

***A Survey on the Recruitment of
Graduates of
Master's Programs in
Public Administration and Public Policy***

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Abstract

This report is based on the responses from a survey of graduate programs offering master's programs in public administration and public policy. It summarizes the key findings based on the awareness and effectiveness of various recruitment programs, the use of recruitment methods and placement history, cooperative internships run by different graduate programs and standardized testing. It also provides a critical assessment of the findings in these areas and offers a number of recommendations.

In general, the survey found a distinct divide between the large and small programs regarding familiarity with recruitment methods; the larger programs were more familiar with the established recruitment campaigns, while the smaller ones were generally unfamiliar. Regarding the campaigns in existence, responses from all graduate programs relayed low scores for satisfaction in communicating with the target audience, as well as for student awareness. Respondents generally felt that each federal department should conduct an individual recruitment campaign corresponding to the academic cycle. Respondents were divided, however, as to whether each provincial/territorial department should conduct an individual campaign. A common remark was that perhaps a centrally coordinated campaign in each province, which represented all departments in that province, would help to serve the needs of graduates as well as the government. Responses with regard to casual or temporary employment leading eventually to full-time permanent employment varied. Some were in favour while others were not. There was support for standardized testing for certain types of positions, provided that such testing was not the only criteria for selecting candidates. On a positive note, of all employment-based relationships between graduate programs and employers at all levels, by far the most successful is the Cooperative Internship Program. The Internship opportunity in many of the programs serves as a major drawing card in attracting students.

Given that the number of graduates successfully recruited through organized recruitment channels each year is still relatively small, it is recommended that recruitment campaigns run by different levels of government improve advertising, establish closer collaboration between the recruitment campaigns and the graduate programs, and ensure that students are aware of the academic and other requirements of various career opportunities with government at the beginning of their studies.

Well-organized and well-publicized recruitment campaigns will provide better results for all stakeholders. It will mean that government departments will benefit because they will be reaching out to a much broader base of applicants and therefore improve their chances of recruiting the most qualified candidates for the positions available. Universities will be able to identify the types of opportunities that are best suited for their programs and take measures accordingly, both with respect to curriculum development and in providing advice. Potential graduates, and even applicants to graduate programs, will know well ahead of time about the opportunities that exist and plan accordingly.

A Survey on the Recruitment of Graduates of Master's Programs in Public Administration and Public Policy

I. Introduction:

A survey on the recruitment of graduates of master's programs in public administration and public policy was sent out on the CAPPa list-serve in English on February 28, 2006 and in French on March 1, with a due date of March 13. On March 14 reminders were sent to master's programs that had not yet responded. Ultimately, eight replies were received, four from schools running the larger programs (Carleton, Dalhousie, Queen's and Victoria) and four from smaller programs (the University of British Columbia's MA program in political science, Humber College, Regina and the Winnipeg/Manitoba joint program).¹

Due to the small sample size and the necessity for confidentiality regarding individual responses, the following overview of findings, which is followed by an assessment of results, is largely qualitative.

Section II provides a narrative of the key findings based on the responses to the survey questions on the awareness and effectiveness of various recruitment programs, the use of recruitment methods and placement history, cooperative internships run by different graduate programs and standardized testing. Section III presents a critical assessment of the findings in these areas and offers a number of recommendations while Section IV provides a brief conclusion. A summary of the requirements for gaining entry into the federal government under the existing organized recruitment programs is given in Appendix 1.

II. Overview of Findings:

Awareness and Effectiveness of Federal Recruitment Programs

1. With regard to familiarity of *federal* recruitment methods, there was a distinct divide between large and small programs across Canada. The larger programs were familiar with most established recruitment campaigns, while the smaller ones were generally unfamiliar with

¹ Humber College offers "master's-level" courses, but not a master's degree program, unlike the other seven programs responding to this survey.

these campaigns. The only exception was the Accelerated Economist Training Program (AETP), which was known to most programs. It should be noted that in addition to the ones listed in the survey questionnaire, the policy analyst program of the Department of National Defence (DND) was reported by two programs and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) by one. When asked by AAFC to provide a ranking of candidates by grade point average (GPA), the program in question rejected this request as this would constitute a violation of privacy. It is interesting to note that only two of the larger programs reported knowing about the Recruitment of Policy Leaders (RPL). This is an elite and relatively new program that primarily targets promising Canadians studying at some of the prestigious universities in the United States and the United Kingdom. It also seeks to attract talented doctoral and exceptional master's candidates from selected research-intensive universities in Canada. The program, however, is still young, and coming to terms with the notion of expanding its reach beyond Canadians studying abroad to Canadians studying within Canada.

2. Of all federal recruitment programs, the AETP, Finance Canada and Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) seemed to be the ones most active in sending representatives to university campuses to hold information sessions. Industry Canada and DND seemed to be more selective in their choice of visitations. The Management Trainee Program (MTP) held an information session at only one of the larger schools. Interestingly enough, while the RPL Program has been active in interviewing graduate students from selected programs at selected universities, they have for all intents and purposes bypassed graduate programs in public administration or policy. One program, however, reported an informal visit by a recruiter, who happened to be in town to interview candidates from a number of science departments at that university. These first-round interviews were being chaired by the Chair of the Regional Federal Council. Overall, despite the large number of MPA and MPP graduates hired by the federal government every year, very few departments visit university campuses to hold information sessions or actively court graduate students to consider the federal government as a possible career option.
3. Satisfaction with existing *federal* recruitment programs in communicating with their target audience was *very low* across the board, although it was somewhat higher in larger programs. On a scale of 1 to 5, three of the eight responding programs reported a score of 1, one program reported a score of 2, three programs a score of 3 and only one program gave a score of 4 for an average score of 2.25.

