



**Task force on the procurement of
public relations services
by the Government of Canada**

**The Canadian Public
Relations Society, Inc.
La Société canadienne
des Relations publiques, Inc.**

**Submission to
the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada
the Honourable Michael Fortier**

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I. INTRODUCTION

This document responds to a request from leaders in the Canadian public relations industry to work in cooperation with the federal government to develop clear, fair and effective guidelines for the procurement of public relations services. It is the shared belief of the majority of public relations professionals that much needed reform is in the best interests of the industry, the government, as well as Canadian taxpayers.

The auditor general's report on the sponsorship program examined the federal government's policies and procedures governing the procurement of communications services—primarily focusing on advertising agencies. Following the report, and in the midst of the sponsorship scandal, the Liberal administration reinforced the selection process for the procurement of advertising services and public opinion research services. It did not however address the distinct requirements for the procurement of public relations services.

The need for meaningful and effective federal government procurement policies and procedures has been a long standing concern and frustration of the public relations industry. The industry believes the time has come for the federal government to develop and implement new policies and procedures that recognize the unique role and application of comprehensive public relations services required by government.

During a meeting with representatives of the Minister's office and the Department in 2005, it was agreed that the Canadian Public Relations Society would present an official submission for consideration by the Department and the government.

Our submission defines the profession/industry of public relations, reviews the long-standing issues, as evidenced by a recent survey among practitioners, and recommends changes that are necessary to be fair to suppliers of public relations services and to offer Canadian taxpayers quality services at competitive prices.

Task force members

The Canadian Public Relations Society's task force on the procurement of public relations services by the Government of Canada is composed of the following members:

Chair

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Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
NATIONAL Public Relations

Members

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II. THE CANADIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY

The Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) is a voluntary organization of 1,600 men and women who practice public relations in Canada and abroad. Members work to maintain the highest standards and to share a uniquely Canadian experience in public relations. The actual number of public relations practitioners in Canada is many times the above figure.

CPRS was founded in 1948 from two original groups—the first in Montreal and the second in Toronto. In 1953, these became associated as the Canadian Public Relations Society, and, in 1957, the organization was incorporated as a national society.

Today, CPRS is a federation of 16 member societies based in major cities or organized province-wide. All member societies adhere to the constitution of the national and member society.

In cooperation with its regional member societies and with like-minded organizations in other countries, CPRS works to advance the professional stature of public relations and regulates its practice for the benefit and protection of the public interest.

Membership is restricted to individuals (not firms) who are engaged in the practice of public relations on behalf of business and industrial concerns, consulting firms, trade and professional associations, governments, educational institutions, health and welfare organizations, and other similar endeavours.

To be eligible for membership in the Canadian Public Relations Society, applicants must devote most of their work-for-pay time to the practice of public relations, have a degree in public relations, or be a career teacher or administrator engaged in public relations/communications education at an accredited post-secondary institution.

Society programs include the following:

National level

- National Council on Accreditation: members may establish their proficiency in the public relations field through the National CPRS Accreditation Program. Adding the coveted APR (Accredited, Public Relations) designation after their name becomes a key to career advancement. As an accredited member they join a group of more than 500 Canadians who have demonstrated this established level of expertise. Only Society members may seek accreditation. The APR is also recognized by Global Alliance partners.
- Membership directory: all members have access to an online membership directory and receive a printed copy of the annual publication. The directory includes member society listings, historical and professional material.

- Canadian public relations conference: a conference is held each year, in conjunction with a member society. The conference consists of study sessions, case history presentations, talks by nationally and internationally recognized experts in the field. The annual general meeting of the Society is also held at this time.
- Awards of excellence: the annual awards competition for members is designed to foster pride and a spirit of competition in projects through national recognition and reward for high-calibre entries.
- Major awards: through the national major awards, members are recognized for outstanding contribution to public relations, the advancement of public relations itself on behalf of the Society, the attainment of the highest level of professional achievement and to exceptional public service.
- Educational institutions: the national society provides support for certificate, diploma and degree courses in public relations at community colleges and universities across Canada.
- College of Fellows: the induction to the College of Fellows recognizes a member's contribution to the public relations discipline.

Member society level

- Regular meetings with public relations practitioners including speakers recognized for their expertise in the field, case study sessions, panel discussions and educational and technical seminars.
- Career development initiatives through seminars, workshops and courses.
- News bulletins to keep members up-to-date on professional affairs at the local level.
- Sponsorship of social events to promote and maintain a stronger sense of identity within the community.
- Involvement in national conferences following nominations as host society.

Code of professional standards

Members of the Canadian Public Relations Society are pledged to maintain the spirit and ideals of the following stated principles of conduct, and to consider them essential to the practice of public relations.

1. A member shall practice public relations according to the highest professional standards.
2. A member shall deal fairly and honestly with the communications media and the public.
3. A member shall practice the highest standards of honesty, accuracy, integrity and truth, and shall not knowingly disseminate false or misleading information.

4. A member shall deal fairly with past or present employers, clients, fellow practitioners, and with members of other professions.
5. A member shall be prepared to disclose the name of their employer or client for whom public communications are made and refrain from associating themselves with anyone that would not respect such policy.
6. A member shall protect the confidences of present, former and prospective employers and clients.
7. A member shall not represent conflicting or competing interests without the express consent of those concerned, given after a full disclosure of the facts.
8. A member shall not guarantee specific results beyond the member's capacity to achieve.
9. A member shall personally accept no fees, commissions, gifts or any other considerations for professional services from anyone except employers or clients for whom the services were specifically performed.

