COLLABORATIVE GOVERNMENT IN THE POST-INDUSTRIAL AGE

Five Discussion Pieces

Centre for Collaborative Government

The Authorship

This series of articles has benefited from discussions with many people. As the principle author, I have drawn on them freely. In addition, the first article was co-written with Reg Alcock, MP for Winnipeg South. The following four were written in collaboration with Jay Kaufman and Jim Thomas, my colleagues at the Centre for Collaborative Government.

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Changing Government

Since its formation in 1999, the Centre for Collaborative Government has coordinated several national partnership initiatives to research and advance understanding on a variety of leading issues in governance and public sector management.

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Introduction

This is the first publication in the Changing Government series from the new Centre for Collaborative Government. We refer to it as our "signature piece."

The articles share the central theme that interdependence is increasing and that collaboration is the appropriate democratic response. The Centre is committed to promoting democratic values such as transparency and accountability, to strengthening democratic governance, and to the development and use of tools to support collaborative government. Our analysis of some key issues around the future of democratic government thus also serves as a statement of the Centre's mission.

The discussion is based on the premise that countries such as Canada are changing from industrial to knowledge-based societies. In recent years, much effort has gone into analyzing the economic implications of this transition. Much less has been said about how it will affect government.

As governments enter the Information Age, a key challenge will be to manage the transition to a new "collaborative"

We suggest that the "command-and-control" or "departmental" model of government belongs to the Industrial Age. As governments enter the Information Age, a key challenge will be to manage the transition to a new "collaborative" or "networking" model while strengthening democratic values and principles.

Although the departmental model has been used in countries as diverse as Canada, the Soviet Union and the Islamic Republic of Iran, only the first placed it on democratic foundations. It did so by building liberal principles and values into basic concepts such as citizenship, governance and accountability.

If the old model is being replaced, the emerging model should be examined to determine what steps could be taken to ensure that democratic governance is not only preserved but also strengthened. Although this involves a consideration of how new information technology and administrative tools can be used to improve governance, it goes beyond these practical applications. Ultimately, it requires consideration of how the new environment affects our understanding of fundamental categories such as citizenship. A good place to start the discussion is with the phenomenon of **interdependence**.

Interdependence happens when supposedly separate organizations—such as corporations or governments—find themselves connected so that an action by one has consequences for the other. Suppose two governments share common goals, such as sustainable economic development, a healthy population or a competitive workforce. The policies and programs they create to achieve these goals may seek to secure and use the same resources or influence the behaviour of the same population. In a case like this, the actions of one party begin to have consequences for the other. Whether these actions are beneficial or antagonistic depends in part on the compatibility of the governments' planning and management approach.

As interdependence grows, a strategy of coordination, and eventually collaboration—a partnership—becomes

As interdependence grows, a strategy of coordination, and eventually collaboration—a partnership—becomes increasingly attractive and, ultimately, essential. But creating a partnership changes the original relationship. It makes interdependence and collaboration the rule rather than the exception.

The old departmental model of government assumes that the interests and actions of different governments, different departments within a government, or the private sector and government can be kept separate enough for interdependence to be ignored or managed by a central authority. This strategy worked reasonably well for two centuries but it is fast becoming obsolete.

Networking and internet technologies are the basic infrastructure of the knowledge-based society. As they spread and develop, interdependence increases. We have begun to see the effects in the private sector. The old "self-contained corporation" is being replaced by a new vision of "corporations without boundaries" in which mergers, alliances and partnerships are standard business practice. Governments are beginning to take a similar path. Rapid and dramatic changes should follow. Can we envision the government of tomorrow?

The answer is, partly. The metaphor of a jigsaw puzzle is helpful here. Quite a few pieces of the puzzle are now on the table and some have been put together. If the whole picture is not there yet, at least some of the parts are visible.

New results-based management tools that have been introduced into government

We see a new networking model of government emerging. It looks quite different from the old departmental one. For example, information, knowledge and continuous learning are essential features. Network government should be smart government. The model thus promotes—indeed, requires—collaboration, in part because knowledge and learning are quintessentially collaborative enterprises. Finding new ways to understand and manage the new connections—between separate parts of a government, different levels of government, government and the private or third sectors, or government and citizens—will be critical to the successful emergence of network government and the learning culture. In our view, the new results-based management tools that have been introduced into government over the last decade have a crucial role to play here.

A second set of issues concerns how the new government will fare on questions such as openness, transparency, accountability, legitimacy and citizen involvement. Nothing guarantees that these democratic commitments will be strengthened under the new model. Nothing ensures that they won't be. Like departments, networks can be transparent or not. They can enhance democracy or undermine it. Everything depends on how they are designed and managed.

If democracy is to be reaffirmed, it will be crucial that open, informed public

Nothing should be taken for granted here. If democracy is to be reaffirmed, it will be crucial that open, informed public debate guides the transition. If it does, we are confident that citizens will demand that the new system not only reaffirm but strengthen democratic values. Indeed, if the new model is to be truly knowledge-based and supported by a culture of learning, a firm commitment to democratic values such as openness and transparency will be essential. These are key conditions of a learning culture.

In conclusion, the five short articles in this volume form a meditation on aspects of the new model. At the same time, they sound a call for public debate on how best to ensure that it is designed around democratic values and principles. Finally, insofar as the articles point to further work that needs to be done, they contain a program for action and a mission statement for the new Centre for Collaborative Government.

Network Government and the Challenge of the IT Revolution 1

By Reg Alcock and Donald G. Lenihan[1]

The Current Context

During the 1990s governments in Canada underwent major restructuring. Fiscal pressure was the single biggest driver of change. Deficits are now coming under control and pressure is easing. Looking ahead, is there anything on the horizon that might prove to be as powerful a driver of change in the first decade of the 21st century?

The candidate is **networking and internet technology** (NIT). Over the past two decades, we have seen information and communications technology revolutionize business around the world. Today, huge sums of capital flash around the globe at a keystroke. A collapse in confidence in Asia's financial sector can send North American commodity prices into a tailspin. And a single product, such as an automobile that has been assembled in Canada and sold in the US, may also have an engine built in Korea, an interior manufactured in Indonesia, electronic components from Japan and a frame built with Swedish steel. In the private sector, **interdependence** is now a fact of life.

A similar period of transformation has begun in the public sector. Increasingly, private and public interests, responsibilities and actions are linked in complex ways. Managing the connections is becoming the central preoccupation of contemporary governance and administration. Over the next decade, the challenges posed by interdependence will only intensify as the use of NIT accelerates.

An Historical Precedent

The fact that interdependence is suddenly increasing—and changing our system of governance in the process—has an interesting precedent in Canadian history.

When the Fathers of Confederation drafted the British North America Act (BNA Act), they divided the new country's constitutional powers into two exclusive sets, and then assigned one to the federal government and the other to the provinces. The idea was that these two levels of government would co-exist, going about their business within their own separate spheres without intruding on one another's constitutional territory. For example, education was declared a provincial responsibility. The Fathers regarded this head of power as essentially a self-contained domain of policy and programming that had no particular connection with, say, trade and commerce—a constitutional power assigned to the federal government.

For much of the first century after Confederation, the system worked reasonably well. However, by the middle of the 20th century, the world had changed dramatically. Advanced industrial democracies like Canada had become economically and socially diversified, and technologically sophisticated. Their governments were building large professional bureaucracies, and Canadians wanted the state to play a more active role in social and economic life.

[1] An earlier version of this article appeared as an afterword in the report: *Crossing Boundaries: Privacy, Policy and Information Technology*, by Harvey Schachter, New Directions Number 5 (Toronto: Institute of Public Administration, 1999). The report was based on a series of four roundtables held on Parliament Hill in the spring of 1999. The project was chaired by Reg Alcock, Member of Parliament for Winnipeg South.