4. Student awareness of existing *federal* recruitment methods was also very low with two of the four smaller programs reporting a score of 1 and the other two a score of 2. Of the four larger programs, one gave a score of 2 and the other three a score of 3. This shows that on the awareness scale, a majority of programs are reporting that their students are either not at all aware of federal recruitment programs or only slightly aware of them. The fact that not a single program is reporting more than an *average* level of awareness is clear testimony of the very limited success of federal recruitment programs in making students aware of their existence.

Use of Recruitment Methods / Federal Placement History

5. For graduates from the four larger programs successfully recruited through an organized *federal* recruitment program, respondents listed the AETP, the MTP, the NRCan Program, Finance Canada, Industry Canada, DND and the Post-Secondary Recruitment (PSR) Program. Although these four programs as a group reported up to 5 students recruited per year on average through such campaigns, this might be attributed to their larger program size or aforementioned familiarity with the recruitment programs. The numbers, however, are still very small, given the number of students graduating. For the four smaller programs, the situation is grim. Three of these reported no placement whatsoever in the past five years while one listed the AETP as the only campaign through which placements were made at the rate of one per year.
6. Most respondents felt that each of the *federal* departments should conduct an individual recruitment campaign. One program said that these campaigns should be coordinated. In addition, a common remark was that these recruitment initiatives should correspond to the academic cycle; i.e., advertise in the fall / early winter. In the words of one of the larger programs:

Larger departments should definitely consider conducting their own recruitment campaigns similar to the one run by NRCan. Although such an arrangement may not be feasible for smaller departments, they should at least develop a coordinated system that is more effective in communicating employment opportunities; for example, through the use of the PSR program to increase student awareness of opportunities that might exist.

The following caveats, however, were also expressed:

Perhaps a hybrid model of a comprehensive centralized posting of employment opportunities in the fall and winter, combined with more targeted efforts by individual departments, would help increase awareness of career opportunities with federal government departments among graduating students, as well as help departments draw from a wider pool of candidatesThe choice between centralized and decentralized recruitment efforts must be balanced against departmental resources and recruitment needs.

Perhaps there could be a centralized authority to disseminate this information?

The October application deadline is premature for some of our students who are just settling into their studies and new community, when they are asked to project their career interests several months ahead.

7. With regard to casual or temporary employment leading eventually to full-time permanent employment, there seemed to be a mixed reaction from the six programs responding to this question. Here are some of the responses:

Any and all opportunities for our graduates are welcome.

Outside of coop placements, this is not a route generally pursued by our MPA students.

I think that it is OK on a case by case basis – however, those graduates that are admitted into these training programs often go farther in government faster than those hired by bridging, etc.

We are strongly opposed to casual or temporary positions being converted to permanent positions. Short-term employment on the basis of a limited competition is acceptable, but for full-time continuing positions, proper advertising through the PSC/PSR avenues should be the norm. This will ensure that all permanent positions are filled with the best available candidates. It will also provide a wide range of opportunities for well qualified candidates who might otherwise be unaware about the existence of these positions. It will make the recruitment process considerably more fair and transparent as it is in the case of organized

recruitment campaigns run by NRCan and Finance Canada, for example.

Students would benefit from a more coordinated recruitment so that they knew about possibilities from many different departments. Being hired as casuals does allow them to get a start, but not to plan well.

8. In response to the question on changes that should be made to existing federal recruitment methods, quite a number of recommendations were made, mostly by the larger programs. There is a clear indication that advertising methods need to be improved, that federal recruitment programs should work more closely with school administrators, and cooperative internship coordinators to ensure that students are aware of the academic and other requirements for these programs at the beginning of their studies. This would help students select the most appropriate courses given their interests and, more generally, tailor their program of studies keeping in mind the potential opportunities with the federal government upon graduation. There is also a need for the federal government to be more proactive in reaching out to the public administration and public policy programs across the country. Here are some of the specific responses:

Expand current admissions requirements to include college postgraduate certificates.

Should do more of a blitz in the fall and coordinate times when you are on campus.

Federal hiring recruitment programs should work more closely with school administrators / coop coordinators to ensure that students are aware of the academic requirements for these programs at the beginning of their studies.

Improved advertising, more proactive approaches to recruitment, and (depending on the circumstances) greater use of standardized tests.

The PSR works well for some students and appears to work well for some programs and departments. That there is rarely a high-profile federal campaign in the winter term means that some graduating students surrender this ambition and find employment with sub-national governments. The less competitive terms for casual, temporary or coop placements reinforces this perception, often incorrectly, that opportunities for these graduating students are not as

available at the federal level in comparison to other levels of government.

A communications strategy that is targeted to graduating post-secondary students on employment opportunities outside the PSR might help to inform highly qualified students of ongoing placement opportunities and counter the perception among some students that only with personal contacts will they be successful.

The greatest gaps seem to be with the 'high flier' programs – MTP and the RPL. They could have a much greater presence in recruiting. If the programs were coordinated, they could do a joint session (which we could facilitate) early in the fall term that would greatly enable students to begin planning coops and casual jobs, and to ask the right questions, as well as plan courses.

Awareness and Effectiveness of Provincial and Territorial Recruitment Programs

9. Most of the larger programs are familiar with one or more *provincial/territorial* recruitment programs, especially if it is within their own province. Among those cited were the Nova Scotia Career Starts Program, the Nova Scotia Department of Energy, the Ontario Internship Program, the Saskatchewan Graduate Development Program, the British Columbia Graduate Development Program and the British Columbia Ministry of Finance. One response from a larger program is given below:

Most of our students are looking for federal employment, and the coop helps with this. The lack of career paths in provincial government is partly by plan, but also by default as there is no provincial recruiting for our program.

Other than a single reference to the Ontario Internship Program, respondents from the smaller programs are either not familiar with *provincial/territorial* recruitment programs or offered comments that were not accurate.

