Leveraging our Diversity:
Canada as a Learning Society

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Centre for Collaborative Government

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Introduction and Executive Summary

The decision by Canada's Fathers of Confederation to adopt a federal form of government in 1867 was not a foregone conclusion. Some of them favoured a unitary state – including Sir John A. MacDonald, the country's first prime minister. In the end, federalism was agreed to as a good compromise between full integration and the status quo of independent colonies. It was an experiment with a new kind of governance tool that the Fathers hoped could unite different communities under a single government for common purposes while recognizing their differences through the creation of separate regional governments. It was also a *commitment* to respect the new country's diverse linguistic, cultural and regional communities.

Respect for diversity has thus been central to Canadian politics since the beginning. Regional, linguistic and cultural accommodation is integral to the Canadian social contract. It is a quintessential Canadian value. Nevertheless, a variety of new forces, including globalization, the spread of information and communications technologies (ICTs), and highly mobile populations are raising a new questions about Canadians' commitment to diversity. What is implied by it? How has it changed over time? What should it mean for Canadians today?

If it is true that Canadians are committed to the principle of respect for diversity, it is equally true that for much of their history they have tended to regard their diversity as an issue or a problem to be managed. In many ways, it remains such today. Nevertheless it is time to move beyond this narrow view.

This paper explores the idea that, in a knowledge-based society, diversity should be recognized as a resource. It proposes that diversity be viewed as high-grade social capital that has a significant contribution to make in developing the human capital needed for the 21st Century.[1] The working assumption is that, properly leveraged, diversity can become a powerful contributor to ***learning and innovation*** – both crucial conditions for success in a knowledge-based economy.[2]

If the argument is accepted, what should Canadian governments do to ensure that the institutions and organizations that support Canadians' participation in the new economy promote learning and innovation? What role should diversity play?

> **The position argued for here is that governments should take steps to transform Canada from an educated to a learning society.**

The position argued for here is that governments should take steps to transform Canada from an ***educated*** to a ***learning*** society. An educated society is one that promotes learning as a state or *level of achievement*—usually attained in the first quarter of an individual's life. A learning society is one whose institutions and organizations foster learning as a *way of life*, an activity that continues from birth to old age.

A learning society must rest on the right values and culture. It also requires the right kind of individual training and the right opportunities for personal development. To that end, this paper sets out a vision of Canada as a ***cultural network***, that is, a culturally diverse society in which ***intercultural learning*** is regarded as a basic human skill and a social good.

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[1] The term "social capital" is used in a manner considerably less precise than in the work of Robert Putnam. It is intended to be suggestive – a metaphor that encourages us to explore useful connections between what we know about how physical capital increases productivity and whether or how diversity might do the same. There is no pretense to being rigorously analytical about how social capital is to be defined or measured. It is too early for that. If the argument of the paper is accepted, those questions will certainly have to be faced, but not yet.

[2] In a forthcoming paper entitled `Urban Economy and Society in Canada: Flows of People, Capital and Ideas' Meric Gertler argues that there is now compelling evidence that immigration flows to large cities in North America enrich their cultural economies by endowing them with distinctive forms of cultural capital. ISUMA, Vol. 2, No 3: Fall 2001.

The institutions and organizations in such a society are designed to facilitate intercultural learning as a key source of new ideas, perspectives, values and priorities in all aspects of daily life, ranging from the workplace to the family dinner table. ICTs are a vital part of the institutional infrastructure that supports the process of intercultural learning. They act as drivers of diversity and tools of cultural transformation.

Planning and building a learning society thus goes well beyond preparing Canadians for participation in the knowledge-based economy. It requires cultural change that involves three basic values, on three levels. At the individual level it requires openness; at the organizational/institutional level, it requires inclusiveness; and at the societal level, it requires recognition. In this paper these are referred to as the *three pillars of intercultural learning*.

The analysis of intercultural learning and the identification of the three pillars could help us better understand the relationship between Canada's public institutions, stakeholders and citizens in the 21st Century. It underlines the fact that the Canadian social contract rests on a commitment to respect diversity.

What are the implications for governance? The analysis of intercultural learning and the identification of the three pillars could help us better understand the relationship between Canada's public institutions, stakeholders and citizens in the 21st Century. It underlines the fact that the Canadian social contract rests on a commitment to respect diversity. The paper aims to contribute to this in three ways:

- conceptualizing the transition,
- proposing some first steps toward a basic strategy for facilitating it, and
- considering some of the implications for the role of government.

Although intercultural learning is central to the discussion here, there is no suggestion that it is the only important principle, value or concept involved in building a learning society. Nevertheless, it has an important contribution to make to a number of initiatives that converge on that overarching goal, including:

- fostering innovation
- renewing the public services
- implementing government online
- refining the understanding and use of new governance and management tools, such as collaborative partnerships and citizen engagement
- encouraging development of the appropriate human capital for the 21st Century
- strengthening and modernizing the idea of citizenship
- "branding" Canada internationally

The position argued for here is that a greater awareness of and emphasis on intercultural learning would enhance their contribution to that goal.

All of these initiatives (and others not mentioned here) contribute to the goal of establishing a learning society. The position argued for here is that a greater awareness of and emphasis on intercultural learning would enhance their contribution to that goal.

Finally, the view that diversity is a form of social capital needs a champion. The Department of Canadian Heritage is naturally positioned to assume this role. This paper suggests that a critical starting point is to engage in a dialogue on how diversity can help Canadians position themselves for success in the new economy and move Canada towards the goal of becoming a learning society.

Part1: Rethinking Diversity

Canadians have traditionally recognized three basic kinds of diversity:

- cultural
- social
- individual

The first one centres on differences between ethnic or ***cultural*** groups. For example, the 1867 Constitution guarantees certain minority religious and linguistic rights. The official commitment to multiculturalism in the 1970s significantly broadened the diversity focus. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the 1982 Constitution guarantees existing Aboriginal rights and proclaims the importance of recognizing and respecting Canada's multicultural heritage. For most of the country's history, government recognition of and support for cultural diversity focused mainly on linguistic and regional groups. In a different – and unfortunate – way, Aboriginal groups were recognized through measures such as the Indian Act and the creation of reserves. Recent initiatives aimed at establishing self-government for Aboriginal peoples attempt to provide redress for these earlier actions.

Canadians made another kind of commitment to respect diversity when they adopted federalism as a way of respecting regional differences.

Canadians made another kind of commitment to respect diversity when they adopted federalism as a way of respecting regional differences. Although regional diversity is similar to cultural or ethnic diversity in that it is group-based, it is less dependent upon shared traditions, customs, rituals, practices, beliefs and values. Regional groups are united as much by shared economic concerns as ethnic or cultural ones. Thus people with very different racial, ethnic or cultural backgrounds often belong to the same regional group.

The constitution of the federal Parliament also recognizes regional diversity through the Senate, whose primary role is to balance representation by population with representation by region.

Although regional groups have been recognized the longest of any non-ethnic diversity group in Canada, they are not the only ones. Encouraged by the equality provisions in the Charter, governments have responded to action by a variety of other groups, including women, homosexuals and persons with disabilities. As a result, the number and range of groups seeking some form of government recognition and sponsorship in the name of diversity – so-called "identity groups" – has multiplied. We can call non-ethnic, group-based diversity **social** diversity.

The argument has been made that to equate diversity with any kind of group-based differences is arbitrary, if not unfair, from a public-policy perspective. This suggests a third paradigm of diversity. In this view, if diversity is about difference, it is a fundamental characteristic of all human relationships, not just group-based ones. No two individuals are the same. Everyone is different. Some maintain that diversity should be about respecting people's right to be different without privileging one person's differences over another's. Why single out particular groups for special treatment, they ask? For them, the role of government is to protect the right of individuals to be different, not to promote particular forms of difference based on group membership.

We can call this *individual* diversity. Canadians are also committed to the liberal democratic tradition, based on the belief in limiting the power of government to protect individual freedom. This commitment is clear from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees most of the traditional liberal rights and freedoms.

At different times, Canadians' commitment to respect various kinds of diversity has been taken to mean quite different – even opposing – things. Tensions between the three forms of diversity have sometimes been acute.

We can call these the *three diversity paradigms*. At different times, Canadians' commitment to respect various kinds of diversity has been taken to mean quite different – even opposing – things. Tensions between the three forms of diversity have sometimes been acute. At others, the balance has worked quite well. The experience of diversity can and does change over time.

Today Canadian society is in the midst of major change. Globalization, the spread of ICTs, and mobile populations are producing new levels and new forms of diversity in all three paradigms. Moreover, the spokespersons for these interests are increasingly well organized and articulate.

Many Canadians view some aspect of the changes with alarm. For example, some fear that the proliferation of well-organized diversity groups is making the political process too beholden to narrowly focused interests. Others think the political culture has become too individualistic and, as a result, government either has become too focused on promoting private economic interests or is failing to protect "traditional" family, community or cultural values.

Where once there was an underlying consensus on Canadian values and goals, increasingly there is only difference and dissent. The critics fear that too much diversity will fragment Canadian society.

Notwithstanding such differences over where and why diversity is a problem, the critics tend to agree on the result: Where once there was an underlying consensus on Canadian values and goals, increasingly there is only difference and dissent. The critics fear that too much diversity will fragment Canadian society. They want governments to act to prevent this, either by disengaging from interest groups or by promoting "traditional" family, community or cultural values.