One consequence was the rise of the welfare state. Federal and provincial governments developed and delivered large, costly and highly complex social programs in areas such as education, health, income security and social services. In the process, however, they discovered that the "watertight compartments" into which constitutional powers had been divided, were anything but. Keeping with our example, education was found to have significant links with commerce. The huge migration from rural farming communities to large urban centres was one significant factor in transforming our educational systems. Having an educated workforce became an increasingly important condition for the economic well-being of the country.

What the Fathers of Confederation saw as a workable separation of powers between federal and provincial governments simply dissolved with the wave of inter–dependence brought on by technological, economic and social

It is not necessary here to revisit in detail the long history of Canada's constitutional debates. The important lesson is this: What the Fathers of Confederation saw in the 1860s as a workable separation of powers between federal and provincial governments simply dissolved with the wave of interdependence brought on by technological, economic and social development. Managing interdependence has been a defining feature of Canadian federalism ever since. The process, notoriously, has not been an easy one.

Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, a second wave of interdependence is beginning with the rapid growth of NIT systems. Not only are these systems dissolving the boundaries between different parts of government, but also between levels of government, government and the private and third sectors and even between national governments. By comparison, the first wave of interdependence begins to look small. Canadians should consider what this means for their country. How are governments responding to increasing interdependence?

Responding to Change

From the point of view of public administration, perhaps the most obvious change in governments concerns the way they operate. A range of new tools and practices (see Article 2) has been adopted. Generally speaking, they do not fit well into the traditional hierarchical, command-and-control, departmental model of government where the organization is divided into sections, each with a specific task, and management happens from the top down. The conventional metaphor for this approach is the pyramid.

By contrast, the new tools favour a **collaborative model** where governments actively engage one another, private- and third-sector organizations, citizens and communities in new kinds of consultative and power-sharing arrangements. The metaphor of choice here is the **network**, with its myriad nodes and connections and relative absence of top and bottom. The following three features of the collaborative model are now standard practice in contemporary approaches to public-sector management.

Focus on results: Over the last decade, new "results-based" management practices have been introduced in most Canadian governments. This changes the way governments plan, implement, report and evaluate. In short, it affects every level of government activity. This is supposed to lead to more coordinated, effective, transparent and accountable government. If there is a central idea here it is that government has been too focused on "process" (*how* it does things) and not focused enough on "outcomes" (the *results* of what it does). The new commitment to manage for, measure and report on results is intended to correct this problem.

Managing horizontally: Under the old model, government departments tend to act in isolation, turning themselves into a series of unconnected "stovepipes." As things become more interdependent, issues increasingly cut across several departments and jurisdictions. In response, governments are developing new, "horizontal" approaches to planning, managing, delivering and reporting on programs. For example, traditional health policy tended to be reactive, focusing on the

curing of illness. Now it focuses on promoting well-being, a more inclusive concept that not only looks at "health determinants," such as education levels, exercise, diet and the environment, but which also encourages citizens to take greater responsibility for managing their own health.

Within many governments, separate departments are now encouraged or even required to organize their programs into "business lines." These are clusters of programs that share a connection to an overarching or "societal" outcome (see Article 2). Interdepartmental planning, coordination and information sharing around societal outcomes is common in some governments, and there is some experimentation with collective reporting. On the service delivery level, single-window service is an attempt to overcome the stovepipes by getting different departments and levels of government to coordinate and integrate related services.

The result of all this is an increasingly network-like look to governments and an anachronistic feel about departments.

Partnerships: A third feature of the new emerging model of government is the focus on partnerships. These can be intergovernmental, interdepartmental, public-private or public-third sector. Traditionally, partnerships between government and the private or third sectors have been much like contracting-out arrangements. Government itemizes the tasks it wants performed and pays the partner for performing them. Now a new and less-structured approach to partnerships is emerging, with the parties aiming more at working together. This can range from a simple co-location of offices to efforts to co-manage policy areas, programs and resources. The key idea here is that at least some of the planning and decision making of government are shared with the partner. We can call these **collaborative partnerships**.

Finding the Fulcrum of Change: Crossing Boundaries

Change is unavoidable; but there are at least two ways to deal with it. We can allow it to happen and then react to it, or we can be proactive and try to manage it. If we opt for the latter, we must move away from the old "command-and-control" model of government, with its rigid structures and top-down approach to management. We need a model that is flexible, horizontal and able to coordinate diverse actors and interests.

The new tools and practices move government in this direction. But they are not enough. If, like a lever, they can be used to move heavy loads, they still require a fulcrum—a point where change comes to a focus—on which they can rest. Is there such a point?

There is no single point in government where all change is concentrated, but there are some parts of the system where the impact of change is most clearly felt. Perhaps the single most important one is the set of departmental, jurisdictional and sectoral **boundaries** that separate a government's activities from other parts of itself, from other governments and from the private and third sectors. These are the walls that support the traditional command-and-control model. NIT systems tend to knock them down.

If greater inter–dependence between walled-in areas cannot and should not be prevented, neither should existing boundaries be

Still, if greater interdependence between walled-in areas cannot and should not be prevented, neither should existing boundaries be allowed to collapse just because pressure for change builds. The system's boundaries define the limits and authority of any part of government. When we say that someone is accountable, for example, we set limits to this by identifying the boundaries within which he or she exercises authority. Boundaries also determine how decisions can be implemented. For example, government usually acts through one of its parts, such as an appropriately mandated agency or department. Both are crucial to ensuring the accountability and transparency of government.

"Managed change" aims at balancing interdependence and separateness. The new tools can facilitate greater integration of some things while keeping others apart. More specifically, departments, governments, organizations and sectors are experimenting with collaborative partnerships that allow for:

- **joint planning and decision making** – uses teams of individuals from a number of organizations to plan and make decisions;
- **integrated service delivery** – ranges from electronic kiosks to partnerships as a way of bringing government(s) together around citizens;
- **common practices and standards** – where governments can agree on these, they help coordinate and integrate activity across boundaries; and
- **joint reporting and evaluation** – this helps governments arrive at similar conclusions which, in turn, helps them coordinate new planning and initiatives.

These new practices change the way government works. They force a rethinking of the command-and-control model of government by redefining how, when, where and why boundaries are permeable, eliminable, elastic, diffuse or firm. If leaders want to manage change effectively, they must learn to use these tools to manage boundaries differently.

Information, NIT and the Collaborative Model of Government

A few key points follow from these reflections.

First, the new partnership practices all make government far more dependent on a cross-boundary flow of information that is current, of high quality, easily accessible and effectively communicated.

Second, because this kind of information is so important to the collaborative model, realizing it will require a major change in the infrastructure government uses to do business. Traditional, hierarchical structures must be supplemented—if not replaced—by horizontal information networks and systems.

Finally, because information systems are horizontal, they will penetrate boundaries of all sorts in the existing system. So, on one hand, information is a key resource of the model of government needed to manage change. On the other, the flow of information itself tends to dissolve the boundaries within the system. The collaborative model thus creates a state of dynamic tension in which boundaries are maintained, but are shifting and diffuse. They are more like electrical fields than the solid walls of the traditional command-and-control model.

Conclusion: The Immediate Task

From the perspectives of politics and administration, the Information Age is about interdependence. As the new systems spread out across departmental and other boundaries, they create vast new information networks and databases that were unthinkable only a generation ago. But these same networks are beginning to dissolve the boundaries around which the old model was designed. As a result, lines of accountability, control over decision making, and the consequences of policies and actions are increasingly diffuse and difficult to discern.

In this new networked world, what appear to be management decisions are suddenly found to have important, if unintended, consequences for governance and vice versa. This raises fundamental questions about the future: **Does the interdependence that results**

from NIT threaten the integrity of the existing departmentally based system? If so, what can be done? Is there a new kind of governmental system evolving within the old one? If so, what is it like?

A key challenge facing government at the millennium lies in how information is

As these questions suggest, a key challenge facing government at the millennium lies in how information is gathered, managed, communicated and shared. And that, in turn, depends upon how the boundaries within the system are managed. Decisions about what information systems to use how, when, where and why thus have both management and governance implications. Changes to our existing model of government that may result from such decisions must respect fundamental democratic values.