10. The *provincial/territorial* recruitment campaigns that were listed as having visited programs in the past year include the Ontario Internship Program, the British Columbia Graduate Development Program and the Nova Scotia Department of Energy. One large program and three of the four smaller programs responding to the survey were unaware of any visits by *provincial/territorial* recruitment campaigns.

11. The level of satisfaction with existing *provincial/territorial* recruitment programs in communicating with their target applicants was generally quite low. There were three scores of 1, one 2, two 4s and one 5 with one not responding for an average score of 2.57 on a scale of 1 to 5.
12. As for student awareness of existing *provincial/territorial* recruitment methods, of the seven programs responding, there were four 1s, one 3 and 2 5s for an average of 2.43. This apparent polarization is difficult to interpret except to say that although in a majority of programs students are not at all aware of this type of recruitment, there are programs in which students are very well aware. It is possible that some programs actively promote employment opportunities at the provincial level while others do not, hence this outcome. That also seems a little odd considering that two of the largest MPA programs in the country gave the lowest score possible for this question on student awareness.

Use of Recruitment Methods / Provincial/Territorial Placement History

13. The number of graduates successfully recruited through organized *provincial/territorial* recruitment methods each year is relatively small. While some programs expressed their complete lack of knowledge about the existence of such campaigns, others reported that only one or two graduates were being recruited each year. Two of the larger programs reported that none of their graduates were being recruited while one program reported that up to five were recruited annually. This latter program referred to several campaigns run by different provinces across the country. The Ontario Internship Program was most commonly listed as the program graduates were placed in. The British Columbia Graduate Development Program and Nova Scotia Career Starts were also mentioned.
14. Respondents were divided as to whether each *provincial/territorial* department should conduct an individual recruitment campaign. A common remark was that perhaps a centrally coordinated campaign in each province, which represented all departments in that province, would help to serve the needs of graduates as well as the government. This broader recruitment drive could be coordinated by the public service commission in each of the provinces. One of the larger programs offered the following comment:

The School of regularly works with representatives from individual departments interested in hiring our graduates. This process appears to serve individual students as well as employers well. Students generally receive information on the actual job responsibilities and employers generally receive applications from a highly qualified applicant pool in a timely and relatively effortless process.

15. In response to the question on *ad hoc* initial hiring, leading eventually to permanent employment, there were relatively few responses. The three that provided a full response are given below:

Six-month term positions have proved useful entries for many graduates to employment with provincial governments in Canada. Most often the terms of employment have been competitive to their skills and experience levels, making this an effective recruitment and retention option to graduating students.

We are strongly opposed ...short term employment on the basis of a limited competition is acceptable, but for full time continuing positions, proper advertising through the PSC/PSR avenues should be the norm.

This often works well. Thegovernment has no bridging program. However, they often take advantage of hiring students on an auxiliary basis. It would be nice if the provincial government enacted a bridging program.

16. With regard to the changes that should be made to existing *provincial/territorial* recruitment campaigns, there was a clear indication from the programs that much more could be done by these governments. Here are some of the responses:

Perhaps the Civil Service Commission could facilitate a broader recruitment drive.

While some provinces appear to favour employment of residents from the province (reasonably), they might draw a larger pool of qualified candidates by posting notices to graduate programs outside the province, as out-of-province students in our program often have a preference to return to their home province, but are less aware of the employment opportunities available to them while they are out-of-province and pursuing their studies.

In some cases, highly qualified students may take up employment outside the province without ever realizing their former ambition to work for their home government.

Make sure our students are aware of them [recruitment campaigns]. Make sure I am aware of them [recruitment campaigns].

Improve advertising, increase speed at which recruitment information is relayed, campus visits by major recruiters, time the recruitment cycle to coordinate with the academic cycle.

Our students come from all across Canada and would be interested in provincial employment, but they do not know of such employment.

Awareness and Effectiveness of Other Recruitment Programs

17. Almost all respondents had no awareness of organized visits by recruiters from municipal governments, the private sector, the not-for-profit sector or other sectors. Although the campaigns themselves were not listed, one small program noted visits by a municipal government and not-for-profit recruiters.
18. Satisfaction with existing *municipal / private sector / not-for-profit sector / other* recruitment programs in communicating with their target applicants was extremely low across the board. On a scale of 1 to 5, the scores consisted of only 1's and 2's. Two of the four larger programs gave a score of 1 while the other two scored this question as *not applicable*.
19. Student awareness regarding existing *municipal / private sector / not-for-profit sector / other* recruitment methods was most commonly scored as a 1. As for the larger programs, the response was exactly the same as for the previous question, with two giving the lowest possible score of 1 while the other two scored this question as *not applicable*.
20. For the five respondents that seemed to have some sense of the proportion of graduates who found positions in the *Private Sector*, the values ranged from 1 – 10 percent for four of them. Only one of the larger programs reported 20 percent.
21. One-half of the respondents had data available on the percentage of graduates who found positions in the *Not-For-Profit Sector*. Of the

four reporting, three reported a figure of 5 percent with the fourth saying “ten percent or less on initial employment.”

Cooperative Internship Program

22. Although the majority of respondents reported having a Cooperative Internship option, the duration and employment details vary from program to program. Most placements occur over a 3 – 4 month period and are generally paid positions. One small program reported unpaid internships of eight weeks in duration. Depending on program requirements, there can be anywhere from 1 to 3 Cooperative Internship work terms.
23. The themes that were expressed in support of the purpose of the Cooperative Internship program seem to have a lot in common. Here are some of the responses:

The MPA Internship Program allows students to combine their academic studies with real-world experience and help them build the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to make an effective transition from school to work following degree completion.

Provide a practical context in which to gain experience and expand employment network.

To provide students with opportunities to integrate the theoretical and practical aspects of public administration and to gain work experience in the public sector.

Practical experience gained on coop is an integral part of the student's education. Coop emphasizes the relationship between the employer, the student and the university.

