

Good Governance Project: *'Reformcraft'*

Final Report

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The ideas expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Canada or the Privy Council Office of Canada.

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Reformcraft* Project Report

Introduction

The project was to develop criteria for 'good (high quality) governance' in countries like Canada for the next twenty years. Governance (more than government) meaning 'how societies steer themselves'. The work was carried out by Ruth Hubbard in collaboration with the Governance Centre at the University of Ottawa and the Public Policy Forum (PPF), over the period July 1999 to June 2000. The work was stimulated and shaped by the thinking and writing of Professor Yehezkel Dror. It also benefited significantly from

the multi-stakeholder 'Renewing Governance Project' organized by Steve Rosell of the Meridian Institute.

Findings

1. The key question is 'Why should we care?'

Should we try to preserve a separate social and cultural space in the northern half of the North American continent, in the face of globalization and fragmentation and increasing economic integration with the United States? This is a societal question not a governance one. But good governance is essential to answering it, and to societal steering thereafter.

2. The evolving status quo is not enough; we must think differently

If Canada matters, the increasing irrelevance of governments to their citizens (including elites who are increasingly asking 'why care about governance?' and some 'bad' working around of governments) is reducing its capacity to steer itself just when the need is increasing (facing the unimaginable; novel issues with no good options; risk of decline in world influence). Good governance is needed to define Canada (as it evolves) and its place in the world, and to sustain it.

A few broad shared values and a willingness to work and live together must provide the continuity to the system of governance (how society steers itself) when the predominant characteristics of the environment for the foreseeable future are interconnectedness, complexity, and continuing change. E.g. what enables the marine platoon's adaptability and the priest to function in Africa (i.e. what the Pope would do if he were in Africa?).

Canada is no longer shared geography and ethnicity, but shared values (e.g. in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and underpinning the Social Union Framework) and a commitment to work and live together despite significant geographic, cultural, historical, and other differences. The shared understanding and commitment to these values and to working together (embracing not just tolerating the differences) must be built up slowly over time. This means that the existence and health of the on-going public conversation in Canada is the key. Growing tensions associated with aboriginal issues in Canada provide an important opportunity to learn how to engage better in this on-going conversation.

Institutions and structures, which used to provide the continuity to systems of governance, must become consequential and changing (i.e. more flexible and more networked and thus more-resilient). **The focus needs to be on people, process, and capability.** E.g. corporate giving tied to the employees to give to the organizations where they volunteer, not to specific organizations as in the past.

3. This means a focus on people, processes and capabilities

Increasing attachment to something outside oneself is a basic human need. From the perspective of the 'public good' locally through to globally, the continuum of this need at a **societal** level is **inclusion** through **integration** to **belonging**, and at the level of the **individual**, **casual** through **connected** to **committed** (i.e. pride).

The objective is to cluster actions so as to enable and support people and society in moving up each continuum - starting where they are; planting and amplifying rather than breaking and re-building, and putting a focus on 'youth' because working in networks may be easier for them than for others.

For example, for **society** this means:

- building on what emerges spontaneously (e.g. remembering that intense globalization can produce intense local production, and that communities using broadly-inclusive processes often know best);
- focussing at the right level (often the community);
- ensuring real decision-making is provided combined with clear authority, responsibility, financial flexibility and transparency.

And for the **individual** this means:

- making real decisions that they want to make (combined with the necessary authority, accountability, responsibility, financial flexibility and transparency);
- learning the art of dialogue and consensus-building, i.e. 'new leadership' skills;
- helping people to apply these leadership skills at levels of decisions of broadening scope (e.g. local, community, provincial, national and supra-national) when they are interested, with mentoring to help at each transition point;
- recognizing that risks are built in to this approach (e.g. raised expectations and interfaces with 'traditional' approaches);
- starting with the very young, inculcating these leadership skills and building a culture of civic decision-making, and responsibility throughout life.

There is the need for several things as a result. For example, new, inclusive mechanisms for working together; the building of capabilities to design, construct, use, and adapt these mechanisms; knowledge about how to participate in these mechanisms so people can be informed participants if they want to. In other words, there need be processes and spaces for public dialogue, and ways to communicate shared values.