The immediate task is to examine and carefully consider how NIT systems are changing the relationship between management and governance. But if NIT and the internet are changing the system of governance; and if, moreover, we are moving to a new networking mode, a further and perhaps even more profound question is raised: What does this mean for the practice of democracy? According to some, IT and the internet are what have been called "transformative" technologies. They not only change how we do things; they change our understanding of who we are. If so, how will this change the way citizens relate to government? Can NIT be used to strengthen democracy? What can be done to ensure that it does not weaken democracy? Does it open up choices for different kinds of democracy? If so, what are the choices? Is liberal democracy at a crossroads?

The kind of analysis, discussion and judgement needed to respond to these issues is complex. It will require the committed participation of political officials, public servants and informed members of the concerned public. Most importantly, it will require leadership. Public servants and legislators must work more closely together. They must become more aware of and attentive to the interdependence of their respective roles. They must be acquainted with and informed about how decisions driven by management priorities can have serious consequences at the governance levels. These themes are discussed further in articles 4 and 5.

In conclusion, the point here is not to identify NIT with any single set of values or outcomes. Of itself, it is neither good nor bad. It is, as many say, only an **enabler**. Everything depends on how it is designed and the ends to which it is put. To guard against negative unintended consequences and to identify new opportunities, we need to ensure that high levels of transparency, openness, accountability are maintained and, if possible, expanded. Otherwise it will be impossible to monitor and assess how new NIT systems are changing government. The next two articles consider some key tools and techniques for achieving this within a networking model.

Introduction: Focusing on Results and Using Societal Indicators

In recent years, two related trends have been central to government reform in many of the member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). First, most have shifted attention away from process and onto results. Second, many are adopting sets of broad "societal indicators" in order to track and report on larger societal trends.

A **results-based approach** to planning, reporting and evaluation requires that departments identify the strategic objectives they want to achieve, organize policies and programs into core business lines that support strategic objectives, set clear sub-objectives for policies and programs, and adopt performance measures to assess their effectiveness. The new approach is supposed to:

- clarify the purpose of a department's programs and services;
- ensure that they reflect and are responsive to client or citizen needs;
- ensure that they support the department's strategic directions;
- provide feedback to management and staff on the quality and effectiveness of programs and services, thus allowing for adjustment and improvements;
- ensure that they are delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible; and
- strengthen government accountability to legislatures through improved reporting.

Societal indicators and outcomes are often used as part of a results-based approach. Examples of outcomes include a healthier population, safer communities, sustainable development, quality education, a vibrant culture, or more productive research and development. Societal indicators are used to track the community's progress toward these outcomes.

When people say what they want their governments to do, the goals are usually articulated in terms of societal outcomes. They say, for example, that they want safer streets or a healthier environment. This poses important issues for how departments understand and report on what they do.

First of all, societal outcomes are rarely if ever the result of activity by a single government or sector. They are "societal" outcomes because they result from activity at a wide variety of levels. For example, a healthy population will be the result of programs from a variety of departments and governments, as well as private- and third-sector activity. Thus a program designed by Environment Canada may do as much to influence population health as those designed by a provincial department of health.

Identifying and tracking societal outcomes thus provides the "big picture" of how the society is doing. Evaluations of or debates over the policies and programs of a

Because no single department or government is responsible for societal outcomes, a department or government must distinguish between (a) the **specific objectives** of policies and programs and (b) the **possible contributions** those policies and programs make to societal outcomes. A department's programs and services are the specific actions that it has taken to achieve its objectives. But the objectives of real programs are usually not as broad and diffuse as a societal outcome. For example, the objective of a "clean needle" program in Vancouver's east end won't be "a healthy population." It will be more focused than that. Perhaps it will be "to reduce the incidence of AIDS and Hepatitis among the community's drug users."

Nevertheless, although a single government should not be responsible for achieving a societal outcome, citizens do expect that their governments will act in ways that are reasonably thought to contribute to these outcomes. Thus it is reasonable to claim that a lower incidence of AIDS and Hepatitis among drug users in Vancouver's east end will contribute to a healthier population. This sets the clean needle program in a larger context. It adds to our understanding of the rationale behind the program, making it easier to assess how a government should seek to deliver on its policy and program commitments; and to see why these commitments matter. Identifying and tracking societal outcomes thus provides the "big picture" of how the society is doing. Evaluations of or debates over the policies and programs of a particular government should occur against this backdrop.

Horizontal Management of Societal Outcomes

Because societal outcomes are the product of multiple causes whose origins lie in a variety of policy fields, governments or sectors, the more governments organize around them, the more interdependent things become. One consequence is that real progress on achieving societal outcomes requires coordination and collaboration.

Results-based management is useful here. It can be used to build a framework for coordinating policies and programs better across departments, jurisdictions and, where partnerships are involved, the private and third sectors—so-called "horizontal" management. The key lies in identifying common outcomes and performance indicators.

Suppose two neighbouring municipalities agree that they want their streets to be safer, and that they will make this a priority. As a first step, they will try to develop policies and programs that produce the outcome. Let's assume that they share common views about the sort of things that will achieve this, such as a stronger police presence, earlier closing hours for bars and nightclubs, and activity programs for youth. By virtue of their commitment to pursue a common objective, some degree of policy and program coordination should follow automatically.

If, in addition, they choose the same performance indicators, even more coordination should occur. As the indicators start to provide feedback on how well the new policies and programs are doing, bad programs should be eliminated, weak ones should be fine-tuned to make them more effective, and new ones should be designed in accordance with the learning that has occurred. As a result, the two governments' programs should become increasingly "coordinated."

In theory, this should happen even if the governments do not discuss their programs with one another. Being committed to the same outcome, adopting the same performance measures, and agreeing to manage for results in effect creates a common policy and management framework. This framework disciplines the choice of policies and programs and how they are managed. Coordination should result. More realistically, however, we can say that the evolution of such a framework makes cooperation and even collaboration between the two jurisdictions easier and less controversial. Insofar as they share common goals and indicators, they have an excellent starting point for cooperation and a strong incentive to work together.

Self-Organizing vs. Command-and-Control Systems

This approach to horizontal management differs from the traditional command-and-control one. In that view, coordination is the product of a coordinator whose job is to survey the system and ensure policies and programs function as a coherent whole. This takes considerable centralization of authority. There must be "someone with the big picture"—traditionally,

Cabinet—who has the vision and authority to monitor and shape the overall direction of government.

By contrast, focusing on common outcomes, using common indicators, and managing for results is more decentralized. In part, it makes coordination a by-product of efforts to close the gap between specific policies and programs, on one hand, and their specific objectives, on the other. Closing this gap automatically results in the alignment of programs with larger societal goals.

Results-based management is thus reminiscent of Adam Smith's famous "invisible hand of the marketplace," which supposedly regulates production and price through the mechanism of supply and demand rather than by fiat. If successful networks really are self-organizing, effective use of results-based tools may hold the key to a smooth transition from the departmental to the networking model. Two interconnected developments will be especially significant here.

First, we saw in Article 1 that governments have begun organizing programs into clusters or "business lines" that share a connection to a particular societal outcome. As this trend progresses, interdepartmental (and intergovernmental) planning, coordination, information sharing and reporting, based on a commitment to shared outcomes, will increase. On the service delivery level, integrated, single-window service and the use of collaborative partnerships will increase.

Secondly, exponential growth in computing power and access to huge reserves of data and information through networking and internet technologies will vastly improve capacity to track, measure and analyze progress toward societal outcomes. As a result, public debate over the merit of particular programs and policies will be supported by far more sophisticated analyses of the results they produce and the contribution they make to societal goals. This, in turn, will increase pressure to coordinate and integrate related programs or clusters of programs, whether across departments, jurisdictions or the public, private and third sectors.