The Cooperative Internship Program fosters the integration of practical public service experience with the professional education of the MPA program. It enhances both the quality of education and work preparedness. It is of benefit to participating MPA candidates, employers and the School. Most importantly, it is a contribution to the profession of public service and the quality of public services in Canada.

24. The Cooperative Internship option serves as an academic credit in only two of the seven programs that responded to this question. In one, a relatively small program, it is worth six credit hours. In the other, a large program, the Internship is treated as an elective and counts for three credit hours of the required 54 credit hours for the MPA degree. In another large program, each coop term is worth two “units” of credit. The grade is either a “complete” or “incomplete”, but this does not serve as a course credit towards graduation requirements.
25. In three of the four large programs, the Internship is a major activity. The number of students placed each year to coop positions range from 40 or so to 70 for these programs. For the other large program, only two students per annum are placed, implying that the overwhelming majority of graduates complete the program without participating in the Internship.
26. Participation numbers in the Cooperative Internship Program vary greatly across programs. One-half of the respondents noted 5 – 15 percent participation, while the other half noted 80 – 100 percent. Since paid internships over an entire academic term are more difficult to obtain than unpaid internships, programs that allow unpaid internships of a shorter duration reported a higher placement rate. Generally speaking, the larger programs offered paid internships ranging from thirteen to eighteen weeks in duration.
27. The challenges encountered by programs in placing students in Cooperative Internship positions were not too significant, but a number of issues were still raised. The difficulties encountered included: employers waiting until the last moment to assess their needs and submit job requests, lack of consistency amongst public service departments in terms of how the coop process is handled internally, inefficient utilization of public service human resources personnel and managers not being aware of deadlines, upcoming placement periods. It was also said that managers should be made more aware of other programs such as student bridging. Two other comments are given below:

There are no serious challenges although some years we have had more students seeking a placement than we have available; other times we can not fill all of the spots.

A major challenge is becoming well known with employers and developing good relationships. Once the program has become well known, placements are much easier to secure.

28. The percentage of Cooperative Internship student placements leading to full-time positions after graduation varies widely across programs. One program reported 95 percent, but this program also reported that only 5 to 15 percent of its students participate in the Internship Program. Interestingly enough, those programs with high internship participation do not necessarily see those numbers translated into full-time continuing positions after graduation. One large program, which reported a mere 25 – 30 percent of internships leading to full-time positions after graduation offered this additional comment:

The Internship experience helps enormously to secure full-time employment at the end of the graduate program. Although it may not necessarily serve as a direct connection (bridged into the same department), the experience itself works extremely well to secure full-time continuing positions within other departments.

29. All programs express high satisfaction with the learning experience provided by the Cooperative Internship program in preparing students for full-time professional employment in the public sector following graduation. Of the six programs responding to this question, five gave the maximum score of 5 on the satisfaction scale of 1 to 5. The other program gave a score of 4.

Standardized Testing

30. Opinions varied between respondents as to whether public sector departments at different levels of government should use standardized tests to assess graduates. On the whole, there seems to be general support for the use of standardized tests in certain circumstances, but contrary views were also expressed. Here are some of the comments that were made:

Although I appreciate the usefulness of standardized testing, I am concerned it does not allow those to 'rise to the top' who would otherwise have much to offer to the public service.

The tests would miss so much as not to be very useful at all.

We believe such tests are appropriate for selected positions where the tests will provide the government department with a pool of candidates having the aptitude and skills it is seeking. This can be used widely by certain departments if it

serves their purpose, but will likely not be suitable for all types of competitions.

31. Most programs expressed familiarity with government recruitment standardized tests. The ones cited were the Graduate Recruitment Test (GRT) and those required for the Management Trainee Program and the Ontario Internship Program. Foreign Affairs was also mentioned, perhaps because the GRT was reinstated in the spring of 2005 for the Foreign Service recruitment campaign.
32. Respondents were divided as to whether government departments should re-establish the widespread use of standardized testing, such as the GRT, as part of their recruitment programs. Two of the responses are given below:

Yes, if it is only one tool. No, if it is to be the only basis of decision-making.

I think the test may prove valuable to an employer in selecting employment candidates at the first stage, but can imagine a range of other and more useful measures that an employer can adopt to select the most qualified candidates for the work to be performed by the employee.

Placement Office Structure

33. Surprisingly or not, none of the programs reported having a placement office or any form of organized structure to help students find positions upon graduation. Some of the larger programs, however, offer career counseling, assistance in preparing resumes, host workshops on employment-related topics, or provide assistance to employers seeking to recruit students. One large program offered this interesting comment:

As limited as federal and other government (and NGO) recruiting is, we are as disorganized. We do not collect good data, nor do we have programs for helping our students find positions.

III. Critical Assessment and Recommendations:

Federal Recruitment Programs

There are established models in place that have stood the test of time, which could easily be emulated to recruit well-qualified master's graduates of public administration and public policy programs. For example, departments such as Finance Canada, Industry Canada and Natural Resources Canada have recruitment models that allow them to recruit the best candidates out of graduate programs long before graduation. A rough generic version of how it works is briefly described below:

Early in the fall term, these departments place advertisements on their website and then notify selected graduate programs across the country of their hiring intention. This is followed by posters and other information materials that are mailed to universities as a way of communicating directly with programs and students. Representatives of recruitment campaigns, usually successful applicants of these competitions from past years, visit schools and departments to carry out information sessions and to encourage interested students to apply. This is followed by first-round interviews on campus later in the fall. Those selected for second-round interviews are flown to Ottawa in January for more extensive interviews, which usually include written tests. Reference checks are carried out soon after and offers to successful candidates made starting from mid- to late-January. The effective date of employment is mutually agreed upon and is generally quite flexible, starting usually between May and July, to allow sufficient time for graduation.

