LABOUR-MANAGEMENT COOPERATION
IN THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

By

EDWARD GILLIS
B.A., Mount Allison University, 1981

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We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

----------------------------------------------
Michèle Demers, Project Sponsor

----------------------------------------------
Paul F. Clark, Ph.D., Faculty Supervisor

----------------------------------------------
R. Nancy Greer, Ed.D., Committee Chair

ROYAL ROADS UNIVERSITY
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY *

Overview

In late 2003, new legislation was introduced in the House of Commons that would bring the most significant changes in 40 years to the human resources management framework in the federal public service. The Public Service Modernization Act seemed to herald a new era of cooperation between union and management. In the spirit of the new act, union and management leaders came together to consult on the how to implement the legislation. Both traditional and innovative consultation mechanisms were introduced to aid in achieving this new harmony, and unions were granted unprecedented levels of access to and involvement in planning the implementation of the new legislation. Deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers from various government departments worked side by side with union presidents and vice-presidents to develop a cooperative approach to implementation. Senior staff members from unions and departments were seconded to an implementation secretariat established to facilitate the effort.

The central question this research sought to explore is “How can leaders’ experiences in Public Service Modernization Act consultations be used to improve senior-level labour-management relations in the federal public service?” Senior union and management leaders were asked to reflect upon their experiences and candidly examine the outcome of their collective efforts. The study focused on the relationship between these normally adversarial parties both during and as a result of their collaboration. This examination of the human and organizational dynamics at play in the process aimed to provide a new perspective on how the parties can find mutual benefit in collaboration.

Literature Review

Taken individually, the topics of labour-management cooperation, organizational change, and organizational culture have each been the subject of serious and sustained attention from academics over an extended period. Taken together, the existing literature relating to these closely intertwined topics amounts to an enormous body of intellectual analysis. The literature review in Chapter Two focuses on labour-management cooperation as it relates to building a cooperative labour relations culture over the long term. With respect to organizational change, the intent of this review is to capture the breadth of analysis related to change leadership in unionized environments, with particular attention to change efforts undertaken cooperatively between employers and unions. A brief discussion of key concepts as they relate to the research question follows the review of the literature.


**Research Methods**

This study was conducted using a qualitative research approach. At its heart, the research question sought to explore the effect of collaborative processes on the relationships of a small number of key participants in the federal labour relations community. The intent was to use the experiences of research participants in PSMA implementation as a springboard to recommendations for improving labour management relations in the federal public service. Issues of trust, respect, and collaboration were central to the exploration of the research question.

The mechanics of labour relations are defined by legislation, collective agreements and jurisprudence, but the practice of labour relations is much more closely aligned to personal and organizational relationships. As these relationships go, so goes the state of labour relations in a particular jurisdiction at a particular time. Accordingly, one-on-one interviews were used in this study to gather data.

Research participants were chosen from both the union and the management sides. Participants who were actively involved in the Public Service Modernization consultations or who had substantial direct experience in senior-level labour relations engaged in interviews that took place over one to two hours. Participants were chosen to reflect a cross-section of experience, and ranged from senior policy analysts and labour relations specialists to deputy ministers and union presidents. These interviews were supplemented by an in-depth background interview with John Fryer, chair of the Advisory Committee on Labour management Relations in the Federal Public Service. The interviews followed a semi-standardized format designed to introduce topics but to allow for considerable digression by the participants.

A full description of the conduct of this research project can be found at Chapter Three of this report.

**Results and Conclusions**

Chapter Four presents a narrative description of the data gathered from the research participants. Stated differently, these are the words and ideas of the senior leaders who participated in this study and which are distilled from over 500 pages of interview transcripts. The findings are grouped into common themes that emerged from the interviews. A brief synopsis of some of the findings is outlined below.

**Labour Relations Culture**

Participants reported that wide differences exist in the culture and practice of labour relations from department to department in the federal public service. A common theme among participants was the importance of the deputy minister in shaping the labour relations culture in a given department.

Many participants reported resistance from both sides to any cultural change to the union-management relationship in the public service. While the PSMA consultation process has raised the level of engagement of some senior management leaders, both union and management participants confirmed that a significant core of senior managers are not supportive of a more collaborative union-management relationship.
Strengthening senior-level commitment will be an immediate requirement if positive cultural change is to be realized through the coming demographic shift.

The Secretariat Experiment

Participants from both the union and the management sides qualified this experiment as a breakthrough for the parties. In most cases, it was considered that the breakthrough came at the level of mutual trust and acceptance of risk by the senior officials.

Participants were nearly unanimous in their positive assessment of the initiative. While union and management representatives were tightly integrated into the secretariat, early concerns among unions of being co-opted proved to be unfounded. Participants from both union and management reported an increased understanding of the constraints and realities facing their counterparts.

Some participants suggested that in future applications of the secretariat model, care should be taken to clarify expectations of equitable workload sharing and accountability for deliverables among secretariat members.

Departmental Union-Management Consultation

Participants identified wide differences with respect to the effectiveness of union-management consultation mechanisms both across the public service and between levels within departments. Many departments have little or no meaningful consultation, and there is only a small, albeit growing core of deputy ministers who are visible in their support of improved labour-management cooperation.

Management participants were unanimous in their view that national-level consultation processes could be more effective if a stronger strategic focus were employed. There was a recognition that senior managers could do a better job of articulating the strategic thinking behind issues for consultation, but also a sense that the senior union leaders have some difficulty transcending individual operational irritants to focus on ‘big-picture’, cross-governmental issues. Management participants also expressed frustration at assembling management teams and multiple bargaining agents for senior-level consultation, only to discuss relatively minor issues impacting a few members of one bargaining agent.

Many participants identified the lack of labour relations capacity within departments and bargaining agents as a potentially significant impediment to the increased consultation and co-development envisioned in the Public Service Modernization Act.

Competencies

Competencies are defined as knowledge, skills, and abilities that can predict successful outcomes on a job or task. Research participants were asked to describe the competencies that they believed were the most important to an effective labour-management relationship.
Competencies identified by participants can be grouped into four broad categories based on behaviour, cognition, communication and values. If there is an overarching competency, however, it would relate to the ability to understand and appreciate the realities and constraints of one’s counterparts in the union-management relationship. This “reciprocity” cuts across the behaviour, communication, cognition, and values-based competency categories. It can be concluded that cooperative labour relations initiatives will have an increased likelihood of success when participants possess competencies that promote mutual understanding.

The responses of participants in this study correlate well with recent literature on labour relations competencies which suggests that “strong organizational leadership, definition of mutual goals, team building, openness, effective communication skills and above all, trust” (Ospina and Yaroni, 2003a, p. 140) are the hallmark competencies of individuals in an effective labour relations environment.

A number of other findings and conclusions emerged from the discussions with research participants. These include the role of joint learning in cooperative labour relations, the effect of personal relationships, shared expectations and goals, trust and commitment, and lessons learned. A full discussion of the views of research participants in all key areas can be found in Chapter Four, along with a summary conclusion.

**Study Recommendations**

Chapter Five begins with recommendations flowing from the results and conclusions presented in the previous chapter. Three main recommendations are presented, each with a number of sub-elements designed to clarify and expand on the main recommendation. This is followed by a discussion of the implications for stakeholder organizations if the recommendations were implemented.

More than half a decade has passed since the Fryer report identified a need for cultural change in the labour relations environment of the federal public service. Research participants in this study unanimously agreed that cultural change is necessary, and the efforts of the parties in the PSMA consultation process are direct evidence of such cultural change. However, if the lessons learned from the PSMA implementation experience are not shared and transferred, there is a risk that the experience will become an isolated and temporary example of union-management collaboration, rather than a bridge to true cultural change.

In determining how best to build on the successes of the PSMA experience, the parties should recognize that they enjoyed senior-level commitment and support systems that are not currently in place for the collaborative efforts to follow at the departmental level. Replicating this commitment and support will be an important factor in the success of future efforts. The following recommendations address the need for establishing and developing commitments and systems that will assist the parties in building long-term, collaborative relationships.
Relevant Document:

**Recommendation 1: Create a Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation**

The primary mission of the Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation would be to facilitate positive cultural change in the labour relations community. The Centre would fulfill two broad mandates. First, it would conduct outreach activities to advance the cause of cooperative labour relations in the deputy minister community. The aim here would be to create a compelling case for greater engagement among deputies, which has been identified as a prerequisite to any long-term success.

A further element of the outreach effort would include bringing senior management and labour leaders together to build cooperative relationships. These activities would support cultural change by promoting better mutual understanding among the senior representatives, and by challenging some of the underlying assumptions and beliefs that may be acting as barriers to greater cooperation.

Second, the Centre would coordinate and facilitate cooperative efforts through the provision of professional support, developmental tools to enhance capacity, and facilities for collaborative initiatives. In effect, the Centre would build an infrastructure to assist parties involved in cooperative labour relations efforts in the federal public service.

In keeping with these recommendations, the following suggestions could be considered as key activities of the Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation:

- Facilitate outreach to the deputy minister community, and create opportunities for senior leaders from both sides to come together to build relationships.
- Facilitate the development of collaborative capacity in the labour relations community.
- Provide professional support and facilities for parties engaged in co-development of government-wide initiatives.
- Conduct, compile, and disseminate research on labour-management cooperation.
- Develop tools to track progress of cooperative efforts across the public service.
- Host an annual seminar to highlight trends, share best practices, and recognize innovative and successful cooperative efforts.

**Recommendation 2: Design Learning Modules for Use in Joint Workshops**

From the results and conclusions of this study, it is clear that the parties would benefit from joint learning opportunities. The following recommendation outlines a series of joint learning workshop modules designed to address different elements of a collaborative labour relations framework. These learning modules would be of four key types:

- Joint workshops on labour relations competencies
- Joint workshops on problem-solving behaviours and processes
- Joint workshops on shared values, common goals, and relationship building
- Joint workshops on union-management collaboration.

Once developed, these modules would become part of the suite of offerings of the Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation.
Recommendation 3: Develop More Effective Consultation Strategies and Practices

If the consultative processes outlined in the PSMA are to lead to improved labour relations, all parties must perceive the processes to be useful and effective. This is not currently the case. To address this issue, and in conjunction with the outreach activities referenced in Recommendation 1, the following strategies are recommended for consideration:

a. Unions and management should consider adopting an integrated approach to departmental consultation.

b. Unions and management should consider creating clear linkages between cooperative labour relations and successful change initiatives.

c. Unions and management should consider more bilateral consultation at the senior level.

All of the recommendations are discussed in detail in the body of Chapter Five. This is followed by an analysis of the organizational implications of these recommendations for the stakeholders. The thesis concludes with a discussion of implications for future research and a reflection on lessons learned during this research project.

* This executive summary did not form part of the thesis submitted to Royal Roads University.
ABSTRACT

A decade of difficult labour relations preceded the introduction, in 2003, of legislation designed to modernize human resources management in the Canadian federal public service and launch a new era of labour-management cooperation. Senior leaders from unions and management were brought together to consult on and implement the new legislation. This study examines their experience through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, identifies lessons learned, and makes recommendations for improving senior-level labour-management cooperation. Issues of organizational change, trust, labour relations competencies, shared values, and joint learning are canvassed in the context of current and future labour-management collaboration and co-development. Notable gaps are identified in the effectiveness of current departmental consultation mechanisms, in the level of engagement of some senior managers, and in existing infrastructure supporting labour-management cooperation. A series of recommendations is presented to address these gaps and to promote positive cultural change in the federal labour relations system.
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CHAPTER 1: FOCUS AND FRAMING

Introduction

Senior officials in the Canadian federal government and its 17 unions were presented with a unique opportunity in late 2003. New legislation was introduced in the House of Commons that would bring the most significant changes in 40 years to the human resources management framework in the federal jurisdiction. The Public Service Modernization Act (2003) c. 22 (PSMA) seemed to herald a new era of cooperation between union and management. In the spirit of the new act, the leaders came together to consult on how to implement the legislation, using both traditional consultation mechanisms as well as new and innovative approaches to working together. As a longtime senior staff member with the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC), one of the largest unions in the federal public sector, I was interested in examining the relationship between the federal government, my union, and other federal unions during this interesting period.

This research project asked these senior union and management leaders to reflect upon their experiences and candidly examine the outcome of their collective efforts. The study focused on the relationship between these normally adversarial parties both during and as a result of their collaboration. This examination of the human and organizational dynamics at play in this process aimed to provide a new perspective on how the parties can find mutual benefit in collaboration.
The broad research question considered in this study was “How can leaders’ experiences in Public Service Modernization Act (2003) consultations be used to improve senior-level labour-management relations in the federal public service?” Sub-questions were as follows:

1. What factors positively or negatively affect union-management cooperation?
2. What are the most important skills or competencies required by union and management leaders to improve the likelihood of success of labour-management cooperation efforts?
3. How can union and management leaders use the PSMA consultation experience to improve cooperation at the workplace level?

The Opportunity

In late 2003, the Liberal government introduced an omnibus bill in the House of Commons that would usher in a host of significant changes to the human resources framework in the federal public service. The Public Service Modernization Act (2003) holds great promise for the future of labour-management relations in this important sector. The preamble to the act is a lofty statement of the significance of the relationship between the federal government and its unions, and trumpets the arrival of a new era of harmonious relations.

Innovative mechanisms were introduced to aid in achieving this new harmony, and unions were granted unprecedented levels of access to and involvement in planning the implementation of the new legislation. Deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers from various government departments worked side by side with union
presidents and vice-presidents to develop a cooperative approach to implementation. Staff members from unions and departments were seconded to an implementation secretariat. The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, the sponsoring organization for this research, participated fully in the consultative process, including a staff secondment to the multilateral implementation team.

Gauging the success of the consultation mechanisms introduced with the legislation could benefit the stakeholders in the federal labour relations system. How would the participants judge their efforts and experiences against the challenge embodied in the preamble of the new act? Have they, by their actions and attitudes, launched a new era of harmonious labour relations in the federal public sector? Or have old antagonisms and mistrust created unseen barriers to cooperation?

The timing of the proposed research also created an opportunity. The action research for this major project was undertaken during the early stages of implementation at the departmental level. As the senior-level consultation process in this case could be viewed as a microcosm of the broader labour relations system, the timing needed to allow for an examination of the correlation, if any, between the experience at the senior level and experiences at the working level. This examination sought to identify practices that could be replicated at various levels of the labour relations system. The opportunity to observe, facilitate, and discuss the outcomes of many months of consultation was expected to yield a rich reserve of data.

My interest in this topic grew out of a broader interest in the field of change leadership, and specifically whether there were observable differences in leading change in a unionized versus a non-unionized environment. The focus narrowed to a specific
change initiative, and the implementation of the act became an obvious choice. A change of this magnitude is beyond the scope of one research project, but there are numerous interesting questions around change leadership and organizational culture that may be illuminated by the parties’ collective efforts.

This major project represented a leadership stretch on several fronts. First, while I occupy a senior position within the Professional Institute, I do not regularly interact with the government officials and other stakeholders who were the focus of this study. Therefore, I needed to cultivate the trust and goodwill of a very senior group of leaders and policymakers over a short period. This creation of trust was a challenge because I would be viewed as inextricably linked with the union side, yet I would be a relatively unknown quantity.

My abilities both as a leader and as a researcher were stretched because of the necessity of honest and forthright feedback from the participants. Both sides are invested in the success of the implementation, but this is especially true of the employer side. This strong need for success could lead to a tendency to cast the experience in the most positive light possible, and to show a corresponding unwillingness to go beyond platitudes. Many of the key stakeholders, as senior representatives of their organizations, are well versed in avoiding answers to sensitive questions. Drawing out these leaders would require a deft touch and a nuanced understanding of qualitative research methods.
Significance of the Opportunity

All of the key stakeholders in this action research project should reap benefit from the work they engaged in collectively. The nature of this examination suggested that the outcomes should be shared with all parties, and not just the sponsoring organization.

As the senior-level consultation leading to the implementation of the act could be seen to reflect the broader state of labour relations in the federal public sector, the outcomes of this study could be viewed as one predictor of future relations between my union and the federal employer. In reality, the outcomes could be extrapolated to relations with each of the other federal unions and could provide insight to multilateral relations between the government and its unions.

The president of the Professional Institute frequently interacts with deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers of federal departments. The results and recommendations from this study could provide the president with new insight into the views, attitudes, and underlying assumptions of her counterparts on the employer side. In turn, this new insight could well inform the approach that the president takes during such interactions. Perhaps most importantly, the research could bring into focus attitudes or assumptions on the union side that may unconsciously be influencing the union’s approach to consultation and labour relations in general.

The timing of the study added to the significance of the opportunity. The research took place in the early months after the implementation of the first phase of the act. The stakeholders had a strong, current connection to the topic being explored and rich evidence of the success, or lack thereof, experienced to that point was anticipated.
Considerable time and energy were devoted to the Professional Institute’s response to the introduction of the Public Service Modernization Act (2003). The union wrote briefs, made presentations to parliamentary committees, established task forces, and trained staff and stewards in the fine points of the act. If this research were not undertaken, the Professional Institute might find that it has a less clear sense of the value and impact of these activities. Further, its leadership might engage in behaviours that have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the current strained labour relations environment in the federal jurisdiction. Finally, if this research were not undertaken, the Professional Institute might fail to discover simple truths that could not only help to humanize the labour relations system at the senior level, but also positively affect the impact of the changes on individual employees and union members.

Systems Analysis of the Opportunity

The union-management consultation processes described in this study operate within complex governmental and labour relations systems. The following sections describe first the recent history leading to the PSMA consultation process and then the key stakeholders in the PSMA consultations, their relevance and potential systems impact on the research study. Those stakeholders are the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada (PSHRMAC), the Union-Management Advisory Committee (UMAC), the Treasury Board of Canada, federal departments, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC), the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), other federal bargaining agents, and the National Joint Council (NJC).
Recent History

The complex consultation effort leading to implementation of the new legislation occurred during a period in which the relationship between the federal government as employer and its employees has been acknowledged by many to have reached a low-water mark (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2000). While the Public Service Modernization Act envisions a collaborative labour relations climate in the federal public service, collaboration has not typified the relationship between the parties in recent memory. The 1990s saw a series of events which served to lower the level of trust between bargaining agents and the federal employer. Wages and salary increments were frozen, collective bargaining was effectively suspended for a six-year period and 45,000 public service positions were eliminated.

