

Summary of Discussion from WFA Committee Meeting – September 19, 2012

In attendance:

VAC: Keith Hillier, Don Love, Terry Wiseman, Charlotte Bastien

UVAE: Yvan Thauvette - Chair, Kim Coles

PIPSC: Doreen Weatherbie

AJC: Marie-Claude Desrosiers

Discussion Items	OPI for action items
<p>1. <u>Opening Remarks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don Love explained that through ongoing discussions with Treasury Board, VAC is adjusting its approach to SERLO, Alternations, to better meet the needs of employees • Keith Hillier related information from the NLMCC with PIPSC: that the DM confirmed that VAC has achieved 130 position savings so far this year. However, attrition is not at a sufficient par to meet targeted savings, so other options are needed. The business side of the organization will be making recommendations to the Deputy Minister on potential reductions. Consultation with bargaining agents will take place first, to provide their ideas. • Don Love recommended the use of the WFA Committee to provide strategic communications, to identify ideas and the needs of bargaining agents. • Doreen Weatherbie asked if the Transformation time lines of realizing reductions by 2016 is flexible. Keith Hillier confirmed that Transformation reductions are on a five-year plan, with one year complete. Attrition alone was working for achieving Transformation targets. • However, The challenge is reaching budget 2012. Budget 2012 was reduced to a three-year time line, with the resources already removed from departmental budgets. It would require a memorandum to Cabinet to make any changes to planned reductions and time lines. Don Love confirmed that it's necessary to combine targets to reach objectives. • Keith Hillier asked for the bargaining agents' opinion of how their membership would view the following approach: if fewer employees are required in targeted areas, will employees volunteer to leave? He added that this only applies to areas requiring reductions; in other areas, employees are all needed, and will not be offered WFA options. • Kim Coles offered that the approach would require providing the opportunity to move to where positions need to be added first, and inquire if employees are mobile. Yvan Thauvette added that those employees still needed could alternate. 	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Doreen Weatherbie asked if this approach was already attempted with CSA's, but Kim Coles confirmed that volunteers were not requested before the CSA SERLO process, nor were retiring employees provided with WFA options.• Don Love described two scenarios:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The first where reductions apply to one-of positions no longer being required. Those employees would be declared surplus, and could be retained through alternation.○ The second scenario would be for groups of employees, where volunteers would be requested, and SERLO used in specific locations only, where targets remain. Charlotte Bastien confirmed that similar tools would be used for SERLO processes for identical positions.• Keith Hillier referred to the Deputy Minister's statements in VAC Today, where the Department must work with unions to facilitate reductions. He asked bargaining agents to share their thoughts, and obtain member reaction to the proposed approach. Kim Coles responded that the proposal is what her union has been asking for. | |
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2. Alternation

- Don Love expressed the need for the Department to have a robust alternation process. The focus was on opting CSA's, but has to be broadened to meet the needs of downsizing. The objective is to promote this approach along with bargaining agents.
- Yvan Thauvette asked if this would allow all alternations within VAC. Don Love responded that alternation still requires a balance of the needs of employees, versus the Department's ability to carry out its business. He added that departments must avoid major changes in personnel, due to the cost of training and possible loss of efficiency in serving clients.
- Doreen Weatherbie described the departure of 80 VAC employees to Shared Services Canada (SSC). She added that 25 more were planned to be moved from the Service Desk. She asked if the Transformation target of reducing by 60 employees by 2016 takes those departures into account? She added that there were only 110 PIPSC members left at VAC, with office closures and potential retirements reducing that number even more.
- Keith Hillier confirmed that this was not under his area of responsibility, and therefore did not have specific numbers, but that of the 80 transferred to SSC, some were part of Transformation targets.
- Doreen Weatherbie reiterated the need to have IT management represented at the WFA Committee.
- Keith Hillier described the need for employee awareness of what their choices are, including alternation. He added that other than CSA's, they may not be aware of their options. Kim Coles responded that the Department has placed roadblocks, such as alternations being turned down. Don Love explained the need for a fit between the skills of the opting employee, and the needs of the organization.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keith Hillier said that he was not aware of any alternations being blocked. He confirmed that they were expediting the alternation requests they were aware of, rather than wait for the Fin/HR Committee meeting, which is only monthly. Kim Coles confirmed that delays create stress for employee, who only have 120 days to find an alternation during their opting period. She added that there were a lack of opportunities in locations where the opting CSA's are located, as few other employees in those areas seem willing to alternate. • Keith Hillier provided an example of how alternation could work for office closures. Sydney employees could switch with where the work remains, in Halifax, for example. Kim Coles explained that employee mobility would be needed first, which is not likely in small communities. She described that even in Ottawa, there are still difficulties for their members to find and complete alternations. • Charlotte Bastien made reference to an upcoming Joint Learning Program (JLP), where training on collective bargaining agreements will include the Workforce Adjustment Directive (WFAD). She asked if it would be valuable to have alternation added to the syllabus? 	
<p><u>Action Item:</u> Yvan Thauvette agreed to ask the JLP committee if this would be possible</p>	Yvan Thauvette
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marie-Claude Desrosiers explained that departments have expectations that bargaining agents will endorse departmental alternation programs. To do so, these programs must be consistent with the WFAD; they cannot have criteria that goes beyond what's in the WFAD. Don Love explained that it is a balancing act between the WFAD and departmental needs. There should be no artificial impediments in an alternation process beyond the WFAD. He agreed with AJC, that removing hurdles will facilitate more movement, but there are challenges. • Don Love gave the example of where there are future cuts, they must advise the incoming employee that they may be declared surplus again in 2 to 3 months. Accepting that alternation removes the employee from the talent pool and the chance at longer term opportunities. Marie-Claude Desrosiers responded that the employee should decide, and be provided with full disclosure. If they are cut later, the WFA provisions will apply again. Don Love explained the difficulty, in that in some areas, the reductions have not been clearly defined yet. 	
<p><u>Action Item:</u> Don Love agreed to respond in writing to Rick Swoffer (AJC) on the outstanding concern over an alternation request by AJC members.</p>	Don Love
<p>3. Round Table Items</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don Love mentioned the need to ensure surplus and opting employees are getting the right information to assist them in making decisions. Kim Coles confirmed that several CSA's have not returned to work due to the stress they have been through. 	
<p><u>Action Item:</u> Don Love will confirm for UVAE how many opting CSA's are out of the office.</p>	Don Love

