



## Human Resource Management in Canadian Public Sectors

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## **Introduction**

In every organizations, an effective and efficient management of human resources is a necessary condition for achieving results. Public sector organizations do not escape this logic. They must count on a skilled workforce, whose skills and abilities will achieve organizational goals. In this context, human resource management (HRM) practices are the mechanism by which organizations can ensure the development and engagement of their employees and, therefore, contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the public sector in general (OECD, 2011). To assess the extent of this relationship, this study addresses four main dimensions of HRM: the legal regime, the organization of HRM, the practices related to workforce management and the labor relations.

Three specific objectives were pursued by this study on HRM within Canadian public sectors. The first objective is to contribute to a better understanding of HRM practices within the Canadian governments. The second is to strengthen cooperation and exchanges between Canadian governments (federal, provincial and territorial). Finally, the third objective is to report on the differences and similarities between Canadian governments in public governance.

This study was conducted in 2011-2012 using a questionnaire of 64 questions, which was sent to representatives of Canadian governments (federal, provincial and territorial) that participate annually to the Public Service Commissioners' Conference. The responses received were reviewed and classified in a database accessible on the bilingual website "Canadian Governments Compared". This report presents the main results gathered after analysis of the questionnaire.

As part of this survey on HRM in Canadian public sectors, representatives of eight provinces and two territories have answered then entire questionnaire, which represent an overall response rate slightly above 70% (10/14). The following table provides a detailed picture of the participation of Canadian governments.

**Table 1: Canadian governments participation**

Participation level	Government
Answered all questions	NL, NS, NB, QC, ON, MB, SK, AB, NWT, NU
Answered a section of the questionnaire	FED (Q. 1 to Q. 18), PEI (Q. 1 to Q. 28)
No questionnaire replies were received	BC, YK

The questions included in the survey were largely inspired from a questionnaire used by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with its member countries. Indeed, in 2010 the OECD conducted a survey on HRM within the central governments of the Member States of the organization. Of the 34 countries that make up the OECD, including Canada, 33 participated. Part of the results from this survey are available in the publication Government at a Glance 2011 (OECD, 2011). The key advantage to this approach is to be able to compare some of the results of this study with those of OECD countries.

## ▪ Legal Regime

In general, the legislative framework relating to HRM covers the following aspects. Note that the frequency by which each item was mentioned is identified within the brackets.

- Public servant definition (11/12);
- Casual employee definition (8/12);
- Central HRM Unit role (7/12);
- Recruiting and selection (9/12);
- Appointment and nomination (12/12);
- Promotion (9/12);
- Remuneration (11/12);
- Lay-off/replacement of staff (10/12);
- Rights and responsibilities of public servants (9/12);
- Political activities (11/12);
- Disciplinary measures (8/12);
- Relations with unions/labor-union regime (9/12).

It is worth noting that the elements related to individual and collective performance are rarely included in the main legislative framework. The same applies for aspects related to ethics for officials, retirement (age and pension), mobility and training.

Regarding the legal status of employees, and in particular the employment scheme that exists in the Canadian public sectors, two groups can be distinguished: those who have a specific employment scheme and those with a mixed employment scheme.

**Table 2: Employment schemes in canadian public sectors**

Employment scheme	Government
Specfic employment scheme	NL, PEI, NS, SK, NU
Career scheme	None
Mixed scheme	NB, QC, ON, MB, AB, NWT

In addition, all Canadian governments may grant fixed-term contract to some of their employees. The maximum duration of fixed-term contracts varies considerably from one place to another. Newfoundland and Labrador has the shortest maximum duration with one year, while the longest is in New Brunswick where employees can get a fixed-term contract for a term of up to three years. Interestingly, seven governments mentioned that no maximum duration was provided by the legislative framework regarding fixed-term contracts (Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta, Nunavut, Northwest Territories and federal government). This lack of limit is also observable in the number of possible renewals for a specific position. In fact, only three governments have some form of restrictions. For example, in New Brunswick, an employment contract can not be renewed at the end of the maximum period of three years. Other situations also constitute a form of limit to the number of renewals for a fixed term contract. For instance, a person employed by the federal government as a fixed-term employee, in the same department (or agency) for a cumulative period of three years, without a service interruption for more than 60 days, must be given a permanent contract for employment at the same level.