Against this backdrop, the Treasury Board of Canada established the Advisory Committee on Labour Management Relations in the Federal Public Service in October 1999. John Fryer, an academic and former labour leader, was appointed to chair the committee, which comprised senior representatives from management, labour and academia. The committee’s mandate was to evaluate the state of labour relations in the federal public sector and to make recommendations for improvement.

The committee consulted broadly, inviting bargaining agents and deputy ministers to make presentations to the committee, administering questionnaires and convening discussion panels. These consultations contributed to the first of two committee reports, which identified a badly deteriorated relationship between unions and management, restrictive labour and employment legislation, and stressful workplaces. The first report concluded by suggesting that the current system of labour relations in the federal public
service could not be sustained in the twenty-first century (Treasury Board of Canada, 2000).

A year later the Fryer committee published its final report, complete with 33 recommendations on which the tri-partite group had reached unanimous agreement. The recommendations covered the broad sweep of federal labour relations, calling for, among other things, co-development of the staffing and classifications systems, issues heretofore the sole purview of the employer. Other recommendations included two-tier bargaining, the reconstitution of the Public Service Staff Relations Board, and the establishment of a Public Interest Dispute Resolution Commission. The committee urged the adoption and implementation of all recommendations as a package.

This was not to be. Rather than adopting the recommendations, the federal government instead established the Task Force on Modernizing Human Resources Management in the Public Service. A senior deputy minister, Ranald Quail, led the work of the task force, whose mandate was to recommend a framework for modernizing human resources, taking into account policy, legislative and institutional elements. The task force was asked to prepare a memorandum to Cabinet including a human resources policy framework and draft legislation.

The establishment of the task force was not without controversy. Despite repeated calls for direct union participation in the activities of the task force, neither the task force nor its advisory council included bargaining agent representation. Unions were highly critical of this approach (Canadian Association of Professional Employees, 2001). Nevertheless, unions were periodically updated on the progress of the task force and were offered the opportunity to provide written submissions on a range of topics under study.
In several cases though, ‘Cabinet secrecy’ was invoked when unions asked for specific information.

The work of the task force resulted in the introduction in Parliament of *Bill C-25*, the *Public Service Modernization Act*. The bill worked its way through the legislative process, with House of Commons and Senate committees hearing testimony and receiving briefs from various stakeholders, including bargaining agents. The *Public Service Modernization Act* received Royal Assent on November 4, 2003.

**Key Stakeholders**

*Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada*

The Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada was created in December 2003 and mandated to oversee and assist in the implementation of the Public Service Modernization Act (2003). PSHRMAC plays a central role in this study, as it is this agency that facilitates the consultation process leading to the implementation of the PSMA. It is under the auspices of PSHRMAC that senior representatives of key stakeholders are brought together to collaborate on issues related to the new legislation. PSHRMAC also houses a group of senior staff representatives from departments and unions who have been seconded to the agency for the duration of the implementation. This multilateral group represents one of the more innovative elements of the approach to PSMA implementation.
Union-Management Advisory Committee

The Union-Management Advisory Committee is the body established to provide a forum for senior management and union representatives to consult on matters related to the implementation of the Public Service Modernization Act (2003). The committee comprises seven representatives from the management side and seven union leaders. The management representatives are senior executives from various agencies and departments affected by the legislation, while the bargaining-agent side comprises presidents of federal public service unions. Many of the research participants in this study were members of the UMAC.

Treasury Board of Canada

“The Treasury Board is the employer, expenditure authority and general manager of the public service” (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2005, Section 1.1). It is primarily in its role as employer that the Treasury Board of Canada participates in the federal labour relations system. The Treasury Board represents the federal employer in all collective bargaining with unions and is ultimately responsible for management-side labour relations in the federal sector.

Federal Departments and Agencies

While the Treasury Board acts as the nominal employer of all public service employees, public servants are actually hired into the myriad of departments and agencies that make up the federal public service. Workplace labour relations, therefore, occurs at this level on a national, regional, and local basis. Senior management representatives
from departments sit on the Union-Management Advisory Committee. A significant feature of the new legislation is a mandatory requirement for unions and management to consult at the departmental level. For the purposes of this report, the term ‘department’ should be taken to mean departments, agencies, or other organizations to which the Public Service Modernization Act applies.

The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada

The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada is the largest union of professionals in Canada and the second largest of the 17 unions in the federal public service. Given this size, PIPSC is looked to by the federal government and by sister unions to play a leading role in system-wide labour relations matters such as the introduction of new legislation. From the outset, the Professional Institute called for meaningful consultation between government and bargaining agents as a prerequisite of successful implementation of the new legislation (Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada [PIPSC], 2003, ¶ 6). PIPSC fully engaged in the consultation process, established an internal response team, and seconded staff to the collaborative implementation team at PSHRMAC.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada

The largest union in the federal public sector is the Public Service Alliance of Canada. PSAC represents the majority of blue- and pink-collar workers in the sector. Traditionally the most militant of federal unions, PSAC rejected the premise that the new legislation would bring harmony to the labour-management relationship, and called for
the new act to be replaced by the Canada Labour Code (Public Service Alliance of Canada [PSAC], n.d., p. 2). Notwithstanding this position, PSAC engaged in the senior-level consultation process and seconded staff to the PSHRMAC implementation team.

Other Federal Bargaining Agents

While the remaining 15 bargaining agents in the federal sector do not approach the size of the Professional Institute or PSAC, all of their members will nevertheless be affected by the legislation. Several presidents of the smaller bargaining agents sat on the Union-Management Advisory Committee and took part in other discussions related to PSMA implementation.

The National Joint Council

The NJC serves as a forum for consultation and negotiation between employer and bargaining agent representatives in the federal public service. The council focuses on issues with service-wide applicability, especially in relation to benefits and terms and conditions of employment. The National Joint Council assisted the parties to the PSMA consultation process through their collaborative work with the implementation secretariat of the Public Service Human Resources Modernization Agency of Canada.

Systems Impacts

The labour-management cooperation initiative attempted through PSMA consultation is an experiment that is transpiring in isolation from other labour relations activities, but which is surrounded by the larger system of labour relations in the federal
public sector, and by the system of government itself. As is the case with any dynamic system, events unfolding in real time in one part of the system impact events in another part of the system.

One such system impact relates to the largest union in the federal public sector, the Public Service Alliance of Canada. PSAC played a lead role in the senior-level consultation process, and due to its sheer size, the views and actions of PSAC impact the system. A strike by all 125,000 PSAC members in autumn 2004 resulted in a withdrawal by PSAC from all consultation for a period, thereby influencing the union-management consultations on the PSMA. Paradoxically, PSAC chose not to recall employees it had seconded to the Public Service Human Resource Management Agency of Canada. The impact of the presence of these employees at PSHRMAC during this strike represented an interesting research vein to mine.

Collective bargaining is the core function of any trade union. While PSMA discussions were unfolding, events at the Professional Institute’s largest bargaining table, that of the Computer Systems (CS) group, were also creating unforeseen systems impacts. In the spring of 2005, negotiations quickly turned acrimonious when the federal government abruptly ended a longstanding albeit temporary allowance to CS employees. Many of these employees marched in the streets of Ottawa to protest the government’s actions, and PIPSC (n.d.a) filed an unfair labour practice complaint (¶ 2). The leadership of the Professional Institute questioned the logic of using precious resources to support the PSMA effort while simultaneously waging battle with the same employer on another front. This research sought to understand the impact these events had on relationships within the PSMA initiative.
The attempt to create new harmony in labour-management relations as envisaged in the PSMA is influenced by events and forces in the system of government as a whole. While the parties were engaged in cooperatively discussing the new PSMA, another piece of government business, the February 2005 federal budget, threatened to jeopardize the initiative. The budget announced program cuts and job transfers affecting thousands of workers, along with significant changes to the structure and organization of work (PIPSC, n.d.b, p. 1). These changes could eclipse the efforts to modernize the public service and will test the resolve of the parties to continue their collaboration.

On a more personal level, all participants in this cooperative effort have constituencies to whom they are accountable. On the union side, bargaining-agent presidents are accountable to their boards of directors, other elected and appointed union leaders, and ultimately to the membership as a whole through their annual general meetings. The stakes for union leaders are potentially high given that these leaders are elected through a democratic political process and could risk election defeat if their actions were seen as a betrayal of the membership. On the management side, senior leaders are accountable to their superiors, in this case usually a minister or deputy minister. The ramifications of their participation in PSMA consultations must constantly be assessed in light of shifting political realities.

In turn, the outcomes generated through PSMA consultation process will impact other elements of the federal labour relations system. The cooperation or confrontation evidenced at the senior level will likely be replicated at the departmental and local levels in the system and could well be an early indication of the overall success of the implementation effort. Finally, factors, skills, and competencies that were identified to be
beneficial to cooperation at the senior level may translate to improved labour-management cooperation at the workplace level, thus impacting the labour relations system across government.

Organizational Context

The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) is the organizational sponsor of this research. At 50,000 members, the Professional Institute is the largest union of professionals in Canada, being the certified bargaining agent for 39 knowledge-based groups spanning such diverse fields as architecture, accounting, information technology, and research science. PIPSC negotiates with 22 employers in six jurisdictions. While all members of the Professional Institute are employed in the public service of federal, provincial, or territorial governments, employees in the federal sector are by far the largest constituency within the institute.

The core function of the Professional Institute has always been to protect and enhance the interests of its members. The mission statement of the organization is an explicit declaration of this raison d’être:

The mission of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada is to represent members collectively and individually,

• by providing bargaining, labour relations and other member services,
• by promoting and defending the rights and interests of members,
• by safeguarding and promoting professional standards,
  through an effective network of elected officials, stewards and members supported by staff. (PIPSC, n.d.a, ¶ 1, bullets in original)

The Professional Institute is organized along both regional and occupational lines. Each profession or community of professions is represented in a group structure. Groups enjoy considerable autonomy over their own affairs and negotiate directly with the employer on terms and conditions of employment. For its purposes, the Professional
Institute divides the country into six regions. Each region has input into PIPSC affairs through a regional structure and through election of members to the board of directors.

With an annual budget of $30 million, the Professional Institute employs 140 staff at its National Office in Ottawa and in seven offices across Canada. This researcher occupies the position of Executive Secretary, and as such is responsible for all corporate services, sits on the Management Committee, and works with the board of directors as a senior staff official and corporate secretary.

The scope of the changes introduced in the Public Service Modernization Act (2003) triggered a sustained effort by the major bargaining agents to respond in an appropriate and timely fashion. While the president and other senior officials of the Professional Institute are the official voice of the institute at many consultation meetings, a large team of institute staff and elected representatives worked behind the scenes to develop positions, prepare submissions to committees, and track events related to implementation.

Organizational Values

The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada was founded in 1920 and functioned until 1967 as a professional association whose main role was to consult with government on behalf of its members. Since becoming certified as a trade union in 1967, the Professional Institute’s core function is the negotiation of collective agreements. Nevertheless, the nature of its membership dictates an approach unlike many traditional trade unions.
As a labour organization, however, the Professional Institute has explicitly chosen not to affiliate with national labour federations. Similarly, the institute chooses, as a matter of policy, not to support any particular political party, but rather to lobby the government of the day regardless of political stripe (PIPSC, 2003, sec. 10.11).

Members look to the Professional Institute to reflect their concern for service to the public, especially in matters of public safety, and to reflect the high value they place on the work itself as a professional endeavour. This blending of professional interests in a trade union has directly contributed to the style of labour relations employed by PIPSC. While strong, even militant action is sometimes required, the Professional Institute has earned a reputation as a union that prefers consultation and negotiation as its processes of choice.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Taken individually, the topics of labour-management cooperation, organizational change, and organizational culture have each been the subject of serious and sustained attention from academics over an extended period. Taken together, the existing literature relating to these closely intertwined topics amounts to an enormous body of intellectual analysis, a complete review of which is well beyond the scope of this report. It is possible, however, to distill the most salient insights as they relate to the research question.

Within the framework described above, this literature review focuses on labour-management cooperation as it relates to building a cooperative labour relations culture over the long term. With respect to organizational change, the intent of this review is to capture the breadth of analysis related to change leadership in unionized environments, with particular attention to change efforts undertaken cooperatively between employers and unions. A brief discussion of key concepts as they relate to the research question follows the review of the literature.

Labour-Management Cooperation

Cooperation Defined

Peterson and Tracy (1988) broadly define labour-management cooperation as “any mode of bargaining or joint discussion in which the objective is to improve the well-
being of both parties” (p. 41). It is interesting that the authors classify bargaining as a form of cooperation, while others (Klare, 1988; Warrian, 1996) clearly distinguish adversarial processes, such as bargaining, from cooperative ones. Perline and Sexton (1994) note that while labour-management cooperation is defined differently by individuals, the general sense of the concept involves “an approach that enhances communication and information sharing between the parties, ultimately leading to increased productivity for the company and, as a quid pro quo for this increased productivity, an increase in union input into the decision-making process” (p. 378). Despite the clear reference to mutual gains, the authors remark that for the management representatives they studied, the concept of union cooperation most often meant little or no union involvement in decision making and compliant union representatives who do not make waves.

**Brief History**

The concept of labour-management cooperation dates back at least to the turn of the last century (Verma & Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1996) in this country. Peterson and Tracy (1988) report the widespread use of union-management consultation committees during the First and Second World Wars to improve wartime productivity and thus assist the war effort. In 1944, the federal government established the National Joint Council (NJC) as a formal consultative body (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2001) composed of government officials and staff associations in the federal public sector. The NJC continues to play a key role in bringing together employer and union representatives.
More recently, the importance of labour-management partnerships was highlighted in the United States by President Clinton (The White House, 1993) in an executive order that states in part: “Only by changing the nature of Federal labor-management relations so that managers, employees, and employees’ elected union representatives serve as partners will it be possible to design and implement comprehensive changes necessary to reform government” (¶ 1). This initiative led to a blossoming of partnerships in the public service of that country, followed by the reaffirmation of the commitment to partnership by Clinton in a Presidential Memorandum 6 years later (The White House, 1999). President Clinton stressed the value of interest-based conflict resolution, training, facilitation, and mediation, and ordered measures to identify specific improvements in service to Americans made possible through partnership. It was to be a short-lived commitment. One of the first acts of incoming President George W. Bush in 2001 was to revoke the original executive order, as well as the reaffirmation memorandum of 1999 (The White House, 2001).

In the Canadian public sector context, cooperation has a far less storied history. Warrian (1996) notes: “After years of academic preaching to practitioners about Japanese or European models on labour-management cooperation, in the late 1980s, Canadian labour and management started to generate a home-grown model of labour-management cooperation and change” (p. 148). Lonti, Slinn, and Verma (2002), in a study of Canadian government workplaces, concluded that in the 1990s labour-management cooperation was usually limited to issues of labour adjustment – that is, softening the blow of unilateral management decisions. The authors found that unions were not consulted at the decision stage in matters of downsizing or restructuring. Their role was limited to
ensuring that due process was followed for layoffs or other adjustments. Lonti et al. summarized their findings bluntly: “Substantive union-management cooperation seems to be a utopian concept in Canadian government workplaces” (p. 12).

Adversarial vs. Cooperative Relations

The labour relations arena has long been viewed as an adversarial one, culminating in periodic collective bargaining, which represents the ultimate test of economic strength between workers and their employers. So ingrained is this framework of relations that the parties come reluctantly to the concept of cooperation, usually driven by crisis or economic necessity rather than by choice (Cook, 1990; Keefe, 2003; Oxenbridge & Brown, 2002; Verma & Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1996). However, in recent years there is a growing realization on the management side that union involvement is “vital in the implementation of organisational change programmes resulting from competitive or financial difficulties” (Oxenbridge & Brown, 2002, ¶ 11). In addition, Warrian (1996) reports on studies that suggest that substantial employee participation is an important element of the productivity increases and service improvements sought by management.

The impetus for cooperation on the union side is fundamentally shaped by the restrictive scope of collective bargaining in the public sector and the legislative restrictions on “concerted self-help activities” such as strike or job action (Keefe, 2003, p. 212). “This narrow scope of bargaining may make joint labor-management transformation practices particularly attractive to public sector unions” (Keefe, 2003, p. 228). Warrian (1996) suggests that a system change in public sector labour relations may
also be propelling unions to cooperate. He identifies disaggregation – the pulling apart of
government services from their policy and finance underpinnings – as a growing
movement that “will fundamentally destabilize the overall labor-management relations
system” (pp. 13-14). If unions wish to protect and enhance their members’ interests
during this “unbundling and separating out [of] service delivery” (p. 14), they must
become involved in this “new public sector management model” (p. 13).

A related driver of cooperation on the union side is the desire to engage with the
employer on issues not encompassed by collective bargaining. Kumar, Murray, and
Schetagne (1998) note that change initiatives common in modern workplaces provide an
opportunity for unions to expand their role and gain influence at the level of strategic
business decision making. The authors suggest that “regulating the pace and nature of
workplace change has emerged as one of the greatest challenges facing unions” (p. 76).
Verma and Cutcher-Gershenfeld (1996) cite the US experience of partnership in which
“unions are motivated to enter the partnerships since they represent a unique avenue to
expand their capability to represent their members” (p. 229).

Observers differ somewhat as to whether a cultural shift is required to achieve
sustained cooperation in the workplace. Cook (1990) argues that cooperation between
management and labour does not, and indeed cannot, require an end to the traditional
model of labour relations. “Choosing to cooperate does not change the inherent conflict
of interests between management and union. The wealth generated from the employment
context will always require dividing and relative power will always underlie any
mechanism for dividing it” (Cook, 1990, pp. 138-139). Unions still seek to maximize
economic benefits and workplace conditions for their members, while employers still press for productivity and service improvements at the lowest cost.

The move in recent years to a more cooperative relationship is premised on a change in the processes of coming to agreement, rather than a change in outcomes. The values and ideologies that form the underpinning of the parties’ respective positions remain unchanged. “Instead, cooperation requires that the parties shift their values and ideologies about the means of pursuing priority goals” (Cook, 1990, p. 138). This view is echoed by Preuss and Frost (2003), who argue that

In part, realizing that conflict does not go away when parties enter into cooperative undertakings is a large step towards managing the tensions that inevitably arise. Union representatives and managers must realize that the existence of cooperation does not eliminate conflict. Further, they need to know that conflict is not pathological, but rather is a natural outcome of such a relationship. (p. 103)

The authors suggest that maintaining a balance between conflict and cooperation is the key to maintaining a cooperative environment over the long term. Peterson and Tracy (1988) also point out the importance of carefully considering the linkages between traditional bargaining and the more recent focus on problem solving.