A key challenge for central planners will be to promote greater accountability and policy coherence across the whole of government through (1) identification of appropriate societal outcomes

Overall these developments should lead to a change in the role of central planners. Over time, command-and-control-style management of line departments should diminish in importance. Instead, a key challenge for central planners will be to promote greater accountability and policy coherence across the whole of government through (1) identification of appropriate societal outcomes and indicators; and (2) accurate reporting of overall progress toward their achievement. In turn, this could lead to fundamental changes in how government works on several other fronts, including federal-provincial relations, the engagement of citizens, and the role of parliamentarians. We will touch briefly on each.

Results-Based Coordination and Canadian Federalism

A long-standing issue of Canadian federalism is the management of interdependence. Federal and provincial governments often find themselves active in the same policy fields, sometimes with negative consequences. One problem is overlap and duplication; another results when one government creates a program that inadvertently cancels out or conflicts with the goals of another government's programs. Efforts to achieve better coordination are often fraught with tension. A results-based approach to managing interdependence could help reduce political tensions between Canadian governments.

As federal and provincial governments work to identify and articulate the societal outcomes they want to pursue, they will arrive at a list that contains a number of the same goals, such as a healthier population, safer communities, sustainable development or a more productive economy. These are basic goods that all governments want to promote. If, in addition, they agree to adopt the same or similar performance measures to track progress toward these outcomes,

they will have a common policy and management framework.[2] Moreover, if they have arrived at this on their own, there will be no reason for one government to think that it was strong-armed by another into adopting its goals or management assumptions. This results-based framework would make the management of interdependence much easier.

The emphasis on results means there wouldn't be the same need to debate which policies and programs would best achieve a goal; each government would choose its own path. As long as it remained within the framework, whatever programs and policies were adopted, they should be consistent with those of other governments and should contribute to the goal. At the same time, the process of receiving feedback from the measures and using it to adjust the policies and programs, means that other policies and programs that conflict with or undermine the goal should be weeded out over time.

The development of common management frameworks provides a basis for active cooperation and possibly for intergovernmental collaborative partnerships. When the same societal outcomes are found in different business plans, there will be common concerns and interests, and so the basis for possible cooperation. These may exist between only two governments, in which case the idea of a bilateral process may be appropriate, or they may involve several or all governments, as in some areas of health policy, where it would be natural to think about multilateral partnerships. Where business plans call for the use of private- or third-sector partnerships in service delivery, this may be an option.

A key virtue of this approach is that it allows for diversity in policy and programming. At the same time, it provides a non-partisan approach to the management of interdependence, based upon a commitment to common outcomes. It thus combines a respect for asymmetry at the program level, with a commitment to shared goals at the outcome level.

In conclusion, it should be said that this approach is not proposed as a *replacement* to more traditional approaches to intergovernmental coordination but as a complement to them. We view it as another tool that can be used to improve coordination.

Engaging Citizens through Collaborative Partnerships

Another way that results-based management is leading to innovative approaches is in collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations. In this case, the focus is on transferring some responsibility for the design and delivery of programs and services to the community level. Members of community organizations then become program managers and take on some of the responsibility of results-based coordination.

Unlike the old partnerships, which are based on a contract for the performance of specific tasks, collaborative arrangements contract for results. As with the intergovernmental agreements, the government and the partner(s) negotiate a framework of outcomes, principles, objectives and indicators. The partner(s) then commit to achieving the outcomes and to having their performance evaluated by the indicators. At the same time, they acquire some flexibility regarding the design and delivery of services; tasks which may even include lower-level policy-making.

It is important to note here that this "flexibility" in the partnership amounts to a delegation of some decision-making authority to non-governmental actors. Exactly how much, of course, depends on the agreement. At present, various sorts of collaborative partnerships are in use in a

[2] The Social Union Framework, adopted by federal and provincial governments in 1998, is a recent example of such a framework.

wide range of policy fields. A significant increase in their scope and use could radically change the nature of government.

The Political-Administrative Interface

A further consequence of results-based collaboration reaches beyond public administration into the broader public policy arena. Organizing policies and programs into clear business lines and attaching clear outcomes and performance measures to them should lead to more informed and objective public debate over the merits of various policy options and programs, what they are supposed to achieve and whether they are effective.

For example, inside parliamentary committees this kind of information could help focus and discipline discussion. It would provide members with a clearer statement of the department's strategic thinking, policy framework and action plan for achieving its goals. In addition, it would tell members why the department believed that its policies and programs were good ones, how they were expected to contribute to its goals, and how successfully they seemed to be working. In short, it would provide an integrated and more complete picture of departmental planning and evaluation.

A results-based management approach also would allow members to comment on the "fit" between objectives, policies and programs, and indicators, and suggest refinements or alternatives. Finally, members and their constituents could be given a meaningful role in determining which outcomes should be tracked, measured and reported on, and through which indicators.

This last point could have far-reaching implications. We have noted that the more governments organize around societal outcomes, the more interdependent they become. We also noted that information technology improves the capacity to track and report on progress toward these outcomes, leading to increasingly sophisticated and accurate analyses of the relationship between different policy approaches and their goals. If so, the list of societal outcomes will assume a key role in public debate. They will serve as the "big picture" against which public policies and programs should be debated and assessed. But which outcomes should be included in the list?

In a democracy, the role of elected representatives is to ensure that the values and interests of the whole society are fairly represented in public debate. It is thus their job to ensure that the

There is no single, authoritative answer to the question. It should be decided through democratic debate and decision making. In the end, the list should reflect the overarching values and commitments of the society as a whole. It should stand as a statement of the vision that the members of the society are attempting to create. It defines their collective project. In a democracy, the role of elected representatives is to ensure that the values and interests of the whole society are fairly represented in public debate. It is thus their job to ensure that the list of societal objectives defines a vision that is representative of the Canadian public, rather than of some subgroup.

Overall, then, using results-based planning and reporting tools to strengthen the role of parliamentary committees should contribute to making government more responsive, transparent and accountable.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a results-based approach provides us with new ways of thinking about coordination, partnerships, citizen engagement and public debate. Of course, success in these undertakings assumes that the outcomes identified are not too vague or general, and that the performance measures used to monitor policies and programs are effective. Although some

jurisdictions are more advanced than others, Canadians' collective skill in this area is still weak. As it stands, the outcomes identified often are very general and performance measures may not be very effective.

Nevertheless, the fact that we are at an early stage may be an advantage. There is an opportunity for governments to work together, sharing their experience and expertise. We need a better understanding of what count as appropriate outcomes and effective performance indicators, especially at the societal level. We need better analytical models for assessing the relationship between policies and programs, on one hand, and outcomes, on the other. Finally, we need more sophisticated data systems to support performance measurement. Collaboration between governments on this would greatly facilitate the development of results-based management skills and culture in Canada and the adoption of common indicators and measures for common outcomes.

A business model for managing government would treat its customers as customers in an arm's-length trading relationship. But we are not merely customers of government we are also subjects (who have obligations), citizens (who have rights) and clients (who have complex needs). Thus we need a wide range of models for providing public services.

Henry Mintzberg

Introduction

Providing quality public services is a fundamental goal of Canadian governments. Over the last decade, much effort has gone into rethinking and improving how public services are delivered. In part, this is in response to citizen demand for quality services. In part, it has been inspired by innovative work in the private sector. In addition, new attitudes have played an important role in the introduction of new service delivery tools. For example, because governments now accept that they needn't do everything themselves, partnerships are appearing in many places.

However, even if governments have some powerful new tools, they often fail to use them well. What works well at one time or in one situation may not in another. Deciding what to use where and when can be very difficult. Part of the answer lies in a better understanding of the relationships that public services create.

At least three generic kinds of **service relationships** can be identified. The appropriate standards for quality service, and the means for achieving them, vary with the kind of relationship. This article proposes a framework for a citizen-centred approach to the delivery of public services. The framework not only helps us think through how to improve the delivery of services in a methodical way. It clarifies some basic aspects of the relationship between citizens and government in a liberal democratic state.

Citizen-Centred Service: The Overarching Principle

The principle of client- or citizen-centred service defines a particular approach to delivering public services. It is the foundation of most current trends in government. *Citizen*-centred service contrasts with *government*-centred service. In past, governments tended to organize services around their own priorities and structures rather than those of citizens.

