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CITIZEN-CENTERED GOVERNANCE : INTER- GOVERNMENTAL AND INTER- INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSIONS OF ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

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Studies of inter-governmental relations in Canada have generated heated political debate over the years. Some authors have argued that Canada has two national sports: hockey and constitutional discussions. Who should do what? Should it be the federal government, the provinces or municipalities? We often hear about the skirmishes among politicians trying to get votes by confronting another level of jurisdiction. But what if the issue of who does what had become obsolete because of new multi-level partnerships? Is it possible that the practice of inter-governmental projects has moved beyond political considerations? As some of the cases presented in this article illustrate, some projects have worked when head offices did not interfere with generally workable arrangements in the field while they wondered at the centre about who should do what.

The argument developed in this article reviews the debate over the citizen first perspective by looking back at a few cases developed when the new public management movement was in full flight (Bernier and Angers, 2010), attempting to build services reflecting the perspective of current citizens, not simply the institutional division of powers decided in 1867, the “watertight compartments” (Simeon, 2002; 214). What had then been organized in 1867 was in the context of a very different state system and capacity, but governments still seem sometimes to attempt to function with those institutions of the 19th century. To establish control over local services in a country where geography, communications and transport presented enormous challenges was not a simple task for the provinces back then (Silver, 1997) Also, until the Quebec state challenged the legitimacy of the federal government (Guindon, 1978) and province-building became a reality (Bernier, 2011), there were not many problems in inter-governmental service delivery but evidently they have by now become far more important (Julien and Proulx, 1992). Budget constraints, technological improvements and a more crowded state system have changed the way governments deliver services together.



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Among the instruments of the new public management era were partnerships with the private sector but also with other governments (Klijn, 2005; Bernier and Angers, 2010; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). Inter-organizational relations of any nature have become an important research topic (Cropper et al, 2008). One could also argue that the transformations and reforms of the last twenty or thirty years have generated new problems to solve, among which are those of managing more autonomous agencies (Verhoest et al, 2010; Margetts et al, 2010). What are the solutions? By going back to some cases that have not been much exploited but have aged well, this article attempts to develop some new insights into issues of inter-governmental relations and service delivery as well as important questions and suggestions for public administration and governance.

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1. Introduction : ASD Through partnerships

Over the summer of 1996, the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC), in partnership with the KPMG Centre for Government Foundation, the Privy Council Office and the Treasury Board Secretariat of the Government of Canada, organized a series of roundtables (in Ottawa, Vancouver, Halifax, Montreal and Toronto) to consider the intergovernmental dimensions of alternative service delivery from a "citizen-centred perspective." The discussion involved senior public servants from all levels of governments, members of the private and non-profit sectors and academics. The 'citizen-centered' approach which emerged from these discussions suggested the need to look for lessons in a broader range of alternative service delivery mechanisms, and to examine more closely the implications for intergovernmental relations arising from the increasing appeal to unconventional partnerships and networks and more generally of the inter-institutional aspects of governance.

No simple answer, no single grand design, was anticipated; what was sought was documentation of a growing track record of experience in development of innovative arrangements to assure that public servants could meet the needs of diverse communities demanding greater access and responsiveness in their relations with their governments. We were looking for experiments already under way that could teach us interesting lessons.

This article attempts to provide a synthesis of ideas discussed during six meetings across the country and draw lessons that are still relevant today. Some references are offered throughout the text to more extensive analyses elsewhere. The authors of this article were the two rapporteurs of the conferences already mentioned. We were initially worried that we would not get much material out of the conferences. We were wrong. At the end, the people we listened to had raised more questions and issues than the sponsors of the conferences had bargained for. We wrote a far longer document than required in Ottawa. The required short version has already been published (Dobell and Bernier, 1997). We believe however that the longer story that the following article presents is useful and important for the future of service delivery and reform in Canada. In the



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discussions from Halifax to Victoria, a bottom up approach emerged that is worth of further discussion.

In a way, this article might be seen as offspring of two parents--"Canadian Governments and the Search for Alternative Program Delivery and Financing", written by Evert Lindquist and Tammy Sica for KPMG and IPAC (October '95), and "Getting Government Right" issued by the Privy Council Office, Government of Canada (March, 1996, just at the time of the second printing of Lindquist-Sica). But this child is attempting to outgrow both parents. It attempts to move beyond the first by focussing not on alternative mechanisms for program delivery, but on alternative intergovernmental alliances and institutional partnerships for fulfilling public functions collectively--for achieving effective governance through cooperative arrangements. It proposes a different starting point from the second, in that it does not, from the perspective of the citizen, see government as a single "they" offering Canadians protection in a changing world, and does not presume that the federal government represents the single 'core' of policy. Rather it sees governments of all kinds as institutional arrangements and social contrivances created by "us" to discharge assigned responsibilities which in an uncertain world we can better tackle cooperatively and collectively. For present purposes, in other words, we take the public servant to be the agent of citizens.

In considering the institutional setting in which these agents must work, we begin from the premise that knowledge will never be complete, irreducible uncertainty is inevitable, and zero risk is nowhere attainable. We must pursue a process of trial and error-but we must learn, systematically, from the essays and errors. And change in behaviour will require change in incentives as well as in culture, whether those incentives are communicated through sanctions or through prices. The conviction behind this reading of the scene is that it truly is time to move beyond the rhetoric. Governments have to react to their transforming environment and do need consequently to try to find new solutions to new problems. Navigating between globalization and

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the fiscal crisis of the state, governments have to learn rapidly new ways of doing what has to be done.

Further, we have to ‘empower’ our agents in public service not just in form, but in fact. We have to accept that responsible decisions will inevitably entail risk--risk of being wrong, and risk of damage. We have to learn how to delegate responsibilities, appraise judgements and assess performance under these conditions. We have to learn to live with the errors that will inevitably be made, and accept that a good judgement may lead to a bad outcome (and, conversely, that good luck may often bail out bad decisions). Building and rewarding results-oriented management while encouraging entrepreneurship, innovation and risk-taking in the public service is a tricky business (Bernier and Hafsi, 2007).