International level

CPRS engages in on-going liaison with the International Public Relations Association, the Public Relations Society of America and many other national public relations organizations around the world. CPRS has reciprocity agreements with many international partners within the Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communications Management.

CPRS membership in the Global Alliance (GA) offers the membership a passport to the world of public relations. The Global Alliance has a mission to enhance the public relations profession worldwide through co-operation between its representative organizations and act as an advocate for the profession.

To date the GA has adopted a universal code of ethics with significant input from CPRS members, agreed on a reciprocal "at members rate" policy for professional development events, publications and other services and has begun research and benchmarking in several other areas. Through its Web site the GA offers access to information regarding: regional or international conferences and seminars, case studies, awards programs, benchmarking research and networking opportunities for professionals.

III. THE PUBLIC RELATIONS CONSULTING INDUSTRY

According to Statistics Canada, there are approximately 29,390 people employed in the public relations sector in Canada. The total size of the public relations consulting industry in Canada is difficult to estimate since many practitioners are individual consultants working out of their homes or employed in small firms of less than ten people.

According to the task force's estimate, the total number of firms in each province, active locally or as part of national organizations, is as follows; the number of total employees in these firms is also indicated:

	Number	Total employees
British Columbia	20	185
Alberta	7	47
Saskatchewan	N/A	N/A
Winnipeg	N/A	N/A
Ontario	45	834
Quebec	20	402
New Brunswick	3	14
Nova Scotia	7	39
Prince Edward Island	0	0
Newfoundland	3	15

The number of firms of a national nature, working in more than one province, is estimated as follows:

	Number of firms
More than 200 employees	1
150 to 200 employees	-
100 to 150 employees	2
50 to 100 employees	3
20 to 50 employees	5
10 to 20 employees	3

According to the task force's estimates, total billings of the Canadian public relations consulting industry is estimated to be approximately \$400 million per year. Recent estimates of the public relations industry in the United States put it at \$3.75 billion per year.

Public relations consultants provide a broad range of specialized services to small and large organizations in both the private and public sectors. Even large businesses and organizations with in-house communications departments employ public relations consulting firms for on-going counsel, specialized services, and program development and implementation.

In Quebec, the Association des cabinets de relations publiques represents the firms' views and interests. A similar organization, the Canadian Council of Public Relations Firms, is being formed in Ontario under the leadership of a member of our task force, Pat McNamara. Both associations are supportive of the present brief. (See Appendix 1)

In fact, public relations is very likely the fastest growing form of communications around the world. In 1990 the fees generated by the world's top ten agency/consulting firms were about \$910 million. Ten years later the top ten generated fees of \$2.5 billion. It is likely that the fees of the thousands of other smaller agencies and the direct spending on PR of organizations increased in the same proportion.

Public Relations is also a major employer. It has been estimated that there are three million people engaged in public relations around the world. As already noted, Statistics Canada reports in the 2001 census that 29,390 worked in public relations in Canada. We believe the 2006 census will show significant growth. According to data from the US Department Labour, the number of public relations specialists employed in that country in 2002 was 211,000.

As reported in the January 19, 2006 issue of *The Economist*: "Spending on PR in America has been growing strongly and reached some US\$3.7 billion last year, according to Veronis Suhler Stevenson, a New York investment bank that specialises in media. It forecasts PR spending will grow by almost 9% a year. This is faster than the overall market for advertising and marketing, now growing at 6.7% a year."

Public Relations as a discipline has penetrated into the world's governments, industries, not-for-profits, NGOs, military and more. Public Relations people have also risen in the hierarchy of their organizations. In many corporations the most senior PR executive is a member of the executive committee.

Public relations education and training has also blossomed around the world and in Canada, with a huge variety of undergraduate, graduate and now doctoral courses available at colleges and universities.

IV. ISSUES CONCERNING THE PROCUREMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS SERVICES BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The public relations industry has identified four fundamental issues concerning the procurement of public relations services by the federal government. These four, issues are the following:

1. Assimilating public relations with advertising
2. Absence of overall government authority and control over the procurement of public relations services
3. Lack of confidence in the fairness of the selection process
4. Inefficient use of private sector time, energy and money

Issue 1. Assimilating public relations with advertising

The communications industries in Canada and globally are comprised of highly diversified and specialized areas of expertise. While public relations and advertising are both components of the communications industries they are very different disciplines, with distinct roles, functions, and applications. At the present time, the Government of Canada's procurement policies do not recognize the distinct nature of public relations within the broader context of communications firms and their offerings.

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat has key responsibilities for the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada, revised November 29, 2004, which include:

"...advising on the allocation and management of funds for government advertising which the Privy Council Office co-ordinates in conjunction with the Government Advertising Committee and the Cabinet, and assessing, advising on and processing TB submissions from institutions to release funding for approved advertising initiatives." (www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/common/policies-politiques_e.asp)

The document defines the role of PWGSC in the area of communications as follows (pages 4 and 5):

"Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) operates as a common service agency for the Government of Canada. It provides institutions with various mandatory and optional information services to ensure that government communications are well-integrated and cost effective pursuant to Treasury Board policies.

"PWGSC co-ordinates contracting services with institutions to ensure consistent and efficient delivery of government communications. It ensures the integrity of the government contracting process for advertising and public opinion research, for publishing and electronic media monitoring, for film, video, audiovisual and multimedia productions, and for fairs and exhibitions.

