Criteria of good governance

Ruth Hubbard

The power and responsibility that goes with being the president of an independent parliamentary agency, and the history of the role in effecting change were two things I discovered when I was appointed as President of the Public Service Commission (PSC) in 1994. I decided early on that John Carson would be my role model. He was the head of the Civil Service Commission (as it was called then) through the turbulent period from 1965 to 1976 – a period of awakening in the country to its linguistic and gender duality – with the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism which was created in 1963 and the 1969 PSC report on what it was like to be a woman working in the federal Public Service. It was a period that saw the introduction of collective bargaining into the Public Service and witnessed or followed a series of examinations into management and personnel management.

John Carson used his position to reframe thinking about the Public Service, and exemplified the best in public service leadership in a challenging period. So I am particularly honoured to have been asked to give this year's John Carson Lecture, and to use it as an opportunity to reflect on some issues that began to emerge during my five years at the PSC and that preoccupy me today – issues dealing with good governance in Canada.

For years, the Public Service Commission was thought of solely as a personnel office, ensuring that the selection and promotion of federal public servants was carried out meritoriously. Under John Carson's leadership, the PSC became part of a revolution in the Public Service, helping people to understand that the federal Public Service needed to reflect the people it serves. He saw and understood that the values of language and gender mattered, and helped to change the way we think about the Public Service forever.

While I was President of the PSC (1994-1999), the environment for the Public Service was also turbulent, but for very different reasons. The globalization of information and markets was well under way for the first time in human history – and the world was becoming more interconnected, more complex and more fast-moving than ever. Closer to home, Canada was struggling with massive public deficits and experiencing (like other countries around the world) sharply increasing citizen disaffection with government. The carefully learned craft of public service was suddenly changing significantly, and a focus on results would simply not be enough.

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So the reality that I saw during that period was that the PSC was not just an office which carries out part of the human resources management function for public servants – important though that is – but one that has to understand and operate at a "whole system" level and sees itself as one of the institutions that defines an aspect of our governance system in Canada. John Carson knew that the world in which he operated was dealing with values of language and gender, and that this had to be recognized. In a similar fashion, the PSC in its annual reports of 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 asked some fundamental questions about the Public Service and "traditional public service values" because no one else was asking them and they needed to be asked.

For Canada to continue to flourish in the face of other forces, we must begin to think differently about governance. We need to find a new national consensus about what Canada stands for and its place in the world, and to sustain that consensus recognizing that it will evolve with time. Such a consensus would enable us to make public choices and to discuss and influence the societal and public consequences of private choices up to and including the level of humankind. To do this, we need good governance. That means thinking differently. I believe that the craft of reform – what I call "reformcraft" (borrowing a word coined by Professor Yehezkel Dror) – does just this.

Why examine good governance now?

Why should we worry about good governance now? First, good governance is vital now because of the turbulent environment in which we find ourselves (one which is likely to persist for the foreseeable future). We know that today's environment is turbulent, interconnected, complex and fast-moving. I include here, as well, the broader range of options open to humanity (mainly through science and technology); shifts in societal values; greater levels of education; higher expectations; and greater accessibility of information (reliable or not). As well, we increasingly face the unimaginable (some say the inconceivable). These

challenges are exacerbated, for the first time in history, by the second driver – globalization, that is, asymmetric globalization – where information and markets have globalized but democracy has not.

In Canada, these environmental drivers are producing many worrying effects: the need to face the unimaginable; an abundance of novel issues with no good options; the risk of Canada's declining importance in the world community; loss of legitimacy of government within Canada, resulting not in confrontation but the real possibility of irrelevance; and, as a result, decisions being taken without governments that implicitly involve making societal choices about relative priorities among competing values in many domains – decisions with long-term implications which may not be what Canada wants or needs, which may not be informed choices and in which the decision makers may not be accountable to Canadian society.

Within Canada there are worrying signs of deep Canadian disaffection. Our leaders seem to have lost the capacity to speak the common language of Canadians, something that has been significantly exacerbated by global trends. Good governance depends on the consent of the governed. Unlike the 1960s and 1970s, this evidence makes the task of building consent much more difficult and important to address now. In 1999, using a variety of techniques, Ekos Research Associates clustered opinions to reflect commonly recurring characteristics and perceptions of Canadians – thereby providing a framework for analyzing some of the basic divisions among Canadians about the role of government. They saw five distinct clusters and more than 60 percent of Canadians who apparently felt alienated, disconnected or anxious about the future and hoped that governments could help them cope.[1] What is worrying about their analysis is what it tells us about the challenges we face in moving towards better governance in Canada. Enhancing the basis of consent will have to be multi-faceted and will take time. We need to begin soon.

What is even more worrying, perhaps, is that faced with the seemingly impossible task of improving governance in Canada using the ways we have always made things better, Canadians (businesses, political

leaders and individuals) seem to be increasingly "working around" the difficulties they see in order to get things done. Governance in Canada has become like a rock in a stream with water rushing increasingly around it. The rock remains but becomes more and more irrelevant – just a rock in a larger and larger rush of water. But using the rock is the way we steer ourselves in democratic societies. So we must gradually create governance that suits the world we live in if we are to steer our own society rather than have it steered by a few (however well-intentioned they may be), or have it moved implicitly by the sum of individual decisions taken (i.e., not steered at all).