In any case, the criteria for success should reflect the perspective of the citizen, not the supplier. Discussions in Canada about roles and responsibilities are plagued by a top-down approach that has offered negligible results for the last decades. The present efforts to adapt public administration take a different road, a bottom up view focusing on who should decide services delivery in a context where governments are forced to increasingly use alternative mechanisms of delivery. This is what citizen-centered governance is about: service delivery for citizens in a system where the citizen is at the center of the decision making process, not a distant number in a line waiting for an available clerk. In «Getting Government Right : the challenge of implementation», Marcel Massé suggested on December 1, 1993 :

“We need to develop a citizen-centered approach to federal-provincial relations....Organizations which provide high-quality service are those which, among other things, take an ‘outside-in’ perspective on their services. Instead of organizing themselves in the way which is most administratively or bureaucratically convenient, they start with the interests and concerns of their clients.”

“In the conventional approach to federal-provincial relations, too often, the basic preoccupation on both sides has not been ‘how do we meet citizens’ needs in the most efficient way?’ but ‘how do we make sure that our jurisdiction’s interests and prerogatives are protected?’. This is hardly the way to encourage mutual accommodation. Nor is it a good way to restore taxpayers’ confidence in our public institutions.”



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“In these kinds of negotiations, there has been a tendency to lose sight of the interests of those members of the public which both governments are elected to serve. This time, we must do better. Our guiding principle should not be simply ‘disentanglement’, which suggests a reordering and sorting out of what exists now, but ‘service enhancement’, which suggests collaborative, citizen-focused initiatives where the interests of taxpayers and service recipients take precedence over all others. Perhaps we will develop a pilot approach and test it in a few areas, and then refine and improve it and apply it more generally. We will see.”

Now, coming up years later into the challenge of implementation, what have we seen? Currently, service enhancement or maintenance can only be achieved through partnerships and ASD (Bernier, 2010). Is it possible to develop partnerships to solve some of the problems listed above? The following examples illustrate that partnerships could and do work. Partnerships are at the core of alternative service delivery. They are also a model that could be useful on the intergovernmental front by suggesting new institutional arrangements. We believe that this material is still relevant and tells stories that have yet to be implemented.

1.1 Some examples of partnerships

In Halifax, where an unprecedented initiative labelled Summit Odyssey raised substantial private sector money to meet expenses of hosting the 1995 G-7 summit meeting, the Greater Halifax Economic Development Partnership has built on that experience to create what is thought to be the first public/private partnership with a municipality in Canada. It operates autonomously--there is no public agency with responsibility for economic development in the region. The partnership is organized as an independent non-profit society governed by a 16-member board, with a target to create 20,000 new, sustainable private sector jobs. In its pursuit of improved economic performance, the agency can access funds from three levels of government to focus what previously were uncoordinated activities in training, promotion and other development initiatives. New partnerships between the private and the public sectors have ended a mutual distrust and a lack of understanding that was centuries old.

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In Vancouver, a determined campaign is pursuing a significant multi-agency, cross-government project with what might seem the modest goal of ensuring that public safety agencies and emergency services in the region will be able to talk directly with each other by radio in the event of an emergency. The proposed new facility would operate a wide-area, digital, trunked radio system serving over 56% of the provincial population, spanning four regional districts and involving 30 police detachments (both RCMP and municipal), 15 fire agencies and approximately 6,000 emergency personnel presently operating in vulnerable facilities with old, obsolescent and limited radio equipment offering no direct interoperability.

The Edmonton Business Service Center now operates with employees from three orders of government in a single location to provide information and service to business people, including advice to individuals contemplating starting a new business.

In Ontario, the Kent Area Administrator's Group, with members from the City of Chatham, the County of Kent, school boards and hospitals, was formed in 1982 to promote cooperation amongst these jurisdictions in an attempt to maintain services in the face of limited revenue prospects. It now provides cooperative mutual support in banking, procurement, administrative services and other areas.

In Montreal, in New Brunswick, across the country in jurisdictions large and (more often) small, similar institutional alliances and partnerships are being formed with a variety of structures going far beyond formal contracting, while remaining well short of formal devolution or transfer of formal authority.

The interesting feature of almost all these initiatives is that they are happening on the ground, spontaneously, as individual initiatives. They are more likely to involve local and regional governments than formal federal-provincial undertakings. And they are mostly flying in the face of the administrative systems by which they are bound. What was said of the Edmonton case might be said of them all: "The problems we've run up against in this project all revolve around



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the fact that an inter-government integrated entity runs counter to the mechanisms which governments use to control their activities.”

Even more in the case of public/private partnerships involving shared power and shared decision rather than simple contracting, the central systems in place to guard the taxpayer’s resources militate against the organizational innovations devised to meet changing circumstances. Who could be held accountable is a question that makes civil servants nervous when involved in partnerships, the formula we have heard about from Halifax to Vancouver. This explains why we moved from studying strictly intergovernmental relations to the broader questions of governance. One cannot discuss the former without considering the latter seriously.

Of course, here as elsewhere, there is little new under the sun. Successful intergovernmental partnerships have been devised in lots of places, under different names. The Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment, for example, has achieved far less credit than it deserves as an innovative institutional model. Established as a non-profit corporation, its secretariat in Winnipeg serves the ten provincial, two territorial and one federal governments as shareholders having, in principle, equal voice in the development of a work program aimed at achieving a coordinated governmental response to environmental concerns, and a harmonization of policies, procedures and assessment processes across all governments, in order to reduce barriers to development posed by conflicting or overlapping provisions.

Another fascinating example is offered by Quebec’s experience with local co-management of fish and wildlife (Zones d’Exploitation Contrôlée). Initiated in 1978, the program is a unique experiment in governmental delegation of resource management responsibilities to resource users, in which locally-based non-profit organizations are given authority to regulate hunting and fishing, manage resources, and levy fees. One recent assessment suggests that the program has made significant progress in advancing policy objectives, including conservation of fish and wildlife, participation of users, and improved public access, all within a requirement of financial self-sufficiency (Pearse and Wilson, 1996).

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Indeed there are older examples of flexible administrative arrangements. Before the turn of this century, federal-provincial conferences had resulted in federal transfer (to Quebec and Ontario, initially) of administrative responsibility for fisheries legislation for those fisheries which were subject to provincial jurisdiction. There are also federal-provincial agreements over various industrial sectors and pensions.

Provisions for contracted delivery of social services by voluntary agencies abound, and many of these now involve the exercise of delegated authority. Private sector financing of community services to children in poverty through Centraide was one example discussed in Montreal. Other examples of cooperative alternatives in the health and education fields are discussed in “Facing the Future”, a record of a 1996 symposium organized by the Canadian Cooperative Association.

