UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION and
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

UNECE Work Session on the Communication of Statistics
(29 June – 1 July 2011, Geneva, Switzerland)

(iii) Internal Communication

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS:
INTRODUCING AND MANAGING CHANGE

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I.   INTRODUCTION

1.   Internal communications—from facilitating day-to-day operations to implementing strategic governance initiatives—are an important function within an organization. They allow the organization to share its vision, goals and priorities with employees and inform them about new initiatives and changes affecting their work. Effective internal communications are more than just disseminating or exchanging information: they involve active listening, observing, and establishing collaborative relationships.

2.   This paper defines the context in which Statistics Canada communications have evolved. It also describes some current initiatives at Statistics Canada, with a focus on how internal communications can help manage these changes within the organization.

II.   COMMUNICATIONS IN CANADIAN GOVERNMENT

3.   As a federal organization, Statistics Canada is subject to government policies, including the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada*.[2] The purpose of this policy is to ensure that communications across the Government of Canada and its departments are well coordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the diverse information needs of the public. It also reinforces the importance of effective internal communications within an organization subject to the Communications Policy.[3]

4.   The Communications Policy requires open, frequent and collaborative communication among managers and employees to achieve government goals and departmental mandates. Whenever feasible and appropriate, a dialogue between managers and employees is recommended to facilitate exchanging ideas about day-to-day operations and to take advantage of the opportunities that arise in a period of change. Statistics Canada's corporate culture is open and based upon collegiality; it naturally adheres to these requirements and actively promotes respectful communication within its workforce across the country. It also relies on a

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[2] *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada*
[3] The Communications Policy applies to all institutions of the Government of Canada identified in Schedules I, I.1 and II of the *Financial Administration Act*.

long-standing tradition of strong internal cooperation and communications to address emerging challenges.

III.   CURRENT INITIATIVES AT STATISTICS CANADA

5.   Statistics Canada, like many other statistical organizations, carries out its mandate to produce high-quality statistical information, while simultaneously responding to new priorities and improving its efficiency in program delivery.[4]

6.   Over the last few years, these pressures have led Statistics Canada to examine its business processes, computer systems and business rules to develop a strategy for improving efficiency. Task forces and working groups were established and three ambitious strategic proposals have since emerged: the Corporate Business Architecture program, the Information Management initiative and the Project Management initiative.

> *Corporate Business Architecture (CBA)*[5] — A comprehensive review of the way Statistics Canada conducts its business, including its processes, computer systems, planning systems and organizational structure. The CBA involves implementing measures designed to reduce operating costs, enhance quality assurance and improve responsiveness in the delivery of new statistical programs.

> *Information Management (IM)* — An examination of the way information is created and organized including its description or documentation, protection and preservation. The IM initiative reviews to whom and under what circumstances the information is disclosed and how it is accessed. The initiative also examines the retention period of the information, its disposition and deletion. Information Management applies to all of Statistics Canada's information holdings. These encompass two distinct types of information: i) information relating to administrative functions and ii) statistical program information, including microdata, aggregate data and their associated metadata held by the organization for the purpose of achieving its mandate as defined by the *Statistics Act*[6].

> *Project Management* — An initiative to harmonize project management practices and governance at Statistics Canada. A project must produce defined outputs, realize specific outcomes and support a public policy objective, all within a clear schedule and resource plan. The goal of the Project Management initiative is to develop and foster the use of common project management processes and tools to improve the delivery of projects within time, cost, scope and quality standards.

7.   Statistics Canada's senior management strongly supports these initiatives and have integrated them into its governance model which is an important component towards achieving success. The expected outcomes of these initiatives have been defined and communicated within the organization and alignment to these will eventually lead to behaviour changes over time.

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[4] Adapted from Statistics Canada's *Corporate Business Plan 2009/2010 to 2011/2012*
[5] Adapted from Statistics Canada's *Corporate Business Plan 2009/2010 to 2011/2012*
[6] Statistics Canada Policy on Information Management

8.   The successful implementation of these initiatives over a multi-year period requires the engagement of all Statistics Canada staff. Such organizational changes require the involvement of many employees within the organization and internal communications help to quickly and consistently convey information to staff and enable the collection of feedback in an organized manner.

IV.   INTRODUCING AND MANAGING CHANGE

9.   Statistics Canada uses different approaches to implement its strategic governance initiatives and to introduce and manage change. These mechanisms, tools and events play an important role in sharing information with employees and gaining their support for, and participation in, Statistics Canada's current initiatives.

A.   Effective internal communications

10.   Effective communications ensure that relevant information reaches the right audience in a timely manner. This success is dependent on the use of a sound communications plan created in collaboration with all stakeholders, which generally achieves the following:

- Defines achievable communications goals in user-friendly, concise and appropriate style;
- Scans the environment to understand who will be affected by an initiative and explains the circumstances under which this will happen;
- Defines the target audiences and their anticipated reactions;
- Presents succinct key messages that will be used to explain or promote the initiative;
- Lists the strategic considerations that may be relevant before or after implementation of the initiative, allowing for proactive measures, if necessary;
- Defines activities and communications vehicles that are targeted to specific audiences; and
- Describes other aspects, such as costs, evaluation and partnerships.