“As well as managing the contracting process for professional advertising services, PWGSC manages the contract with the government’s Agency of Record. Institutions procure media space for advertising through the Agency of Record. PWGSC also provides advisory services to institutions and maintains the Advertising Management Information System (AdMIS), which documents the advertising activities of institutions throughout the government and forms the basis for annual reporting on such activities.

“In its role as the government’s technical and co-ordinating authority for public opinion research, PWGSC advises institutions on their research plans and strategies, and maintains standing offers and other tools to facilitate the purchase of research services. As well as depositing final reports on research findings with the Library of Parliament and with Library and Archives Canada, PWGSC publishes an annual report on the government’s research activities and manages a Web-based database that is used to co-ordinate public opinion research activities throughout the Government of Canada.

(...)

“To ensure sound financial management and the consistent application of Treasury Board policies and directives, PWGSC provides to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, as required, information and advice on the allocation of expenditures in contracts for communication services.”

It is surprising to note that even within this important ‘defining’ document there is no specific reference to public relations. The document then provides a lengthy discussion of what constitutes the essence of the public relations function without making reference to the actual discipline.

Appendix B of the document defines the communications function as follows (pages 9, 10, 11 and 12):

Communications are central to the work and management of the Government of Canada. As a function of good management, open and proactive communication ensures that the public receives government information, and that the views and concerns of the public are taken into account in the planning, management and evaluation of policies, programs, services and initiatives.

Government communications represent a vital public service that involves both providing information and listening to the public. To develop policies, programs and services that meet the needs of a diverse public, the government must understand the environment within which it operates and respond to the concerns of the public in relevant and useful ways. This includes communicating in the official language of a person’s choice, and producing information in multiple formats to accommodate diverse needs.

Communications entail more than simply providing or receiving information. The manner in which information is exchanged is also important. The quality and timeliness of the transaction has an impact on the value of the information and the credibility of its course.

Communications within the Government of Canada is a shared responsibility involving officials and employees at all levels. Effective policy and program development and administration requires co-operation and co-ordination throughout the government: among ministers, senior officials, policy advisers, analysts, program managers, communications staff, specialists in human resources, information technologies, Web masters, graphic artists, researchers, marketing specialists, access to information and privacy co-ordinators, librarians, receptionists, call-centre staff and others.

Co-operation and co-ordination between institutions are also necessary to better serve and inform the public. It ensures that government themes and priorities are clearly and consistently reflected in the information and messages communicated to Canadians at home and abroad.

In budgeting for and delivering communication services, it is essential that all elements of the communications function be properly resourced. Sufficient resources must be allocated to all local, regional, national and international operations to ensure the requirements of the Communication Policy of the Government of Canada are fulfilled.

The communications function, under the stewardship of heads of communications in all institutions of the Government of Canada, includes the following:

Effective and accountable management

- *Providing leadership, support and advice to ensure that communications are integrated in all phases of policy and program planning, development, implementation, marketing and management;*
- *Applying the principles and practices of good management to the co-ordination of research, analysis, advice and planning, and to the organization and implementation of communication programs and activities:*
- *Preparing and implementing communication plans and strategies—including analyzes of the internal and external environments—in support of policies, programs, services and initiatives:*
- *Assessing performance and evaluating results, learning, and adjusting processes and activities to enhance effectiveness:*
- *Providing effective resource and expenditure management;*

- *Ensuring appropriate accountability and reporting mechanisms to Parliament and central agencies for the administration of all communication activities;*
- *Ensuring the inclusion of communication plans, and the identification of dedicated resources, in memoranda to Cabinet and in Treasury Board submissions;*
- *Co-ordinating activities with ministers' offices to advance the communication goals and priorities of the government;*
- *Providing communications support and advice to ministers and senior officials on (non-partisan) government matters, including the preparation of speeches, news releases, briefing notes, presentations, memoranda and correspondence;*
- *Collaborating with other Government of Canada institutions to promote common communication objectives;*
- *Providing advice and support in the establishment and management of collaborative arrangements and sponsorships.*
- *Integrating corporate communication planning with annual business planning and budgeting cycles;*
- *Ensuring coherence and consistency of communications across all channels—telephone, in-person, mail, publications, Web sites, and so forth;*
- *Integrating all communication activities, including Internet applications, marketing, advertising, public opinion research and media relations to promote consistent and well co-ordinated communications with the public;*
- *Advising on and assisting in the development of internal communication strategies and activities that recognize and support the role all employees have in communicating with the public;*
- *Supporting an open, co-operative and consultative culture throughout the workplace, which includes being open to the views and concerns of employees unions, representatives and associations regarding workplace issues;*
- *Advising on information management to ensure effective use of information technologies and electronic communications;*
- *Advising on and assisting in risk communication;*
- *Advising on and assisting in crisis and emergency communications.*

Values and ethics

- *Informing the public about policies, programs, services and initiatives in an accountable, non-partisan fashion consistent with the principles of Canadian parliamentary democracy and ministerial responsibility;*

- *Communicating in a manner that affirms Canadian values of freedom, openness, security, caring and respect;*
- *Ensuring that public trust and confidence in the impartiality and integrity of the Public Service of Canada are upheld;*
- *Honouring the value and reputation of the government and public institutions in all communication activities;*
- *Working collaboratively with institutions to serve the public interest;*
- *Providing useful, timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information to the public in both official languages;*
- *Respecting privacy rights, security needs and matters before the courts;*
- *Avoiding conflicts of interest and the appearance or public perception of endorsing, or providing a marketing subsidy or an unfair competitive advantage to, any person, organization or entity outside of government.*

