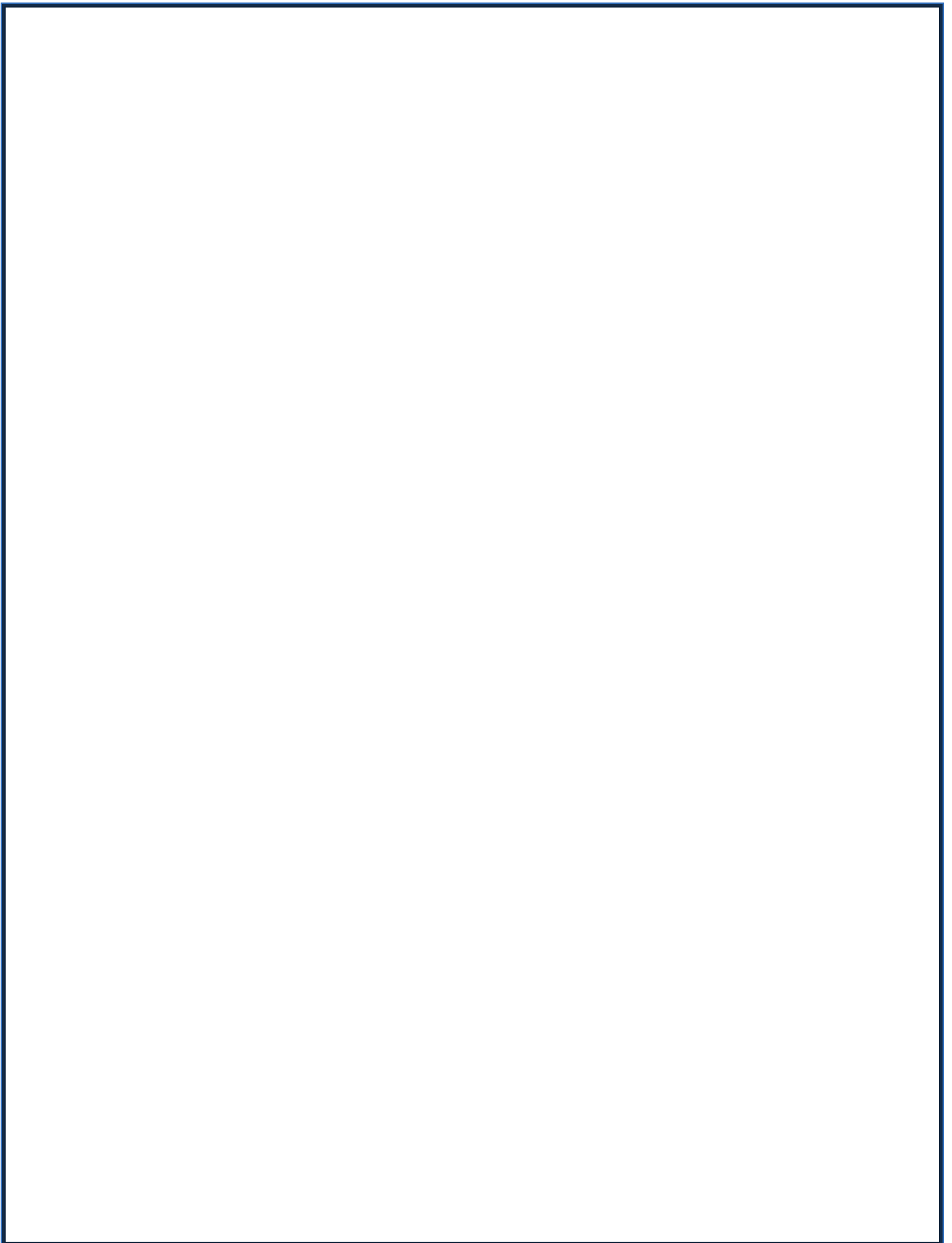


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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this sixth annual report is to: set out the current context in which the Advisory Service for Executives (ASE) operates; provide data and commentary on the nature and number of clients served; and, summarize issues addressed in 2009-10, along with recommendations for change.

Although the ASE was established to address the needs of individual executive clients, the composite data in this report provides a unique perspective on the collective needs, issues, and concerns of a significant cross-section of the senior leadership cadre of the Public Service of Canada.

This data provides an opportunity to take the pulse of this group and to identify hot spots and trends, as well as to recommend actions that could improve the job satisfaction, retention, productivity and well-being of the Executive community as a whole.

ASE - Quick Facts

- Confidential service available free of charge to all federal executives nationally and abroad.
- Supported financially by the Deputy Head community and housed at APEX.
- Established in 2003 in response to expressed needs of executives for an objective and confidential ear in dealing with difficult work-related situations.
- Single window for arms-length advice and referral to a specialized resource network.
- Complementary to other services for public service executives e.g. Public Service Commission (PSC) Executive Counseling Services.
- Steady demand - six year total of clients served: 1284.
- Most frequently raised issues and service needs: Career Management; Reorganizations; Relationship with Supervisor; "Dismissals"; Harassment; Health; Performance Management; Retirement.
- Comprehensive annual reports available at www.APEX.GC.CA.
- Deputy heads recognized the ASE as an important contributor to workplace well-being.
- In June 2008, ASE funding for one FTE (EX-3) renewed for an additional five years.