The concern that diversity may undermine shared values and goals is often explained in ways that echo the theory of the classical or 19th Century nation-state. In this view, shared values and goals are rooted in a shared history and a shared identity, which underwrite the idea of a consensus. Preserving consensus by preserving identity is the ultimate task of government. Too much of the "wrong kind" of diversity is seen as weakening the bonds of community. In particular, those who hold this view have concerns over the growth in recent decades of Canada's visible minority population. In several urban centres, including Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, those of European stock are or will soon be in the minority, as the number of people from other racial, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds rises.

Now if by "shared values and goals" one means the sort associated with a 19th Century-type national identity, it seems clear that Canadians have never had such a consensus. Presumably, this is because we have never had a national identity in the classical sense. Since the beginnings of European settlement here, concerns over linguistic, regional and Aboriginal diversity have underlined the tenuousness of claims on behalf of such an identity – notwithstanding several efforts at "nation-building."

Nevertheless, it does not follow that Canadians lack a culture, history or shared values and goals. Indeed, we have a rich cultural heritage that includes all of the particular traditions, customs and practices of the cultural communities that make up Canada. In addition, Canadians have a fairly clear consensus around fundamental commitments to liberal democracy, the values of a sharing community, fairness, the commitment to peaceful resolution of conflicts and, of course, respect for diversity. In short, for a regionally, culturally and linguistically diverse population, spread across a very large country, Canadians have managed to strike a pretty good balance between unity and diversity. But do changing circumstances threaten to upset it?

The changes under way in Canada are similar to those in countries around the world. Globalization, the Internet and highly mobile populations are making nation-states like Canada, the US, Britain and France far more socially, culturally and economically *interdependent*. This is having a major impact on these societies and their institutions. One consequence is an economic shift from industrial to knowledge-based products and services. A second consequence is the proliferation of new and often well-organized networks and groups whose interests often cut across traditional social, cultural and economic boundaries. The argument advanced here is that, in this environment, Canada's lack of a strong national identity and its historic experience with diversity should be considered major assets for at least two reasons.

1. Managing interdependence will require major investment in the development and use of new collaborative processes and arrangements at all levels, from multi-national firms and international forums to national governments and community organizations. Canadians' experience with diversity provides a comparative advantage in this environment. It could be levered into programs for developing new human capital in ways that would give Canadians a competitive advantage in designing collaborative arrangements and institutions, and at managing and functioning within socially complex environments where collaboration is crucial.[3]

2. Success in the new economy will require an adaptable workforce increasingly equipped with the "soft" skills of teamwork, relationship building and communications, and a culture of continuous learning and, ultimately, innovation. Those countries that have figured out and institutionalized the norms, values and practices that facilitate co-operation within and among groups, institutions and organizations are likely to both do well in the new economy and achieve leadership positions in the shaping of our global futures. High levels of diversity, especially cultural diversity, can create risks in this new environment, however, where diversity has been capitalized on as an asset it can be a powerful catalyst to learning and innovation and serve as a means for developing the values, methods and strategies to enhance co-operation at all levels of society. Approached in this positive way, diversity should be a potent source of new ideas, attitudes, visions, perspectives, challenges and opportunities. It is also a source of new networks and connections to other parts of the world, as well as of information, knowledge and expertise regarding the needs, practices, habits, customs, beliefs, and opportunities in other countries. A society that has learned to accommodate – and even flourish – in the midst of cultural diversity has already taken a giant step toward developing the kind of learning environment that leads to innovation. In a knowledge-based economy, diversity should be viewed as a major resource, a form of high-grade social capital.

What can we do as Canadians to ensure that our diversity emerges as a source of national strength and prosperity? How can Canadians capitalize on the opportunities that our rich cultural diversity affords us? What strategies are available to ensure that rising levels of diversity contribute to learning, innovation and, ultimately, to cooperation and cohesion, rather than division and strife? These are issues that will be explored as we work our way through this paper.

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[3] As a recent article in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* reports: "the traditional U.S. style of leading the troops over the hill to conquer is out of favour in an economy increasingly marked by mergers, joint ventures and co-operative networking. Being able to work collaboratively – delegating responsibility and appreciating diversity – is becoming the way of the New Economy…Canadian senior executives are in the enviable position of being leaders in this approach." The article goes on to discuss how headhunter firms are now actively seeking out Canadians executives as candidates to lead multinational corporations. See `Canadian team builders turn U.S. heads'; Monday, August 28th, 2000, Page B8.

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 here 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.

The project has been compared to the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in the 19th century—a momentous event in Canada's experience of the Industrial Revolution. The railway linked the country together in a new way. It provided the infrastructure that enabled the building of large new cities on the frontiers. During the transformation of Canada's economy from an agricultural to an industrial base, people left the farms and flocked to the cities, creating a new, urban society.

Preparing for such a change is about more than building the right infrastructure. A knowledge-based economy also requires different ways of organizing people and a different kind of work culture.

Development of the infrastructure to support the knowledge-based economy will also link the country together in a new way. It will change how people communicate, how they work, what they produce and where they can live. Preparing for such a change is about more than building the right infrastructure. A knowledge-based economy also requires different ways of organizing people and a different kind of work culture. In government circles, both are now quite widely discussed. In particular, there is much talk of "collaboration" and "networks" as organizational models and of the need for a culture of continuous learning. Where does this discussion lead?

Two essential characteristics of a genuine learning culture are as follows:

- 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 – the right "human capital." Maintaining this capital will require life-long learning. But identifying and building the right knowledge, skills and training turns out to be difficult. Some key skills are intangible. Thus Robert Allen finds in a recent study that computers now do many of the technical processing jobs that employed people in the past. In the new economy, competitive businesses therefore don't need people with information processing skills. They need people who are trained to think "creatively" and "flexibly" with the information they have. How do managers train people for this?

New-style middle managers and front-line workers need greater interpersonal and communications skills to deal with clients and to work together in self-directing teams. We would add that in communities and workplaces that are socially and culturally diverse, understanding the values, customs and orientations of others is also of paramount importance.

Moreover, focusing on building the right human capital isn't enough – even if it is continuously upgraded. For this capital to be effective, the workplace must also be organized differently. Allen goes on to note that, because computers now perform much of this work, organizational structures are flatter. As a result, there are fewer middle managers and the role of middle management is changing. New-style middle managers and front-line workers need greater interpersonal and communications skills to deal with clients and to work together in self-directing teams. We would add that in communities and workplaces that are socially and culturally diverse, understanding the values, customs and orientations of others is also of paramount importance. Such skills are not acquired through technical knowledge and training, he concludes.[4]

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[4] 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 what can governments do to promote it?

As with Allen, Thurow has interesting things to say about the nature and importance of learning in the new economy, as well as about the need for new organizational arrangements and structures. He goes helpfully beyond Allen when he begins to reflect on the role that cultural differences can play. For example, he suggests that a preoccupation with order has favoured the Japanese with very low incarceration rates but that it has also suppressed creativity.

Notwithstanding such reflections, Thurow fails to plumb the idea that, in a learning environment, high levels of diversity, especially cultural diversity, should be a powerful catalyst to learning and innovation. Given the historical analysis upon which his observations are based, this is a bit surprising. There is much evidence that it is true. For example, cities that were placed at the cross-roads of major trade routes were usually affected by intercultural contact. Learning and innovation were a common result.

What, then, can we do to ensure that the development of appropriate human capital is not only supported by the right organizational structures and culture, but that these are also designed to lever Canadians' experience with diversity into the mix? In fact, globalization, the spread of ICTs and the mobility of populations are creating the conditions for such a strategy through reconfiguring our sense of identity and the process of identity-building.

From Society to the Individual:

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Networked Identity

The more socially, culturally, economically and technologically diverse a country such as Canada becomes, the more its individual citizens cease to identify themselves as members of a single, primary group.

Not only does interdependence impact the knowledge-based economy and the learning society, its effects are also felt at the level of the individual. Interdependence brought about by these new forces is having a major impact on how Canadians view themselves, that is, on their individual identity. The more socially, culturally, economically and technologically diverse a country such as Canada becomes, the more its individual citizens cease to identify themselves as members of a single, primary group. Instead, they begin to identify with a variety of cross-cutting communities. For example, a man may think of himself as a Canadian citizen, a British Columbian, a Sikh, a lawyer, a musician, a sports fan, a father, a husband, and an environmentalist. Each of these identities connects him to a different community of individuals, with different (sometimes conflicting) values and goals, and engages him in different activities. As a result, his individual identity is multi-faceted and complex – a ***network*** that links a constellation of diversities.

This contrasts with the identity of individuals in more socially, culturally, economically and technologically homogenous societies. When a single system of beliefs, traditions, values, goals, rituals and practices dominates and is shared by most community members, the various roles individuals play in daily life are far more likely to conform to a generic or universal "script" that is shared by all members of the community. Not surprisingly, individual behaviour tends to be more predictable, precisely because it conforms to a generic script.