Listening and evaluating

- *Researching and analyzing public issues and the public environment to help identify and assess the wants, needs and views of Canadians with respect to existing or proposed policies, programs, services and initiatives;*
- *Maintaining open communications with the public and developing proactive strategies for assessing and addressing public concerns;*
- *Learning about the views, priorities, needs and expectations of Canadians through various means, including enquiry analysis, citizen feedback, media coverage and opinion research;*
- *Advising on and assisting in public consultations and citizen engagement;*
- *Planning, conducting or contracting and analysing public opinion research;*
- *Providing, co-ordinating or contracting media monitoring services;*
- *Evaluating communication programs and activities against planned objectives and professional standards, and making adjustments or improvements as needed;*
- *Monitoring and evaluating the degree to which management practises comply with the requirements of this policy.*

Meeting diverse needs

- *Preparing, producing and disseminating information using all forms of media and graphic arts, including electronic publishing;*
- *Advocating on behalf of those who will or should receive information to ensure its clarity and utility for the end user;*

- *Communicating in English and French—complying with official language requirements in all communications;*
- *Communicating with the public and providing information services through the Internet and other electronic media while ensuring more traditional or alternative forms of communication are available to meet the needs of all Canadians;*
- *Recognizing the special needs of many Canadians, including literacy levels and perceptual or physical challenges, and designing and delivering communication tools to respond to those needs;*
- *Recognizing the diverse nature of Canadian society and ensuring that communications are fair, balanced and representative.*

Outreach

- *Applying marketing, citizen engagement and consultation techniques to foster citizen feedback or to enhance public access to, awareness and use of government policies, programs, services and initiatives;*
- *Planning, co-ordinating, implementing regional, national and international activities that integrate major objectives of the government, ministers and institutions;*
- *Planning, co-ordinating, implementing and evaluating advertising, publishing and public awareness programs and campaigns;*
- *Building and maintaining communication partnerships with various sectors of society to help meet the diverse information needs of Canadians and to achieve government objectives;*
- *Building and maintaining effective relations with journalists and other communicators;*
- *Planning, co-ordinating and promoting the government's participation in public events, including fairs and exhibitions.*

Although the preceding description makes a legitimate attempt to outline communications functions, it does not link them to the practice of public relations. In fact, these same functions constitute the broad range of initiatives undertaken by public relations practitioners on behalf of their public and private clients.

As well, the document does not provide any direction on the appropriate steps to contract communications consulting services. In fact the “public relations” discipline is not mentioned until page 14 of the document under the heading *16-13 Contracting for Advertising and Public Opinion Research Services, Section 16.13.5*:

- *All activities involved in the purchase, by or on behalf of the government, for the development and production of advertising campaigns and associated space or time in print or broadcast media, or in other mass media, such as outdoor and transit advertising.*
- *It also includes any collateral materials such as posters, counter displays, and printed material such as inserts that are a direct extension of an advertising campaign. Public Service Announcements are also considered advertising.*
- *Public relations, special events, direct marketing and promotion activities that are an extension or form part of an advertising campaign are included in the definition of advertising. (The underline is ours.)*
- *Paid announcements such as public notices regarding tenders, sales, public hearings, offers of employment, and business hours and addresses may be placed directly with the media by departments and agencies.*

The document's lack of clarity on the depth and scope of public relations services is limiting and inappropriate to the real public relations needs of government and the stakeholders it serves.

To assimilate public relations with special events, direct marketing and promotion activities and to limit its perceived value as merely an extension to, or component of, an advertising campaign—is a perspective that is aggressively challenged by The Canadian Public Relations Society.

Contemporary management theory views public relations as a management function with a broader, more sophisticated and integral role within public and private organizations.

In the broadest sense, public relations aims at managing an organization's relations with the stakeholders in its socio-economic environment. It establishes and maintains on-going relationships between an organization and its employees, clients, shareholders, local communities, governments at municipal, provincial or federal levels.

Public relations seeks to persuade with the sharing of fact-based information and dialogue. It is not paid for. The media are a public unto themselves as they influence all other stakeholders and provide them with third-party, arms-length views.

It is acknowledged that public relations can also be a marketing tool to inform consumers about products or services. Even in this role, marketing public relations is about establishing two-way communications with the stakeholders in order to arrive at an informed public opinion.

It is also, generally acknowledged that advertising is primarily used as a commercial communications tool to influence consumer behaviour. In its traditional form, print advertising and radio and television commercials are one-way communications, with no interaction with the targeted public and no screening by third party influencers like journalists. The print space or air time is paid for.

The inclusion of public relations services under the broader advertising umbrella—and by default making the selection of public relations firms the responsibility of advertising firms—creates inherent obstacles and conflicts to the procurement of appropriate public relations providers.

Most advertising agencies in Canada do not offer public relations services as part of their core communications offerings. Therefore, to fully respond to the government's RFPs, ad agencies must seek out public relations firms to partner with. In all such cases, the federal government is not itself selecting the public relations firm of its preference. Under this practice, the government is removing itself from the responsibility and accountability of the procurement process. It is as if the federal government hired architects through RFPs intended for engineers.

On a business level, the practice of ad agencies selecting public firms creates management difficulties due to the differences in the business models of both professions. Public relations firms and advertising agencies do not operate the same way. Traditionally, advertising agencies charge for their services on a commission basis. A large part of revenues received from clients is used to purchase media properties. They also incur substantial expenses in paying for creation—graphic design, video and film production. In contrast, public relations firms charge fees for their services, generally based on an hourly rate.

