

March 2017

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AN AUDIT OF
B.C. PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS MANAGEMENT

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The Honourable Linda Reid
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Province of British Columbia
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
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Dear Madame Speaker:

I have the honour to transmit to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia the report *An Audit of B.C. Public Service Ethics Management*.

We conducted this audit under the authority of section 11 (8) of the *Auditor General Act* and in accordance with the standards for assurance engagements set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA) in the CPA Handbook - Assurance and Value-for-Money Auditing in the Public Sector, Section PS 5400.



Carol Bellringer, FCPA, FCA
Auditor General
Victoria, B.C.
March 2017

AUDITOR GENERAL'S COMMENTS

MAINTAINING THE PUBLIC'S trust is a constant consideration for government. High ethical standards are fundamental to good governance and good government.

We carried out this audit to examine government's management of ethics within the core B.C. Public Service – the ministries and central agencies – that manage and oversee government's programs and activities. Sustaining a culture of ethical conduct requires ongoing, conscious effort.

We were looking for a robust framework that sets expectations of ethical behaviour and actively communicates and reinforces that behaviour. We expected to find central accountability for coordinating and managing ethics across the B.C. Public Service.

We found that government has set expectations for ethical behaviour, but it can do more to coordinate ethics management across the B.C. Public Service. With improved coordination, government could better monitor, evaluate and report the results of its efforts to support ethical behaviour.

To find out how public servants experience ethics in the workplace, we surveyed approximately 25,000 public service employees throughout the province, and 50% responded. Many had positive feedback about ethical behaviour in their workplace, and generally perceived the likelihood of unethical behaviour as low.

The survey results also showed us areas where government can improve ethics management. For example, in the last two years, only half of employees who observed unethical behaviour in their workplace came forward to report what they saw. Of those who didn't report, just over half said they were afraid to. This is a troubling finding that needs attention; employees' willingness to report perceived unethical behaviour is critical to government's efforts to manage ethics.



CAROL BELLRINGER, FCPA, FCA
Auditor General

AUDITOR GENERAL'S COMMENTS

We make a total of eight recommendations. If implemented, these recommendations can help build a stronger framework for ethics management in the B.C. Public Service.

Before we sent the survey to the core public service, we piloted it at our office. The survey results told us that we could use more ethics training and guidance. So, we developed new ethics training and guidance materials to ensure our staff are well equipped to apply ethical decision making in all aspects of their work. We have our own code of conduct that staff must follow and review annually. Many of my staff are Chartered Professional Accountants and must also adhere to the ethical requirements of their profession.

Although our audit focussed on ethics in the *core public service*, we thought it important to engage the *broader public sector* in the process. We sent out a survey, asking different questions than our public service survey, to the board chairs and CEOs (or equivalent) in school districts, universities, health authorities, and other taxpayer-funded Crown organizations, to learn more about their efforts to strengthen ethics management. We hope that all broader public sector organizations can use our survey results, findings and recommendations (specific to the public service), to continue implementing strategies that will effectively foster a culture of ethics.

I'd like to thank the ministries and agencies (especially the Public Service Agency) for their cooperation, and the over 12,000 public service employees, and the board chairs and CEOs, who responded to our surveys.



Carol Bellringer, FCPA, FCA
Auditor General
Victoria B.C.
March 2017

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

REPORT DOESN'T CONCLUDE

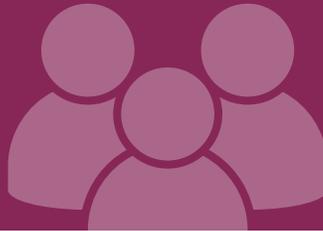
whether public
service is ethical
– IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE

52% OF
EMPLOYEES
said they received
ETHICS TRAINING



THE TOP REASON
**for staff not
reporting**
observed
misconduct
WAS FEAR
OF REPRISAL

SURVEYED
25,000
B.C. PUBLIC
SERVANTS
ABOUT ETHICS.
50% RESPONDED



**GOOD
PRACTICE**
elements in place
**BUT BETTER
COORDINATION**
and oversight needed

62% OF
EMPLOYEES
strongly or somewhat
**AGREE THAT LEADERS
COMMUNICATE ETHICS
AS A PRIORITY**

59% OF
EMPLOYEES

**don't feel
pressure**

TO COMPROMISE
ETHICAL
STANDARDS



SURVEY GATHERED
**EMPLOYEE
FEEDBACK**

ON ETHICS IN
THE WORKPLACE



SUMMARY

B.C.'S MINISTRIES AND CENTRAL AGENCIES – made up of about 32,500 public servants – carry out the day-to-day activities of government and deliver services to the public. They also oversee public service providers in sectors such as energy, health and education. This broader public sector has approximately 351,000 additional employees who are not part of the core public service.

The expectation by government and by society at large is that public service employees, in doing this work, can be trusted to abide by high ethical standards. Ethics are a set of moral principles that inform and guide individual and group behaviour. Supporting and enforcing a culture of ethical conduct is fundamental to good governance and good government.

We carried out this audit to examine government's management of ethics in the public service. We expected to find that government had:

- ◆ an ethics management framework that:
 - ◆ sets the expectations for ethical conduct
 - ◆ actively communicates and fosters ethical culture
 - ◆ enforces proper conduct through active prevention, detection and discipline of misconduct
- ◆ established overall accountability for coordinating and managing ethics across government

In addition to our audit work, we conducted a survey of board chairs and chief executive officers in the broader public sector. This was to get a sense of how these organizations are doing towards meeting recent ethics related guidelines set out by government.

We hope our survey results and report will help both government and organizations within the broader public sector to move forward in their efforts to improve accountability and good governance for ethics across the broader public sector.

GOVERNMENT HAS SET ETHICS EXPECTATIONS FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS

Government has set expectations for the ethical conduct of public servants, primarily through its *Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees* (Standards of Conduct). The expectations in this policy are mandatory for public servants and are reflected in the promise that new employees make when they take the *Public Service Oath of Employment*. Government has embedded these standards of conduct expectations in corporate and ministry-specific legislation, policies and procedures.

In 2014, government announced that all provincial public sector organizations in B.C. would operate under new [Taxpayer Accountability Principles](#) (TAP), a framework designed to strengthen accountability, promote cost control and ensure the broader public sector operates in the best interests of taxpayers. [Standards of Conduct Guidelines for the B.C. Public Sector](#) were also provided.

SUMMARY

GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO STRENGTHEN ETHICS LEADERSHIP, TRAINING AND ADVICE

Through our survey of the B.C. Public Service, many public servants told us that senior leaders and supervisors set a good example of ethical conduct in the workplace. At the same time, however, survey results revealed that leaders can do more to engage directly with staff to gather feedback on how well ethical culture is being fostered and protected in the workplace.

Opportunities for ethics training exist, but government does not have a plan to ensure that all public servants receive ethics training. And ministries have also not clearly defined roles or designated individuals as ministry contacts for dealing with matters related to standards of conduct.

GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO MONITOR AND EVALUATE ITS CONTROLS OVER ETHICAL CONDUCT TO ENSURE THEY'RE WORKING

Government has established controls to prevent and detect unwanted behaviour, and to correct misconduct when it is found. But it is not doing enough to monitor and evaluate these controls to know how well they're working. We found that government does not systematically evaluate risks that could lead to unethical conduct.

According to the survey results, public servants generally perceive the likelihood of unethical behaviour occurring in the workplace as low; however, the survey results reveal that some areas warrant increased focus and attention. As well, some employees told us they did not report perceived unethical behaviour because they were afraid or because they did not understand their rights and obligations to report wrongdoing.

The ability for employees to come forward with concerns about ethics is one of the most important methods for detecting misconduct. Government needs to regularly assess potential ethical misconduct risks and evaluate whether the measures in place to safeguard against these risks are working. It must also address the barriers that are currently hindering some employees from coming forward to report perceived wrongdoing.

SUMMARY

GOVERNMENT NEEDS AN OVERALL FRAMEWORK TO COORDINATE ETHICS MANAGEMENT

Government's management frameworks – for human resources, finances, information and technology management and ministry operations – include expectations for ethical conduct. However, these do not serve as an overall ethics management framework. For government to effectively manage its ethics expectations throughout the public service, it needs to assign an overall ethics leadership and accountability role, and to strengthen coordination of ethics within and across B.C.'s central agencies and ministries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WE RECOMMEND THAT GOVERNMENT:

- 1** ensure that all public servants regularly review and sign off that they understand both the Oath of Employment and the Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees.
- 2** implement an ethics training plan to ensure that all levels of staff are receiving appropriate and timely ethics training.
- 3** ensure that ministries clearly formalize and communicate the role and responsibilities of ethics advisors to act as a point of contact and advise public servants on matters related to the standards of conduct.
- 4** formally evaluate ethics risks as part of their regular risk reviews.
- 5** provide employees with a way to report perceived unethical conduct where the process and protections are transparent and easy to understand, address the barriers to reporting, and where the individual who comes forward to report is informed of the outcome as far as appropriate.
- 6** share with staff information on the types of allegations of misconduct raised, and action taken to address them.
- 7** regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its controls to prevent, detect and correct misconduct, and address any gaps identified.
- 8** clearly designate the lead role for coordinated ethics management across the public service.

RESPONSE FROM THE B.C. PUBLIC SERVICE AGENCY

THE BC PUBLIC SERVICE thanks the Office of the Auditor General for their work reviewing the management of ethics in the public service.

We share the view that ethics and the integrity of our professional public service are essential elements in maintaining the trust and confidence of British Columbians in their democratically elected government. And we appreciate that the audit acknowledged how ethics figure prominently in the public service Oath of Employment, our Standards of Conduct and our corporate public service values. We feel strongly that being part of a professional public service is what attracts employees to work for us.

The findings of the Auditor General reflect the high level of ethical behaviour demonstrated by public service employees and the professional integrity that exists across the BC Public Service. This should give British Columbians reassurance that the frameworks and practices we have in place are effective and set a sound ethical foundation for our service to government and the public.

We are pleased to note that, overall, the audit concludes that employees “generally perceive the likelihood of misconduct of occurring in the workplace as low” and “generally feel they have easy access to ethics guidance resources and that it is useful.” The Auditor General’s survey results are consistent with the results of our own employee Work Environment Survey in that the survey found that nearly 80 per cent of employees agreed they are

clear on ethical expectations of them in their work and that they know where to go for help when faced with resolving an ethical question or concern. Our response rate on this survey in 2015 was 80 per cent, giving us a high degree of confidence in the results and reinforcing that the importance we place on providing a solid grounding for ethical practice and support is being understood and reflected by employees.

As with every aspect of work in an evolving government environment, we acknowledge the value of the Auditor General’s insights into areas where additional focus is warranted.

In the past year, the BC Public Service has initiated a number of actions that effectively address some of the recommendations made in this audit report. Our updated Corporate Plan for the BC Public Service—*Where Ideas Work*—highlights how integrity defines the work culture and unique responsibilities of a professional public service. The introduction of the new Corporate Plan has been supported by a number of related engagement activities led by members of the corporate executive with a focus on reinforcing the importance of ethics and integrity. Additionally, the topic of ethics is a regular feature in the development of new corporate learning tools and resources made available to all members of the public service.

RESPONSE FROM THE B.C. PUBLIC SERVICE AGENCY

These ongoing efforts demonstrate our commitment to strengthen both how we effectively manage ethics as an employer and their practice throughout the public service, and they align well with the advice we have received in this report.

The Auditor General's survey has illuminated three primary concerns raised by employees – the application of merit, misuse of work time and misuse of sick time. We are committed to addressing those concerns and perceptions in a substantive way. For example, although the findings of the Merit Commissioner consistently demonstrate that the principle of merit is applied in hiring in more than 90 per cent of hires, a significant number of employees identified the potential for misconduct in this area. This indicates a need for improved communication and engagement with employees on this issue, to address the apparent gap between practice and employee perception.

We agree with the Auditor General's recommendations and will explore options to implement them. We thank the Office of the Auditor General for a report that supports and reinforces both the commitment of the BC Public Service to ethical professional conduct and the commitment of individual employees to delivering on that responsibility.

BACKGROUND

ETHICS IS FUNDAMENTAL TO GOOD GOVERNANCE AND GOOD GOVERNMENT

ETHICS ARE MORAL principles that inform and guide individual and group behaviour. It is about bringing people together to share a set of values. Ethical behaviour is about people knowing what is right and what is wrong, and doing what is right – even when no one is looking.

Governments around the world have increasingly recognized the importance of ethics in their operations, and much effort has gone into creating expectations about ethical conduct in the workplace.

“*Ethics is a keystone of good governance, a condition for all other activities of government not only to be legitimate and trusted, but also to be effective.*” – OECD Sound Integrity Framework, 2009

Some key government ethics expectations include:

- ◆ **Accountability** – Openly take responsibility for your actions, accept consequences, learn and improve.
- ◆ **Confidentiality** – Be helpful when working with others, but safeguard confidential information.

- ◆ **Honesty** – Do not lie, steal or cheat in any way.
- ◆ **Impartiality** – Provide advice and recommendations free from preference or prejudice.
- ◆ **Integrity** – Put the interests of the public and the public service above your own personal interests and avoid all conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.
- ◆ **Loyalty** – Serve the public interest, as defined by the government of the day, to the best of your ability.
- ◆ **Objectivity** – Base recommendations and advice on objective information.