McKay (1996) takes a contrasting view, arguing that management is making a mistake by simultaneously treating unions adversarially and cooperatively, instead suggesting that “the time has come for the two parties to realize that they are in the same boat and must cooperate in sailing it in only one direction, lest they end up sinking it” (p. 468). Klare (1988) strikes a middle ground: “Progress toward democratizing work requires abandoning the notion of a choice between adversarial and cooperative models and developing instead institutional structures that combine the virtues and mitigate the disadvantages of each” (p. 42).
Conditions Favourable to Union-Management Cooperation

Many authors have contributed to an understanding of the factors and conditions that facilitate cooperation in the organized workplace. While not exhaustive, an overview of the primary conclusions of these writers provides a concrete sense of the elements that should be in place for a successful cooperative relationship between unions and management.

Perhaps the single most important condition for labour-management cooperation is the existence of trust between the parties. Crane (cited in McCabe, 1996) defined trust as “faith that the other party will be faithful to its word, respecting each other as equals in their relationship, and each accepting the right of the other to exist and function” (p. 475). Peterson and Tracy (1988) highlight the importance of trust in stating that

Trust is crucial if problem-solving is to have any chance of working at all. … If trust is lacking in the relationship, it is very difficult for either management or the union to move away from “protecting one’s flanks” behavior towards ownership of the problem. (p. 46)

The seminal work done by Cook (1990) in this area suggests that trust is based on the perceptions of the parties, regardless of the accuracy of their perceptions. In order to mitigate the negative effect of inaccurate perceptions, the author suggests the parties mutually define and agree upon expectations of trust and commitment. “By discussing the kind of behaviors that diminish or violate trust and the kind of responses that can be expected from such violations, the parties can then negotiate behaviors that enhance cooperation, not undermine it” (p. 143). Having negotiated expectations of trust, Cook suggests the parties also agree upon a mechanism for addressing perceived violations and repairing damaged trust if difficulties arise between the parties.
Also critical, in the view of many authors (Masters & Albright, 2003; Peterson & Tracy, 1988; Verma & Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1996), is the need for commitment to cooperation at the senior levels of both unions and management. In reviewing the success of partnerships in the US public service following the issuance of Executive Order 12871 (The White House, 1993), Verma and Cutcher-Gershenfeld (1996) give credit to the clear and continued support provided by President Clinton. Masters and Albright (2003) also see support at the most senior levels, including political support, as being of primary importance. Such support is manifested by the appropriate allocation of necessary resources.

Both Cook (1990) and Peterson and Tracy (1988) emphasize that the parties must believe that the benefits of cooperation outweigh the costs. Cook (1990) adds that the parties must also believe that the benefit of cooperation outweighs the benefits that could be derived from the use of relative power in the traditional framework. Tobias (2003) notes the necessity of both parties committing to move from an adversarial relationship to a cooperative one, suggesting that this outcome will not be achieved through a unilateral change by one party.

Senior-level support for cooperative endeavours extends beyond the allocation of human and financial resources. In studying factors common to high-performing labour-management partnerships, Masters and Albright (2003) concluded that “it was necessary that both sides have the expertise to act on matters affecting the agency per se. … For real partnership to occur, both management and labor had to have access to information, knowledge, and analytical capability” (p. 203). Peterson and Tracy (1988) also point to
Labour-Management Cooperation

the importance of management providing the necessary information in the cooperative process.

The impetus for cooperation on the management side may be a desire for operational flexibility or productivity gains, but research suggests that a cooperative relationship cannot be sustained on this basis alone (Preuss & Frost, 2003; Rothstein, 1989). Preuss and Frost (2003) stated,

If managers and union leaders seek to develop cooperation as a long-term approach to working together, they must also use cooperation as a path to addressing factors that employees see as critical to improving their working conditions. Topics for discussion cannot be limited to “how not to outsource jobs” or “how to minimize costs to employees during workplace transition,” but they must also address those areas that will lead to overall improvements in employees’ working lives. (p. 101)

Other factors that that were identified as contributing to successful cooperation include a longstanding, mature relationship between the parties (Oxenbridge & Brown, 2002), training of union representatives to participate fully and knowledgeably in cooperative processes (Rothstein, 1989), and union leaders who spend time building a consensus among employees with different objectives (Tobias, 2003). Also important are a recognition of the legitimacy of the cooperative relationship (Peterson & Tracy, 1988), defined by the authors as management sharing credit with unions for successes achieved through cooperation, and a strong base for union leaders so managers could be assured that union leaders were speaking for the majority of employees (Masters & Albright, 2003).

Preuss and Frost (2003) outline several challenges to cooperation in the labour relations environment. Chief among them is the difficulty in sustaining cooperative relationships in the face of conflict in other elements of the parties’ relationship. “Labor and management often end up using cooperation as the hostage, withdrawing from
cooperation to punish the other side for its escalation of conflict” (p. 104). Other challenges include employee disengagement as cooperation results in mitigation of negative impacts rather than net gains in workplace improvement; the failure of cooperation mechanisms to evolve with changing contexts; and the volatility of the environment.

Competencies Favourable to Union-Management Cooperation

An interesting but little-studied question arising from the study of labour-management cooperation focuses on the competencies and skills that are likely to enhance the chances of success of cooperative initiatives. Ospina and Yaroni (2003a) recently turned their attention to this subject, noting that it is easier to maintain adversarial relations than cooperative ones. Working from the belief that “gaining and reinforcing the right competencies are critical for the benefits of Labor-Management Cooperation to persist in the more traditional environment” (p. 162), the authors identify a number of specific competencies that contribute to more successful, long-term, cooperative relationships.

Significantly, Ospina and Yaroni (2003a) found that the most important competency for leaders is the ability to trust their counterparts, which promotes openness among the parties. It is interesting that the authors cite trust as a competency, given that trust is highly dependent on the actions of the other party, unlike many of the other competencies identified. Among other important qualities, the authors suggest that strong organizational skills, the ability to define mutual goals, teambuilding, and effective communication are key to successful labour-management cooperation. As may be
expected, strong negotiation and problem-solving skills are also critical, as is persuasiveness. Finally, Verma and Cutcher-Gershenfeld (1996) note that innovation in the public service will be dependent on management and union leaders mastering process change skills “while still being effective in a system that resists the use of these skills” (p. 235).

Ospina and Yaroni (2003a) also identify attitudes that they found to contribute positively to cooperation. The first of these is openness, which the authors describe as a willingness to be more flexible and tolerant, as well as a willingness to share information. The second influential attitude identified by the authors is reciprocity, defined as the willingness of union and management leaders to put themselves in the other’s position. Finally, an attitude of respect for the views and role of the union is identified as critical.

Organizational Change

Within the large body of academic analysis on the subject of organizational change and change leadership, a sub-set of literature is specifically focused on change issues in the unionized environment. A further sub-set of the literature examines the question of change in the context of the labour-management relationship. The following section reviews some current thought on change theory, then examines change within the union-management context. Factors favourable to change within this environment are canvassed, along with a review of challenges to change leadership.

Anderson and Ackerman (2001) suggest that “we can expect more change to occur in our lifetimes than has occurred since the beginning of civilization over ten thousand years ago” (p. xv). Given this daunting statement, it is small wonder that
“competent change leadership is a most coveted executive skill” (Anderson & Ackerman, 2001, p. 1). And yet, successful change efforts in organizations are the exception rather than the rule. Worse still, “the very methods used in these failed efforts are causing tremendous resistance and burnout in people, loss of employee morale, and turmoil in the cultures of organizations” (Anderson & Ackerman, 2001, p. 2).

In reviewing the history of organizational change, Anderson and Ackerman (2001) trace a shifting focus from processes to people over the course of the past 30 years. The authors note that the 1970s saw organizations first beginning to examine their business strategies in a systematic way. This new emphasis led to the first wave of change theories and buzzwords (process improvement, work re-design, and the quality movement) in the 1980s. During the 1990s, the emphasis changed to re-engineering and global connectivity, driven by the information technology revolution.

Beginning in the 1990s and continuing forward, the focus evolved toward a recognition that the people involved in change efforts are as critical to success as the content. At the outset of this period, organizations devoted their change efforts to attempting to overcome employee resistance so as to better control change implementation. Over the intervening years, the role of organizational culture in successful change initiatives has captured the focus, with self-management, empowerment, emotional intelligence, and learning forming the new landscape of organizational change (Anderson & Ackerman, 2001).

Consistent with this evolution, Anderson and Ackerman (2001) describe drivers of change, which they divide between external/ impersonal and internal/personal. The internal drivers of change – culture, behaviour, and mindset – if not attended to by
leaders will result in failed change efforts regardless of whether the external drivers of change – environment, marketplace, business, and organization – are attended to or not. (Anderson & Ackerman, 2001).

Anderson and Ackerman (2001) also describe three types of change: developmental, transitional, and transformational. Developmental change is simply the improvement of an existing skill, method, or performance standard. Transitional change goes beyond improvement to replace one method or skill with an entirely different one. Transformational change represents a radical shift that requires change in culture, behaviour, and mindset if it is to be implemented successfully. Keefe (2003) describes transformational leadership as “the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes and assumptions of organization members and building commitment for the organization’s mission, objectives, and strategies” (p. 227).

Public vs. Private Sector Change

Keefe (2003) also recognizes that change in the public sector context is quite different from that in the private sector, despite the fact that crisis is often the common denominator (Verma & Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1996). While private sector change is usually precipitated by deteriorating competitive position, the external drivers of change in the public sector are more often associated with budget concerns or privatization of public services. Verma and Cutcher-Gershenfeld (1996) note that change initiatives, when driven by crises, will be more likely to succeed if the crisis is neither too severe nor too mild. When the crisis passes, continued support for the change will depend on the strength of relationships developed during the crisis and strong leadership skills. In the
case of change driven by planning and leadership, a perceived compelling need must be established so that the effort is not overcome by the sudden rise of a new crisis.

Keefe (2003) describes the public service as a distinct form of bureaucracy and notes the inherent inflexibility of this bureaucracy in the face of change initiatives. He also cites the much higher level of unionized supervisors and managers in the public service as a factor that adds complexity to change efforts in that sector. Verma and Cutcher-Gershenfeld (1996) comment on the additional complexity of innovative change in a political setting:

It is important to keep in mind that the public service will remain answerable to political masters, and hence, the kind of isolation from political interference that workplace innovations sometimes need will never be realized completely. Innovations must be carried out in the sector in the full glare of political debate. This may hinder workplace innovations at times, but it may also facilitate them at other times. A skillful public manager will blend workplace innovation objectives with other objectives of the government to achieve success. (p. 237)

**Resistance to Organizational Change**

Resistance to change has a critical impact on the success of change initiatives, and while such resistance is manifested across stakeholders, this resistance is driven by different underlying motivations in each case. In the case of union leaders, they must be convinced that the value of engagement is greater than the “comfortable, predictable status-quo” (Tobias, 2003, p. 129). Once engaged, they must continually evaluate their role in change efforts through the political lens of an elected official.

Union leaders, no matter how committed they are to workplace transformation, cannot become surrogate managers and survive their unions’ election process. At the most fundamental level, union leaders are expected to represent the members’ interest by engaging in conflict with management. (Keefe, 2003, p. 224)
Keefe (2003) notes that even where there is agreement between the parties, there may be a need for union leaders to engage in “symbolic reenactment” (p. 224) to visibly demonstrate their advocacy of members’ interests.

Even where commitment is evident at the senior management level, cooperative change efforts can be negatively impacted by the actions of lower-level managers and supervisors in the workplace. Their resistance to change is often motivated by a perceived or actual loss of authority and job security as a result of workplace change, prompting attempts by this group to undermine change efforts (Keefe, 2003).

Finally, employees can be driven to resist change through a prevailing belief that change has negative consequences. “Decreased worker confidence in management and decreased job security are the dominant traits of workplace change in the public sector” (Kumar et al., 1998, p. 81). Nor is union involvement in change initiatives a guarantee of employee acceptance. Preuss and Frost (2003) conclude that some employees blame their unions when expectations for positive change are not met. These employees see the cooperative change effort as a mitigation of negative effects such as job loss, rather than as an improvement in their working lives. Keefe (2003) notes that “workers are reluctant to support union participation in change efforts because they fear diminution of their working conditions without any real benefit to themselves, the union, or their organization’s performance” (p. 221). If cooperative change efforts are to become a feature of the labour-management relationship, attention must be paid to employees’ aspirations for an improved workplace. Otherwise, “employee interest in cooperation will wane over time as their frustrations increase and inevitably will result in the dismantling of the joint initiative” (Preuss & Frost, 2003, pp. 101-102).
**Union Involvement in Organizational Change**

Observers of the labour relations environment note the important role of union representation in change initiatives, beginning at the strategic business-decision level and carrying through to the influence of unions on employees’ acceptance of change at the workplace level. At the strategic level, Verma (2005) notes that

> It is very hard for management, a hierarchical organization, to come up with the most efficient processes on its own because of its in-built inability to question authority or the dominant paradigm. The implication is that when unions enter the scene they are able to question management. Such questioning sets up a dialectic, otherwise absent from managerial deliberations, which then leads to better, more creative and hence, more productive solutions. (p. 9)

Although not directly related to unionized environments, Wanberg and Banas (2000) echo this finding in their assertion that “individuals willing to openly question change play important roles through challenging the logic of organizational decisions, at times saving organizations from costly and foolish changes” (pp. 139-140). Hecksher and Schurman (1997) make a similar observation: “When unions fully engage in strategic planning processes, they substantially improve on management’s approach by bringing a perspective and information not usually considered and an ability to generate honest dialogue – management’s most intractable weakness” (p. 329).

Adding to the complexity of change efforts is the interdependence of union and management leaders in the process (Keefe, 2003). To a great extent, union leaders stake their credibility on the goodwill of their management counterparts. Those who commit to cooperative efforts with management have a strong interest in successful outcomes, and they assume a share of the risk without the ability to control the actions of management. As a result, unilateral management actions that stall or undermine successful outcomes
serve to damage the credibility of union leaders. “Before embarking on a joint transformation effort, union leaders and political executives must assess and challenge management’s credibility, determination, and commitment. While unions can improve the likelihood of success, they cannot overcome a lack of commitment by management” (Keefe, 2003, p. 223).

Lonti et al. (2002) identify two broad conditions necessary for innovative change in unionized environments. First, there must be stability in the labour-management relationship. This stability is marked by a balance between centralized and workplace-level labour relations. Further, the labour-management framework must allow for change that will accommodate creativity and productivity improvements. Other factors that contribute to successful efforts to implement innovative change in the public sector include the involvement and support of unions for the proposed change; greater autonomy of operational managers over workplace practices; and workplaces where formal or informal local agreements can be made without impacting master collective agreements (Verma & Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1996). Finally, Lonti et al. (2002) note that greater union involvement in workplace change initiatives can potentially increase employee involvement in workplace issues. “In turn, this may enhance the effectiveness of union representation and improve union-management relations by securing a greater degree of employee support for workplace changes” (p. 15).

**Organizational Culture**

Scholars have been fascinated with organizational culture for several decades. In this time, abundant literature has been produced on this elusive topic. DeWitte and van
Muijen (1999) suggest the fascination may stem from the fact that the study of culture offers a “global approach to understanding the functioning of an organization” (p. 585). One important issue that has garnered significant attention in the academic community is the perceived distinctions between organizational climate and organizational culture. Other much-discussed issues are the definition of organizational culture, and the influence of Schein’s (1985) theories on a host of other scholars in the field. The possibility of using knowledge gained through these academic pursuits to control organizational culture is directly related to whether culture is seen as an organizational variable or as a root metaphor for the organization. These issues and their implications for cultural change are explored in this third section of the chapter.

**Culture Distinguished**

A review of the literature related to organizational culture would not be complete without reference to the controversial debate between organizational culture theorists and those theorists concerned with organizational climate. The study of climate in organizations predates the surge of academic exploration of culture in the 1980s. Organizational climate was described by Burke and Litwin (1992) as “the collective current impressions, expectations, and feelings that members of local work units have that, in turn, affect their relations with their boss, with one another, and with other units” (p. 532). The defining features of an organizational climate are those behaviours that are external, can be consciously perceived by organization members, and are subject to direct control (Denison, 1996). In contrast, organizational culture, as described in the literature, is concerned with the deeply held assumptions, beliefs, and values of individual
organization members. Culture goes beyond surface behaviours to delve into deeper levels of shared meaning in organizations (Denison, 1996).

The approach used by researchers was perhaps the most significant difference in the culture vs. climate debate. Organizational climate has been studied and described through quantitative methods, with the results being applied generally across settings. Indeed, this attempt to generalize has been the main preoccupation of quantitative research into organizational climate. The quantitative approach lent itself to studies of observable practices and procedures that were close to the surface of organizational life. Cultural research, by contrast, was conducted by qualitative means and focused on individual organizations and their members (Denison, 1996).

Denison (1996) notes that over time, cultural researchers began to incorporate quantitative approaches in their methodologies, while researchers in organizational climate sometimes approached their field of study from a social constructionist frame of reference, heretofore the domain of qualitative researchers. Ultimately, the more recent literature sees a predominance of focus on culture rather than climate. These more recent writings, however, also feature a blending of “forms and meanings” (Lewis, 1996, p. 13) describing differing levels of culture and including both visible behaviour patterns and less visible shared assumptions. As Denison (1996) concludes, “the culture and climate literatures actually address a common phenomenon: the creation and influence of social contexts in organizations” (p. 646). DeWitte and van Muijen (1999) support this conclusion but note that the element of culture to be studied will have implications for the research method and method of analysis.


**Culture Defined**

Definitions of organizational culture abound in the literature. As the study of organizational culture gained momentum in the 1980s, some prominent authors (Peters & Waterman, 1982) sought to understand how rituals, norms, and behaviours created a culture. Burke and Litwin (1992) suggest that corporate culture is “the collection of overt and covert rules, values and principles that are enduring and guide organizational behavior” (p. 532). The most frequently cited definition is that proposed by Schein (1985), which states that organizational culture is

[A] pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and relate to those problems. (p. 19)

Schein’s view of organizational culture has its central focus on deep, unconscious attitudes, beliefs, and basic assumptions that reside well below the surface of demonstrated norms and behaviours.

