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# Audit of Organizational Culture, Internal Audit and Evaluation Sector April 10, 2024

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## Note to Reader

A Public Opinion Research (POR) was conducted to gather feedback and insights from Correctional Service Canada employees regarding the current organizational culture. The POR provided a significant source of evidence for this engagement, and as such, the POR report should be read in conjunction with this audit report. Further information on the POR can be found in Section 2.3 of this audit report.

## Executive summary

### What we examined

The Audit of Organizational Culture was conducted at the request of the Commissioner to assist Correctional Service Canada (CSC) in gaining a deeper understanding of the current culture, to identify areas requiring improvement, and to provide recommendations that will help guide the

organization's culture change journey. Organizational culture refers to the learned shared values, beliefs, and assumptions of members of an organization.

The objective of the audit was to provide reasonable assurance that CSC (Correctional Service of Canada)'s actual organizational culture is in line with its desired culture. Pursuant to this objective, the audit examined whether:

- Senior management has defined CSC (Correctional Service of Canada)'s values and emphasizes their importance while holding management accountable to appropriately execute their duties;
- Managers ensure that the vision and mission of the organization are being respected by all employees by modelling appropriate behaviour and creating a culture of inclusiveness;
- Management actively gathers and listens to feedback from employees at all levels and positions across the organization;
- All employees are engaged in discussions on how to fulfill CSC (Correctional Service of Canada)'s mission, and all staff are working towards the same goal;
- Management reinforces the values and CSC (Correctional Service of Canada)'s culture through clear communication of expectations across the organization; and;
- Management ensures employee recognition of successful events and outcomes and applies appropriate discipline when required.

The audit was national in scope and included an analysis of the organizational culture across four areas of focus: National Headquarters, Regional Headquarters, institutions, and community corrections.

## Why it's important

CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) plays a critical role in ensuring public safety by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure, and humane control. The nature of CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) work, which is carried out within a complex, dynamic, and often challenging environment, requires a healthy organizational culture as it drives how CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) functions and executes its strategies. The organization recognizes that the health and wellbeing of its workforce is essential to this effort. CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is committed to adapting and strengthening its culture to improve the health and wellbeing of its employees and to help ensure that its workplaces are safe, diverse, inclusive, and respectful.

The audit links to CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) priority of "efficient and effective management practices that reflect values-based leadership in a changing environment", as well as its corporate risk that "CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) will not be able to maintain a safe, secure, healthy, respectful and collaborative working environment as established by its legal and policy obligations, mission and values statement."

## What we found

CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is a complex organization with employees taking on a variety of roles within significantly different work environments. Employees take pride in the work they do to support the organization in achieving its mission and priorities. We found that while CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is making a concerted effort to improve its culture through the creation of national level committees and

the implementation of numerous initiatives, there is a lack of governance in place to ensure that the efforts of the organization to transform its culture are aligned, efficient, and effective.

The results of the PQR (Public Opinion Research) reflect respondents' perception of specific elements of culture at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) and may not completely reflect the controls management has put in place to create and maintain a healthy organizational culture. However, employee perceptions are a significant component of organizational culture, and understanding and acting upon them is crucial to making informed decisions for improving the culture at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada).

Overall, the results of the PQR highlight significant discrepancies in employee perceptions of various elements of the culture at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada), which in part, points to a lack of cohesion across the organization. Specifically, the following issues were raised through the PQR that warrant further management attention:

- Although employees understand and agree with CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) mission and priorities, there is a widespread belief, especially as one gets closer to the front-line, that there is a disconnect between the tone from the top and what is actually happening within the workplace.
- There is a belief, especially as one gets closer to the front-line, that middle managers are not always recruited, developed, and empowered to be effective leaders that support a healthy organizational culture.
- There is widespread belief that the manner in which decisions are made at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is best described as top-down rather than collaborative.
- There is a strong belief, especially amongst front-line and other non-executive staff, that CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is quick to

discipline and slow to recognize employees.

## Management response

Management agrees with the audit findings and has developed management responses to address the recommendations contained in this report.

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 What is organizational culture

Organizational culture refers to the learned shared values, beliefs, and assumptions of members of an organization. Values, norms, and symbols are all key aspects of an organization's culture:

- Values are the standard for discerning what is good and just;
- Norms are the expectations and rules by which an organization's culture guides the behaviour of its employees; and,
- Symbols are powerful representations of an organization's culture.

Culture is an element of an organization's control environment, which serves as the foundation for all other layers of control. Organizations with a healthy culture tend to thrive, perform better, and are more resilient in the face of challenges. Conversely, if the culture of an organization is toxic, it can erode the effectiveness of all control layers. Ultimately, the culture of an organization will have a significant impact on its ability to deliver on its objectives and achieve its mission.