In such circumstances, personal identity is to a large extent an ***internalization of the community's collective identity***. In other words, it tends to be homogeneous – the expression of a *single, established cultural tradition of beliefs, traditions*, values, goals, rituals and practices, such as Orthodox Judaism or Islam. In such societies, there is less opportunity for individuals to develop a networked individual identity along the lines described above. Similarly, it is less likely that they will think and behave in ways that would be perceived as unexpected by an observer.

The emergence of societies where networked rather than homogeneous identities are the rule is new. In such societies, individuals now play a comparatively active role in defining who they are and how they belong to the society. One consequence is that they are more likely to think and behave in new and unexpected ways. An example will help make this clearer.

Leveraging Our Diversity: Canada as a Learning Society

The Case of the Veil

Several years ago, school officials in Quebec informed a young Muslim woman that she would have to remove the veil covering her face while on school premises. They maintained that it did not conform to acceptable dress code. She insisted that the veil was an important religious custom and that she could not remove it in public. A public debate followed in which some critics argued that an expectation that women should wear veils in public reflects the values of a male-dominated culture that patronizes and demeans women. To allow the practice of wearing the veil is to legitimize this. The veil therefore should not be tolerated in the public schools of a liberal society like Quebec.

As the debate progressed, some other young Muslim women who were also wearing the veil answered the critics with the argument that, far from demeaning women, the veil promotes respect for them. They claimed that men and women should value each other primarily for their spiritual rather than their physical qualities. Wearing the veil focuses attention on qualities such as warmth, moral character, intelligence or charm. Far from demeaning women, this discourages philanderers and encourages recognition of women as persons.

To some, this claim at first seemed doubtful. They attempted to dismiss it, saying that the young women were just wrong; that they were merely projecting contemporary liberal views about respect for persons or gender equality back onto an ancient custom that is rooted in the values of a society where woman were viewed as possessions rather than equals.

For the sake of argument, let us suppose that this is true. Does it follow that the young women's defence of the veil should be dismissed?

Suppose that before the public debate the young women had not seriously considered the meaning of the veil. But in the face of public criticism they began to reflect and discuss urgently with one another why they wear the veil.

Suppose that before the public debate the young women had not seriously considered the meaning of the veil. They simply had accepted that as women it was their duty to wear it. But in the face of public criticism they began to reflect and discuss urgently with one another why they wear the veil. They concluded that, if the veil is a symbol of respect, it must be because it diverts attention from a woman's physical appearance. This makes it easier to avoid situations where physical beauty or a lack of it interferes with normal human relationships and to participate in social situations more confidently and freely as women. Suppose that the women then pledged to continue wearing the veil as a symbol of their desire to be treated with respect.

On the basis of such considerations, some non-Muslim women who had been critics recanted, expressing not only support but also admiration for the veil. They came to understand the institution in a new and revealing light. They saw how wearing it could be consistent with the very values they had invoked to attack the practice. In particular, they saw that the veil could be used to help establish respect and equality across the gender divide. They concluded that the young women had found in the veil an admirable and effective way to manage some of the most intractable problems of human relationships. A few even wondered whether the veil might not be a more humanizing form of dress than that of western democracies. In the end, it was decided that the young women should not be prevented from wearing the veil at school.

The case is instructive here because it exposes the close links between intercultural contact, learning and the transformation of personal identity. The young Muslim women's decision to reaffirm their commitment to wear the veil, but to do so partly on their own terms, constitutes a declaration of

their determination to take ownership of and responsibility for their participation in the custom. Although they have not abandoned their cultural tradition, they have begun to think about it in new ways. As a consequence, the women's relationship to the custom has changed. What before was done out of a relatively unreflective and passive sense of duty may now be the expression of a desire to be treated equally with men.

Seen in this light, cultural practices are not just mechanisms for preserving and participating in collective meanings. They are opportunities to invest community life with new meanings.

As for the critics, they have come to see that the full meaning of a custom cannot be determined independently of the beliefs and intentions of the persons engaged in it. Sometimes the beliefs and intentions do not go much further than the recognition of a generic obligation or duty to respect the past. But another individual may invest the same practice with a distinctive personal meaning that elaborates, embellishes or extends the script. Seen in this light, cultural practices are not just mechanisms for preserving and participating in collective meanings. They are opportunities to invest community life with new meanings. That is what the young Muslim women have done. In the process, they have introduced a new and potentially powerful symbol of gender equality into Quebec society – a significant act of social innovation.

Moreover, they have forged new links between their cultural community and other ones within that province. As a result, the identities of these cultural communities have become more interdependent, more networked and more responsive to acts of reflection, judgement, decision and commitment on the part of their members. Far from threatening Canadians' commitment to individual freedom and equality, the actions of the Muslim women have strengthened it.

It is worth pointing out that this learning could not have taken place without a high degree of cultural openness, appropriate social institutions such as mass media, and a collective capacity for democratic dialogue and debate. That Canadians can have such a discussion is a significant achievement. It shows that the culture has evolved over time and that intercultural learning is very much a part of our current national culture. Although there is still a long way to go, Canadians are already remarkably adept at talking across boundaries.

The discussion around the veil casts diversity in a different light from that of the classical nation-state. It reveals that, although diversity often spurs discussion, debate and reflection between the members of distinct cultural groups, this need not lead to social fragmentation. On the contrary, such debate is natural – even desirable – in a democratic society. It can result in creative new interpretations of existing practices that then serve as linkages between different groups.

The development of such cultural networks is a natural consequence of the intercultural contact and learning that occurs in diverse, contemporary, liberal-democratic societies like Canada.

Networked identities are both a condition and a result of such linkages. By translating and communicating meanings and perspectives across cultural divides they unite diverse communities within a single network. The development of such *cultural networks* is a natural consequence of the intercultural contact and learning that occurs in diverse, contemporary, liberal-democratic societies like Canada. However, *a cultural network is not a homogeneous cultural identity*. It is not a homogeneous whole. Integration into a cultural network is not the same as assimilation of one group by another. A network may contain a variety of group identities within itself as "regions" of the network – although individuals who belong to such regions will participate in different ways and to different degrees, depending on the networked links they have to other cross-cutting communities.

Networked identities can be a powerful source of social cohesion and integration in diverse societies. They complement and counterbalance diversity by increasing interdependence. Nevertheless, intercultural contact does not guarantee intercultural learning or the development of cultural networks. As experience has often shown, diversity can be a source of tension, division and strife. What is needed to help ensure that diversity leads to the emergence of a cohesive cultural network rather than conflict?

The Foundations of Individual Learning & Culture

The concept of *openness* is integral to the process of intercultural learning. Humans are distinct from other animals in their remarkable capacity to learn. Children, in particular, engage in an extraordinary amount of learning. As adults, we marvel at the ease with which they acquire and use motor skills, information about the world around them and language. Metaphors to describe the learning processes in children reflect this. Their minds are said to be supple, flexible, elastic, sponge-like. For present purposes, perhaps the most appropriate metaphor is that of *openness*: Children are remarkably open to new experiences and ideas.

The openness of childhood tends to disappear beneath layers of assumptions, dispositions, attitudes and beliefs that are acquired in the journey from childhood to adult.

Equally interesting is the process of "closing off" that characterizes the emergence of adulthood. Notoriously, as adults age more than a few find change, learning and the new or unexpected to be increasingly uncomfortable, disconcerting or difficult to adjust to. Indeed, the "learning gene" seems somehow to get switched off. The openness of childhood tends to disappear beneath layers of assumptions, dispositions, attitudes and beliefs that are acquired in the journey from childhood to adult.

These reflections on learning are hardly controversial. It is not contentious that the capacity of children to learn – their openness – declines with age. Less clear is whether this decline is inevitable. Does the "learning gene" really get switched off? Why then do some individuals continue to learn well into old age? Is the disposition to learn only a matter of biology? Or is it also a result of environment, training and effort? If so, what sort of environment or training is needed to encourage a disposition toward life-long learning?

The point of these remarks is not to set the stage for a debate over the psychology of learning. It is to make a broad but critical observation about human nature. As a rule, acquired dispositions, attitudes and beliefs tend to close individuals off to new experiences. They act as "filters" through which unfamiliar things begin to appear familiar by being assimilated to what we already know or have experienced. The idea of these filters gives rise to a kind of learning dilemma. On the one hand, filters are important aids to learning. They make unfamiliar things easier to deal with by placing them in a familiar context; by making them seem like the things that are already known. They provide a ready-made interpretation of the world. On the other hand, they make it difficult to experience unfamiliar things as unfamiliar precisely because they automatically interpret them.

The result is that the experience of learning changes as we age. It becomes increasingly about what we already know. The advantage is that what we know becomes richer, more refined, subtle and connected. The disadvantage is that we find it increasingly difficult to connect with the unfamiliar, the unknown, the very different and the new. In short, the "openness" of our childhood disappears.

Such learning requires a capacity and willingness to engage in critical self-reflection in order to become aware of deep-seated values, beliefs, attitudes and dispositions; to compare and contrast these with others; and to consider their reaffirmation, modification or rejection.

Openness is essential to intercultural learning. Such learning requires a capacity and willingness to engage in critical self-reflection in order to become aware of deep-seated values, beliefs, attitudes and dispositions; to compare and contrast these with others; and to consider their reaffirmation, modification or rejection. This assumes that individuals are willing and able to plumb their own depths and those of other cultures around them; 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 the idea that collective identities may be changed as a result of intercultural learning; and that, where differences between collectivities are too great and

more unity is needed to ensure cohesion and stability, individuals are able and willing to reflect on their habits, beliefs, dispositions and practices and consider the possibility of change. This is what we saw happening in the example of the veil.