In every workplace, opportunities and pressures can undermine ethical behaviour. Governments need to remain vigilant and do as much as possible to reduce these risks to maintain public trust. Strong ethics management is at the core of good government.

BACKGROUND

WHY AN AUDIT OF PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS NOW?

As of April 2016, B.C.'s *public sector* had about 383,500 employees (Exhibit 1) who provide a wide range of services to the public, from education to roads and highway management.

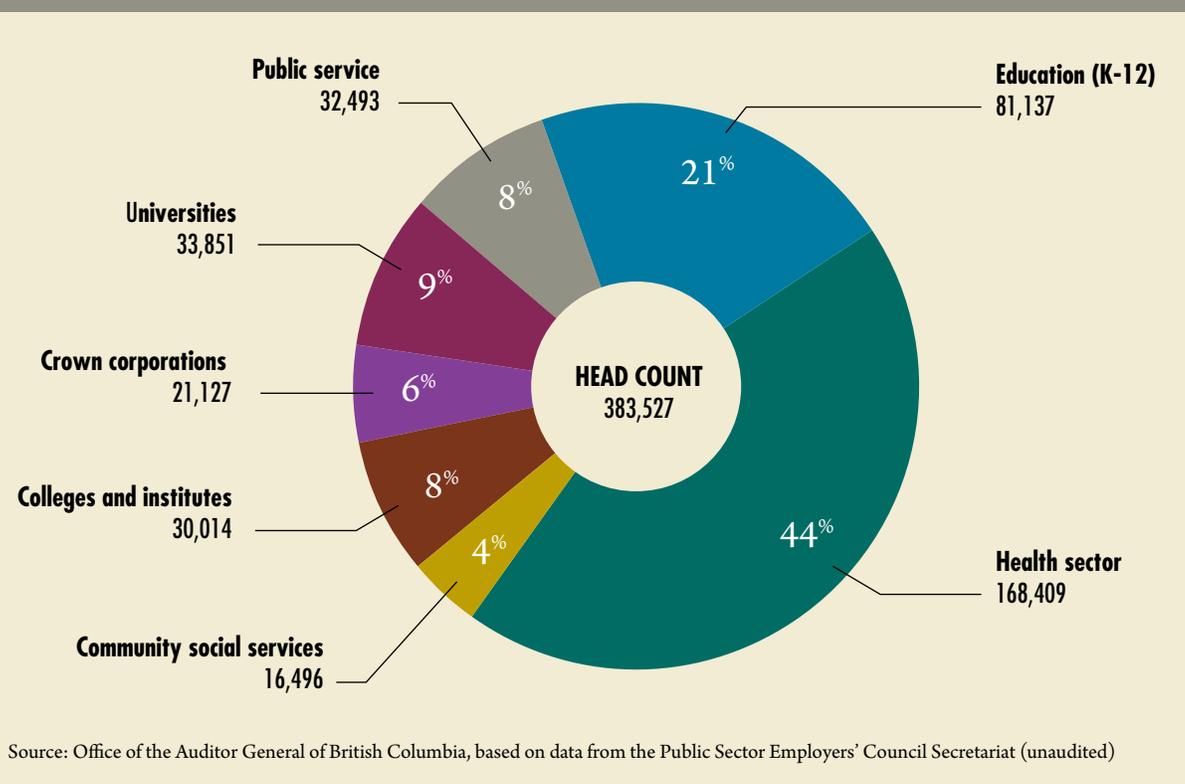
B.C.'s ministries and central agencies – the *public service* – is only 8% of the total public sector, but it provides direct services to British Columbians as well as critical leadership and oversight of the broader public sector. Therefore, ensuring the 32,500 public service employees conduct themselves ethically

is integral to overall good governance and good government in B.C.

The last time we looked at public service ethics management was 1997. Since then, society and government have changed, as have the challenges to, and opportunities for, effective oversight and management of ethics. For example, new technologies make service delivery more efficient, but technology comes with new risks and needs for information and privacy management.

Fostering and enforcing an ethical culture must be ongoing. To keep ethics top of mind, government must continually find new ways to engage public servants on the topic.

Exhibit 1: B.C. Public sector employees by service type



BACKGROUND

WHAT ABOUT THE BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR?

In 2011, a number of government-led reviews of public sector organizations other than the B.C. Public Service (i.e., broader public sector organizations) identified opportunities to enhance public sector accountability to taxpayers. These are still being implemented.

Organizations in the **broader public sector** include: school districts, universities, colleges, health authorities, taxpayer-funded Crown corporations and other Crown agencies.

Taxpayer Accountability Principles

In 2014, government announced that all provincial public sector organizations in B.C. would operate under new [Taxpayer Accountability Principles](#) (TAP), a framework designed to strengthen accountability, promote cost control and ensure the broader public sector operates in the best interests of taxpayers. The six principles are:

1. cost consciousness
2. accountability
3. appropriate compensation
4. service
5. respect
6. integrity

Under the TAP framework, *integrity* requires broader public sector organizations to respect the shared public trust by making decisions and taking actions that are

transparent, ethical and free from conflict of interest. Also, these organizations must establish a strong ethical code of conduct for employees and executives.

Standards of Conduct Guidelines for the B.C. Public Sector

In 2014, government developed [Standards of Conduct Guidelines for the B.C. Public Sector](#) to help create consistent standards of conduct for employees in the public sector. The guidelines mandate that all public sector organizations have an ethics code or standards of conduct.

Broader public sector ethics survey

To learn how broader public sector organizations are doing in terms of implementing the new guidelines, we sent a survey to 258 board chairs and Chief Executive Officers (or equivalents). We received 153 completed surveys, giving us a response rate of 59%. We asked organizations if they:

- ◆ have or are creating an organizational standards of conduct policy
- ◆ provide standards of conduct orientation and training
- ◆ have a whistleblower program in place
- ◆ meet regularly with government officials

Some high-level results of the survey:

- ◆ 86% said their organization has a code of conduct in place
- ◆ 86% said new board members receive standards of conduct orientation
- ◆ 69% said employees receive standards of conduct training

BACKGROUND

- ◆ 64% said their organization has a whistleblower policy (or equivalent) in place for staff to report ethical misconduct
- ◆ 43% agreed the board chair meets quarterly with the minister
- ◆ 63% agreed the CEO or equivalent meets quarterly with the deputy minister
- ◆ 73% agreed government clearly communicates the ethics or standards of conduct it expects from Crown agencies.

Our survey results show that broader public sector organizations have a way to go to meet the requirements of the Taxpayer Accountability Principles. Most, but not all, organizations have a code of conduct and are providing new board members with standards of conduct training. The results also show that more work has to be done to ensure employees have access to a safe and effective process for reporting ethical misconduct.

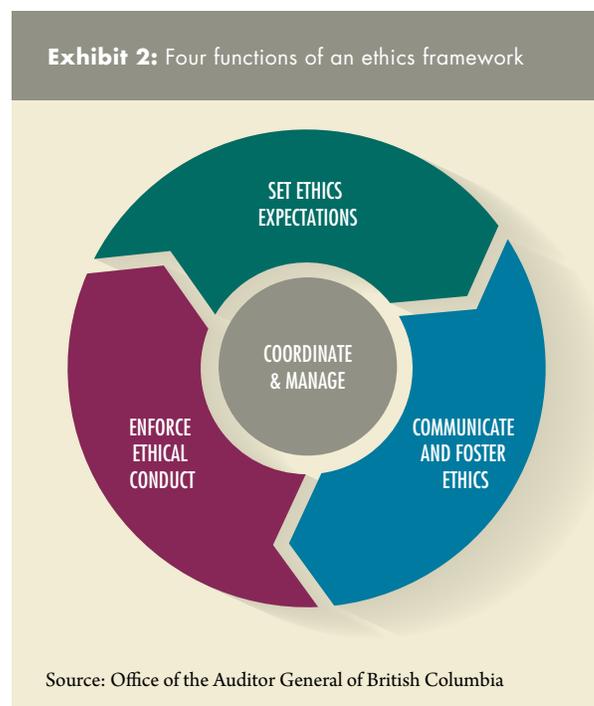
Our results also show that leaders in both government and broader public sector organizations are not communicating with each other as regularly as they could, even though TAP requires regular, two-way communication. We hope our results and report will help both government and organizations to move forward in their efforts to improve accountability and good governance for ethics across the broader public sector.

To review all of our findings from the B.C. broader public sector ethics survey, see [Appendix C](#).

WHAT DOES A GOOD ETHICS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK LOOK LIKE?

We looked at research on good practices in ethics management in government organizations and found many similar ethics management frameworks (see [Appendix A](#)). Most notable is that of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), of which Canada is a founding member. The OECD has researched ethics over the past two decades and developed 12 key principles and three core elements for managing an ethics infrastructure. These principles can be organized under four functions of an ethics framework (see Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2: Four functions of an ethics framework



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

BACKGROUND

1. **Setting ethics expectations** – An organization will have a sound foundation for managing ethics when it has:

- ◆ developed a formal code of conduct that is easy to understand and apply
- ◆ full coverage of the ethical conduct expectations for public servants based on core values
- ◆ policies and procedures that guide the desired conduct

2. **Communicating and fostering ethics** – Employees will understand what is expected of them, and then meet those expectations when they:

- ◆ can easily get help to understand their obligations through online support materials and training
- ◆ can go to someone they trust to get help with an ethical issue
- ◆ work with leaders who model strong ethical behaviours and communicate ethics as a priority through formal and informal conversations and actions

3. **Enforcing ethical conduct** – An organization may minimize the chance that employees will do the wrong thing when it:

- ◆ identifies possible ways that employees might misbehave
- ◆ adopts effective policies and procedures to prevent, detect and discipline unethical conduct

- ◆ regularly monitors its system of controls for effectiveness, including asking employees for feedback

4. **Coordinating and managing ethics** – An organization is effectively coordinating and managing its ethics initiatives when it has clearly assigned responsibility and accountability for:

- ◆ providing oversight of the ethics framework functions
- ◆ developing strategies to support, promote and renew ethical culture in the workplace
- ◆ implementing those strategies in a coordinated way
- ◆ evaluating and reporting on the effectiveness of ethics management

By creating an overarching framework to coordinate ethics management, an organization strengthens its approach to governing ethics initiatives.

“Countries have ... made substantial efforts to develop institutions, systems and mechanisms for promoting integrity and preventing corruption in the public service. Growing demand for evidence of impact requires public institutions to shift their focus towards verifying the effectiveness of these efforts.”

~ OECD, 2005

AUDIT OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

OBJECTIVE

WE CARRIED OUT this audit to determine whether government has established and implemented a framework that effectively fosters an ethical culture within the B.C. Public Service.

To answer this objective, we focused on whether government had designed and implemented an ethics management framework that includes:

1. setting ethics expectations
2. communicating and fostering ethics
3. enforcing ethical conduct
4. coordinating and managing ethics

We also surveyed public servants for information about how well government is working to support ethical culture.

We based our audit criteria on good practice research in ethics management in the public sector, especially the research of the OECD. The OECD has a long history of working with governments around the world to improve governance, including ethics management. See [Appendix A](#) for more details on our audit criteria and sources.

SCOPE

We audited six ministries that provide a wide range of government services:

- ◆ Advanced Education

- ◆ Children and Family Development
- ◆ Finance
- ◆ Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
- ◆ Health
- ◆ Public Safety and Solicitor General

A majority of public servants (68%) work within these six ministries.

We also included three central agencies – the Public Service Agency, the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Office of the Comptroller General – within the scope of our work.

As well, we sent an on-line survey to about 25,000 government employees working under the *Public Service Act* who are subject to the B.C. Public Service Oath and Standards of Conduct. We asked them for information on how well government is providing support for ethical conduct in the workplace. We had an overall survey response rate of 50%. We discuss the results of the survey throughout this report, and we provide a summary in [Appendix B](#).

AUDIT OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC SERVICE ACT?

The *Public Service Act* sets out the roles and responsibilities for human resources management in the B.C. Public Service. The Act requires all public servants to swear or affirm the Oath of Employment.

We did not include in the audit:

- ◆ **Political staff** – Although sound ethics is important for political staff, we did not include them because of their unique and separate function from the public service. Political staff take a different Oath of Employment and must abide by the [*Standards of Conduct for Political Staff*](#). For example, political staff must interact with the permanent public service in a way that maintains separation of the non-political and political sides of government.
- ◆ **Staff in Statutory Offices of the Legislative Assembly** – These public servants are covered by the same standards of conduct as ministry staff, but they may also have their own code of ethics that reinforces particular requirements. For example, employees of the Office of the Auditor General are covered by a Code of Values, Ethics and Professional Conduct that is more specific in particular areas, such as independence, political neutrality and professional competence.

We excluded Crown agencies (broader public sector entities) because their staff are not hired under the *Public Service Act*. Also, in 2014, government issued new *Taxpayer Accountability Principles and Standards*

STATUTORY OFFICES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

British Columbia's statutory offices are non-partisan and headed by independent officers with legislated mandates and who report to the Legislative Assembly. In B.C. there are eight statutory offices:

- ◆ Elections BC
- ◆ Office of the Auditor General
- ◆ Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner
- ◆ Office of the Information Privacy Commissioner
- ◆ Office of the Merit Commissioner
- ◆ Office of the Ombudsperson
- ◆ Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner
- ◆ Office of the Representative for Children and Youth

of Conduct Guidelines for the B.C. Public Sector. Crown agencies were implementing these at the time of our audit.