## 1.2 Why audit Correctional Service Canada's organizational culture

CSC plays a critical role in ensuring public safety by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure, and humane control. CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is faced with the challenge of aligning the efforts of a diverse workforce of over 18,000 employees, within a complex structure of 43 correctional institutions of various security levels, 14 community correctional centres, 90 parole and sub-parole offices, and various administrative offices across Canada.<sup>1</sup> The importance of a healthy organizational culture cannot be overstated as it drives how CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) functions and how it executes its strategies.

CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) recognizes that the health and well-being of its workforce is essential to be able to deliver on its mandate and achieve its mission. The organization is committed to adapting and strengthening its culture to improve the health and well-being of its employees and to help ensure that its workplaces are safe, diverse, inclusive, and respectful. In addition to the multitude of initiatives being implemented to improve culture, the Commissioner requested that the Internal Audit and Evaluation Sector conduct an audit to assist CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) in gaining a deeper understanding of the current culture, to identify areas requiring improvement, and to provide recommendations that will help guide the organization's culture change journey.

The audit links to CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) priority of "efficient and effective management practices that reflect values-based leadership in a changing environment", as well as its corporate risk that "CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) will not be able to maintain a safe,

secure, healthy, respectful and collaborative working environment as established by its legal and policy obligations, mission and values statement.”

## 1.3 CSC's commitment to culture change

Recently, CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) has made a concerted effort to improve its culture through the implementation of many initiatives targeting areas such as workplace wellness and employee well-being, employment equity, diversity and inclusion, anti-racism, and values and ethics. The following are examples of actions the organization has taken to improve its culture:

- Developed the Comprehensive Strategy on Workplace Wellness and Employee Well-being, which serves as the foundation for prioritizing activities essential to the wellness, health and mental health of employees and managers.
- Implemented annual reporting on workplace climate and employee well-being to monitor and assess trends in mental health and well-being across the organization, the results of which are used to identify and prioritize actions to address areas of concern.
- Launched the Respectful Workplace Campaign to promote healthy and respectful workplaces.
- Created the Steering Committee for Workplace Mental Health Injuries and the Employee Mental Health Unit to strengthen governance of employee mental health.
- Expanded the provision of mental health and wellness programs, including the launch of Telus Health, to help ensure that employees have access to services that support their mental health.
- Created CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) Office of the Ombuds for Workplace Well-being to provide all employees with an impartial,



confidential, safe space to raise workplace issues and explore options to resolve them informally.

- Implemented the Anti-Racism Framework and associated actions with the goal of creating an anti-racist organization that is more inclusive, diverse, and equitable.
- Completed the Ethical Risk Assessment to assist with the identification of ethical risks in the workplace, breaches that could develop from these risks, and strategies to mitigate these risks.
- Diversified communications channels to better reach front-line staff, including reducing reliance on email communication and opting instead for videos, podcasts, digital displays and the use of computer lock screens.

## **1.4 Elements of CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) policy framework**

The following elements of CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) policy framework provide guidance around the desired organizational culture.

### **CD (Commissioner's Directive) 001 Mission, Values and Ethics Framework of the Correctional Service of Canada**

The purpose of this Commissioner's Directive (CD) is "to support the integration of the Mission and of the Values and Ethics Framework into the daily activities of all persons who work at the CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) or are involved in CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) activities, and to promote an ethical organizational culture characterized by a diverse workforce, healthy workplaces and professional excellence." <sup>2</sup> It defines CSC (Correctional Service of Canada)'s mission, values statement, and values and ethics framework, and sets out the roles and responsibilities of

management and staff to provide a common understanding of CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) shared beliefs and expected standards of behaviour in achieving its mission.

## **Standards of professional conduct (Standards)**

The purpose of the Standards is to promote ethical behaviour consistent with CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) mission. The Standards establish the specific rules for professional conduct that all CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) employees must observe, and includes additional guidance to assist with their interpretation and application. <sup>3</sup>

## **CD (Commissioner's Directive) 060 Code of discipline**

The purpose of this CD is “to ensure high standards of conduct for employees of the Service.” <sup>4</sup> It sets out the general responsibilities of management and staff for implementing the Standards, and provides guidance on the types of actions that would constitute infractions.

## **CD (Commissioner's Directive) 265 CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) recognition program**

The purpose of this CD is to “establish a recognition program comprised of formal recognition, informal recognition and career milestones to build a culture of recognition in the CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) by recognizing attributes and behaviours that promote departmental values; create a work environment where people feel valued for their contribution; instill a sense of pride and satisfaction derived from being recognized for achievements, behaviours, qualities and skills; and encourage initiative and personal responsibility by recognizing significant individual and team accomplishments through demonstrations of appreciation that collectively support CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) mission, priorities and

government-wide objectives.”<sup>5</sup> It sets out roles and responsibilities for the management and implementation of recognition activities at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada).