OVERVIEW

In 2009-10, there continued to be a steady demand from executives for the services of the ASE, with a caseload of 225 clients. The ASE is a one person service housed at the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX).

The Senior Advisor provides client service via phone, e-mail, and in-person meetings to clients across Canada and abroad. In March 2009, on the retirement of Ed DiZazzo, responsibility for the functions of Senior Advisor moved to Paulette Panzeri, an EX-03.

The top reasons executives sought the support of the ASE in 2009-10 were, in order of frequency:

- career management
- relationship with superiors
- health
- “dismissal”
- retirement
- managing “problem employees”
- reorganizations
- terms and conditions.

2009-10 ASE Key Activities

Client Service and Outreach

- Supported 225 clients
- Participated in APEX national consultation and feedback/information sessions
- Reviewed and updated internal ASE resource and referral network

Infrastructure

- Moved from a calendar year reporting cycle to fiscal year reporting
- Designed and implemented a more sophisticated data capture system to expand reporting capability
- Initial assessment of current ASE business model

CONTEXT

Executives in the federal public service work in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment, in a period of fiscal restraint and shrinking budgets. Wayne Wouters, Clerk of the Privy Council, in his *Seventeenth Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada*, sets out this context and underlines the importance of a strong and capable Public Service to continue to deliver high quality results to Canadians.

In terms of the public service management agenda, 2009-10 has seen continued emphasis on public service renewal, including the move to a simplified human resources governance model. Roles have been redefined, with Deputy Heads having primary responsibility for people management and the Chief Human Resources Officer, supported by the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO), playing a strategic and enabling role.

Key public service management activities affecting executives over the past year have included work to more fully embed talent management in departments and agencies; implementation of a more rigorous performance management regime (integrating the measurement of the “what” being achieved as well as the “how” they were achieved); and, a continued focus on tools and training to manage performance.

As well, this report comes at a time when the critical linkages between workplace health and productivity are both better understood and measured. The relationship of effective workplace health and productivity programs (such as Employee Assistance Programs [EAP] – like the ASE) to “*superior human capital and financial outcomes*” is a key finding of the 2009-10 Towers Watson report “*Staying at Work - The Health and Productivity Advantage*”. <http://www.towerswatson.com/research/648>

DATA COLLECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is a key aspect of the ASE and explained to clients at the outset of the initial discussion.¹ In order to ensure confidentiality, client names and case notes are automatically destroyed six months after the end of the fiscal year (or at any time upon client request). Key demographic data at the aggregate level covering such things as gender, language and classification levels is retained in a secure database.

At each visit, in addition to noting the initial “presenting issues”, the Senior Advisor records the full range and nature of services provided in response to each client’s particular needs. The same presenting problem can have multiple dimensions and can generate the need for a range of responses depending on the circumstances. For example, assisting a client in leaving an untenable situation may require career management, coaching, dispute resolution, and/or legal intervention.

This consistent identification and assessment of the broader range of executive client needs has three key impacts. At the individual client level, it helps the Senior Advisor to provide more complete support. From a broader systems perspective, this detailed information provides more complete data for the annual report, trend analysis, and informs its policy recommendations. And, finally, it provides ongoing feedback that the Senior Advisor uses to identify emerging or growing areas and issues which could be addressed at a collective or group level by APEX or its partners through targeted workshops, seminars, videoconferences and fact sheets.

¹ See “*Confidentiality and the ASE – What You Can Expect at*” www.APEX.qc.ca.

CLIENT SATISFACTION AND QUALITY CONTROL

In keeping with the terms of the agreement with Treasury Board Secretariat Advisory Committee (TBSAC), APEX established a monitoring and evaluation framework for the ASE that requires the collection of aggregate data and regular reporting on the extent and purpose of use of the service.

In 2009-10, feedback was obtained through three mechanisms: formal client questionnaires; regional consultations; and, unsolicited informal feedback, both written and oral. Overall client satisfaction levels remain consistently high.

Feedback on client satisfaction is obtained both formally and informally throughout the year. A comprehensive report is prepared annually and shared with all Deputy Heads (ASE annual reports, such as this one, for 2004-2008 are available at www.apex.gc.ca).

Formal questionnaires are sent to randomly selected clients who agree to participate in the survey and are returned directly to the APEX CEO (to preserve impartiality). Clients have the option of returning their survey anonymously. In 2009-10, as in the past, the satisfaction levels remained consistently high.

As the ASE has matured, these positive evaluations have been bolstered by the increasing number of new clients referred by former clients of the service. In addition, a number of clients are referred by departmental human resources organizations.

This attests to the growing reputation and credibility of the ASE as an impartial, confidential “safe space” where executives can tell their story to a neutral third party, be heard, and obtain factual and practical information/advice as well as access to expert resources when needed.

The 2009-10 APEX regional consultations included a specific component on the ASE, intended both to inform and to ascertain knowledge of the service, along with feedback about its utility and relevance. APEX heard consistently from regional executives that the ASE is highly regarded as a valuable service. Participants in these sessions expressed concern that the ASE is not as well-known as it should be and recommended that the service be more actively marketed. The second most common theme from the regional consultations was that executives can feel very alone, particularly in the face of workplace issues, and that this type of confidential service helps at a very practical level.

A number of clients also provided unsolicited feedback via e-mail and written correspondence, noting their appreciation for the service and the professional and compassionate support.