In this paradigm, one sees governance as 'process' with appropriate, flexible institutional and structural expression. One sees the importance of process principles (for example the credibility and accessibility of information, and mobility across organizations, networks and structures). The benefit seems obvious of starting at the bottom and working up in terms of allocating authority, not just at the top and working down; and the role of elected officials as keepers of the community vision and brokering in the sense of bringing people together (not in bringing money to the table).

4. The *Reformcraft* model can help

It says: strengthen values, consent and learning; start using action levers now; and measure progress with success criteria.

a) **Strengthen values, consent and learning:**

These areas have emerged as ones that seem to be the key. Most people I talked to agreed.

Values - There are several goals. Taking a normative not deterministic view of the future (weaving the future); *raison d'humanité* partially displacing *raison d'état* because some values bind us together as humans around the planet; and putting morality (including integrity) back at the center of politics and government. We can achieve these goals through a pluralistic, values-driven political philosophy; more-explicit, more globally-sensitive value choices; the existence of a healthy on-going public conversation to slowly build understanding and commitment to the shared societal values, and to help manage differences in other values (e.g. by region, culture, history) constructively.

Consent - The goal here is to strengthen consent to improve the link between governors and governed. Improve the link through informed participation (not just sharing ignorance or immorality); increased inclusiveness and transparency (accountability, performance measurement and timely public reporting); and getting consent at the right place. Where real inclusiveness means providing places for people to speak for themselves, using processes that are meaningful to them, and hearing what they are saying - listening even if the 'right answer' isn't missing. We need to ask as well if enough Canadians feel economically, socially, and culturally secure enough to participate, regardless of the processes.

Learning -The goal is to strengthen learning at all levels (individual through to societal) in a climate of blaming. This can be accomplished through knowing what learning means (including truth telling); just 'doing it' (i.e. ensuring feedback loops at the right levels (including values) and using and sharing the learning); and by walking the talk, as well as by requiring governance, institutions and processes to compete to learn, and not just to blame.

b) **Use base action levers starting now**

Three action levers are part of the *reformcraft* model and can be used right away. They all strengthen values, consent and learning and were selected because, although very different, they are strategically important in moving towards good governance. They are: politicians helping understanding; network-based institutional innovation; and horizon scanning entities.

Politicians helping understanding by asking the right questions and framing issues the right way. There are three questions that spring to mind. What are the implications for elected officials and advisors (political and other)? Do current operations and rules of political institutions and processes help or hinder? How could they be improved?

Network-based institutional innovation to strengthen collaborative relationships. Important issues include the following: What are the most important institutional gaps to fill this way now? What are the implications for roles of elected officials and advisors (political and otherwise) of these roles? What is the feedback loop design and operation for these roles (including timely public reporting)?

Credible horizon scanning entities for emerging issues with understandable results that are linked to decision makers and to people at large. Several questions need to be pursued here. What are the roles of academics, existing think tanks and policy advisors? How are viability (including financial), credibility (including efficiency), and timeliness preserved? How is effective and efficient linking of issues to people (including decision-makers) enabled, required, and sustained?

c) **Measure progress with success criteria:**

Good governance should have several features. It should enable and safeguard integrated democracy; be values based; be globally sensitive; enable informed participation; be consent based; integrate human considerations; and learn and enable learning. The criteria are elaborations of each feature, and work on them has begun.

To optimize its use, the *Reformcraft* model should be applied to the set(s) of (territorially-based) units where change will be most effective. The characteristics of such set(s) of units are the next big intellectual puzzle, and should be a focus of attention.

5. Doing better is everyone's business

Moving towards good governance is not just the work of academics and the public sector (although governments can be catalysts and leaders). It is everyone's work because it affects everyone. Business must become actively involved. Business is better off with progress towards good governance than with the evolving status quo because this means two things. First, increased public confidence and support as well as real improvements in society's ability to steer itself. These produce a more-predictable business climate in the Canadian market; a more-post-modern business climate in Canada sooner; better influence over evolving supra-national governance; and increased mutual trust for sectors, elites, and leaders. Second, it means credible choices about what Canada wants and needs, which makes for greater clarity and predictability about doing business in Canada; and greater integration of global realities into the societal choices made.