Definition

My use of the term *governance* is a very broad but generally accepted one – "the ability of a society to steer itself." For me, it includes the notions of movement (evolution through time) and societal difference.[2] I am not alone in believing that good governance is essential, as you will know if you are familiar with what organizations such as the UN, the OECD and the World Bank say. In effect, they emphasize values and consent as well as a democratic foundation (albeit democracy broadly defined). It is worth noting that I am talking about "liberal representative democracy" (a specific variant of democracy that dominates in "first world" states such as Canada). Therefore, I am trying to describe good governance in this context.[3]

Good governance is made up of complex relationships so that it is like a three-legged stool – with three healthy legs (the private sector, the public sector and civil society) in constructive tension with governance being the evolving manifestation of the equilibrium among them. In fact, this idea of three healthy, mutually respected sectors reappears as one element of the first of my success criteria as you will see – a criterion which I believe is the foundation of sustainable democracy. I should say, nevertheless, that I am not advocating that the coercive (in the best sense of the word) power that resides in the public sector over the other sectors (and people in a society generally) should reside elsewhere.

The status quo is not an option; we must think differently

If we need good governance in order to steer ourselves, how do we get there from here? In my view, we have no alternative but to think differently. Albert Einstein said, in effect, that the problems created by our current pattern of thought cannot be solved by our current pattern of thought. This means that the way we have learned to think about things may not enable (or perhaps permit) us to understand and express the concepts of good governance for today and tomorrow. Furthermore, the fact that we increasingly face the unimaginable demands a revolution in cognitive concepts and models of thinking. It is no wonder we are having trouble grasping this particular nettle despite its importance and despite the prominence we are beginning to give to governance as the new buzz word. So I turned to science, first to systems thinking and then to its successors for the kind of holistic thinking that has characterized environmentalism and feminism, a mindset where understanding matters as well as knowledge and learning is the only sustainable advantage.

Before describing what thinking differently means for governance systems, I need to note three things. First, my focus is on the higher order tasks of governance (the big picture stuff). The other tasks of governance are very important but are not treated here. Second, I am presuming that my success criteria apply to all levels of problems – from the highest to the lowest – from political philosophy (beyond political ideology which deals with the how and the who, not the what), through value conflicts and policy design, to service delivery. Third, when I use the term *leaders* I mean everyone (no matter what their "work") who leads by her or his actions. This includes all those in whom power is vested but also many others.

"Reformcraft" is thinking differently

For me, reformcraft (thinking differently about governance) includes seven success criteria that emerge from the need to strengthen values, consent, human

considerations and management capability building on a democratic foundation. I have identified three action levers to start using now.

Reformcraft's seven success criteria comprise the following:

- Enables and safeguards integrated democracy
- Is values based
- Is globally sensitive
- Enables informed participation
- Is consent based
- Explicitly integrates human considerations, and
- Learns and enables learning.

Its three action levers are:

- Horizon scanning
- Network-based institutional innovation, and
- Politicians helping understanding.

I will describe each briefly and provide some examples and questions for Canada.

Enables and safeguards integrated democracy

My first criterion deals with a (liberal representative) democratic foundation. By this criterion, I mean the enabling and safeguarding of an evolving equilibrium among three healthy sectors (market, state and civil society) so as to establish and maintain just and honest government. It is the foundation on which the other success criteria are built. I will not describe it here because of considerations of time and space, but I will note that one component is emerging as important in many democracies (not just liberal representative ones) – the environment in which these three sectors can thrive.

Measures of this criterion could include the scope and degree of explicit mutual acknowledgement of the three sectors; the nature and use of the leadership change process; and the existence and respect for the rule of law (including a focus on the elimination of corruption).

For Canada, I would ask whether the three sectors are in fact acknowledged as healthy and mutually respected.

Is values based

For the first time in human history, we are now able to destroy ourselves and the planet. So there is an unprecedented urgency to strengthening values. Democratic governance has always meant the emergence of relative priorities for competing values, but in Canada this has mostly been compartmentalized, implicit and has presumed consent. This has to change.

Taking apart the idea of strengthening values leads me to three important ideas well expressed by Professor Dror: an acceptance of the importance of governance to "weave the future"[4] (a normative rather than deterministic view of the future); explicit, globally sensitive value choices in all domains – in other words, a change of values as difficult and long term as this may be; and the renewal of pluralistic values-based political philosophy to guide the design.

To operate effectively in a global context, furthermore, I agree with Dror that it requires the acceptance that some values are common to humankind and go beyond nation-state boundaries *(raison d'humanité* displacing to some extent *raison d'état* as a mission of government). National governance must promote and be bound by these values, eventually with international enforcement. This is the idea that humanity as a whole has needs and aspirations which governance should promote and is closely related to the concept of political philosophy. This is the foundation for the thinking of experts such as Professor Dror and also expressed by world leaders such as Vaclav Havel.

