

THE BLACK EXECUTIVES NETWORK

# FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY

THE BLACK EXECUTIVES NETWORK SECRETARIAT



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**The Black Executives Network  
Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs (BEN/REN)**

First Annual Report

# MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY MINISTER CHAMPIONS

As Deputy Minister Co-champions for Black Executives Network / Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs (BEN/REN), we are honoured to witness and celebrate the immense progress made over the past three years to create a community for Black executives and to champion for a more inclusive, equitable, representative and anti-racist public service.

BEN/REN's efforts to support the career aspirations of Black public servants by offering peer coaching and leadership development opportunities, conducting research and gathering data on the experiences of Black executives and many more activities have moved the needle on the management and development of Black executive talent.

In 2016, there were 68 Black executives in the public service. Today, there are at least 168 Black executives including 2 deputies and 2 associate deputies along with at least 15 assistant deputy ministers. There are several driving forces responsible for this change including BEN/REN's work through the Black Executive Talent ebinder. Released in 2021, the ebinder showcases the professional profiles of Black executives highlighting key areas of experience and expertise in public sector leadership and management. Additionally, the ebinder serves as a tool for overcoming some of the systemic barriers stemming from anti-Black racism to career advancement and mobility in the federal public service. This is just one example of BEN/REN not merely identifying problems but offering creative solutions.

BEN/REN demonstrates leadership and commitment to the public good that makes us all proud.

As senior Black executives, we know firsthand of the important work being undertaken by BEN/REN and how the Network provides a credible voice on the identification and response to issues ensuring that Black perspectives are considered in government processes and decision-making.

Looking ahead, we are motivated and determined to leverage our influence and leadership, to advance BEN/REN priorities, and ensure we have a public service where no talent is left behind. We will continue to be strong ambassadors and champions for BEN/REN through action-oriented behaviours that demonstrate a commitment to addressing anti-Black racism and fostering an environment within the federal public service where Black executives feel seen, safe, and supported.

Thank you

**Caroline Xavier, Chief, Canadian Security Establishment**

**Shalene Curtis-Micallef, Deputy Minister and Deputy Attorney General, Justice Canada**

# STATEMENT FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

As the Co-chairs for BEN/REN, it is with profound joy that we share with you our first annual report. Over the past three years, the Black Executives Network has sought to create a network that provides Black executives in the federal public service with a sense of community, while working with the Government of Canada to address issues of systemic anti-Black racism in the public service.

We have made positive strides but there remains much more to be done. We are committed to creating the conditions that will enable Black executives to flourish and ensure that the federal public service is representative, equitable and inclusive for Black talent.

In this report, we share with you BEN/REN's stories, achievements, challenges, and our collective joys. Our priorities have been talent management, data and research, mental health and leadership, strategic partnerships and engagements, and most importantly building the community of Black executives and those who aspire to be Black executives. We have also sought to be meaningfully engaged in the development and delivery of public policy responses to ensure Black community perspectives are considered during decision-making processes. This is a unique space we operate in and one that offers many lessons for how public policies can be developed to ensure more inclusive responses to the challenges facing racialized communities.

To our colleagues in the BEN/REN Secretariat who work diligently to advance BEN/REN's agenda and the BEN/REN Working Group members who do this work off the side of their desks while balancing the demands of busy days as executives, thank you. To those who offered support when BEN/REN was just getting off the ground, we extend our sincere gratitude.

Thank you

**Tahanee McKnight, Executive Director, Human Resources Policies, Strategies and Programs, Royal Canadian Mounted Police**

**Hantz Prosper, Director General, Corporations Canada, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the progress that BEN/REN has made since its establishment in July 2020.

The report presents our vision, mission and priorities, ongoing initiatives, achievements to date. It also includes other relevant information on issues specific to addressing systemic and anti-Black racism; and supporting Black executives and employees within the Government of Canada.

Messages included in the report are intended for public servants including executives and allies in government.





# OUR STORIES: THE FACTS ABOUT BLACK PUBLIC SERVANTS IN THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

From 2016 to 2021, the Black population in Canada has increased by 23%, which is significant considering the overall visible minority population increased by 19%. However, national data indicates the Black population is disproportionately affected by significant, systemic inequities compared to the broader population. This includes low employment rates and higher prevalence of low-income. Black employees are also twice as likely to report having experienced unfair treatment or discrimination at work, and hate crimes targeting the Black population remain one of the most common types of hate crimes in Canada.

These documented trends experienced by Black Canadians are founded on our history of anti-Black racism in Canada, traceable to the enslavement of Black people in Canada and its legacy, through specific laws and practices enforcing segregation in education, residential accommodation, employment, and other socioeconomic opportunities. The impacts of our history have allowed anti-Black racism and other forms of stereotypes to be normalized and entrenched within Canadian institutions, policies, and practices. Unfortunately, these same issues hold true to being Black in the Federal Public Service (FPS), which is a microcosm of Canadian history.