Schein’s (1985) model of culture identified three levels of hierarchy. At the most profound are the basic underlying assumptions that in most instances are unconsciously accepted and understood by members of the organization. These assumptions are never questioned or examined. In fact, “[the] members of a culture are not even aware of their own culture until they encounter a different one” (Schein, 1996, p. 236). One level closer to the surface are found the espoused values, which encompass the values, relating to ethical and moral codes, and beliefs, or what the members of the organization think (Driscoll & Morris, 2001). “The members of the organization are aware of the values and will use them to describe their perceptions of right, wrong, success, failure, truth, integrity, honor and similar concepts as they relate to the organization” (Fraser & Stupak,
1998, p. 70). Finally, at the surface level are the artifacts, which are “the visible, tangible, and audible results of activity” (Hatch, 1993, p. 659).

The significant influence of Schein led to a burgeoning of research in the field of organizational culture (Gagliardi, 1986; Hatch, 1993; Lawson & Ventriss, 1992; Lewis, 1996). Authors variously describe culture as a system of shared meaning, a set of deep-rooted understandings, or “shared feelings, beliefs and values” (Lewis, 1996, p. 13). Overall, the literature concerned itself with the concept of organizational culture, rather than the practical application of culture to management and leadership situations.

_Culture Refined_

While many authors were concerned with defining the concept of culture, others turned to refining the topic to better understand how to use the knowledge gained to effect cultural change within organizations. This area of research is not without controversy. At the core of this controversy is the discussion among researchers as to whether culture constitutes an organizational variable in the same sense as geography or human resources, for example, or if in fact culture is a root metaphor for the organization. Culture as a variable is something an organization _has_, while as root metaphor, culture and the organization are synonymous (Wilson, 2001).

Those authors who hold that culture is an organizational variable tend to support the view that culture can be changed like any other variable, and further link cultural change to organizational performance (Peters & Waterman, 1982). This school of thought, known as cultural pragmatism (Frost & Gillespie, 1998), suggests that a strategic leader could direct the course of the organization through skillful management of the
culture. A strong culture is one in which there is consensus across the organization, and all members share the same set of underlying beliefs, espoused values, and behaviours. Such a culture is seen to promote loyalty and commitment, as well as to discourage conflict or sub-cultural differentiation (Wilson, 2001).

Ogbonna and Harris (1998) note that “a common rationale for cultural management attempts is to exert cultural control in order to accomplish the goals of the organization” (p. 274). Driscoll and Morris (2001) suggest that “organizations are attempting to introduce culture management as a substitute for traditional technocratic forms of bureaucratic control” (p. 805). Ogbonna and Harris (1998) identify a group of theorists who have questioned the ethical propriety of such attempts to direct and control culture.

By contrast, those authors, known as cultural purists (Frost & Gillespie, 1998), who see culture as a root metaphor point to the deep-seated nature of the core assumptions that drive the surface behaviours, and suggest that cultural change is at best a long, slow process (Sathe, 1983). Moreover, Lewis (1996) suggests that in her experience, many managers were not seeking cultural change but rather a change in surface-level behaviour, and she echoes Sathe’s (1983) advice to managers to carefully consider the time and money involved in true cultural change before proceeding.

Discussion

This research project uses the experience of public service modernization in the federal sector as a touchstone for an examination of the issue of union-management cooperation and the related areas of organizational culture and change leadership. Many
of the concepts contained in the preceding review of the literature are evident in the current labour-management relations environment in the federal public sector.

The reform of human resources practices arising from the Public Service Modernization Act (2003) is best viewed as an exercise driven by planning and leadership, rather than by crisis. As noted by Verma and Cutcher-Gershenfeld (1996), effective implementation in these circumstances is dependent on a perceived compelling need for change. That need for change is documented in the findings of the Advisory Committee on Labour Management Relations in the Federal Public Service of Canada (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2001).

Warrian’s (1996) concept of disaggregation, or the pulling apart of service delivery from policy development, is instantly recognizable in recent announcements by Government of Canada officials regarding the establishment of a shared services framework for future service delivery. While these developments are not addressed through the PSMA consultation processes, lessons learned from this examination may inform future consultative and cooperative efforts.

As noted above, many authors agree that the core of organizational culture is found in deeply held, and often unconscious, assumptions that are manifested as visible organizational norms and behaviours. In the context of labour-management cooperation, Cook (1990) asserts that the parties need not change their essential values and ideologies, instead suggesting that in order to succeed, the parties must shift the means by which they pursue their goals. The research for this study explores whether the players in the federal public sector consider they are at the stage of shifting some of the means they use to achieve priority goals from adversarial means to cooperative ones.
Of interest as well is the correlation, if any, between evidence from the research pertaining to critical factors for labour-management cooperation and the experience of the senior-level labour relations leaders who are the subjects of this study. A further correlation of interest is the relationship between leadership competencies identified in the research as vital to successful cooperative efforts between unions and management, and those competencies identified by research participants.
CHAPTER 3: CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

Research Approach

This study was conducted using a qualitative research approach. At its heart, the research question sought to explore the effect of collaborative processes on the relationships of a small number of key participants in the federal labour relations community. As stated in the research question and sub-questions, the intent was to use the experiences of research participants in PSMA implementation as a springboard to improving labour management relations in the federal public service. Issues of trust, respect, and collaboration were central to the exploration of the research question.

Berg (2004) notes that “qualitative research properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings” (p. 7). He further notes that while a quantitative approach may provide arithmetically precise data, these data may nevertheless fail to fit reality owing to the inability of quantitative approaches to address unquantifiable facts about research participants. Given that this research examined the interaction of a small number of individuals in a specific social setting and largely focused on unquantifiable relationship issues, a qualitative approach was expected to yield far richer data than would a quantitative approach.

The qualitative approach employed in this study is action research. This approach has an especially close affinity to the situation explored in this research. Stringer (1999) suggests that action research is “fundamentally a consensual approach to inquiry and works from the assumption that cooperation and consensus making should be the primary
orientation of research activity” (p. 21). He further identifies the importance of relationships and notes that action research has a primary interest “in establishing and maintaining positive working relationships” (p. 29).

There are striking similarities between Stringer’s (1999) approach to action research and the goals embodied in the preamble to the Public Service Modernization Act (2003). Moreover, the importance of such an approach cannot be overstated in the context of modern labour relations. Both employers and unions seek constructive working relationships and directly benefit from cooperation and consensus. The close affinity between the stated goals of the consultation process in question and the orientation of action research made this approach an obvious choice for this analysis.

Berg (2004) describes a four-stage “spiraling progression” (p. 197) in the action research cycle, beginning with identifying the research question and spiraling through data gathering to analysis and interpretation, and finally to sharing of results with participants. This spiral process is depicted in Figure 1. Stringer’s (1999) cycle of look, think and act suggests a spiral, as does Swann’s (2002) cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. All of these progressions share a common thread of non-linear cycles of action and reflection. This project followed a similar progression, with the non-linear research cycle dictating, upon reflection, revisions in approach and focus, as well as rethinking of the steps in the process and their sequence.
Project Participants

A diverse team of individuals assisted me in various aspects of this study. The team consisted of my project sponsor, project supervisor, editor, and transcriber. I was also assisted by several individuals whose contextual knowledge and insight proved invaluable. These individuals provided significant feedback related to question development and pilot-testing, participant selection, and data analysis.

My project supervisor played what was perhaps the most important role on my research team. As my supervisor is a subject matter expert, I sought advice on sources of literature and drew from his experience in the field. In addition, my supervisor was an indispensable sounding board during the data-gathering and analysis processes. Finally, I
used a predetermined schedule of submissions to my supervisor to impose discipline on my work schedule.

My project sponsor provided invaluable assistance on several fronts. The nature of this study required obtaining access to the some of the most senior leaders in the federal public service. My sponsor was instrumental in using her network to secure interview time on the schedules of these busy executives. My sponsor also provided feedback and insight that helped shape the focus and direction of the research.

The cooperative process that is the subject of this study involved a relatively small number of senior government and union representatives. I used a purposive or judgmental sampling process, which “derives from the belief that a researcher’s knowledge about the population and its elements can be used to handpick the cases to be included in the sample” (Polit & Hungler, 1991, p. 260). It was possible to identify precisely which participants I would most like to be involved in the research. I selected those participants who were most actively involved in the Public Service Modernization consultations or who had the longest direct experience in senior-level labour relations. Research participants were chosen from both the union and the management sides. Participants were chosen to reflect a cross-section of experience, and ranged from senior policy analysts and labour relations specialists, to deputy ministers and union presidents.

Accessibility to research participants was an important constraint in this study. It was therefore gratifying to witness the engagement of the research participants in the subject matter, several of whom took on the role of informal sponsor by offering suggestions of senior leaders who they thought would provide valuable input. One went...
so far as to facilitate an interview with a leader whose schedule might not otherwise have permitted such a meeting.

Apart from accessibility, the availability of interested participants was a significant concern and affected the sequence of the steps in the data collection phase. Palys (2003) notes that “when people are very busy and/or are more senior members of the organization, you must demonstrate that you’re worth their time and that they, in particular, are the only appropriate sources for what you need to know” (p. 213). Capturing 60 to 90 minutes of an interviewee’s time proved challenging. Given the difficulty in scheduling senior executives’ time, I took the first available opportunities, regardless of my sequencing preferences.

Finally, I was in contact with the chair of a committee that produced a pair of influential reports on the state of labour relations in the federal public service and which set the stage for the cooperative effort that is the subject of this study. This background research, which occurred prior to the actual start of data gathering, provided an important understanding of the major factors and events that shaped the landscape of PSMA implementation. This in-depth interview also provided an early opportunity to pilot-test the interview format and questions that were used in the data-gathering process.

Research Methods and Tools

The research design for this study used a phenomenological inquiry strategy. In a similar study, Ospina and Yaroni (2003b) noted that “a phenomenological study explores the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals in reference to a concept or
phenomenon – in this case, participation in a labor-management cooperation effort” (p. 458).

At its most fundamental, this research was a study of human relationships in a particular setting. The mechanics of labour relations are defined by legislation, collective agreements, and jurisprudence, but the practice of labour relations is much more closely aligned to personal and organizational relationships. As these relationships go, so goes the state of labour relations in a particular jurisdiction at a particular time. These relationships are made manifest in many ways, not all of which are available to a researcher in a project of this scope. This is the case with personal relationships between union and management leaders. If, however, as Ospina and Yaroni (2003b) assert, “the reality of labor management cooperation can be perceived only within the meaning of an individual’s experience” (p. 458), then the one-on-one interview is the appropriate research tool, “as depth is more important than breadth to explore experience” (p. 458).

Accordingly, one-on-one interviews were used in this study to gather data. The research comprised a total of seven interviews. These interviews were supplemented by an in-depth background interview with John Fryer, chair of the Advisory Committee on Labour management Relations in the Federal Public Service. These interviews followed a semi-standardized format designed to introduce topics but to allow for considerable digression by the participants.

“Face-to-face interviews tend to be longer and more detailed, tend to seek greater depth of response, and tend to be more open-ended in their construction to allow for phenomenological input from respondents” (Palys, 2003, p. 160). These qualities of face-to-face interviews provided the opportunity for extensive data collection and a rich
understanding of the factors that contribute to or detract from labour-management cooperation at the senior level. The interviews resulted in fully engaged discussion, rather than a rigid question-and-answer format. One question would arise from another, a reference from the literature would insert itself, and the discussion would digress from the main topic only to later return to the original question. It was a fluid, lively, and unpredictable process that was consistent with the action research context.

Those individuals who agreed to participate were provided with information in advance describing the topics to be covered in the interview. This document was constructed to delineate some boundaries for the discussion while at the same time inspiring the participant to present an in-depth picture of their views and experiences.

Voluntary, informed consent was fully discussed, as was the issue of confidentiality. Letters of informed consent clearly disclosed my position within the sponsoring organization and indicated a potential concern for participants because of this role (see Appendix A). The letters of informed consent are kept in a locked cabinet.

Interviews were digitally recorded where written consent was provided. Digitally recorded interviews are stored in password-protected computer voice files. Written transcripts of interviews are kept in a locked cabinet. A transcription of each interview was provided to the interviewee for validation and any additions, deletions, or amendments.

Being mindful of the time constraints experienced by senior executives, I considered creating a form of Executive Summary for each participant, to ease the validation process for them. Ultimately, I rejected this procedure for fear of injecting researcher bias into such a document.
Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers broadly to the rigor applied to the research to improve the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of findings and conclusions (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olsen, & Spiers, 2002, p. 2). The concept of validity refers to the extent to which research measures what the researcher believes is being measured (Palys, 2003, p. 438). Validity is an important concern for researchers, and can be negatively impacted by reactivity. Reactivity relates to “the degree to which (if at all) the researcher’s presence causes research participants to react by changing from their ‘usual’ or ‘normal’ behaviour patterns” (Palys, 2003, p. 435). The concern regarding reactivity arises out of the possibility that participants, knowing that I am exploring union-management cooperation, would manifest their most cooperative behaviour, resulting in less than complete candour.

Another significant concern is that of actual or perceived researcher bias. As a senior official of the Professional Institute, I am inextricably linked to the union side despite my researcher role in this study. I was therefore concerned that the management-side participants in particular might be reluctant to be candid. In retrospect, I do not believe this proved to be the case.

Aside from the perception of others as to my potential bias, I was careful to question my biases repeatedly. I examined whether I was resisting going down certain paths of inquiry, whether my personal or organizational acquaintance with some of the participants impacted the research in any way, and whether my subjective views on labour relations were in any way colouring my approach.

Through careful question construction and pilot-testing I hoped to increase the validity of the data. This was achieved by engaging in cyclical, repeated examination of
interview topics to ensure that the discussion that resulted best informed the research question. I took careful note of Stringer’s (1999) admonishment that “researchers should be particularly wary of leading questions that derive from their own interpretive schemata” (p. 70). Overall trustworthiness was enhanced through comparison of my findings with the findings of other researchers, and through “member checking” (Stringer, 1999, p. 176) – that is, the process of ensuring that participants had the opportunity to check and verify the accuracy of the data collected from them during the interview.

Data Analysis

As Berg (2004) suggests, my data analysis began by re-focusing on the research question. This re-examination brought into sharp relief the purpose for gathering data and ensured that I set out in the analysis phase to answer the question originally posed. At this stage, I began to establish analytic categories, which “arise from reading the literature, links to the research question or even directly from interview questions” (Berg, 2004, p. 285). Following this stage, I spent considerable time reading the data and noting the emergence of themes or categories. These themes, which are grounded in the data, were examined along with the analytic categories as the analysis proceeded.

Once categories were established, the data were coded and sorted by category. Coding and sorting are methods for organizing data that can take several forms, including manual transcriptions onto a card system and the use of qualitative research coding software. Although I used a computer to assist in this task, I limited myself to relatively
simple electronic means such as word processing and spreadsheet packages to code and sort data.

At this stage, Berg (2004) recommends a cursory overview of the sorted data, along with a count of the number of data chunks in each category. Though not giving a definitive finding, this technique assists in identifying potential patterns in the data, which can be examined more closely. Berg (2004) also suggests that the strength of a pattern may be illustrated by noting the proportion of the sample containing similar statements, but cautions that magnitude alone does not prove a causal relationship between variables and therefore does not make meaning.

As meaning emerged from the data through the coding and sorting process, referring back to the literature review became an important part of the action research cycle to confirm these meanings. Where there was a lack of congruity between the existing literature and my findings, it was necessary to account for the conflict between the apparent meaning and the literature. Throughout this process, it was important to continually question the explanations that seem to emerge. I needed a clear understanding of my biases, and I needed to question them often to ensure that the data were not skewed by these biases and that my conclusions were apparent from the data.

In order to demonstrate data-supported conclusions, I identified a theme and any patterns within the theme, and illustrated the significance in terms of the participants. Quotes or other data that were particularly relevant to the theme were noted, along with an explanation of the significance of the data. These quotes were compared or contrasted with other quotes, to enhance understanding of the emergent themes. Throughout this
process, I repeatedly questioned my findings to ensure that I was in fact developing the explanation sought in the research question, thereby ensuring greater validity.

**Ethical Issues**

At their core, ethical research practices deal with the considerations and practices researchers must undertake to safeguard the dignity of their human research participants. Ethics in research within the Canadian university context is governed by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, which has been incorporated into the Royal Roads University (RRU) Research Ethics Policy (Royal Roads University [RRU], 2004). The principles of this policy are respect for human dignity; respect for free and informed consent; respect for vulnerable persons; respect for privacy and confidentiality; respect for justice and inclusiveness; balancing harm and benefits; minimizing harm; and maximizing benefit.

Respect for free and informed consent is key to the ethical practice of research. In order to conduct ethical research, all participants needed a full understanding of the nature and extent of their participation. It was also important to convey the understanding that participation was entirely voluntary and that participants could withdraw from the research at any time.

As Stringer (1999) notes, action research is a repeating cycle of observation, reflection, and action. Given this repeating cycle, and the possibility that the research will sometimes make “radical changes in direction” (Stringer, 1999, p. 18), it was difficult to fully inform all participants in advance of all potential harm. Williamson and Prosser (2002) suggest that in the “journey” through an action research project, “it is unlikely that
‘informed consent’ is as meaningful as in other research approaches: neither researcher nor participants know where the journey will take them in advance, and cannot fully know to what they are consenting” (p. 589). It was incumbent upon me as a researcher to approach informed consent as an ongoing ethical requirement, re-visiting potential risks as the research evolved and ensuring that participants understood the implications.

Respect for privacy and confidentiality is another key tenet of ethical research. Researchers go to great lengths to preserve confidentiality, using fictitious names and altered descriptions of participants, with varying degrees of success (Glesne, 1999). The question of confidentiality was somewhat problematic for my action research. My research involved in-depth interviews with a small group of senior leaders who interact regularly on a wide range of issues. Moreover, the participants were clearly divided into management and union camps. These factors may make it possible for some readers to identify research participants.

In addition, the leaders who were research participants operate in a highly political environment and are expected to embody the formal positions of their organizations. If confidentiality is a major concern for participants, the research could potentially suffer from a lack of openness on the part of the participants, who might not have felt able to stray from their organizations’ official positions. As well, there is a potential danger of doing harm to professional reputations through lack of confidentiality on the part of the researcher. Every effort was therefore be taken to safeguard confidentiality while also making manifest the cultures, assumptions, and norms that the participants brought to the collaborative effort that was the subject of this study. I
provided clear assurances of my own actions to preserve confidentiality at every stage of
the research.