My second criterion then deals with strengthening values and includes developing and embracing an overarching values set. I see four components addressing the substance of this criterion: making value conflicts visible and finding medium-term equilibrium in all domains; strengthening morality in politics and government; developing and adopting a pluralistic, political philosophy; and ensuring credibility in value choices.

First, there must be clear, well-understood, accessible and useful processes for making the major value conflicts in all sectors visible and for making medium-term choices for policy design and development so as to ensure that the choices are credible to most Canadians. This includes,

in my view, the idea that we need innovative values thinking (to deal with the array of emerging ideas such as bioethics) and the appropriate processes and mechanisms to enable and harness them to decision making. This kind of innovative values thinking is not a task for government. These processes may well be outside government (but are, de facto, part of governance). It is important to emphasize that value choices will evolve with time, but that making them for the medium term (three to five years) remains important nonetheless.

Second, strengthening morality in politics and government is essential because it is important to remember that politics and government are, in fact, highly moral as well as crucial endeavours and that, as Dror puts it: "There must be normative groundings for making politics and governance fit their callings under the demanding conditions, uncertainties and inconceivabilities in the twenty-first century."[5] And, as others have put it to me: You lead from values and sense of community. Community-mindedness means being driven by values and ethics. Leadership operates from conviction, otherwise it is followership.

Third, we need to develop and adopt a pluralistic values-based political philosophy to guide the design of "weaving the future" (including an overarching set of values).

Fourth, the value choices we make must be credible and be seen to be credible to most Canadians.

For the values-based criterion, we could measure three kinds of things: the scope and degree of making value conflicts visible and finding medium-term equilibrium; progress towards a renewed values-based political philosophy; and the extent and use of mechanisms to enable those willing and able to help contribute to this complex mental endeavour.

For Canada it is in the social field that we have tried more often and for perhaps the longest to make value conflicts visible. We have used different vehicles and have had limited degrees of success in engaging Canadians in the discussions, but we have never come close to the idea of explicitly recreating a political philosophy in this country or to discussing and adopting the notion of a mission of governance being to "weave the future" (risky though this may be).

Is globally sensitive

The third criterion is one which has taken on new and urgent importance. It is one which deserves to be examined carefully.

First, there should be clear public criteria and a strategy for enabling the emergence of appropriate global governance (including strengthening global equity) which, in the long term, is in the interest of humanity as well as of nation-states themselves. I said appropriate global governance because I want to make it clear that I am not arguing for the replacement of nation-state governance by something at a supranational level. I see the addition of transnational layer(s) as global governance matures. I am also leaving room for the idea of strengthening global equity but not simply taking Western liberal democratic ideas and transplanting them at a higher level. This would not necessarily make sense given the diversity of cultures and value sets around the world. Nor, as some would argue, are western liberal democracies necessarily ready to see one person/one vote operate at the higher level where they would be in the numerical minority. Just what "global equity" means deserves examination but is beyond the scope of this article.

Second, there should be an explicit framework for consideration of the global implications of all governance deliberations and decisions at all levels of governance. As I said earlier, it is simply not useful any more for global considerations to be thought of as separate from domestic ones and only relevant for the national levels of governance and higher. There may be increasing recognition of this reality, but it remains to be translated into really effective and constructive systematic management of the interdependence of governance systems that it implies within nation-states.

Measures for this criterion could include public commitment by leaders, extent of strategies and plans created, and quality and progress of implementation of strategies and plans.

There are some good examples of Canada using its leverage to advance global interests (e.g., G20[6] and perhaps the offshore fishery). There are some examples (notably in the environmental field) where the global implications have been considered. Nevertheless, there seems to be no widespread understanding or

acknowledgement of the strategic importance of global sensitivity in Canada or of the need to be systematic about its application.

My questions for Canada would be the same as for the previous criterion – how to identify the biggest barriers to progress and then to reduce them.

Enables informed participation

The fourth criterion is about enabling informed participation and comprises two parts: ensuring that town squares (i.e., public spaces) exist today as well as credible useful processes to access them; and helping people understand their responsibilities as humans and citizens – in other words, leaders enabling, supporting and investing in improved civic literacy. In a world filled with information (some reliable and some not), with the inadvertent crowding out of public spaces and dramatic changes to our lifestyles, we must rethink how to help people, including the next generations, to learn that there are responsibilities for the common good and to feel the weight of these responsibilities. This task is both important and urgent. There is a view that the steep decline in democratic societies in participation in "traditional" democratic processes is not reflective of declines in civic literacy, but rather of a sophisticated citizenry understanding that political reform is overdue and not being inclined to participate until institutions have caught up. I believe that both are likely contributors to poor voter turnout and so both need to be addressed urgently.