The above model is similar to recruitment for the AETP, which also draws from and relies heavily on the same pool of candidates. It is therefore not unusual for some of the top students to receive offers from the AETP in addition to one or more of the departments noted above. While the AETP recruits around fourteen or so every year, each department running these competitions usually recruits anywhere from thirty to fifty or more graduates depending on need and the availability of qualified candidates. The target subject areas for these competitions invariably include graduate degree holders in economics in addition to business and public administration/policy, and occasionally law, environmental studies and political science among others. Candidates with strong quantitative and analytical backgrounds usually do well in these competitions as do students with a science or economics undergraduate degree.

These organized recruitment campaigns by the relatively small number of federal departments have proved to be highly successful. The departments have become better known to the target group of graduate programs and to the students in those programs. In this regard, their profile, visibility and overall recognition to the public administration and public policy communities have all been enhanced. The departments have had first crack in recruiting the best students from these programs and successfully recruited many of them. If one goes through the record of public servants recruited through the AETP or the departmental competitions over the last several years, the evidence will speak for itself. The primary lesson that emerges out of this experience is that

organized recruitment competitions that target high-quality graduate programs normally yield public servants with high potential. This is a method that some of the larger federal departments and agencies such as the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), Health Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), Service Canada and Transport Canada might wish to emulate. These organizations recruit a fair number of graduates from public administration and public policy programs every year, but they do so in a relatively uncoordinated fashion, often without a rigorous interview and selection process or simply by formalizing ad hoc or casual appointments without conducting a nation-wide search using proper advertising procedures. The result is unsatisfactory, partly due to the mismatch of jobs and candidates. Not all candidates who go through the AETP, Finance Canada or NRCan competitions necessarily are interested in those organizations, certainly not always as their first-choice destinations. They apply simply because the choices are limited. This implies that if the other departments, especially the larger ones with significant annual hiring needs of their own, institute competitions using some version of the model described above that addresses their specific needs, the matching of jobs and candidates would be much better facilitated. It would also eliminate the inherent bias that is associated in recruiting without adequate advertising or moving casual appointees into continuing positions without the benefit of a fair competition. It would also mean that students would have significantly more opportunities made available to them at approximately the same time in a reasonably coordinated fashion (in much the same way that doctoral candidates nearing completion of their dissertation are able to identify faculty openings at different universities every fall).

There are also other fairly straightforward ways for federal departments to connect with graduate programs and students. One option is to hold job fairs once or twice a year in Ottawa featuring departments and agencies interested in recruiting graduates. The timing of these job fairs could potentially coincide with interviews of applicants previously screened. One benefit of these organized recruitment events is that departments would be able to interview as many applicants as they wished over a relatively short period of time. It would complement the existing recruitment campaigns by drawing in other federal departments as active participants in organized recruiting. For applicants, the advantage would be that of being interviewed by several departments in one trip instead of having to travel to Ottawa each time there is an interview. Choosing the right job also becomes a lot easier for those receiving multiple offers if the offers are received at approximately the same time.

Sharing information on applications is another way of streamlining recruitment. For example, if the names of high quality applicants who narrowly fail to receive offers from the elite competitions are shared across departments, this might assist other recruiting departments and the candidates

in finding a suitable match quickly. That said, recruiting departments would have to feel sufficiently confident that the benefits of inter-departmental cooperation and the resulting efficiency do not overshadow departmental autonomy and departmental staffing priorities.

The profile of the federal government at the university campuses across the country also needs to be enhanced. The challenge of location for universities located in the periphery of the country is a related impediment that needs to be addressed. Job seekers located in the National Capital Region have the advantage of proximity while those in the periphery must struggle constantly for visibility. This imbalance can be mitigated to a certain extent if the government can maintain a presence at each university throughout the year. As well, the greater the profile of government on campus, the more likely will it be for students to gravitate towards the government as a career option. For example, the visibility of biotech companies at certain campuses have greatly contributed to their success in recruiting high quality graduates. It must ultimately be remembered that both recruiters and job seekers transmit and receive information. The more efficiently the relevant information is disseminated the better off both parties shall be.

Among the existing federal recruitment programs, the most competitive is the RPL. The AETP and the Finance Canada competitions, elite programs in their own right, are probably tied for second place. The main distinguishing feature between these three programs, aside from the fact that the RPL accepts considerably more graduates to the program than the AETP and at least as many as Finance Canada, is the preference of RPL for *very* high quality candidates. These candidates are often doctoral candidates holding prestigious *external* scholarships such as the Commonwealth, Fulbright, NSERC, Rhodes, SSHRC or the Trudeau.² This stringent requirement automatically rules out the vast majority of candidates who successfully compete for placement with the AETP.

In another sense, the RPL competes directly with the best universities in the country seeking to fill tenure-track faculty positions by offering attractive compensation packages and the promise of rapid career advancement into the executive ranks of the federal government. Its reach is also much broader as far as subject-matter specialization is concerned. Through this program, the federal government seeks to attract high quality science, engineering and law graduates in addition to graduates of public administration, public policy, economics and the other social sciences. Presidents of the top Canadian universities are directly approached by the federal government to nominate their best graduate students, irrespective of subject area or specialization, to compete for a place in the RPL. Key federal deputy ministers visit university

² Under the eligibility criteria in the RPL website, specific reference is also made to the Governor General's Gold Medal as a distinguishing sign of merit.

campuses to meet with presidents and deans to promote the program. The Public Service Commission has little or no real visibility in this high profile campaign.

Provincial Recruitment Programs

It was clear from the responses to the survey questions that the programs in public administration and public policy, especially the smaller ones, were less aware of provincial and territorial recruitment programs than they were of federal programs. This is not surprising since there are only a few recruitment campaigns run by provincial governments and none of these are of the visibility or stature of the AETP, for example.³ Like the federal government, the provinces also engage in large scale recruiting every year, but much of this recruitment is uncoordinated and lacks structure. The provinces do little to engage universities in their recruitment plans although they will from time to time ask individual schools and departments to encourage suitable candidates to apply for advertised provincial positions. It is not entirely clear what role, if any, the Public Service Commissions in each province play in coordinating recruitment. As a result, the level of satisfaction with provincial recruitment programs in communicating with their target applicants is very low.