## 1.5 Risk assessment

This audit was identified as an audit priority and an area of high risk to CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) in the 2019 - 2022 Risk-based Audit Plan. During engagement planning, a risk assessment was completed based on interviews with CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) senior management, external partners, and labour unions representing CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) employees. As well, a review of policies, past audit work, corporate data, and other documentation related to organizational culture was conducted.

# 2.0 Audit objective, scope, and methodology

## 2.1 Audit objective

The objective of this audit was to provide reasonable assurance that CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) actual organizational culture is in line with its desired culture.

Specific criteria are included in Annex A.

## 2.2 Audit scope

The audit was national in scope and examined the organizational culture across the following areas of focus: National Headquarters (NHQ), Regional Headquarters (RHQ), institutions, and community corrections.

The audit did not include an analysis of the various culture change initiatives referenced in this report.

## 2.3 Audit methodology

Audit evidence was gathered through the following methods:

**Public Opinion Research:** A Canadian market research company conducted Public Opinion Research (POR) to gather feedback and insights from CSC employees regarding the current organizational culture. The POR consisted of both qualitative and quantitative research components.

The quantitative research component consisted of a national survey (survey) that was carried out with CSC employees between July and October 2022. In total, 3,413 surveys were completed, representing a participation rate of approximately 17%.

The qualitative research component consisted of a mix of focus groups and individual interviews that were completed with CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) employees between October 2022 and October 2023. In total, 37 focus groups and 122 interviews were completed. Focus groups were established based on work function, classification, and work location (NHQ, RHQ, institutions, and community corrections). The number of sessions assigned for each focus group was determined based on the percentage of the total CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) workforce represented by the number of employees within each group. This approach was taken to help ensure that the results of the focus groups provided a balanced representation of CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) total workforce to help mitigate the risk of over or underrepresenting the views of incumbents in certain positions or levels.

**Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) management and other stakeholders.

**Review of Documentation:** Relevant documentation such as corporate reports, corporate plans, corporate emails, and CDs was reviewed.

**Analytical Review:** Analysis was completed of various corporate data sets, including harassment, grievances, discipline, training, and Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) results.

## 3.0 Audit findings

The audit team completed a review of the POR (Public Opinion Research) report to identify the key issues raised through this important work. The statements in bold in sections 3.2 through 3.5 reflect the results of this review.

The results of the POR (Public Opinion Research) reflect respondents' perception of the culture at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) at a point in time and may not completely reflect the controls management has put in place to create and maintain a healthy organizational culture. However, employee perceptions are a significant component of organizational culture, and understanding and acting upon them is crucial to making informed decisions for improving the culture at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada).

### 3.1 Governance

There is no governing body in place that has clearly defined responsibility for the oversight of organizational culture at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada).

An oversight body is a core element of effective governance. It is responsible for establishing strategic direction and providing oversight to ensure that management's plans and actions are appropriate and support the achievement of objectives.

CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) has implemented seven national level committees that are responsible for providing advice to the Commissioner or Executive Committee around areas that have a direct impact on organizational culture. These include:

- National Advisory Committee on Ethics;
- Official Languages Leadership Committee;
- National Ethnocultural Advisory Committee;
- National Indigenous Advisory Committee;
- National Employment Equity and Diversity Committee;
- Ethical Risk Action Committee; and,
- Steering Committee for Workplace Mental Health Injuries.

We found that CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) has not established a governing body with responsibility for the oversight of organizational culture. This, coupled with the absence of a strategic plan, has resulted in efforts to transform the culture at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) being carried out in silos with a lack of a coordinated approach and common objectives, which increases the risk of inefficiencies and a duplication of effort. Further, it impedes the ability of CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) to ensure that information and data flow to a central group that could support strategic decision making.

There is no coordinated strategic plan in place to guide CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) in its efforts to transform its culture.

A strategic plan outlines the direction that senior management would like the organization to take. Among other elements, it includes long-term and short-term objectives, priorities, and the actions the organization will take to achieve its objectives. CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) has developed various plans that include objectives, priorities, and/or goals that focus on change in areas that have a direct impact on the organization's culture, such as workplace wellness and employee wellbeing, employment equity, diversity and inclusion, and anti-racism.

We found that CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) has not created a coordinated strategic plan that outlines the objectives and associated actions that will be taken to transform its culture. This impedes the ability of CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) to ensure that its efforts to create and maintain a culture that supports the achievement of the mission are aligned, efficient, and effective.

CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) has not established a performance measurement framework to guide how it measures, monitors, and reports on the success of its efforts to transform the organizational culture.

A performance measurement framework provides a consistent approach for systematically collecting, analyzing, and reporting on the performance of a program or activity, and this enables management to make informed strategic decisions around the achievement of objectives.

We found that CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is collecting and assessing information that provides insight on organizational culture through mechanisms such as the PSES, and the Workplace Climate and Employee Well-being annual report; however, there is no overall approach

to monitor and assess the impact of CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) cultural initiatives, which impedes the ability of management to make informed strategic decisions.

## 3.2 Tone from the top

Although employees understand and agree with CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) mission and priorities, there is a widespread belief, especially as one gets closer to the front-line, that there is a disconnect between the tone from the top and what is actually happening within the workplace.

CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) has developed key elements that support the organization's desired culture; namely, its mission and values have been clearly defined and documented. The organization reinforces the importance of its mission and values through various means such as policy direction, corporate communications, mandatory national training, and performance agreements. Results of the POR reveal that the vast majority of respondents understood and agreed with CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) mission and priorities.

When asked to describe the overall culture at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada), many participants in the POR (Public Opinion Research) felt that this was quite impossible as they believed that the organization is a collection of many sub-cultures that exist at various levels. This led many to suggest that the overall culture is multifaceted, complex, incoherent, broken, and divided. Participants at all levels in the organization used similar terms to describe the culture at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada). That said, individuals working at NHQ and RHQ were more likely to view the culture in a positive light and used terms such as professional



and team focused, while individuals working at the institution and community corrections levels were more likely to view the culture in a negative light and used terms such as challenging and thankless.

Overall, the results of the POR reveal significant variation in employee perceptions of culture across the organization. The existence of sub-cultures is to be expected in an organization as large and complex as CSC (Correctional Service of Canada); managing these subcultures effectively involves promoting a shared overarching culture that aligns with the organization's values while acknowledging and leveraging the diversity within it.

The importance of the tone from the top cannot be overstated, as it has a profound impact on various aspects of an organization's functioning. A common theme throughout the POR is that the closer you get to the front-line of the organization, the more likely an employee was to believe that the tone from the top is disconnected from what is actually happening in the workplace.

When the tone from the top is not perceived by employees to be reflected in the day-to-day realities of their workplace, it can lead to a number of significant issues. First, it can impact morale and leave employees feeling disillusioned and disengaged. Second, employees may question the authenticity of leadership's commitment to the organization's values, which can erode trust in management and lead to communication breakdowns and reduced collaboration. Finally, it can result in inconsistent decision making as leaders might make decisions that may not align with the day-to-day realities faced by employees.

### 3.3 Middle management engagement

There is a belief, especially as one gets closer to the front-line, that middle managers are not always recruited, developed, and empowered to be effective leaders that support a healthy organizational culture.

Middle managers serve as the conduit between senior management and employees; translating strategic goals into actionable plans, and ensuring implementation in accordance with corporate values. As outlined in CD (Commissioner's Directive) 001 Mission, Values and Ethics Framework for the Correctional Service of Canada "All executives and managers will provide direction and leadership on the integration of values and ethics into the everyday functioning of their area of responsibility, use the CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) Values Statement as a guidepost in their behaviour, decision making and discretionary judgment, and promote healthy workplaces through values-based behaviours."

Results of the POR (Public Opinion Research) reveal widespread agreement that the culture an employee experiences is largely determined by their manager or supervisor. Employees believed that there are strong managers and senior managers at all levels in the organization; those working at NHQ (National Headquarters) and RHQ (Regional Headquarters) were more likely to feel this way than those working at an institution and community corrections. Feedback from employees suggests that managers with shortcomings are more likely to be present as one gets closer to the frontline and at occupational levels further removed from executive staff.

Results of the POR (Public Opinion Research) also highlight that many employees, especially those working on the front-line, did not believe that their managers are effective leaders who foster an ideal organizational culture. Nearly one third of respondents to the survey did not believe that managers and supervisors encourage employees to respect the mission of

the organization by modelling the appropriate behaviour. Further, nearly half of respondents felt that middle managers are not empowered to do their job and support the culture.

Participants in the POR (Public Opinion Research) focus groups and interviews raised the following concerns with the recruitment, development, and empowerment of managers:

- Competitions for management positions do not take a holistic view of an individual's skill set;
- Various forms of favouritism result in individuals without the necessary management skills being selected for key positions;
- There are too many acting managers which in turn weakens management overall;
- Managers are not provided with sufficient time to complete management training, or opportunities to develop through activities such as mentoring and job shadowing; and,
- Managers are overworked and under-resourced.