Leaders enabling, supporting and safeguarding today's town squares, at all levels from community and neighbourhood to societal and beyond, matters in light of the inadvertent crowding out produced by asymmetric globalization and the decline of traditional mechanisms. One interesting example of a leader doing just this kind of thing at the community level is the experiment being led by Benjamin Barber, director of the Walt Whitman Center for the Culture and Politics of Democracy at Rutgers University, related to the revitalization of failed shopping malls. There are apparently many failed strip malls in the United States. Basically the idea seems to be to work with the associated communities to reopen these malls as modest public spaces with small local libraries,

art galleries or other civil society activities so as to recreate places for people to come together as citizens (not voters or consumers). Another example, also from Barber, is the Walt Whitman Center's setting up of a self-regulating "governance" chat room on the Internet, in part to show how it can be done without needing to use the controlling approaches that would have characterized such an endeavour in the past.

The second part of this criterion is leaders enabling, supporting and investing in improving civic literacy – helping people understand their responsibilities as part of humankind and also as citizens of a particular nation-state – again with respect to all levels of problem space.

I should add that there is an important condition to all this. There is some evidence that people will not tackle political power in a democracy (even though ironically it might prove effective) if they do not feel personally empowered – in other words, unless they first feel secure physically, economically and socially.[7] We still need to work hard on the things I have noted above; they seem to be necessary but not sufficient to ensure participation. It will be important therefore to pay attention to the issue of security for all if there is to be real enabling of participation.

Measurement of this criterion could include the existence and sustainability of public spaces and accessible, useful processes for using them; the extent of leaders' strategies and plans to improve civic literacy as well as progress and quality of implementing them and the level of awareness of responsibilities as humans and as citizens; the level of knowledge about how to engage (i.e., to use the processes); and the level of knowledge and understanding of the issues in order to engage.

In Canada, there is some thinking through of how to improve processes to enable participation, although it is hard to conclude that we have focused on "informed" participation. Improving civic literacy seems to be an important need. At the neighbourhood and community level, there are many examples of "public spaces" being created or re-energized (we know that the organized and unorganized voluntary sector is alive and well in Canada). The "Connecting Canadians" initiative, furthermore, is an enabler of public spaces if individuals choose to use it for this purpose. But it is not clear either

that we are acting to create or recreate public spaces at the societal (i.e., Canada as a whole) level systematically, or that we are harnessing technology for this purpose. The incidental crowding out of public spaces at the national level continues apace. I agree with Benjamin Barber[8] that this puts democracy at risk. In addition, I would ask if we, in Canada, are confident about the prerequisite to broad participation – individual security.

Is consent based

The fifth criterion includes three components: citizen engagement (inclusiveness); transparency (accountability, performance measurement and timely public reporting); and getting consent at the right place.

It raises some interesting questions to which no one seems to have the answers at present. For example, consider the following.[9] Confidentiality has been the traditional underpinning of private and public decision making. What price are we willing to pay to achieve transparency? Is it useful to have distributed decision making if you don't have shared accountability and responsibility? And how do you share them anyway?

Russell Ackoff, the famous American corporate consultant in systems thinking, talks about the mistakes of omission being much more important than the mistakes of commission. He adds that our accounting systems around the world only measure and report mistakes of commission so that the more important mistakes of omission are ignored.[10] He also talks about Peter Drucker's view that it is far better to do the right thing wrong (because it can always be done "righter"), than to do the wrong thing right (because this just means it is "wronger").[11] Should we do something about this imbalance? Where do we start?

With respect to accountability, it is worth mentioning that there is some fascinating work going on in the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) in Maastricht[12] by Les Metcalfe, Professor and Head of the Master's program at Maastricht, driven by an examination of different kinds of relationships – administrator/subject; professional/client; governance system/citizen – which lead to different concepts of accountability and of cost structure. It will be interesting

to see if this work yields a breakthrough in thinking about accountability that will benefit us all.

"Getting consent in the right place" is about ensuring everyone feels and understands the compromise(s) that must result when equilibrium among competing values is found in all domains. Societal change must come slowly, respectfully and compassionately. One current manifestation of "getting consent in the right place" is choosing the right delivery vehicle for services. Ackoff noted that you discover through dialogue in the process of design what you want that you did not know beforehand. This seems difficult to achieve in Canada – in part, I believe, because that mistrust and power are entangled implicitly into the strategies and plans related to these choices.

The most recent report on performance by the President of the Treasury Board called *Managing for Results 1999* shows that we are making some progress in Canada, as do the results and performance reporting work in Alberta. There is significant progress in this country on improving the basis of consent by all levels of government with a focus on inclusiveness, accountability and getting consent at the right place. Much of it is still at the level of service delivery rather than other levels of problem spaces where the issue is much more the lack of "ongoing public conversation." Nevertheless, in terms of thinking about new institutions, this is an interesting start and provides some useful lessons learned from important examples such as the Canada Assistance Plan in the social union preparation material.

Measurement for this criterion could include the scope and results of inclusiveness; the degree of transparency; and with respect to getting consent in the right place, the public commitment of leaders, the extent of strategies and plans, and the quality and progress of implementation of the strategies and plans.