OUTREACH AND MARKETING

ASE activities in this area have focused on the regional consultations, as noted above, the twice annual Recognition of Entry to the Executive Group and regular updates with the APEX Network of Departmental Representatives, as well as the information provided on the APEX website and at the annual APEX Symposium. Still, many executives remain unaware of the existence of the ASE.

Our past experience, particularly in 2007 and 2008, has shown a close correlation between increased outreach and awareness activities by the Senior Advisor and growth in client case load. These activities, such as group workshops on career management, provided practical and highly rated tools on a topic that is consistently the top reason executives seek the support of the ASE.

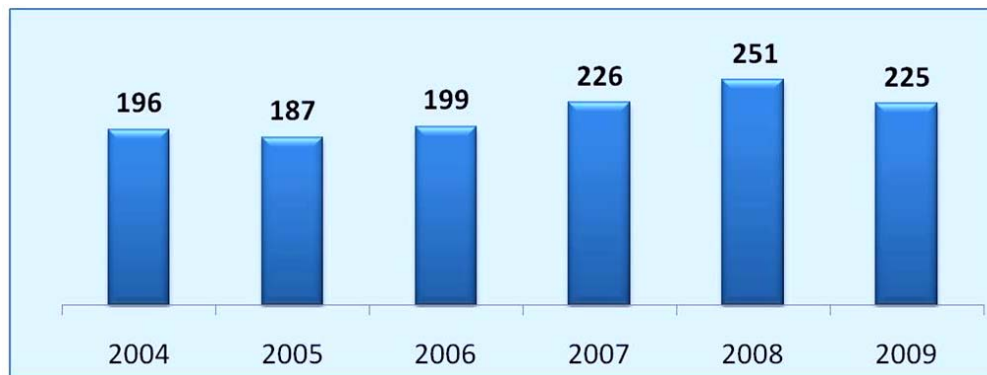
The Recognition of Entry to the Executive Group events also ensure that new EX-1's are aware of the ASE. Based on the Public Service Commission Annual Reports of 2008-09 and 2009-10, the public service EX-1 population increased by 391 between March 2008 and March 2010. Our 2009-10 analysis of the levels of EX clients using the ASE also shows an increase in the number of EX-1 clients, at a rate about seven percent higher than their representation in the broader EX population.

Increased ASE marketing and outreach has historically corresponded with an increase in clients. The current single person service model for the ASE is at maximum capacity to provide continued quality client service. A preliminary assessment of this service delivery model has been completed with a further review targeted for completion in 2010-11.

PROFILE OF CLIENTS SERVED

Demand from executives for ASE services remained steady in 2009-10. The client caseload of 225 represents 63 departments and agencies. Figure 1 shows client demand over the period 2004-2009.

FIGURE 1 – ASE NUMBER OF CLIENTS (2004-2009/10)



The demographic profile of the clients served by the ASE in 2009-10 generally parallels that of the entire public service executive community (as of March 31, 2009) with a slight shift in the dimension of gender.

Figures 2 to 5 illustrate, for 2009-10, four key dimensions of the ASE client profile in relation to the public service executive community (data source: OCHRO): gender; language; level; and, location. The 2009-10 data shows an interesting shift in the dimension of gender.

2009-10 is the first year in which the ASE had more female clients than male, although it is a shift we started to see in 2008-09. As Figure 2 shows, the percentage of female clients of the ASE in 2009-10 is 14 percent higher than the representation of women in the public service executive group.

The representation of women in the Executive category has continued to increase since 1999, more than doubling in that time period, from 918 to 2197. In 2008-09, the representation of women in the Executive category increased to 43 percent, from 41.7 percent in 2007-08. This is still slightly lower than the Executive Work Force Availability of women (44.7 percent)².

Male clients of the ASE in 2009-10, in relation to the public service executive population, are under-represented by 14 percent.

² "Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada, 2008-09 Annual Report to Parliament" – Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

FIGURE 2 - ASE-GENDER OF CLIENTS VS. P.S. EX POPULATION (2009-10)

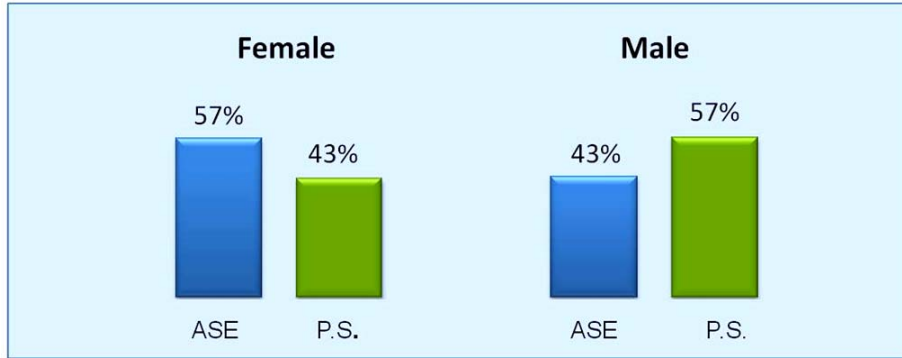


FIGURE 3 - ASE-LANGUAGE OF CLIENTS VS. P.S. EX POPULATION (2009-10)