Palys (2003) notes that researchers are always subject to some level of conflict of
interest when making ethical decisions about interaction with research participants. As
the research unfolded, it was important to differentiate between my role as a direct report
to the PIPSC president and my role as researcher. While I may report to the president, the
research demanded an objective approach devoid of any partisan view. I needed to be
seen by research participants, especially those from the government side, as a neutral
figure. Complications could have ensued if I were perceived as attempting to advance the
Professional Institute’s agenda on public service modernization. A clear understanding
among all research participants with respect to informed consent and confidentiality
(Palys, 2003) helped to ensure the protection of participants’ rights and interests and to
alleviate the concerns outlined above.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH PROJECT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study seeks to understand how senior leaders’ experiences in PSMA consultations can be used to improve labour-management relations in the federal public service. Chapter 4 begins with a presentation of the results of this study. Results are grouped into themes that emerged from close analysis of the data. Following presentation of the results, conclusions are drawn based on these results. The final section of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of the scope and limitations of the research.

Study Results

The following section presents the results of this study grouped by theme. Research participants comments related to themes such as trust, cultural change, shared understanding, and personal relationships. Other identifiable themes include labour relations competencies, labour-management consultation, the Implementation Secretariat, and lessons learned. This discussion of results begins on the theme of the current state of labour relations in the federal public service.

State of Labour Relations

Participants were asked at the outset of each interview to provide their views on the current state of labour relations in the federal public service. Although expressed differently by individual participants, most shared the view that the relationship between the parties could be improved. One labour leader suggested the parties’ relationship was
in a “state of flux” (U1), while a senior manager described it as “evolving” (M4). These participants recognized that the modernization legislation would have an impact on relations between the parties, with one describing the current period as a difficult time in which the parties were struggling to define a new relationship. Other management participants described relations as “testy” and “not as positive as they could be” (M1), and “not at a very advanced level; a 2 out of 5” (M2). One union representative acknowledged that intentions of senior management were generally good and that union input was frequently sought at the senior level.

Many participants remarked on the unevenness of labour-management relations across departments. Both management and union participants expressed surprise and disappointment at the number of departments that engage in little or no consultation with bargaining agents. As one participant commented: “There’s a wide variation in labour-management cultures in various departments. Some it’s very good; some it’s piss poor” (M1).

Several participants correlated the state of labour relations in any particular department to the outlook of the deputy minister for that department. Both union and management leaders acknowledged that a core of deputy ministers are not supportive of the strong and open union-management relations envisioned in the Public Service Modernization Act (2003). Consequently, participants recounted that the relationship in a given department can shift as deputies are appointed or transferred.
The Secretariat Experiment

Upon its creation as an agency of government, the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada (PSHRMAC) established an implementation secretariat to help facilitate the implementation of the Public Service Modernization Act (2003). This group was created to provide support to the consultation processes taking place under the umbrella of PSHRMAC, develop implementation tools, and provide advice to departments, to the public service at large, and to bargaining agents.

In a departure from the norm, but in keeping with the spirit of the modernization legislation, the bargaining agents were invited to identify union representatives who would be seconded from their union organizations to the new secretariat to work side by side with management representatives seconded from departments. These senior policy analysts and labour relations specialists spent the following 2 years working together to facilitate the implementation of the new legislation. Each research participant was asked to comment on the ‘experiment’ known as the Implementation Secretariat.

Participants were nearly unanimous in their positive assessment of the initiative. A sampling of their observations follows:

I think it was innovative, it was a stretch. There was an element of risk by the employer to put out that olive branch to do that. I think there was a risk on the part of the unions to reach out and grab it. … So it was innovative, it was bold, it was daring, but I think it was certainly the philosophy and the approach … needed to make the change; a cultural change. (U2)

It produced results beyond any of our expectations. (M1)

The most positive experience was having the employer challenge the unions to put union employees inside the system, in the Implementation Secretariat, and having the unions take up that challenge. It was an enormous step on both parts. The level of effectiveness of the move will be reviewed in the future, but it was very significant to have broken down the barrier. (U1)
Union participants reported that this initiative raised eyebrows within their organizations and that there was internal union debate on the question of union representatives being co-opted to the management side. Management participants similarly reported initial resistance and astonishment from their colleagues at the idea of union representatives working in the secretariat and participating on other working groups and committees.

Based on the responses of the research participants, the fears of co-opting proved to be unfounded. One participant noted that the seconded union employees did not become apologists for their particular union, but that they did provide “hard-hitting, blunt advice” (M1). This same senior manager remarked that bargaining agent representatives became as proud and defensive of their products at the secretariat as any manager. “To me that was the perfect mix of working together and feeling pride in what you had accomplished” (M1). Another senior manager commented that at a certain point he could not distinguish the bargaining agent representatives from the management representatives working in the secretariat and on committees. “So to me, when you get to that point, it’s just people sharing ideas; what works, what doesn’t work. When you get there, I think you can say, ‘We’ve succeeded’” (M4).

A union participant commented on the ambiguity of the situation for labour representatives at the outset of the secondment:

We had an initial meeting with our team boss who said, “Your role here isn’t to represent the union, but on the other hand, you are here to bring a union perspective.” So it was always unclear and I think we all struggled with that at the beginning about “just how far do we go?” And it really wasn’t clear at the beginning what our role was and what we were going to be doing there. (U3)

Nevertheless, research participants who worked inside the secretariat also reported a generally positive experience. A management participant from the secretariat
noted a positive outcome in terms of greater understanding by union representatives of the realities of the management side, adding “I had a better understanding where they’re coming from too” (M2). A union participant summed up the experience in the following manner:

> It was really different being there on a day-to-day basis working side by side with the employers’ representatives to achieve a common goal. It made all the difference in the world. I guess in the end we all wanted that to work really well so that the employees would be happy with the system. So we had a common goal, a very broad one, even though individually it might have been slightly different. (U3)

Not all reviews were uniformly positive. Management participants expressed some doubt on the question of transferring the secretariat experience to other contexts. While they shared a belief that the model could work in other contexts, it was thought that the leadership required to make it happen would not be present in all departments. “I think it should happen and I see it happening in places, but it takes a pretty enlightened manager to see the benefits of it” (M1).

The question of equitable workload distribution between union and management representatives working inside the secretariat was also raised. It was stated that in some cases, there were unequal expectations of workload sharing and accountability for deliverables, with management-side representatives shouldering heavier responsibilities in these areas.

**Shared Understandings**

Participants had mixed responses to questions of whether there were preliminary joint discussions relating to shared understandings and expectations for the PSMA collaboration effort. Union participants recounted that discussions had taken place among
bargaining agents as to the establishment and composition of the Union Management Advisory Committee (UMAC). They also described long discussions between union and management representatives on the terms of reference for this committee. However, the union representatives interviewed did not recall any specific discussions on matters such as trust, commitment to the process, shared values, or common goals.

One management representative did recall discussions of this nature at the outset of the consultation process, although the discussions may not have specifically addressed issues of trust and commitment. Another senior manager made the following observation:

Maybe we don’t spend enough time sorting out what is that shared vision. … In terms of the PSMA, you know an interesting question [would be], would we have ended up with the disconnect at the front end if there had been a little more dialogue around ‘Okay, so we have an opportunity here; what are we actually trying to achieve?’ (M3)

Addressing the issue of process versus content discussions, this participant went on to wonder if the parties moved too quickly to the details of the legislative changes:

I know there were meetings and consultation and there was all that, but at what stage did the dialogue begin, and was it at ground floor, or was it arguments about this bit of text versus, you know, whatever? (M3)

The experience of participants directly involved with the PSMA Implementation Secretariat was somewhat different from the experience of those involved with the UMAC. Participants involved with the secretariat recall formal meetings to discuss procedures and assign tasks, but do not recall any discussion of values-based expectations at the outset. However, one participant recalled frequent informal discussions of common goals and working in a spirit of cooperation. These informal discussions were attributed to the unique circumstances of union and management representatives working side by side for a sustained period and the corresponding necessity to achieve a shared understanding of expectations and roles.
The issue of trust in the labour relations context was a recurring focus of the interviews. Participants were asked to define trust in the labour relations context and to provide examples of situations or actions that would serve to raise or lower trust between the parties. The issues of risk and information sharing in the labour relations context emerged as sub-sets of the theme of trust.

Trust was described by one participant as the single most important element in labour relations. In several cases, trustworthiness was linked to honesty, integrity, credibility, and respect. Several participants reported that they start with a default position of trusting their counterparts in any new relationship, and only stop trusting when given a reason to do so.

Both sides recognized that the unique circumstances of the labour-management relationship require trust even in the face of disagreement:

It is necessary to trust that the other person is telling you the truth even if you don’t like the truth they’re telling you. … You don’t have to agree with somebody in order to trust them; you just have to believe what they’re telling you is what they truly believe. (U1)

It [trust] looks like people actually communicating clearly and honestly with each other and recognizing that they’ve got different roles and you can have quite genuine disagreements. (M3)

To me it means being able to put everything on the table, feeling secure enough in the relationship that I can say what I have to say. (U3)

There’s a willingness to put yourself in the other person’s shoes, even if you don’t agree with them. That’s part of the trust thing. (M2)

Participants acknowledged that a trustful relationship is built over time. One participant characterized the process as an investment of time, noting that without this
investment, the relationship is unlikely to be successful. Another noted that the opportunity to work together over time forges strong relationships. “You have to have a chance to get to know one another, you have to have a chance to get to work together and you have to see some success in the relationship; some positive results” (U3). One participant noted that trust is built during periods when the relationship is not being tested by contentious events, and then relied upon in difficult times. Another recognized the importance of ongoing dialogue between union and management in the trust-building process and credited the PSMA consultations for providing the opportunity for such an ongoing dialogue.

There was universal agreement among the participants that risk was associated with trust in the labour relations context, especially as it relates to the sharing of information. “The party with the information needs to be the one to take a chance … there are some risks involved, and somebody has to take the first risk and be willing to share” (U1). When asked to describe an action that would serve to lower trust between the parties, the majority of participants cited the inappropriate disclosure of confidential information as the primary example. Indeed, this concern appeared in the very definition of trust for one management representative:

First and foremost, it’s the ability to have a conversation off the record and have that respected. … Trust is the ability to say something to someone and not find it in the paper the next day … I think trust, inherently when it gets right down to it, it’s the gut feeling that someone won’t abuse you when you’re least expecting it. (M2)

Tellingly, several participants from both sides recalled the same example to illustrate the point. The participants recounted an occasion on which a deputy minister assembled the leaders of all unions within his department for a confidential briefing. Despite everyone in the room agreeing that the information in the briefing would remain
strictly confidential, one union disclosed the information to the press, and it appeared in a national newspaper the following morning. The deputy minister had to deal with a very unhappy minister who was required to handle the public and political fallout from the disclosure.

Management representatives pointed to the heightened risk inherent in the political environment of the federal public service, noting, “The stakes are a lot higher in terms of sharing information in the public service” (M3). As well, senior managers indicated that a breach of trust of the type described above could have repercussions in the labour relations community beyond the incident itself. “Our political masters, I suspect, could push back the relationship a long way” (M3). Another noted that “sometimes, politically, the union leaders have to be seen by the members to be present in the media, but it does negatively impact the relationship at the senior level” (M4).

For their part, union participants described a loss of trust between the other bargaining agents and their sister union, noting that the bargaining agents were just as upset as the employer representatives. With respect to the effect on the relationship between the employer and the bargaining agents, one union participant described it as follows:

The reaction from management was ‘We took a risk, we stuck our neck out and you chopped it off. We have to give this a second thought about whether we’re going to do this again …’ There was a cooling period for a number of months. (U2)

One management-side participant summarized the concern in noting that “at the end of the day, it really does come down to figuring out how you have real conversations in a manner that doesn’t put anybody at risk, because there is a real risk here” (M3).
When questioned about the level of trust evident between the parties during PSMA consultations, participants expressed a high degree of trust in the sincerity of the senior managers who were coordinating the exercise. Union participants also reported that they believed they were privy to more information than in previous consultation exercises and that there was a good degree of openness in the discussions. One union participant made the following observation:

I certainly had the impression that the individuals at the senior level on the employer side were more willing to talk about some of the concerns they had. … It was a fine line to be walked on both sides. I think the senior officials were walking it at the same time as they were taking some chances, and I like to think the chances they took proved to be worthwhile. (U1)

A management participant described lower initial levels of trust on the part of some union representatives, but thought that trust levels increased over the course of the PSMA consultation process.

Participants from both the union and the management sides who were involved with the PSMA Implementation Secretariat reported a high level of trust as well. They described an environment of equal access to all information and no differentiation in levels of trust between the union and management officers seconded to the secretariat.

A further theme that emerged through the interviews was that of trust built on reliability. Leaders from both the management and the union side stressed the importance of being able to rely on the word of their counterparts in forging a trustful relationship. “When I say something, I’ll do it, and when I can’t do it, I’ll tell you that too, and when you can tell me the same thing without posturing, then we’re starting to get somewhere” (M1). Related to this theme is the assertion of two of the senior leaders that a trustful relationship must also be premised on the understanding that a leaders’ counterpart, whether from the union or the management side, must be able to deliver on his or her...
word. For one management participant, this meant an understanding that the union leader was in fact speaking for the union membership and was reflecting the union position that would be communicated to the members and the public. For one union-side participant, trust was closely related to personal credibility: “If you commit to delivering something and then find out that you cannot deliver, the other party needs to know it’s a genuine mistake and that you weren’t misleading them. If they think you were misleading them, you’ll lose trust” (U1).

Finally, one participant directly linked trust, the consultative process and, future efforts on policy co-development.

I think that if you learn how to consult properly first, I think it’s the bridge to proper co-development; it’s the bridge to trust, to the integrity and the honesty that has to exist between the parties in order to get to that point where you co-develop. (M2)

**Cultural Change**

The Report of the Advisory Committee on Labour Management Relations in the Federal Public Service (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2001), commonly referred to as the Fryer report, was an influential precursor to the collaborative initiative undertaken through the PSMA consultation process. During the interviews for this study, research participants were asked for their views on a statement from the Fryer report that suggested that in order for the labour relations system to be viable in the 21st century, there would need to be far-reaching cultural change. The question sparked a wide-ranging discussion around the issues of the current labour relations culture in the federal sector, the demographic shift under way in the public service, and the capacity of the parties to respond to cultural and organizational change.
There was a widely held view among research participants that many individuals in the public service labour relations system are unwilling to shift their view of the system. One senior manager linked this unwillingness to change to demographic realities in the public service:

They [public service managers] come from a generation where collective bargaining was nothing more than negotiating salary and wages and all that. So they’ve got a whole mindset that’s been built up … and they have spent most of their career in that kind of conflicting environment and many of them are looking to say, “For the next 3 years that I’m here, does it really make a difference what I do? And how much time do I really want to spend on this?” That, we think, is a huge issue, a huge challenge for us. (M4)

A union participant reached essentially the same conclusion in remarking that

Unfortunately, I think there are still people on both sides who don’t necessarily believe in cooperation or don’t believe that cooperation is possible or appropriate, and they’re still stuck in the old adversarial model of union versus management. As those people leave, I think the opportunity to make it better will be there. (U1)

A senior management leader expressed what may be the view of many of his colleagues:

Cultural change, you have to work at it all the time and it comes back to … the fact that as an organization we are going through such huge changes in how we operate, how we do our business, and trying to cope with that, with that aging workforce; how do you instill that cultural change in the union-management relationship? Many simply say that’s just one more thing you’re throwing on me. So all of these factors, we agree, require huge cultural change. Is it our number one priority? No. Is it a priority? I think so, but the ability to cope and focus and determine what is required, I think, is still huge. (M4)

Another union participant echoed these comments: “I believe that not everybody has bought into this collaborative approach. Both on the union side and the employer side and the departments as well, but I think the culture has to change” (U2). Participants on both sides made reference to the ‘command-and-control’ culture that defined the public service for decades and which is in many ways antithetical to the approach embodied in the Public Service Modernization Act (2003):
I think there has to be some cultural change, and I think this employer has to be very aware of the big stick and not use it like they have in the past, the last 20 years, the way they have … because that doesn’t engender a good working environment or workforce, and the public service will not be attractive to the younger generation to come. (U2)

One feature of the modernization legislation is a new requirement for departments to establish mandatory union-management consultation processes, as well as mandatory informal conflict resolution systems. Some participants lamented the necessity of legislating cooperative problem-solving mechanisms, while others identified these measures as a “springboard” (M2) to cultural change. “There are times when you have to force people to change or to be involved in some things, and eventually they come to understand this is a good thing” (U1). A management-side representative came to the same conclusion:

To me there is an element of mandatory that you need to put in place to try and kick start and give yourself the opportunity or potential to think about how you can have a better relationship. … If you never start to force it at the front end, you’ll never, I don’t think, break through to the kind of climate you’re ultimately trying to achieve. That was, for me, a real revelation. (M1)

Research participants also recognized that cultural change is a long-term process that requires senior-level support:

You’ve got to be prepared for the long haul … senior leaders, deputies, and so on have to keep pushing at it and saying, “This is the way we work in the public service. This is the way we work in our department.” And you have to sustain it over time. (M1)

Another management participant, discussing the need to build strong labour-management relationships, acknowledged that change must be supported at the top and also commented that

It has to be built into the culture of the place … we can help change the culture, but it doesn’t have to be me, it doesn’t have to be my ADMs or even my DGs; it can be the directors, often where a lot of the work is getting done … it can be down to that level. (M4)
There was no dispute among participants about the need for cultural and organizational change, both in the public service itself and in the union-management relationship. Nevertheless, some doubted the capacity of the bargaining agents and the employer to cope with the kind of changes that would result from a rejuvenated labour relations system. In the wake of the implementation of the PSMA, unions are faced with a rising chorus of requests from departments and central agencies to participate in consultation, informal dispute resolution, and collaboration on a plethora of issues. In the words of one management participant, “I think if we were really serious on all fronts, I think it would be a huge issue for the bargaining agents. I don’t know how they would do it” (M4).

**Departmental Labour-Management Consultation**

The aim of this research inquiry was to use the knowledge and experience gained by senior leaders through the PSMA collaboration effort not only to better understand senior-level labour relations, but also to assist management and bargaining agent representatives elsewhere in the labour relations system. As documented in this report, the Public Service Modernization Act (2003) ushered in a new labour relations framework, including a mandatory requirement to establish union-management consultation in each department. Accordingly, research participants were asked to provide their advice to colleagues and counterparts at the departmental level on achieving more effective consultation and collaboration.

One management participant encouraged deputies to think of labour-management consultation as a network of interactions at all levels in the department, rather than as
simply one committee at the national level. This allows for a clearer understanding that strategic issues are to be the focus of the most senior committee. Indeed, management participants were unanimous in their view that national-level consultation processes could be more effective if a stronger strategic focus were employed. There was a recognition that senior managers could do a better job of articulating the strategic thinking behind issues for consultation, but also a sense that the senior union leaders have some difficulty transcending individual operational irritants to focus on ‘big-picture’, cross-governmental issues. In the words of one management participant, senior union leaders “are not always comfortable talking about the vision thing” (M4).