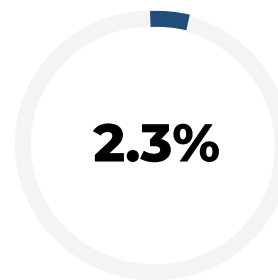
Also, despite legislative commitments to fairness and equality, employment equity, labour, and human rights; laws and legal institutions have failed to eliminate the practice of Black exclusion in Canada.

## Did you know?

In 1989, the first Black Deputy Minister (DM) was appointed in the Ontario Public Service. By comparison it was in 2020, more than thirty years later, that the first Black DM was appointed in the federal public service. In 2016, there were 68 Black executives in the federal public service, and though this number has grown to approximately 168 today, it is still indicative of the extensive underrepresentation in senior leadership. At parity, this number should be at least 287 if we account for Black representation in the public service workforce of 4.2% (2022-2023).

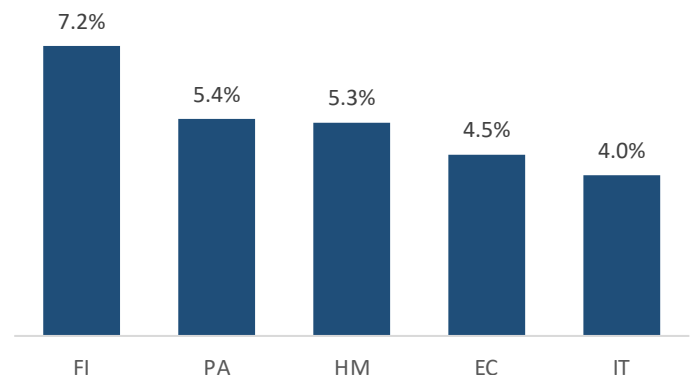
### Where are the Black public servants?

In 2022, there were 9,809 Black public servants or 4.2% of the overall core public service. Among Black public servants, 55.9% identify as Black women; 1.5% identify as Afro-Indigenous and 4.3% identify as Black with disabilities.



In 2022, out of 6,834 executives in the federal public service, only 168 self-identified as Black.<sup>i</sup>

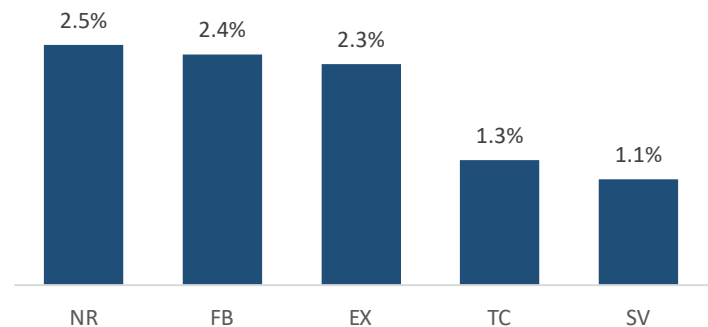
### Occupational groups with highest proportion of Black employees



FI: Financial Management  
PA: Program and Administrative Services  
HM: Human Resources Management

EC: Economics and Social Science Services  
IT: Information Technology

### Occupational groups with lowest proportion of Black employees



NR: Architecture, Engineering and Land Survey  
FB: Border Services

EX: Executive  
TC: Technical Services  
SV: Operational Services

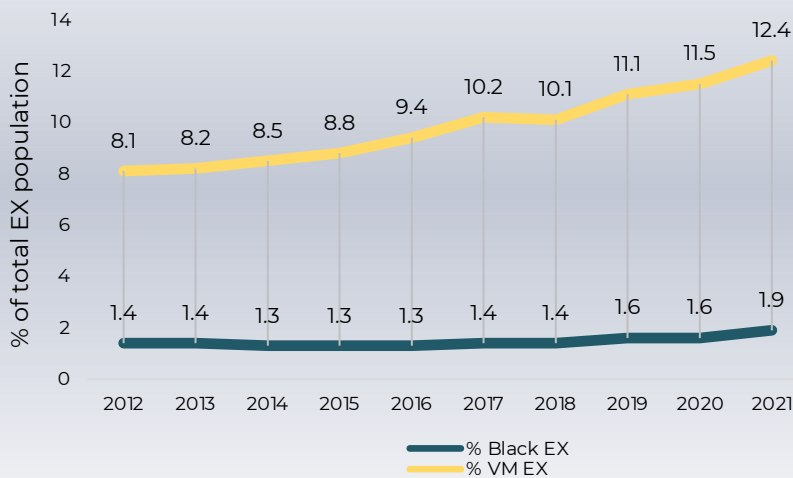


# OUR STORIES: THE FACTS ABOUT BLACK PUBLIC SERVANTS IN THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

When compared with the other employment equity groups, the proportion of Black employees is the highest in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 salary range and lowest in all other salary ranges between \$75,000 and \$250,000.<sup>ii</sup> Considering that a higher percent of people within the Black population (28.0%) speak French at home compared to the total population (23.3%) and Black Canadians in the core age group (25 to 54 years) were more likely to hold a bachelor's degree or higher (41.1%) than people in the same age group who did not belong to a visible minority and were not Indigenous (34.2%)<sup>iii</sup>, this is a significant example of career stagnation. As shown, Black public servants do not lack the ability or the qualifications but rather the system of anti-Black racism continues to deny them access to

sponsorship, leadership development and unbiased performance assessments. The experiences of career stagnation and corresponding lower rates of pay not only undermine the workplace well-being of Black public servants, but it also denies Black families opportunities to build generational wealth as low salaries while working, leads to a reduced pension at retirement time. As evidenced by the *Thompson Class Action*, such experiences are widespread, but few have spoken publicly about their lived experiences because of fear of workplace retaliation, further career repercussions and increased workplace incivility.