For example, getting a business license in one Canadian province once required visits to over a dozen offices, involving all three levels of government. On adopting a more citizen-centred approach, officials agreed to deliver the service through a single window so that it is now possible to complete the process in a single visit. The challenge of citizen-centred delivery thus is to make government fit the citizen rather than expecting citizens to fit government.

Within a citizen-centred approach, public services should be accessible, convenient, timely and reliable; they should be responsive to citizens' wants

Still, if this were all there was to say about citizen-centred delivery, it would not take us very far. In most cases, a wide variety of alternative delivery options are available. How do we know which ones will make services the most citizen-centred?

The question draws us into the logical structure of the principle. Within a citizen-centred approach, public services should be accessible, convenient, timely and reliable; they should be responsive to citizens' wants and needs and respectful of their rights; and they should be

delivered effectively and efficiently. Applying the citizen-centred principle requires consideration of all these aspects of service delivery. This can be done through a series of three analytical steps:

- identify the **service relationship** that exists;
- decide which **mechanisms** could be used to do things differently within the service relationship; and
- review any **best practices** that might help determine the best models for improving service standards.

The following sections provide a brief account of the three steps.

Identifying the Service Relationship

With respect to service delivery, the relationship between the public and government is complex. At least three basic types of service relationships can be identified. The public can be a customer, client or citizen. The first two have parallels in the private sector. The third one does not. Let's consider each one.

The Public as Customer

The simplest form of service relationship is one in which the public is essentially a *consumer* or *customer*. Government provides a service that focuses on a fairly straightforward **transaction** with a citizen. For example, doing a title-search for liens against a property usually involves going to the proper authority, making the request, providing some basic information and paying a fee. When the transaction is completed, the relationship ends.

The purpose of this relationship is to perform a single service for, or transfer an item to, someone. The customer's interest in **how** the service is provided rarely exceeds a few simple standards. The customer wants a quality product delivered in convenient, accessible, timely and reliable ways. As long as these standards are met, **who** delivers the product or service usually makes little difference to the level of customer satisfaction. The service provider could be one or another level of government; it could be a private-sector agent of government; it could be an electronic kiosk. In the end, what the customer really cares about is the quality of the product and service.

The Public as Client

A more challenging service relationship occurs when the public is a **client** of government. Governments provide some services that go beyond simple transactions. They often create relationships that endure over long periods of time—perhaps years—and which involve a high level of personal engagement between a government representative and a client.

Consider, for example, the relationship that exists between an employment counsellor in a small Human Resources Canada Centre (HRCC) on Cape Breton Island and the local residents. At a minimum, the HRCC counsellor will provide the client with information. But the counsellor also will provide advice, support, direction and opportunities to residents, sometimes over long periods of time or under conditions of considerable stress. For example, the official may advise a client that his or her long-term employment prospects are better if the person retrains in one field rather than another. Or the counsellor may advise a young person to consider leaving the region and seek employment elsewhere.

In such a relationship, an effective counsellor must enjoy a high level of trust and respect from the client. The client must be confident that the counsellor is not only informed and competent, but has the client's best interests at heart. Moreover, where the counsellor is in a position to influence the awarding of opportunities, such as training program grants, the client must be satisfied that decisions are made in ways that are open, transparent and accountable to ensure fairness, while respecting client confidentiality.

So the client relationship is richer and more complex than that of customer. Of course, basic service standards are important here too. The service must be provided in a convenient, accessible, timely and reliable way. But high levels of client satisfaction also require that the relationship be based on a second set of standards that reflect key public service values, such as fairness, openness, transparency, trust and neutrality; and that the client believes that the service provider has his or her best interests at heart.

The Public as Citizen

The most complex service relationship occurs when members of the public are engaged as **citizens**. In a democracy, citizens stand in a very special relationship to government. It exists to serve them and they, in turn, have rights over it and duties to it. Some government services are closely connected to the respect for citizens' rights or the fulfillment of their duties. An example of the former is policing. As keepers of the peace, police are entrusted with exceptional powers. To ensure that these powers are exercised in the service of citizens, strict controls are placed on their use. At the same time, citizens have specific rights that protect them from potential abuses of authority by the police.

As service providers, police forces thus are expected to meet at least three different kinds of service standards. First, as with the customer relationship, they must provide service in a convenient, accessible, timely and reliable way. Second, as with the client relationship, police forces must earn and maintain the trust and respect of the community. This means police business must be conducted in a manner consistent with key public service values such as fairness, openness, transparency, trust and neutrality. The community must also believe that the service provider has its best interests at heart. Finally, because of the exceptional nature of the authority they exercise, police forces must act in ways that respect the rights and privileges of citizens.

Identifying the kind of service relationship that underlies a particular service is the first step in deciding what can be done to make a service more citizen-centred. The higher up the service relationship ladder we climb, the more careful

The citizen relationship is thus quite unlike the other two. Although the customer and client relationships have analogues in the private sector, services based on the citizen relationship do not.

Identifying the kind of service relationship that underlies a particular service is the first step in deciding what can be done to make a service more citizen-centred. The higher up the service relationship ladder we climb, the more careful we must be that introducing new mechanisms to improve service standards at one of the three levels does not weaken it at another. For example, if the relationship is client-based, we must be sure that contracting out to improve customer-based qualities, such as availability, does not compromise client-based ones, such as trust or transparency.

Identifying Mechanisms to Improve Service Standards

Having considered the overarching principle of service delivery and identified the basic service relationship at issue, the next step is to ask what mechanisms are available to improve delivery within that service relationship.

Over the last decade, governments have imported from the private sector a host of "new tools" for service delivery. At the same time, they have adjusted these for the public sector and developed others of their own. Although these tools are heterogeneous, they are often referred to collectively as "alternative service delivery" or ASD. As we noted at the outset, a key issue for managers here has been deciding which new tool to use in which situation. When should something be placed in an independent agency? When should we create a single window? When is a collaborative partnership a good idea?

Although many questions will remain, sorting out the basic service relationship is a major step toward solving this problem. It helps us see more clearly what interests and values are at stake, how they are situated relative to one another, and what standards need to be met to improve the service. Presumably, the more experienced we are at using the different tools, the more confidently we will be able to say which ones improve which standards. This section provides just a few examples of the kinds of tools that governments are now using to improve service relationships.

Information technology such as electronic service delivery, e-commerce, and 24-hour telephone and kiosk services is one important tool for improving service delivery. It can fundamentally change the way that services are provided to the public. It has the power to improve communications and access (broader audiences and easier dissemination of information and services), to improve efficiency and effectiveness (single-window one-stop service delivery), and to increase citizen participation and influence in government decision- and policy-making (interactive policy development and on-line discussion groups). These powerful attributes can make it a good candidate for improving service delivery at the citizen level, where more public involvement can be a way of strengthening the protection of rights. However, new technology cannot always provide an appropriate solution for service delivery. For example, rural, remote or First Nation communities may not have the capacity to access electronic or on-line services.

Partnering with the broader public, private and voluntary sectors can aid governments in providing certain services at the client and even citizen level. In partnerships, government can continue to play a very active and visible role, while allowing the partner to take on some of the duties. Community partnerships can be a good way of ensuring that programs and services are tailored to local needs. Moreover, community organizations often enjoy high levels of public trust and confidence. This can make them excellent partners in the delivery of community-oriented services.

Another strategy for improving service delivery is to redesign the systems and processes by which relevant **information is gathered, integrated and communicated**. In a knowledge-based society, information has a vital role. How it is gathered, integrated and communicated will determine how programs are designed, delivered and evaluated. Indeed, providing information is itself increasingly a crucial service. Often the key step in improving a service is to break the reliance on departmentally based, legacy systems and starting to build horizontal networks by collaborating with other departments and governments.

Although far from an exhaustive list, these are all ways to promote key values underlying different service relationships, thereby making them more citizen-centred.