Several factors distinguish regular and fixed-term employees. Generally, the latter are not affected by processes related to performance management, as it is the case for regular employees. In some Canadian governments, such as New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, employees hired under a fixed-term contract are not subject to a probationary period.

In the same vein, fixed-term employees in most provinces and territories do not have the same opportunities in terms of wages and compensation, pension rights and career advancement when compared to regular employees. The most commonly observed situation concerns salaries and wages. In this particular case, fixed-term employees are compensated for some of the benefits (such as group insurance) which they would be entitled if they were considered regular employees.

However, what differentiates some governments is how the law is applied when employees hired under a fixed term contract retire. Indeed, in some cases, as in Newfoundland and Labrador or Prince Edward Island, these employees can not participate to the same pension plan as regular employees. In other cases, pension plan are not so restricted. For example, in Ontario and Manitoba, fixed term employees may participate to the same pension plan as regular employees on a voluntary basis.

## ■ The Organization of HRM

With regard to the organization of the HRM function, three main aspects have been taken into consideration, namely: the central organization responsible for HRM, the division of roles and responsibilities between public sector actors, and strategic human resources planning.

### ► Central HRM Unit

From the outset, it is important to note that all governments in Canada have a central unit that has the primary responsibility of HRM for the entire public service. This situation corresponds to what exists in most OECD countries: 31 of the 33 member countries of the OECD have such a central unit. Only Germany and Slovakia have not put in place a unit responsible for HRM for the entire public service.

The nature of the responsibilities assumed by central HRM units is the main element that differentiates Canadian governments. Indeed, although each unit is responsible for specific HRM tasks in their respective public sector, some provinces, such as Alberta and Prince Edward Island, assumes fewer responsibilities (6) than other governments such as Ontario (11) and Newfoundland and Labrador (10). Among them, the following are supported by virtually all central HRM units across Canada (the numbers in brackets represent the frequency with which each item was mentioned by respondents compared to the total number of responses received):

- Defining salary levels and benefits across the public service (10/11);
- The provision of training (10/11);
- Providing leadership and guidance on HRM in general (11/11);
- Designing an HR policy/strategy (11/11);
- The coordination and supervision in the implementation of the HR policy/strategy (10/11);
- Providing advice on the legal framework (10/11);
- Designing the pay system (9/11);
- Standardizing recruitment (9/11).

By comparison, not all central units within OECD countries formally assume specific HRM responsibilities: of the 31 countries that share this type of structure, 13<sup>1</sup> have a central organization that plays a coordinating role among ministries. In contrast, the central organization of 18 countries takes officially at least one specific responsibility in the field of HRM, as it is the case for Canadian governments.

#### ► Division of Roles and Responsibilities

The scope of responsibilities assumed by the central units has some impact on the division of roles with departments and agencies in HRM. In Canada, this division is often very similar from one government to another. For example, when it comes the time to determine the number and type of positions, as well as the budget for salaries and other expenses of employees, almost all governments entrust this responsibility directly to departments and agencies, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Posts determination and budget allocations**

Primarily determined by:	Central HRM unit (which sets the rules and is closely involved in applying them)	Central HRM unit but with some latitude for ministries/departments/agencies in applying the general principles	Ministries/departments/agencies, within established legal and budgetary limits	Unit/team level
Number of posts within organizations	NL, ON		PEI, NS, NB, QC, MB, SK, AB, NWT, NU	
Type(s) of posts within organizations		NL	PEI, NS, NB, QC, ON, MB, SK, AB, NWT, NU	
Allocation of budgetary envelope between payroll and other expenses		NB, ON	NL, PEI, NS, QC, MB, SK, AB, NWT, NU	