Developing this kind of self-awareness at a personal level requires individual training and discipline. Situations and environments that encourage reflection, consultation, negotiation and collaboration promote openness and intercultural learning. All sectors, private, public and third, can contribute to this. But what specifically can governments do to help create such environments?

ICT Networks as a Lever

The idea of intercultural learning is not a new one. Nor is that of a networked identity. But ICTs, globalization and the mobility of populations are bringing them to the fore. The social conditions that shape personal and collective identity are changing. In particular, ICTs are creating more complex social relationships by fostering a wide range of groups and communities. The technology that fosters this increased diversity also plays a critical role in sustaining the relationships on which networked identities rest. It can be used as a lever to strengthen those relationships and, in the process, the identities they create.

7.1 ICTs as Drivers of Diversity

Compared with the 20th Century, vastly higher levels of organizational interdependence can be expected in the 21st Century – at least in countries such as Canada. Globalization, the increased use of ICTs – ranging from the 500-channel universe and webcasting to the creation of huge new databases of all sorts – and the spread of ICT networks will be key drivers. Together they create a dynamic that is beginning to change the social structure of these countries.

Interdependence encourages citizens to organize in new and often unexpected ways. Because they have the opportunity to take advantage of ICTs – especially the Internet – the size, strength, number and organizational capacity of social and cultural groups is increasing rapidly. Effects range from the establishment of a global profile and message for the environmental movement to the appearance of small singles chat lines on the Internet; from a worldwide gay and lesbian movement to e-mail networks inside a single organization; from a politically effective international Jewish community to the reintegration of an Aboriginal nation with a membership of only hundreds.

Organization of these groups is greatly facilitated by, and increasingly dependent on, ICTs – especially the Internet. They not only allow individuals to communicate over great distances inexpensively and quickly, they also facilitate group communication: ICTs can accommodate huge volumes of information between very large numbers of people or private exchanges been small intimate groups, and everything in between. The technology's capacity to integrate, store, retrieve and communicate information is flexible and versatile.

The structure of many groups is changing. They are shedding some of their command-and-control structures and taking on more of the form of a peer-to-peer information network.

A predictable consequence of using the new technology to reorganize is that it makes information more available to members. Reorganizing is usually linked to new ways of accessing, sharing and using information. As a result, the structure of many groups is changing. They are shedding some of their command-and-control structures and taking on more of the form of a ***peer-to-peer information network***. What is the difference?

Command-and-control structures are hierarchically organized, with each level containing numerous subdivisions of its own. The basic idea is that the parts are relatively separable. Every person in the system has an assigned role and every role has an assigned place. The person at the top of the pyramid is responsible for overall planning and coordination of the system. Once the plan has been defined, a key challenge is to ensure that each part of the system understands its assigned role and carries it out effectively.

Because of this, managers in command-and-control systems tend to be highly concerned about the flow of information. Too much information, the wrong kind of information, or information made available at the wrong time, can undermine efforts to implement the plan. It can confuse, incite or mislead. Communicating the right message at the right time is crucial to success. There is thus a strong incentive to centralize and control the flow of information.

Peer-to-peer networks are fundamentally different kinds of organizations. They are relatively free of tops and bottoms. Each participant connects in a variety of ways with other members of the network, sharing and receiving information from them in ways that change easily and often. The growth and development of networks tends to be spontaneous and far less managed than departmental systems. People join, leave and rejoin for many reasons. Different networks overlap and merge as they develop.

This transformation from command-and-control to network is having an impact on government. In the old command-and-control model, government departments tend to act in isolation, turning themselves into a series of unconnected "stovepipes." Now information networks are growing at an exponential rate – a trend that will accelerate with the move to "electronic-government."

This transformation from command-and-control to network is having an impact on government. In the old command-and-control model, government departments tend to act in isolation, turning themselves into a series of unconnected "stovepipes." Now information networks are growing at an exponential rate – a trend that will accelerate with the move to "electronic-government." As they proliferate, they are creating a new kind of infrastructure, one that conforms less and less to existing government boundaries. This, in turn, creates pressure to reorganize conventional planning and delivery systems to ensure that policies and programs "map on" to the new social realities – which, as often as not, now cut across traditional departmental and other boundaries.

ICTs are thus a powerful driver of organizational change in government and at the broader societal level. They expand capacity for horizontal governance, management and service delivery by changing the way information is distributed and used. What has hardly been discussed, however, is ICTs' impact as an agent of cultural transformation within government and, indeed, at the broader societal level.

7.2 ICTs as a Tool of Cultural Transformation

The spread of e-government provides an opportunity to promote openness and intercultural learning. *ICT networks could serve as a foundation on which to build more formal collaborative arrangements that strengthen or build strategic linkages between diversity groups.*

A key assumption behind collaborative arrangements is that diverse individuals and organizations that share a common objective can often work together to achieve it without having to eliminate important cultural differences. Thus a public-private partnership assumes that, even though government exists to promote the public interest, officials can collaborate with representatives from a private sector organization that exists to increase shareholder value. In a similar vein, a public-voluntary sector partnership involves being sensitive to unequal levels of resources, accountability structures and honesty in face of funding relationships. The key to success in such partnerships is to clearly articulate the common interests, set parameters for the relationship and commit to work together within those parameters to achieve the common goals.

Often the hardest part is the "working together". Collaborative arrangements are dynamic. Roles, responsibilities, strategies and needs change often and adjustments must be made.

Often the hardest part is the "working together". Collaborative arrangements are dynamic. Roles, responsibilities, strategies and needs change often and adjustments must be made. That requires a capacity and willingness among the partners to understand and respect one another's point of view, to share ideas, information and authority, to seek new solutions, to innovate and to change. It requires openness to new ideas, methods, goals and even values. Ultimately, it requires a learning culture based on respect for diversity.

Information networks that are created and maintained through a rich range of personal interactions and exchanges between members, embody just such a culture precisely because they are relatively unstructured, inclusive and organized around personalized learning. Members are free to seek out, establish and manage the relationships that best meet their needs. All this makes participation in such networks a genuinely ***collaborative*** undertaking. This enhances the opportunities for intercultural learning and for benefiting from it through new and innovative ways of using information. ***In a networking arrangement much of the heavy lifting associated with managing cultural and individual differences is performed at the level of individual relationships.***

Effective participation in a formal collaborative partnership requires such a culture. Specifically, it requires high levels of reflection, consultation, negotiation and collaboration, supported by quality information. This, in turn, promotes and assumes high levels of personal openness and intercultural learning.

So far, the discussion has ranged across several levels of analyses. It starts with recognition that large-scale changes at the *societal* level are deepening interdependence. It goes on to ask what impact this will have on the commitment to respect diversity and how Canadians should respond at the *individual* and *organizational* levels. The general reply is that they should work together to transform Canada into a learning society. ***This is proposed as a collective or societal project that would define Canadians' vision of their country, at home and abroad, in the 21st Century.***

If Canadians want to transform their society into a learning society, they must become world leaders in the art of network-building at all three levels: personal, organizational and societal.

We saw that a strategy to make Canada a learning society would require long-term investment in developing the appropriate knowledge, skills and tools for the job. Moreover, investment in developing the right human capital also requires investment in the right organizational structures and, ultimately, the levering of diversity. Summing up, if Canadians want to transform their society into a learning society, they must become world leaders in the art of ***network-building*** at all three levels: personal, organizational and societal.

Such a project is very different from traditional nation-building projects of the 19th and 20th Centuries. The cultural identities that nation-states sought to strengthen were understood to be homogeneous. They 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 that shielded them from potentially threatening external forces.

A networked society is organized very differently. Citizens connect through participation in dynamic social, cultural and economic networks. Each individual is like a small electrical charge that energizes a series of unpredictable and frequently changing economic, social and cultural connections. Such a society is by definition a dynamic and changing one. Diversity, complexity, interdependence, collaboration and change are its fundamental characteristics. Each member contributes to the integration and cohesion of the network by promoting the integration and cohesion of his or her networked identity. Links between the various aspects of such identities are the glue that holds networks together.

Traditional nation-building thus rests on an ***exclusive*** view of identity. By contrast, network-building rests on an ***inclusive*** one. Understanding the difference leads to a fundamental shift in conventional thinking about societies, states and their institutions. An historical analogy comes to mind.

The 16th Century Polish astronomer Nicholas Copernicus turned the Ancients' view of the world upside down when he declared in *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies* that the earth and planets revolved around the sun, rather than the sun and planets revolving around the earth. This was not only the beginning of a scientific revolution. It was the beginning of a ***cultural*** revolution that changed the conventional picture of how things are organized. The networking model implies such a revolution in thinking around social and political organization.

In the conventional nation-state view, the ideal society is a seamless cultural whole. Its members are bound together through their common inheritance of an all-encompassing, homogeneous National Identity.