We did, however, survey Crown agency board chairs and Chief Executive Officers (or equivalent) to learn how they are doing in terms of implementing the new guidelines. We did this to engage with the broader public sector on ethics and ethics management. We provide a summary of the survey results in the report and in [Appendix C](#).

AUDIT OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

ADDITIONAL MATTERS RELATED TO SCOPE:

In December 2015, government created the Chief Information and Records Management Office (CIRMO), a new division within the Ministry of Finance, and a new position – Chief Records Officer (CRO) – to lead this new division. This shifted responsibility for corporate information and records management from the Office of the Chief Information Officer to CIRMO. Because CIRMO was being established at the time of our audit, we did not look at their work in detail.

However, we did look at government's information management policies, training and controls that were in place prior to CIRMO's creation. Since CIRMO is now responsible for all information management legislation and policies, including oversight of the new *Information Management Act* as well as the existing *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Personal Information Protection Act*, they will have a role to play in ethics management in the future.

OUR AUDIT WORK

To conduct our audit, we:

- ♦ interviewed leaders and senior executives in our sample to confirm their understanding of ethics management in the B.C. Public Service and within their organizations
- ♦ reviewed existing legislation and guidance to identify the ethical expectations and standards set by government for employee conduct
- ♦ examined how these expectations were communicated to public servants, including awareness and performance training, and formal and informal conversations
- ♦ examined the extent to which these expectations were supported and enforced
- ♦ examined whether government assessed the effectiveness of its ethics communications, support and enforcement activities, and made adjustments based on this assessment
- ♦ surveyed over 25,000 public servants for their perceptions of government's work to support ethical conduct in their workplace

Because ethics management has a long history in the public service, there is no ideal start and end period. So, we did not limit our audit evidence to a specific period of time. We started our audit work in November 2015 and completed it in September 2016.

AUDIT CONCLUSION

CLEAR LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY to coordinate a comprehensive, integrated ethics management framework is key to establishing a framework that effectively fosters an ethical culture within the B.C. Public Service. We concluded that, even though many ethics management elements are in place, government has not established an overarching ethics management framework to plan, coordinate, foster and enforce ethics management within the B.C. Public Service.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SETTING ETHICS EXPECTATIONS

GOVERNMENT HAS SET ETHICS EXPECTATIONS FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SET clear ethics expectations for employees are more likely to have consistent and desirable business decisions and outcomes. If employees do not know how they are expected to behave, their actions can seriously undermine the culture and reputation of the organization.

We looked to see if government has clearly set expectations for ethical behaviour.

We found that government has set ethics expectations for public servants through the following:

- ◆ the Oath of Employment
- ◆ the Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees
- ◆ the Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees Engaged in Government Procurement Processes
- ◆ various government statutes
- ◆ the Appropriate Use of Government Information and Information Technology Resources policy

Government has incorporated its ethics expectations into four management frameworks:

- ◆ financial management
- ◆ human resources management
- ◆ information technology management
- ◆ information management

Each ministry also has its own operational framework (defined by legislation), and these are supported by the four corporate management frameworks listed above.

Government has a set of corporate values – curiosity, service, passion, teamwork, accountability, courage and integrity – which have been incorporated into the employee performance management system and review process. *Integrity* affirms the Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees and encourages everyone to make the right decision for the right reasons.

Overall, government’s work in this area met our expectations. However, with so many documents communicating expectations, government needs to clearly:

- ◆ communicate ethics priorities (for example, aspire to live up to corporate values, while still adhering to the standards of conduct)

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ define ethics, provide examples and ensure consistent messaging
- ◆ identify the process and the protections for employees who come forward to report perceived wrongdoing
- ◆ ensure that ethics expectations are revisited on a regular basis

RECOMMENDATION 1: *We recommend that government ensure that all public servants regularly review and sign off that they understand both the Oath of Employment and the Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees.*

The Oath of Employment

When new employees join the public service, they must swear or affirm the *British Columbia Public Service Oath of Employment* (see [Appendix D](#)).

By taking the Oath, public servants promise to:

- ◆ be loyal to the government as the employer
- ◆ give service to the government of the day
- ◆ perform their work duties in a way that will not bring the public service into disrepute
- ◆ respect confidential information that they receive through their employment
- ◆ faithfully abide by the *Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees*

Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees

The [Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees](#) expand and build on the ethical requirements in the Oath of Employment. All new employees must sign that they have read and understand these standards as a condition of employment. Some of the main sections require employees to:

- ◆ maintain confidentiality
- ◆ treat others respectfully
- ◆ avoid conflicts of interest
- ◆ report allegations of wrongdoing
- ◆ remain impartial when doing their work, and to keep political activity separate from activities related to their employment

Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees Engaged in Government Procurement Processes

These standards, developed and maintained by the Comptroller General's Procurement Governance Office, set out conduct expectations for employees involved in government procurement. The standards cover confidentiality and conflicts of interest, and provide additional guidance and examples. Adherence is a condition of employment, but employees are not required to sign that they have read and understood these standards.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ministry level standards of conduct for employees engaged in higher risk roles

We found some examples of ministry-specific standards of conduct that provide further guidance on government expectations for employees working in higher risk areas. Two examples are: the *Standards of Conduct for Corrections Staff* and the *Standards of Conduct for Youth Custody Service Employees*.

Various government legislation

We looked at government legislation related to the six ministries we audited for evidence of ethics requirements. We found evidence of ethics related content in some, but not all. It varied, depending on the degree of risk in the organization's work. For example, the *Child, Family and Community Services Act* sets out a framework for making decisions based on the best interests of children and youth.

Appropriate Use Policy

The Appropriate Use Policy (Appropriate Use of Government Information and Information Technology Resources) outlines what employees are required to do with government information and technology resources. Employees must follow

the *Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees* when working with government information, using IT resources or accessing social media. This policy is a condition of employment and new employees must sign that they have read and understood the policy.

Survey Results

The ethics survey showed that 43% of public servants took the Oath over 10 years ago. In addition, approximately 8% of respondents reported that they had either not taken the Oath, did not know whether they had taken it, or preferred not to answer.

Demographics questions from the survey show that approximately 34% of respondents began work in the public service more than 16 years ago, prior to the requirement for all new employees to sign that they have read and understood the Standards of Conduct. Also, the Standards of Conduct were revised in 2007 and 2014.

These results together indicate that formal acknowledgement or review of ethics expectations would benefit employees—particularly those who may have learned those expectations a long time ago or before standards or policies were updated.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. COMMUNICATING AND FOSTERING ETHICS

GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO STRENGTHEN ETHICS LEADERSHIP, TRAINING AND ADVICE

We looked to see if government was communicating and fostering a culture of ethics in the public service through:

- ◆ **Leadership:** communicating the importance of ethical conduct, modelling ethical behaviour and having ongoing formal and informal conversations about ethics in the workplace
- ◆ **Training:** providing a comprehensive ethics training curriculum and ensuring employees receive it
- ◆ **Guidance:** making guidance on ethical conduct helpful, available and easy to find
- ◆ **Advisors:** establishing ethics officers or advisors who are available to staff and reach out to develop ethics knowledge and support ethical decision-making

In each of these areas, we found good practices but also identified opportunities for improvement.

- ◆ **Leadership:** Leaders are setting a good example for ethical conduct, but they need to engage more directly with employees on how well ethical culture is being fostered in the

workplace. Also, all leaders from supervisors to senior executives need to regularly talk to their staff about the importance and relevance of ethics in their everyday work.

- ◆ **Training:** Government training courses include ethical content, but comprehensive ethics training for all staff does not exist. Only half of those who responded to the ethics survey said they had received ethics training. We also found that the Public Service Agency's Learning Centre course participation levels are low.
- ◆ **Guidance:** Employees generally feel they have easy access to ethics guidance resources and that it is useful.
- ◆ **Advisors:** Ministries have not clearly designated or defined the role for someone to serve as the contact for matters related to standards of conduct, as required by the Standards of Conduct.

RECOMMENDATION 2: *We recommend that government implement an ethics training plan to ensure that all levels of staff are receiving appropriate and timely ethics training.*

RECOMMENDATION 3: *We recommend that government ensure that ministries clearly formalize and communicate the role and responsibilities of ethics advisors to act as a point of contact and advise public servants on matters related to the standards of conduct.*

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Leaders need to communicate more on the importance of ethics

Leaders in the B.C. Public Service – from entry-level supervisors and middle managers to senior executives – direct and oversee other employees and their work. Together, they shape the organizational culture. Leaders who effectively foster ethics consistently promote the importance of making decisions ethically. They model good ethical behaviour and they check in to ensure their staff has the understanding and support they need to carry out their work ethically.

Because leadership plays a critical role in shaping an ethical work culture, we asked public servants to what extent:

- ◆ senior leaders and supervisors set a good example of ethical conduct
- ◆ leaders communicate ethics as a priority
- ◆ leaders ask for employee feedback on ethical culture in the workplace

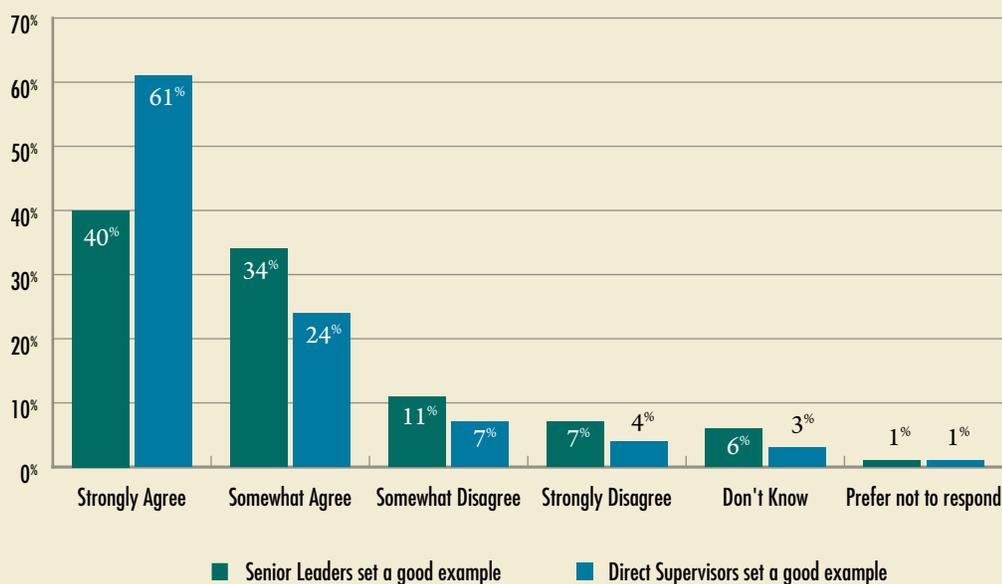
- ◆ leaders are fostering an ethical environment in the workplace

A majority strongly or somewhat agreed that senior leaders and supervisors are setting a good example of ethical conduct and working effectively to foster an ethical environment. But respondents also said leadership could do more to communicate ethics as a priority, and to ask for employee feedback about ethical culture.

Are senior leaders and supervisors setting a good example of ethical conduct?

We found that most respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed that senior leaders (74%) and direct supervisors (85%) are setting a good example of ethical conduct in their workplace (Exhibit 3). These results indicate that most employees view their leaders to be good ethical role models.

Exhibit 3: Leaders setting a good example of ethical conduct



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Are leaders communicating ethics as a priority?

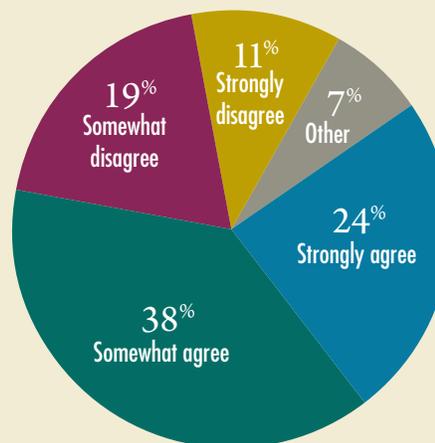
A total of 62% of respondents either strongly or somewhat agreed that leaders in their organizations are communicating ethics as a priority (Exhibit 4). This means, however, that about one-third either somewhat or strongly disagreed, which suggests that leaders can do more to raise the profile of ethics.

We also found there was a notable difference in responses by employee type, with senior leaders holding a much more positive view than other employees (Exhibit 5).

Are leaders asking employees for feedback about ethical culture in the workplace?