Entrusting the departments and agencies with management aspects related to posts and budget allocation reflects a large delegation of responsibility in the Canadian public sectors. This situation is very similar to what prevails in OECD countries, at least in regard to the number and type of positions within organizations. Indeed, 23 OECD countries entrust these responsibilities in whole or in part<sup>2</sup> to their departments and agencies. The delegation of responsibilities does not prevail as much in the determination of the budget envelope for salaries and other expenses. In fact, central HRM unit entirely fulfill this role in a significant number of countries (11). In addition, seven countries mentioned that this role is normally filled by the central HRM unit, while allowing departments and agencies some flexibility in the application of general principles, as it is the case in

<sup>1</sup> Australia, Austria, Belgium, Chile, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Iceland, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that in the OECD study conducted in 2010, a country had the possibility to identify more than one level of delegation for each aspect of HRM, unlike the study on Canadian public sectors where respondents could only identify one level of delegation. Therefore, comparisons with OECD countries should be interpreted with caution.

New Brunswick and Ontario. Finally, as in seven Canadian provinces and two territories, 19 countries entrust this role directly to departments and agencies.

In regards with several key aspects of HRM, such as the management of post classification system as well as the recruitment and selection, the division of roles in Canada is very homogeneous from one government to another. Thus, with the exception of the post classification system, for which management is primarily entrusted to the central HRM unit, this division shows a strong delegation of responsibilities to departments and agencies, as shown in the next table.

**Table 4: Management**

Primarily determined by:	Central HRM body (which sets the rules and is closely involved in applying them)	Central HRM body but with some latitude for ministries/departments/ agencies in applying the general principles	Ministries/ departments/ agencies, within established legal and budgetary limits	Unit/team level
Post classification system – grades	PEI, NS, NB, QC, ON, MB, SK, NWT, NU	NL	AB	
Recruitment of permanent employees (choice of individuals)	MB, NU	NL, PEI, ON, NWT	NS, NB, QC, SK, AB	
Recruitment of fixed-term employees (choice of individuals)	MB, NU	NWT	NL, NS, NB, QC, ON, SK, AB	
Appointment and nomination of permanent employees (to a specific post)	MB, NU	NWT	NL, NS, NB, QC, ON, SK, AB	
Appointment and nomination of fixed-term employees (to a specific post)	MB, NU	NWT	NL, NS, NB, QC, ON, SK, AB	
Individual duration of employment contract in the civil service			NL, NS, QC, ON, MB, SK, AB, NWT, NU	
Individual duration of contract for posts (mandates)	NU		NL, NS, QC, ON, MB, SK, AB, NWT	
Individual career management			NL, NS, ON, MB	NB, QC, AB, NU
Individual dismissal following :				
- lack of performance				
- organisational restructuring	NL, NU	NWT	NS, NB, QC, ON, MB, SK, AB	
- misconduct				
- a lack of work				

Despite a high degree of homogeneity in regard to several key aspects of HRM, some specificities were observed. For example, in matters related to recruitment and selection, the division of roles may vary within governments: it depends on the employment status (regular employees and those with fixed-term contract). The central HRM unit actually plays a more dominant role in the recruitment and selection of regular employees than with the fixed term contract staff in two provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario). In addition, it is worth noting that in terms of individual career management, Canadian governments tend to delegate this responsibility to departments and agencies, or even to the unit/team level. This situation underlines a high degree of delegation. Finally, when considering all the aspects related to management, the governments of Manitoba and Nunavut show the least delegation compared to other provinces and territories. Thus, for these two governments, the central HRM unit plays a key role on several levels, including matters related to the system of job classification, recruitment, selection, hiring and appointment of staff (for regular and fixed-term employees).

The comparison of these results with those from other countries is more difficult, since the only available data for OECD countries relates to the recruitment and selection of individuals in general regardless of employment status (regular or fixed-term employees). However, the vast majority of OECD countries (26) assign this responsibility to departments and agencies, as is usually the case in Canadian jurisdictions.