The failure of RFPs to not always distinguish between the two disciplines is not in the best interests of government and the communications suppliers they require. It is strongly recommended that separate RFPs be developed to reflect each particular communications discipline.

Issue 2. Absence of overall government authority and control over the procurement of public relations services.

The public relations industry believes the best interests of government, the industry and the taxpayers would be served by the designation of a single government management authority responsible for having comprehensive information and control over the actual procurement of public relations services. This model is currently operating in the province of Ontario with a central authority performing such a role to the satisfaction of the industry.

Presently, PWGSC has authority over the procurement of public relations services by the federal government but it is limited in its application. Although Treasury Board and PWGSC develop the rules, PWGSC is only involved in RFPs when other departments request its assistance. Government departments are not obligated to go through PWGSC. Nor is PWGSC mandated to monitor RFP activity in the various departments.

In addition, government agencies such as Canada Post or the Royal Canadian Mint are not bound by any PWGSC rules and PWGSC has no authority over their activities for the selection of public relations services.

It is recommended that PWGSC be granted a leadership role in the procurement of public relations services and be given the authority to:

- establish the rules of procurement;
- conduct RFPs for all government departments; and
- monitor and supervise all public relations RFPs by all government agencies.

It is believed that benefits of this approach will be derived through greater clarity, transparency, control and management oversight.

Issue 3. Lack of confidence in the fairness of the selection process

Given the lack of differentiation between public relations and other communications functions, and the absence of an independent authority with real oversight, it is understandable that the public relations industry views the current procurement process as being seriously flawed, if not, unfair.

Again it should be noted that the majority in the industry hold in high regard the procurement processes at the provincial level—most notably in Ontario and Quebec—where the selection process is viewed as being generally transparent and free of political favouritism.

Among the present requirements or seemingly tolerated behaviour at the federal level that are believed to be inappropriate and counterproductive are:

- The limiting requirement of ‘prior government work experience’ which prevents the eligibility of talented firms whose only deficiency may be their inability to have won a government contract under the present guidelines.
- The ‘existing security clearance’ requirement imposed by the federal departments and agencies which, by definition, excludes firms who in the past may have not been successful in winning contracts under the prevailing guidelines.
- The practice of circumventing the procurement process and extending tenders ‘by invitation only’ where there is an emergency or an urgent need to proceed with a project. For instance, the Royal Canadian Mint only invited three prior suppliers to bid on a \$700,000 communications project that was awarded in June 2004, thereby excluding all other public relations firms from competing in this exceptional contract. A firm that featured prominently in the Gomery hearings, Lafleur Communications, was hired by Canada Post in the 1990s and then dispensed public relations contracts around the country for postage stamp promotions, never tendering or inviting competition for those assignments.
- The circumventing of the procurement process as described by the Gomery Commission through the vetting of potential suppliers by the PMO, the granting of contracts without tenders, and the retention of commissions by an approved firm who sub-contracts to another communications firm.
- The perception that the ‘standing offer’ approach used by PWGSC and government supports favouritism. Many firms are frustrated that, after spending time and money for “standing offer” status, they never get any work.
- Practitioners are becoming concerned by the latest proposal put forward by the government’s new director general for small and medium businesses that would allow departments to use the services of smaller contractors after larger firms made a considerable investment in qualifying for standing offers. They call for the strict enforcement of the bidding system policy.

For all of the above, the federal government needs to put in place a transparent and fair process for the procurement of public relations services, to establish trust and counter industry perceptions of bureaucratic favouritism or political patronage.

It is strongly recommended that all contracts, including standing offers, of more than \$100,000 in fees should be awarded through specific public tenders.

No firm should receive more than \$100,000 in fees from any particular department or agency through the standing offer approach.

When the standing offer method is used there needs to be a mechanism for fair distribution of contracts.

As well, no consultant should be allowed to bill cumulative services on separate invoices over \$50,000 without tender.

Issue 4. Inefficient use of private sector time, energy and money

The government's current procurement process and practices are often perceived to be inconsistent, inefficient and ultimately, cost prohibitive to many public relations firms.

Among the challenges and concerns that should be addressed include:

- Lack of consistency in the form or substance of RFPs. Every time a new RFP comes up, firms' presentations and credentials have to be redone in order to fit in the particular RFP requirements for proposal presentations.
- Lack of consistency regarding Canadian ownership. Requirements vary over time, department to department and may require anywhere from no Canadian ownership to up 80% and 100% Canadian ownership.
- Unrealistic deadlines for submission of proposals. Firms are often asked to spend considerable time and resources to meet strict deadlines. Conversely, decisions on contracts can take a long time to be made or announced after proposals have been submitted. Other times announcements are never made and projects are cancelled with no indemnity to firms.
- Some requirements are sometime irrelevant or do not apply to the public relations discipline (e.g.: Do you have your own media placement department?)

V. SURVEY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS' OPINIONS

In November 2005 the CPRS task force initiated an online survey of senior executives in public relations firms across Canada. The purpose of the survey was to garner their perceptions of the federal government's approach to the procurement of public relations services and identify ways to improve the process and practices for the selection of firms.

The survey in English was sent to 47 senior public relations firm executives and received 11 responses, for a 23% response rate. The survey in French was sent to 14 senior public relations firm executives and received 4 responses, for a 28% response rate. The task force is satisfied that the response rate is reflective of the current opinions of the industry, considering that a significant proportion of firms, many of them operating outside of Ottawa or central Canada, expressed little or no interest, having lost faith in the present procurement process.