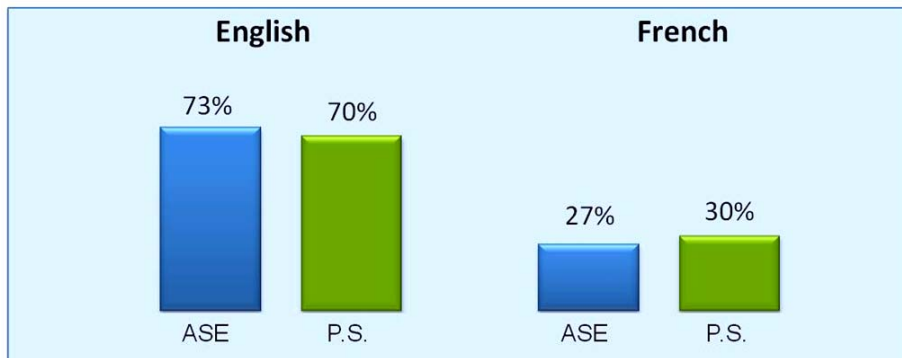


FIGURE 4 - ASE LEVEL OF CLIENTS VS. P.S. EX POPULATION (2009-10)

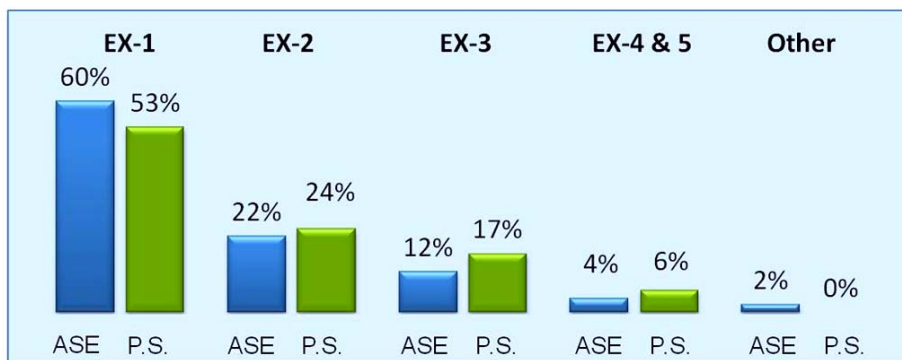
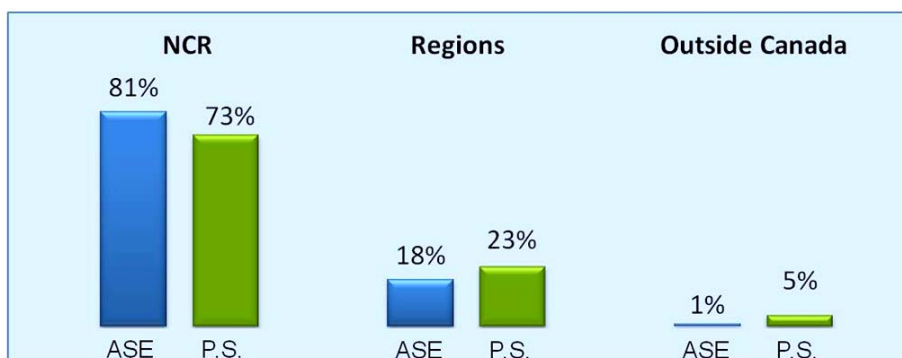


FIGURE 5 - ASE-LOCATION OF CLIENTS VS. P.S. EX POPULATION (2009-10)



CLIENT ISSUES AND OBSERVATIONS

As a comprehensive employee assistance program for executives (complementing existing departmental programs and the PSC Executive Counseling Service), the ASE deals with an extremely wide range of issues and needs.

The design and implementation of a new database in 2009-10 has made possible more sophisticated data and in-depth analysis. These new tools enabled a further disaggregation of data on client issues from previous years, particularly in the “other” category, as well as a refinement of ASE statistics on client issues for increased precision.

Issues raised by clients are classified under 18 specific headings. It should be noted that one client may consult the Senior Advisor on more than one issue in a particular year and/or, that a single issue may overlap several headings.

The headings are: Career Management; Relationship with a Superior; Reorganizations; Official Languages; Performance Management Program; Retirement; Harassment; “Dismissal”; Health; Executive Terms and Conditions; Classification; Staffing; Interchange; Values and Ethics; “Problem Employee” Management; Disability Issues, including Return to Work and Accommodation, Communication Issues; and, Other.

In 2009-10, as set out in figure 6 (page 9), the top eight issues and service needs were: career management; relationship with a superior; health (including re-entry and accommodation); “dismissal”; retirement; “problem employee” management; re-organization; and, Executive terms and conditions. Figure 7 (page 9) shows the top eight reasons for 2008-09 for comparison purposes.