If the division of roles is relatively homogeneous in Canada for the responsibilities that have been discussed so far, the situation differs in terms of remuneration and other working conditions of employees. As shown in the following table, the situation on these matters varies from one government to another it is thus more difficult to discern a general trend.

**Table 5: Remuneration and working conditions**

Primarily determined by:	Central HRM body (which sets the rules and is closely involved in applying them)	Central HRM body but with some latitude for ministries/department/s/ agencies in applying the general principles	Ministries/ departments/ agencies, within established legal and budgetary limits	Unit/team level
Flexibility of working conditions (number of hours, etc.)	NB, NWT	NL, QC	NS, MB, AB, NU	ON, SK
Adjustments to working conditions (part time, etc.)	QC	NB	NL, NS, MB, SK, AB, NWT, NU	ON
General management of pay systems (salary levels, progressions)	NL, PEI, NS, NB, ON, MB, NWT, NU	QC, SK, AB		
Performance appraisal systems	ON, MB, NWT, NU	NB, QC, SK, AB	NS	
Management of the variable portion of pay (ex: performance related pay)	NL, AB, NU	PEI, QC, ON, SK	NS, NB, MB, NWT	
Code of conduct	NL, NB, SK, AB, NWT, NU	QC, MB	NS, ON	

In fact, except for the overall management of pay systems, and to a lesser extent of performance appraisal systems, the lack of overall trend in terms of pay and other working conditions is clear. That being said, it is still possible to identify some specific trends. For example, New Brunswick and Quebec are interesting cases, since the division of roles shows a strong involvement of the central organization for all HR responsibilities. In contrast, Saskatchewan and Ontario have a relatively homogeneous configuration in which responsibilities are often delegated to departments and agencies, or even to the unit or team level.

The situation in Canada regarding remuneration and working conditions is similar to the general trend observed in the OECD countries. For instance, concerning the flexibility of working conditions, the division of roles in the OECD countries is most often in favor of departments and agencies (19 countries). Furthermore, in a significant number of OECD countries, as it is also the case in Canada, the central HRM unit fixes the rules while being closely involved in their implementation (12 countries) or assumes this responsibility in collaboration with all the departments and agencies (11 countries). In respect to the overall management of pay systems, the situation in the Member States of the OECD is also similar to Canada: in 20 OECD countries, this responsibility is fully assumed by the central organization HRM, as is the case for 6 provinces and 2 territories. However, what differentiates the Canadian situation to that of OECD countries is the role of departments and agencies: no province or territory of Canada entirely delegates the overall management of pay systems to its departments and agencies, as is the case in nine OECD countries.

However, there is also a significant contrast between the Canadian situation and that of other OECD countries. This contrast concerns performance appraisal systems and management of the variable portion of remuneration. In fact, for these two aspects of HRM, the general trend in the OECD countries is to give wide latitude to departments and agencies. In 16 OECD countries, it is the departments and agencies that are responsible for performance appraisal systems, whereas for 15 countries, this responsibility is entrusted to the unit or team level. In regard to the management of the variable portion of pay, departments and agencies fully assume this responsibility in 21 OECD countries.

### ► Strategic Human Resource Management

In terms of strategic planning in Canada, all governments have put in place a long-term planning to ensure adequate and sufficient workforce. Typically, this planning takes into account the next two to three years, as is the case in Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Nunavut. In some cases, such as New Brunswick and Manitoba, the strategic planning process is done four to five years ahead, while the Northwest Territories stand out with a horizon of ten years or more. However, there is no clear trend that indicates whether this planning concerns the whole government or if it is done at the discretion of the departments and agencies. In fact, Canadian provinces and territories form two distinct groups in this regard: for some, planning is based on a systematic process for the entire government (Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Northwest Territories) while for others (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba and Nunavut), it is left to the discretion of the departments and agencies.