Senior managers clearly expressed frustration with their experiences of holding a national-level meeting with multiple bargaining agents and an entire departmental senior management team at the table, only to spend inordinate amounts of time discussing a matter that might affect only a few members of a single union. One management representative made the following comment:

I would like to see the agenda driven more by both parties. I would like to see agenda items from both parties that are specific to that level. So if you’ve got a departmental level and regional level, don’t bump up the regional stuff … there’s nothing a deputy hates more than to deal with stuff at the regional level. (M2)

Another manager considered this situation an enormous lost opportunity for constructive dialogue, but acknowledged that “if you want to deal at a strategic level, you’ve got to be dealing at a regional and local level effectively” (M3), and noted that a dysfunctional relationship at a lower level can become a strategic issue at the national level. This recognition dovetails with the systemic view of the consultation network envisioned above.
All research participants stressed the importance of personal relationships in modern labour relations. Both union and management representatives found great benefit in establishing informal relations with counterparts, which they found in turn facilitated formal interaction. Participants also noted that strong personal relationships between leaders carried over from one context to another and contributed to continued cooperation in the face of difficult or adversarial situations.

Personal relationships were seen as fundamental to a trustful labour relations environment in two ways. First, these relationships facilitated the flow of information between parties through both formal and informal channels. Second, they provided an opportunity for the parties to test the veracity of information received from other sources by connecting directly and easily with their counterparts.

Personal relationships also factored into the consultation process. In thinking about advice to colleagues just beginning to put consultation mechanisms into place, one management participant offered the following thought:

So my advice to departments getting under way is … we’ve got to carve out time to just have conversations. Just to get to know each other and keep the agenda pretty simple at the beginning. That would be my advice because I think most people would discover that we’re pretty good folks all around. (M3)

Another participant made the following observation:

I think, to me, personal relationships and establishing personal relations is always very, very important. Because if you can do that, when something comes up, you can always call and say, “Look …” and be frank with people. …”You know what? That shouldn’t have happened.” I think that goes a long way. (M4)

Research participants also identified the value of personal relationships in helping union and management representatives understand the realities and constraints their counterparts face. As one participant noted,
For too long, managers and union reps have been living in a world of misconceptions about the other side. … The union reps need more exposure to the pressures on the managers and what they’re trying to do. At the same time, the managers need to understand why a union rep shows up in their office trying to defend what the manager sees as indefensible. (U1)

**Competencies**

Tubbs and Schulz (2006) describe competencies as knowledge, skills, and abilities that can predict successful outcomes on a job or task. Research participants were asked to describe the competencies that they believed were the most important to an effective labour-management relationship. Responses that were identical or similar in meaning were grouped together. Following this exercise, the results were analyzed to determine if broad categories of competencies could be identified. This led to a determination that the competencies identified by the participants fell into categories based on cognition, communication, behaviour, or values. The results are provided in Table 1 through Table 4. Where a table contains more than one column, each row contains competencies that are similar in meaning, but which are sufficiently nuanced to warrant separate inclusion in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Competencies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of counterparts’ organizations</td>
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<td>Understanding of government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
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<td>Ability to learn quickly</td>
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<td>Cognitive capacity</td>
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<td>Analytic ability</td>
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<td>Ability to be strategic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inquisitive / Genuine interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to know and understand the players</td>
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<td>Well organized</td>
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Table 2. *Communication Competencies*

<table>
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<th>Competency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able / Prepared to listen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good sense of body language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to explain difficult and unpopular decisions</td>
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<td>Ability to be open about your interests</td>
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<td>Effective at conveying messages</td>
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<td>Persuasiveness</td>
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<td>Ability to negotiate</td>
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Table 3. *Behavioural Competencies*

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<td>Ability to lead through others</td>
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<td>Ability to reach out to others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to be a statesman – rise above the fray</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to deliver on your word</td>
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<td>Ability to encourage initiative</td>
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<td>Ability to encourage sensible risk taking</td>
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<td>Ability to trust</td>
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<td>Assertiveness</td>
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<td>Professionalism</td>
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<td>Behavioural flexibility</td>
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<td>Adaptability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to ensure a diversity of views</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to value experience regardless of where it comes from</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comfortable in yourself</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidence in yourself / your point of view</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to understand counterparts’ issues</td>
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<td>Ability to understand different perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to create a mutually shared vision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to motivate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bias to action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decisiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative / Ability to work as a team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genuine ability to partner with others</td>
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Table 4. *Values-Based Competencies*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
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<td>Sincerity</td>
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<td>Respectful approach</td>
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<td>Empathy</td>
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<td>Honesty</td>
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<td>Capable of disagreeing in a respectful manner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
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<td>Genuineness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognition of legitimacy of each party’s role</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
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</table>
Lessons Learned

The discussion of outcomes of the PSMA collaboration effort was broad enough to encompass a number of elements related to the union-management relationship in the federal public service. Participants provided views on the lessons learned from the process, often focusing on replicating successful PSMA outcomes elsewhere in the system and on the heightened importance of effective human resource management.

At its heart, the Public Service Modernization Act (2003) embodies a new philosophy of federal sector labour relations. If successfully implemented on the level of true cultural change, the new framework will be manifested through shifts in attitudes and behaviours. Some evidence of these shifts was remarked upon by the research participants:

We made progress in breaking down some of the traditional barriers. People took some chances that didn’t come back to haunt them. There was a willingness to have a discussion about the options, constraints, and pressure points in advance of making decisions and recommendations. (U1)

The one thing I’ll say is the biggest change is a growing number of deputies are starting to treat HR or people management like they always have treated financial management, and that’s a big breakthrough because we’ve got a nucleus of deputies now who have come through PSMA and are committed to the goals of PSMA and aren’t bashful about or afraid to take the time to talk to their colleagues. (M1)

I think some of the flavour and the approach and the relationship have flowed over into some of what has gone on with the National Joint Council and some of their directives and certainly the health care plan discussions. (U2)

Another senior manager noted that the PSMA experience will lead to “a much stronger attempt than ever before on the soft side of the relationship” (M4), which would lead to greater encouragement of collaboration between the parties. Participants also credited the PSMA effort for highlighting the need to focus more attention on the people who make up the public service. “Traditionally deputies have been rewarded and
managers have been rewarded on their policy leadership … but not for how they manage people. Well, now this is putting people on the same footing” (M1). It was noted that private sector CEOs spend up to 50% of their time on strategic human resources and people issues, while by their own reckoning, deputies in the public service spend less than 20% of their time on these issues. “That’s the change we’ve got to make” (M1).

Research participants also commented on the value of the PSMA implementation process in terms of future co-development of policy by the employer and the bargaining agents. In reviewing the role of union representatives on working committees that developed policy and tools to facilitate implementation of the new legislation, one manager commented that “the union rep brought a slightly different perspective and slightly different emphasis to something which will make what comes out the other end much more effective” (M3). Another manager saw the experience in the PSMA process, coupled with the intent of the new legislation, as a template for bargaining agents’ future efforts:

Their primary objective is to ensure that they get good working conditions for their members … now you can do that through co-development. I do think with the new workforce, that if the bargaining agents want to be relevant to the new workforce, that’s the model that will serve them. (M4)

Finally, one manager commented on the effectiveness of the Union Management Advisory Committee (UMAC) model, where the parties collaborate on a specific issue in a dedicated forum. This approach was contrasted with some of the current consultative bodies, which have very broad mandates. It was thought that the UMAC structure allowed for quicker turnaround in matters of policy development and bargaining agent feedback.
There was general agreement and some enthusiasm for the notion that the experience of senior leaders in the PSMA process could be successfully replicated in other contexts. At the level of the senior leadership of government and the bargaining agents, the challenge articulated by one management representative was to take the experience outside the labour relations context. Management representatives made specific reference to the development of a program of shared services across government departments as a possible example:

I think we have to take that model and actually apply it to the business of government as opposed to the business of labour relations. … So let’s say, take shared services or internal services and maybe having two or three people from the bargaining agents working with us right from the outset to see how this is evolving. I think we would find that at the end of the process that we would all be in a better situation. We’d all have a better understanding of the constraints. (M4)

This view was echoed by another senior manager, who commented as follows:

I think you take this model and, specifically the model of union-management consultation. … I think you’ve got to say that’s a success model and you’ve got to replicate it, so what I’m pushing for on the shared services is to do exactly that. (M1)

In noting that a shared services initiative was under way in the public service without a strong consultative role for the bargaining agents, this senior leader further commented that

We’ve not communicated early enough, we’ve not consulted early enough, even on the broad thinking and we’re trying to catch up. But I think the only way we’ll do that is if we get committed to a model like we’ve done with PSMA. That’s the way you do it. (M1)

Despite the support for transferring the PSMA model to “the business of government,” one management participant noted that there has been no call from the bargaining agents for such an initiative.
Study Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from the study results are presented in the following section. Conclusions are grouped into themes that are similar to, but not identical to the themes presented in the Results section. Themes identified in this section are labour relations culture, the Secretariat experiment, shared expectations and joint learning, competencies and lessons learned. A summary conclusion rounds out the section.

Labour Relations Culture

Wide differences exist in the culture and practice of labour relations from department to department in the federal public service. A few departments were engaged in cooperative efforts with bargaining agents long before the advent of public service modernization. Other departments pay lip service to the concept of consultation, and in these departments consultation is more akin to after-the-fact briefings of union representatives than to meaningful discussion in the course of decision making. Still other departments have no formal process of consultation between unions and management.

In their study of Canadian public sector workplaces, Lonti et al. (2002) came to the conclusion that, during the 1990s there was very little cooperation between the parties, calling the concept “utopian” (p. 12). This somewhat harsh assessment nevertheless accords with the views of a number of the research participants. One participant noted that the situation has improved in recent years:

The ‘90s was not a good decade for labour relations in the federal government; it was terrible. Things have improved – of course one would say they had to improve, they couldn’t get any worse – but I think the last 5 years have certainly been better than the previous 10. (U2)
Of course, the attempt by government to engage unions on public service modernization, and the unions’ willingness to do so, is direct, if limited, evidence of a changing relationship.

A common theme among participants was the importance of the deputy minister in shaping the labour relations culture in a given department. Departments with good records of labour management cooperation reverted to an adversarial relationship with a change in deputy, and vice versa. Participants reported that this correlation was evident as far back as the 1970s and highlighted the importance of the people in the system, regardless of the legislative or policy mechanisms. This conclusion aligns with the findings of Masters and Albright (2003), who assign primary importance to senior-level support, including support at the political level.

Unfortunately, many participants reported strong resistance to any cultural change to the union-management relationship in the public service. Participants noted a deep-rooted adherence to the traditional adversarial models on both sides of the labour relations equation. As one union participant noted: “I think there’s a lot of union leaders … stuck in that confrontational mode. It’s something that they know and that they’re comfortable with and it’s hard to get out of that” (U3). Both union and management participants confirmed that a significant core of senior managers are not supportive of a more collaborative union-management relationship. A further group of senior leaders, while not necessarily opposed to an improved labour-management relationship, do not see the issue as a priority.

Given the time and commitment required for cultural change to take effect, it can be concluded that significant attitudinal change across the public service may only be
possible with the advent of a new generation of public service employees. Nevertheless, strengthening senior-level commitment will be an immediate requirement if positive cultural change is to be realized through the coming demographic shift.

*The Secretariat Experiment*

Participants from both the union and the management side qualified this experiment as a breakthrough for the parties. In most cases, it was considered that the breakthrough came at the level of mutual trust and acceptance of risk by the senior officials. Indeed, it was evident from the interviews that there was good reason for senior officials to contemplate the risks involved, given the wary reactions within their respective organizations to the proposed secretariat.

As one participant noted, the actual effectiveness of the secretariat would need to be evaluated separately from the success of the leap of faith by the senior leaders. On the issue of effectiveness of the secretariat, it can be concluded that there was a generally positive dynamic within the group of seconded union and management representatives. Nevertheless, in any evaluation, participant comments concerning lack of clarity at the outset of the assignment should be borne in mind. Similarly, future applications of this model should ensure equity between union and management representatives in matters of responsibility, workload, and accountability for deliverables.

*Shared Expectations and Joint Learning*

Conspicuous by its absence was any recounting by research participants of orientation, preparation, or joint learning opportunities prior to embarking on the PSMA
consultation process. Participants were vague about discussions of shared values, trust, and commitment. The only preliminary discussions that seem to have taken place were related to terms of reference for the Union Management Advisory Committee, which do, however, make reference to mutual respect and goodwill.

There are two indications in the data that some discussion could have been valuable. First, it was noted that a “disconnect” (M3) occurred at the outset of the process, which might have been avoided if the parties had had a fuller discussion of the shared vision of the group. Second, it was noted that at least one senior union representative was extremely distrustful of the process, although this distrust is reported to have dissipated somewhat over time.

The seeming lack of joint discussion at the outset of the process may be attributable to the relative familiarity of the union and management leaders who took part in the process. Many would have known each other from other interaction on labour relations matters, and almost all would be veterans of consultative processes in the labour relations realm. This may have led to a level of comfort and a presumption that joint discussions of the type described were not necessary.

It should also be noted that a labour-management relationship is distinctly different from a relationship that is completely internal to one organization. Perhaps most importantly, stakeholders in a union-management relationship have widely differing interests and goals. This would make the identification of common goals more challenging. A further barrier that must be considered in the case of the PSMA effort is the outright rejection of the new legislation by one of the most influential unions in the federal public sector. This sort of fundamental opposition, whether it be ideological,
political, or pragmatic, should be anticipated as a legitimate feature of the labour relations landscape.

However, it is precisely these factors that would make preparatory discussions and learning opportunities so valuable. Given the differing interests of the parties, an identification of common goals would seem essential. In addition, given the primary importance research participants placed on trust between the parties, an explicit discussion of trust as it applied to the consultation process might have served to ease levels of distrust at an earlier point in the process. In his seminal study of labour management cooperation, Cook (1990) noted that cooperative efforts between union and management are more likely to succeed when the parties specifically address the issues of trust and commitment at the outset of such an effort. Finally, labour leaders are often faced with unenviable choices between outright opposition and a need to remain engaged in consultative process in order to protect the interests of their members. The parties to collaborative processes could benefit from explicit discussions of this reality, to further enhance understanding of constraints that could impact joint efforts.

**Competencies**

There was a close correlation between the competencies described by the participants as important to a cooperative labor relations environment, and competencies identified by Ospina and Yaroni (2003a) in a similar study. These included “strong organizational leadership, definition of mutual goals, team building, openness, effective communication skills and above all, trust” (p. 140).
The unique nature of the union-management relationship, however, did contribute to the identification by participants in this study of several competencies that may be of greater significance in the labour relations environment. As noted above, the environment is characterized by parties with sometimes widely differing goals and interests. The stakeholders share nominally equivalent authority in bilateral or multilateral discussions. Senior public service management representatives have a strong political element to contend with in their roles. Similarly, labour leaders are usually elected by their memberships, adding a political element to interaction with their counterparts as well. Finally, the parties are counterparts rather than colleagues, so their ability to develop personal relationships is somewhat more constrained than in a direct collegial relationship. These environmental characteristics are reflected in participants’ responses to the question of key competencies in the labour relations context.

Ospina and Yaroni (2003a) concluded that three attitudes are likely to increase cooperation. These attitudes are openness, respect, and reciprocity. The authors’ findings correlate well with the findings in this study. Openness refers to flexibility and a willingness to share information. Respect relates to acceptance, by the employer, of the role of the union. Reciprocity describes the willingness of union and management representatives to put themselves in the others’ roles. All of these attitudes are evidenced in the responses of research participants.

If there is an overarching competency, however, it would relate to the ability to understand and appreciate the realities and constraints of one’s counterparts in the union-management relationship. This “reciprocity” cuts across behaviour, communication, cognition, and values-based competency categories. It can be concluded that cooperative
labour relations initiatives will have an increased likelihood of success when participants possess competencies that promote mutual understanding.

The competencies identified by research participants that are most closely linked to the labour relations environment are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5. Competencies Linked to Labour-Management Cooperation

| Cognition Based                               | Understanding of counterparts’ organizations |
|                                            | Understanding of government                  |
|                                            | Ability to know and understand the players   |
| Communication Based                         | Ability to be open about your interests      |
|                                            | Ability to negotiate                        |
| Behaviour Based                             | Ability to value experience regardless of where it comes from |
|                                            | Behavioural flexibility                      |
|                                            | Ability to understand the other party’s issues |
|                                            | Ability to understand different perspectives |
|                                            | Genuine ability to partner with others       |
|                                            | Ability to trust                            |
|                                            | Ability to deliver on your word             |
| Values Based                                | Respect and recognition of legitimacy of each party’s role |
|                                            | Empathy                                    |

Lessons Learned

The academic literature on union-management cooperation suggests that both parties in the labour relations equation have good reason to explore more cooperative models of interaction. From the management perspective, union and employee participation in change initiatives is becoming increasingly vital to successful change initiatives (Oxenbridge & Brown, 2002; Warrian, 1996). Conversely, union leaders are
increasingly constrained by the restricted scope of traditional collective bargaining in the public service and legislative restrictions on job action (Keefe, 2003).

Unions in particular recognize the opportunity that a more collaborative approach holds. Faced with a narrowly defined scope of bargaining, unions are embracing collaborative models to provide an expanded capability to represent their members at the level of strategic business decision making (Kumar et al., 1998; Verma & Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1996). Finally, the disaggregation, or the pulling apart of government service delivery from its related finance and policy functions, has been identified as a new public sector management model in the United States, which could “fundamentally destabilize the overall labor-management relations system” (Warrian, 1996, pp13-14) in that country’s public service.

These trends identified in the literature were borne out in the experience and comments of research participants. Union leaders expressed frustration with the continued unwillingness of government to expand the scope of collective bargaining to include such areas as classification, staffing, and pensions. Management representatives foresaw an extended period of change in the federal public service, driven in part by the pursuit of shared services and Service Canada initiatives remarkably similar to the disaggregation in the U.S. described above. A turbulent period of systemic change through disaggregation will necessitate collaborative efforts if government is to achieve its goals and unions are to protect and enhance their members’ interests.