Although the methodology used for this instant online survey is not scientific it suggests a manifest common distrust of the RFP procedures, a lack of confidence in the selection process and criteria, and the government transparency on this matter. Respondents are also critical of the time, resources and financial investment required, and of the delay in receiving the government's decision.

A copy of the survey is attached. (Appendix 2) for the consideration of the government as it looks to the development of proper procurement policies and procedures.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Canadian Public Relations Society's task force on the procurement of public relations services by the federal government recommends that:

- The Government of Canada should engage into an in-depth review of its procurement practices concerning the procurement of public relations services;
- The objectives of such review should be to establish processes that are fair to suppliers of public relations services, based on merit and providing Canadian taxpayers quality services at competitive prices;
- Public relations contracts should be awarded separately from advertising contracts;
- There should be one central government procurement authority within PWGSC in charge of
 - supervising and coordinating all public relations consulting activities in all government departments and agencies;
 - developing uniformed regulations and RFPs;
 - awarding public relations contracts of more than \$100,000 by government departments; and
 - developing standing offers for work of less than \$100,000 and monitoring all public relations one-time contracts under \$25,000 awarded by all departments and agencies.
- The Public Relations Procurement Authority should institute an advisory committee of public relations practitioners, representing CPRS and IABC practitioners as well as the Canadian Council of Public Relations Firms and the Association des cabinets de relations publiques du Québec, in order to benefit from on-going feedback and advice on the procurement of public relations services.

A fair and transparent method for hiring public relations firms has existed under the Ontario and Quebec governments for almost a decade. Several of the government's current cabinet colleagues who served previously at the provincial level will be familiar with it as a model to consider for the federal government.

APPENDIX 1
ACRPQ RESOLUTION

APPENDIX 1 ACRPQ RESOLUTION

Alliance des cabinets de relations publiques du Québec

Resolution from the minutes of the board meeting of the ACRPQ held on
Friday, March 10

The following resolution was unanimously adopted:

"The *Alliance des cabinets de relations publiques du Québec* (ACRPQ) supports the Canadian Public Relations Society's efforts directed at the minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada for a full review of the current process used to attribute government contracts in the public relations sector."

Adopted in Montreal, March 10, 2006.

Signed by:

Fransoise La Haye

APPENDIX 2

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT SURVEY RESULTS

1. In the past five years has your firm considered participating in or participated in any Requests for Proposals (RFPs) issued by the Government of Canada, its Ministries, Agencies or Crown Corporations?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Yes		81.8%	9
No		18.2%	2
Total Respondents			11
(skipped this question)			0

2. How many RFPs issued by the Government of Canada, its Ministries, Agencies or Crown Corporations does your firm respond to in an average year?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1-3		100%	5
4-6		0%	0
7 or more		0%	0
Total Respondents			5
(skipped this question)			6

3. How many such contracts has your firm been awarded over the last 5 years?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
None		40%	2
1 - 4		60%	3
5 or more		0%	0
Total Respondents			5
(skipped this question)			6

4. Which top three factors influence your decision when considering responding to a federal government RFP?					
	1st	2nd	3rd	N/A	Response Average
Size of the contract	0% (0)	40% (2)	40% (2)	20% (1)	2.50
Estimated time investment to prepare response	33% (1)	67% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1.67
Project resource requirements	67% (2)	0% (0)	33% (1)	0% (0)	1.67
Official language requirement(s)	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (1)	0% (0)	3.00
Security clearance requirements	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (1)	0.00
Selection / evaluation process	50% (2)	25% (1)	25% (1)	0% (0)	1.75
Total Respondents					5
(skipped this question)					6

5. Is your firm more or less likely today to respond to a Government of Canada RFP than it was in 2000?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Much less likely		60%	3
Less likely		20%	1
About the same		20%	1
More likely		0%	0
Much more likely		0%	0
Total Respondents			5
(skipped this question)			6

6. Overall, when compared with other RFPs of similar size and scope do you find completing RFPs issued by the Government of Canada to be:			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Significantly easier		0%	0
Easier		0%	0
About the same		20%	1
More difficult		40%	2
Significantly more difficult		40%	2
Total Respondents			5
(skipped this question)			6

7. How satisfied are you with the existing Government of Canada RFP process compared with other RFP processes of similar size and scope?						
	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Response Total
RFP procedures	40% (2)	40% (2)	20% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	5
Time & resource requirements	25% (1)	75% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4
Turnaround time for completion	25% (1)	25% (1)	50% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4
Transparency in the process	40% (2)	60% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	5
Selection process & criteria	75% (3)	25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4
Submission requirements	50% (2)	25% (1)	25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4
Financial investment / expenditures	50% (2)	50% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4
Time to final decision	25% (1)	25% (1)	50% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4
Total Respondents						5
(skipped this question)						6

8. How would you like to see the Government of Canada's RFP process improved?		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Total Respondents	4
	(skipped this question)	7

9. Please provide any other comments on the RFP process for the benefit of the CPRS Task Force on Government Relations.		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Total Respondents	0
	(skipped this question)	11

10. Which top three factors influence your decision to not reply to RFPs from the Government of Canada?					
	1st	2nd	3rd	N/A	Response Average
Size of the contract	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.00
Estimated time commitment for response	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1.00
Lack of resources	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.00
Bilingual requirement	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (1)	0% (0)	3.00
Security clearance	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.00
Lack of confidence on the selection process	0% (0)	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2.00
Total Respondents					1
(skipped this question)					10