Questions for Canada include the broad ones that arise with the other criteria: identifying the biggest barriers and then reducing them. Specifics include asking ourselves how clusters of Canadian opinion should guide the design of strategies and plans dealing with gaining consent, and asking how we can engage constructively when choosing the right delivery vehicle (disentangling power and mistrust from other considerations).

Explicitly integrates human considerations

People say that the hardest thing for a system is to face the truth about itself. Denial is one way to avoid looking in the mirror. Another is blaming. I come at the subject of human considerations in three ways. First is the assertion by some experts that each of us has an individual implicit template (based on our history, culture, religion, experience, etc.) of a few dominant values that we use to simplify the reality we see around us. Second is the view of the considerable mental demands of postmodern life and human capability to handle it. And third is the idea that there is a particular way of defining the complexity of work that is independent of language or culture and that there are ways of thinking about mental processing capability which argue that each of us has an envelope of capability which constrains the extent to which we are likely to be able to deal with and handle work of varying complexity now and in the future.

The sixth criterion then means supporting, enabling and encouraging leaders who infuse their actions with an understanding of human behaviour and capability; who accept and enable evolution in their actions; who enable the celebration of successes and build on them; and who present ideas in ways that people can understand and see as relevant to themselves.

Measures for this criterion could include public commitment of leaders; degree of explicit consideration of human behaviour and capability in strategies and actions; and degree of explicit considerations of opinion clusters in strategies and actions.

Questions for Canada as for the other criteria include asking what the biggest barriers are in this area and how we can reduce them.

Learns and enables learning

Management capability needs to be strengthened because in the turbulent environment in which we find ourselves, we cannot focus on results alone. Russell Ackoff says that improving the performance of the parts does not improve the performance of the whole. It is the "fit" of the parts that matters.[13] The same concept is contained in the work

of Les Metcalfe[14] who has taken the ground-breaking work of Emery and Trist[15] and pushed it further in the context of the European Union (E.U.). The key is learning to manage risk and uncertainty in a climate of interdependence. This amounts to a different way of managing and demands new capabilities – what I call "whole system management." In close association with this is the idea that learning is the only sustainable advantage. Leaders must harness innovation and creativity to manage uncertainty, improve adaptability and increase timeliness (i.e., enable good governance).

This criterion deals with a governance system that learns and is creative, and that enables and supports learning at all levels, from individual through societal and beyond. In my view, this is essential in our environment. In fact, it is not possible for the equilibrium among the three sectors (private and public and civil society) to be influenced in its evolution through time, if the society and the governance systems themselves are not explicitly able to learn. As a result, I see two components to this criterion.

The first component means that leaders enable the understanding of what learning means in terms of what needs to be taken into account explicitly. To me, it means designing things for learning (i.e., so that they can be learned from); it means making mistakes (we know that we learn more from what doesn't work the way we expected than from what does); it means observing (i.e., learning itself) and using that observation to make refinements and improvements for the next time; and it means sharing the learning widely. This last requirement is crucial. Another way of putting it is "truth telling," and this is not easy to find because of the widespread fixation in the Western world on blaming.

The second means that leaders enable learning and show by their actions that they are open to learning themselves, as well as institutions and processes that learn instead of blaming, perhaps even legislation that learns (and I do not mean simply using regulations) and new roles for democratic representatives.

Measurement for this criterion could include several components. First, public commitment of leaders to and investment in learning. Skandia Insurance of Sweden has shown us that it is possible for publicly traded companies

to be successful by explicitly measuring and reporting investments in intellectual capital not just using the traditional balance sheet – although this remains important too. The Society of Management Accountants of Canada is a world leader in working out how to explicitly account for this kind of investment, a fact we should bear in mind. Some countries, I am told, publish societal scorecards on intellectual capital – an interesting notion. Another measure would be the extent and results of explicit and systematic learning, including: making mistakes and truth telling; learning at all levels; and learning from new patterns of governance and being seen to learn from them.

In Canada, this is the area with the highest ratio of rhetoric to results – although it is easy to identify significant barriers to doing better. There is much written and said about the importance of learning – at all levels and in many different ways. But, with much of the Western world, we share a culture of blaming rather than learning which permeates our lives and is expressed in the "info-tainment" business (including much of what we see on television). This culture makes it extremely personal (and corporately risky) to engage in real learning – which involves making mistakes and telling the truth (in order to share the learning).

So, for example, the federal Public Service has become a place where many say privately that individuals are encouraged to innovate and take risks as long as they don't get caught. Appearances at parliamentary committees seem sometimes to be more about scoring points than getting at the facts. Some say that politicians feel that they must evade the truth (or even mislead in public) in order to avoid being pilloried in public (perhaps our modern equivalent to battles in the coliseums of Rome) by many "ordinary Canadians" – the same "ordinary Canadians" who complain bitterly that politicians do not tell the truth. I confess that I am as much an "ordinary Canadian" in this respect as anyone else – tempted to blame and enjoy blaming in the particular if not in general.