FIGURE 6 - ASE-TOP 8 REFERRAL REASONS (2009-10)

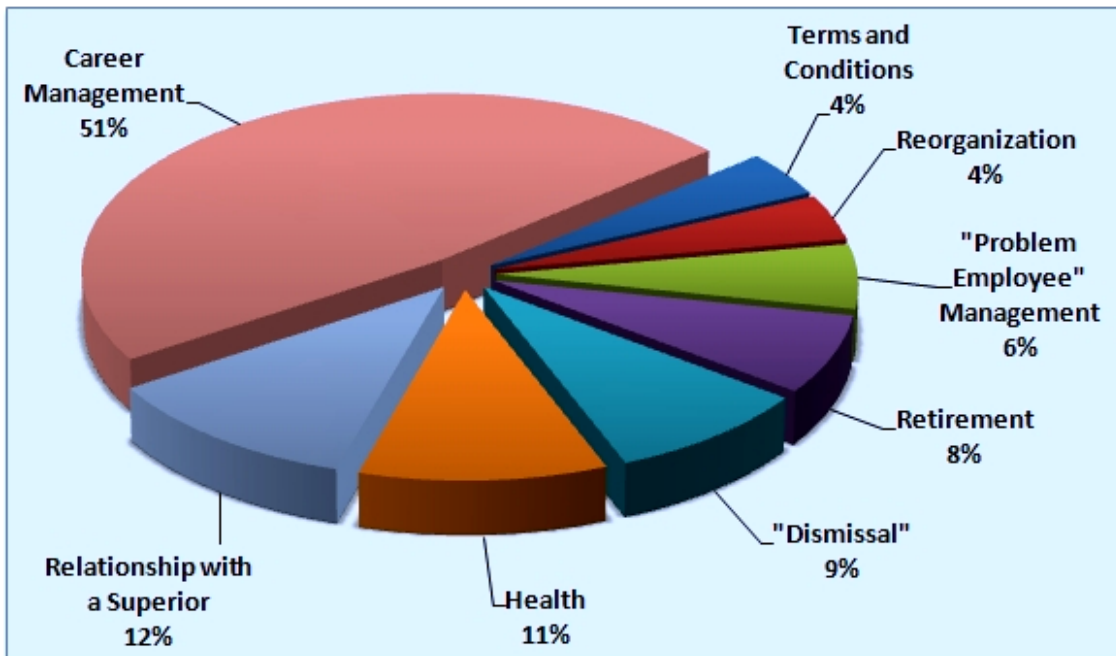
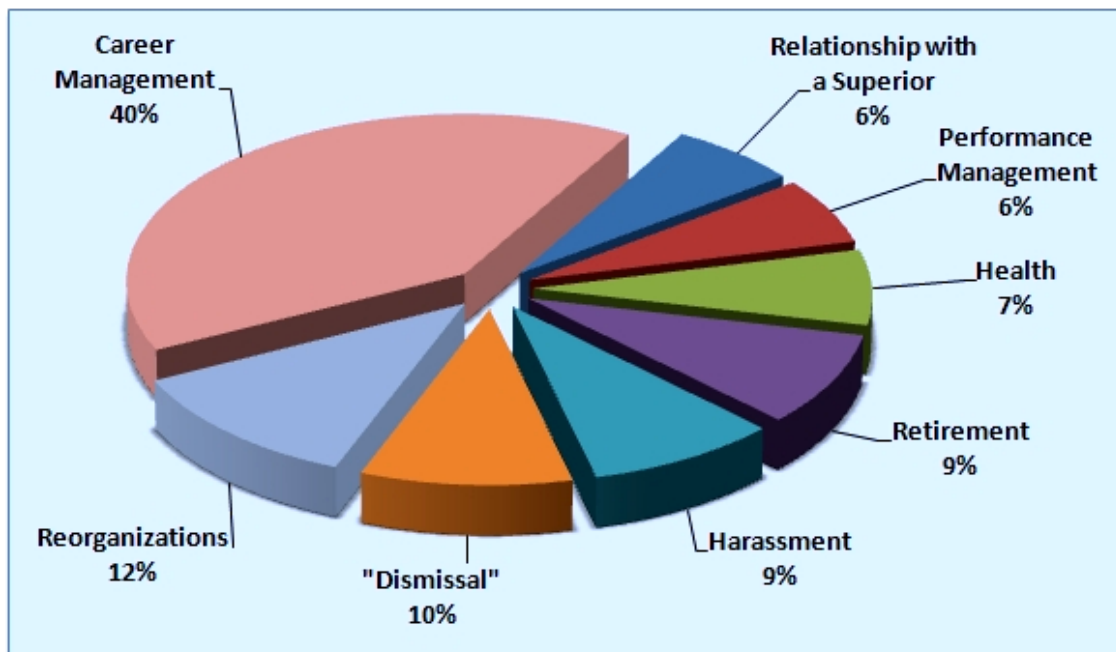


FIGURE 7 - ASE-TOP 8 REFERRAL REASONS (2008-09)



1. **CAREER MANAGEMENT** has consistently remained the highest area of demand and increased by 11 percent in 2009-10. This is an umbrella category that covers the full spectrum of issues, from seeking advice on resumes and job search strategies to queries about how to achieve work-life balance as an executive. Guidance and counseling is offered on how to successfully navigate sometimes confusing career waters. Many of the clients who come for other reasons, such as irreconcilable differences with a superior or health issues also need a career management component as part of the resolution.

The continued emphasis on talent management has given this topic increased profile. It is encouraging to see that many executives are taking a more proactive approach to managing their careers. At the same time, the findings of the *APEX 2007 Study on the Health and Well-Being of Executives on "Turnover-Thinking of Leaving the Organization"* identify significant increases in the "**push factors**", such as lack of recognition, values conflicts, non-supportive workplaces, and personality conflicts.