11. How would you like to see the Government of Canada RFP process improved?		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Total Respondents	1
	(skipped this question)	10

12. Please provide any other comments on the RFP process for the benefit of the CPRS Task Force on Government Relations.		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Total Respondents	0
	(skipped this question)	11

13. In which province(s) or territory(s) does your firm operate?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
British Columbia	<input type="text"/>	66.7%	4
Alberta	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	2
Saskatchewan	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	2
Manitoba	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	2
Ontario	<input type="text"/>	83.3%	5
Québec	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	2
New Brunswick	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
Nova Scotia	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
Prince Edward Island	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
Newfoundland and Labrador	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
Yukon Territory	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
Northwest Territories	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
Nunavut	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Outside Canada (specify)	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
Total Respondents			6
(skipped this question)			5

14. What area(s) of Public Relations do you practice in (please check all that apply)?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Community Relations	<input type="text"/>	50%	3
Crisis Communications	<input type="text"/>	100%	6
Employee Communications	<input type="text"/>	66.7%	4
Event management	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
Fund Raising	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Government Relations	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	2
Investor Relations	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	2
Marketing Communications	<input type="text"/>	66.7%	4
Measurement	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	2
Media Relations	<input type="text"/>	66.7%	4
Research	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	2
Total Respondents			6
(skipped this question)			5

15. How many Public Relations professionals work in your firm?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1-10	<input type="text"/>	50%	3
11-25	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
26-50	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
51-100	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
More than 100	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Total Respondents			6
(skipped this question)			5

16. What are the average annual Public Relations billings/revenues of your firm?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Less than \$500,000	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
\$500,000 - \$1 million	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	2
\$1 million - \$5 million	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	2
\$5 million - \$10 million	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
More than \$10 million	<input type="text"/>	16.7%	1
Total Respondents			6
(skipped this question)			5

French survey results

1. Au cours des cinq dernières années, votre firme a-t-elle envisagé répondre ou a-t-elle répondu à des appels d'offres du gouvernement du Canada, de ses ministères, agences et sociétés de la Couronne?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Oui	<input type="text"/>	75%	3
Non	<input type="text"/>	25%	1
Total Respondents			4
(skipped this question)			0

2. À combien d'appels d'offres du gouvernement du Canada, de ses ministères, agences et sociétés de la Couronne votre firme répond-t-elle en moyenne à chaque année?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Entre 1 et 3	<input type="text"/>	66.7%	2
Entre 4 et 6	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	1
7 ou plus	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Total Respondents			3
(skipped this question)			1

3. Combien de contrats de ce type votre firme a-t-elle décroché au cours des cinq dernières années?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Aucun	<input type="text"/>	66.7%	2
Entre 1 et 4	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	1
5 ou plus	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Total Respondents			3
(skipped this question)			1

4. Quels sont les trois principaux facteurs qui influencent votre décision lorsque vous envisagez répondre à un appel d'offres du gouvernement fédéral?					
	1er	2e	3e	N/A	Response Average
Envergure du mandat	33% (1)	33% (1)	33% (1)	0% (0)	2.00
Temps estimé à consacrer à la réponse	33% (1)	0% (0)	67% (2)	0% (0)	2.33
Exigences du mandat en termes de ressources	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1.00
Exigence(s) en termes de langues officielles	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.00
Exigences en termes de vérification de sécurité	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.00
Processus de sélection et d'évaluation	0% (0)	100% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2.00
Total Respondents					3
(skipped this question)					1

5. Votre firme est-elle aujourd'hui plus susceptible ou moins susceptible de répondre à un appel d'offres du gouvernement fédéral aujourd'hui qu'en 2000?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Beaucoup moins susceptible	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	1
Moins susceptible	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Environ autant	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	1
Plus susceptible	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	1
Beaucoup plus susceptible	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Total Respondents			3
(skipped this question)			1

6. De façon générale, en comparaison des autres appels d'offres de taille et de portée similaire, trouvez-vous que répondre aux appels d'offres du gouvernement du Canada soit :			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Beaucoup moins facile	<input type="text"/>	66.7%	2
Moins facile	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Sensiblement pareil	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	1
Plus facile	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Beaucoup plus facile	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Total Respondents			3
(skipped this question)			1

7. Quel est votre degré de satisfaction face au processus actuel d'appel d'offres du gouvernement fédéral, comparativement à d'autres processus d'appels d'offres de taille et de portée similaire?						
	Très insatisfait	Insatisfait	Neutre	Satisfait	Très satisfait	Response Total
Procédures d'appel d'offres	67% (2)	0% (0)	33% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3
Exigences en termes de temps et de ressources	33% (1)	0% (0)	67% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3
Délai nécessaire pour répondre	33% (1)	0% (0)	33% (1)	33% (1)	0% (0)	3
Transparence du processus	67% (2)	0% (0)	33% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3
Processus et critères de sélection	67% (2)	0% (0)	33% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3
Exigences de soumission	67% (2)	0% (0)	33% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3
Investissement monétaire / dépenses encourues	33% (1)	0% (0)	67% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3
Temps à rendre la décision finale	67% (2)	33% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3
Total Respondents						3
(skipped this question)						1

8. Quelles améliorations aimeriez-vous voir apporter au processus d'appel d'offres du gouvernement du Canada?		
Total Respondents		2
(skipped this question)		2