**Percentage of Black executives vs. Visible Minority executives from 2012–2021<sup>iv</sup>**



The graph demonstrates that despite Black public servants being the largest sub-group of visible minorities (20.6%) and having suitable education and other qualifications for advancement, the percentage of Black public servants in the EX-ranks has remained fairly stagnant at under 2% while the percentage of other visible minority (VM) public servants in the EX-ranks has been steadily increasing. In 2012 the gap between Black and other VM groups was 6.7% and in 2021 the gap was 10.5%. The widening of the gap further signals how existing efforts to diversify executive ranks in the public service continue to underperform for Black public servants.

## Ministerial Mandate Letters: A focus on the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent (UNDPAD)

Several Ministerial Mandate Letters from 2021, included building on the UNDPAD by developing policies and projects that tackle discrimination and unconscious bias in public and private institutions, including:

- Anti-Black racism;
- Accelerating the review of the Employment Equity Act; and
- Developing a Black Canadians Justice Strategy in consultation and cooperation with provinces, territories, and Black Canadians.

68

**Executives in 2016 self-identified as Black in the core Public Service**

168

**Executives in 2022 self-identified as Black in the core Public Service**

## Clerk's Call to Action

In response to the collective voices of many public servants, the Clerk of the Privy Council officially released the [Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion](#)<sup>v</sup> in 2021, which called on leaders to take action to eradicate all forms of racism, and appoint, sponsor, and support Black, Indigenous, and other racialized employees to leadership positions.

# AN OVERVIEW OF BEN/REN

## Who we are and why we are needed

In a speech to the House of Commons in 2020, the Prime Minister publicly acknowledged what Black executives and Black public servants have always known, anti-Black racism, systemic discrimination and unconscious bias are real and have devastating effects on our daily lives.

As an executive network, BEN/REN is engaged in horizontal discussions related to policy development and improved organizational culture. We aim to be at the table collaborating with senior leadership to identify solutions for addressing the challenges faced by Black public servants and enhancing policy development to better meet the needs of Black and all other Canadians.

In the spirit of “**Nothing about Us Without Us**,” our network has not only developed and delivered executive talent strategies, but we also offer our policy leadership expertise. This expertise serves to ensure that the Canadian government incorporates Black perspectives throughout the implementation and development of policy and programs for Black communities in Canada, and within the FPS.

The diversity of skills and talents from a racially diverse workforce ensures great service quality to the diverse Canadian population. Therefore, the FPS must strive to harness the potential of Black executives to ensure a future-ready workforce. To do this, we will continue to work with the Government of Canada and stakeholders to address the underrepresentation of Black Canadians at executive levels, while also working to set the stage for a sustainable approach that will warrant the representation of Black public servants across all levels.

Our work is intended to complement the work of other networks focused on supporting Black employees, such as the Federal Black Employee Caucus (FBEC) and the various departmental Black Employee Networks. However, we are distinct as an executive-only network with a mandate and objective that leads us to strategically co-design and co-deliver solutions with federal organizations and central agencies.

# About BEN/REN

## Vision

BEN/REN was established in July 2020 to support Black executives in the FPS, while working with the Government of Canada to address issues of systemic and anti-Black racism with a view to making the Canadian public service an institution that is representative at all levels, recognizes talent and leverages it to better serve all Canadians.

The network exists to ensure that the voices of Black executives and employees are heard and to be an active partner and agent of change in addressing issues of anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination in the FPS.

## Mission

Our mission is to:

- **Build and sustain a strong, inclusive and influential network of Black executives** who are committed to public service excellence, sound stewardship and positive outcomes for all Canadians;
- **Promote talent management** by supporting, mentoring, and sponsoring Black executives and aspiring executives;
- **Exemplify the changes we want to affect** in the federal public service; and
- **Support the mental health and well-being of Black executives** in the federal public service.