By contrast, a networked society is a socially and culturally diverse system composed of many subsystems. Each individual participates in a constellation of these, which establishes a unique pattern of linkages between them. That pattern is the basis of his or her personal identity. These linkages can change. Over time, some do and some do not. All of the linkages of all of the society's members, taken together, establish it as a whole. ***The individual members are thus what hold a networked society together. Their participation in its various social and cultural subsystems is its centre of gravity.***

In the old nation-state view, things are reversed: The nation's identity is an entire, homogeneous, integrated, cultural system. Individual identity is a partial expression of that larger whole. The national identity defines, regulates and integrates roles within the community and binds it together. In the conventional nation-state, national identity is to social organization what the earth was to the old model of the solar system: the common ground on which we all walk; an unquestionable, ubiquitous point of reference that defines and assures our central place in the scheme of things.

Leaders of the day feared the new heliocentric model of the solar system because it removed humankind from the centre of things. They thought that it made us appear rootless, and that it robbed us of our destiny and special purpose. History has shown that these fears were groundless. Human identity is a remarkably flexible, creative and resilient force. Its form has changed before. It appears to be changing again.

There are various ways of perceiving and contrasting these two societal visions. An attempt to set them out schematically follows.

First imagine group-based diversity as existing along a horizontal axis. At the extreme left we place culturally homogeneous societies. At the extreme right, we place multi-ethnic societies, i.e. those where a number of different cultural groups co-existed. Now we add a vertical axis to the chart to identify "individual diversity." At the top of it, we place individual, networked identity and at the bottom we place individual, homogenous, cultural identities.

This creates four quadrants demarcating different kinds of social diversity (Figure 1). In the lower left-hand quadrant would be the ideal nation-state. In the lower right-hand quadrant would be the multi-ethnic state. In the upper right-hand quadrant would be what we have called a cultural network. Finally, in the upper left-hand quadrant would be what we can call social networks.

Framework for Societal Types
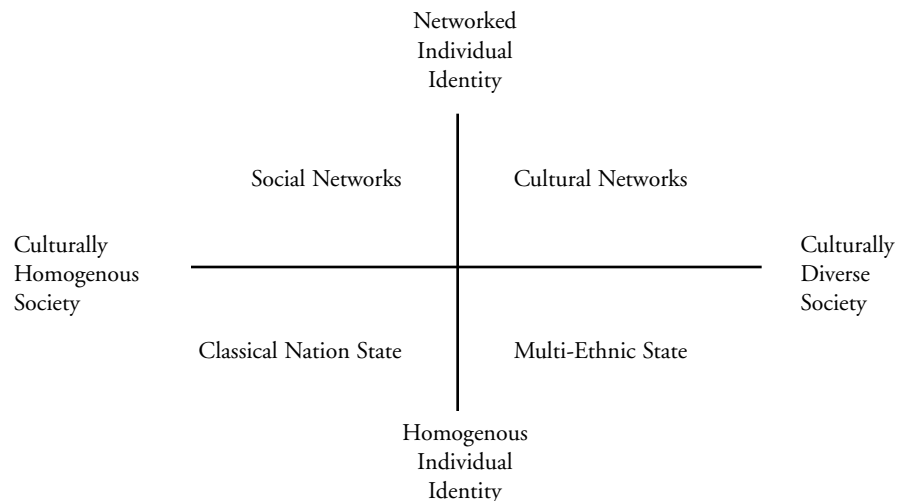
The difference between a social and cultural network is that, in a social network, there is a single, predominant cultural identity, along with a range of non-ethnic identity groups.

The difference between a social and cultural network is that, in a social network, there is a single, predominant cultural identity, along with a range of non-ethnic identity groups. This latter group – also referred to as "communities of interest" – ranges from fairly well defined, well represented and well recognized groups such as, perhaps, homosexuals, persons with disabilities or environmentalists, to less well defined, represented or recognized groups such as artists. Japan may be an example of such a society.

By contrast, a cultural network includes *a plurality of ethnic identity groups*, as well as non-ethnic identity groups or communities of interest. Moreover, unlike the classical nation-state and the multi-ethnic state, the members of such a society do not identify exclusively with a particular ethnic group. They tend to view the plurality of identities as part of a common collective heritage.

Indeed, a central thesis of this paper is that Canada is in transition from a multi-ethnic state to a cultural network.

Canada is well positioned to become a leading example of such a community in the 21st Century. Indeed, a central thesis of this paper is that Canada is in transition from a multi-ethnic state to a cultural network. As we will see below, such a society is defined in part by its commitment to the view that diversity is a collective asset – a form of social capital. Two immediate challenges this poses for Canadian governments are, first, the development of a "storyline." Canadians need a coherent and accessible narrative that explains what kind of society they are trying to create, how it is different from the Canada of the past and what it means to citizens in terms of their sense of identity, attachment and belonging, and their relationships to one another and their common citizenship. Second, governments need a strategy to facilitate the transition from a multi-ethnic state to a cultural network. Part 1 of this paper has taken a first step toward the development of a storyline. Part 2 considers the challenge of developing a strategy.

Part 2:
Strategic Transformation:
Toward the Learning Society

How should governments respond? What can they do to facilitate Canada's transition from an educated to a learning society? How can governments work more effectively with other sectors and engage citizens in this project?

In the last section we set out a Framework for Social Diversity delineating four types of societies. The paper argues that Canada is in transition from one type to another and that, properly understood, Canadians' experience with diversity could become a catalyst to innovation and creativity. In brief, the argument asserts that globalization, the mobility of populations and the ICT revolution are creating all kinds of new linkages between governments, multi-national corporations, non-governmental organizations and various kinds of "communities of citizens" – what we have referred to as "networks" or "communities of interest." This is affecting basic social relationships that define Canadian society and constitute Canadians' sense of identity – private and public, individual and collective. As a result, identity is becoming less homogeneous and more diverse; in a word, "networked." Finally, the paper proposes that the transition from a multi-ethnic nation-state to a cultural network provides an opportunity to "lever" diversity into the process of individual and organizational learning. This raises a cluster of basic strategic issues: How should governments respond? What can they do to facilitate Canada's transition from an educated to a learning society? How can governments work more effectively with other sectors and engage citizens in this project?

Our approach so far proposes that collaborative arrangements can be used to strengthen or build culturally diverse networks in a way that levers their content into the learning process. Such networks are part of the infrastructure of the knowledge-based economy. They make a crucial contribution to developing the necessary human capital. But this "approach" is not yet a ***strategy***. We have already said that multiplying the number of horizontal initiatives or establishing a vast web of electronic connections across government does not guarantee the result we seek. If these structures and tools are to serve as levers, they must be designed and employed to connect individuals, organizations, opportunities and cultural experience in the right way. In short, they must ***promote innovation by promoting intercultural learning***. This, in turn, requires the strengthening of existing networks and the development of new ones – a process of ***network-building***. What sorts of initiatives are most likely to achieve the goal? How should they be designed? What should guide our thinking? Who should decide?

The remainder of this paper constitutes an effort to begin thinking strategically about such questions. If the challenge is to manage fundamental societal change, an obvious place to start is at the "foundations." Drawing on the concepts and arguments discussed so far, some practical thoughts on the development of such a strategy are proposed and explored. We begin by considering how Canadians now understand their citizenship.

Many Canadians continue to believe that citizenship implies a hierarchy of identities. In this view, one must be able to say whether, for example, one is e.g. a Canadian, a Mohawk or a Québecois first. This view reflects the essentially passive and exclusivist conception of identity and citizenship associated with the classical nation-state. Clearly, that view still has much resonance with Canadians.

Nevertheless, as this paper has argued, ***through their long experience with diversity, Canadians have developed a special kind of identity that not only respects diversity, but also incorporates it***. We can see this more clearly by revisiting the question posed at the outset: How should Canadians understand the commitment to respect diversity in the 21st Century? Reflecting on the discussion so far, we see that there are at least three basic ways to view this commitment.

The first form is respect through tolerance. In this view, a liberal society must tolerate private beliefs and practices, even when many members regard them as wrong.

The first form is ***respect through tolerance***. In this view, a liberal society must tolerate private beliefs and practices, even when many members regard them as wrong. Thus someone may believe that atheism is immoral but nevertheless agree that religious beliefs should not be controlled by the state. If he or she did not accept such limitations on government's authority, it might also decide to regulate that person's private beliefs. Limiting the power of the state protects individual freedom. But there is a cost. Others will also enjoy the same freedom and may exercise it in different ways. Tolerance means that each citizen must respect this freedom, even when they disapprove of the consequences.

A second form of liberal respect for diversity is ***respect through understanding***. This is a more sophisticated response to difference. People who hold different, even opposing, views sometimes recognize that the person whose views they oppose has sound reasons for holding them. No one has perfect evidence or fully rational grounds for living the life they have chosen. Liberalism assumes that reasonable people can disagree on important matters. This is precisely because key choices, such as lifestyle, rest on many things, only a few of which are usually fully justified. Thus when a thoughtful liberal disagrees with, say, someone else's choice of lifestyle, they may conclude that the basis for their own choice rests to a large degree on *partially justified personal beliefs, inherited values, personal commitments and mere preferences*. Looking at one's own commitments this way leads beyond a mere tolerance of others and toward a respect for their views even when they may be at odds with one's own.

For example, someone from one cultural background may participate in the practices and customs of another group. This can result in a personal experience of the meaning, values and beliefs behind them.