#### ■ **Human Resource Management Practices**

Concerning HRM management practices in public sectors, several aspects have been taken into consideration, including the recruitment and selection of individuals, the performance assessment, the training and mobility as well as the termination of employment.

## ► Recruitment and Selection

The process by which a person can become a regular employee in Canadian public sectors is not the same from a jurisdiction to another. While only two provinces (New Brunswick and Quebec) proceed only through a competitive examination that provides for entry into a specific group of the public service or allow individuals to be placed on an eligibility list, three provinces and one territory (Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario and the Northwest Territories) require that applications be submitted directly to a particular post. Finally, there is a third group of provinces and territories, more specifically the western provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta) and Nunavut, that proceeds by competition or by direct applications on a particular post, depending on the position to be filled.

That being said, management of competitive examinations also varies in Canadian public sectors. For instance, within the six provinces and territories that systematically or occasionally use a competitive examination process, three of them (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nunavut) entrust the central HRM unit with the responsibility of managing it while two others (New Brunswick and Alberta) let departments and organizations manage their own examination process.

## ► Performance Assessment

The overall picture in Canada concerning the assessment of employees' performance is relatively homogeneous from one government to another. With few exceptions (Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba and Nunavut), the provinces and territories formally assess, on an individual basis, the performance of their regular employees. In addition, the types of assessment and the frequency with which they are used are substantially the same, as shown in the following table.

**Table 6: Types and frequency of performance assessment**

Types of assessment	Frequency			
	Every six months	Every year	Every two years	Other
Meeting with immediate superior	SK, AB	NS, NB, QC, ON, NWT		
Written feedback from superior	SK	NS, NB, QC, ON, AB, NWT		
360° feedback				NB, ON, AB (optional in each cases)

Interestingly, regular employees in Saskatchewan are evaluated more frequently than other provinces and territories. In addition, three provinces (New-Brunswick, Ontario and Alberta) use the 360° evaluation. It is worth noting that this type of assessment remains optional in those three provinces.

Concerning assessment of employees, collective performance is rarely taken into account. New Brunswick and Alberta are the only provinces that take this aspect into consideration when evaluating their regular employees. In general, performance assessments allow employees, or at least some of them, to receive a pay based on their performance. This is, at least, the case in all

governments that formally evaluate their regular employees, except in Alberta where employees do not receive any kind of performance pay.

#### ► Training and Mobility

Training and mobility enable public sector employees to acquire new skills. Thus, the vast majority of governments in Canada focus on these two aspects. Indeed, all governments (with the exception of the Northwest Territories) provide training to employees who are entering the public service. However, as shown in Table 7, the scope of these courses is not the same throughout the country.

**Table 7: Initial training of public servants**

Possible scenarios	Government
All public servants receive the same initial training	NL, QC, ON, MB, AB
Training is differentiated by hierarchical levels	SK, ON
Training is differentiated by business lines	NS, NB, ON, MB, NU
Only some public servants receive training	
Public servants do not receive a specific training	NWT

If almost all of the provinces and territories provide such importance to the training of their employees, it is not always the case for mobility. In terms of external mobility, few governments have implemented initiatives to promote it. In half of the cases (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan), external mobility is accepted, but it is not promoted in any way. Most initiatives that have been put in place by Canadian governments to encourage external mobility consist mainly in allowing public servants working outside the public service to retain the right to return to their post (or equivalent) in the public administration, as it is the case in Ontario, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

With regard to the promotion of internal mobility, Canadian provinces and territories form two distinct groups: those, on one hand, which have put in place a plan to increase it (New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Nunavut), and those, on the other hand, who simply have no plan (Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario and the Northwest Territories). That said, although not all of the provinces and territories have established a plan to promote internal mobility, most of them have implemented initiatives to promote it. For several governments (Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and Nunavut), promotion of internal mobility is made by increasing publicity of available positions. For their part, some provinces have either created one or more pool of available staff to publicize the names of officials interested in a change of assignment (Quebec, Ontario and Saskatchewan), or informed their officials of the benefits of internal mobility (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta). Finally, some specific initiatives have also been implemented, particularly in the context of talent management programs (New Brunswick) or temporary assignments (Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nunavut).