Anecdotally, the Senior Advisor has also observed that there often is a current perception among ASE clients that horizontal movement for executives across the broader public service is now more difficult because of an increased focus on talent management within departments. As well, a number of executives expressed frustration that a central career management mechanism for EX-01 to EX-03 does not currently exist.

2. **RELATIONSHIP WITH SUPERIORS** is in second position. It is noteworthy that 10 percent of clients came to the ASE with issues relating to being treated with disrespect, humiliated in front of others, perhaps ignored, and generally bullied by superiors. It is not uncommon for the Senior Advisor to be asked by an Executive how the "system" can either let this happen, continue, and, in some instances, appear to overlook such behaviors when staffing decisions are being made.

The federal public service frameworks and tools to support effective people management are numerous – Code of Values and Ethics, Management Accountability Framework – People Component, key Leadership Competencies for executives in the public service, along with effective and ineffective behaviors, and

an updated Executive Performance Management Program which, starting 2009-10, integrates the assessment of the “what” and the “how” of delivering results. However, the ASE continues to see and experience the frustration of this “say-do disconnect”.

Observation

New approach to Performance Management of Executives should reinforce a more consistent and rigorous emphasis on “people skills” in annual assessments.

Upcoming implementation of an updated Code of Values and Ethics should provide a welcome opportunity for departments, agencies and central agencies to engage in open frank discussions on a range of management issues, including managing workplace conflict, effective communications, and, managing poor performance.

- 3. HEALTH-RELATED ISSUES** moved from seventh place to third this year. In 2006, in anticipation of the *APEX 2007 Study on the Health and Well-Being of Executives*, the ASE began tracking this reason separately to more precisely gauge the extent of these issues. Prior to 2006, information on health was included in the “Other”

Observation

Current interdepartmental work, facilitated by OCHRO, on an integrated approach to Disability Management is a positive development.

Having such an approach in place both at the public service wide level and in individual organizations would provide much needed targeted support to individuals and help increase organizational effectiveness.

In November 2009, the Advisory Committee on Senior Level Retention and Compensation, in taking stock of the APEX data on the health of Executives, asked that APEX undertake further work to assess the cost to the system of doing nothing on executive health. This work is in progress.

category. Understandably a broad category, Health includes issues related to both mental and physical health, such as stress, burnout, depression, substance abuse/addictions, and workplace reintegration following extended disability/sick leave. The ASE sees not only a range of issues, but a spectrum of severity from health impacts identified early where prevention and mitigation are more possible, to cases that often require

significant time away from the workplace and then the challenge of effective re-integration. In all of these, one is struck by the potential extent of the societal costs – to the individual as a productive member of a team, their team, their organization, their family, and the taxpayer.

APEX has placed a priority on executive health matters since 1997, through a series of three studies on the health and well-being of executives, the March 2009 Health Summit and Recommendations (available at www.APEX.GC.CA) and their ongoing partnering on learning events with the Canadian Mental Health Association. The trend data of the *2007 APEX Study on the Health and Well-Being of Executives* – increased incidence of burnout, coupled with a continued high degree of engagement and commitment – is consistent with the health related issues and concerns that Executives bring to the ASE.

4. **DISMISSAL** remains in fourth place with nine percent of clients coming to the ASE for support in this area. Typically, Executives reported that they were told that they were being removed from their positions, as they were not seen as a good fit with “new organizational direction” and needed to move on. While experience has shown that there can be legitimate corporate reasons for these actions, too often the affected executives report being given little information and support, and being left to find their own way through the numerous challenges related to forced job change.
5. **RETIREMENT** moved up to fifth place, not unsurprisingly considering the demographic profile of the executive community. Eight percent of ASE clients sought advice on obtaining pension-related information, assessing options, post-employment considerations, and access to financial advisors familiar with the public service pension plan, severance and related considerations.

Observation

Current fiscal environment and broader public discussions regarding pensions have heightened the profile of this issue and contributed to a stronger demand for services in this area.

Typically, the Senior Advisor refers clients to key websites, such as the well-designed and highly user friendly www.pensionandbenefits.gc.ca and the Service Canada retirement planning tools.

6. **MANAGING “PROBLEM EMPLOYEES”** has continued its upward move from last year to sixth place. Six percent of clients came to the ASE seeking advice on how to effectively deal with poor performers or “problem employees”. Managing performance, in particular poor performance, has become a system-wide renewal priority.

Expectations for Deputy Heads to... “enable managers to better manage people and performance by equipping them with the tools, skills, and support they need”... are clearly set out in *The Clerk of the Privy Council’s 2010-2011 Public Service Renewal Action Plan*.

Tools, skills, and support are critical components of an effective performance management system. Supporting tools for managers and executives to help manage the full spectrum of performance have been developed both at the departmental level and by OCHRO, including a performance management website³.

Managers and executives need both guides and guidance to adeptly navigate the complexities of performance management with its numerous component parts – ideally, a systems approach comprised of integrated planning, identification of goals and objectives, setting priorities, clear direction, and, performance feedback.

Clients of the ASE are often dealing with longstanding performance issues and are highly dependent on human resources support. The capacity of human resources organizations to effectively support managers varies across departments and agencies. Frequent changes in human resource advisors, uneven practical skills and experience, and a discomfort with risk are some of the most common frustrations cited by executive clients in respect of human resources capacity. The Human Resources Council work on building strong human resources community capacity remains a critical area of investment.