11.   In 2010/2011, the senior managers of the functional areas responsible for implementing the Corporate Business Architecture program, the Information Management and the Project Management initiatives worked in consultation with communications specialists to establish a communications strategy. Their goals were to raise awareness among employees, supervisors and managers to increase engagement and to ensure the coordination of the collective effort needed to achieve successful results. One of the major steps was to choose communications vehicles adapted to their needs from those already in place at Statistics Canada.

B.   Internal communications mechanisms at Statistics Canada

12.   Statistics Canada has developed several mechanisms and tools to share information across the organization, supporting internal communications between employees, supervisors and managers. They can be used simultaneously or not, depending on the circumstances. Together, they provide additional avenues to engage managers and employees in a dialogue for action.

> *Corporate-level committees* — A number of corporate-level committees of senior managers are actively involved in Statistics Canada's governance. The most senior

executive committee, the Policy Committee—chaired by the Chief Statistician—provides broad strategic direction for the organization and oversees all decision-making related to corporate-level management. Briefings from the weekly Policy Committee sessions are disseminated through cascading meetings to ensure information flows openly and quickly from management to employees in each part of the organization. There is also a corporate-level committee for each key corporate issue (e.g., systems architecture, human resources, recruitment and development, communications and dissemination). These committees meet monthly to discuss strategic direction, reporting ultimately to the Policy Committee. To encourage transparent communication within the organization, the terms of reference, membership and record of decisions for all corporate-level committees, including the Policy Committee, are posted on Statistics Canada's intranet.

Internal Communications Network (ICN) — Statistics Canada's intranet, used as a central platform for internal communications. The ICN hosts a repository of reference material and is a source of current information on programs, events and employee services. It also provides employee access to human resources information, financial systems, administrative forms, service requests and more. In 2010/2011, new modules to promote information on the Corporate Business Architecture program, the Information Management initiative and the Project Management initiative were added.

@StatCan — A monthly publication produced by and for employees of Statistics Canada. It started in the 1950s as a print publication and is now electronic, found on the ICN and advertised through an email sent to all staff at release time. It is an invaluable in-house communications tool that informs employees of the organization's principal activities, management's strategic plans and changes in the workplace. It helps to create a positive, dynamic and stimulating work environment by offering articles on a range of topics, giving a voice to employees, and enhancing the corporate culture.

Chief Statistician's Annual Address — An important annual event where the Chief Statistician addresses executives and provides an in-depth review of accomplishments for the past year and an overview of priorities for the upcoming year. The 2011 address was videocast to all employees, giving them the opportunity to watch and listen to the Chief Statistician from their desktop in real time.

Employee Coffee Sessions — Monthly events where small groups of employees (8 to 10) have a unique opportunity to meet with the Chief Statistician for an hour. They can ask the Chief Statistician questions on various topics that concern them. Issues raised during the meetings are presented to the appropriate senior management committees for consideration and action, as required.

Learning activities — A variety of formal training sessions to promote and support continuous learning and knowledge-sharing among Statistics Canada's employees. Courses in English and French are offered throughout the year to develop employees' skills on various topics, such as subject-matter topics, survey methodology, systems development, survey skills, data interpretation, project management and communications.

Working Better Together Office — A unit that provides team building services. These services are designed to help individuals or entire work units interact and work in a

positive, healthy and respectful workplace where dialogue and collaboration are favoured and promoted. They are confidential, neutral and professional.

Employee Opinion Survey — A questionnaire that gathers employee feedback about their jobs and workplace nearly every three years. Results are shared with all employees. Areas for improvement raised by employees are examined by the management team so that actions can be taken to improve the workplace as necessary. The participation rate in the 2010 Employee Opinion Survey was 81% and the results showed that employees felt respected in their workplace.

13.   By using these established and proven communications channels, Statistics Canada is able to effectively introduce and manage change. These tools and vehicles are an integral part of the communications plans for its current initiatives and will continue to be used in future proposals.

V.   KEY CONSIDERATIONS

14.   Although Statistics Canada relies on sound planning for its internal communications and uses effective communications mechanisms and tools, a few considerations are examined to further advance communications. For example:

- The Communications Division is planning to create an overarching internal communications plans, whereas consistent messaging would be defined and used strategically throughout the year. In this way, the messages can be coordinated with the overall communications strategy and can be channelled more efficiently to all audiences.
- The internal communications team of the Communications Division is continuing to further strengthen its relationships with project managers to ensure the coordination and consistency of internal messages across the organization.

15.   In the years to come, internal communications will be strengthened horizontally by developing online collaborative tools adapted to the needs of many. Discussions are taking place within the organization to gather requirements for a content management system for the ICN. Work is also currently underway to set principles and establish criteria for structuring information, with the goal of limiting duplicate channels and improving the overall efficiency of internal communications.

VI.   CONCLUSION

16.   Statistics Canada has developed several internal communications channels which allow the organization to quickly disseminate information from senior management to staff. These channels have also been used in consultations, and for sharing the organization's priorities with its entire workforce. Various committees, meetings and information sessions have contributed to the development and maintenance of collaborative relationships among employees, supervisors and managers. Statistics Canada has also established feedback mechanisms which are used by operational-level employees and managers to share proposals, comments and ideas with senior management.

17.   These internal communications tools are a key component of Statistics Canada's strategy for introducing and managing change. Working within the context of the government-wide communications policy and a tradition of open dialogue, the agency has had the opportunity to make good use of internal communications. It is a strategy that has proven effective and, with ongoing improvements and developments, will continue to be effective for future initiatives within the organization.