## Strategic Priorities

Through a strategic planning exercise completed in 2021, BEN/REN identified the following six priorities that aim to advance and support our mission:



**Talent Management**



**Partnership & Stakeholder Engagement**



**Research & Data**



**Mental Health, Leadership & Learning**



**Network Communications & Engagement**



**Marketing and Communications**



## Key Policy Drivers

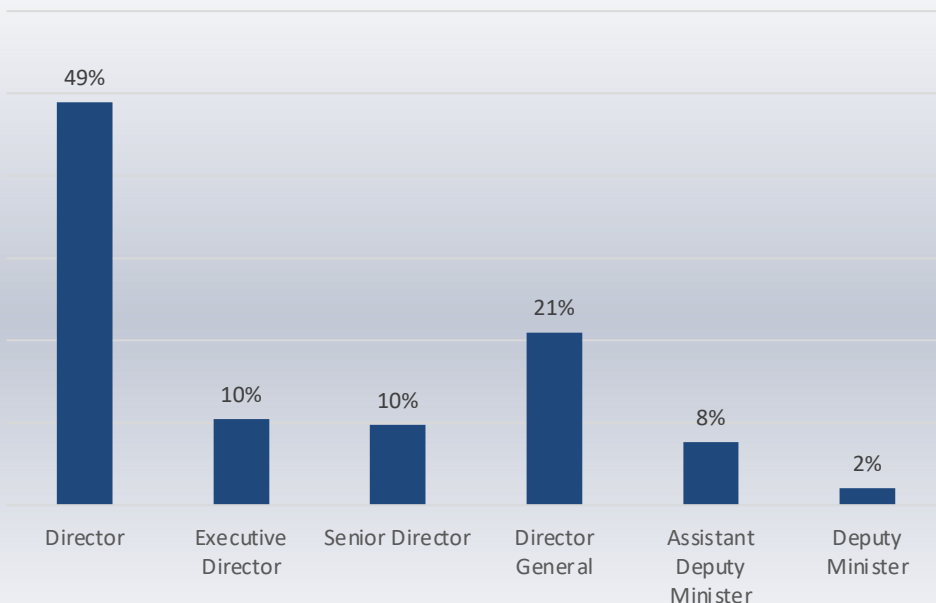
The Government of Canada has recognized the pressing need for policy and program approaches that address the specific needs of Black public servants. In addition to Cabinet directives, the authorities and requirements to advance this work are derived from:

Speech from the Throne 2020 <sup>vi</sup>	The Federal Budget 2023 <sup>vii</sup>	The Federal Budget 2022 (Mental Health Fund for Black federal public servants) <sup>viii</sup>
Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion	United Nations Decade for People of African Descent, 2015-2024 <sup>ix</sup>	2022 Ministerial Mandate Letters <sup>x</sup>
Employment Equity Act <sup>xi</sup>	Canada Labour Code <sup>xii</sup>	Canadian Human Rights Act <sup>xiii</sup>

## Membership Summary

Membership in BEN/REN is open to people of African descent who are executives (at the EX 01 level and above or are acting for one year or more in an EX position). Since our establishment in July 2020, BEN/REN has grown from 78 to 168 members that represent various core and non-core departments, crown corporations and special operating agencies across the country.

### Member Classifications\*



The chart shows the network is comprised of Directors forming the largest category (69%), followed by Director Generals (21%), Assistant Deputy Ministers (8%), and Deputy Ministers (2%).

**168**  
Total Members

\*Note: The classifications/levels of members will change daily. As a result, we intend to confirm our executive levels through a member survey to be conducted in the Summer 2023.





## BEN/REN Structure

BEN/REN is led by a seven-member Steering Committee that provides direction on initiatives and engagement activities to be undertaken by the Network.

The work of the Steering Committee is supported by a Secretariat, that is responsible for providing strategic advice and administrative supports necessary to run an effective, efficient network. This includes providing analytical, research and reporting capacity, as well as coordination and integrating input from various sources to inform advice and recommendations on

BEN/REN priorities. BEN/REN Working Groups exist to lead the work under the priority areas.

In addition, the Network has champions and allies at the DM level that play a strong role as ambassadors and advocates for BEN/REN. Their activities include championing talent management of Black executives within their DM and Assistant Deputy Ministers communities; encouraging commitment and action on addressing systemic racism; and advancing accountability through leading by example.

# BEN/REN Structure

## BEN/REN Secretariat Members



**Christopher K. Scipio**  
Deputy Director



**Chuks Onwuachi**  
Senior Strategy Advisor



**Sandrine Chebekoue**  
Policy Analyst



**Victoria Simba**  
Project Manager

## BEN/REN Steering Committee Members



**Kentia Dazulma**  
Executive Director, Employment & Social Development Canada



**Tahanee McKnight**  
Executive Director, Royal Canadian Mounted Police



**Hantz Prosper**  
Director General, Innovation Science & Economic Development



**Paula Folkes-Dallaire**  
Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Services and Procurement Canada



**Kevin Petit-Frère**,  
A/Director General, Privy Council Office



**Trudy Samuel**  
Director General, Canadian Institutes of Health Research



**Albert Tshimanga**  
A/Senior Director, Shared Services Canada

## BEN/REN Working Groups

### Talent Management

Farahdine Boisclair & Seyi Okuribido-Malcolm

### Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement

Ray Edwards & Albert Tshimanga

### Research and Data

Paula Folkes-Dallaire

### Mental Health, Leadership and Learning

Trudy Samuel

## BEN/REN Champions

- **Caroline Xavier**, Chief, Communications Security Establishment
- **Shalene Curtis-Micallef**, Deputy Minister and Deputy Attorney General, Justice Canada