One area for leaders to improve engagement with staff is to ask employees for their feedback about ethical culture in the workplace. Only 35% agreed that

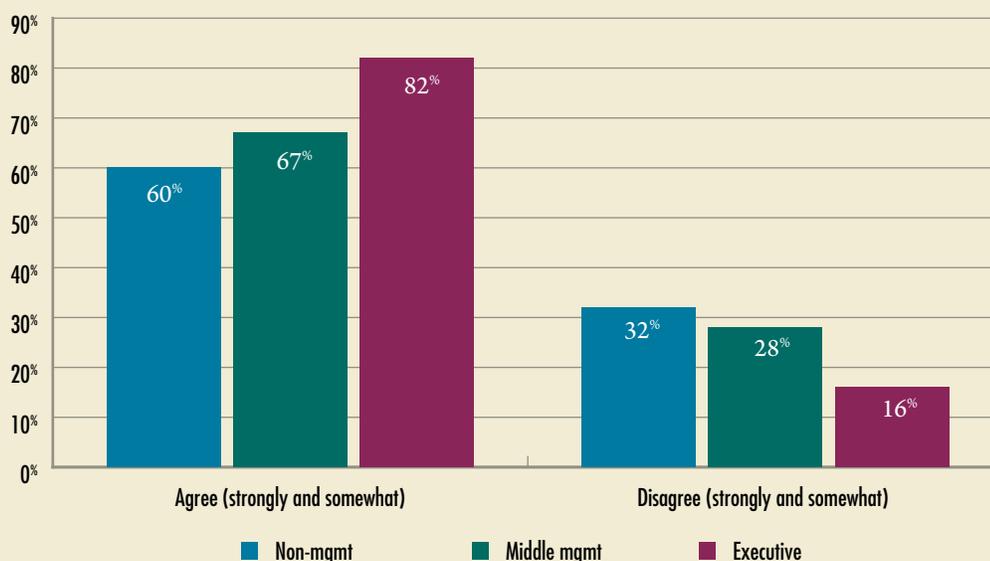
Exhibit 4: Leaders communicating ethics as a priority



*Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

Exhibit 5: Communicating ethics as a priority by employee type



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

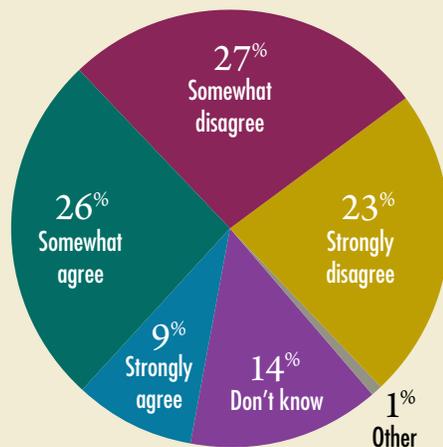
KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

leaders ask for employee feedback about the ethical culture, which strongly suggests there is room for improvement (Exhibit 6).

Again, we found a difference by employee respondent type. Only 41% of middle managers and 32% of non-managers either strongly or somewhat agreed that leaders in their workplace ask for feedback about ethical culture. In contrast, 55% of executive respondents provided a positive response (Exhibit 7).

These clear differences suggest there is disconnect between the views of executive, middle-management and non-management staff. If workplace leaders don't check in with employees, they are missing an important opportunity to identify, prevent and correct areas of weakness.

Exhibit 6: Leaders ask for feedback about ethical culture



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

Overall, are those in positions of leadership working to foster an ethical environment the workplace?

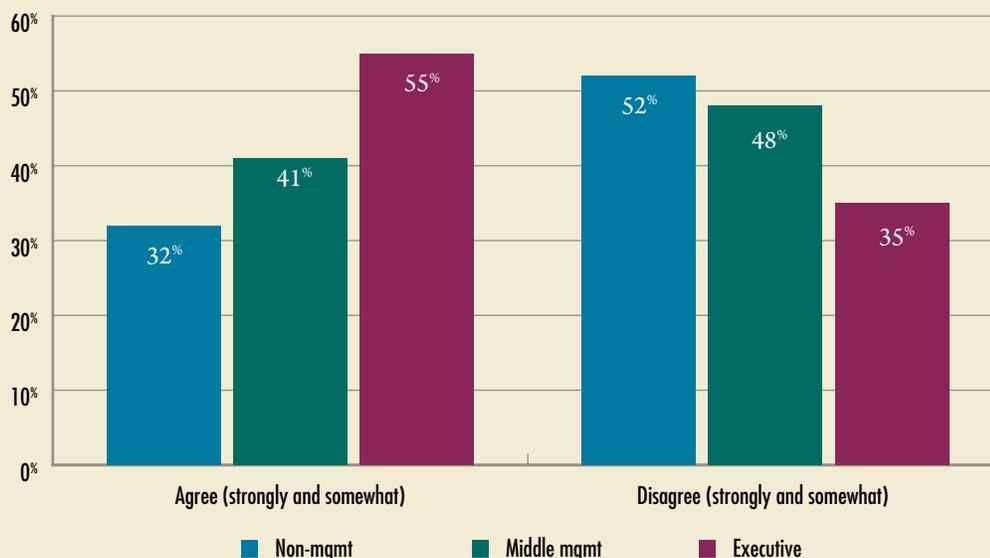
Even though the survey results showed that leaders can improve ethics conversations with staff, 67% of all respondents said those in positions of leadership are either very or somewhat effectively working to foster an ethical environment (Exhibit 8). The one-third of respondents who did not provide a positive response indicates that more can be done to foster ethics.

SAMPLE OF COMMENTS ABOUT ETHICS LEADERSHIP:

- ♦ *"I believe if we are to maintain the high ethical standards that we take pride in, this needs to be behavior that is shown by all levels of the organization. If our most senior leaders cannot model the high standards they say they expect from us, it is inevitable that the standards of the organization will erode over time."*
- ♦ *"The ministry I have worked in for over 20 years has had numerous changes over the years. Every manager and supervisor may have a different way of leading, but I have always been able to count on their integrity."*
- ♦ *"My direct supervisor takes ethic matters seriously, but I do not believe he is supported by his superiors."*

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Exhibit 7: Leaders ask for feedback by employee type



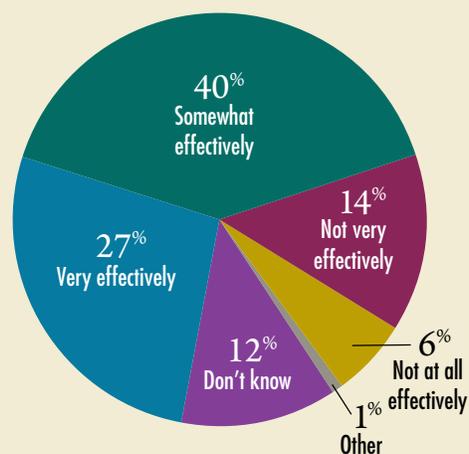
Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

When we met with senior leaders in ministries and central agencies, they told us they understand the importance of fostering ethical culture. Some strategies they said they use to communicate the importance of ethics included:

- ♦ engaging directly with new employees during orientation and training
- ♦ using the Work Environment Survey, which has some new questions related to ethics, to get employee feedback on the workplace
- ♦ using intranet postings and other communications

They also showed us how they have incorporated ethics expectations into government’s human resources, financial, information technology and information management frameworks.

Exhibit 8: Leaders effectively fostering an ethical environment in the workplace



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Integrating ethical conduct expectations into these frameworks makes sense. However, there's also a risk that ethics could get lost or diluted among other priorities. By making ethics a regular, explicit part of communications and engagement with staff, leaders can:

- ◆ reinforce the importance of ethics
- ◆ get useful insight into how well ethics-focused practices are working for employees
- ◆ work with staff to identify and discuss situations that can be ethically challenging
- ◆ identify areas for improvement to reduce the risks of unethical incidents

Government does not have a comprehensive ethics training plan for all staff

Effective ethics training helps employees understand the standards they are expected to follow and to apply an ethical lens to their work. We looked to see if government has a planned ethics training curriculum for all levels of staff. With planning, government will know there is appropriate ethics training for everyone. We also looked to see if government monitors and enforces participation in a planned ethics curriculum to ensure that employees are receiving adequate ongoing ethics training.

We found that ministries and central agencies have developed some ethics-focused training. For example:

- ◆ the Public Service Agency's (PSA's) Learning Centre has developed an e-learning course called *Standards of Conduct*, designed for supervisors but available to all staff

- ◆ the PSA offers an ethics course developed by the Ministry of Finance for accounting professionals
- ◆ the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, in collaboration with the Justice Institute, has developed an ethics training curriculum for corrections staff

We also found that other courses and seminars offered by government include ethics-related content.

For example:

- ◆ the Office of the Chief Information Officer, in conjunction with the PSA's Learning Centre, has implemented mandatory *Information Sharing and Privacy Awareness Training* for employees
- ◆ the PSA's *Building a Respectful Workplace* course is offered throughout government
- ◆ the PSA's *Welcome to the B.C. Public Service* orientation seminar for new employees

However, government has not established a planned ethics training curriculum for the public service as a whole, nor have they established participation targets.

We looked at the number of employees receiving ethics training through the Public Service Agency's Learning Centre. We found that participation rates were generally low, averaging 7% from 2013 to 2015. This suggests that not enough work is being done to ensure that the valuable training offered through the Learning Centre is reaching enough employees.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FOSTERING AN ETHICAL CULTURE

Government began hosting a *Welcome to the B.C. Public Service* orientation for new employees in 2007. This optional, one-day session emphasizes the importance of the Oath of Employment, provides new employees with an overview of what it means to work for the B.C. Public Service, and explains the requirement to abide by the Oath and behave in accordance with the Standards of Conduct. The day also includes an official oath swearing-in ceremony. Sessions were not held in 2012 and 2013 but were resumed in 2014.

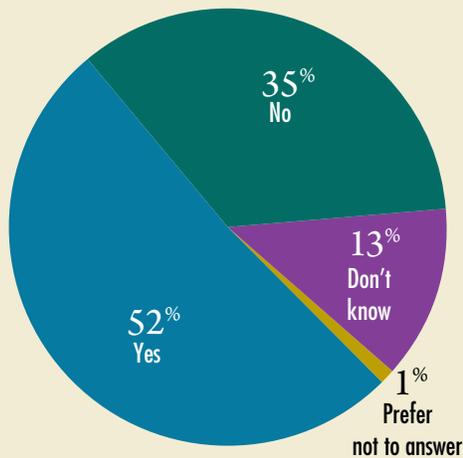
Are employees receiving ethics training?

We asked employees if they have received training in how to conduct their work ethically. Just over half (52%) said yes (Exhibit 9). This low number supports our finding that government could be doing more to ensure that employees regularly receive ethics training.

Is the ethics training that is provided useful?

Of those who received ethics training, 93% said it was either very or somewhat useful (Exhibit 10). These results suggest the ethics training that does exist is generally good.

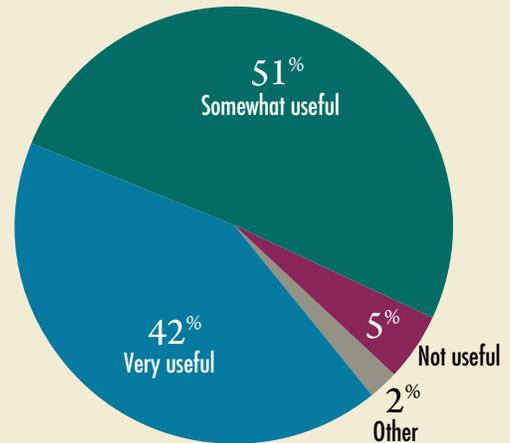
Exhibit 9: Are employees receiving ethics training?



*Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

Exhibit 10: Usefulness of ethics training provided



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SAMPLE OF COMMENTS ABOUT ETHICS TRAINING:

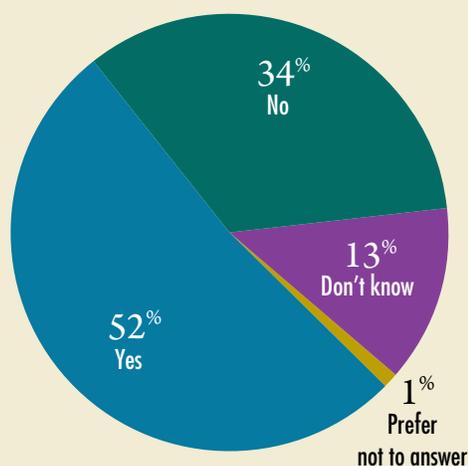
- ♦ *“If leadership is leading by example then ethics training seems a must.”*
- ♦ *“I can say that ethics training has been very limited since I started working with government (8 years).”*
- ♦ *“I took a Financial Management course FM 210 Governance in Practice and found it was excellent in giving opportunities to explore situations that involved ethical decision making.”*

Would employees find refresher training helpful?

We asked all public servants if some refresher training on ethics would be helpful. Just over half (52%) said yes (Exhibit 11), indicating mixed sentiments on the need for refreshers. Still, a large number of employees do think some refresher ethics training would be helpful.

We concluded that for ethics training to be complete and effective, government needs a plan to ensure there are ethics courses for all levels of staff and across all operational areas. Government also needs to establish participation targets and track results to ensure it is meeting its planned curriculum objectives.

Exhibit 11: Would refresher ethics training be useful?



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

Ethics guidance is available and useful

Public servants need easily accessible guidance to succeed at meeting their ethical obligations. Guidance helps clarify or supplement policies, or provides a framework to help employees work through challenging ethical situations.

Do employees have easy access to ethics guidance?

We asked employees if they have easy access to guidance on how to conduct their work ethically; 69% said yes.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Is the available ethics guidance useful?

Of those who said they have easy access to guidance, 83% said it was either very or somewhat useful (Exhibit 12).

Although this is a positive finding, the high number of somewhat useful and don't know responses suggest that government may need to make some improvements to the usefulness of the guidance.