The lesson we can get from these examples is that intergovernmental partnerships are feasible and efficient. These are only a few examples of the track record we were trying to establish. More generally, we think that these examples raise important issues we discuss in the following sections.

1.2 The need for a revolution in the federal bureaucracy

The story to be told in the balance of this article is simple. It suggests that a changing global context is creating a highly interdependent world. Globalization also explains in part the financial crisis of the state that is the other main reason why alternative service delivery and partnerships become so important. In this interdependent world, an unprecedented degree of communication and cooperation is forced upon all organizations, most particularly governments. A holistic, horizontal response is demanded from highly-specialized, vertically-organized agencies.



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On the ground, employees from various governments and other entities are finding pragmatic responses to the need for coordination of activities across jurisdictional and organizational lines. But they dare not tell their bosses.

Out where the rubber meets the road, overlap and duplication in the activities of different agencies and different governments are often avoided by informal and opportunistic deals for sharing of tasks and information. But the principles of Parliamentary government and the systems of financial management designed to assure probity and prudence--not to mention entrenched cultures and attitudes--militate against such innovations. In Vancouver, it was asked how far the legal frameworks which surround operational activities can find the flexibility to accommodate 'sensible' administrative decisions. The answers were not optimistic, in the absence of managers in a position to take real risks with the prospects of legal action or financial liabilities.

The message we heard from the discussions of all this activity across the country was that it is the entrenched systems and cultures which will have to yield. Decentralization, devolution and cooperative alliances are demanded in the new context, and the periphery cannot continue to be reined in by centralizing tendencies or constrained by abstract frameworks not sensitive to the imperatives of resource constraints and the pressures of time in a rapidly-changing external environment.

We believe we heard a special message for the federal government in all this. It is necessary to recognize how great is the gap between what is seen as relevant on the firing line in the regions, and what is thought important in the national capital. Ottawa is not thought the natural center from which to manage many peripheral activities, and the core of federal policy is not thought the core of the most pressing management challenges. The task is not simply to find ways by which policies set in Ottawa are to be effectively handed off for implementation and delivery somewhere else.

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The federal government--and not only the federal government--will need to find a new attitude along with its new policies, one which recognizes that the capacities of local governments and voluntary agencies, along with provincial governments, are now substantial. The partnerships to be developed around operational responsibilities dealing with citizens are not likely automatically to be structures in which a federal lead and federal dominance are assumed or even accepted. In other cases, delegation of power would even work better.

Obviously this creates a dilemma, since the essence of political life is the delivery, visibility of services to citizens, and it may be hard to maintain an effective federal presence while withdrawing from implementation toward core policy roles in more abstract and distant fields. But the federal government must recognize that its attempts to portray itself as the leader charged with articulating the over-arching vision and organizational mission even in operational fields is simply not to be accepted. As inter-governmental institutional arrangements and inter-governmental cooperation are pursued in order to assure citizen-centered governance, Ottawa agencies must recognize that they are one player, not the player, and they (as others) will have to earn their place through performance and contribution, through demonstrated ability to anticipate change and deliver on their parts of the bargains, not through assertion of natural right.

Political willingness to change is therefore essential, but must also be reflected in bureaucratic attitudes and styles. We believe from federal civil servants participation to the roundtable that this could change. While not necessarily in any way representative, horror stories nonetheless abound :

The long-serving senior deputy in the West who insists that he no longer permits his secretary to book time for 'consultation' with federal officials, because "nothing has ever been altered or amended as a result of such 'consultations', even in cases where only straightforward factual information about implementability in the specific circumstances of the province was involved";

When the federal government moved from a policy of reimbursing hospital costs for refugees (a federal responsibility) to a policy of per diem payments to hospitals for this purpose based

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on national average costs, some hospitals in British Columbia (whose financing is a provincial responsibility) were adversely affected financially. The government of British Columbia found out about the federal policy change when some hospitals complained to them. The federal government response to provincial expressions of concern was that the federal government had carried out any necessary 'consultations'--with the Canadian Health Association.

In the preparations for the 1992 UNCED meeting in Rio, new and more effective procedures (the 'Rio Way') were put in place to permit the involvement of provincial governments (and NGOs) in negotiations leading to international agreements and commitments which provincial governments would have to implement. In the negotiations around NAFTA, the 'Rio way' was abandoned and international commitments undertaken which some provincial governments are still unwilling or unable to implement.

A federal government determination was made that the duties of chairing the Canada Health Forum should not be shared with the governments exercising constitutionally-assigned responsibility in the field, and departmental officials have not yet understood that 'a shared vision of the health system' involves more than simply a federal government announcement to a waiting audience of provincial officials.

So there must be political will to cooperate; there must also be bureaucratic willingness to share organizational power. In the Vancouver and Montreal meetings in particular, it was noted by various people, among whom federal civil servants, that the federal government and public service are not very good at handling the techniques of partnerships, and will need to draw lessons from other jurisdictions and other sectors where traditions of cooperative inter-institutional operations are better established (though certainly not beyond possibilities for vast improvement). But much the same sentiments were expressed wherever the discussions occurred. Federal officials will have to move further to walk the talk that federal politicians offer in their promises of cooperative and imaginative new administrative arrangements. With this preliminary scan of examples and issues, we turn then to explore more fully the idea of citizen-centered governance, and then to some of the barriers in the way of its realization.

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1.3 To be or not to be ... responsive

A citizen-centered approach presumes that responsiveness is crucial. Three aspects may be distinguished :

1) Emphasis on customer-centered service (not necessarily delivery of specific services), in which criteria of success are oriented toward the preferences of the client (very possibly signalled through markets) rather than toward the rational technical and professional standards of the designers or delivery vehicles.

2) More particularly, emphasis on the necessity of an attitudinal and cultural shift within the public service and other bureaucracies, whereby the duties and responsibilities of the position are seen in terms of the response to the individual citizen rather than the obligations attached to that position as one unit in a hierarchical structure, charged with achieving some abstract mandate. “Not in my jurisdiction”, or “you’ve come to the wrong place” become in this orientation impermissible responses to a citizen approaching her public service, no matter how accurate a reflection of institutional and jurisdictional realities it may be. The obligation of the public servant is seen as being the resolution of the citizen’s problem, through the integration of services, or, in the absence of the necessary expertise and resources, conscientious facilitation of access to a more relevant and promising office or jurisdiction. This extension of the “single window” notion in effect would make each public official, whether well-selected or not, an agent for the individual citizen who approaches, rather than an arbiter of some more general public good.