9. Veuillez faire part de vos commentaires additionnels sur le processus d'appel d'offres au Groupe de travail sur les relations gouvernementales de la SCRP.		
Total Respondents		2
(skipped this question)		2

10. Quels sont les trois principaux facteurs qui influencent votre décision de ne pas répondre aux appels d'offres du gouvernement du Canada?					
	1er	2e	3e	N/A	Response Average
Taille du contrat	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.00
Temps estimé à consacrer à la réponse	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.00
Manque de ressources	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.00
Exigences de bilinguisme	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.00
Vérification de sécurité	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.00
Manque de confiance dans le processus de sélection	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0.00
Total Respondents					0
(skipped this question)					4

11. Quelles améliorations aimeriez-vous voir apporter au processus d'appel d'offres du gouvernement du Canada?		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Total Respondents	0
	(skipped this question)	4

12. Veuillez faire part de vos commentaires additionnels sur le processus d'appel d'offres au Groupe de travail sur les relations gouvernementales de la SCRP.		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Total Respondents	0
	(skipped this question)	4

13. Dans quelle(s) province(s) ou territoire(s) votre firme opère-t-elle?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Colombie-Britannique	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	1
Alberta	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	1
Saskatchewan	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Manitoba	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Ontario	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	1
Québec	<input type="text"/>	100%	3
Nouveau-Brunswick	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Nouvelle-Écosse	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	1
Île-du-Prince-Édouard	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Terre-Neuve et Labrador	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Territoire du Yukon	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Territoires du Nord-Ouest	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
Nunavut	<input type="text"/>	0%	0
À l'étranger (préciser)	<input type="text"/>	33.3%	1
Total Respondents			3
(skipped this question)			1

14. Dans quel(s) domaine(s) des relations publiques exercez-vous? (cochez toutes les mentions pertinentes)			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Relations avec la communauté	<input type="checkbox"/>	100%	3
Communication de crise	<input type="checkbox"/>	100%	3
Communication interne	<input type="checkbox"/>	100%	3
Gestion d'événement	<input type="checkbox"/>	100%	3
Campagnes de financement	<input type="checkbox"/>	33.3%	1
Relations avec les investisseurs	<input type="checkbox"/>	33.3%	1
Communications de marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>	66.7%	2
Relations avec les médias	<input type="checkbox"/>	100%	3
Recherche	<input type="checkbox"/>	66.7%	2
Autres (veuillez préciser)	<input type="checkbox"/>	33.3%	1
Total Respondents			3
(skipped this question)			1

15. Combien de professionnels des relations publiques travaillent pour votre firme?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Entre 1 et 10	<input type="checkbox"/>	33.3%	1
Entre 11 et 25	<input type="checkbox"/>	33.3%	1
Entre 26 et 50	<input type="checkbox"/>	0%	0
Entre 51 et 100	<input type="checkbox"/>	0%	0
Plus de 100	<input type="checkbox"/>	33.3%	1
Total Respondents			3
(skipped this question)			1

16. Quel est le chiffre d'affaires / le total des recettes annuel de relations publiques de votre firme?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Moins de 500 000 \$		0%	0
Entre 500 000 \$ et 1 million \$		33.3%	1
Entre 1 million \$ et 5 millions \$		33.3%	1
Entre 5 millions \$ et 10 millions \$		0%	0
Plus de 10 millions \$		33.3%	1
Total Respondents			3
(skipped this question)			1

Survey respondents' comments

How would you like to see the Government of Canada's RFP process improved?

Quelles améliorations aimeriez-vous voir apporter au processus d'appel d'offres du gouvernement du Canada?

¶

Separate PR from other marketing services. Establish a neutral and knowledgeable agency or board to select firms. Recognize regional skills of smaller firms. ¶

Where to start.... ¶

Eliminate sucker contracts where they hire an inside agency and then use proposals to cherry-pick ideas. Western agencies rarely win any substantial accounts. ¶

Simplify requirements, references, insurance indemnities; make expected outcomes more relevant and precise. ¶

Que les petites agences comme la nôtre soient dûment considérées vs les plus grandes agences. ¶

Ne pas inclure les relations publiques dans des appels d'offres s'adressant aux agences de publicité; avoir des appels d'offres distincts pour les relations publiques et adaptés à cette discipline et non conçus pour la publicité. Enlever toute ingérence et tout favoritisme politiques du processus. Soumettre les ministères, les sociétés de la couronne et les agences aux mêmes règles. Avoir un organisme responsable de monitorer et de gérer les appels d'offres de tous ¶

More transparency, accountability in the public service and, here's a thought, more opportunity for firms outside Ottawa and Montreal to compete. ¶

Nous avons le sentiment qu'il n'y a aucun effort de la part du gouvernement fédéral pour favoriser une tranche de leurs mandats aux petites agences et que seules les «amies» sont considérées. ¶

Veillez faire part de vos commentaires additionnels sur le processus d'appel d'offres au Groupe de travail sur les relations gouvernementales de la SCRP. ¶

Forcer tous les ministères, les sociétés de la couronne et les agences à aller en appel d'offres public pour tout contrat de plus de \$100,000 et sur invitation pour tout appel d'offres entre \$50,000 et \$100,000. Limiter la portée du prix dans les critères d'évaluation et faire porter le choix surtout sur la qualité de l'offre. Exiger que les firmes soumettant une offre aient été en affaires depuis un certain temps et que ses membres fassent partie de sociétés professionnelles ayant un code d'éthique. S'assurer que les jurys sont composés de personnes compétentes et non biaisées ¶