We saw that some ministries had developed good examples of guidance that other ministries could emulate. The Ministry of Children and Family Development's decision-making flowchart is one example (see [Exhibit 13](#)).

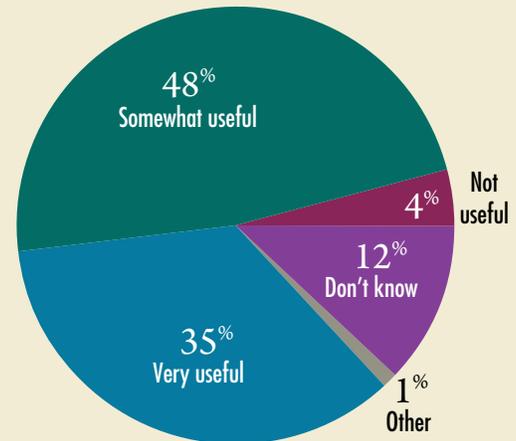
This flowchart visually identifies important questions that employees need to consider, and the people they need to consult, to make a decision that is free of ethical conflicts. This guidance is unique to the work of Ministry of Children and Family Development staff, and the framework specifically provides practical direction and advice to these employees.

Ministries have not clearly identified or formalized Standards of Conduct contacts

We looked for evidence that government has assigned an ethics officer or equivalent that can provide support on matters of ethics and standards of conduct. The Standards of Conduct state that:

- ♦ deputy ministers are required to “designate a ministry contact for matters related to the standards of conduct”

Exhibit 12: Do employees find ethics guidance useful?



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

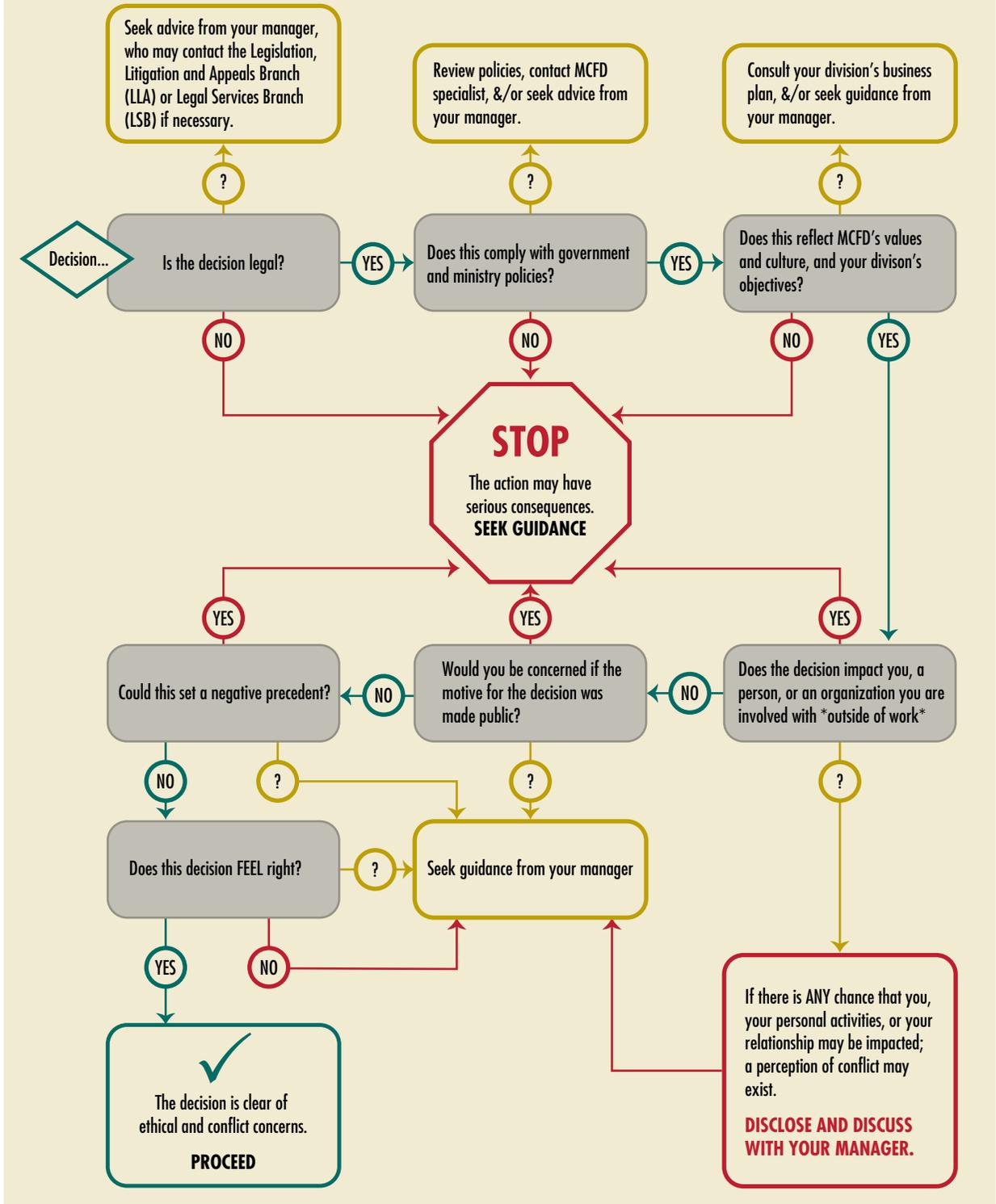
- ♦ managers are to “advise staff on standards of conduct issues” and “engage the ministry-designated contact as may be appropriate”

Ministries currently rely mostly on supervisors to be the primary go-to person for ethics advice or concerns. This makes practical sense because supervisors observe daily employee conduct and provide performance evaluations. But this might not be enough in terms of objectivity and expertise:

- ♦ Supervisors are not in a neutral relationship with employees. Therefore, employees may be reluctant to go to a supervisor if they are not comfortable with him or her, or if the issue relates to the supervisor.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Exhibit 13: Decision-Making Flowchart of the Ministry of Children and Family Development



Source: Recreated by the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, based on Ministry of Children and Family Development's flowchart

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Supervisors, although trained to understand the Standards of Conduct, may not be sufficiently experienced to provide leadership on complex ethical situations.

Apart from supervisors, employees can go to the next level of management or to the designated ministry contact for standards of conduct matters. Every deputy minister we met with identified someone assigned to this role of designated ministry contact, but we found that the role was not formalized or well communicated to staff.

By clearly identifying and defining this position to include ethics outreach and advisory responsibilities, government would strengthen the ability of this individual to provide leadership and support to supervisors and staff.

3. ENFORCING ETHICAL CONDUCT

GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO MONITOR AND EVALUATE ETHICS CONTROLS TO KNOW THEY'RE WORKING

In addition to communicating and fostering ethics in the workplace, organizations must enforce the established ethical standards. This can be done by:

- ◆ regularly looking for **ethical risks** that may exist
- ◆ putting **controls** in place to prevent, detect and correct or discipline ethical misconduct

- ◆ **monitoring and evaluating** controls and making improvements as necessary

We found that government does not, in general, conduct regular reviews to look for ethical risks. They have controls in place to prevent, detect and correct misconduct, but some controls may not be as effective as planned. Government can do more to monitor and evaluate ethics controls to ensure the system of controls is working as intended. As we found from our survey, there is room for improvement.

RECOMMENDATION 4: *We recommend that government formally evaluate ethics risks as part of their regular risk reviews.*

RECOMMENDATION 5: *We recommend that government provide employees with a way to report perceived unethical conduct where the process and protections are transparent and easy to understand, address barriers to reporting, and where the individual who comes forward to report is informed of the outcome as far as appropriate.*

RECOMMENDATION 6: *We recommend that government share with staff information on the types of allegations of misconduct raised, and action taken to address them.*

RECOMMENDATION 7: *We recommend that government regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its controls to prevent, detect and correct misconduct, and address any gaps identified.*

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Employees perceive some ethical risks, but government does not do regular, formal ethics-focused risk reviews

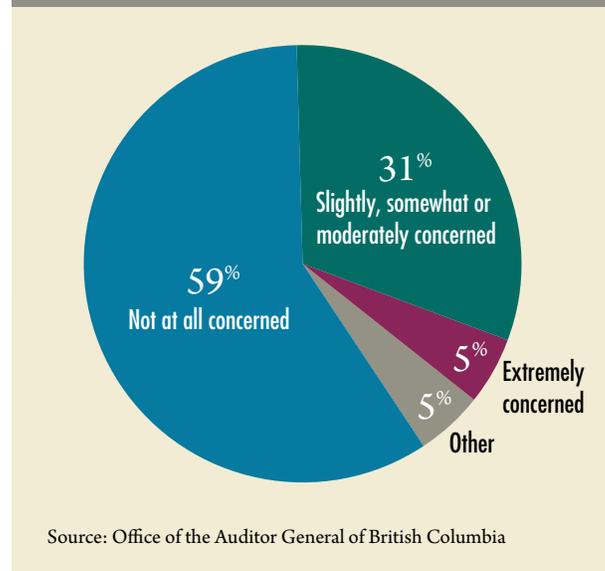
Ethical risk is the chance that individuals or the organization could be harmed based on unethical conduct. Examples of unethical conduct that could cause reputational harm to an organization include using a government credit card for personal purchases or making decisions that benefit an individual in a way that is not in the best interests of the organization.

We asked senior ministry and central agency staff if they conduct ethics-focused risk reviews. With some exceptions, we found they do not. Such reviews would involve regularly looking at government operations to identify what unethical activities could happen and checking to see if there are controls in place to stop them. Without regular reviews, the chance is much higher that government will miss seeing the risks and fail to put measures in place to prevent something from going wrong.

To better understand the risks of misconduct, we asked employees what concerns them. First, we asked to what extent they felt pressured to compromise ethical standards. We found that 59% had no concerns, almost one-third had some level of concern, and 5% said they were “extremely concerned” (see Exhibit 14).

These results suggest that most employees feel they work in an environment that supports ethical conduct, but a significant number feel that some pressure to compromise standards does exist. Government needs to understand where these concerns are coming from and address them.

Exhibit 14: Pressure to compromise standards



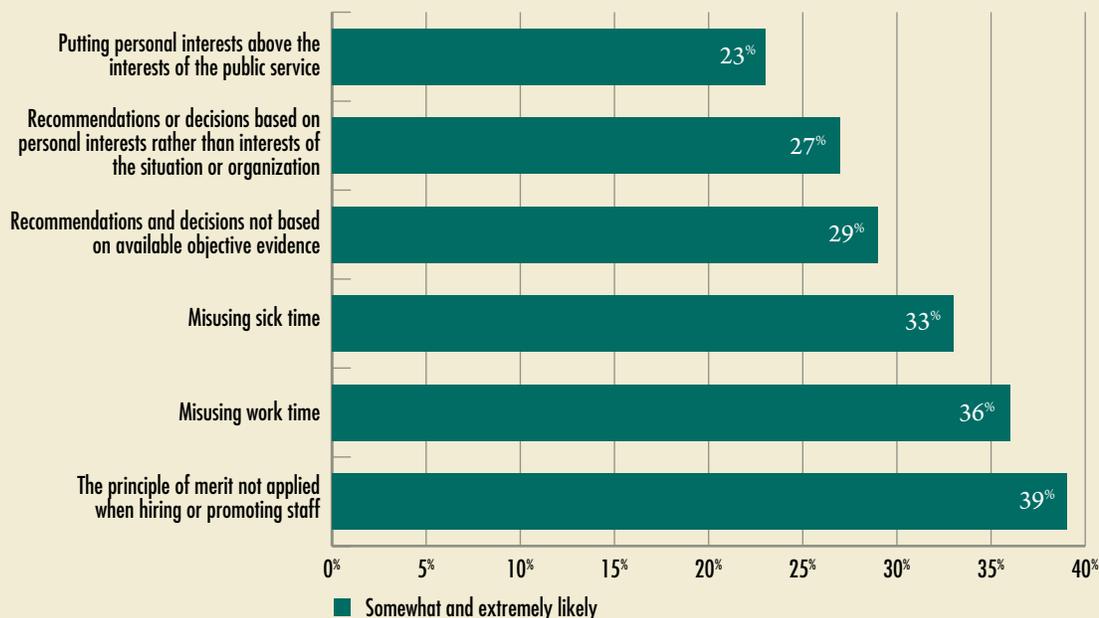
We asked employees to rate the likelihood of certain unethical behaviours occurring in their workplace. For the most part, employees see the risk of obviously dishonest or fraudulent behaviours as low. For example, stealing, committing procurement fraud or buying personal items with a government credit card are not viewed as likely to occur.

Unethical behaviours that some employees rated as more likely to occur included misusing work time and not applying the merit principle. [Exhibit 15](#) summarizes areas that 20% or more of employees identified as having a higher likelihood of occurring in their workplace.

By investigating the causes of these concerns, government may be able to identify whether it needs to add or adjust its training and ethics controls. In addition, even if the problem is only one of perception, trust in the public service as an ethical workplace may

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Exhibit 15: Potential risks of unethical conduct in the workplace



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

be undermined if employees do not have information and confidence that controls are working. Regular risk reviews help identify areas where opportunities or pressures to violate standards might exist.

