



# National managers' community marks decade of leadership

From a small community of like-minded managers and with the support of a dedicated handful of senior officials, the National Managers' Community (NMC) has grown to be what it is today – an active dynamic network of managers with a presence across the country.

**FROM MAY 2-5**, over 1,200 federal government managers will meet in Toronto for the NMC's 10th Annual Professional Development Forum. The forum has become the organization's signature event and, as usual, organizers are expecting to sell out within weeks of registration opening. What makes it such a hot ticket? What is it about this community that has propelled it to be one of the most important "go-to" communities? Why does it have deputy ministers and the Clerk paying attention to what it has to say?

## In the beginning

You could say it started as a grassroots movement. The NMC formally started in 2000, created from the fusion of manager communities that had sprung up in re-

gions across Canada. Some of these communities were quite strong and they could see that by working together they would be able to support managers much more effectively.

Even in the early years the NMC saw strong support from senior leadership, in particular Michelle Comeau, then Associate Deputy Minister with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Michael Nurse, then Associate Deputy Minister with Public Works and Government Services Canada, who were the first two champions for managers. They each brought passion and were instrumental in the creation of the NMC.

A volunteer manager representative was appointed from each region to form the Governing Council. As demand increased, a small secretariat was set up in Ottawa, and each province and territory was pro-

**"Managers are the creators and carriers of corporate culture. They translate the principles and goals of renewal into the realities of daily work."**

— Clerk of the Privy Council, 2010-11 Public Service Renewal Action Plan

vided with funding to hire a regional coordinator to support community building efforts and organize learning events. Most of the regional coordinators were and continue to be hosted by federal councils, who provide a significant amount of in-kind and program support.

Shortly after, an ADM advisory board was formed and has been a continuing presence. This group provides advice, guidance and advocacy and steps forward individually and collectively to support the management community.

## The formative years

In 2001 the NMC partnered with the Canadian Centre for Management Development to hold the first managers' forum in



Kevin Leahy, Governing Council member from New Brunswick (left), presents to Clerk of the Privy Council Wayne Wouters (right).

Ottawa. It was a huge success and became an annual event. NMC also partnered with The Leadership Network to develop communities of practice for coaching and learning organizations, both of which are still active today.

In the early years, NMC supported a range of regional activities such as annual networking forums and local learning events. Some of the NMC's core programs were developed during this time by people like Paul Lefebvre, Bob Chartier and Karen Bonner. The communities of practice and the practical tools to support managers in their work have stood the test of time and are still important lines of business today. They have even been integrated across other levels of government, expanding the reach of the NMC.

Financially, however, the NMC was vulnerable, with no assurance that funding would continue beyond the current fiscal year. Under champion Ric Cameron, then Assistant Deputy Minister with the Canadian International Development Agency, the NMC conducted an external review. Consultations were held within the NMC and in-depth interviews conducted with senior executives. The resulting report highlighted the unique role of the NMC as the only organization working on behalf of managers within the Government of Canada that had the capacity to reach the entire managerial community in the public service in a non-fragmented, holistic manner.

The report recommended some im-

provements to the organization, including enhancing governance, increasing partnerships, securing long-term funding, and increasing awareness and visibility. Taking guidance from the report, the NMC developed a strategic plan to address the gaps.

It was during this period that the first chair of the Governing Council, Richard Crowe, was elected. There has only been one other chair, Mark Butler, who has held the position since 2008.

### Present and future

François Guimont has been deputy minister champion for the National Managers' Community since 2007. Under his leadership, the NMC has made significant progress in meeting all its goals.

The NMC will continue to take the pulse of managers through regular e-polling sessions and focus groups. That ability to reach managers nationally, across regional and departmental networks, to gather intelligence on trends and issues, and to use that information to influence positive change is one of its most important roles.

NMC has become a familiar face at deputy minister and other senior management tables, bringing forward managers' views and collaborating on measures to enhance and support managers in their roles.

In response to the great demand from managers for learning sessions on coaching and other tools, NMC delivered more than 150 learning events to over 5,500 managers in every region across the coun-

try in 2009-10. It is on pace to beat that number in 2010-11. The sessions cost the NMC an estimated \$20 per participant to deliver and are offered free to managers – a welcome initiative for many managers as budgets continue to tighten.

Susan McElcheran and Murray LaForge of the B.C. region are just two of the coaching resources who deliver these sessions. They say that they will do so as long as they can see they are making a difference to people on the frontline. LaForge looks for the “shining eyes in the room,” which suggest participants are engaged and workshop ideas are hitting home.

Over the past few years, NMC has made great strides in its ability to communicate with its members. With an improved website that makes use of Web 2.0 tools, an annual report in each of the past two years, regular mailings to managers and articles in publications such as *CGE*, NMC is better able to inform managers on issues that matter to them.

In celebration of its 10th anniversary in 2011, the NMC launched a new Leadership Awards Program to recognize leaders who have contributed significantly to achieving the goals of the NMC. The awards will be presented for the first time at the annual forum in May.

The NMC represents all regions and territories and managers from all groups. From a science manager to a commander in the navy to a call centre manager, all are represented and have their concerns heard. The reach of the community with very little infrastructure makes it a truly unique organization.

The goal of the NMC is the same today as when first expressed by Mike Nurse in 2002: “to continue to build a cadre of managers who have the competence, confidence and enthusiasm to help take the public service into the future.”

As the current champion, François Guimont, said at last year's annual forum in Montréal, “one of the determinants of success for managers is the need to forge strong partnerships, making connections across organizations and levels. The National Managers' Community helps make that happen.” 



NMC Open Space Discussions in Sudbury, Ontario last December.