## DM Ally Champions

- **Bill Matthews**, Deputy Minister of National Defence and DM Ally for the UNDPAD
- **Jody Thomas**, National Security and Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister
- **Simon Kennedy**, Deputy Minister, Innovation, Science and Economic Development

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*The Steering Committee is doing great work! Given their full-time jobs... I believe the Public Service is really lucky to have this team. Very proud of the work they are doing.*

**Gail Johnson**, Senior Advisor to the Clerk and former BEN/REN ADM Champion

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# OUR RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

BEN/REN manages its work in a way that demonstrates integrity, accountability, efficiency, and adds value to support departments and agencies in addressing issues of anti-Black systemic racism within their institutions.

Our first Champion, Chief Caroline Xavier, was the first Black Deputy in the Federal Government in February 2020 and there were only 96 executives who self-identified as Black in the core public service. Since our establishment, BEN/REN has seen steady growth of the number of Black executives in government; however, we are still far from our goal of equity. Below are some key successes to note:

- 168 executives self-identified as Black in the core public service.
- 2 Deputy Ministers and 2 Associate Deputy Minister, including the first Black male Deputy in the Federal Government.

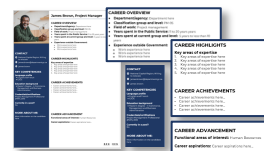
BEN/REN will continue to be a voice for the executive community; create connections, opportunities for Black executives; and close the representation gaps for Black talent.



# Our Results And Achievements

## eBinders

- Launched a “Black Executive Professional Profiles eBinder” in collaboration with the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO) to raise awareness of available talent, and support more equitable representation of Black leaders at senior levels of the executive ranks.
- Launched a “Black Future Leaders eBinder for Aspiring Black Executives” in an effort to support and build the EX-pipeline and to spotlight promotion ready Black employees whose careers have stagnated as a result of systemic barriers.



## Newsletter

- Developed and distributed newsletters to members to facilitate detailed updates on BEN/REN activities. In each issue, we share with our members and allies relevant news and updates, information about job posting opportunities, notes from the steering committee meetings and engagements, educational pieces such as articles, blogs, videos as well as a list of upcoming events that raise awareness of issues affecting Black Canadians.



## Deputy Minister Panels

- The first Deputy Minister Panel was organized in December 2021 and featured discussions on the topic of equity, diversity, and inclusion in support of the Clerk’s Call to Action which included the Clerk of the Privy Council and deputy ministers from several departments.
- The second Panel was held in February 2023 and focused on the unique and persistent challenges posed by the pervasive nature of anti-Black and systemic racism. The panel brought together the Clerk of the Privy Council, members of the Deputy Minister Community, academia, and representatives from other sectors.

## Senior Management Engagements

- Ongoing engagement with the Clerk of the Privy Council to discuss priorities for the Government’s anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion agenda. The Clerk has also publicly recognized the work and leadership provided by BEN/REN.
- Engaged with OCHRO on the co-development and implementation of a Black Executive Talent Management Framework.
- Undertook broad engagements with other senior officials on issues related to anti-Black racism and racial discrimination in the FPS.

## Talent Management Pledges

- Developed a pledge for DMs to sponsor, support and appoint more Black executives and non-executives to more senior roles across the FPS.
- Developed a pledge for Black executives to support the career advancement of Black non-executives.

# Our Results And Achievements

## Executive Peer Coaching Circles

- Developed a Black-centric executive coaching circles for Black executives through a partnership with the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX) and the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) in an effort to address the mental health concerns of Black executives.

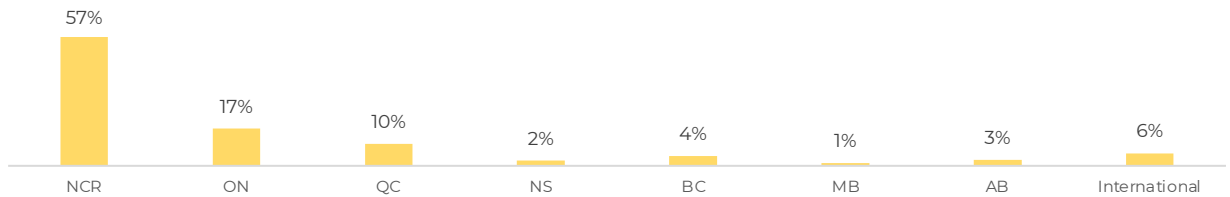
## Social Media Engagement

- BEN/REN's LinkedIn page increases the network's visibility and reach by providing a platform to share updates, news and events related to the network. BEN/REN's page is a valuable tool for the network to attract more followers and create a sense of community among members.