The discussion in this paper of intercultural learning, openness, networked societies and Canadians' experience with diversity suggests a third way to understand diversity. We can call it ***respect through identification***. Citizens' personal identities can be viewed as open and dynamic. Individuals can transcend their own cultural experience to become what they are not. For example, someone from one cultural background may participate in the practices and customs of another group. This can result in a personal experience of the meaning, values and beliefs behind them. As we saw in the case of the veil, such an experience may change the person's point of view, giving him or her a sense that they have become identified with the new community in some significant way.

This points beyond encouraging citizens to accommodate one another's differences through tolerance or even understanding. It suggests that they should be encouraged to reflect on, question and experiment with their social and cultural heritage; and that they should think and act in ways that facilitate intercultural learning.

The members of a society that seeks to institutionalize this kind of respect for diversity do not have or aspire to a single, distinctive national identity in the traditional sense. If such a community can be said to have a collective identity at all, at its core is *openness* – a Zelig-like trait that helps the community's members empathize and even identify with the perspectives of others.

This does not mean that, as in Woody Allen's Zelig, they are human chameleons. Nor does it imply that they cannot have cultural identities. As we saw with the young Muslim women in the case of the veil, they may have a firm attachment to such an identity. The point is that their attachment is not an exclusive one. They are open to considering how other values and practices may relate to their own. They regard their own values and practices as part of a living tradition that will grow, develop and change over time. Finally, they see themselves as having a personal responsibility to ensure that this growth and development occurs.

A culturally diverse, multi-ethnic state whose members are increasingly open in this sense, and who begin to shed the view that their cultural identities are exclusive, is gradually transformed into a cultural network.

A culturally diverse, multi-ethnic state whose members are increasingly open in this sense, and who begin to shed the view that their cultural identities are exclusive, is gradually transformed into a cultural network. Its members become linked to one another through complex personal, institutional and societal connections. Increasingly, this social and cultural network is seen as the common heritage of all citizens. They are free – indeed, encouraged – to join one another's networks and to participate in, absorb and identify with their various aspects.

The transition from a multi-ethnic to a culturally networked society moves Canadians' commitment to diversity beyond respect through tolerance and understanding to include a commitment to respect through identification.

The transition from a multi-ethnic to a culturally networked society moves Canadians' commitment to diversity beyond respect through *tolerance* and *understanding* to include a commitment to respect through *identification*. The concept needs to be further clarified. We can do this, first, by identifying the values that define it; and, second, by considering how it affects basic institutions and practices.

The first task is easily addressed. The discussion of culture and identity in this paper winds its way across three basic levels – personal, institutional/organizational and societal. They are treated as separable but mutually supporting parts of the community that is Canada. *Each level incorporates a basic social value that is essential to the creation of a learning society.* They are:

- openness at the individual level;
- inclusiveness at the institutional/organizational level; and
- recognition at the societal level.

We can call these *the three pillars of a learning society*. Together they provide the conditions needed to promote intercultural learning.

THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: *Openness* should be regarded as a basic human skill and a social good. It is an individual disposition that can be cultivated and encouraged through education, training and practice. Identifying it as one of the three pillars of a learning society implies that strategic initiatives to promote the transition to such a society should be designed to encourage individual openness to learning, and awareness of the changing nature of individuals' own identities and of their personal role in managing and integrating them. This last point needs further explanation.

There is no guarantee that a networked identity will be well integrated. It takes reflective work.

There is no guarantee that a networked identity will be well integrated. It takes reflective work. Indeed, if the different facets of a networked identity conflict too sharply, it can create internal conflict. Such identities require change and adjustment. Consider the mass entrance of women into the workforce over the last generation. It has had a major impact on their traditional role as wives and mothers.

Studies show that many women still feel obliged to meet traditional expectations as a homemaker even though they have full-time careers. As a result, they spend several hours a day engaged in household chores above and beyond time spent on the job. The cumulative result is a high stress level.

Canadians have not made the necessary cultural adjustment to allow individuals to adjust to this major social change. As a result, unrealistic expectations are placed on women to "perform like a man" in the workplace and then to be the traditional homemaker after hours. Adjustment in values and expectations is needed at the individual and societal levels.

Much more thought and research is needed to understand the task individuals face in integrating roles from different identities into a single, well-adjusted, functional personality. Government has a responsibility to provide support and education here.

Much more thought and research is needed to understand the task individuals face in integrating roles from different identities into a single, well-adjusted, functional personality. Government has a responsibility to provide support and education here. For example, it could carry out research to identify innovative policy instruments to help individuals achieve this kind of integration.

THE INSTITUTIONAL/ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL: *Inclusiveness* should be understood as an overarching institutional goal. This paper advocates an increased use of collaborative, networking structures to promote inclusiveness at the organizational level. This involves more than ensuring that diversity groups are represented in the workplace or public institutions. The challenge is to design working arrangements that do not suppress the expression of diversity by implicitly demanding conformity to a homogeneous work culture. There is evidence that collaborative networking arrangements are helpful here. They can facilitate our engagement of one another's diversity more directly and provide more opportunities to incorporate the learning into the workplace.

THE SOCIETAL LEVEL: Insofar as an initiative has an impact at the societal level, it should aim at promoting *recognition* of key forms of diversity and of the value that diversity has in a vision of Canada as a 21st Century cultural network and learning society. Public recognition provides critical support for efforts to promote individual openness and institutional inclusiveness.

> **A clearer idea is needed regarding the kind of public processes, debates, discussions and symbols that are needed at the societal level to demonstrate and celebrate this recognition.**

Citizens should be engaged in public discussion of the changing nature of Canadian society, the new place of diversity and its effects on identity, and the opportunities, risks and responsibilities this implies. A clearer idea is needed regarding the kind of public processes, debates, discussions and symbols that are needed at the societal level to demonstrate and celebrate this recognition. For example, how does it connect with evolving conceptions of democratic citizenship? How should cultural groups be recognized in a cultural-network? What is the role of government? How can the government expand and deepen its capacity to engage citizens? [5]

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[5] Current federal Treasury Board Secretariat draft Guidelines on Engaging and Consulting Canadians will encourage and educate departments to do this (with a special section on on-line engagement) but, as with most exciting new ideas, it will take leadership from the top to carry it out.

Our analysis of the forces of change in Part 1 led us to propose in this second part the three pillars of a learning society. What are the implications for the practices of governance in a representative democracy?

The transition to a cultural network requires a realignment of key institutional practices that would change how diversity is represented in public debate and decision making.

Promoting the new understanding of diversity and the values behind it would require a major rethinking of some long-standing policy trends and a transformation of the culture that could only be pointed to in the last section. What about Canada's public institutions? What changes might it imply there? The transition to a cultural network requires a realignment of key institutional practices that would change how diversity is represented in public debate and decision making. This would constitute a critical step on the path toward levering diversity into the process of organizational learning.

In *traditional representative government*, citizens elect representatives who, to a significant degree, share their values, beliefs, perspectives, concerns and priorities. Because there is a high degree of consensus on these, representation is viewed as a legitimate and effective way of making the voices of all citizens heard in the halls of government.

This approach to democracy is well suited to a classical nation-state. Shared cultural identity helps ensure the degree of consensus that is needed for citizens to feel that their views have been fairly represented and that the policies that result are legitimate. Thus in the late 19th and early part of the 20th Centuries, the relative cultural homogeneity of countries such as France and Britain ensured enough agreement on values, beliefs, perspectives, concerns and priorities to make policies such as colonialism appear "civilizing" in the eyes of French or British citizens. To colonized peoples, on the other hand, they often seemed exploitative, patronizing and unfair.

Federalism played a key role. It helped establish the diversity principle as fundamental to Canadian institutions and democracy, while also underlining the need to strike a balance between diversity and unity.

As with France and Britain, Canada adopted a system of representative government. But unlike them, it was multi-ethnic from the start, involving English and French (and to a much lesser degree, Aboriginal peoples) in the governance structure. If many values that were basic to the French and British systems were also basic to Canada, there was a key difference. The Fathers of Confederation had to ensure that the institutions of the new country would respect recognized forms of diversity, including regional diversity. Federalism played a key role. It helped establish the diversity principle as fundamental to Canadian institutions and democracy, while also underlining the need to strike a balance between diversity and unity.

In this view, *the commitment to diversity in the social contract underlying Confederation is basically a commitment to peaceful co-existence*, in which the "founding peoples" agreed to share the same political space while maintaining their separate cultural identities. A basic premise in the strategy for implementing this arrangement was to minimize the need for intercultural contact. Various tools were used. Linguistic and educational minority rights provide one example. They recognized and protected the identities of minority groups through, for example, the creation of separate school systems. At the political level, "executive federalism" provides another example. It proved to be a successful way of managing tensions arising from diversity by keeping public contact and debate between diverse groups to a minimum. When tensions arose, they were mediated by a small number of high-level officials from the relevant groups, usually behind closed doors.

Such practices helped define Canada as a multi-ethnic state and performed well for Canadians through the 19th and 20th Centuries. Insofar as they serve to minimize intercultural contact, however, they are not well suited to a 21st Century cultural network. In such a society, homogeneity of identity has declined. High levels of heterogeneity make consensus increasingly difficult to reach, even among individuals who share the same cultural heritage. This erodes the effectiveness and legitimacy of traditional representative practices and institutions. As a result, citizens begin to demand a more direct say in governance.