Many controls over ethical conduct are in place, but some may not be as effective as intended

Government has a lot of physical controls (such as locks on warehouse doors to control who can enter buildings). However, an *ethical control* is one where government works to ensure that employees who have the keys to the warehouse understand their obligations to safeguard the assets and use them as government intended. We looked specifically at ethics-focussed

controls – those that help to prevent, detect or correct unethical decision-making.

THREE CATEGORIES OF CONTROLS

- ◆ **Prevention** controls aim to *avoid* an unwanted event from happening in the first place.
- ◆ **Detection** controls aim to *discover* that an unwanted event has occurred.
- ◆ **Disciplinary** controls aim to *correct* the conditions that led to an unwanted incident or to *discipline* the individual involved to show that unwanted behaviour will not be tolerated.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Prevention controls

We found that government has controls to prevent misconduct. For example:

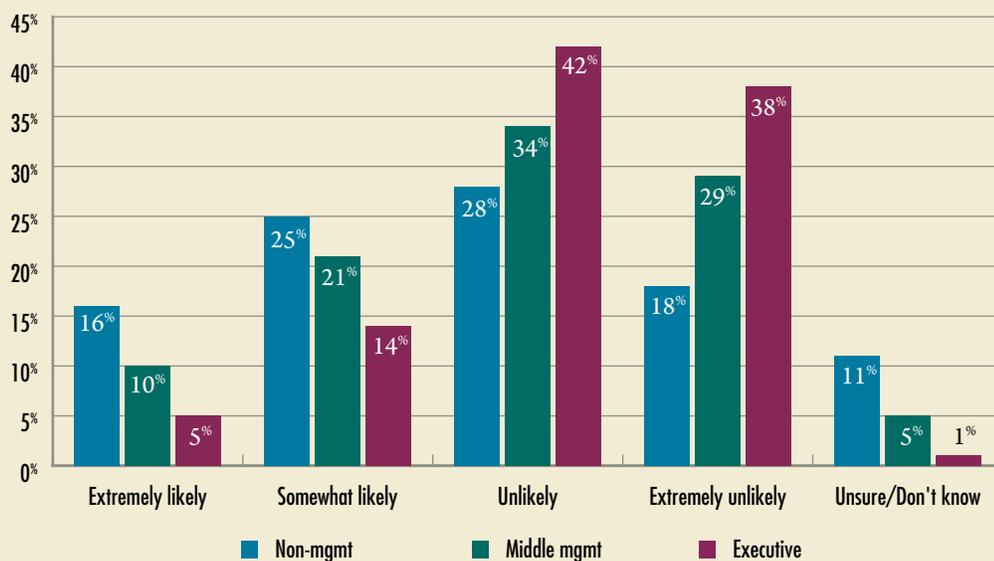
- ◆ **Hiring and promotion** –Managers are expected to base hiring decisions on the principle of merit (based on an unbiased assessment of skills, qualifications and experience). Other examples include reference and criminal record checks.
- ◆ **Training** –Training introduces new employees to the standards of conduct, and reminds existing employees how to conduct their work ethically. Training is also provided in specialized areas, such as corrections, financial management and information management.

The mandatory Information Sharing and Privacy Awareness Training for Employees course teaches people how to handle private information ethically by ensuring confidentiality and security.

- ◆ **Specialized guidance tools** –Tools that support ethical conduct include ethical decision-making flowcharts and tips on how to protect government information when working remotely.

One area of concern we found through the survey is that almost 40% of respondents felt there was some likelihood that hiring managers would not adhere to the principle of merit. This may indicate a weakness in the existing controls, or that employees may not

Exhibit 16: Perception that the principle of merit will not be followed in hiring



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

fully understand or respect the hiring and promotion decision process. In the open-ended comments section of our survey, some respondents explained their concerns:

- ♦ the hiring panel may have people in power who can bias the selection-ranking process toward a favoured candidate for the wrong reasons (e.g., a manager who wishes to promote his or her best friend)
- ♦ a lack of objectivity in drafting hiring criteria (e.g., manipulating position requirements to either include or exclude potential candidates)

Again, our survey revealed marked differences in employee perceptions, by level (see [Exhibit 16](#)). About 42% of non-managers said there is likelihood that managers will not follow the principle of merit in hiring or promotion decisions, while only 18% of executives had the same level of concern.

The [Office of the Merit Commissioner](#) audits government's hiring process to ensure that proper processes were followed in merit-based hiring decisions. They also review employment decisions based on employee complaints of unfair hiring or promotion practices. However, subtle influences on the hiring process are hard to detect, and the commissioner does not review complaints of bias in non-union positions. We concluded that government can do more to understand and address concerns about the merit principle.

Detection controls

We found that government has several ways to detect ethical misconduct even though these methods are not designed specifically for that purpose. Examples include: the privacy breach hotline and the Ministry

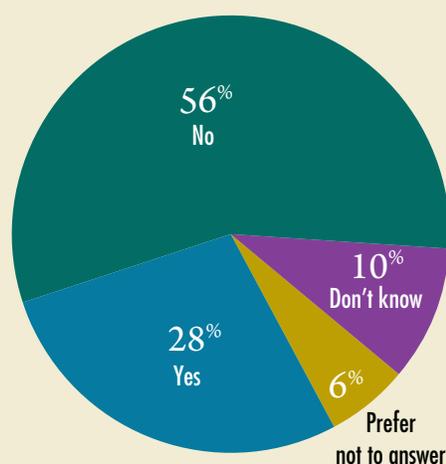
of Finance's review of charges made to government corporate cards. Government also has many agencies that will investigate potential ethics-related issues. Such investigations, however, are generally complaint driven. This means to detect misconduct, government relies on employees to report wrongdoing if they see it.

Currently, government relies heavily on supervisors to act as the ministry resource for ethics advice. However, employees who may not feel comfortable speaking to their supervisor can go to the next level of management or directly to the Public Service Agency.

Have employees observed ethical misconduct in the past two years?

We asked employees if they had observed ethical misconduct in their workplace within the last two years. A majority (56%) said no, however 28% said yes, which is fairly significant and is concerning (see [Exhibit 17](#)).

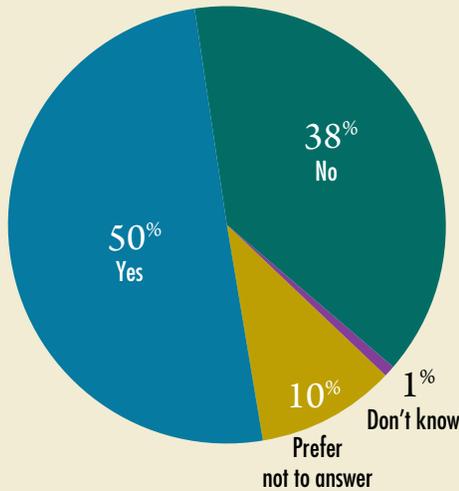
Exhibit 17: Have employees observed ethical misconduct in the past two years?



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Exhibit 18: Did employees who observed misconduct report it?



*Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

Did employees who observed misconduct report it?

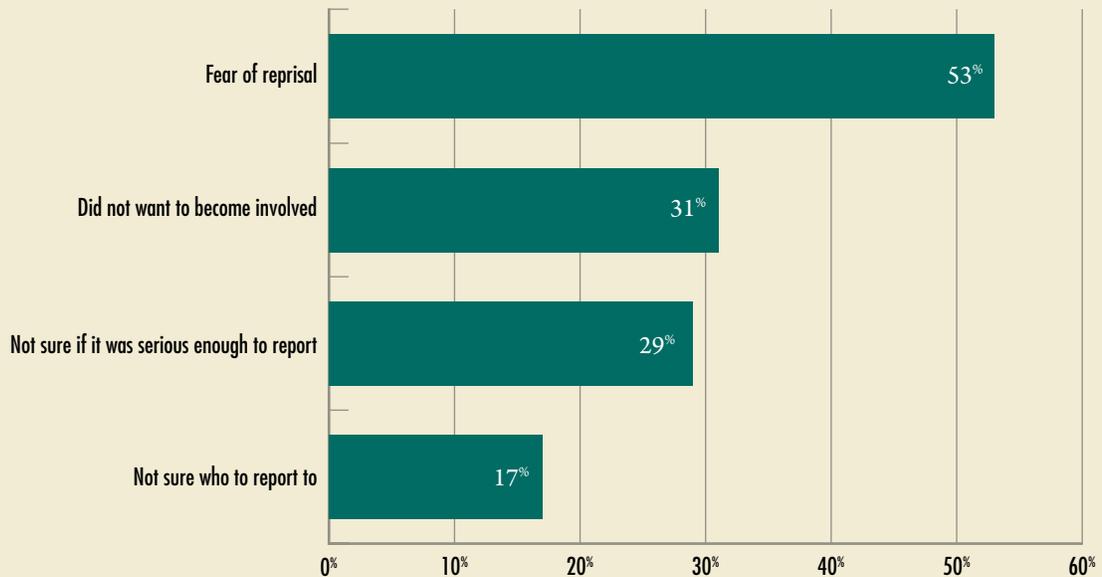
Of the 28% of staff who said they had observed misconduct, only half said they reported it to a person in a position of leadership (Exhibit 18). This indicates that many suspected incidents of misconduct are going unreported, despite the obligation to report.

The main reason respondents gave for not reporting misconduct is “fear of reprisal” (Exhibit 19).

This finding is significant and we concluded that government needs to address these barriers to make sure that employees who suspect ethical misconduct will report it.

Ensuring that ethical reporting mechanisms are effective is a challenge all jurisdictions face. Options typically include: anonymous reporting hotlines run

Exhibit 19: Top reasons employees gave for not reporting misconduct



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

by a third party, a whistleblower process run by a trusted group inside government or an independent office, and comprehensive legislated whistleblowing frameworks. For example, the federal public service and most other provinces have whistleblower legislation that provides a safe process for public servants to bring forward allegations of wrongdoing or to make complaints of reprisal. Some of these jurisdictions have also established independent oversight bodies to conduct investigations of allegations of wrongdoing or reprisal.

Employees need training not only so they gain confidence in the process, but so they fully understand

their obligation to report, whom to report to, and the processes to protect them. Without such training, this key detective control will not work effectively and government will not know the real level of unethical activity that could be occurring. Government needs to consider all of its options in this area if it is to reduce the barriers that survey respondents identified and ensure that its public service has a strong and consistent culture of reporting wrongdoing.

Disciplinary controls

For employees to believe that government is serious about enforcing ethics, they need to know that unethical behaviour will be appropriately dealt with. We found that government has clear policies and procedures to guide managers through the disciplinary process.

We asked employees questions about disciplining misconduct. First, we asked those who had reported misconduct whether corrective action had been taken. More than one-third said yes, but about a third said no and another third said don't know ([Exhibit 20](#)). This mix of responses suggests leaders vary in their communications and results reporting. There are many possible explanations for this:

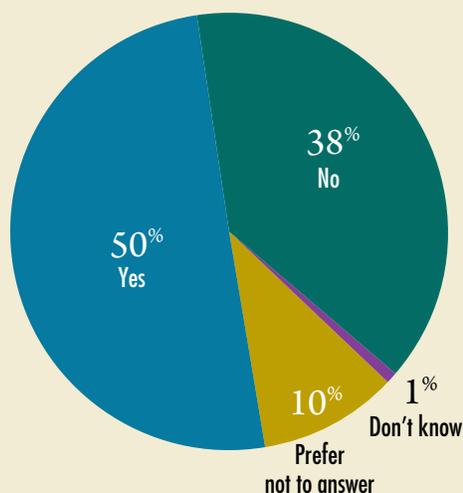
- ◆ an employee might view an incident as misconduct, but government may, after an investigation, conclude it was not
- ◆ government might have addressed the misconduct but in a way that was not satisfying to the person who reported it
- ◆ government might not have provided information about the outcome of an investigation because of confidentiality concerns

SAMPLE COMMENTS ABOUT REPORTING MISCONDUCT:

- ◆ *“I have been impressed with action taken by management especially when someone has crossed the boundary related to confidentiality of files. I believe they take it seriously.”*
- ◆ *“On a personal level I have high regard for most of my coworkers and supervisors. In the past I have let supervisors know about employees and supervisors who have misused work time. I have been told that these employees and supervisors have their own supervisors and that it is not my place to worry about this matter.”*
- ◆ *“At times there is reluctance to act decisively by managers... and if they do it's confidential so how would others know for sure.”*

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Exhibit 20: When misconduct was reported, was it corrected?



*Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

Whatever the reason, clear and consistent communication by government can address potential misunderstanding. This will also improve employee trust that regardless of the outcome, fair consideration and due process will be given when they report alleged wrongdoing.

We also asked employees how confident they are that leaders would take corrective action if misconduct was reported to them. About 73% said they had high or medium confidence.

As seen elsewhere in the survey results, executive level staff responded much more favourably than non-managers: 90% of executive had high or medium confidence while only 70% of non-managers reported the same level, and only 39% had high confidence

(see [Exhibit 21](#)). In particular, some had concerns about the equal application of discipline to all levels of staff.

Given that non-managers represent the largest group of employees, it is critical that they have a high level of confidence in the integrity of the discipline process. If they don't, there is a risk that employees will ignore the stated standards and not report their concerns because they doubt that action will be taken. By improving the transparency of the outcomes of investigations, government has an opportunity to increase the overall confidence that staff have in the system. This kind of reporting could have names removed and be aggregated to respect confidentiality and legal requirements.