Observation

Issues related to Harassment are in ninth place, however, more than half the harassment complaints are related to the Executive trying to address a performance problem with the employee in question.⁴

- 7. RE-ORGANIZATIONS** are in seventh place this year at four percent, a drop from last year’s second place. Transition and renewal are constants in today’s public service. However, it would appear that the necessary changes that a department undertakes do not always adequately take into account the distress and displacement experienced by those executives affected.

³ *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Clerk of the Privy Council, Annex B: Results from the 2009-2010 Public Service Renewal Action Plan.*

⁴ *Harassment as a category is reserved solely for those cases where an executive has been formally accused of harassment by a subordinate or a colleague.*

Executives typically report that communication was inadequate or largely absent, that they lacked information about their rights, recourse and options. Some executives felt targeted, that they were perhaps seen as “past their best before date”, while others felt that the reorganization was a way to move them from their positions because the “fit” with current management wasn’t there.

Tied with Re-organizations for seventh spot this year is, **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**, a new addition this year to the top referral reasons. Four percent of clients came to the ASE with questions and issues about “the rules”, for example, “What are the rules?”, “What are my rights?”, “How does it work?”, in areas such as leave, compensation, and classification. Often, executives are not very familiar with the Treasury Board Secretariat *Policy on the Management of Executives* and the related Directives. The ASE is a strong proponent of being an “informed client”, i.e., having a working understanding of the policies/directives that relate to executive management just as you would a collective agreement if you were a unionized employee.

Other Issues we are Monitoring

For the second consecutive year, issues related to the Performance Management Program are absent from the top tier of reasons executives seek the support of the ASE. Cases relating to this subject peaked in 2005 and have since decreased annually. This is likely reflective of a more strongly embedded and rigorous performance management and assessment regime in departments and agencies, as was noted by the Clerk in his *Seventeenth Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada*.

However, 2010-11 will be the first year in which we see the results of the implementation of the integrated approach on executive performance management, the assessment of both the “what”, and the “how” of the results achieved. Clear, continuous, and meaningful feedback, at a minimum respecting the Directive on the Performance Management Program requirement for a mid-year review, will be key to facilitating a smooth implementation of this approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

UPDATE FROM 2008-2009

The 2008 ASE Annual Report focused on two recommendations: **developing solid people management skills** and **revisiting and rebalancing the landscape of harassment management in the Public Service**.

Progress has been made on the **development of people management** skills. There is a clear awareness of the need to support managers to better manage people and performance⁵.

Regarding **harassment management**, little appears to have changed over the past year. The Treasury Board Secretariat policy on Harassment is under review as part of the development of a broader Workplace Policy. A critical element of rebalancing the harassment management landscape will be to ensure support for non-represented employees, including Executives, such as was formerly provided through a network of volunteers.

2009-2010

This year's report again makes two recommendations—one broad and all-encompassing, the other more focused and specific, which, if implemented over time, would not only improve productivity and the quality of the workplace environment in the Public Service, but should also serve to reduce the growing workload/demand on the ASE.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Health, both at the individual and organizational level and its relationship to productivity is a cross-cutting matter increasingly emerging as a key area of concern. Studies such as the *Towers Watson "Staying @Work Report – The Health and Productivity Advantage"*, recent work by the Canadian Mental Health Association, the three APEX Health and Well-Being of Executives surveys, along with the cumulative ASE information provide compelling data support.

Premises for Moving Ahead On Executive Health in the Public Service of Canada

"The health and well-being of an organization's people, including executives, is integrally linked to overall organizational health, sustainability, renewal and high quality service delivery."

"Executive health is a shared responsibility between individual executives and their organizations."

Source: Summary Report, March 2009 APEX Summit on Executive Health & Well-Being

⁵ 2010-2011 Public Service Renewal Action Plan

In particular, the ASE would note the linkages between health and employee engagement, the cost to individuals and the system, and the impact on the ability of people in organizations to deliver quality results, such as the provision of excellent advice to government and service to Canadians.

While this report focuses on the public service executive community, the foundational principles around organizational health and well-being are broadly applicable. The premises for moving forward on executive health in the Public Service of Canada that were developed at the *March 2009 APEX Summit on Executive Health and Well-being* would provide a solid base.

Flowing from those principles, the four recommendations and proposed actions of the *APEX Health Summit* could provide a solid point of departure for discussions with central agency and departmental partners.

Progress has been made in a number of areas. For example, APEX has partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association on two learning events for executives and developed specific learning and development programs to support executives such as “*Finishing Well*” and “*The Leadership Evolution*” series, Parts 1 and 2. The interdepartmental work, facilitated by OCHRO, on Disability Management is also a positive development.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The recommendation from the 2008 ASE Annual Report on **the importance of developing solid people management skills** continues to be highly relevant, particularly in this environment of rapid change, fiscal restraint, and high expectations. Developing solid people management skills is a key element of building high performing adaptive organizations.

In the executive community, through the integrated approach to assessing performance, these skills are now more systematically assessed and recognized.

The senior level commitment to this has been articulated in *The Clerk of the Privy Council’s Seventeenth Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada* which “identifies employee development as one of the four key renewal pillars.” In addition, the *2010-2011 Public Service Renewal Action Plan* specifically highlights supporting managers “by equipping them with the tools, skills, and support they require”.