3) Finally, attention to the wide range of contractual arrangements or institutional alliances (partnerships) which might support more effective governance as well as service provision, and which might therefore have survival value or evolutionary advantage in a complex and changing world of increasing uncertainty (Davis, 1995; Williamson, 1996; Wilkins, 2010).

When many agencies or jurisdictions are involved, it is not the responsibility of the citizen to sort out the arcane lines of jurisdiction involved, in order to find the appropriate point of entry. The goal is a seamless process, a response in which the inter-agency and inter-jurisdictional structures are transparent to the citizen, in the same way that software designers promise that all the transitions from one program to another in their office suites will be transparent to the user, who is interested only in the result. Or as all the linkage from greater pressure on the accelerator to greater speed on the road is transparent to the automobile driver, who is concerned only with



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outcomes and not with the mechanisms by which power is transferred from the engine to the rubber on the road.

At bottom, effective delivery of service to the citizen means concerns with responsiveness to a client, with public servants as agents for program delivery. However, effective government performance on behalf of citizens means concerns with determination of the public interest, with government as a regulatory or rule-making agent, or policy-setting authority, and hence with the creation of institutions aimed at balancing the demands of some ‘clients’ against those of others (Ostrom, 1992; March and Olsen, 1989; Bance, 2012).

We would see the lesson from our discussions across the country as emphasizing that ‘citizen-centered governance’ tests of responsiveness, openness and transparency should apply in all aspects of government operations. Further, expectations of a more cooperative and flexible posture accommodating greater sharing of power and decision-making are strong not just in respect of program delivery but also in government’s rule-making and standard-setting activity.

Even in this latter role, where the citizen is more the ‘subject’ than the ‘customer’, the idea of citizen-centered governance involves a dramatic shift in conventional public service attitudes. Still here government performance should be judged not only by the effectiveness of the policy or regulation as seen by the designer and supplier. Even the citizen as the object of regulation or taxation has the right to deal with a comprehensible entity, an entity that is demonstrably concerned to be responsive to the citizen’s interest, and clearly able to give a fair hearing and fair consideration to the perspective of the citizen and the impacts on the citizen.

So the goal of citizen-centered governance is fairly clear, whether one is thinking of citizens as customers of programs, clients for more complex services, subjects of enforcement efforts, or citizens sharing power and responsibility in decisions. How is this goal to be pursued?

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1.4 Cooperative responses: partnerships rather than selling out

We have to consider cooperation and new institutional arrangements for better governance, not just privatization or commercialization, not just decentralization or devolution; and not just a politics/administration decomposition, or ‘separating steering from rowing’. Indeed, far from suggesting such a dichotomy, the experience reviewed --which attempts to draw lessons from many experiments in alternative institutional arrangements for government discharge of its responsibilities--suggests the need for dramatically improved communication across organizational boundaries, and from centre to periphery.

The key result or central thesis emerging from comments is that governments, in order to deal with current crises in fiscal management and legitimacy, must learn how to interact, among themselves and with other institutions, more effectively than they have in the past. The management of complexity, interdependence, interconnection cannot be achieved within existing practices (Bardach, 1998; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). Management of interconnections in light of citizen interest should be the organizing principle for action in the public service too.

From a perspective of citizen-centered governance, the old systems and practices are not coping well with changing circumstances or changing expectations. Faced with a crisis of confidence and challenges to the legitimacy of most collective institutions, greater flexibility and cooperation is demanded. Participatory mechanisms and holistic approaches to horizontal issues likewise make inter-institutional cooperation essential.

The key question that has to be addressed is whether such a fundamental change in culture and orientation can be achieved within the traditions and principles of the Westminster model. In particular, can principles of individual and collective Ministerial responsibility and accountability to the taxpayer not directly, but through Parliament, be preserved in a setting of citizen-centered governance? If not, can they be adapted, or do they represent a fundamental barrier to new mechanisms for achieving improved delivery of services to citizens, and also improved



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performance by governments in discharging responsibilities for political leadership and vision, for regulating markets and other activities, and for public policy?

If present traditions of Ministerial accountability--honoured as they are anyway as much in the breach as the observance--are not compatible with a government institutional apparatus which is user-friendly and transparent to the citizen, is it perhaps our current view of Ministerial accountability and Parliamentary oversight via the judgements of auditors-general that must change?

The remainder of this article attempts to flesh out these questions by brief reference to some background context and concrete cases.

2. Context : A Changing World

2.1 The world has become a congested global village.

Continuing increase in the scale of human populations and human activities--particularly industrial activities--and continuing advance in information technologies and communications capacities create a changing context within which governments must function. The inexorable move toward what might be called the congested global village has transformed the setting within which the roles of government--or indeed nation-states themselves--must be worked out. Information technologies make possible both a borderless global village and an integrated global economy and new intergovernmental partnerships.

Some observers conclude that with all this we are seeing the demise of the nation-state and the passing of the Westphalian order based upon the sovereign state--or at least a weakening of the territorial basis for it. What counts on the latter are trust and cooperation, not the exercise of power, however legitimate.

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2.2 Public sector reform

These developments mean exciting ('interesting') times in public service and public administration--perhaps more exciting for those who study than for those who serve (though for those who remain to serve, the possibility of real change to reshape their own world may also be exciting). In practical terms, the dominant development within this global context, and the proximate factor driving the whole search for alternative mechanisms, is the fiscal crisis of the state. As noted in the first part of the paper, this crisis can be seen as driving a re-definition of the scale, scope and role of the state.

A consequence of the almost universal swing by governments toward deficit elimination and debt reduction is of course the need to ensure that current revenues exceed program expenditures by a significant margin, sufficient to cover not only interest payments but some move toward paying down the debt. Taxpayers perceive, quite rightly, that from an earlier position in which a dollar's worth of taxes financed an expenditure of more than a dollar on programs and services, they have now swung to a position where they receive considerably less than a dollar's worth of program expenditure for every dollar in taxes. Regardless of the operational efficiency of governments, they can hardly persuade citizens that on a current basis, as taxpayers, they are receiving value for money. And a huge debt still has to be managed and citizens should not expect to get a dollar of services for a dollar of taxes in the near future.