When middle managers do not possess the necessary skill set to lead a team, it can result in operational inefficiencies, poor decision making, communication breakdowns, and increased turnover. Further, when middle managers are not empowered, they may struggle to make decisions, resulting in a misalignment with the organization's strategy, and an increased risk of non-compliance with legislative and policy requirements.

### 3.4 Open dialogue

There is widespread belief that the manner in which decisions are made at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is best described as top-down rather than collaborative.

Open dialogue supports various aspects of organizational culture, from employee engagement and innovation to transparency and conflict resolution. Organizations that prioritize open dialogue tend to be more adaptable and successful in the long-term. Feedback mechanisms can include both formal mechanisms such as employee surveys, consultations, and corporate communications, as well as informal mechanisms such as team meetings, and daily interactions with management.

We found that CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) utilizes formal mechanisms, such as surveys and policy consultations, to gather feedback from employees, and processes are in place to review and assess this feedback to help inform decision making. Results of the POR (Public Opinion Research) demonstrate that many employees agreed that they are regularly invited to share feedback and that the formal mechanisms in place are an effective means of gathering input from employees across the organization.

Results of the POR (Public Opinion Research) reveal a broad concern that the organization does not actively listen to the feedback it solicits from employees. Half of the respondents to the survey did not believe that their feedback is taken into consideration in decision making. This belief left many employees feeling that efforts to engage them in decision making are artificial and the manner in which decisions are taken at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is best described as top-down rather than collaborative. The prevalence of this belief increased significantly as you approach the front-lines.

Results of the POR (Public Opinion Research) also suggest that there are opportunities to improve the use of informal mechanisms, such as manager open-door policies and team meetings. Nearly half of the survey

respondents felt that management does not make efforts to gather feedback from employees. Again, the prevalence of this belief increased as you approach the front-lines.

Some of the barriers to open dialogue that were identified in the POR (Public Opinion Research) include limited interaction with managers, high manager workload, and a reluctance to report issues out of concern for repercussions from either their peers or their immediate supervisor or manager. When employees fail to report concerns, it impedes the ability of CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) to identify and address issues in a timely manner. This can result in the normalization of unethical behaviour, a loss of trust among employees, and a toxic work environment, each of which increases legal and reputational risk.

## Communication

CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) uses various mechanisms to communicate expectations that, in part, are meant to reinforce the organization's values and culture. These include CD (Commissioner's Directive)s, national mandatory training, Messages from the Commissioner and This Week at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) emails, and announcements on the CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) intranet (The Hub). Many participants in the POR (Public Opinion Research) focus groups and interviews felt that the tone of corporate emails is professional and the content quite comprehensive as they often convey and reinforce the organization's values and feature interesting staff and team stories.

Results of the POR (Public Opinion Research) reveal a widespread belief that communications at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) are a weakness. Roughly half of survey respondents believed that the communication approaches CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) employs are inefficient and ineffective; the prevalence of this belief significantly

increased the closer an employee is to the front-lines. Participants in the POR (Public Opinion Research) focus groups and interviews generally believed that the primary means of communicating throughout CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is email and there is frustration amongst employees with the volume of emails considered to be irrelevant. Further, many staff were frustrated with the lack of opportunities to have in-depth discussions with their managers and supervisors about information contained in corporate communication.

Overall, the results of the POR (Public Opinion Research) indicate that employees assigned a high level of importance to team-level communication; those who believed that team-level communication is strong also tended to feel that communication at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is working well overall.

### 3.5 Recognition and consequences

There is a strong belief, especially amongst front-line and other non-executive staff, that CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is quick to discipline and slow to recognize employees.

A well-designed system that balances positive reinforcement and appropriate consequences helps to create a healthy organizational culture. Recognition can motivate employees to go the extra mile and can nurture a positive and productive workforce. On the other hand, appropriate consequences for undesirable behaviour can foster a sense of fairness and accountability, and helps to ensure that employees adhere to the organization's expectations.

We found that CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) has implemented a recognition program, comprised of formal and informal recognition, with the aim of creating a work environment where people feel valued for their

contributions. There was general agreement amongst participants in the POR (Public Opinion Research) focus groups and interviews that the effectiveness of employee recognition depends on the supervisor or manager and requires both time and effort.

The results of the POR highlight an opportunity to improve employee recognition. Half of respondents to the survey did not believe that CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) provides appropriate recognition for a job well done. Many employees believed that formal recognition is not effectively utilized and a low priority at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada), and that informal recognition is not part of the organizational culture. The prevalence of this belief significantly increased the closer an employee is to the front-lines.

CD 060 Code of Discipline provides guidance aligned with the Standards of Professional Conduct, around expected behaviours and what constitutes infractions. Participants in the POR focus groups and interviews agreed that policy direction is clear and discipline follows a progression in line with policy.