We have an adversarial (i.e., parliamentary) governance system, but we seem unwilling to try to compete around learning instead of blaming (even though I think that this kind of competing around learning might work in at least some cases).

There are some pinpricks of light nevertheless – an occasional Cabinet minister or provincial premier who stands up and says publicly that something was an experiment that did not produce the intended results. I know of one Cabinet minister who would announce operational failures in speeches – his only rule was that there needed to be more successes per speech than failures. There is interesting progress being made in publishing results and performance measures even when the results are not the best. These give us reason to be a little hopeful.

If we cannot figure out how to move this focus on learning forward systematically and begin to tackle the culture of blaming, we are going to see a steady failure to attain good governance.

Using reformcraft's action levers

I have identified three reformcraft action levers that embody "whole system management" to start using now. I have selected them because each provides significant leverage in moving towards good governance. They act in three different but important areas. First, intelligence gathering, or horizon scanning, is linked to informing both those who are accountable to us for decision making and Canadians generally. Second, management should be network based and embody both innovation and creativity (network-based institutional innovation). Third, politicians should ask the right questions and frame issues the right way, because we need to begin to understand and politicians play such a key role in our system of governance.

Horizon scanning

The first of my levers deals with horizon scanning. I call the organizations involved "searchlight entities" – a concept that comes from my observations of what is going on in the E.U., and using a label that I adapted after listening to the chairman of a huge U.S. high-tech firm a few years ago. He described how his company identified a few clients (ranging from large to small and in different sectors) as being the ones that were on the cutting edge in terms of using technology in their

businesses. By paying close attention to these companies (having someone close enough that she or he could understand the technological need), his company could identify emerging trends for new products and get them to market ahead of competitors. He called these few companies "lighthouse customers." My label is "searchlight entities" and it applies to entities that scan the horizon, gather intelligence and evidence, and identify issues and their implications for society. They then communicate and inform society and its leaders about what they see.

I have found two interesting examples. They are the Nuffield Trust in the United Kingdom (U.K.)[16] and the Netherlands Scientific Council.[17] The Nuffield Trust (a body created in 1940 as part of governance but outside government) is a good example of a searchlight entity that operates in the U.K. in the health field. Using evidence-based research, it identifies and communicates information on emerging health issues (currently using chat rooms on the Internet and three-page letters to the Prime Minister which it makes public). It invests considerable energy in identifying emerging public policy issues in the health sector for the U.K., validating its findings on the Internet and communicating them. Another important issue at the moment, they feel, is the relatively poor health of health-care workers in the U.K., compared to the U.K. population at large. The second example of a searchlight entity is the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy, which reports to the Prime Minister in that country but provides its reports to the legislature. One of its most recent reports is called *Governments Losing Ground: An Exploration of Administrative Consequences of ICT [Information and Communication Technology]* and deals with the impact of technology and communications on governments.

Societies need this kind of credible entity. What these entities need, in turn, is sustained support, access to experts, timely access to leaders and conversations with citizens. Part of governance, they may also need some independence from government.

In Canada, we have organizations such as Judith Maxwell's Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc. (CPRN) which may have the potential to become searchlight entities – indeed, she has put forward similar

ideas. We need, nevertheless, to ask what equivalent searchlight entities would look like in Canada, whether we have any (even in embryonic form) and how we can nurture and grow them.

Network-based institutional innovation

My second action lever is network-based institutional innovation. This means institutions whose mission is to design, build and develop capacity in networks rather than running networks themselves. They harness the right expertise from around the world to assist in addressing problems in a high quality, credible and timely way. Two examples are the E.U.'s drug testing agency (located in the U.K.)[18] and the Helsinki Commission on the Baltic Marine Environment.[19] Both focus on the design, building and capacity development of networks rather than running them themselves.

In the case of the E.U. drug testing agency, rather than running its own network of experts, the head of this organization apparently chose to design and build a network which includes the drug testing agencies of E.U. countries plus others around the world (such as the U.S. and Canada). When decisions on drugs are needed, it draws from rosters of scientists, all of whom have a certain level of credibility as scientists with the members of the network. This means that quality, timeliness and scientific credibility are all present. And because it is a network of drug testing agencies, not one which can be seen as "competing" with them, the work is apparently accepted by all of those agencies. Running this kind of organization requires different management skills from setting up an organization, even one which is efficiently run, along more traditional lines.

The Helsinki Baltic Commission was set up to deal with marine environmental problems in the Baltic and comprises countries bordering on the Baltic Sea. The authority to act resides within each sovereign country, but the Commission is a governance (not government) body which enables and supports the network of individual entities so that, as a network, they can develop the capacity to deal with the problems that emerge and for which the Commission is responsible. It could have been designed more traditionally, of course.

Such institutional innovations require a new mindset, a new management capability, permission to try to systematically share the learning, as well as the necessary mandate (in other words, support).