As a result of this straightforward financial reality, and as a result of the divisive debate around the responsibility for the crisis and the appropriate response to it, there can be seen a widespread crisis of confidence in the capacity of governments to meet their responsibilities in a rapidly changing and uncertain world, and a widespread sense of loss of legitimacy in governments. Alienation is allegedly widespread, although less so at local level. Confidence, legitimacy, competence are not words that spring to mind as increasingly highly-educated and increasingly demanding citizens contemplate their governments.



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2.3 Overlap and duplication

One symptom highlighted in attempts to respond to the fiscal crisis and to improve citizen perceptions of governments and public servants is the problem of overlap and duplication. There is a widespread belief that a fortune could be saved by eliminating costly overlap and duplication simply between federal and provincial governments alone, not to mention opportunities more broadly. (Julien and Proulx, 1992) From the perspective of the citizen, many federal programs and provincial programs seem to have similar or identical definitions of their clienteles, and the appearance of overlap may be strong.

From the point of view of expenditures, the problem is seen as one of real waste. Perhaps more fundamentally, so far as perceptions are concerned, the problem is one of lack of coordination, inter-jurisdictional squabbling, bureaucratic buck-passing, and a complete absence of concern for the impacts on a citizen attempting to thread a path through a maze of non-communicating and introspective, self-reflexive and self-interested agencies.

Many studies exist to demonstrate that in fact there is not much actual overlap in the work done. But these miss the point. First, as just noted, there is a widespread perception of waste and duplication. More fundamentally, the fact of the multiple governmental involvements leaves citizens with the task of identifying, understanding and interpreting the significance of all the arcane jurisdictional distinctions worked out by bureaucrats in neighbouring units or agencies over decades of rivalries. Generations of investment in MOUs (Memoranda of Understanding) and policy manuals embed subtle distinctions and dividing lines, all rational and possibly essential, but fundamentally irrelevant to the citizen. A culture of citizen-centered governance cannot let the responsibility rest with the citizen to comprehend all these and to track down, through the organizational maze, the public servant uniquely responsible for dealing with the citizen's issue. A user-friendly government would offer both better manuals for the users, and faster, more direct response.

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In the closing keynote address to the 1996 IPAC Conference, the City Manager in Vancouver mentioned an example he had offered in the Vancouver meeting of this project. “One of our staff got an angry call from a friend, who had sought to get some garbage cleaned up from the area near his home. The friend had received ‘the City Hall runaround’--his fourth referral was to the first person he talked to.

“You see, we have four different groups dealing with garbage cleanup. If it is ordinary junk on private property, Permits and Licenses enforces the Standards Bylaw. If the junk on private property represents a health hazard, Health staff do it under the Health bylaw. Depending on where it is on the street, and how big, one of two different Engineering sections deals with it. In effect we’re saying to citizens ‘you figure it out--measure it, smell it, figure out where it is, what kind of garbage it is, and then know the bylaws and our organization well enough to know who to call’! Obviously, no matter how logical the division of work from our perspective, that isn’t good enough for the citizen.” (Dobell, 1996) Even less is it acceptable in a multi-jurisdictional or multi-organizational partnership venture.

From the other side of the country came the example of permitting in New Brunswick, where it was suggested that to open a gas bar and convenience store entails at least 22 different permits from 22 different offices involving several levels of government--or 39, it is said, to open a travel trailer business--at least some of which appear to be simultaneously pre-requisites for each other. Not just the number, but the sequencing is difficult to the point of impossibility for the first-time small business aspirant. Service New Brunswick, established in 1991, bringing 60 different provincial government services under one roof, with one staff, is a start toward addressing such problems. Although there is work yet to be done to extend integration to other jurisdictions or to include some private sector services, response to date to the initiative is reported to be enthusiastic.



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In the Spring of 1996, fishermen in the Atlantic provinces were on strike to protest redistribution of fishing quotas for snow crab. The New Brunswick Minister of Fisheries got his windows smashed by a furious crowd. Quotas, of course, are decided by the federal government. Neither the crab nor the crowd knew or much cared about this constitutional distinction, however. And in the face of the pressures of maintaining a living in the fishery, it can perhaps be argued that neither the crab nor the crowd should have need themselves to become familiar with such niceties.

Again moving to another coast, it has been noted that the poor Pacific salmon, over the course of its journey to the sea, must pass among many jurisdictions, local, regional, provincial, and federal and, while spending much of an adult life in international waters with only the protection of the UN Convention on Straddling and Migratory Stocks, return again to run a gauntlet of multiple competing jurisdictions in its search for its home waters and spawning grounds. It is probably debatable whether it is more vulnerable in the context of multiple conflicting jurisdictions, or in the face of competing fishers in the absence of any national jurisdiction.

So a first response to both the perceptions of waste and the organizational barriers to access is to consider a clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities--to address the question "who does what, when and where--and why?". We leave that question to a broader debate, at some later time because we have to answer a more fundamental question. The next question is to consider new ideas, new instruments and new institutional arrangements associated with meeting agreed responsibilities, particularly in an intergovernmental context. In order to solve the roles and responsibilities predicament, we have to get a handle on the question of how interdependence influences roles and responsibilities. In some cases, delegation could be the solution. In others, centralisation might work better. In what we heard, partnerships work better. We started by looking at roles and responsibilities but the responses we got are another set of questions about governance in an interdependent world. The issue is to manage the interdependence. It is to that question that the next section turns.

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3. Looking for Responses

When it comes to delivery of programs and services, a vast literature on customer-centered management has explored a wide range of options for ‘re-inventing’ and re-engineering the public service in order to deal with some of the issues just raised (Pollitt and Bouackert, 2011; Seifdle, 1995 Ford and Zussman 1997). The point of the citizen-centered governance approach is that it can extend this notion of “outside-in” organization beyond the question of client satisfaction with individual service delivery transactions to the much more difficult and complex issues of inter-governmental dimensions and governments’ relations with citizens through all facets of government responsibilities for rules, regulations, framework policies and governance. The citizen-centered perspective does not involve satisfying everyone, necessarily, but it still demands responsiveness to the needs of, and respect for the concerns of, the citizens directly involved as well as those indirectly represented. The following issues have yet to be addressed properly.

