



LEVERAGING DIVERSITY, EQUALITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) IN MEETING MODERN INTELLIGENCE CHALLENGES

Date: November 22, 2022

Disclaimer: This briefing note contains the encapsulation of views presented by the speaker and does not exclusively represent the views of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies.

KEY EVENTS

On November 22, 2022, Ms. Michelle Tessier, Deputy Director of Operations, Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), presented on *Leveraging Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Meeting Modern Intelligence Challenges*. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period with questions from the audience and CASIS Vancouver executives. The key points discussed were the ways in which DEI strategy helps the government of Canada deliver programs and services to all Canadians and examples of steps taken to ensure the implementation of such strategy.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

Ms. Tessier discussed the importance of the implementation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategy for organizations in the modern security landscape. She highlighted the ways in which CSIS has committed to DEI, including increased investment in public outreach and engagement. She closed by outlining the ways in which effective DEI strategy can foster a positive work environment, encourage innovation, and increase popular trust.

Question & Answer Period

In the question-and-answer period, Ms. Tessier outlined the measures CSIS is taking to avoid performative action while implementing the DEI strategy. These measures include empowering personnel to raise concerns, ensuring the presence of proper accountability, and maintaining assessment processes.

BACKGROUND

Presentation

Ms. Tessier presented on how CSIS is implementing DEI in order to build a workforce representative of Canada's diverse population. Studies have shown that the DEI strategy encourages innovation, diverse approaches, and engagement outside of the organization, while reinforcing trust and contributing to a psychologically safe workplace for all employees within the organization. DEI also addresses systemic barriers, which can prevent some employees from excelling. In August 2022, the Government of Canada launched the first federal 2SLGBTQI+ action plan within CSIS, The Pride Network. CSIS Pride Network and a Strategic Business Integration Team are working to progressively incorporate elements of the action plan into the ongoing application of a DEI strategy.

Ms. Tessier stated that as an intelligence agency, CSIS needs its workforce to reflect and understand the rich diversity of the Canadian communities it works to protect. The linguistic skills, cultural insights, and unique perspectives of CSIS employees can help bridge cultural gaps in communities, focus investigative efforts, and give context to information collected. Ms. Tessier stated that transparency and public confidence are essential to effectively address modern national security threats; therefore, CSIS strives to remain committed to integrating the diversity of viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences of Canadians from all communities into its operations.

Ms. Tessier suggested that DEI strategy is an effective way to address a recently observed downward trend in governmental and institutional trust, in that it allows the building and sustaining of critical relationships. From an intelligence perspective, the complexity of the threat environment and the various needs and requirements of the communities who are often victims of threat actors requires a detailed understanding of the needs of specific communities, their past experiences, and concerns. To meet the challenges of the new disruptive security and defense landscape, Ms. Tessier stated that the security and intelligence community must be adaptive and progressive in all efforts, and DEI is a core part of that strategy.

Question & Answer Period

Ms. Tessier stated that although the implementation of DEI strategy only began in summer 2022, the impact is noticeable—specifically in recruitment and

selection processes. For example, interviewers are mindful of word choices in questions, using gender neutral language as opposed to gendered language, so that heterosexuality is not assumed.

Ms. Tessier also suggested that incorporating younger generations of intelligence practitioners can improve recruitment and inclusivity in the intelligence community. CSIS is currently pursuing diversity in its hiring process, specifically at the senior executive level, in order to better reflect the diversity of Canadian society.

As an intelligence organization and an employer, CSIS is committed to ensuring accountability while developing DEI policies as a means of fostering meaningful over performative policy.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

- Studies have shown that the DEI strategy encourages innovation, diverse approaches, and engagement, while reinforcing trust and contributing to a psychologically safe workplace.
- DEI also addresses systemic barriers, which can prevent some employees from excelling.
- CSIS particularly focused on building a diverse workforce by applying principles of equity and decisions and in how it manages its people and practicing inclusivity in the workplace. This ensures fair treatment and opportunity for all.
- Participating in outreach programs and engaging with the public allows communities to better understand the mandate and operations of CSIS.
- From an intelligence perspective, the complexity of the threat environment and the various needs and requirements of the communities requires a detailed understanding of the needs of specific communities, their past experiences, and concerns.

Question & Answer Period

- Incorporating progressive language in interview questions allows the organization to be more inclusive to applicants from diverse backgrounds.
- CSIS is committed to ensuring accountability while developing DEI policies as a means of fostering meaningful over performative policy.

- CSIS is currently pursuing diversity in its hiring process, specifically at the senior executive level, in order to better reflect the diversity of Canadian society.



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Published by the Journal of Intelligence, Conflict, and Warfare and Simon Fraser University

Available from: <https://jicw.org/>

The Journal of Intelligence, Conflict, and Warfare
Volume 5, Issue 3