Best Practices

The last step in applying the framework involves an examination of best practices. The method and point of this should be clear: Drawing on the experience of others is a basic part of learning; if we are considering new ways of doing things, it will be helpful to find similar examples to see

what relevant lessons they may hold for our own project. With experience, our ability to make the right choices about which tools to use where should improve.

Conclusion

In focusing on government as a service provider, this article explores a key aspect of the relationship between citizens and the state. Although governments are more than just service providers, this is a primary task. Citizens expect their governments to respond to their needs through a range of programs and services. This requires an understanding of and respect for service relationships. Changes that alter or undermine fundamental aspects of a service relationship, such as public trust or individual rights, undermine the legitimacy of government.

In conclusion, innovations and improvements in service delivery are not only allowed—they are expected. New service delivery tools, such as partnerships, single windows or independent agencies can be powerful aids in improving service quality. But it is crucial that governments use them in ways that respect the particular service relationship they are intended to improve.

Citizenship in the Knowledge-Based Society 4

Introduction

Canadians are moving to a knowledge-based economy. This article distinguishes three strategic goals that are essential to a successful transition:

- building the networking and internet technology (NIT) infrastructure;
- ensuring that Canadians have opportunities to acquire the right knowledge, skills and training; and
- creating a learning environment that results in innovative use of the new technology.

The article concentrates on the third goal. It suggests that developing strategies that lead to innovation takes us beyond the usual discussions of government programs and policies. We need to consider how the new environment is changing citizenship and identity. The article sketches a view of these based upon inclusiveness that could support a major strategic initiative to promote a learning environment that is conducive to innovation.

From Knowledge-Based Economy to Learning Culture

Assisting Canadian enterprises to establish a globally competitive, knowledge-based economy is a key strategic goal of Canadian governments. For example, Industry Canada has shown leadership in this area through its Connecting Canadians initiative. The goal is to get Canadian governments, businesses, schools, libraries, etc. on-line by 2004 through the creation of a nation-wide fibre-optic cable system, making Canada one of the most "wired" countries in the world.

A successful transition to the new economy must be accompanied by the emergence of

The project has been compared to building the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 19th century. Like the railway, it is expected to mark a change in the way Canadians live and work. Preparing Canadians for the new economy thus involves more than building the right IT infrastructure; it also involves cultural change. In particular, Canadian governments, businesses and other organizations must view the process of wealth creation in the new economy differently from that in the resource-based, industrial economy they seek to leave behind. A successful transition to the new economy must be accompanied by the emergence of a robust culture of learning**.** In government circles, this is now quite widely viewed as an economic imperative.

On the cusp of the new era, then, a major challenge facing Canadian governments is to help conceive and establish such a culture—within their own ranks, in the private and third sectors, and among Canadians. What steps can governments take to promote a learning culture? What should it look like?

Two essential characteristics of a genuine learning culture are life-long learning, and a

Two essential characteristics of a genuine learning culture are **life-long learning**, and a **personal and collective openness to change**. Meeting the first condition involves ensuring that Canadians have the **skills, knowledge and training** that are essential to success in the new environment. Maintaining these will require life-long learning. But having the right knowledge, skills and training won't be enough—even if they are continuously upgraded.

For example, computers now do many of the technical processing jobs that employed people in the past. In the new economy, competitive businesses don't need people with information processing skills. They need people who are trained to think creatively and flexibly with the information they have. Again, because computers perform so many tasks, organizational

structures are now much flatter; there are fewer middle managers, and the role of middle management is changing. New-style middle managers need greater interpersonal and communications skills to deal with clients and to work within self-directing teams. Such skills are not acquired through technical knowledge and training. [3]

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) economist Lester Thurow makes a different but related point in his recent book *Building Wealth: The New Rules for Individuals, Companies, and Nations in a Knowledge-Based Economy*. He maintains that the IT revolution is the third (and final) stage of the Industrial Revolution. When the revolutionary technologies of the first two stages were introduced, people at first failed to recognize the real potential for change. Instead, they tended to use the new technology to perform existing tasks. Although this increased efficiency, it didn't create new products, markets or ways of doing business. That took another several decades.

We are using new technology largely to do old jobs more efficiently; we have not yet begun to tap its

Thurow maintains that emerging post-industrial economies like Canada are now in a similar lag period. The technology is there but we are using it largely to do old jobs more efficiently. As a result, we have not yet begun to tap its real potential for change and wealth creation. The dividends that flow from such applications will belong to those societies with the creativity and vision to define entirely new products and ways of doing things through the new technology.

The moral here is that building the new IT infrastructure is not enough. Nor is it enough to ensure that Canadians have the appropriate knowledge, skills and training to use the technology effectively. If Canadians are to be leaders in the new economy and reap the real benefits of the technology, they must use these tools **innovatively** to create new products and new ways of doing things. In the new economy, innovation is the handmaiden of success. But thinking and acting innovatively require a special kind of learning environment. Innovation requires a culture in which reflection and experimentation are encouraged, error is expected and a personal commitment to excellence is the norm. It requires what perhaps we can describe as a culture of **personal and collective openness to change**. Is there a foundation on which Canadian governments could build an initiative aimed at promoting such a culture among Canadians?

Diversity, Inclusiveness and the New Citizenship

Diversity is a fundamental value of Canadian society. This distinguishes Canadians from many other countries that are also building a knowledge-based economy, such as Japan and Korea. Creating a society that incorporates diversity as a fundamental value, as Canadians have done, lays the foundation for a culture of personal and collective openness that provides a "comparative advantage." In a knowledge-based economy, diversity can be viewed as a major resource. It is a potent source of new ideas, attitudes, visions, perspectives, challenges and opportunities. A society that has learned to accommodate—and even flourish—in the midst of diversity has already taken a giant step toward developing the kind of learning environment that leads to innovation. In such a society, diversity is high-grade social capital.

Creating a society that incorporates diversity as a fundamental value, as Canadians have done, lays the foundation for a culture of personal and

There is good reason to think that Canadians can develop a culture of personal and collective openness, and that this is an ideal moment in history to do so. Indeed, it may not be too much to speak of the creation of a new kind of cultural identity around shared citizenship, one that incorporates diversity. How would such an identity differ from the old ones?

Over the last two hundred years, views of the connection between citizenship and identity have been heavily influenced by the 19th century vision of a nation-state. Membership in such a state is

[3] See *Education and Technological Revolution: The Role of the Social Sciences and the Humanities in the Knowledge Based Economy*, Robert C. Allen, Government of Canada, November 1999.

based upon full participation in the distinctive practices of a culturally homogenous group of people. Such a state allows members of the group to live together under a government whose highest priorities include the protection, preservation and promotion of the group's distinctive practices and common identity. The nation-state thus institutionalizes promotion of an identity based upon **exclusiveness** in order to provide cultural security.

In contrast, the new approach seeks to institutionalize an identity based upon **inclusiveness** through the creation of a culture of learning. Such an identity incorporates diversity by making us conscious of how cultural practices and values shape and influence attitudes, dispositions, feelings, beliefs, judgements and, ultimately, actions and behaviour. This involves a fundamental change in how citizens relate to their culture. In particular, they must be willing and able to plumb their own depths; to engage in self-examination in ways that make them aware of what separates them from other peoples and communities, and what makes them the same. Further still, they must be **open to personal and collective change** so that when differences are too great and more unity is needed to ensure cohesion and stability, they are able and willing to reflect on their habits, beliefs, dispositions and practices and consider the possibility of change.

An identity based on inclusiveness goes beyond merely accommodating diversity. It builds change and innovation into its very essence. It is neither passively acquired nor static. It is a

The idea of an identity based on **inclusiveness** thus goes beyond merely accommodating diversity. It builds change and innovation into its very essence. It is neither passively acquired nor static. It is a dynamic form of engagement between citizens and their collective cultural heritage.

This approach to "identity-building" is very different from the nation-building of the past. The cultural identities that nation-states sought to strengthen were acquired and preserved in largely *passive* and even *unconscious* ways, such as life-long—and often unquestioning—participation in traditions, rituals and other distinctive cultural practices. The nation-state acted as a buffer around these mechanisms, shielding them from potentially threatening external forces. The state also used its authority to promote and reinforce the traditions, rituals and practices on which its own authority rested.