3.1 Shared decisions and incentive systems

Again the range of mechanisms considered must be widened. The original simple and popular notions of privatization--substitution of market mechanisms for hierarchical institutions--is not a sufficient solution; an alternative is substitution of more loosely coupled networks. The current management fads overlook the complex world of partnerships although they might be the appropriate response.

Essential problems in this setting arise because there are many stakeholders (with no consensus-finding or dispute resolution mechanism assured), and many joint venture partners (with no executive authority dominant). Hence we encounter a variety of multi-organization problems in defining demand and making the judgements necessary to establish standards in defining agreed services or outputs, and similarly face multi-organizational problems in exercising discretion as to cost-effective measures to meet imposed standards in the provision of services.

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But the key point is that the emphasis here is on the search for alternative mechanisms for governance, not simply alternative structures for service delivery (Bernier and Angers, 2010). And these alternative mechanisms may often demand greater inter-governmental cooperation than exists in the present climate. They entail shared decisions, and a willing sharing of power.

In this setting, the concern with reforming government operations must therefore lead particularly to an emphasis on incentive structures within the different governments or agencies making up these new and complex partnerships and intergovernmental arrangements. The distinct concern with reforming the overall institutional structure more generally, leads to an emphasis on inter-organizational and intergovernmental alliances, bargains or contracts.¹

3.2 Subsidiarity

Local and First Nations governments are closest to the people, at least in the sense that contact between the citizen (principal) and the government official (agent) is maximum. Opportunities for informal accountability moments and flow of information on preferences are most frequent and direct. Where local decisions do not have more distant consequences, we would expect to see greater confidence in the match between citizen preferences and services delivered locally. On the other hand, it is necessary to take account of the preferences of all those affected, whether directly or indirectly, locally or at a distance. It is necessary to recognize spillovers, both physical/environmental and psychic/communal. The risk that provincial and municipal insistence on presence close to the people will undermine altogether the rationale for a federal government or a nation-state more broadly has already been mentioned.

The experience with the ZECs in Québec, once again, is interesting in this respect. One of the emerging problems identified by Pearse and Wilson (1996) in their study is the growing tension between the local members, who control the agencies, and more numerous, more distant non-local

¹ On all this, again, see Ostrom (1992) and Williamson (1996) and the references they cite.

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members who reflect different interests and face different incentives. Not only are these internal problems significant, but the differing interests internally press toward different responses to external interests--for example, those favouring development over conservation--and different resolutions of the conflicts.

Thus, although we see broad support for a principle of subsidiarity (suggesting that functions of government be devolved to the smallest jurisdictions still able to embrace all significant spillovers or inter-relationships relevant to that function), the task of working out what it means in action is not simple. The concern with service delivery suggests an emphasis on subsidiarity as dictating devolution and decentralization, to get delivery closer to the client, except where significant economies of scale are demonstrable. The concern with government as regulator or rule-maker, however, suggests subsidiarity in the direction of escalation or centralization of responsibilities so as to internalize externalities and take adequately into account spillovers among jurisdictions. The division of responsibilities into rowing--delivery or service to the client--and steering--policy or judgement on behalf of the citizen--still does not avoid the need for coordination of the rowers to achieve a greater public good or to avoid waste of resources.

A different perspective on the same issue arises from distinguishing governance as a series of transactions with individuals from governance as a framework for relationships among individuals, a climate or a framework for transactions. The former is individual in nature, business models may apply, concepts like timeliness and responsiveness are central. The latter is shaped by the expectation of repeated transactions, repeated encounters (Axelrod, 1984), or the need to create the expectation of trustworthiness in order to be eligible for relationships which hinge on performance in the absence of any possibility of monitoring (Frank, 1988). What seems to serve individual self-interest then has to be recast in terms of longer-term enlightened interest arising out of collectively more rational action. Here the issue of defining the client becomes central--who is the government's "client" in the field of environmental policy, criminal justice or other regulatory endeavours? Or in other words, "quality of service" is to be assessed according to

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what criteria, interpreted in the perspective of what client groups, informed by what balancing of different interests?

3.3 Implementation and accountability

Awareness of an underlying policy/administration or policy/delivery dichotomy is important in all this discussion. It corresponds in part to the successive stages in the implementation process as viewed by contemporary political science literature. Everybody accepts that such linear sequencing of the process does not happen, and that the dichotomy envisaged does not exist, except as an expository artifact. But it is useful to have the reminder that policy tradeoffs at a more general level have to be approached differently from effective delivery at the street level. Indeed, the discriminations which have to be made at street level to determine eligibility for program benefits or service delivery may thwart the distributive objectives espoused at a general policy level. These distributive discriminations or eligibility determinations are in fact central elements in the delivery of government service to citizens. Moreover, the essence of the policy may ultimately rest in the enforcement policies which surround such determinations. (A policy of zero tolerance for welfare fraud coupled with compassionate understanding in the face of tax evasion may amount to a social policy quite different in impact from the intent of the original legislation in either case.) There are different ways of addressing these difficulties of policy implementation. Mazmanian and Sabatier (1989) offer what is often cited as the most comprehensive framework.² The Mazmanian-Sabatier framework includes earlier research that attempted to generalize from the pathbreaking case study undertaken by Pressman and Wildavsky (1983). Accountability is only one of many factors influencing effectiveness and success in implementation in such a framework.

In a partnership, the hierarchical integration within and among implementing institutions and the recruitment and commitment of implementing officials are the features that differ most

² More recent work has been done but not as complete. See Bernier (2010).

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dramatically from traditional patterns of implementation by civil servants or within other hierarchically-organized bureaucracies (such as large corporations and big international agencies). There is, however, an extensive literature outlining tensions between departments of the same government or agency in dealing with cross-cutting issues such as foreign trade (where even the creation of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada has not fully succeeded in integrating the interests previously represented separately by Industry Canada and External Affairs), or in international environmental negotiations (where even the development of a formal accord did not fully resolve the questions as to where the lead should lie as between Environment Canada and External Affairs), or where the location of the new 'Information Canada' in Canadian Heritage rather than in an intergovernmental relations setting must have generated some debate. Competition in 'turf wars' rather than cooperation in pursuit of agreed outcomes has often been seen as a defining feature of public administration, or hierarchies generally. More positively, with partnerships involving local groups and voluntary agencies, we can presume that what is lost in accountability may be gained in commitment. As already noted in this report, the necessary skills and capacities are not available only in Ottawa. Moreover, the commitment of groups already involved to some degree in service delivery can only be increased through their fuller integration in partnerships and shared decision. When several institutions and jurisdictions are involved, consensus-based decision processes become inevitable, as many examples discussed through the round table process emphasized.