In Canada, three interesting examples of network-based institutional innovation come to mind. The first is the integrated and accessible "Team Canada Inc." and the second is a small but important initiative on land mapping (geo-spatial data). Third, the University of Ottawa's Centre on Governance's submission on one city/eight boroughs to address governance of Ottawa's metropolitan area describes an interesting example of a proposal for a network-based innovative institution.

Politicians helping understanding

The third kind of action lever is politicians helping understanding by asking the right questions and framing issues the right way. In the turbulent and asymmetrically globalized world, the key seems to be understanding, as well as knowledge, and this means asking the right questions and framing issues the right way (synthesizing, as well as analyzing). For us to regain our capacity to steer our society, we need politicians who are able to do this. We need a common vocabulary so that we can influence the inevitable compromises needed among competing values. We elect politicians to play an important role in mediating these compromises. Asking the right questions and framing issues the right way provides that common vocabulary. Politicians need to use it as they exercise the power we have entrusted to them. As well, they (along with leaders generally) can help us understand what is at stake in each issue and domain. Conversely, to the extent that they are not able to do this, they will not be able to serve the interests of Canadian society well in the face of uncertainty.

It is important to examine the implications of this notion for our political institutions and processes for the way we choose politicians, and for the capabilities that would serve both politicians and their professional advisors in good stead. For politicians to help us to understand, they themselves must first understand. This is something that needs further examination.

In the E.U., there are examples of ministers of E.U. countries getting together with their portfolio counterparts to work out agreements in their areas of responsibility, because if they do not, the (unelected) politicians in Brussels will do it for them. These politicians believe that they are the ones who should mediate between the citizens in their individual countries and the needs of the collectivity of the E.U. To do this, they are learning to ask the right questions and to frame issues the right way. This, in turn, helps their citizens understand and shape the decisions. We have a couple of good examples of this in Canada in the G20 and "Connecting Canadians." But politicians from many countries lost an opportunity to demonstrate this kind of ability with the World Trade Organization (WTO) talks in Seattle in November 1999. In Canada, we need to ask how we can enable this kind of approach more effectively and more often.

Measurement for this criterion about the use of the three actions levers could include: the extent and use of all levers; and the extent to which this use is producing the desired outcome, that is, making better (high quality, timely, credible) decisions.

Questions for Canada include asking what the biggest barriers are for us using these levers and thinking about ways to reduce them.

Restoring good governance to Canada matters now

I have been told that any good governance framework has to address key Canadian concerns: capacity (nation-state influence), competence (of us all), integrity (of those to whom we entrust power over us), and awareness and understanding (i.e., not "getting out of touch"). I believe that my framework does this.

Reformcraft's elements are broad and abstract and improvement will take years, probably decades. Furthermore, what makes sense will change with time as well. It will take more than Canada acting on its own for improvement on a global scale. These concepts embrace philosophy, political science, organizational theory and aspects of human behaviour and capability, and require serious reflection – never mind understanding the implications for everyday life. Some, perhaps many, will say that this is all too abstract and impractical, that it is

madness to spend time even thinking about these things. But I think we must try. Things are not going to remain the same, so doing nothing has implications too. If we do try, we may fail to move towards good governance, but if we don't try, we will certainly fail. I cannot and do not prescribe what we should do to achieve good governance. The task is monumental, requiring the efforts of many people, including experts and practitioners.

Good (high quality) governance matters in Canada and around the world. In the turbulent environment in which we find ourselves with asymmetric globalization, good governance for Canada for the next 20 to 30 years means evolving and learning democratic governance, designed and delivered in human terms, that uses a "whole-system" (values-based, globally sensitive) approach – including values that transcend boundaries and bind humans together.

The status quo is not an option. We must think differently. Reformcraft is thinking differently, and it gives us seven success criteria with which to measure progress, and three action levers to use now.

I believe it is likely that we will survive anyway – survive even if we do not actively embrace reformcraft. But at what cost? Do we want to weave our future (difficult and risky though this may be) or do we want others, elsewhere, to weave it for us? What price are we willing to pay (in terms of people who feel marginalized in Canada and for how many generations – and in other costs some of them irreversible) because we are unwilling to try?

I hope that I have been able to provide a different way of looking at important issues for the country and for the Canadian Public Service – governance – building upon the institutional platform of the Public Service Commission and following in the footsteps of John Carson.

Notes

1. As part of its research called "Rethinking Government V" (1999), Ekos Research Associates developed a topology of the Canadian public which is both informative and alarming. Using a variety of techniques, Ekos clustered opinions to reflect commonly recurring characteristics and perceptions of Canadians – providing a framework for analyzing some of the basic divisions among Canadians about the role of government. They demonstrated this in graphic form and discussed it briefly in their research. According to this analysis:

    *   There is a significant split in opinion between the "haves" (economically and education-wise) and the "have-nots."
    *   Nearly one-quarter of Canadians are anxious and angry/disengaged (21 percent). They have lost faith in government. Another significant 13 percent are alienated and disconnected/anomic. They are different from the other clusters in having lower support for values and belonging to the world, country, province and ancestry. This group has a stronger proportion of youth (aged 16 to 24) than the others.
    *   More than one-quarter (28 percent) are dependent preservers who see government as a source of salvation, and are strongest in government activism, especially in the social field.
    *   Significant numbers of Canadians seem to be either disengaged or alienated and disconnected from government – that they have turned away from their governance system seems quite likely. They are scared and feel marginalized by mainstream Canadian society. Another large share continue to pin their hopes on government (or the governance system) but are neither comfortable with nor confident in it. How likely is it going to be that any Canadian governance system will be able to continue to meet their needs in the whirlwind of change that all nations are facing? Together, these three clusters amount to more than 60 percent of opinions expressed. The enormity of trying to counteract these opinions is very large indeed.