Needless to say, there is clearly a lot of room to improve recruitment of graduates at the provincial level. More and better organized competitions can easily be run with little additional effort. Some of the larger departments, especially within the larger provinces, may wish to run their own annual competitions, others may want to rely more on their provincial Public Service Commissions to take the lead in promoting and organizing the recruitment of graduates. Of the provincial recruitment programs, the Ontario Internship Program is the most well known. The others are less well known and have little visibility outside their provinces. For some programs, such as the Nova Scotia Career Starts, the compensation is not competitive due to which the applicant pool is not quite as strong as it is for the federal competitions. An improvement in the compensation package of public servants in the provinces of Atlantic Canada is required if these provinces expect to retain the most promising graduates in the region and possibly attract some from other provinces.

Other Recruitment Programs

There are no organized recruitment campaigns at the municipal level or with the private or not-for-profit sectors that were reported. It is clear that these sectors do not target graduates of programs in public administration or public policy directly. Thus, it is not surprising that both program awareness and student awareness of such recruitment is either low or non-existent. This is not to imply that graduates are not recruited by these sectors. On the contrary, a number of graduates are hired every year, especially by the large

³ Through its provincial Public Service Commission, the Government of Manitoba recruits six interns, mostly MPA graduates, every year. Interestingly enough, none of the MPA programs responding to the survey reported awareness of this Internship program.

municipalities. As well, there is nothing to indicate that those who find positions at the municipal level are any less satisfied with their careers relative to their peers employed in the federal or provincial governments. The numbers, however, are very low and for some programs bordering on insignificance. This is a reality that can not be overlooked.

On their part, graduate programs in public administration and public policy, by and large, are designed to cater to the needs of the federal and provincial governments. The overwhelming majority of students enrolling in these programs not only have these two levels of government in mind when they enroll, their preference is also to work for these two levels of government, and that is essentially what happens in actual practice. The programs, in turn, thrive and flourish if recruitment at the federal and provincial levels is strong, regardless of the situation elsewhere. The recruitment of graduates by municipalities, the private sector and not-for-profit organizations is definitely a plus for the programs, but the numbers to date have been relatively small so as not to have much impact on the fortunes of these programs.

There is no doubt a lot of room for graduate programs to reach out to sectors other than the federal and provincial governments as potential career paths for students. Likewise, these other sectors need to be more proactive if they wish to attract graduates of public administration and public policy. The opportunities as well as the potential gains for both sides are significant, but very little of it has been tapped so far.

Cooperative Internship Programs

Of all employment-based connections between graduate programs and employers at all levels, the most successful is the Cooperative Internship Program. The Internship opportunity in many of the programs serves as a major drawing card in attracting students. It provides valuable work experience for participating students; it is by far the largest single source of external funding in support of graduate programs; and it prepares students well for a career in the public sector. It is no wonder, therefore, that the majority of programs, especially the larger ones, take the Internship program so seriously. Some programs give students academic credit for coop placements while others do not, but nearly all programs invest significant resources to secure placements for their students. The underlying rationale is not merely altruistic. By all accounts, the success of the graduate program offering the Internship hinges largely on the success of the Internship program. A successful Internship program gives the degree program visibility, prestige and a vital link to the public sector. It makes the program relevant and practical in the eyes of government, and, more generally, reinforces the usefulness of post-graduate education in the workplace. For students, the Internship creates a valuable opportunity for further learning in a

work environment; it serves as a complement to their formal university curriculum; it provides for significant funding in support of their education; and makes it easier to find full-time continuing employment upon graduation. Interns provide employers with a high level of energy, fresh ideas, enthusiasm, and serve as an inexpensive source of professional help. This contribution is analogous to the contribution made by teaching and research assistants in a university environment.

The Cooperative Internship on the whole is an extremely valuable program, which deserves to be supported by all parties concerned. There is potential for its expansion at all levels, especially at the municipal level and within the private and non-profit sectors. These sectors may not have fully understood yet the value that interns bring in to the workplace. Universities would do well to capitalize on this potential and promote internships wherever possible, especially among the ranks of those organizations that have thus far not fully recognized the value of internships for the employer.

Standardized Testing

As for the use of standardized testing for federal positions, the most well known is the Graduate Recruitment Test (GRT), which assesses general cognitive ability and measures ability to use reasoning skills to solve problems. It is a 90-minute multiple-choice test with pass marks that vary according to needs. Although discontinued in recent years as a requirement for most federal employment positions, the GRT was reinstated in 2005 for the Canadian Foreign Service recruitment campaign.

Despite the limitations of the widespread use of standardized testing to fill public sector positions that obviously require more than just cognitive ability, tests such as the GRT are a useful tool to screen applicants for certain types of positions such as those that require relatively more analytical and technical skills. For smaller departments especially, with no organized annual recruitment campaign of their own, standardized testing is a fair and relatively straightforward way of establishing a threshold, a minimum criterion essentially, below which applicants will not be considered. This will not work for all departments nor for all types of positions, but it will for a good number such as various entry-level professional positions with the Bank of Canada, Finance Canada and Statistics Canada, and for certain positions with the Canada Revenue Agency and the Office of the Auditor General. It will assist departments as they are sorting through applications by reducing the number of candidates to be given serious consideration to a manageable number.⁴

⁴ For example, if there are, say, twenty or more applicants for each position, a standardized test such as the GRT could help to reduce the pool of applicants to be given serious consideration to five or so per position.