A striking example is that of water supply and water quality in the Don Valley near Toronto, where it is estimated that 132 separate agencies exercise statutory authority in respect of some relevant feature. Evidently almost any initiative will be vulnerable to the emergence of some coalition which will block its way; cooperation and consensus-seeking negotiation seem to be forced on all the players as a way of life. Equally evidently, lines of accountability for any failure to achieve goals with respect to water quality will be murky at best.



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Experience elsewhere is informative on this issue. In the United States, some evidence has been developed to suggest that concerns with accountability are less important than expected in partnerships where policy-makers, staff and clients all have a shared interest in the long-term policy outcomes (Lin, 1996). Examination of environmental policy coordination in Scotland suggests that the vertical dimension of coordination (the relationship between government and organized interests) has posed less of a problem than the horizontal dimension (relationships amongst government agencies themselves) in the implementation of policy (Macleod and McCulloch, 1996). This last study also suggests that founding members of partnerships are more likely to be motivated by shared collective concerns, while those who join later will more likely be responding to selective incentives. Sources of revenue to the partnership also help to explain the degree of cooperation among members.

Thus a vast implementation literature teaches that there can be no policy/administration dichotomy, that policy formulation and policy implementation are simultaneous, iterative, interconnected. At the same time, the even more vast management literature on ‘re-inventing’ and ‘re-engineering’ government (or something) embraced under the rubric of New Public Management tells us that we must separate core policy (‘steering’) from operations (‘rowing’) and eschew micro-management from the centre. The only way identified in our meetings to reconcile these conflicting instructions is to have far easier flow of relevant results-oriented information between centre and periphery, across all organizational boundaries, and far more flexibility and discretion in the field.

Citizen-centered governance focuses on the criteria of effectiveness themselves--judges performance not according to the duties and responsibilities of a position within a hierarchy, but according to the satisfaction of the citizen dealing with the incumbent in that position. That is, it implies attempting to turn around the accountability mechanism to focus on citizen ratings, not evaluation by a hierarchical superior. Accountability and loyalty are thus intended to flow outward, not upward. But of course this is exactly the way in which the traditional Westminster

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model of Parliamentary government is threatened--where do Ministers and Parliament exercise their fundamental authority and answerability? Or, more generally, in a federal government delegating operations to agencies, and contracting for policy, what is left for the central government and public service? Can the idea of citizen-centered governance be so entrenched that the accountability upwards is for satisfaction outwards--i.e.--the public servant is to be held individually accountable for the popular understanding and acceptance of government initiatives? This question points to one example of important practical barriers to realization of institutions for inter-governmental and inter-agency cooperation to achieve citizen-centered governance. The next section turns to a more systematic exploration of these.

4. Potential barriers to citizen-centered governance.

Alternative mechanisms for delivery of services and fulfilment of other government functions are high on the agenda for all governments. A wide range of specific examples of inter-institutional arrangements, and the inter-governmental dimensions of various mechanisms were discussed in the meetings across the country. A wide range of alternative mechanisms was also identified. There is one immediate question to be faced: what determines (or should determine) the choice, of mechanism, a question *Alternative Service Delivery* (Ford and Zussman, 1996) discusses at some length.

A second, more vexed, question imposes itself, however. Regardless of the mechanism chosen, as individual governments pursue their selected alternative mechanisms, they will almost certainly face the need for innovative, unprecedented cooperative arrangements with other agencies and other governments--cooperative arrangements going beyond simple direct contracting for delivery, but involving instead mechanisms for shared power, joint decisions and mutual responsibility or accountability.

And there's the rub.



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4.1 The Barriers

As some of the participants have said, the answers the literature has to offer are not always sufficient. For instance, although as discussed in the previous section, we believe that the accountability issue is not overwhelmingly important, discussants around the country keep referring to it. Discussions of the inter-institutional aspects of alternative mechanisms identified four key themes or barriers to be considered: questions of accountability and authority; visibility or credit and presence; management ; and motives

- Accountability

The central concern, most frequently voiced, was that of identifiable individual responsibility for joint operations and shared decisions, in particular, the responsibility of individual ministers to Parliament and legislatures. Citizens do want to know who's in charge, who's responsible, who to question when things go wrong. The direct answerability of ministers to a legislature of which they are a part, for all activities for which they are seen as responsible, is often identified as the core of our systems of governance. Seamless service at far arms length from central policy-making functions seems to offer few hints as to where the buck stops. Moreover, since the essence of 'policies' is less in their articulation and mandate than it is in the street level eligibility determinations and discriminations employed in their implementation, and the instruments deployed for enforcement, it is again hard to identify where the responsibility for the actual success or failure of policy should, in complex and decentralized alliances, be seen to rest. The answer does not lie in centralization, but in paying attention to the need to find the balance between clarity in mandate and discretion in delivery, and communicating the ability to distinguish who is responsible for which.

- Visibility

The issue of credit is equally vexed. It is often suggested that 'there is no limit to what one person can accomplish provided it does not matter who gets the credit'. But politicians and governments

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go to the wall (or at least the stump) on the basis of the public credit they have accumulated for visible accomplishments. Their interest is in concrete delivery, not abstract policy. Without an effective federal presence throughout the country, in particular, the federal government may well find it impossible to maintain the acceptability of its tax base, and preserve a coherent national vision.

- **Management**

Questions of management also arise. While it might be possible to govern by consensus, it is rarely possible to manage complex operations by committee. How are co-located integrated groups made up of personnel from different agencies and different governments to be brought under a single executive authority with clear management powers? In particular, how are the vastly differing provisions governing pensions, work rules, disciplinary action, union powers, mobility and compensation to be brought into line? With joint products produced by team work, how are differential compensation packages to be tolerated--or what conventions will be acceptable in determining the differences? More generally, how is the merit principle in a career public service to be preserved through the variety of institutional arrangements envisaged here? The fact that special agencies are created as ways to evade some of the regulatory burdens underlying these questions was cited as evidence of the need to attack these barriers and rigidities at their source, rather than merely detour around them.