These are critical building blocks of management success for development of managers and executives at all levels. In particular, improvements in communication skills – having “difficult conversations”, giving and receiving feedback; managing workplace conflict; performance coaching skills, such as mobilizing diverse teams, should be a mandatory part of leadership development programs at all levels. The current executive performance management regime provides a vehicle for the systematic assessment of these key management competencies.

As an integrated planning culture becomes increasingly embedded in public service culture and measurement tools such as dashboards more widely used, one can envision a learning dashboard for executives/managers that identifies these critical management skills and assesses both individual and organizational progress.

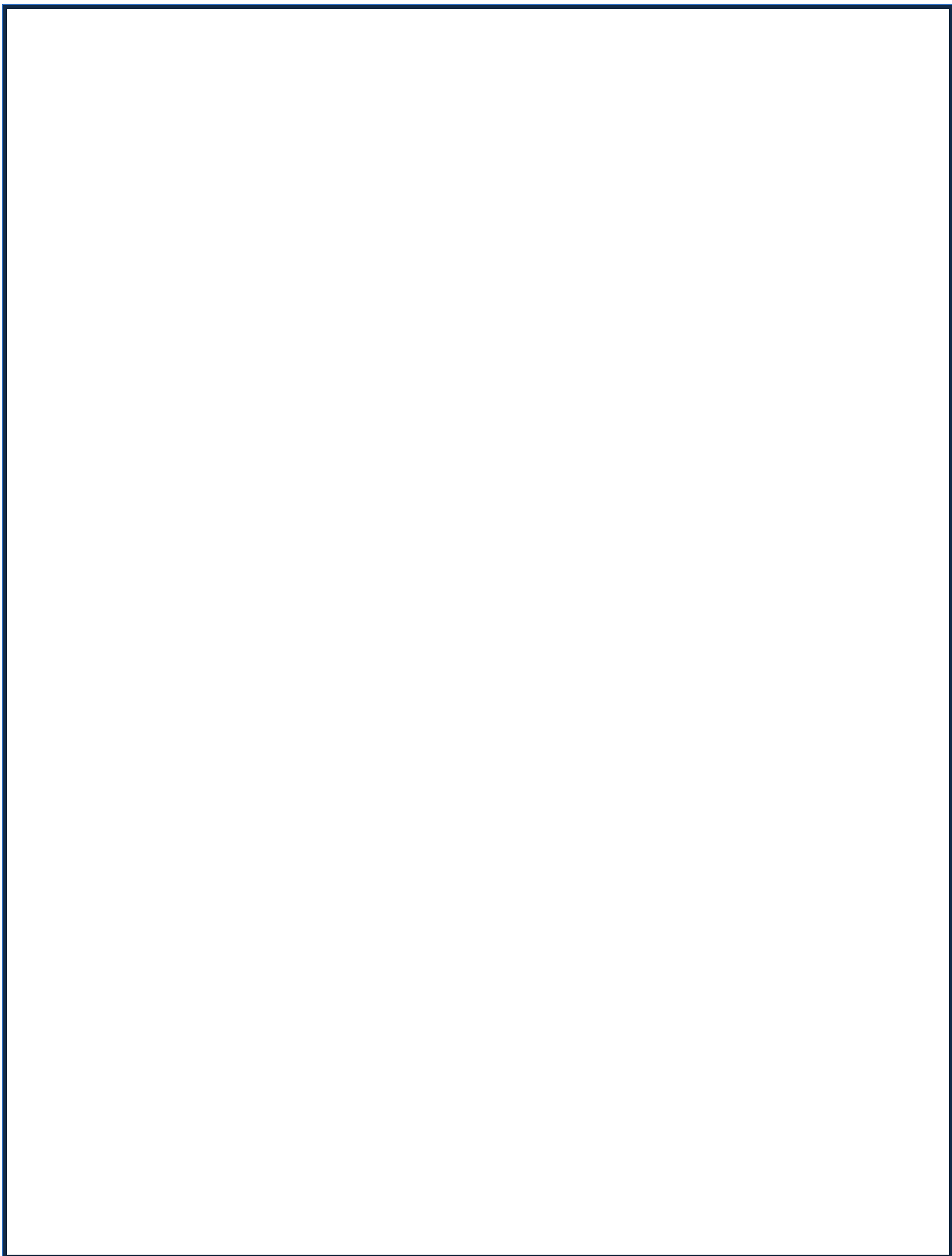
CONCLUSION

The ASE has completed its sixth year of service to Executives. In June 2008, the Deputy Minister Human Resources Management Advisory Committee recognized the ASE as an important contributor to workplace health and the program was renewed for a further five years.

In 2010-11, key initiatives - beyond individual client service - will include: an in-depth review of the ASE business model; developing a client outreach strategy; and, further analysis and mining of the cumulative data to better identify trends and collective needs for use by APEX and its Central Agency and departmental partners.

As I conclude this sixth annual report in my first year as Senior Advisor to Executives, I would like to thank those who ably assisted me in providing the best client service possible: my colleagues at the APEX Secretariat who shared their skills, experience and knowledge with me; the network of policy advisors and subject matter specialists at the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Public Service Commission and the Canada School of Public Service; and, members of my external network of coaches, consultants, learning specialists, lawyers, health and human resource professionals.

Finally, on behalf of the Executive cadre, sincere thanks are extended to those Deputy Ministers who are financially supporting the ASE.





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