A culture of learning turns this on its head. It opens citizens to the possibility of experiencing identities other than their own. It encourages them to reflect, question and experiment. Thinking and acting inclusively requires effort and training. If it is true that humans have a natural capacity for this, it is also true that other inclinations or forces can weaken or undermine it—such as the unreflective participation in tradition, ritual and habit. Ultimately, inclusiveness is a skill or trait that must become part of who we are as persons, part of the structure of our own identity. That does not prevent each of us from having a traditional cultural identity. Nor does it imply the creation of a single, new homogeneous one. It does imply that distinctive cultural identities must permit the cultivation of openness.

Ultimately, inclusiveness is a skill or trait that must become part of who we are as persons, part of the structure of our own identity. That does not prevent each of us from having a traditional cultural identity. Nor does it imply the creation of a

We believe this is in keeping with the aspirations of minority peoples in many countries. In Canada, for example, loss of traditional identities and, ultimately, assimilation into the cultural mainstream is a preeminent concern of Aboriginal peoples. A sense of historical rootedness and belonging plays a crucial role in defining who one is and in helping to establish and maintain self-respect. Aboriginal peoples are fully justified in their desire to preserve and strengthen their traditional identities. At the same time, many Aboriginal individuals and communities want to participate fully in Canadian society and to be integrated into the larger community of which they are a part. An identity based upon inclusiveness does not view these two goals as incompatible.

An identity based on inclusiveness would be more than a political achievement; it would also be a *cultural* one based upon a new sense of transnational identification. To be a Canadian citizen is to have a "feel" for what it is like to be part of many different peoples and places at once,

without abandoning one's own identity. The Canadian vision is one of *inclusiveness* rather than *exclusiveness*. This is well beyond the traditional liberal value of *tolerance*, which requires little more than a willingness to permit practices or lifestyles that one may privately condemn and wish to prevent. It is even beyond the traditional liberal ideal of *understanding*, which requires recognition and acknowledgement that a practice or lifestyle may have its own validity. Inclusiveness is a kind of openness to the experience of others that engenders genuine *respect* for who they are.

Conclusion

Proposing to promote cultural change through a change in the structure of personal and collective identity is an ambitious project, to say the least. Such an undertaking would take vision and commitment. But there is good reason to regard such a project as timely and appropriate, if not imperative. When we examine history, we see that there are times when such changes occur. One example is during the first phase of the Industrial Revolution. That period coincided with the rise of liberal democracy in Western Europe and North America. The result was a new emphasis on individual liberty and equality that permanently changed the Western world's conception of individuals and their place in society.

This is a time of equally significant change. Already, we see that the world is a vastly different place from what it was only 30 years ago. It is hard to imagine what it will be like 30 years from now. But it does not take a great leap of faith to conclude that the "globalizing" effect of networking and internet technology will change the experience of being human. From a policy point of view, the pressing question concerns how much or how far we can define those changes. And, insofar as we can, which ones do we want?

This, in turn, raises many other searching questions: How should we practice democracy in the future? What kind of governance systems do we want? What are the rights, responsibilities and common bonds of citizenship in a knowledge-base society? How flexible is human nature? How able are we to incorporate diversity and difference into the sense of who we are?

Perhaps the most pressing questions concern the role of government in promoting an identity based on inclusiveness. What steps can government take? Are there strategies and processes that it can execute to achieve this goal? If so, what are they?

Responding to these questions requires debate. It cannot be held behind closed doors or involve only elites. The questions are about the most fundamental values, practices and institutions in our society: democracy, governance, citizenship and the experience of being human. This is a time of great change. Democratic discussion and debate on the future should reflect this by being as inclusive and as far-reaching as can be managed.

Introduction

Opinion leaders in democracies around the world are calling for greater **citizen engagement**. Citizens are demanding it. Both say that it will make government more effective, open, transparent and accountable.

Is this true? If it is, does it follow that the more citizens are engaged, the more effective, open, transparent and accountable government will become? Or, on the other hand, will those results be more likely through selective or limited engagement of citizens?

The general view seems to be that the new technology will strengthen democracy. There is no such guarantee. If we are to ensure that governments of the future are open

These are difficult questions. Though full answers are not provided here, this article takes a step in that direction. It begins with a reflection on the role of citizens in democratic societies. On this basis, it suggests the need for a broad process of public discussion and debate on the impact of networking and internet technologies (NIT) on government. The general view seems to be that the new technology will strengthen democracy. There is no such guarantee. If we are to ensure that governments of the future are open, transparent and accountable, we must begin building those commitments into the system now. Delay could be costly, both in dollars and for the practice of democracy.

Citizens have a right to be directly involved in this discussion. Elected officials have a responsibility to involve them. Appropriately, we begin with a brief reflection on the relationship between citizen engagement and democracy.

Democratic Foundations of Citizen Engagement

Democracy gives citizens a fundamental role in political decision-making or **governance**. It does this either by allowing them to pronounce on issues (direct democracy) or to choose leaders who will act on their behalf (representative democracy). Although modern democracies lean toward the representative side of the continuum, many mechanisms exist that involve citizens directly, ranging from advisory councils to town hall meetings to national referendums. Recent experience with the internet, ranging from chat rooms to the near-spontaneous emergence of political demonstrations and coalitions, suggests that it will be a major new avenue for direct democracy. But we are in the very early stages of the development of this new forum, and far from clear on the long-term potential.

Why promote more citizen engagement? The classic view is that it is essential to good government. But the argument has at least two forms.

One form claims that government should promote the public interest and that democratic decision-making is the most reliable means of doing that. This isn't meant to suggest that public opinion is always right; but that on balance or over the long term, it is the most reliable guide to selecting priorities or leaders that best serve the community. By contrast, governments controlled exclusively by non-elected elites, whether bureaucrats, aristocrats or dictators, suffer from a fatal weakness. However well intentioned at the outset, decision makers like these eventually become insulated or corrupt, which undermines their capacity to provide good governance. So, in this view, democracy is a strategy for ensuring that decision making promotes the public interest "on balance" or "over the long term." Democracy is a **means to the end** of good governance.

A different defense turns on the claim that individuals have inalienable rights. More specifically, they should be free to make basic choices about the lives they wish to live—even though these may *not* be in their best interest. For example, even though I may have little talent and am unlikely to succeed, I may wish to be an artist. In this view, I should be free to pursue this goal. Democracy is about respecting my right to make this kind of choice about my life.

Unlike the first defense, this one doesn't claim that democracy leads to the best policies or leaders being chosen. Instead, it is defended as the only morally acceptable political system. All others limit freedom through an excessive use of coercive force. Democracy is thus more than a means to an end. It is the political system that permits freedom. As such, it is **intrinsically valuable**.

We needn't choose between the two. Indeed, neither is the *right* view of democracy. On one hand, all contemporary democracies are part of a tradition that goes back to the American Revolution, with its idea that all persons are born free and possess inalienable rights. This idea is invoked whenever we insist on our right or that of others to make controversial choices. On the other hand, most democrats believe that, over the long term, openness, transparency and public involvement improve governance.

Nevertheless, the two views are in tension with one another. We view this as creative or constructive tension—what might be called "democratic" tension. As with the tension between direct and representative democracy, political debate often moves back and forth between them, as it works to balance one against the other. What does this imply about citizen engagement?

The Goals of Citizen Engagement

The four components of democracy just identified—direct and representative decision-making, citizen participation as a means to good governance, and respect for individual freedom—are fundamental to it. They are embedded in the institutions, practices, laws and history of all democratic societies. However, they are incorporated in complex ways that differ from country to country and change over time. How the institutions and practices of a society balance and integrate these features defines its **political culture**, its "brand" of democracy.