1066  
followers



Follower  
demographics



## BEN/REN Policy Contributions

To advance Black inclusion across government, BEN/REN was involved in the:

- **Clerk's Call to Action:** Provided input and significantly strengthened the language on issues around racism, discrimination and need for action for Black employees, Indigenous People and other underrepresented groups.
- **Mental Health Fund for Black Public Servants:** Worked with OCHRO, FBEC and other intradepartmental Black employee networks to develop policy recommendations for creating a comprehensive action plan to address barriers for Black public servants.
- **Federal action plan to advance the rights and wellbeing of Black communities in Canada:** Worked with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to propose initiatives that focus on addressing career stagnation and increasing representation of Black public servants at all levels in the FPS.
- **Employment Equity (EE) Act Review:** Provided written feedback with recommendations which centered on the need for people of African descent to be identified as a distinct group and the need for disaggregated demographic data.
- **Future of diplomacy:** Drafted a policy paper on the future of diplomacy for the Standing Committee on Foreign Service and International Trade in partnership with the 1834 Fellowship of Operation Black Vote.
- **Black Centric Lens:** Provided input on ESDC's Black Centric Lens, which is a resource guide that helps federal departments ensure their policies, programs, and services are inclusive of the experiences of Black populations in Canada.
- **Disproportionality Index:** Provided support to working group members on developing the Disproportionality Index.



# Our Results And Achievements

## Learning events

- Partnered with the Canada School of Public Service to host a three-part learning event that focused on barriers in recruitment, career advancement, and retention for Black public servants.
- Partnered with the Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED) Black Employee Network and the Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) Black Employee Advisory Council (BEACON) to deliver an Emancipation day event.

## Networking events

- In celebration of the holidays, the Network organized its first in-person event in the National Capital Region in 2022. This event was focused on celebrating Black joy and brought out over 50 members for a night of fun and networking while supporting a local Black owned restaurant in Ottawa, ON.
- In honour of Black History Month 2023, BEN/REN in partnership with APEX, hosted an evening of networking between members of BEN/REN and the DM community. This event provided a valuable opportunity for dialogue, discussion and building professional relationships between the Black executives and members of the DM community in an informal and relaxed setting.



# MOVING FORWARD: OUR WORK CONTINUES

BEN/REN recognizes that there is still a lot of work to do in addressing issues related to systemic anti-Black racism, discrimination, harassment, and lack of career progression for Black public servants in the FPS. However, we will continue to stay committed to working with departments, central agencies, and other government stakeholders to ensure clear, concrete, and comprehensive actions are taken to improve outcomes for Black public servants. In addition, senior leaders must continue their efforts in building confidence and trust through demonstrating a level of accountability, and transparency to drive meaningful change.

As we look towards 2023-24 and beyond, we know that our work to advance Black inclusion will yield positive results and get us closer to our goal of a public service with no talent left behind. Canadians expect the FPS to be reflective of the diverse population we see today and into the future. Yet we remain aware that fighting anti-Black racism is a long-term struggle that can be met with many challenges and opportunities – foreseeable and unforeseeable – along the way. BEN/REN is striving to create a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce by ensuring hiring, retention, and promotion practices incorporate Black talent throughout the public service.



# AREAS OF FOCUS

## Here are 10 areas of focus based on BEN/REN's Mission Statements for the year ahead:

***Build and sustain a strong, inclusive and influential network of Black executives who are committed to public service excellence, sound stewardship and positive outcomes for all Canadians***

### Affirm the focus on Black public servants



- Ignoring anti-Black racism within the federal government won't eliminate its existence nor its very real consequences.
- We cannot be afraid to raise these issues at the highest levels of government and ensure our voices are heard. We have received many questions challenging us on why the government needs to focus on Black public servants.
- As a way on answering these questions, BEN/REN has developed a visual data analysis document that depicts the current unique experiences of Black public servants using publicly available data from Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Statistics Canada, and the Public Service Commission. This infographic includes representation numbers, policy drivers, data on mental health, stagnation and barriers to advancement facing Black public servants.
- In 2023-24, BEN/REN will continue sharing this tool directly with senior officials and other stakeholders, as a means of demonstrating why anti-Black racism is a priority issue within the federal government requiring targeted action and results for Black public servants.

### Establish solidarity with other equity-seeking networks



- BEN/REN's ongoing engagements in the public service have helped highlight and advance issues specific to anti-Black racism that currently exists within the FPS. This work requires working collaboratively with all departments and central agencies, but also with other diversity networks to increase awareness of our challenges and priorities, and support each other to achieve collective goals.
- We will continue to be inclusive in this work with partners that focus on issues related to Indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, religious minorities, 2SLGBTQIA+, etc. We will also continue to collaborate with various anti-racism secretariats and other Black employee focused networks such as FBEC, ESDC's Black Engagement and Advancement Team and the Interdepartmental Black Employee Network.
- These networks are playing a vital role interdepartmentally and within departments to create inclusion and advance equity across the public service. Through their peer-to-peer activities, advocacy, monitoring, reporting and advice to departments and central agencies, they are attracting momentum and gaining influence in the equity space, despite a lack of consistent resourcing and coordination across the federal family.
- BEN/REN believes these networks need to be funded and resourced in a sustainable way.