2. I turn to a definition of *governance* put forward by Steven Rosell. He says governance is "the process whereby an organization or society steers itself" (S.A. Rosell, ed., *Governing in an Information Society* (Montreal: Institute for Research in Public Policy, 1992). To this foundation it is useful to add the concepts of movement (evolution through time) and societal difference. Gilles Paquet puts it this way – "the process is complex and changing, but hinges on the dynamics of communication and control ... so the pattern of governance is different (from one society to another)." (G. Paquet, *Governance Through Social Learning* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1999).

3. For an extremely good basic text on democracy, I turned to David Held's *Models of Democracy*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, Calif.: Standord University Press, 1996). I found the descriptions of the evolution of thinking about democracy and the variants of various types of democracy well laid out in this book and extremely useful.

4. Yehezkel Dror, *The Capacity to Govern: Report to the Club of Rome* (Barcelona: Circulo de Lectores, 1994). In this seminal work, Dror says: " ... It is remarkable that so little attention is paid at present to improving governmental capacities to influence future trends, as distinct from reforms aimed at savings, efficiency, 'citizen-friendliness,' participatory democracy and so on. There is a proliferating literature on the problems we face as we approach the twenty-first century, and innumerable conferences, meetings, seminars and similar activities set out to deal with them. The need to change global governance is much discussed, for example in the context of the European Union. But one critical link, with very few exceptions, is missing: How to qualify state governments, as they continue to play pivotal roles including shaping supra-national and global governance, to undertake novel and demanding tasks that will determine the direction taken by their societies as well as humanity as a whole, that is 'to weave the future.' "

5. Ibid.
6. Group-20, a new international group of 20 countries which will coordinate the efforts of the industrial and developing nations in formulating and implementing global financial reforms. The member countries of the new G-20 include Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, Great Britain, the U.S., the E.U. and the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. From TERMIUM Plus (February 21, 2000).
7. For evidence about the need to empower people first, a very persuasive and readable document is the one issued in September 1999 by the Commonwealth Foundation and CIVICUS entitled "Citizens and Governance: Civil Society in the New Millennium" which describes the needs and desires of citizens, citizens' leaders, and citizens in influential positions in the Commonwealth. They were asked what they thought was a good society, the roles best played by citizens, political institutions and other sectors, and what would enable citizens to play their roles more effectively. Their expectations could be classified into three categories: basic needs, human association and participation. Each category turns out to provide an essential foundation for the next. The document is available at: www.commonwealthfoundation.com/information/infosheet23.html (retrieved April 25, 2000).
8. Benjamin R. Barber, "Democracy at Risk: American Culture in a Global Culture," *World Policy Journal* XV, 2 (Summer 1998).
9. These questions were posed at a discussion on governance organized by the Ottawa-based Institute on Governance (IOG) in late 1999 in Hull, Quebec.
10. Russell L. Ackoff, *Recreating the Corporation: A Design of Organizations for the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

11. Peter Drucker, as reported by Ackoff, ibid.
12. The European Institute of Public Administration in Maastricht is a non-profit international institute supported by the national administrations of the member states of the European Union and the European Commission. More information can be obtained from their site: www.eipa.nl (retrieved February 15, 2000) or via e-mail: eipa-nl.com.
13. Ackoff, *Recreating the Corporation*, 1999.
14. Les Metcalfe and Sue Richards, *Improving Public Management*, 2nd ed. (Maastricht, The Netherlands: European Institute of Public Administration, 1990).
15. Frederick Emery and E.L. Trist, "The Causal Texture of Organizational Environments," *Human Relations* 18, 1 (1965) pp. 21-32.
16. The Nuffield Trust for Research and Policy Studies in Health, 59 New Cavendish St., London W1M 7RD, United Kingdom (Web site under construction – February 12, 2000).
17. An anniversary publication entitled "Wise before the event" (Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) 1999) contains a history of this interesting organization.
18. The European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products (EMEA) was established in 1993 and is based in London. It is a network agency which acts as a focal point of the European system. More information about it is available at its site: www.eudra.org/emea.html (retrieved February 10, 2000).
19. Called the "Helsinki Commission: Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission," it is the governing body of the (new) Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea which was signed in 1992 by all countries bordering on the Baltic Sea and the European Economic Community. More information can be obtained from its site: www.helcom.fi (as of February 10, 2000, only an organization chart was available).

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