For example, Americans have traditionally placed a high value both on having a direct say in decision making and on respecting individual freedom. An illustration of the first point is the right of citizens in a number of states to initiate referendums. By contrast, Canadians have been more deferential to authority and more pragmatic. As a result, their politics has been less inclined to populism than that of Americans, and their institutions and practices more inclined to view the preservation of peace, order and good government as a natural limit on direct democracy.

Effective democracies require ongoing attention to the balance between direct and representative decision-making. **Citizen engagement aims at realigning the balance between these two.** More specifically, it aims at moving away from representative structures and toward more directly participatory ones in order to: (a) improve the quality of governance; or (b) give better expression to the respect for individual freedom. Ultimately, engaging citizens is a way of **empowering** them, whether through a greater role in governance or greater exercise of personal freedom.

Why is Engagement an Issue Now?

Democracy assumes that citizens have meaningful opportunities to voice concerns, whether directly or through a representative. Without this, public debate is not truly representative and

Democracy also assumes that citizens regard their public institutions and processes as fair. Without this, decisions and

the decisions that result are more likely to reflect the interest of a minority rather than that of the general public. They will not lead to good governance. But democracy also assumes that citizens *regard* their public institutions and processes as fair. Without this, decisions and actions will lack *legitimacy*.

Ensuring the opportunity to voice concerns and nurturing the belief that they will be heard and duly considered are basic conditions of a healthy, effective and evolving democracy. Although the two are interdependent, they are not the same. One refers to how the institutions and processes of government are designed, the other to how attitudes and beliefs about them affect their use.

To be viewed as legitimate, democratic institutions and processes must be regarded as fair and equitable at both levels—there must be a good fit between the two. This "fit" provides the moral ground on which the **social contract** between citizens and government rests. It defines the parameters of government's authority to make decisions and to act in the public interest. It constitutes, in the broadest sense, the terms and conditions that underwrite the **consent of the governed**. Respecting and maintaining this consent is at the heart of a government's legitimacy.

In democracies around the world today, significant numbers of citizens feel that their governments are not respecting the contract. They think governments are not responsive to their concerns; that they often create and follow their own agendas; and that two decades of changes and reforms have eroded democracy. At the same time, primarily as a result of television and other mass media, the public has an increasingly sophisticated understanding of politics and government. There is heightened awareness that government is there to serve them, both as a guarantor of the larger political process and as a provider of services. Early experiments with the internet suggest that a wave of citizen-based reaction may be forming. Discovering that the technology empowers them has some citizens not only demanding a more direct role in decision making but seizing one. Does this trend signal serious erosion of the legitimacy of government? Can legitimacy be restored or maintained?

The New Environment

After the Second World War a broad political consensus emerged within Western democracies. Most citizens accepted government's growing role in building the welfare state and managing key aspects of the economy. By the 1980s, this consensus had broken down. Governments began downsizing. At the same time, they deregulated many areas and liberalized trade. In the 1990s, concern over public debt and deficits led to major and rapid government restructuring around the world. As we saw in articles 1 through 3, new management tools and approaches were imported from the private sector; governments started managing for results, contracted-out or privatized many services, and began experimenting with partnerships.

The changes have affected citizens in a variety of ways. One concern is that governments have been overtaken by "managerialism"—the view that government is essentially a business. Many citizens fear that governments are too preoccupied with the pursuit of effectiveness and efficiency through better systems and tools, and do not pay enough attention to democratic values and processes. The result is a loss of confidence and trust in government. For governments, this is a loss of legitimacy.

Networking and internet technologies could make the situation worse. They vastly increase the speed at which transactions of all sorts occur, the range of communications, and the availability of information. As a result, governments are inclined to take a managerial approach to them,

regarding them as essentially tools to do things more efficiently or effectively. This understates their potential as instruments of democratic governance and, in all likelihood, their impact. Just as the printing press and steam engine turned out to be far more than tools for faster, more efficient ways of producing books or moving heavy loads, the new technology will do more than speed up government. It will change the nature of government and its relationship to citizens. It should do so in ways that enhance and strengthen democracy as well as increase efficiency and effectiveness.

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The Challenge

In this collection of articles we have argued that a torrent of change is being set in motion by new technology and that a new "networking" or "collaborative" model of government is emerging. Although this will be difficult to adapt to, one way or another, organizational structures and cultures will evolve towards the new model. [4] There is a choice to be made: Governments can react to change after the fact; or they can try to plan for and manage change as it unfolds.

If governments fail to rise to the challenge posed by the new technology, there is no guarantee that its use will preserve rather than erode democratic values. Under a networking model, high levels of accountability, transparency and openness are quite possible. Indeed, there is every reason to think that they can be enhanced. But they are realized in new ways that would be unlikely to evolve under the departmental model.

A previous challenge is worth recalling. In the 1950s and '60s, new highway systems unrolled across the continent. They changed the world in which people lived. City dwellers who had rarely left their neighbourhoods were suddenly mobile. With hindsight, it is clear that governments failed to appreciate and plan for the changes this would bring. Within two decades, the core of many urban centres had been all but abandoned—"hollowed out." Sprawling suburban zones with endless strip malls sprung up around the cities. Urban planners today regard the period as a planning disaster. Four decades later, they are still picking up the pieces.

With the spread of information networks, boundaries separating the internal parts of government, levels of government, and government and the private or third sectors, will become increasingly porous. As this happens, the lines between departments, governance and management, policy and implementation, public and private, will be increasingly hard to draw. In short, the divisions of labour on which parliamentary democracy rests are beginning to dissolve.

The longer we avoid change, the greater the chance that the new system will have evolved in ways that make openness,

Although understanding of how the new system might work and how to build democratic values into it is progressing, there is a long way to go. Much needs to be done on developing reliable mechanisms, processes and procedures. Thus we suggested in Article 2 that accountability should be closely linked to performance and, ultimately, the achievement of results.[5] Understanding how and why, and learning to use the new management tools in a networking environment requires a change in our expectations, our thinking and our practices. The longer

[4] It is noteworthy that the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission recently decided against regulation of media services on the internet. See *CRTC Won't Regulate The Internet,* CRTC news release, May 17, 1999.

[5] A more detailed treatment of these issues can be found in *Thinking Through the "Alternative" in Alternative Service Delivery: Toward a New Framework for ASD*, by Donald G. Lenihan, forthcoming July 2000 on the Centre for Collaborative Government website. Also see *From Controlling to Collaborating: When Governments Want to be Partners*, by Jim Armstrong and Donald G. Lenihan, New Directions Number 3 (Toronto: Institute of Public Administration of Canada, January 1999). Also available on IPAC's website at www.ipaciapc.ca.

we avoid change, the greater the chance that the new system will have evolved in ways that make openness, transparency and accountability difficult or costly to secure.

Conclusion: Between Leaders and Citizens

There is still a tendency within government to look at the new networking and internet technology as essentially a "management tool." It is approached as something that can be used to speed up government, to make it more efficient. Although true, this fails to appreciate how profoundly and how quickly new technology is changing government. It also fails to appreciate the possible risks for democracy as well as the opportunities to strengthen and improve it.

If we want to improve governance and democracy, there must be public debate. According to the analysis provided here, it should explore three central themes:

- the role of the new networking and internet technology;
- the tools, skills and culture needed for successful results-based management; and
- the implications of organizing public programs and services around societal outcomes.

We have argued that democratic governments cannot legitimately change the social contract without the consent of the governed. The picture we see emerging from the convergence of these themes does change the social contract; it redesigns government and its relation to citizens. Elected officials and citizens therefore must become part of the process, or governments will risk losing legitimacy. Citizens must have a direct role in affirming the new model.

Leadership must arise from duly elected officials who are ready, willing and able to commit to a visionary program of change through

In conclusion, a better understanding of the tools underlying the new collaborative model of government is only one part of the work that must be done. Providing **democratic leadership** that engages and empowers the public will be at least as important. First and foremost, this leadership must arise from duly elected officials who are ready, willing and able to commit to a visionary program of change through democratic debate and discussion with the citizens they represent. This collection of articles sounds a call for such leadership.