This poses a governance challenge for a 21st Century, liberal-democratic, cultural network such as Canada. The old strategy of promoting the peaceful coexistence of diverse cultural groups through elite accommodation and low levels of intercultural contact is less and less an option. Achieving the kind of cohesion and agreement that can counterbalance increasingly high levels of diversity demands a new approach that starts with a rethinking of the diversity principle. In a cultural network, respect for diversity requires more than toleration or even understanding of cultural difference. ***It requires personal insight into the impact that the increasingly high levels of social and cultural diversity are having on personal identity.*** What does this imply for democracy, governance and the public policy process in Canada?

Canada's democratic institutions, practices and policies should be adjusted to engage Canadians more directly in the management of their own diversity.

Meeting the challenge requires a rethinking of the basic vision behind our institutions, practices and policies. The new vision involves a clear shift away from the old ideal of peaceful coexistence, and the reliance on strategies such as limited intercultural contact and elite accommodation. Far from minimizing intercultural contract, the new vision promotes intercultural (and interregional) learning among citizens. Canada's democratic institutions, practices and policies should be adjusted to engage Canadians more directly in the management of their own diversity. How is this to be done?

The remaining sections outline a strategy and a proposal that would get Canadians and their governments moving in this direction. But it is viewed as ***one step*** along the way, not as a full or comprehensive strategy for transformation. It should be taken in that spirit. The proposal is to develop a forum for public debate that views Canadians' diversity optimistically as a form of social capital. Diversity is seen as a source of creative tension that should be expressed and explored by citizens rather than a cause of strife and division that should be "managed" by elites. The strategy is to enrich public debate – and thereby to strengthen the public policy process and governance – through an adjustment to public consultation processes based on a rethinking of diversity. Without being overly optimistic or naïve, it seems safe to say that the capacity to involve citizens in such a discussion is greatly enhanced by the Internet. The new technology would be used to achieve an extension of public space by developing a new Canadian institution that promotes intercultural learning through online discussion and debate – a so-called digital commons.

Toward More Inclusive Governance

Canadians' governance system includes an array of consultation processes designed to engage Canadians on key policy issues. These processes recognize the importance of diversity and are usually designed to ensure that diversity-related aspects of an issue are explored. Such processes distinguish between three main categories of participants:

- Experts
- Citizens
- Stakeholder Organizations

Experts ensure that the debate is informed. Citizens may or may not be consulted directly. When they are, it is usually in relatively small numbers. Stakeholder organizations occupy the middle ground between experts and citizens. On one hand, they are usually regarded as having a significant measure of expertise regarding the interests they claim to represent. On the other, they often claim to represent the interests of a number of citizens whose interests are at stake.

Although the system has played an important role in helping Canadians meet their existing commitment to diversity, it does not meet the needs of a cultural network. It falls short of a key requirement imposed by the commitment to respect diversity through Identification.

Many stakeholder organizations have developed close, long-term working relationships with governments – specifically, with the departments that administer the areas in which they claim expertise and legitimacy. The working relationship is often so close that officials refer to such groups as the department's "clients." Over the years, a long list of diversity-related groups has formed, claiming to authoritatively represent a wide variety of diversity communities and a broad cross-section of the Canadian public. Although the system has played an important role in helping Canadians meet their existing commitment to diversity, it does not meet the needs of a cultural network. It falls short of a key requirement imposed by the commitment **to respect diversity through identification**.

As Canada becomes more networked, so do citizens' identities. Because there is less homogeneity among the members of key cultural communities, there is also less legitimacy in the claims of traditional stakeholder organizations to be able to speak for them. Although members of a community may continue to share many core values and interests, increasingly they will diverge on a variety of other ones. Thus a group that claims to represent, say, francophones, is not in a position to comment on how that aspect of a particular person's identity interacts with other aspects, such as his being, say, a westerner, a Protestant, a homosexual or disabled – any or all of which may be very important to that person's understanding of his or her diversity.

The unpredictability that results from integration is precisely what makes culturally networked societies potent sources of creativity and innovation.

In a society where identity is increasingly networked, the *integration* of its various aspects – the knitting together of partial identities – may be as important in defining who an individual is and how his or her interests are defined as is the "content" of the partial identities. Indeed, this "interaction of the parts" is what distinguishes identity in a cultural network from identity in a multi-ethnic society. The unpredictability that results from integration is precisely what makes culturally networked societies potent sources of creativity and innovation.

If public consultation is to help produce policies and programs that reflect this new and increasingly important aspect of Canadians' diversity, the system must be redesigned. At present, it encourages stakeholder organizations to frame diversity issues in terms of the values, institutions, practices and policies of a multi-ethnic state rather than a cultural network. This discourages discussion and exploration of how public policy should respond to the fact that, say, someone's Aboriginal heritage might have been affected by their involvement with Protestantism, environmentalism, gender theory, homosexuality or a disability.

These comments are not meant to deny **the importance of recognizing specific diversity groups** in the policy process. Recognition is one of the three pillars of a learning society. Canada contains **core cultural diversity groups** with large memberships, rich and long heritages, strong social, economic and territorial bonds, and a wealth of accumulated experience. Being a francophone or an Aboriginal person remains a central aspect of many Canadians' identities. It is important that our institutions and processes continue to recognize that communities such as these occupy a special place in our social, cultural and economic landscape. Indeed, it is central to the argument of this paper that they constitute a huge reservoir of social capital that could contribute to creativity and innovation. Nothing said immediately above should suggest otherwise.

The point is that **networked identities do not function like homogeneous ones**. They introduce a new "personal" dimension into the diversity discussion. This has potentially profound social, cultural, political and economic implications. Recognition of that means that, in effect, diversity issues should not be framed solely in terms of their effect on generic identities. Steps to implement the commitment to diversity must change to accommodate this. Practically speaking:

The strategy of consulting traditional stakeholder organizations should be complemented by an open and inclusive system that allows citizens to engage one another in an on-going discussion of the impact and relevance of their membership in a variety of social and cultural networks.

> *The strategy of consulting traditional stakeholder organizations should be complemented by an open and inclusive system that allows citizens to engage one another in an on-going discussion of the impact and relevance of their membership in a variety of social and cultural networks.*

In a liberal-democratic, multi-ethnic state such as Canada, diversity is a way of recognizing the important role that membership in a particular community plays for many citizens. Respecting diversity means taking steps to ensure that the cultural identity of one group is not threatened by the existence of another one or that individuals are not disadvantaged because of their membership in a particular group.

In a liberal-democratic, cultural network – that is, a society based on respect through *identification* – the role of government extends beyond this. It includes a responsibility to ensure that the impact of diversity on personal identity is also reflected in public policy and public debate. **This means that government must become a facilitator of cultural interaction and intercultural learning.** It has a responsibility to encourage and support citizens in their efforts to become actively involved in the on-going management of their collective diversity. They must have the opportunity to **explore the social and cultural landscape around them and to engage one another in debate over its impact on who they are as individuals and as a community**.

Citizens need a forum in which they can debate, discuss, define and develop their collective and individual understanding of diversity. They must be free to explore, one-on-one, one-to-many and many-to-many, their common history. New institutions and practices are needed to build and support the changing patterns of social and cultural organization. A key task is to create the kind of public space that will encourage and facilitate their efforts to engage one another in on-going, meaningful exchanges – networking – to discuss, debate, explore and share their unique perspectives on the community: its history, significant issues and events, the aspirations of its members, the nature and differences of its constituent communities.

ICTs appear to be a huge enabler here. The Internet connects governments, citizens and organizations in new ways that cut across traditional cultural, organizational and other societal boundaries. It provides an opportunity for governments to achieve a major expansion of public space at very little financial cost or infringement on private space.

ICTs appear to be a huge enabler here. The Internet connects governments, citizens and organizations in new ways that cut across traditional cultural, organizational and other societal boundaries. ***It provides an opportunity for governments to achieve a major expansion of public space at very little financial cost or infringement on private space.*** Governments could encourage the creative use of technology to link diverse groups of citizens together in a process of network-building. It would be designed to strengthen existing linkages between key social and cultural networks, as well as to forge new ones. Through this process, governments could engage Canadians in a rich discussion and exploration of their diversity, what it means to them and how they understand its place in the 21st Century. How is this to be done?

Our discussion has taken us from an examination of globalization, to diversity and intercultural learning, to the role of ICTs as drivers of change and levers of identity and, finally, to the question of governance. What emerges is that, as technology spreads, governance will involve a growing number of networked relationships. In the previous section, we examined the changing nature of stakeholder relations, as stakeholders become networks within a more inclusive governance structure. At the same time, citizens are becoming more engaged in governance issues, leading to the extension of the public space. There is a need to develop and institutionalize this space.

14.1 The Idea of the Commons

The concept of the **commons** has a central place in modern democracy. In early-modern France and England "commons" referred, first, to the "common people," i.e. the non-aristocracy. This is the historical origin of the House of Commons in parliamentary democracy.

But the term has a richer history than this. It was also a physical space, usually in the centre of a town, where people met, such as a town square or a market (*les communaux*). These public spaces, from town commons to the common rooms of bars and clubs, not only encouraged discussion, debate, persuasion, choice and action about community affairs. People also gathered there to become acquainted, celebrate community events, and share their stories, memories, hopes and aspirations.