Many employees, especially front-line and other non-executive staff, believed that there is too much latitude for managers with regard to initiating the disciplinary process, and that the process is flawed, resulting in unfair and inconsistent discipline across the organization. Results of the survey indicate that nearly half of respondents believed that the consequences employees face for their actions are unfair. Further, just over half of respondents felt that management is inconsistent in terms of how it disciplines employees when it is required.

A lack of recognition can lead to employees feeling undervalued and underappreciated, while unfair and inconsistent discipline can erode trust in management, and create a sense of fear within the workplace. Overall,

these issues can lead to reduced employee morale, and engagement, which can result in lower productivity and higher turnover.

## 4.0 Recommendations and management response

### Overall management response

First, I would like to thank all CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) staff who took time to participate in the audit of organizational culture – whether it be taking time to fill out the survey or participate in focus groups and interviews. I want you to know that the work you do, in service to Canadians, is invaluable. It is challenging work and I want to make sure that you have the work environment, tools and supports you deserve to do your job.

I asked for this audit because I wanted to better understand the challenges and opportunities of our various workplaces from coast to coast to coast. I want you to know that I heard you loud and clear, and this audit provides useful information from which we can work to further understand and evolve our culture.

This initiative is dear to me, and I wholeheartedly accept all of the audit's recommendations. As you will see below, I did not wait to implement some of your feedback. To this end, work is underway in many areas, and together, we will have more work to do moving forward. I want to hear from more of you in terms of whether the focus areas identified are the right ones, or whether we need to adjust them. In some cases, I need to better understand the root causes of the feelings behind some of your comments so we can work to address them. From there, we will develop a



more detailed action plan. I want to underscore that I recognize that listening is important, but it must be backed up by action – and this is what you will see.

This will not be a quick fix – it will be a multi-year initiative that will need ongoing reinforcement. We are a large and complex organization, and our approach will be multi-faceted. Leaders at all levels will be engaged, as will our employees. This will take hard work and every single one of us must own the culture. The findings in this report help set us on the right path. They challenge us to be innovative, communicate in new ways, and transform aspects of the organization that have remained unchanged for a very long time.

Today, my call to action is clear: please join me on this journey as we build on everything that is working well, our strengths, while we work to improve what is not. In the meantime, I have provided responses to the audit's recommendations below, including status updates and next steps. As part of my commitment to this effort and demonstrating action, I will provide you with regular and ongoing progress updates.

## **Recommendation 1**

Correctional Service Canada should identify a diverse governing body with a clear mandate and resources to oversee and guide its organizational culture transformation.

## **Management response**

As Commissioner, our employees – and organizational culture – is one of my top priorities. Given the importance of this initiative, I am putting in place a structure that has a direct reporting relationship to me.

CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) will put in place a diverse team representing different levels and responsibilities within the organization to guide its work on culture transformation. We will have change leaders that have diverse roles and perspectives, and that represent our national, regional, and team-specific realities.

## Progress

- I have taken action to select an Office of Primary Interest within CSC (Correctional Service of Canada). The Communications and Engagement Sector will be taking on this new opportunity and this is currently being finalized. Strong communications will be essential in how we implement this initiative.
- This will be followed by the selection of individuals – a team – that will focus on culture change across the organization, with a clear mandate. This team will have a direct line of reporting to me, as Commissioner, given the importance of this initiative.

## Next steps

Recruit a diverse team, finalize the reporting structure, and announce the team. **Date:** September 2024.

## Recommendation 2

Correctional Service Canada should:

- conduct a comprehensive review of the public opinion research report to identify trends, patterns, and specific areas of concern highlighted across various demographics within the organization; and
- develop and implement a management action plan to address the results of this comprehensive review.

## Management response

Work on this 2nd recommendation will be necessary early on to inform other steps in the process.

All data points available and linked to culture will be relevant in this exercise to ensure that we are aligning our efforts and focusing on the right areas or improvements moving forward. We will be doing a deeper dive into the public opinion research report to identify trends, patterns, and specific areas of concern, and identify any gaps and additional engagement questions to include in our engagement with employees.

## Progress

- CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) began looking at the preliminary public opinion research in 2023 with a view to take immediate action on any areas of concern or opportunity. Some of these actions are listed below under recommendation 4.
- We know employees can sometimes get consultation fatigue, so we want to make sure we examined and actioned the feedback you have already provided through a variety of existing initiatives. To this end, we have started examining other existing data points that touch upon culture as well. This includes feedback received from employees on the Anti-Racism Framework and Action Plan received throughout 2022 to 2023, the Clerk's Call to Action, the Working Group for Women, and consultations with employment equity groups regarding the Clerk's Call to Action and Public Service Employee Survey results.