# AREAS OF FOCUS

## Here are 10 areas of focus based on BEN/REN's Mission Statements for the year ahead:

***Build and sustain a strong, inclusive and influential network of Black executives who are committed to public service excellence, sound stewardship and positive outcomes for all Canadians***

### Reach regional Black executives

- Canada's public service serves Canadians from North, East and West, and in some instances even beyond our shores. Nonetheless, the executive cadre is concentrated within the National Capital Region (NCR). Our membership data indicates that approximately 90% of our members work inside the NCR.
- The use of collaborative technology tools has assisted in connecting with members in regional offices; yet time zone differences and the small number of members in the regions creates challenges for in-person engagement.
- In 2023-24, a focus will be placed on hosting events outside of the NCR in order to better connect with regional members.



***Promote talent management by supporting, mentoring, and sponsoring Black executives and aspiring executives***

### Use hiring pledges to close the representation gaps for Black talent

- In 2023-24, BEN/REN will launch the "Lifting Others as We Climb Pledge" calling on our members to accelerate their efforts to sponsor, support and appoint more Black talent. The pledge would see existing Black executives utilize the Future Leaders eBinder to support their staffing needs and close gaps in representation of Black talent at all levels across the public service.
- BEN/REN will ask deputies to demonstrate their allyship and commitment to Black executives by also pledging to utilize talent development tools such as the Future Black Leaders and the Black Executive Talent eBinders to close staffing gaps by sponsoring and supporting career advancement opportunities.



### Sustain pipeline of future Black executives

- BEN/REN will continue to work with departments, and central agencies to support career advancement programs, develop talent management policies and leverage our network to help Black employees move up in the ranks of management and executives. More work will be done to demolish the glass ceiling that prevents our talented Black community from advancing in government.



# AREAS OF FOCUS

## Here are 10 areas of focus based on BEN/REN's Mission Statements for the year ahead:

### *Exemplify the changes we want to affect in the federal public service*

#### Advance the Clerk's Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service



- We know that there is resistance within the bureaucracy to advancing the objectives of the Clerk's Call to Action, especially as it pertains to Black representation and career progression. Central agencies must do a better job of supporting disaggregated data collection, planning and reporting results across the federal enterprise.
- BEN/REN will continue to raise awareness about the risk to policy and program development when the perspectives of Black talent are absent.
- BEN/REN will not allow resistance and shortcomings in leadership to distract from the anti-racism work that is urgently needed to ensure we can achieve a public service where Black talent flourishes and no talent is left behind. In 2023-24, BEN/REN will continue to champion initiatives that support deputies in pursuing measurable results with consequential accountability to realize the objectives of the Call to Action.

#### Resolve privacy risk and access to disaggregated data



- Issues with privacy have been the main reason for suppression and the refusal to collect, share and use disaggregated EE data in the public service. We feel this is not an acceptable rationale, given its importance in helping to tell a complete story about the Black experience. In addition, the suppression and refusal to collect, share and use disaggregated data undermines the government's commitment to utilize Gender-Based Analysis Plus, an analytical framework that is evidence-based and requires readily available data.
- In 2023-24, BEN/REN will work with its members, federal partners, and researchers to find modernized solutions to extract the data, while keeping the anonymity of the users.
- BEN/REN will also continue to advocate for the collection of quantifiable disaggregated data, as this will enable government to have a complete picture on the state of Black public servants; and to allow for the creation of targeted policies, programs, and processes on key issues.

#### Build momentum on the UNDPAD in Canada



- The UNDPAD began in 2015 and will be observed until 2024.
- Under the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion's Mandate letter commitments, the Prime Minister instructed all departments to undertake both internal and external measures under the UNDPAD.
- As we are nearing the end of the Decade in Canada, there is a sense of urgency to ensure the government meets its commitments and implements lasting changes on key issues such as anti-Black racism, Black representation and career advancement, and Employment Equity.
- BEN/REN will be working with PCO, and other departments on targeted actions that will demonstrate horizontal leadership related to the UNDPAD.

# AREAS OF FOCUS

## Here are 10 areas of focus based on BEN/REN's Mission Statements for the year ahead:

### ***Exemplify the changes we want to affect in the federal public service***

#### Promote self-identification ("self-ID") data

- The collection of self-ID data is a central piece to the government's commitment to EE. The government uses this data to understand their workforce and identify where changes in policies, practices and systems are required for designated EE groups. However, Black public servants remain cautious about self-ID due to fear of being stigmatized, and/or a lack of trust on how the data is being used by departments and agencies.
- BEN/REN will continue to work with federal partners to develop strategies that will improve equity and inclusion efforts, which includes encouraging all Black public servants to self-ID through various employment processes and Annual Public Service Surveys.