The status quo on the other hand means not enough change fast enough in governance systems. Governments still influence the business climate in Canada and they still have coercive power over businesses and people in Canada. The 'old ways' of trying to influence them don't work well anymore. And the gap between 'have' and 'have not' regions, groups, and individuals is growing and will eventually produce real fractures that will affect business. Governments will have to try to respond to these fractures, thereby reinforcing the vicious circle of *mistrust; exclusion; pressure; inadequate response; and more mistrust.*

Round Table Discussion's Key Messages (See Annex A)

Discussions at 15 round tables with more than 160 people across Canada from all walks of life emphasized four things:

First, focus on informed participation and strengthening consent using concrete examples: empower communities; do things that reinforce trust and try to avoid things that diminish it; and model inclusiveness.

Second, focus on learning (including from failures and from long term outcomes; and improving civic literacy).

Third, walk the talk: put morality (including integrity) back at the center of politics and government (including politicians and bureaucrats); and do, and then announce afterwards.

And finally, start where you are: work through the role of elected officials in this new world (e.g. see how they can be mirrors of Canadian values and can help the understanding of decision makers and of citizens), and get these ideas 'out the door' and onto Cabinet (all levels) and corporate tables across the country.

Results

The project has produced a number of results:

A model of good governance for Canada (*'reformcraft'*) that includes action levers and criteria to measure progress. The model has been discussed at 15 round table discussions with more than 160 people across Canada from all walks of life and was also shaped by many bilateral conversations as well as by other governance-related work. The result is a simplified version of the model. (See Annex B).

An increased awareness amongst a number of opinion leaders in all sectors, of the importance of moving towards 'good governance', and support for continued discussion (the beginning of a network).

Advances in understanding about the nature of challenges to good governance and ways to think about it differently that are available (in speeches, articles, handouts etc.) and are of interest to experts and practitioners around the world.

Contacts with senior officials in the European Union (EU) which can be used and built upon in order to learn from experiments going on there and with key people in the international community like Professor Yehezkel Dror, Advisor to the Club of Rome who are interested in governance.

A certain degree of profile for the topic of good governance through the project work itself plus lectures (e.g. John Carson Lecture, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada, February 2000); articles to be published (e.g. in Optimum Magazine published by Prospectus Inc. and Consulting and Auditing Canada, June 2000 and a book on public administration and policy reform in the U.S. and Canada to be published by Mosaic Press, Oakville, Canada); speeches and /or adjudicated papers (e.g. paper submitted for the Commonwealth Association of Public Administration and Management's (CAPAM's) biennial conference in South Africa in October 2000).

Next Steps

Continue the 'good governance work' as a one to three year Privy Council Office (PCO) project led by an experienced senior manager as a full time task, ensuring that the next phase:

1. Comprises clear deliverables, milestones, monitoring of progress and results at least twice yearly at a very senior level in PCO. Starting with the delivery of a proposed action plan within three months that builds on the *reformcraft* project.
2. Links explicitly both to federal decision makers through existing mechanisms (deputy minister retreats; transition planning; ministerial planning) and to key existing governance initiatives (e.g. the Canadian Centre for Management Development's (CCMD's) research agenda and the 'Renewing Governance Project').
3. Demonstrates openness, inclusiveness and transparency (building on the network created as part of the original *reformcraft* work) and ensures institutional memory through the involvement of future public service leaders.
4. Explicitly learns from what is happening (formally and informally) in the European Union (EU) perhaps the fastest developing area of the evolution of governance in democratic societies in the world, (e.g. through extended visits to the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) in Maastricht).

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Annex B

Helping Canada to Steer Itself Better

The Challenge:

Governance in Canada needs attention if we believe that what defines us matters. Canadians greet the promise of the new millennium with a mixture of optimism and concern about their future and the future of Canada in the global community. The world is turbulent, fast moving and the globalization of information and markets is a reality. Canadians are increasingly faced with the unimaginable and novel issues without good choices. Canadians grapple with uncertainty, and many feel alienated, disconnected and worried about the future and hope that their governments (who sometimes say there is little they can do) can help them to cope.