Fortunately, the parties are well placed to undertake collaborative efforts on this front should they so choose. Unions are concerned with the potential impact of a shared services initiative on their members. Management representatives were unanimous in
their view that senior-level consultation was most appropriately used for discussion of strategic issues that were cross-departmental or cross-governmental. A management participant noted the importance of applying the PSMA model to “the business of government as opposed to the business of labour relations” (M4). Another directly referenced the PSMA experience as a model for consulting on shared services. While it was noted that the shared services initiative was proceeding without significant consultation with bargaining agents, it is also true that unions were not formally engaged in the PSMA process until after the legislation had been finalized. Should the parties wish to test the replicability of the PSMA model, the shared services initiative would be a logical choice.

Shared services is simply an example of where the model developed in the PSMA process could be used to facilitate the co-development by union and management of policies that impact public service employees. The concept of co-development was seen by many participants as an integral part of the philosophical underpinning of the Public Service Modernization Act (2003). Participants referred to co-development as a new model of labour relations to complement the traditional adversarial approach. Others considered co-development to represent the evolution of a mature relationship between the parties to consultation.

Standing in juxtaposition to this view of a new labour relations model is the current state of labour-management cooperation described above. Many departments have little or no meaningful consultation, and there is only a small, albeit growing core of deputy ministers who are visible in their support of improved labour-management cooperation.
Summary Conclusion

Three interrelated factors appear to have contributed to the effectiveness of the PSMA consultation effort. First, the senior management and union leaders involved in the process brought relative sophistication in labour relations matters, along with a generally positive disposition toward cooperation between the parties. As reported, however, the majority of departments do not have mature consultation processes in place; some have none at all. Coupled with the reported negative or indifferent disposition of many deputy ministers toward labour relations, it seems clear that senior-level consultation at the department level would not start on the same footing.

Next, the parties to the PSMA process appear to have benefited greatly from the involvement of the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada and its Implementation Secretariat. The agency acted as an umbrella organization and clearing house, feeding committees and working groups with timely and appropriate information, and communicating processes and outcomes to other stakeholders in the labour relations system. This support undoubtedly contributed to more effective use of the time leaders spent together in consultation. No such ongoing support system exists to assist managers and unions as they move toward mandatory consultative processes across departments and levels.

Finally, the effectiveness of the initiative can be attributed in part to the willingness of the bargaining agents to dedicate their own resources to the effort. The assignment of union officers to work in the Implementation Secretariat was the most visible manifestation of bargaining agent support. In addition to this, bargaining agents
such as the Professional Institute created teams within their own organizations to support their leaders’ efforts, analyze outcomes, and communicate with officials, staff, and members. Success in future collaborative efforts will require clear support by senior union leaders, including the willingness to commit resources.

As unions and management embark on mandatory consultation and discussions of co-development, it can be concluded that the likelihood of success would be increased if the factors contributing to the effectiveness of the PSMA consultation process could be replicated in other consultative forums. Conversely, the absence of the factors described could result in less successful outcomes and lower levels of commitment.

The new legislation provides an opportunity to build the infrastructure of a collaborative relationship at the departmental level, but much work remains to be done. This work is not restricted to one party or the other. The parties should jointly develop and have access to the learning resources, tools, and support necessary to ensure the best possible chance of success in their collaborative endeavours. Such a support system does not currently exist and therefore would need to be established.

On the management side, there must be clear support from the senior levels, including an investment of time to build personal relationships with senior union counterparts. Strategies should be developed to further engage the deputy minister community in progressive labour relations.

For the bargaining agents, a sharper focus should be placed on dealing with strategic issues and making effective use of time spent in senior-level consultative forums. Once in place, and if approached in the spirit of the preamble of the Public Service Modernization Act (2003), these commitments and mechanisms could become
the catalyst to developing the mature labour relations environment necessary for truly collaborative relationships.

**Scope and Limitations of the Research**

This research was conducted by interviewing senior union and management representatives in the Canadian federal public sector. A relatively small number of participants provided in-depth views on their experiences in the Public Service Modernization Act (2003) consultation process and in federal sector labour relations generally. One limitation of this research, therefore, is the number of research participants. A larger number of participants would have provided more data from which to derive conclusions.

It must also be recognized that this research was specific to federal public sector labour relations. There are marked differences in the framework and scope of labour relations between the public and private sectors. Similarly, the labour relations environments in the provincial, municipal, and quasi-governmental sectors have unique characteristics. Therefore, the conclusions reached in this research could not be generalized for other sectors.

The labour relations system in the federal public sector engages participants at all levels, from shop steward and first-line supervisor, to union president and deputy minister. The focus of this research was limited to union and management representatives at the senior level. It is therefore not informed by the experiences and views of individuals at other levels in the system.
Finally, all labour relations systems employ neutral third parties to assist unions and management in conducting their affairs. These third parties have a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of the labour-management relationship.

Phenomenological research explores lived experience – in this case, the lived experience of senior union and management representatives attempting to collaborate. For this reason, third-party neutrals were not interviewed. Nevertheless, the inclusion of neutrals may have added a dimension not otherwise captured in the research.
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

“Labor-management cooperation is a superb ethical procedure for both labor and management. Furthermore, the role of government should be to encourage it and to remove the obstacles to its fruition” (McKay, 1996, p. 478).

“Developing a strategy to increase the occurrence of instances of cooperation and sustaining those that exist are important and desirable public policy and public management goals” (Ospina & Yaroni, 2003a, p. 137).

This chapter begins with recommendations flowing from the results and conclusions presented in the previous chapter. Three main recommendations are presented, each with a number of sub-elements designed to clarify and expand on the main recommendation. This is followed by a discussion of the implications for stakeholder organizations if the recommendations were or were not implemented. The final section of the chapter focuses on implications for future research. Several suggestions for potential future research are presented.

More than half a decade has passed since the Fryer report (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2001) identified a need for cultural change in the labour relations environment of the federal public service. Research participants in this study unanimously agreed that cultural change is necessary, and the efforts of the parties in the PSMA consultation process are direct evidence of such cultural change. However, if the lessons learned from the PSMA implementation experience are not shared and
transferred, there is a risk that the experience will become an isolated and temporary example of union-management collaboration, rather than a bridge to true cultural change.

Study Recommendations

In determining how best to build on the successes of the PSMA experience, the parties should recognize that they enjoyed senior-level commitment and support systems that are not currently in place for the collaborative efforts to follow at the departmental level. Replicating this commitment and support will be an important factor in the success of future efforts. The following recommendations address the need for establishing and developing commitments and systems that will assist the parties in building long-term, collaborative relationships.

Recommendation 1: Create a Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation

Mandatory consultation, mandatory conflict management systems, and the promise of co-development as envisioned in the Public Service Modernization Act (2003) are progressive measures designed to encourage harmonious labour relations in the federal public service. However, an Act of Parliament alone cannot be more that a point of departure on a path of cultural change. While mandatory mechanisms may now be in place, cooperation itself cannot be mandated. Nor can it be presumed that the parties who will engage in consultation, conflict management, and co-development possess the skills and mental models that will contribute to successful outcomes. Finally, the parties do not have access to tools that could assist their efforts to collaborate.
In attempting to address these cultural and systemic needs, the nature of organizational culture should be carefully considered. As discussed in chapter 2, the culture of an organization is not merely an inventory of visible behaviours and tangible artifacts. Below this surface level lie the values, beliefs, and ethics of the individuals who populate the organization. At its most profound level, organizational culture is impacted by the deeply held and often unquestioned assumptions that individuals have about organizations and the people in them (Schein, 1985).

The Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation (CLRC) could be established and housed within the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada (PSHRMAC) or the National Joint Council (NJC). Organizational implications of this choice are discussed in the next section. The primary mission of the Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation would be to facilitate positive cultural change in the labour relations community. The Centre would fulfill two broad mandates. First, it would conduct outreach activities to advance the cause of cooperative labour relations in the deputy minister community. The aim here would be to create a compelling case for greater engagement among deputies, which has been identified as a prerequisite to any long-term success.

A further element of the outreach effort would include bringing senior management and labour leaders together to build cooperative relationships. These activities would support cultural change by promoting better mutual understanding among the senior representatives, and by challenging some of the underlying assumptions and beliefs that may be acting as barriers to greater cooperation.
Second, the Centre would coordinate and facilitate cooperative efforts through the provision of professional support, developmental tools, and facilities for collaborative initiatives. In effect, the Centre would build an infrastructure to assist parties involved in cooperative labour relations efforts in the federal public service. These tangible manifestations of support would be the surface-level trappings of cultural change.

In keeping with these recommendations, the following suggestions could be considered as key activities of the Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation:

a. Facilitate outreach to the deputy minister community, and create opportunities for senior leaders from both sides to come together to build relationships.

The CLRC would facilitate this outreach by connecting deputies who have a positive disposition toward labour-management cooperation with their more reluctant colleagues in the deputy minister community. Such an outreach would include informal networking opportunities or events sponsored by the Centre and designed to bring deputies together. The aim of these functions would be to provide an opportunity for these senior leaders to engage around the issue of labour-management cooperation in the hope of reversing some of the indifference among deputies and dispelling negative connotations some deputies associate with traditional adversarial labour relations.

The Centre would also create opportunities for senior leaders from both sides to come together to build relationships. These opportunities would range from informal networking events to more formal presentations or strategic round-table discussions on issues impacting both the business of government and the business of labour relations across government. In addition to building stronger mutual understanding, these events
would highlight the importance of strategic labour relations to the overall objective of improving service to Canadians.

b. Facilitate the development of collaborative capacity in the labour relations community.

The Centre would play a lead role in facilitating the development of collaborative capacity in the labour relations community by coordinating joint learning opportunities. Departments and bargaining agents wishing to engage in joint developmental activities would have a suite of offerings available, ranging from a one-time introduction to consultative processes, to a program of workshops designed to build collaborative capacity over time. In assisting the parties to build collaborative relationships, the CLRC would offer a global package of resources, tools, and other support that would be customized and available for joint efforts at all levels. Among other tools, the Centre could compile guidelines for implementation of cooperative processes, resource guides, and best-practice benchmarks. The joint learning workshops described in Recommendation 2 would be key elements of the offerings available through the Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation.

c. Provide professional support and facilities for parties engaged in co-development of government-wide initiatives.

The PSMA experience demonstrated the value of a collaborative approach. Successfully replicating this approach would be more likely if a similar support system were in place for future government-wide collaborative efforts. In cases of service-wide
consultation and co-development, the Centre would add value by performing an information triage function to provide joint committees and working groups with appropriate and timely data. Should the parties wish to engage in a co-development effort across departments in the immediate future, consideration could be given to the comments of research participants related to the opportunity to collaborate on shared government services.

\textit{d. Conduct, compile, and disseminate research on labour-management cooperation.}

The CLRC would become a centre of knowledge sharing for collaborative labour relations. This would be accomplished by staying abreast of developments in the field from jurisdictions around the world, and by conducting original research within the federal public service. Research results would be used to better understand the dynamics of labour-management cooperation and to help define future needs. If the Centre were housed within PSHRMAC, this research could be dovetailed with the Agency’s current work on change leadership in the public service, as the two subjects are closely intertwined in any highly unionized setting.

\textit{e. Develop tools to track progress of cooperative efforts across the public service.}

Surveys, focus groups, and interviews are examples of tools that could be employed to gather evidence of collaborative labour relations and identify gaps that should be addressed. Such evidence could be extremely useful in assessing the impact of PSMA implementation during the 5-year review of the legislation.
f. Host an annual seminar to highlight trends, share best practices, and recognize innovative and successful cooperative efforts.

Such a seminar would target the senior leadership of unions and management, as well as other senior stakeholders. It would allow the parties to focus exclusively on the cooperative side of federal sector labour relations, while providing a further opportunity to engage members of the deputy minister community and build relationships at the senior level. Guest speakers from the private sector and other government jurisdictions could be invited to share experiences and best practices. An awards program could be established to recognize outstanding cooperative initiatives at the departmental or service-wide level.

**Recommendation 2: Design Learning Modules for Use in Joint Workshops**

From the results and conclusions of this study, it is clear that the parties would benefit from joint learning opportunities. The following recommendation outlines a series of joint learning workshop modules designed to address different elements of a collaborative labour relations framework. Ideally, all of these workshops would be developed by the Canada School of the Public Service, customized for use at various levels in the labour relations system and adapted to a range of delivery methods. In keeping with the subject matter, workshops should be developed with input from unions, departments, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, and the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada. Once developed, these modules would become part of the suite of offerings of the Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation.
The learning modules would be of four key types:

a. Joint workshops on labour relations competencies
b. Joint workshops on problem-solving behaviours and processes
c. Joint workshops on shared values, common goals, and relationship building
d. Joint workshops on union-management collaboration.

\[a. \textit{Joint workshops on labour relations competencies}\]

The results and conclusions of this study suggest that there are identifiable competencies that, when possessed by the parties to labour-management cooperation, will improve the likelihood of effective collaboration. These competencies can be broadly categorized as behavioural, communication-based, cognitive, and values-based. The findings correlate well with those of Ospina and Yaroni (2003a) in their recent research on the role of competencies in effective labour-management cooperation. The authors note that “gaining and reinforcing the right competencies are critical for the benefits of LMC [labour-management cooperation] to persist in the more traditional environment” (p. 162)

A workshop program could be developed to assist the parties in building and strengthening these competencies. Research has demonstrated that once gained, competencies are transferable to other contexts (Ospina & Yaroni, 2003a). In keeping with this finding, the program could deliver maximum benefit by using a framework of transferable leadership competency development, with a specific focus on those leadership competencies judged to be most important to effective collaboration between unions and management.
b. Joint workshops on problem-solving behaviours and processes

The development of competencies associated with problem solving should also feature prominently in any learning program for union and management representatives. Research conducted by Peterson and Tracy (1988) suggests that the development of problem-solving behaviours and processes is one of the key determinants of successful cooperative efforts between unions and management. These behaviours and procedures include “open sharing of relevant information; exploration of subjects without commitment; brainstorming; discussion of feelings, values, and alternatives surrounding the issue before proposing solutions; having frequent contact between the parties; and taking a long-term perspective” (p. 47). Many of these attributes were also identified by research participants in the present study. A joint developmental workshop to assist union and management representatives in building and strengthening these behaviours is therefore recommended. These joint workshops would provide valuable tools for parties involved in labour-management consultation and would be especially useful to assist parties working with Informal Conflict Management Systems (ICMS) mechanisms and processes.

Joint workshops of this type should not be confused with mediation training. The current popularity of training in mediation skills for union and management representatives confirms the parties are interested in alternative models for conflict resolution. However, mediation training focuses on preparing third-party neutrals to resolve specific disputes between individuals. The proposed workshops described here would recognize the distinct roles of union and management in problem solving and
would focus on building frameworks and relationships within the labour relations community to serve the mutual interests of the parties.

Should this recommendation be acted upon, those developing the workshops should take note of the recent research in this area by Ospina and Yaroni (2003a). The authors found that context-specific development is preferable to formal training. This approach envisions labour and management representatives sharing a problem and all information available to resolve the problem. The parties also share leadership capacity and accountability for the consequences of choices made. The authors suggest that such an approach blurs the traditional lines between union and management and facilitates the learning of new competencies. Their research demonstrated that “team problem solving helped build new relationships, higher levels of trust and reciprocity, and in the long run, higher levels of performance” (Ospina & Yaroni, 2003a, p. 164).

c. Joint workshops on values, goals, and relationships

It was noted in the results and conclusions of this study that the parties to the PSMA consultation process could have benefited from an explicit discussion of shared values and goals. Such discussions would set the tone for building effective collaborative relationships. Workshops of this type could focus on exploring issues of trust and commitment, building guiding principles for the open sharing of information, and identifying common goals despite differing interests. These workshops should acknowledge the importance of personal relationships in the labour relations context and ensure appropriate time and energy are devoted to fostering these relationships within formal and informal workshop activities.
In pursuing shared values and common goals in a traditionally adversarial environment, the framers of such a workshop would do well to keep in mind the extensive research done by Cook (1990), which suggests that the parties need not abandon their fundamental goals and interests in order to successfully cooperate. “Instead, cooperation requires that the parties shift their values and ideologies about the means of pursuing priority goals” (p. 138).

d. Joint workshops on union-management collaboration

Parties at various levels of the federal labour relations system may need a condensed overview of union-management collaboration. A workshop of this type could be developed to incorporate key elements of the previous workshops. In addition, the mechanics of consultation, effective preparation, and effective use of consultation time could be included. The direct link between mature consultation processes and effective co-development could also be highlighted.

Recommendation 3: Develop More Effective Consultation Strategies and Practices

The results and conclusions of this study illustrate two key points related to senior-level support for cooperative initiatives. First, it is clear that support from the highest levels is a prerequisite for successful labour-management cooperation. Second, the disposition of a given deputy minister to labour relations matters has a profound impact on the labour relations climate throughout that deputy’s department.

Research participants from both unions and management also concurred that a significant number of deputies are either disengaged from departmental labour relations
or pay scant attention to the concept of meaningful consultation. This disengagement may stem from frustration with traditional adversarial processes or, as described in the results, with senior-level consultation mechanisms perceived to be ineffective.

Management-side participants in this study identified two interrelated issues concerning the perceived effectiveness of senior-level union-management consultation. Senior managers expressed frustration at taking time at national-level meetings to deal with matters that could more appropriately be dealt with at lower levels in the system. Similarly, senior managers in this study expressed disappointment that more time in consultation meetings was not devoted to joint discussions of strategic rather than operational issues. If senior management leaders are to be persuaded to more fully engage in cooperative labour relations, these perceptions should be addressed.

Whatever the reasons, it seems clear that steps should be taken to engage the deputy minister community if the new era of labour-management relations envisioned in the Public Service Modernization Act (2003) is to be realized. In conjunction with the outreach activities referenced in Recommendation 1, the following strategies are recommended for consideration:

\( a. \text{ Unions and management should consider adopting an integrated approach to departmental consultation.} \)

This approach would begin by viewing each level of consultation, from the workplace level to the senior leader level, as separate elements within a single system of consultation. Representatives could coordinate their actions across levels and determine the appropriate forum for consultation issues. Operational issues should be addressed at
the lowest appropriate level before being escalated to the next higher level. Conversely, issues introduced at the most senior level should be cascaded down to successive lower levels as the issue moves from strategic to operational. Senior union leaders should be prepared to engage with their counterparts on a strategic level. They should also highlight the important connection between strategic change leadership and strategic labour relations.

b. Unions and management should consider creating clear linkages between cooperative labour relations and successful change initiatives.