SAMPLE COMMENTS ABOUT DISCIPLINING MISCONDUCT:

- ◆ *"In general everyone I've worked with has been very ethical. On the rare occasions though where I've seen unethical behaviour there were virtually no consequences imposed."*
- ◆ *"I have observed incidences where staff and managers have been held accountable for their conduct which is important as well."*
- ◆ *"I have been employed with the Province for over 20 years, and worked for 3 different Ministries. In that time, I have only witnessed or thought something was unethical on two occasions ... In both cases, the matter was dealt with quickly and in my opinion effectively."*

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Monitoring and evaluating ethics controls

We looked for evidence that government reviews its controls to ensure they are working as intended.

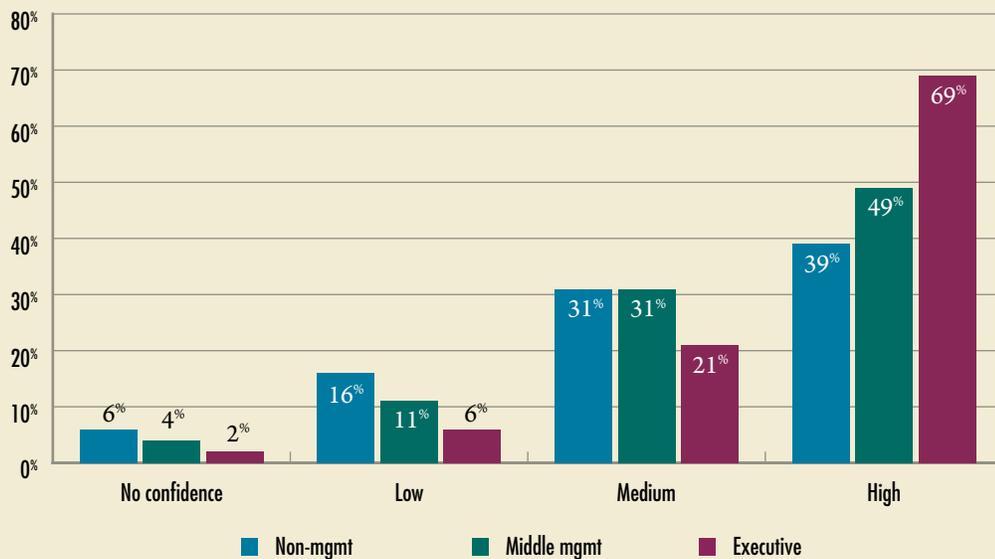
In particular, we looked to see if government:

- ◆ monitors its ethics controls to make sure they are in place and working
- ◆ collects statistics on ethics-related issues and allegations of wrongdoing
- ◆ analyzes such data for trends or gaps in order to identify areas of possible risk
- ◆ develops and puts in place new or revised controls to lower the level of risk in areas identified
- ◆ reports on how well it is doing against its core objective of having employees exhibit the highest level of ethical standards

Among our main findings:

- ◆ The central agencies of government we audited – the Public Service Agency, the Office of the Comptroller General, and the Office of the Chief Information Officer – do collect data on reported and investigated incidences of ethical misconduct. In general, the agencies do not proactively study this data in aggregate to identify trends. Information on misconduct that is investigated or managed by a ministry alone is not always received or analyzed by central agencies.
- ◆ Government does develop and implement new or revised control strategies in response to significant ethical issues that arise. For example, the Public Service Agency has developed a best practices checklist to ensure that employment termination decisions are based on due process and fair treatment of the

Exhibit 21: Employee confidence that misconduct will be addressed by employee type



Source: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

employee. This is good; however, it was not done as part of a regular review of the quality of systems and controls, but rather in reaction to a specific incident. By doing more work to proactively assess the ethical environment and outcomes, government has an opportunity to identify and correct weaknesses in its ethics management strategies before things go wrong.

- ◆ Overall reporting on ethics issues is weak. Most agencies and ministries do not report how they are doing in managing ethics in the workplace. One example we did find of public reporting in the area of ethics was in government's annual report on *the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. As part of this mandated reporting, the OCIO included a summary analysis on the causes of privacy breaches. Some cases stem from issues around poor judgement (e.g., leaving confidential documents inadequately protected). Others are due to more serious ethical misconduct (e.g., theft or fraud). Going forward, the Chief Information and Records Management Office could make this report more comprehensive by including all types of information incidents, not just those related to privacy. In addition, this type of information could be part of a coordinated effort across the public service to report on the results of all areas of ethics management.

We concluded that government needs to do more to analyze the causes of, and explore potential solutions for, all types of alleged and substantiated ethical breaches. Without such analysis, the same problems

may persist. Government should also do more work to collect and analyze ethics-related data from its ministries and central agencies so it can have a complete picture of the types of ethical issues that are occurring. In this way, government would be better able to proactively address misconduct issues and reduce the risk of wrongdoing happening in the first place.

4. COORDINATING AND MANAGING ETHICS

GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO BETTER COORDINATE AND MANAGE ETHICS

A core objective of government is that “all public service employees will conduct themselves to the highest standards of conduct.” We therefore expected to find a coordinated management framework to ensure that government is making progress toward this objective. Such a framework would include:

- ◆ focussed and up-to-date ethics **strategies** on how individual ministries and government as a whole will foster and enforce ethics
- ◆ assigned management **responsibilities** and **accountabilities** for:
 - ◆ implementing planned ethics program elements
 - ◆ monitoring and evaluating program activities to measure effectiveness of the ethics program
 - ◆ reporting results so that government

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

knows how well it is achieving its goal and where adjustments to the plan should be made to do a better job

- ◆ coordinating ethics management activities overall

We found that even though many ethics program elements are in place, government has not planned, coordinated or monitored its activities to ensure that overall it has an effective approach. Various government bodies have been assigned ethics-related responsibilities, but those bodies aren't required to report on how well they are meeting those responsibilities, and government has not established a system-wide accountability for ethics management.

RECOMMENDATION 8: *We recommend that government clearly designate the lead role for coordinated ethics management across the public service.*

Government has not identified a leader for ethics management

Several central agencies oversee corporate policies of the B.C. Public Service. These include the Public Service Agency, the Office of the Comptroller General, the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the recently created Chief Information and Records Management Office. Each ministry also has its own legislated operational mandate that incorporates government's corporate policy requirements. The Deputy Minister to the Premier has overall responsibility for the B.C. Public Service.

SAMPLE COMMENTS ABOUT HOW WELL GOVERNMENT IS DOING OVERALL AT MAKING ETHICS A PRIORITY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE:

- ◆ *"The public service is a great place to work, but with very little effort it could be so much better."*
- ◆ *"I think the overall approach to Ethics in the provincial government is robust and meaningful, like all things it needs to be refreshed every so often to maintain relevancy."*
- ◆ *"I work in a smaller office, with long term, experienced, engaged staff where the office culture commands high ethical standards. I do not believe the same level of ethical culture exists in every location, but overall I think the BC Government maintains a work force of dedicated, highly ethical employees."*
- ◆ *"Please note that my response is based on a small percentage of 'bad apples' in our organization, the likes of which can be found throughout the Public Service who do not adhere to the code of ethics. Overall, I have the pleasure of working with hard-working public servants that go above and beyond."*

Government's *Corporate Human Resource Management Policy Framework* sets out the strategic approach for building a strong public service. The framework specifies the accountabilities of individuals at all levels

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

for a range of human resource management activities. For example, all deputy ministers are accountable for “organizing, directing and managing the performance of staff to meet operational requirements.”

The framework is silent, however, on specific accountabilities for planning, monitoring, reporting or coordinating ethics management.

It makes sense that government’s central agencies have separate functions with defined roles and mandates for distinct areas, such as financial management, human resources management and information management. But for government to foster high standards of ethical conduct and to enforce ethical behaviour across the whole public service, it needs to assign clear leadership and overall responsibility.

The Public Service Agency, the Office of the Comptroller General, and the Office of the Chief Information Officer developed a protocol that establishes guidelines for coordinating investigations into misconduct. The protocol ensures that, in situations where there are overlapping mandates, investigations are efficient and effective. This is an example of central agencies working to improve the oversight and coordination of their monitoring and enforcement functions. However, further work needs to be done to coordinate and oversee other strategies for fostering and enforcing ethical conduct throughout the public service.

APPENDIX A: AUDIT CRITERIA AND SOURCES

CRITERIA

Setting ethics expectations

- ◆ There is clear legal direction, guidance, training and advice for ethical conduct.
- ◆ Ethics Expectations are communicated to public servants.
- ◆ Employees are knowledgeable about ethics expectations in the public service.

Communicating and fostering ethics

- ◆ A coordinated ethics management program exists in the ministry.
- ◆ Ethics management is coordinated in the ministry.

- ◆ Management demonstrates leadership commitment to building an ethical culture in the workplace.

Enforcing ethics expectations

- ◆ Ministries and central agencies have designed ethics control programs.
- ◆ Controls to prevent, detect, and discipline unethical behaviour have been implemented by ministries and central agencies.
- ◆ Ethics controls are preventing, detecting and disciplining cases of unethical conduct.

SOURCES

- ◆ [Trust in Government, Ethics Measures in OECD Countries](#), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2000)
- ◆ [Public Sector Integrity: A Framework for Assessment](#), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2005)
- ◆ [Towards a Sound Integrity Framework: Instruments, Processes, Structures and Conditions for Implementation](#), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2009)
- ◆ [Practice Guide: Evaluating Ethics-Related Programs and Activities](#), Institute of Internal Auditors (2012)
- ◆ [Compliance and Ethics Program Best Practices: Assessing your Program and Moving it up the Maturity Curve](#), SAI Global (2014)
- ◆ [Critical Elements of an Organizational Ethical Culture](#), Ethics Research Centre in partnership with Working Values (2006)
- ◆ [Ethics codes in the Public Sector](#), Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia (1997)
- ◆ [Building Better Reports](#), Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia (2003)
- ◆ [The Status of Enterprise Risk Management in the Government Ministries of British Columbia](#), Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia (2011)
- ◆ [Manitoba's Framework for an Ethical Environment](#), Office of the Auditor General of Manitoba (2013)
- ◆ [Report on Governance Structures for Values and Ethics](#), Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2005)

APPENDIX B:

PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS SURVEY – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

HERE ARE THE SURVEY RESULTS for the Auditor General of British Columbia Public Service Ethics Survey. This survey was sent out to 25,341 active public servants throughout British Columbia. Some public servants were not included in the survey because they held specialized roles or did not have email addresses. We received responses from a total of 12,658 individuals, resulting in an overall response rate of 50%. In this report, results are organized into six sections:

- ◆ ethics guidance and training
- ◆ perceptions of unethical behaviour in the workplace
- ◆ detecting and correcting unethical conduct in the workplace
- ◆ ethics leadership
- ◆ demographics
- ◆ additional comments

Please Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Ethics Guidance and Training	% of survey respondents who said:	
When did you last take the Public Service Oath?	1 – 5 years ago	28%
	6 – 10 years ago	22%
	More than ten years ago	43%
	I have not taken the oath	3%
	Don't know	4%
	Prefer not to respond	1%
Do you have easy access to guidance on how to conduct your work ethically in your workplace?	Yes	69%
	No	31%
To what extent is the ethics guidance that is available to you useful when you have questions or concerns about workplace ethics?	Very useful	35%
	Somewhat useful	48%
	Not useful	4%
	Don't know	12%
	Prefer not to answer	1%
Have you received workplace ethics (e.g., standards of conduct) training?	Yes	52%
	No	48%
To what extent was the training you received useful in terms of helping you to understand the ethical conduct expected of you in the workplace?	Very useful	42%
	Somewhat useful	51%
	Not useful	5%
	Don't know	2%
	Prefer not to answer	0%
Would some refresher training about ethics in the workplace be helpful?	Yes	52%

APPENDIX B: PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS SURVEY – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

Perceptions of unethical behavior in the workplace		% of respondents who said extremely likely + somewhat likely
How likely or unlikely are the following behaviour or activities to occur in your workplace?		
Conflict of interest		
Employees or managers putting their own interests above the interests of the provincial public service		23%
Employees or managers misusing work time		36%
Employees or managers misusing sick time		33%
Employees or managers benefiting personally from transactions over which they have the power to influence decisions		10%
Lack of confidentiality		
Employees or managers disclosing, releasing or transmitting confidential information to anyone other than persons authorized to receive the information		15%
Employees or managers using confidential government information for unauthorized purposes		7%
Lack of objectivity or impartiality		
Employees or managers not basing advice, recommendations and decisions on available objective evidence		29%
Employees or managers making recommendations or decisions based on their own interests and not in the best interests of the situation or the organization		27%
Managers not following the principle of merit when hiring or promoting staff		39%
Lack of honesty		
Employees or managers being deceitful or acting fraudulently		12%
Employees or managers buying personal items on a government credit card		3%
Employees or managers stealing government property		7%
Employees or managers giving or accepting bribes or kickbacks		3%
Employees or managers involved in contract or procurement fraud		4%
Detecting and correcting unethical conduct in the workplace		% of survey respondents who said:
How concerned are you that there is pressure to compromise ethical standards of conduct in the workplace?	Extremely concerned	5%
	Moderately concerned	8%
	Somewhat concerned	9%
	Slightly concerned	14%
	Not at all concerned	59%
	Don't know	4%
	Prefer not to answer	1%
Have you personally observed ethical misconduct in your workplace?	Yes	28%
	No	56%
	Don't know	10%
	Prefer not to answer	6%