As an institution, the commons was a portal into the community that, in hindsight, gives a particularly rich meaning to the term "public space."

The physical commons was a locus of information and learning, support and solidarity, friendship, commerce, entertainment and connectedness – what today might be called "social capital." It fused social, cultural and political aspects of community life. As an institution, the commons was a portal into the community that, in hindsight, gives a particularly rich meaning to the term "public space."

Although the Lower House of Parliament has inherited the title of commons, it was not designed to foster or support this kind of democratic participation in community life. The institutions of parliamentary democracy are representative, not participative. Indeed, today "the commoners" are scarcely even involved in the affairs of Parliament. Their role is largely confined to that of audience. For most Canadians, it is a distant place, captivated by high-level politics and decision making.

As the 21st Century settles in, institutions such as the Commons look increasingly anachronistic – as do the old nation-states they represent. Public discussion and debate in the Commons plays only a marginal role in communicating, sharing, celebrating or exploring community life as it is lived and experienced by citizens.

The idea of an "electronic" or digital commons has been conceived as a way of reviving the spirit of the traditional commons. It is a new kind of institution for a new era, an electronic version of the old town square or marketplace.

The idea of an "electronic" or **digital commons** has been conceived as a way of reviving the spirit of the traditional commons. It is a new kind of institution for a new era, an electronic version of the old town square or marketplace. It is designed to help recreate the public space where citizens can assemble, meet, discuss, debate and explore their community, their membership in it and their common interests.

14.2 The Communications Structure of the Internet

What is a "digital" commons? Why is the Internet the central vehicle? How would such an institution work?

Some writers have called the Internet a **transformative technology**. They mean to say that its impact on society will be on a scale similar to that of technologies such as the printing press or steam engine. A transformative technology not only has the power to perform existing tasks far more efficiently the way, say, an adding machine was an improvement over the abacus. It also has the power to fundamentally change a community's way of life by changing key social relationships that serve as institutional lynchpins. With the invention of the printing press, for example, authoritative texts such as the Bible suddenly became available to commoners. This undermined the monopoly on scriptural interpretation that had been enjoyed by the aristocracy and the Church, ultimately contributing to the collapse of the feudal state.

Like the printing press, the Internet alters citizens' basic capacity to communicate with one another. In considering why and how, it is illuminating to compare the Internet with three other electronic technologies that changed communication in the 20th Century: telephone, radio and TV.

The telephone was a spectacular advance over traditional modes of communication such as letter writing because it linked two individuals in instantaneous and direct communication – a conversation – across great distances. TV and radio were also instantaneous, direct and could bridge distance. But unlike the telephone, their application did little to enhance one-to-one communication. Despite initial efforts to use radio for person-to-person communication, its widespread adoption followed a "broadcast" model that enhanced one-to-many communication. Individuals as different as Adolph Hitler and Jack Benny used the remarkable power of radio to achieve a new kind of public presence. Television spread according to the same paradigm.

Like telephone, radio and TV, the Internet is instantaneous and easily bridges distance. Like the telephone, it can link individuals, one-to-one. Like radio and TV, it can also link one-to-many. Finally, unlike telephone, radio and TV as we know them today, the Internet also allows large numbers of individuals to **network**, linking **many-to-many** – and at extremely low cost. Whether the democratic promise of the Internet fades, as did earlier visions of social transformation through mass exposure to quality cultural product via public radio and television, remains to be seen. Governments can play a role in shaping the future function of this new communications medium and help to realize its promise.

> As a communications tool, the Internet has no real precedent. It combines the power of the telephone, radio and TV along with a new third dimension. Perhaps the closest analogue is the traditional commons.

As a communications tool, the Internet has no real precedent. It combines the power of the telephone, radio and TV along with a new third dimension. Perhaps the closest analogue is the traditional commons. Within the old marketplace or town square, communication assumed all three forms: one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many. The difference, of course, lies in scale: the numbers of people involved and the distances that can be bridged. The natural range of human speech and mobility defined the reach of the commons. As a result, it could include only a relatively small number of people – the townsfolk – and could reliably broadcast or network in an area not much larger than the town itself.

By contrast, the limits of the Internet are as yet unknown. It is a tool unlike any other. Still, evidence is already abundant that its communications and **organizational** power is extraordinary. We have seen it at work in situations as diverse as the anti-globalization protests, the move to integrated, single-window service delivery among governments and the emergence of the new global economy. All are fundamentally dependent on this technology.

Nevertheless, even if the Internet is vastly different in scale, its flexible communications structure gives it a deep affinity with the traditional commons. As a result, the Internet could be used to provide an open, public and inclusive space where the people of a much larger community – for example, a country such as Canada – could assemble, meet, mix and create new intercultural understandings and norms.

14.3 Designing the Digital Commons

If designing and implementing a digital commons on the Internet is a complex and technically demanding task, the idea itself is quite simple. Like the traditional commons, the digital commons is an inclusive, public space where citizens engage one another as members of the same community, moving back and forth as need be between three levels of interaction: one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many. It is not an abstraction, conjured up out of pure ideas that are unrelated to social practice. The digital commons grows out of the day-to-day interests and activities of Canadians. It would evolve and grow over the years. How would the digital commons be organized and what would be the role of government?

The traditional commons was a public institution. Citizens could not use it to engage in slander or other illegal or illegitimate activities. Public maintenance of the physical space was also required. Beyond this kind of basic policing and maintenance, however, it was largely a ***self-organizing and self-governing institution***.[6] The rules of interaction, etiquette, relevance and fair play were determined largely by customary practice. For example, if we asked how a topic of discussion was decided or who was to be included, the answer would be that, when people met and mingled, they self-selected, placing themselves in personal conversations, small "chat groups" or the audience of a speaker, according to what they found interesting and relevant, or off-putting and immoral, like gossip. Different groups developed in the commons according to internal rules that went beyond the common law that applied to the whole commons. In short, the commons had its own "culture." It belonged to the commoners who determined their participation and local rules through participation and involvement.

The digital commons would be a public institution and so should be inclusive and open. Comportment should comply with basic standards of respect and decency. Nevertheless, as with the traditional commons, activity in the digital commons should be largely self-directed and self-organizing. While different groups may need to be able to exclude those who persistently disrupt their lawful discussions about a particular topic, members of these various groups can often benefit from interactions with other groups with divergent points of view. Thus it would be far more than a government website where citizens can get authoritative information, although such information would be available there. Nor would it be just an "interactive" website – a facilitated chat room aimed at "engaging" citizens on current issues. The digital commons certainly would be about citizen engagement, but it would not be about government engaging citizens. Rather, it would be about citizens engaging one another – ***the many engaging the many***.

We can put this differently by saying that the digital commons would be a ***democratic*** institution. It would support reflective participation in public discussion and debate that is inclusive, open and uncontrolled. Nevertheless, the digital commons would not be just – or even primarily – a political institution. First and foremost, it would be a ***cultural*** one. It would be a place where citizens could share, explore, celebrate and create a sense of membership in a common community. This reaches

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[6] Hence the modern idea of economic markets as self-governing institutions.

beyond an examination of public policy issues to a discussion of the common values, beliefs, history, customs and practices, themes, events, aspirations and concerns that distinguish their cultural community from others. If such a new institution is to contain such a discussion, citizens must see in it a reflection of their own democratic aspirations. In particular, they must be free to set the agenda for discussion, control its flow and choose the level at which they wish to engage one another. Government's role would be to design and maintain the common space in a way that allows them to congregate into spaces within it in an environment of security, trust and mutual respect, as well as to work with other sectors to build citizens' capacity to participate.

It should be clear from this that the vision of Canada as a cultural network is central to the vision and success of the digital commons. Such an institution would provide a forum in which Canadians could connect with one another, share their cultural interests and strengthen existing and build new intercultural links that would contribute to intercultural learning. It would contribute to the evolution of Canadians' sense of common citizenship by promoting cultural recognition, inclusiveness and openness among the country's diverse communities. This would make it a powerful public policy tool for promoting the values of a dynamic, innovative, learning society based on a clear recognition of the contribution that diversity makes to the community's overall capacity for creativity and innovation.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion reflects the conviction that a new post-industrial vision of the democratic state is emerging. It downplays the traditional view that a single body of elected representatives is responsible for the exercise of public authority – that is, for governance. Instead, it emphasizes the increasingly important role played by other social, political and economic actors, and the high degree of interdependence between them and governments.

In response, political institutions such as Parliament, the legislatures, the Courts and the public services must become more "networked" and more "collaborative." They must adjust to a vision of democracy based upon a much freer circulation of information and greater involvement in public affairs by citizens.

Finally, if Canada is becoming a knowledge-based society and Canadians are to be successful knowledge-workers and knowledge-producers – if Canadians are to be good at *learning* – they need a ***dynamic communications network at the societal level that can express their changing identity and support their changing social relationships***. It should encourage them to connect with one another directly and facilitate the free exchange of information, ideas and experiences. It must allow them to discuss, debate, explore and share their unique perspectives on their community: its history, significant issues and events, the aspirations of its members, the nature and differences of its constituent communities. Therein lies the future.

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