## Next steps

- Finalize the review of data and the final Public Opinion Research and include the themes in the engagement product. **Date:** September 2024

- As noted in recommendation 4, CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) will engage further with staff to develop and implement a culture strategy and detailed management action plan to address the results of the available data, and any new feedback gathered, to finalize the way forward. **Date:** March 2025

## Recommendation 3

Correctional Service Canada should conduct a review of its governance structure to identify any gaps, overlaps, or inefficiencies that may hinder the successful implementation of culture change initiatives.

## Management response

It will be important to mobilize resources dedicated to this effort. However, we first need to take stock of what we currently have in place. We do not simply want to add more committees or working groups as this can sometimes create silos and duplication. Therefore, we will look to identify opportunities, gaps, and eliminate redundancies. Each group that exists should have a clear purpose and responsibilities to ensure the alignment of various culture-related functions and activities across the organization.

The goal of this exercise will be to ensure resources are maximized, and that all teams and groups have a clear purpose and accountabilities. This will help ensure the successful delivery of initiatives towards a common goal of improving CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) culture.

## Progress

Last Spring, I asked the Audit and Evaluation group to review our governance structure. The Human Resource Management Sector and Communications and Engagement Sector also worked together to examine

all working groups, networks, and committees related to employment equity groups, racialized employees, and diversity. This resulted in new Terms of Reference for the Employment Equity and Diversity Committee, and clearer roles and responsibilities for other entities. We will look at how we can further streamline efforts as they relate to organizational culture.

## Next step

We will finalize and communicate any governance changes to support effective culture change. **Date:** September 2024.

## Recommendation 4

In consultation with relevant stakeholders, Correctional Service Canada should:

- develop and communicate the desired organizational culture, with clear priorities and strategic objectives to guide its culture transformation; and
- develop and implement a performance measurement framework to measure its culture transformation.

## Management response

In past years, we have taken important steps to address workplace wellness and employee wellbeing; employment equity, diversity and inclusion; measures to support mental health and those with workplace injuries; fostering anti-racist and respectful workplaces; and putting in place actions that uphold values and ethics.

In response to the audit feedback, we immediately put in place the following new initiatives to address feedback that “as one gets closer to the front-line, that there is a disconnect between the tone from the top and what is actually happening within the workplace”. In response, CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) increased its video production to focus on the stories of frontline staff, rather than only messages from CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) leadership. In 2023 to 2024, over 70% of videos featured the lived experiences of front-line staff, and CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) podcast and Let’s Talk Express articles are also heavily focused on this. The Commissioner’s Message has also been modified to reduce the number of emails sent to all staff (by amalgamating it with This Week @ CSC) (Correctional Service of Canada) and introducing a “Faces of CSC (Correctional Service of Canada)” section, which features the work of front-line staff and volunteers.

We have also taken action to foster more open dialogue. As a result, we have been mindful to offer staff more opportunities to provide feedback and see that their feedback is valued and can influence change. For example, the title of our new Podcast was the result of asking front-line staff for their suggestions, and we ultimately chose a title that was suggested by an employee. CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) also launched an internal communications survey, providing an opportunity to all staff to provide feedback on our communications channels, and capture suggestions on where we should focus our efforts to better reach staff. From the feedback received, we did the following:

- Integrated visuals into every Commissioner’s Weekly Message with a focus on employee stories and successes.
- Implemented a new Podcast, Lift me Up series, and Back to the Basics campaign focusing on the work of our employees.

- Using All-Staff Calendar invites for important workshops and presentations, in addition to emails.
- Launching “Lock-Screen” Communications on computers as a way to reach more staff.
- Rolling out digital displays in institutions in order to better reach those working in our institutions.

Steps have also been taken to adjust the style of communication to better reach employees and respond to the findings of the audit. This includes using more plain language in communication, and explaining things in a manner that is more casual and informal. Plain language training was provided to all communications staff, as well as managers and senior management to improve upon this.

## Progress

Based on the audit findings and themes, we have started developing an engagement product, which will serve as a discussion piece to seek input from the Executive Committee and employees across the organization on the desired culture, priorities and strategic objectives. This will give a voice to all employees in shaping the future direction. We want your buy-in on this so that everyone trusts the process and takes an active role in our way forward.

## Next steps

- Engagement will take place in different forms. We will leverage face-to-face and also digital methods given the hybrid environment. This will not be driven only from the top – we will action your feedback to hear more from your sector heads/RDCs (Regional Deputy Commissioner) and management teams. **Date:** December 2024
- We will use this information to finalize a multi-year culture strategy, actions and detailed timelines. This will include the development of a

communications approach to support the strategy. This dovetails with recommendation 2, which will inform the actions in recommendation 4.