APPENDIX B: PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS SURVEY – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

[Of those who observed misconduct] Did you report the misconduct you observed to someone in a position of leadership?	Yes	50%
	No	38%
	Don't know	1%
	Prefer not to answer	10%
[Of those that reported misconduct] Did the person you reported the misconduct to take action to correct the misconduct you reported?	Yes	37%
	No	33%
	Don't know	28%
	Prefer not to answer	2%
[Of those that did not report misconduct] Please check all the reasons that may have influenced your decision not to report the misconduct you observed.	I was not sure if the issue was serious enough to report	29%
	I was not sure who to report the incident to	17%
	I did not want to become involved in the situation	31%
	I was afraid I would not be protected from reprisals	53%
	I spoke directly to the person about the issue	10%
	Someone else reported the incident	9%
	Other	24%
	Don't know	1%
	Prefer not to answer	3%
	How confident are you that those in positions of leadership in your workplace would take corrective action if instances of ethical misconduct were reported to them?	High confidence
Medium confidence		30%
Low confidence		15%
No confidence		6%
Don't know		6%
Prefer not to answer		1%
How confident are you that if someone was found acting in an unethical manner they would be subject to appropriate discipline?	High confidence	33%
	Medium confidence	34%
	Low confidence	18%
	No confidence	6%
	Don't know	7%
	Prefer not to answer	1%

APPENDIX B: PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS SURVEY – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

Have individuals in positions of leadership in your workplace taken action to discipline cases of unethical conduct?	Yes	17%
	No	12%
	Sometimes	5%
	N/A (no cases)	16%
	Don't know	48%
	Prefer not to answer	1%
Ethics leadership		% of survey respondents who said:
Those in positions of leadership in my workplace communicate to staff that ethics is a priority	Strongly agree	24%
	Somewhat agree	38%
	Somewhat disagree	19%
	Strongly disagree	11%
	Don't know	6%
	Prefer not to answer	1%
Senior leaders in my workplace set a good example of ethical conduct	Strongly agree	40%
	Somewhat agree	34%
	Somewhat disagree	11%
	Strongly disagree	7%
	Don't know	6%
	Prefer not to answer	1%
My direct supervisor sets a good example of ethical conduct	Strongly agree	61%
	Somewhat agree	24%
	Somewhat disagree	7%
	Strongly disagree	4%
	Don't know	3%
	Prefer not to answer	1%
Those in positions of leadership in my workplace ask for employee feedback about ethical culture in my workplace	Strongly agree	9%
	Somewhat agree	26%
	Somewhat disagree	27%
	Strongly disagree	23%
	Don't know	14%
	Prefer not to answer	1%

APPENDIX B: PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS SURVEY – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

Overall, how effectively are those in positions of leadership working to foster an ethical environment in your workplace?	Very effectively	27%
	Somewhat effectively	40%
	Not very effectively	14%
	Not effectively at all	6%
	Don't know	12%
	Prefer not to answer	1%
Demographics		% of survey respondents who said:
Please tell us which of the following best describes your position in the ministry / organization	Executive or Senior Management (i.e., executive or strategic leadership)	4%
	Middle-management (i.e., business or applied leadership)	21%
	Not-management (may include professional/technical staff, program/operation staff or administrative/clerical staff)	72%
	Other	3%
Do you belong to a professional organization that has established its own ethical code or standards of conduct? (E.g. social workers, engineers, lawyers, accountants, foresters)	Yes	37%
	No	58%
	Don't know	4%
	Prefer not to answer	1%
Employee years of service (based on respondents)	0 to 1 year	14%
	2 to 5 years	15%
	6 to 10 years	25%
	11 to 15 years	11%
	16 to 20 years	10%
	21 + years	24%
When did you last take the Public Service Oath?	1 – 5 years ago	28%
	6 – 10 years ago	22%
	More than 10 years ago	43%
	I have not taken the oath	3%
	Don't know	4%
	Prefer not to answer	1%

APPENDIX B: PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS SURVEY – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

Additional Comments

At the end of the survey, we offered public servants unlimited space to provide additional comments for any information that they felt we may have missed or which they considered important. We coded their responses to various themes to get a sense of topics of significance.

		Summary of themes identified:	
[Of those who left comments] Further comments or suggestions about workplace ethics	Everything is good		17%
	Integrity and conflicts of interest		47%
	Merit principle		15%
	Ethics training		12%
	Partisan politics		11%
	Allegations of wrongdoing		9%
	Workplace behaviour		8%
	Employee fairness		4%
	General dissatisfaction		6%
	No comment		9%
	Other		20%

APPENDIX C: B.C. BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR

ETHICS SURVEY – JANUARY/MARCH 2016 SURVEY – SUMMARY OF RESULTS

THIS APPENDIX CONTAINS the results of a survey we conducted titled *Ethics Survey - Crown Agencies*. We sent the survey to 258 B.C. Crown organization Board Chairs and CEOs (or equivalent). The results analysis includes answers from all respondents who took the survey in the 62 day period from Friday, January 29, 2016 to Wednesday, March 30, 2016. A total of 153 completed responses were received to the survey during this time, which is a response rate of approximately 59%.

In the survey we asked Board Chairs and CEOs:

- ◆ whether their organization has:
 - ◆ a standards of conduct policy and, if so, to what extent the organization uses government’s guidance to develop or update the policy
 - ◆ standards of conduct training in place for employees and board members
 - ◆ a whistleblower program or equivalent
- ◆ how they would describe the quality of communications between the ministry and the board chair and CEO
- ◆ what other comments or feedback they wanted to share

Crown Agency Standards of Conduct	% of 153 answering	
Does your organization currently have a code of conduct for employees?	Yes	86%
	No	12%
	Don't know	2%
	Prefer not to respond	0%
Did your organization have a code of conduct before the government issued the <i>Standards of Conduct Guidelines for the B.C. Public Sector (July 2014)</i> ?	Yes	80%
	No	15%
	Don't know	4%
	Prefer not to respond	1%
Has the code of conduct been compared to the <i>Standards of Conduct Guidelines for the B.C. Public Sector (July 2014)</i> to identify areas for improvement?	Yes	69%
	No	9%
	Don't know	22%
	Prefer not to respond	0%
Will the organization use the <i>Standards of Conduct Guidelines for the B.C. Public Sector (July 2014)</i> in the future to help develop or update its code of conduct?	Yes	69%
	No	3%
	Don't know	29%
	Prefer not to respond	0%

APPENDIX C: B.C. BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ETHICS SURVEY – JANUARY/MARCH 2016 SURVEY – SUMMARY OF RESULTS

How helpful did you find the <i>Standards of Conduct Guidelines for the B.C. Public Sector (July 2014)</i> to identify areas to improve your organization's code of conduct?	Very helpful	23%
	Somewhat helpful	52%
	Not helpful	9%
	Don't know	15%
	Prefer not to respond	1%
Has the board approved any other conduct standards or policies?	Yes	70%
	No	20%
	Don't know	9%
	Prefer not to respond	1%
Do you feel additional guidance is needed in relation to standards of conduct for boards and organizations?	Yes	70%
	No	20%
	Don't know	9%
	Prefer not to respond	1%
What other codes of conduct standards or policies has the board approved?	Total comments: 104	
	Standards of Conduct for Board Members	
	Standards of Conduct for employees in specific roles	
	Whistleblower policies	
	Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality policies	
	Diversity and Respectful workplace guidance	
	IT / Social Media guidance and policies	
What additional guidance do you feel is needed in relation to standards of conduct for boards and organizations?	Total comments: 27	
	More detailed advice for development of codes in different sectors	
	Guidance on conformity of standards in the same sector: e.g. school districts	
	(Mandated) training for Board members on their role and responsibilities	
	More detailed guidance / tools on how to deal with specific situations	
	Guidance on enforcement and discipline for standards	
Standards of conduct orientation and training		% of 153 answering
Do new employees receive standards of conduct training?	Yes	69%
	No	16%
	Don't know	14%
	Prefer not to respond	1%
Do new board members receive orientation on the standards of conduct?	Yes	86%
	No	10%
	Don't know	3%
	Prefer not to respond	1%

APPENDIX C: B.C. BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ETHICS SURVEY – JANUARY/MARCH 2016 SURVEY – SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Do you feel that the board receives timely information from the organization about issues related to standards of conduct?	Yes	89%
	No	5%
	Don't know	3%
	Prefer not to respond	3%
What kind of information and issues related to standards of conduct should the board be receiving from the organization?	Total comments: 8	
	Board training / orientation before starting	
	Information on standards and expectations and how to deal with breaches	
	Orientation on why standards are important	
Communication with government		% of 153 answering
The board chair meets quarterly with the minister	Strongly agree	20%
	Somewhat agree	23%
	Somewhat disagree	13%
	Strongly disagree	36%
	Don't know	6%
	Prefer not to respond	3%
The CEO (or equivalent) meets quarterly with the deputy minister	Strongly agree	42%
	Somewhat agree	21%
	Somewhat disagree	15%
	Strongly disagree	17%
	Don't know	4%
	Prefer not to respond	1%
The government clearly communicates the ethics / standards of conduct it expects from Crown agencies	Strongly agree	41%
	Somewhat agree	32%
	Somewhat disagree	11%
	Strongly disagree	6%
	Don't know	9%
	Prefer not to respond	1%
Has the organization taken actions to improve communication with government?	Yes	78%
	No	9%
	Don't know	9%
	Prefer not to respond	3%

APPENDIX C: B.C. BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ETHICS SURVEY – JANUARY/MARCH 2016 SURVEY – SUMMARY OF RESULTS

What kinds of actions has the board taken to improve communication with government	Total comments: 113	
More proactive and timely board management activities		
Appointment of members who have productive relationships with government		
Regular communications through letters, phone calls, frequent meetings		
Establishing and fostering inter-organizational agreements and working relationships		
Is there anything government could do to better support Crown agencies' efforts to promote and foster ethical conduct in the public sector?	Total comments: 98	
More strategic, risk based guidance / less prescriptive and detail oriented		
Ensure board members have minimum qualifications / training for staff is available		
Ensure government executives model expectations, provide adequate supports, communicate		
What more could the board do to help the organization enhance or strengthen the organization's ethical culture?	Total comments: 110	
Ensure expectations / policies are based on best practice and are clear		
Provide core training and refreshers on the standards, including case studies for different situations		
Ensure board members act as positive role models		
Ensure board members are qualified		
Reinforce positive examples / focus on success not failures		
Review and update policies regularly / focus on areas of risk		
Whistleblower program or equivalent	% of 153 answering	
Do you feel that the board receives timely information from the organization about issues related to standards of conduct?	Yes	89%
	No	5%
	Don't know	3%
	Prefer not to respond	3%
Does the organization have a whistleblower policy (or equivalent) in place for staff to report ethical misconduct?	Yes	65%
	No	27%
	Don't know	8%
	Prefer not to respond	0%
Is the board planning to recommend the organization prepare a whistleblower policy (or equivalent) for board approval?	Yes	25%
	No	32%
	Don't know	43%
	Prefer not to respond	0%

APPENDIX C: B.C. BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ETHICS SURVEY – JANUARY/MARCH 2016 SURVEY– SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Additional Comments

At the end of the survey, we offered respondents an opportunity to provide any additional information or comments about Crown agency ethics management that they felt was important for us to know. The following is a synthesis of the various responses.

[Of those who left comments] Further comments or information about Crown agency ethics management	Total comments: 110
Consistency between crown agencies is important	
Appropriate training and qualifications of Board Chair and members is critical to success	
Consideration and understanding ethical management practices is important	
Differences in crown size, sector and budget impact ability to manage ethics / meet expectations	
Differences between service and commercial crown competitive environments needs to be considered	
Effective tracking and monitoring of key issues is necessary for success	

APPENDIX D: B.C. PUBLIC SERVICE OATH OF EMPLOYMENT



Where ideas work

Ministry/Organization Name: _____

Employee # (If known): _____

Public Service Act

British Columbia Public Service Oath of Employment

As a member of the British Columbia Public Service, I, _____, *[employee name]*
(Print legibly)
do solemnly swear/affirm *[circle one]* that I will

- 1 loyally serve the people of British Columbia through their democratically elected government,
- 2 honour and faithfully abide by the Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees, and
- 3 to the best of my ability,
 - (a) act with integrity, putting the interests of the public and the public service above my own personal interest and avoiding all conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived,
 - (b) safeguard confidential information, not divulging it unless I am either authorized to do so or required to do so by law,
 - (c) base my advice, recommendations and decisions on the objective evidence that is available to me,
 - (d) serve the government impartially, and
 - (e) conduct myself honestly and ethically, in a manner that maintains and enhances the public's trust and confidence in the public service and does not bring it into disrepute.

Sworn/Affirmed *[circle one]* by me, at _____, this _____ day of
(City/Town) (Date)

_____, 20_____
(Month) (Year)

.....
Person giving Oath or Affirmation (Signature)

.....
Person administering Oath or Affirmation (Signature)

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