Why it Matters:

Governance is how our society steers itself. Canadians' dissatisfaction with government is reducing its relevance and eroding the capacity for good governance at a time when the need is great. Canadians are increasingly 'working around' governance systems, sometimes in unhelpful ways, because they do not believe the systems will change. If Canadians do not make their governance systems work for all, if we do not start moving towards better governance now, Canadian society and its future will not be steered by us collectively. It may be steered by a few (who, however well intentioned, aren't focused on the wants and needs of Canadian society as a whole); or by others outside Canada (who are focused on needs and wants elsewhere), or by no one. Good governance will enable Canadians to make public choices and to discuss and influence the societal and public consequences of private choices, including those that affect us as humans.

Concerns Have Been Raised by Others:

Others have come to the same conclusion - that improving governance matters. They have helped make 'governance' an emerging issue in discussions about how societies cope in the new millennium. People like Steve Rosell of the Meridian Institute and Yehezkel Dror, advisor to the Club of Rome, have written books on the subject.

Organizations like the OECD have identified it as an important area of focus. The University of Ottawa has established a Governance Center to explore the subject, and the federal Policy Research Secretariat has identified governance as an emerging issue.

We Must Think Differently:

The evolving status quo is not bringing enough change fast enough. Canadians must start improving governance in Canada now, by thinking differently. Shifting mind sets to focus on people, processes and capabilities. Because if change is the key feature of the landscape for the foreseeable future, then continuity in our governance systems must come from shared values and a commitment to live and work together not just from institutions and structures, which will have to become more flexible. What emerges as crucial, is the existence and health of the on-going public conversation that slowly builds and sustains the understanding of and commitment to the broad values we share as well as the willingness to embrace our differences and to work together.

This means enabling and supporting individuals moving from being casual users of governance systems to feeling pride, and doing the same at the level of society as a whole - moving people from a sense of inclusiveness to a sense of belonging. By starting where we are, building on what grows spontaneously, and by planting seeds and amplifying them.

The *Reformcraft Model Can Help:**

The *reformcraft* model that I have developed can help. It says strengthen values, consent, and learning using three action levers, and measure progress with seven success criteria (see diagram below).

Reformcraft means strengthening values. For the first time in human history we are able to destroy our species and our planet. *Reformcraft*'s goal is to help Canada to 'weave the future' using values to guide choices as part of a pluralistic political philosophy. To see shared values and the willingness to work together providing continuity in our governance systems along with more-flexible institutions and structures; and to put morality back at the center of politics and government. It will require Canadian society to make more-explicit and globally-sensitive value choices, and to have a healthy on-going public conversation in order to define and sustain the evolving shared values as well as to manage the differences in interpretations of values constructively. Values that bind us together as humans around the world, as well as those that define us as Canadians.

Reformcraft means strengthening consent by assisting leaders to re-think how to enlighten, empower and engage citizens; to enable informed participation; to improve inclusiveness and transparency; and to get consent in the right places in Canadian society. And asking if enough Canadians feel secure enough to participate.

And *Reformcraft* means strengthening learning in a climate of blaming. In other words, knowing what learning means (including truth telling); designing for learning, using what is learned both to make adjustments and to share what is learned; and above all, walking the talk.

Canadians can start by using the action levers to move towards good governance now. These are: politicians helping understanding (by asking the right questions and framing issues the right way); network-based institutional innovation (to strengthen collaborative relationships in our complex federation); and horizon scanning entities that link effectively both to citizens and decision makers. And we can measure progress with the success criteria.

Conclusion:

Reformcraft is thinking differently in order to achieve good governance. This would result in: real improvement in Canada’s ability to steer its future; relevant institutions, processes and leaders; and increased public confidence and support for our system of governance. We **can** make a difference. But Canadians have to want good governance, and believe that individual contributions can make a difference.

* The term ‘reformcraft’ was coined by Yehezkel Dror, advisor to the Club of Rome; I use it as a label for my model.

□ [Canada Matters Chart](#)