#### ► Termination of Employment

Termination of employment in Canadian public sectors is one of the most regulated aspects of HRM. Several factors, including the main legislative framework and collective agreements, affect the way

the government may terminate his employment relationship with a regular employee who is not in a situation of misbehaviour/illegal conduct or poor performance. As shown in Table 8, two main scenarios exist in Canada.

The first one concerns the civil service whose employment scheme is mixed (New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories). In this situation, the government must first offer reallocation possibilities to the employee. The second scenario is to pay compensation to the employee. This is mainly the case in civil services that have a specific employment scheme (Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and Nunavut), but also some with a mixed scheme (Ontario and Alberta).

**Table 8: Termination of employment for regular employees**

Possible scenarios	Government
The government is required to propose reallocation possibilities to staff beforehand	NB, QC, MB, NWT
Employees gets a leave allowance that is	Regulated by the Main Legislative Framework
	Prescribed by the collective labor agreement
	Negotiated with unions
	Negotiated with the employee

## ▪ Labor Relations

Two aspects are covered in this section on labor relations: the negotiation of working conditions and modes of dispute resolution.

### ► Working Conditions Negotiation

Regarding the negotiation of working conditions, the situation in Canadian public sectors is quite similar, for both basic pay and other working conditions<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, as the following table shows, in most provinces and territories there is only one negotiation, at the central level, for the entire public service.

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<sup>3</sup> Basic pay refers to all the aspects that incur a direct cost. It includes salaries (ex: hourly rate pay scale) and benefits (ex: pension plans). For their part, other working conditions do not incur direct cost (ex: number of working hours).

**Table 9: Working conditions negotiation practices**

Negotiated element	Practice	Government
Basic pay	Only one negotiation for the entire public service	NS, QC, SK, AB, NWT, NU
	Negotiations at central level by ministries, business lines or job classification	NB, MB
	One negotiation for each administrative unit	NL, ON
Other working conditions	Only one negotiation for the entire public service	NS, SK, AB, NWT, NU
	Negotiations at central level by ministries, business lines or job classification	NB, QC, MB
	One negotiation for each administrative unit	NL, ON

The only exceptions is New Brunswick and Manitoba, where negotiations take into account ministries, business lines or job classification, as well as Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario, where negotiations are made for each administrative unit. Quebec is also a particular case: it is the only jurisdiction where basic pay and other working conditions are not negotiated in the same way.

Another interesting point concerning working conditions is that in few provinces and territories, basic pay is adjusted according to the evolution of certain economic indicators. Only Quebec, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories have put in place such practices. In fact, these three governments adjust basic pay of their employees based on inflation. It is also worth noting that in Quebec, the gross domestic product is also taken into account.

#### ► Modes of Dispute Resolution

If there is little difference between the provinces and territories in the negotiation of working conditions, it is the same in terms of modes of disputes resolution used in this context of negotiation. Indeed, in the vast majority of provinces and territories, all employees, or most of them, have the right to go on strike and use mediation or arbitration processes.

**Table 10: Modes of dispute resolution**

Possible scenarios	Right to go on strike	Right to go on mediation	Right to go on arbitration
All employees	NL	NL, NS, NB, SK, NWT	Aucun
Most employees	NB, QC, ON, MB, SK, NWT, NU	QC, ON, MB, NU	NS, QC, MB, AB, NWT, NU
A minority of employees	Aucun	AB	ON, SK
No employee	AB	Aucun	NB, NL

The right to arbitration is the method of settling disputes which seems the least used in the context of negotiation, while the right to go on strike or to go on mediation are much more prevalent. Aside from Alberta, all Canadian governments belong to one or the other of the following two groups:

- governments where the right to go on strike as well as the right to mediation and arbitration are granted to all regular employees or a majority of them (Nova Scotia, Quebec, Manitoba, Northwest Territories and Nunavut);
- governments where the right to arbitration is uncommon or non-existent, but where the right to go on strike and the right to mediation apply to all regular employees or a majority of them (Newfoundland-and-Labrador, New Brunswick, Ontario and Saskatchewan).