**Date:** March 2025

- In terms of developing a performance management framework and reporting mechanism, we will first look at existing reporting mechanisms and any ways we can align efforts with what's already in place. This includes looking at the existing Workplace Climate and Employee Well-being Report. This report is an analysis of new and ongoing activities, risks, opportunities for change, and priorities in support of CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) continued commitment to employee mental health and well-being. CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) will explore whether this report could be expanded upon to serve as an ongoing reporting mechanism related to the progress being made on culture transformation. **Date:** March 2025

## 5.0 Conclusion

CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is a complex organization with employees taking on a variety of roles within significantly different work environments. Employees take pride in the work they do to support the organization in achieving its mission and priorities, and CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is committed to adapting and strengthening its culture to improve the health and wellbeing of its employees and to help ensure that its workplaces are safe, diverse, inclusive, and respectful. We found that while CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is making a concerted effort to improve its culture through the creation of national level committees and the implementation of numerous initiatives, there is a lack of governance in place to ensure that the efforts of the organization to transform its culture are aligned, efficient, and effective.



The results of the POR (Public Opinion Research) reflect respondents' perception of specific elements of culture at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) and may not completely reflect the controls management has put in place to create and maintain a healthy organizational culture. However, employee perceptions are a significant component of organizational culture, and understanding and acting upon them is crucial to making informed decisions for improving the culture at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada).

Overall, the results of the POR (Public Opinion Research) highlight significant discrepancies in employee perceptions of various elements of the culture at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada), which in part, points to a lack of cohesion across the organization. Specifically, the following issues were raised through the POR (Public Opinion Research) that warrant further management attention:

- Although employees understand and agree with CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) mission and priorities, there is a widespread belief, especially as one gets closer to the front-line, that there is a disconnect between the tone from the top and what is actually happening within the workplace.
- There is a belief, especially as one gets closer to the front-line, that middle managers are not always recruited, developed, and empowered to be effective leaders that support a healthy organizational culture.
- There is widespread belief that the manner in which decisions are made at CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is best described as top-down rather than collaborative.
- There is a strong belief, especially amongst front-line and other non-executive staff, that CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is quick to discipline and slow to recognize employees.

# 6.0 Statement of conformance

This internal audit engagement was conducted in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*, the *Treasury Board of Canada Policy on Internal Audit*, and the *Treasury Board of Canada Directive on Internal Audit*, as supported by the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Program of Correctional Service Canada.

**Daniel Giroux, CIA**  
Chief Audit and Evaluation Executive

## Annex A: Audit criteria

The following table outlines the audit criteria developed to meet the stated audit objective and audit scope:

### Objective

- 1. Provide reasonable assurance that CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) actual organizational culture is in line with its desired culture.

### Audit criteria

#### 1.1 Tone from the top

Senior management has defined CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) values and emphasizes their importance while holding management accountable to appropriately execute their duties.

#### 1.2 Engagement of middle managers

Managers ensure that the vision and mission of the organization are being respected by all employees by modelling appropriate behaviour and creating a culture of inclusiveness.

### 1.3 Open dialogue

Management actively gathers and listens to feedback from employees at all levels and positions across the organization.

### 1.4 Clear communication

Management reinforces the values and CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) culture through clear communication of expectations across the organization.

### 1.5 Employee engagement

All employees are engaged in discussions on how to fulfill CSC's (Correctional Service of Canada) mission, and all staff are working towards the same goal.

### 1.6 Recognition and consequences

Management ensures employee recognition of successful events and outcomes and applies appropriate discipline when required.

## Annex B: Internal audit's role in organizational culture

As outlined in the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*, the role of Internal Audit within CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) is to "...evaluate and contribute to the improvement of the organization's governance, risk management, and control processes using a systematic, disciplined, and risk-based approach."

The Internal Audit and Evaluation Sector will incorporate the results of this audit and its associated POR (Public Opinion Research) into its annual updates to the Risk-based Audit and Evaluation Plan (RBAEP). The internal

audit and evaluation engagements that stem from the RBAEP (Risk-based Audit and Evaluation Plan) will help CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) to continuously refine its organizational culture.

As the third line of defence in an organization's governance framework, IAES is uniquely positioned to assist CSC (Correctional Service of Canada) with establishing a strong culture that is aligned with its mission.

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## Footnotes

- 1 2023-2024 Departmental Plan
- 2 Commissioner's directive 001: Mission, values and ethics framework of the Correctional Service of Canada
- 3 CSC intranet page - The Hub (internal resource)
- 4 Commissioner's directive 060: Code de discipline
- 5 Commissioner's directive 265: Human Resource Management Sector

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### Date modified:

2024-05-17