There is also a more compelling argument in favour of standardized tests for entry-level professional positions. If law schools can demand the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), medical schools the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) and business schools (as well as some schools of public administration) the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), and even some arts and science departments the Graduate Records Examination (GRE) as legitimate entrance requirements, public sector departments should not feel defensive about asking aspiring public servants for some minimum score in a properly designed standardized test before they can be given serious consideration for acceptance into the *profession*. As well, if it is perfectly reasonable to demand minimum writing skills for most positions, it should be just as reasonable to expect a certain level of competence in analytical reasoning and problem solving, for the majority of professional positions at least. A standardized test helps to achieve this goal by ensuring that a minimum ability with regard to cognitive skills must be demonstrated before an applicant can expect to advance to the next round in job competitions. Not all departments will want to use it; nor should they, but some probably will and a few quite extensively, depending on their priorities. If used appropriately and sensibly, standardized testing will cut down on red tape, reduce the potential for bias or favouritism and expedite competitions by streamlining the screening process.

Placement Office

Despite the existence of a strong Cooperative Internship placement office in most of the larger programs, none of the programs, big or small, have offices to help find employment for graduates. This is not unexpected given the significant cost of maintaining such an office. While formally structured placement offices may, for obvious reasons, be unaffordable, it would be desirable if graduate programs could dedicate one or two faculty and/or staff members to provide advice in finding jobs to potential graduates as a part of their duties that clearly would include others tasks as well.

IV. Conclusion:

To conclude, well-organized and well-publicized recruitment campaigns will provide better results for all stakeholders. It will mean that government departments will benefit because they will be reaching out to a much broader base of applicants and therefore improve their chances of recruiting the most qualified candidates for the positions available. Universities would be able to identify the types of opportunities that are best suited for their programs and take measures accordingly, both with respect to curriculum development and in providing advice. Potential graduates would know well ahead of time about the opportunities that exist and plan accordingly. They would be able to

select courses and areas of concentration with greater confidence by virtue of knowing about career options well in advance. This would help them achieve their career goals and aspirations much more effectively over the longer term.

Graduate students in public administration and public policy programs would be served well if they keep in mind that they will be competing with graduates from a range of programs for the same government jobs. Increasingly, governments are targeting graduates with a science background, in addition to those with economics or commerce *undergraduate* degrees, in seeking out master's degree candidates for serious employment consideration. Candidates with a bachelor of science, as opposed to a bachelor of arts, and master's of public administration (or policy) combination find employment with government more quickly. The same is true for applicants with well-developed technical and analytical skills, especially those with a strong background in statistics, accounting, finance and economics, and information technology. A master's in public administration (or policy) is generally of much greater value if the candidate possesses a solid foundation in quantitative and analytical methods. These candidates are also better able to compete with those with graduate degrees in economics and business administration – subject areas that are actively sought out by government, more so than history, philosophy or political science.⁵

Whatever the characteristics of new and innovative recruitment structures that evolve at different levels of government in the future, there is no doubt that MPA and MPP graduates across the country shall face competition from graduates of many other programs. This is as it should be since it also protects the merit-based system of recruitment from potential bias or monopolization by certain influential programs.

⁵ This is evidenced in the description of background preparation required for various entry-level professional positions with the federal government. Details are given in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1

This appendix provides a summary of the entrance requirements and key characteristics of the existing organized recruitment programs of the federal government. It is not intended to be comprehensive; rather it provides an overview of the opportunities that exist for individuals with graduate degrees interested in a career with the federal public service. It is important to note that while these recruitment programs are relevant for candidates with master's degrees in public administration or public policy, the net is cast much more widely to attract graduates of other programs as well.

Accelerated Economist Training Program (AETP)

http://www.hrma-agrh.gc.ca/aetp-pfae/index_e.asp

This AETP program is geared primarily towards students in economics or public administration and policy. It provides high-quality Master's degree candidates who meet certain minimum course requirements in economics and statistics or quantitative analysis with exposure to a variety of policy issues, experience in analyzing sector responsibilities, and a broad view of the role, mandate, and modus operandi of various departments and agencies in the federal government.

The AETP provides four six-month assignments at host departments with economic and public policy sector responsibilities. Three assignments are with central agencies: Treasury Board Secretariat; Finance Canada; and the Privy Council Office. One line department assignment is also provided. The participating agencies and departments include: Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Social Development Canada, Foreign Affairs Canada, Canadian International Development Agency, Transport Canada, Industry Canada, Health Canada, and Canadian Heritage. All assignments are located in the National Capital Region. Up to 14 persons are recruited each year.

The AETP Program is based on an internship type model, although participants are encouraged to take professional development courses and part-time language training. Over the two-year training period, participants are expected to develop an understanding of how the Cabinet and government decision-making systems work and an appreciation of the role of central coordinating agencies and other key players within the federal system. Participants are exposed to a broad variety of issues, people, and working styles. The line department experience offers them the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of policy development. At the end of the Program, participants are eligible to compete for intermediate-level positions in departments or agencies within the federal public service. Since AETP

participants are carefully screened and of high-quality, most of them tend to receive multiple offers at the end of their training period.

Department of National Defence Policy Officer Recruitment Program

http://www.forces.gc.ca/admpol/eng/academic/intern_e.htm

The Policy Officer Recruitment Program began in 1987 to recruit and develop talented policy officers to meet the unique demands of the defence policy environment at National Defence Headquarters. Ten new policy officers are hired into the Program annually. Candidates must have a Master's degree in history, political science, international affairs, public administration or a related discipline, as well as experience in researching and writing on subjects related to defence, security and/or government policy at the graduate level.

While individual assignments vary, policy officers will work in one or more of the following areas within the Policy Group: public policy, policy development, strategic analysis, international security policy and parliamentary affairs. They can also expect to be assigned to other organizations within National Defence Headquarters, such as public affairs or strategic intelligence.

There are regular promotions within the program, provided the policy officer meets the identified competencies for their level. At the end of five years in the program, policy officers have the opportunity of competing in one of the Policy Group's periodic promotion competitions. Should they meet the qualifications, policy officers may also participate in competitions prior to the completion of the five years.