### ***Support the mental health and well-being of Black executives in the federal public service***

#### Support mental health and well-being of Black public servant executives

- Anti-Black racism within the public service causes psychological harm to Black public servants, permeating all aspects of work life including leading to significant career barriers.
- Consequences of systemic racism and racial discrimination include psychological and emotional distress, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, self-harm/suicide, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes and other negative health outcomes.
- In 2022, BEN/REN called for a comprehensive approach co-developed and co-led with Black public servants to ensure the federal public service provides culturally competent mental health supports to Black federal public servants. While the co-developed work ended abruptly in January 2023, BEN/REN continues to leverage other spaces and opportunities to advocate for investments in Black mental health.
- In particular, BEN/REN will demand Black-led, Black-designed and Black-delivered mental health services that provide timely, trauma informed, and culturally relevant mental health supports that can close gaps stemming from a legacy of inaction on addressing anti-Black racism in public service.



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*We must open the doors and we must see to it they remain, open so that others can pass through.*

**Rosemary Brown**, Black Canadian Politician and first woman to run for leadership of a federal political party.

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# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE BEN/REN SECRETARIAT

On behalf of our Champions, the Steering Committee and the Secretariat team, my sincere thanks for reading our first annual report. Though, progress has been made, there still remains much work to be done.

BEN/REN recognizes the risks of a public service that lacks sufficient Black representation and where the mental health and well-being of Black public servants are undermined by experiences of anti-Black racism in the workplace. This must change and this will change. We are unequivocal in our efforts to ensure Black executives representation is on par with the representation of Black public servants across the workforce and Black Canadians in our overall population. BEN/REN will do its part and we call on allies and others in positions of influence to join us as we deliver on this important and urgently needed work.

BEN/REN remains steadfast in ensuring that all Black executive and aspiring executive talent – Black women, Black men, Black 2SLGBTQI+, Black persons with disabilities, Black religious communities, and Black-Indigenous – are seen, safe and supported as they contribute to addressing the public policy challenges we face as a society.



**BEN/REN Secretariat**

Left to right: Christopher K. Scipio, Sandrine Chebekoue, Victoria Simba and Chuks Onwuachi

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*Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.*

**James Baldwin**, American writer and civil rights activist

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Real and substantive representation matters, and representation from the Black executive community will be essential in helping to inform the approach needed to support Black executives in the federal public service. There are many advantages in having Black voices at the table in ensuring diverse, relevant and representative policy and decision making, program development and delivery of excellence for all Canadians.

BEN/REN will continue to influence senior leadership to create spaces for Black talent including Black executive talent to flourish and to ensure no talent is left behind. And in doing so, we help ensure Canada's public service is amongst the very best in the world.

As deputy director, I have seen time and time again the wisdom of the African proverb, “*If you wish to go fast, go alone; if you wish to go far, go together.*” I celebrate what we've achieved thus far and I am excited for what lies ahead. Leveraging the collective energies of the Black public servant and executive community, I know we will succeed.

Thank you for reading and I welcome you to return for next year's report.

Sincerely,

**Christopher Khaalid Scipio**  
**Deputy Director**  
**BEN/REN Secretariat**

# HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Membership in BEN/REN is open to Black Federal Public Servant executives (at the EX 01 level and above, or those acting in an EX position or equivalent). BEN/REN currently has 158 members Canada-wide. Being a member will give you the opportunity to stay connected and explore opportunities for further engagement. You will have access to our upcoming events and will have opportunities to contribute to BEN/REN's mandate.

To join, please subscribe to our mailing list by sending us your name, title and department/agency at [reseaubenren@gmail.com](mailto:reseaubenren@gmail.com)

## **Self Identification**

We encourage all Black employees to self-identify in surveys and employment processes to give BEN/REN and the government an accurate picture of Black representation and experiences in the public service

## **Contact Information**

For more information on BEN/REN, please visit:

- GC Wiki: The Black Executives Network / Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs (BEN/REN)
- LinkedIn: The Black Executives Network

# ENDNOTES

- i Employment Equity in the Public Service of Canada for Fiscal Year 2021 to 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/employment-equity-annual-reports/employment-equity-public-service-canada-2021-2022.html#toc-3>
- ii *Ibid*
- iii Black History Month 2022... by the numbers, [https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/dai/smr08/2022/smr08\\_259](https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/dai/smr08/2022/smr08_259)
- iv Employment Equity Promotion Rate Study - Three-Year Update, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission/services/publications/open-info/ee-promotion-rate-study-3-year-update.html%20>
- v Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity and Inclusion, <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/corporate/clerk/call-to-action-anti-racism-equity-inclusion-federal-public-service.html>
- vi Speech from the Throne 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/campaigns/speech-throne/2020/speech-from-the-throne.html>
- vii The Federal Budget 2023, <https://www.budget.canada.ca/2023/home-accueil-en.html>
- viii The Federal Budget 2022 (Mental Health Fund for Black federal public servants.), <https://www.budget.canada.ca/2022/report-rapport/chap6-en.html>
- ix United Nations Decade for People of African Descent, 2015-2024, <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2018/01/30/prime-minister-announces-government-canada-will-officially-recognize>
- x Ministerial Mandate Letters – 2022, <https://pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters>
- xi Employment Equity Act, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401/>
- xii Canada Labour Code, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/l-2/>
- xiii Canadian Human Rights Act, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/h-6/>