It will be necessary to demonstrate that collaborative labour relations can provide tangible benefits to deputies and union leaders. While many deputies may have little personal affinity for the concept of union involvement at the strategic level of policy development, they are all undoubtedly interested in successful change initiatives within their departments. Similarly, union leaders need to see collaboration resulting in true positive change for their members, not merely the mitigation of negative impacts of management-imposed change. The literature on labour-management cooperation finds significant evidence of greater likelihood of success in organizational change initiatives where there is union involvement on a cooperative basis (Cook, 1990; Lonti et al., 2002; Verma & Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1996). In addition, research participants in this study identified instances of federal sector labour-management cooperation leading to successful change initiatives. The implementation of the Public Service Modernization Act (2003) is one obvious example. Documented evidence of such linkages would provide a cost-benefit rationale for the additional investment of time and energy senior
leaders would need to make to strengthen senior-level labour relations. Such evidence could also demonstrate the value of union involvement at the strategic planning level, thereby overcoming a further obstacle for reluctant deputies. A ‘business case’ approach as described here might also be a useful tool for unions in future discussions of service-wide co-development of issues such as classification, staffing, or pension frameworks.

c. Unions and management should consider more bilateral consultation at the senior level.

Research participants also identified that the multilateral nature of most senior-level consultation meetings can negatively impact effectiveness. Current structures for senior-level consultation typically bring together all unions representing members in a department. This can result in a multitude of bargaining agents sending representatives to a consultation meeting. With no coordination between unions on agenda items, it is inevitable that many matters discussed are unique concerns of one bargaining agent. This results in significant time being spent on matters that have little relevance for or impact on the majority of bargaining agents at the consultation table.

To address these concerns, the parties should consider using multilateral senior consultation meetings to discuss matters of strategic importance that have impact across bargaining units within a department. Matters that implicate only one bargaining agent could be addressed at bilateral consultation meetings. Increased bilateral consultation would have two immediate benefits: first, it would promote more effective use of senior leaders’ time, and second, it would promote the relationship building between senior leaders identified as essential to effective labour relations.
Organizational Implications

The purpose of the following section is to analyze and describe the impacts on the stakeholders and their organizations should these recommendations be implemented, as well as to comment on the implications of not undertaking the suggested changes. For ease of reference the recommendations have been repeated prior to the discussion of organizational implications.

**Recommendation 1: Create a Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation**

If this recommendation were implemented, there would be obvious implications for PSHRMAC or the NJC. The Centre would require both financial and human resources to effectively fulfill the proposed mandate. However, the Agency or the NJC would be well positioned to house a centre of this kind.

Through the PSMA implementation process, PSHRMAC has shown itself to be a capable facilitator of collaborative labour relations. The Agency has experience in creating the kind of tools outlined in the recommendation. Presentations, templates, and draft policies were used extensively in the implementation effort. The Agency has an established Web presence and is experienced in providing advice to stakeholders across government.

Similarly, the National Joint Council provides a forum for consultation between the parties on public service-wide issues. In addition, the NJC assisted with secretariat support during PSMA implementation. Should this recommendation be implemented within the National Joint Council, changes would need to be made in the NJC’s purpose
and scope to allow the NJC to engage and assist in bilateral cooperative efforts between departments and bargaining agents.

In the spirit of public service modernization, the establishment of the proposed centre could be accomplished by a group similar to the PSMA Implementation Secretariat. A small team of seconded union and management representatives could work collaboratively to create the systems and tools envisioned in the recommendation. Senior officials in the Agency or the NJC could lead the effort to reach out to the deputy minister community and bring senior leaders together.

While time, energy, and funding would be required, the establishment of a Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation could offset other resource expenditures by eliminating the need for each stakeholder to create its own systems and tools. As reported in this study, there is a significant level of concern regarding the capacity of the parties to respond to increased opportunities for collaboration. The proposed Centre would bring some relief to the situation by allowing the parties to focus more on substantive issues and less on the infrastructure of effective collaboration.

The proposal for a Centre for Labour Relations Cooperation is one means of addressing some of the issues that emerged in this study. If this recommendation were not implemented, those issues would still require attention. Questions of outreach, skill development, and relationship building will need to be addressed if labour-management cooperation is to find a home in the federal public sector labour relations system. If stakeholders are left without coordinated support to assist their efforts, the current patchwork of inconsistent labour relations cultures across departments could be expected to continue.
Recommendation 2: Design Learning Modules for Use in Joint Workshops

The development of learning modules as described in the recommendations would be best accomplished by the Canada School of the Public Service. The recommended modules would fall within the mandate of the School to serve learning needs that are common to employees across the public service. The School also has the necessary experience in curriculum development and is oriented to effective adult learning.

It is evident that the development of the learning modules described would require an investment of energy and financial resources. Nevertheless, the modules would undoubtedly be made available to stakeholders on a cost-recovery basis. Given the legislative requirements for mandatory consultation and mandatory conflict management, it is likely that learning modules, once developed, would be popular among stakeholders at various levels in the labour relations system.

If, as suggested earlier in this report, these learning modules were developed in collaboration with the stakeholders, there would be further organizational implications to consider. Input from departments, central agencies, and unions would be required to ensure a representative series of modules that would be equally accepted by unions and management when used in developmental workshops. If this collaboration did not take place, an opportunity might be lost to build support among stakeholders, and to model labour relations cooperation in action.
Recommendation 3: Develop More Effective Consultation Strategies and Practices

Were this recommendation to be implemented, organizational impacts would be felt by union leaders, their staff, and volunteers, as well as by departmental management representatives. If unions and management were to approach consultation as an integrated whole across departmental levels, the effort would likely need to be coordinated at the national level by senior staff or senior elected representatives. An effective communication network would aid in ensuring issues for consultation were appropriately triaged and results of consultation communicated in a timely fashion.

In attempting to focus more sharply on strategic issues at the senior level, union leaders could rely on staff whose functions include research, policy, and government relations. Research and policy staff could also be enlisted to help build a business case for greater deputy minister engagement in labour relations. The reality for smaller bargaining agents is that this sort of staff support may simply not exist within their organizations. In these cases, union leaders could rely on material available in the public domain, such as briefs to Parliamentary committees, published position papers, and the Web sites of sister unions.

Finally, a move to increase bilateral consultation at the senior level would impact leaders on both the union and the management side. The business of government is deepening in complexity even as the pace of change accelerates. In this environment, often the most precious commodity for union and management leaders is time. If this recommendation were to be implemented, senior leaders would need to commit time to both bilateral and multilateral consultation processes, which would necessarily impact time available for other issues.
Should these recommendations not be implemented, there is a risk that the time spent in senior-level consultation will continue to be perceived as ineffective. This could lead to further disengagement of senior management from the labour relations process.

Implications for Future Research

The majority of existing research on labour-management cooperation focuses on specific instances of cooperation between the parties. As indicated in the literature review in chapter 2, these cooperative efforts are often driven by financial crisis or other economic necessity. Future research efforts could be devoted to examining instances of labour-management cooperation that have been successful over a sustained period, through good times and bad. This identification of best practices could assist the parties in better understanding how to develop relationships that will withstand the pressures that inevitably arise in a fundamentally adversarial system.

The study of competencies in relation to labour-management cooperation has not been a significant focus of researchers. However, the results of this study suggest that it may be possible to identify competencies that, when possessed by parties in the labour relations system, could positively influence cooperation between the parties. Further research in this area could refine the understanding of the link between specific competencies and effective labour-management cooperation.

Co-development of government policy may represent the ultimate expression of a mature, cooperative relationship between management and unions. If co-development is to gain a foothold in the federal labour relations system, it will need to be demonstrated that the concept can produce positive results. To this end, future research could be
conducted on co-development experiences in other jurisdictions, especially in the federal public sectors of other nations.

Finally, the question of disaggregation in the Canadian context could be the subject of future research. Disaggregation, or the pulling apart of government service delivery from its policy and finance underpinnings, has been studied in the United States and was identified as having a major impact on labour relations in that country’s federal public sector (Warrian, 1996). As the Canadian government moves closer to this model of service delivery, it would be useful to more clearly understand the impacts and likely stressors this change may bring to federal sector labour relations.
CHAPTER 6: LESSONS LEARNED

This thesis is the culmination of 2 years of learning. As such, it represents far more than the sum of what I have come to understand about conducting qualitative research, as considerable as that has been. While it would be impossible to incorporate all of what has been learned in a single document, it can be said that this work is infused with understanding gained over the course of those 2 years, not just during the research phase.

At the same time, the rigors of constructing a cohesive and focused research document prevent the final product from becoming a compendium of every idea, synapse, and revelation that occurs in the course of writing. It was a surprise to discover how difficult it was to jettison an interesting concept or strong piece of writing because it did not move the process forward. Leaving these pieces on the cutting-room floor, while strangely disconcerting, taught me that cohesive progression trumps intellectual curiosity in ensuring the interconnection of literature, results, conclusions, and recommendations.

Another lesson learned over the course of this thesis project was the importance of reading as widely as possible in advance of data gathering. The results, conclusions, and recommendations emerge from the data but are grounded in the research of the many authors who have explored labour-management cooperation, organizational culture, and change leadership. As well, a strong understanding of the specific subject matter, achieved through experience in the field and through considerable reading of organizational documents, was also important. Taken together, these elements provided a
mental framework for approaching the interviews, which were the heart of this project. Equipped with this framework, it was possible to let the discussions largely guide themselves, resulting in an experience that felt natural and more or less unscripted.

During the interviews, which occurred over the course of 3 months, I continued to read widely, resulting in a more nuanced understanding of the topic. New understanding informed later interviews and allowed for probing along paths that had not been followed in earlier interviews. It would have been valuable to have had this deeper understanding prior to beginning the interviews. Were I to undertake a project of this nature again, I would dedicate more time to reading in advance of data gathering.

Having said this, it is also true that the literature review, data gathering, analysis, and synthesis were cyclical processes that spiraled back and forth in entirely non-linear fashion. The final result benefits from earlier and later reading; earlier and later interviews; earlier and later analysis. The cyclical nature of the work would not be possible without allowing time for the ingredients to marinate and percolate. New insights cannot be summoned on command. Reflection, both conscious and unconscious, is necessary to form new understanding. Never underestimate the value of sleeping on an idea. For me, revelations small and large often arrived in the first moments after waking.

It is almost trite to highlight the importance of breaking the work down into manageable pieces, setting goals for a day or week, and celebrating milestones once achieved. Nevertheless, these were important elements in maintaining the balance necessary to stay the course. A tightrope walker looks straight ahead, not down. As a researcher, I had to focus on the task straight ahead, keeping in mind that I would see a multi-tentacled beast if I dared to look down.
Similarly, I discovered that, like the athlete whose greatest challenge is mental, not physical, my greatest challenge was more psychological than intellectual. I was equipped to conduct the research and report on it. I possessed the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities. Nevertheless, at frequent intervals I would experience dread and stress about the task ahead, which often led to procrastination or questioning of work already completed. Without exception, however, once I settled into the work it was thoroughly enjoyable. While I can claim no deep insight as to overcoming the dread, I can vouch for internally imposed deadlines set well ahead of external deadlines, thereby allowing the stress cycle to work itself through without jeopardizing the project.

Finally, I marveled at the level of engagement the research participants brought to their task. I had anticipated that it would be difficult to capture the time and attention of senior leaders, and to hold their attention in the face of multiple competing demands for their time. Instead, participants were welcoming and generous with their time. They were uniformly well prepared for their interviews and were willing to provide candid assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of the federal labour relations system, regardless of their role in the system. Many participants commented on the rare pleasure of having the opportunity to reflect on and articulate their views in a long interview format. A sincere interest in improving labour relations in the federal public service was a universal trait among participants. I am truly grateful to each and every one.
REFERENCES


Public Service Alliance of Canada. (n.d.). Executive summary of the Public Service Alliance of Canada’s submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates on Bill C-25, Public Service


Rothstein, L. E. (1989, August). Lessons for labor-management cooperation drawn from cases of noncooperation in the French and American steel industries or what we have heah is a failya’ to cooperate. Labor Law Journal, 512-517.


APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INVITATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

Dear (Prospective Research Participant):

RE: Letter of Invitation and Informed Consent

I am writing to invite you to take part in a research project I am conducting in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a Master of Arts in Leadership degree at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads can be established by contacting my faculty supervisor, Paul F. Clark, Ph.D. at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or at XXX@XXXXX. You may also contact Dr. Graham Dickson, Director, School of Leadership Studies, Royal Roads University at telephone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

The objective of my research is to increase understanding of the factors that influence cooperation between labour and management at the senior level, with a particular focus on the consultation process prior to and during the implementation of the Public Service Modernization Act (PSMA). This research will produce recommendations which will be shared with my sponsor, Michèle Demers, President, Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada and with other interested parties and participants.

A small group of senior labour and management representatives who were directly involved in PSMA consultations are being asked to participate in separate interviews which will last approximately one to one and a half hours each. The interview format will be a series of open-ended questions designed to give participants the opportunity to reflect on their experience in PSMA consultations, and the relationship of that experience to other labour relations contexts in the federal sector as well as labour-management cooperation in general. Questions will be provided in advance, and following transcription of the interview you will have an opportunity to add to, delete or clarify any information provided.

With your written consent, interviews will be digitally recorded and supplemented by hand-written notes. To protect confidentiality, no comments will be attributed to individuals in the final report unless specific consent to do so has been provided beforehand. All information gathered through the research process will be kept strictly confidential. Tapes, written notes and any other data will be destroyed one year after acceptance of the final report. The final report, in the form of a Masters Thesis, will be housed at Royal Roads University and will be publicly accessible.

In the interest of full disclosure, participants should be aware that I am employed by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada in the capacity of Executive Secretary. While I am acting strictly as a researcher for the purposes of this study,
participants, especially from the management side may perceive my employment with the Professional Institute as a potential risk to their involvement. I would be happy to discuss this matter further with any potential participant.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study, and you may elect to withdraw at any time. If you elect to withdraw, data already gathered from you will be removed from the study. Similarly, should you choose not to participate your decision will remain confidential.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the conditions of participation in this study.

Name: (Please Print )________________________________________________

Signature:__________________________________________________________

Date:_______________________________________________________________

I hope you will consider adding your perspective to this important issue. Should you consent to participate or have any questions, please contact me at (613) 228-6310 x2272 or at egillis@pipsc.ca.

Respectfully,

Eddie Gillis
Graduate Student
Royal Roads University
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Senior Level Labour/Management Cooperation in the Federal Public Sector

Eddie Gillis, MALT 2004-2B

Paul F. Clark, Ph.D., Faculty Supervisor

November 9, 2005

INVolVEMENT/OBJECTIVES

Tombstone Data – years in public service, years in labour relations, etc

What, in your view, is the state of labour relations cooperation and collaboration in the federal public sector today?

(For union reps) Do you feel you had a real say in management's decision making because of your participation in PSMA consultations?

Did you feel that there was there balance and equality among all participants in PSMA consultations? In other words, did you feel like an equal partner in the consultations? Examples?

Is equality or equal partnership necessary for effective labour management cooperation?

(For union reps) As a union representative, were you more receptive to the PSMA changes because you were involved directly in senior-level discussions?

Is acceptance of change by unions more likely to happen when unions have increased access to consultation as in the case of PSMA?

What factors contribute to union buy-in?

CO-OPTING

(For union reps) Is there a risk of your involvement in these consultations been perceived as a co-opting of the Union by management?
As a union leader, how do you deal with this issue?

(For management reps) What are the constraints or pressures you face from colleagues or superiors because of your involvement in consultations like the PSMA discussions?

TRUST

Was the issue of trust discussed as a group at any time in the consultations?

How would you describe the level of trust between the participants in PSMA consultations you were involved in?

Do you think trust is necessary for effective labour relations?

How do leaders develop or regain mutual trust?

What can be done to increase trust levels between the parties in labour management consultation at the senior levels?

What kind of actions by one party serve to lower the level of trust between the parties?

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Does a positive or negative relationship in one context (i.e. PSMA consultations) lead to a positive relationship in another labour relations context? (i.e. collective bargaining)

Does a positive or negative personal relationship between leaders affect how you view your counterpart’s organization (i.e. union or employer)?

What impact did events in the broader labour relations context have on cooperation during PSMA consultations? i.e. PSAC strike, removal of terminable allowance from CS Group, announcements of Service Canada and shared services.

How do unions and management representatives manage to cooperate in one context while having strong disagreements in other contexts?

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CHANGE

The Advisory Committee on Labour Management Relations in the Federal Public Service (the Fryer Committee) in its recommendations suggests that in order for the labour management relation system to be sustainable in the 21st century there must be “far-reaching cultural change”.

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?
How do you view the labour relations culture presently?

The Fryer Report also suggests that effective leadership is required for cultural change but that such leadership is not evident in the public service: Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

How should leaders go about leading cultural change?

The new Public Service Labour Relations Act legislated changes in processes such as mandatory departmental consultation with unions and mandatory Informal Conflict Management Systems involving unions. Is legislated, mandatory cooperation such as this effective?

COMMUNICATION

Were you involved with your union/management counterparts in any joint communication of your PSMA work?

Is there a joint role to be played by union and management leaders together in communicating with employees/members? If so, what is it?

IMPLEMENTATION SECRETARIAT

How do you view the effort to second union and management reps to work side-by-side in the PSMA Implementation Secretariat?

From your perspective, what lessons can be learned from the experience of seconding union employees to work with management?

Would you recommend that management-side reps go to work in union offices? Why or why not?

Would you recommend that union and management reps be seconded to work together at other levels of the labour relations system?

What are the risks and rewards associated with such a model?

OUTCOMES

Did this consultation process feel different from other labour management consultation processes you have participated in? How?
What were some of the most frustrating experiences you had in PSMA consultations?

What were some of the most rewarding experiences you had in PSMA consultations?

What lessons do you see coming out of the PSMA consultation experience?

In your opinion, what should the parties do to build on the successful experiences of PSMA consultations?

Did any barriers to cooperation arise in the course of PSMA implementation, and if so, how were these barriers dealt with?

What factors do you think are critical to achieving a cooperative labour management relationship at the senior level?

What are the most important skills or competencies required by union and management leaders to improve the likelihood of success of labour management cooperation efforts?

Can the collaboration demonstrated during PSMA consultations be replicated at the departmental, regional and local levels? If so, how is this best achieved?

What advice would you give to union/management reps at the departmental level who are just beginning their own consultation processes?

What is the role of union and management leaders in translating the ‘spirit’ of PSMA consultations to other levels within their organizations?