Finance Canada University Recruitment Campaign

<http://www.fin.gc.ca/recruit/fininfoe.html>

Finance Canada offers three streams. Recruitment in the three streams combined has been up to a maximum of 30 candidates per annum in recent years. Finance Canada's goal is to recruit 50 per annum in the future if sufficiently well qualified candidates can be found. Since the goal is to recruit from only amongst the best and the brightest, it will be quite a challenge to meet this target. The three streams are briefly described below.

(1) Recent M.A. graduates hired under the *Economist and Policy Analyst Stream* conduct policy analysis and forecasts, perform research, and provide recommendations on a wide variety of public policy issues. Recruits can choose to specialize in a particular area of the Department of Finance for several years, or can gain experience in a number of different areas of the Department.

(2) Recent Ph.D. graduates hired under the *Researcher Stream* join a team of researchers conducting theoretical and empirical work on policy-relevant questions. Issues tackled cover a wide variety of microeconomic and macroeconomic topic areas. Candidates may continue to do research for a number of years, or may choose to move into other economist positions within the Department of Finance.

(3) Finally, the *Tax Legislation Stream* is aimed at candidates who have training in law, taxation or accounting and who wish to pursue a career as a specialist in income or sales tax. The positions involve direct participation in analyzing complex income tax or sales tax issues, propose policy changes to senior departmental officials and the Minister of Finance, and draft provisions of the Income Tax Act, Excise Tax Act and related legislation for presentation by the Minister of Finance to Parliament.

Industry Canada Student Recruitment Campaign

<http://www.ic.gc.ca/cmb/welcomeic.nsf/ICPages/ChooseACareerWithIndustryCanada>

In the fall, Industry Canada attends career fairs at universities across Canada to recruit students for the following positions:

- (1) *Commerce Officer* (must have received their master's degree by June 30). This position applies value-added knowledge and expertise about Canadian industry to government decision-making and industrial development. As a Commerce Officer, one may also promote the development, adaptation, diffusion and adoption of world-class strategic and sustainable technologies that enhance Canada's industrial competitiveness.
- (2) *Economist* positions (must receive their master's degree by September 1). As an economist at Industry Canada, one will study emerging issues and monitor current developments. Candidates may also conduct in-depth analytical and investigative research on a variety of economic issues impacting on the Canadian economy.

Management Trainee Program (MTP)

http://www.hrma-agrh.gc.ca/mtp-psg/index_e.asp

The MTP provides hands-on work experience through assignments with federal departments and agencies. As well, an educational component complements and enhances the experience acquired on the job. Courses focus on the basic knowledge and skills required by public service managers, and

content is set against a backdrop of larger issues including governance, policy-making, service to the public, and values and ethics. Upon completion of the four-year Program (the Program was of five years duration for those who started the Program before March 19, 1998), graduates will be qualified for managerial positions at the intermediate level.

Each year, up to 100 candidates are accepted into the Program. External candidates must have obtained a master's degree in any area of specialization from a recognized university. Generally, the campaign starts in September and lasts three to four weeks. Posters for the external competitions are posted on the Public Service Commission Post-secondary Recruitment (PSR) website.

Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) Policy Analyst Recruitment and Development Program

http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/polana/index_e.htm

Candidates must have completed a master's or a doctoral degree and those graduating with a degree in economics, public administration, environmental studies or a related field of study from a recognized university and have an acceptable specialization in economics or statistics will be considered in preference to other candidates. All positions are located in the National Capital Region.

Retained candidates are invited by NRCan to an interview which is conducted either on their campus or by telephone. In November, the successful candidates are invited to Ottawa for a second round of interviews and a written test. Job offers are made in December with participants hired at the ES-02 level and promoted to the ES-03 level within 12 months, subject to satisfactory performance. They should reach the ES-04 level at the end of the two-year program.

Assignments are for a 12-month period and will take place in two different policy groups within NRCan to help participants develop a horizontal perspective and increase their knowledge of the department.

Post-Secondary Recruitment Program (PSR)

<https://psjobs-emploisfp.psc-cfp.gc.ca/psr/applicant/applicant.splashscreen;PsrSessionID=DJJ7KBIX8XmYgZQK9gMs7sQKCI2b!721891178?action=applicant.splashscreen&lang=en>

On behalf of all federal government departments, the Public Service Commission (PSC) advertises jobs in specific fields aimed at post-secondary graduates. When the job opportunity closes, the PSC evaluates all applicants

against the requirements listed on the job advertisement, including test scores where applicable. The PSC then refers the candidates who meet these pre-selection criteria to the hiring organization for further evaluation.

The PSR General Inventory contains the names of individuals who have submitted their application for a public service job. This inventory is available to all federal organizations to help them fill a wide range of entry-level positions which require a university degree. Hiring organizations then contact the PSC if they are interested in filling an entry-level job.

Recruitment of Policy Leaders (RPL)

<https://psjobs-emploisfp.psc.cfp.gc.ca/psr/applicant/applicant.callpage;PsrSessionID=GDTy3pMvKfxyJTlnKzlf8F2pf2L!1800054421?pages=applicant/info/aboutRpl>

The Recruitment of Policy Leaders (RPL) is by far the most elite of all federal recruitment programs. It recruits approximately 50 candidates per annum of exceptional merit as policy analysts for higher levels of responsibility.

Applicants must have either a doctorate degree or a master's degree in any field of study. A bachelor's degree in law, together with an undergraduate degree in any discipline, is also acceptable. A graduate level scholarship, such as the Trudeau, Rhodes or Fulbright, or a graduate level distinction such as the Governor General's Gold Medal is a requirement. Policy-relevant experience through formal academic preparation, including publication of articles, and/or through work experience or volunteer activities in the area of economic, social, environmental or strategic analysis is required. As well, applicants must have participated in multiple extra-curricular activities in a leadership capacity or made a significant contribution to society.