Alberta is the only province in which it is not possible for all employees to go on strike. It is also the only government where the majority of employees are not entitled to mediation. In return, the very large majority of regular employees of the Alberta Public Service have the right to arbitration.

Regarding the possibility to declare a lockout, the Canadian situation is certainly not homogeneous: the employer may declare a lockout in six provinces and territories (Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories), but this strategy cannot be used in four governments (Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Alberta and Nunavut).

In addition, when a dispute arises between employer and employees in the public service, it may be referred to a court. In all Canadian jurisdictions except Alberta and Nunavut, an administrative court exists to hear and resolve such disputes.

**Table 11: Existence of an administrative court that addresses employer-employees disputes**

Possible scenarios	Government
Administrative court that addresses only disputes that concerns the public service	NS, QC, ON, MB
Administrative court that addresses disputes that concerns the public service and those that arise in private sector	NL, NB, SK, NWT
No administrative court hear employer-employees disputes	AB, NU

The main distinction between Canadian governments bears on the nature of the disputes heard by the administrative court. While for some governments (Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Northwest Territories), the court also hears disputes that arise in the private sector, in others (Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba), it deals only with disputes affecting the public sector. In the latter case, it is worth noting that the decisions are usually final and without appeal (Nova Scotia, Quebec and Manitoba).

## Conclusion

Depending on the specific aspects of HRM, the comparison of Canadian governments shows some similarities between them, but also significant differences. The similarities are obvious when it comes to specific aspects of HRM such as the organization of the HRM function and labor relations. In the first case, the situation is quite homogeneous from one government to another. The

provinces and territories have, for example, a central HRM unit responsible for the entire public service. In addition, the division of roles and responsibilities in relation to HRM, between the central unit and departments and agencies is generally quite similar across the country.

Concerning labor relations, the portrait of HRM in Canadian public sectors is also very consistent from one government to another. Indeed, most governments negotiate only once at central level, with all their employees, for both base pay and other working conditions. The situation is also similar from one government to another in terms of mode of disputes resolution.

Furthermore, some differences were noted in the course of this study. For example, in regard to the legal regime, even if the areas covered by the different legislative frameworks are relatively similar, the rules governing the legal status of employees in Canadian public sectors are different for most governments, including the maximum duration of fixed-term contracts.

Practices relating to the management of the workforce are another aspect of HRM on which Canadian governments differ from each other. In fact, most aspects of the recruitment and selection of individuals, training, mobility and the end of employment relationship vary considerably from one jurisdiction to another. This leaves few areas where practices related to the management of the workforce in Canada are relatively similar. Aside from the fact that virtually all governments formally evaluate their employees and few are promoting mobility among these, there are few similarities across the country.

This first report therefore reveals that the HRM in the Canadian public sectors can be very different depending on the dimensions that are taken into consideration. This finding raises questions about the factors that explain the similarities and differences that have been identified across the country. In this context, it is interesting to ask to what extent intergovernmental collaboration in Canada may also play a role, particularly for panCanadian dissemination of practices. The next steps in this research project will thus aim to offer possible explanations of differences and similarities observed so far.

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## Abbreviations of the names of provinces, territories and the government of Canada

AB	Alberta	NWT	Northwest Territories
BC	British Columbia	ON	Ontario
FED	Government of Canada	PEI	Prince Edward Island
MB	Manitoba	QC	Quebec
NB	New Brunswick	SK	Saskatchewan
NL	Newfoundland and Labrador	YK	Yukon
NS	Nova Scotia		
NU	Nunavut		