- **Why should we?**

And the question of motive remains. Different marching orders guide these inter-institutional arrangements in times of fiscal restraint. Can fiscal disciplines be effectively transmitted in these more complex power-shared alliances? Indeed, can cost savings be seen as the driving motive, or must it be recognized that citizen-centered governance is about effectiveness, responsiveness and respect, a restoration of confidence and credibility rather than reduced cost? The latter was the driving motivation we heard, but evidently it is somewhat at odds with expectations of big



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expenditure reductions (though obviously there should be some economies to be reaped if overlapping responsibilities can be sorted out).

4.2 Partial Answers in a Complex World

To all these concerns, there are no single answers. Indeed, there are no general answers at all. The devil is in the details of individual arrangements, and so are the solutions. What we did hear is that the responses can only be practical, not theoretical. They must be tailored to circumstances. They lie principally in openness, information and education.

The question of visibility is a little more difficult. It is not, as is sometimes alleged, simply a matter of political posturing, a search for the limelight and the ribbon-snipping ceremonies. It is also answerability to the electorate. Federal spending without federal presence, or participation in provincial programs without visibility in the provinces, is not just frustration for the politician, it is also a denial of the citizen's right to see the government's work and to judge it....Answerability of federal MP's to the public is the other side of the coin from accountability of ministers to Parliament, and a government that is not visible cannot be answerable." (Canada (Breau), 1981)

The solution lies not in uniform procedures, but in pragmatism; not in control, but in communication. It must be made clear, in advance, for what ministers have authority, and hence responsibility, and hence are answerable. Statutory power for ministers to delegate decision-making (as well as operational) authority must be clearly established, and clearly exercised. (This probably entails, for the federal government, new legislation. But a precedent exists in Alberta's perhaps overly-sweeping Government Organization Act.) Where such powers are delegated, it must be made clear that the minister remains answerable in general, for the correct exercise of the authority to delegate, and for appropriate monitoring of the delegated authority, and appropriate amendment of it as necessary--but not for specific outcomes or *ex post facto* modification of decisions (Tassé and Rowe, 1996). At the same time, it must be made clear that Parliament's

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oversight is through the Minister, in general terms. It does not involve the accountability of officers exercising delegated authority directly to Parliament.

The case of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is an interesting example in many respects. In the March, 1996 budget the federal government announced its intention to create a single food inspection agency to carry out all federally-mandated inspection and quarantine activities, as a legislated agency reporting to Parliament through the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. The government also announced its desire 'to work with interested provinces to move towards the development of an agency that is truly national in scope and mandate'--i.e., that could deal effectively with all aspects of the national food inspection system, bringing together responsibilities in health, fisheries and agriculture from all governments.

To create a single food inspection agency within the federal government is in itself a challenging undertaking, involving creation of an agency bigger than most federal departments, and flying in the face of a history which includes, over the past twenty-five years, five separate comprehensive studies addressing the task, without much visible success. One lesson drawn from the experience this time, and extensively discussed in the meetings across the country, was that the success of the process hinged on a consensus-building approach, 'led from behind'. Another factor was that extensive prior discussion of alternative service delivery mechanisms had widened the range of organizational options, and made possible creation of an independent agency, with which departments could all live, in place of designation of one department with lead responsibilities, which departments would have to resist because of the implications for the subordination of their own mandate and priorities.

The desired transition to a national agency still faces barriers, however. Perhaps inevitably, the need to get the federal act together first confronts provincial and local governments with a fait accompli so far as organizational form is concerned. Resentment has been voiced on that count. More fundamentally, the questions of accountability in the exercise of a regulatory function



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having potentially serious consequences for health and safety are not easily answered. Harmonization in the development of national standards, particularly in light of the desire to move away from prescriptive standards toward outcome-based approaches in all regulatory arenas, is a difficult undertaking not only conceptually but in terms of legal frameworks. And the problem of separating steering from rowing in a field where scientific and political judgements seem so inextricably mixed poses obvious dilemmas.

Nevertheless, the need for development of effective national agencies is clear. The consequences of failure to do so are too great, as the example of the Canadian Blood Agency illustrates so compellingly (Trebilcock et al, 1996). And there are a variety of mechanisms and innovative institutions that might be explored as possible avenues for further learning about how operational responsibilities may be delegated without compromising essential elements in the principles of Parliamentary oversight and answerability of Ministers individually to the legislature for general policy judgements.

Indeed, one model suggested for a national agency envisages the nomination by participating governments to a board which will be responsible for the appointment of a CEO, and will exercise the judgement to determine when the performance of the CEO is inadequate, but will leave both the technical and political dimensions of ongoing management to the discretion of that CEO. And the ministers concerned should then--in principle--be answerable to their legislatures only for the adequacy and continuing integrity of the institutional arrangement. Of course, since politicians are in fact answerable for whatever the opposition and the public, egged on by the media, consider them answerable, the continuing workability of such arrangements hinges on successful communication to the public of their intent and character. There rests, no doubt, a significant challenge.

Again, however, the message we heard from discussions across the country was “get on with it”. Try it and learn--’cause we can’t afford to wait until all the lawyers and auditors and political scientists have come to agreement that the theory accords with traditional principles--which may

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in any case be the principles of a disappearing Westminster model devised in the heyday of a past Westphalian world.

5. Implications for governance

We have discussed a “citizen-centered” appraisal of effectiveness, or in the sense of a new predisposition in selection of institutional mechanisms, toward emphasis on cooperative interagency and intergovernmental cooperation, strategic alliances and a “contractual” approach or contractual relations in institutional arrangements, rather than either single market transactions or hierarchical authority. The focus has been on more pragmatic approaches to intergovernmental arrangements as elements of flexible sets of networks to serve citizens. What is implied is a substantial sharing of political--and more importantly, bureaucratic--powers. In examining concrete cases and examples, we have had several layers of context in mind.

1. We live in a congested global village, in which technological change and globalization caught governments everywhere by surprise. Postwar expansion in the scale of public sector activity generated for OECD governments a huge debt/deficit problem to which one obvious response has been withdrawal from responsibilities previously accepted, with the evident task of lowering public expectations being a prerequisite exercise.

Alienation, disaffection and a questioning of the nation-state have been consequences, and these form the agenda of problems with which governments must deal. Alienation reflects citizens’ perceptions that they are not being well-served, not receiving value for money. Partly this feeling may reflect the greater availability of information and access channels open to citizens in an information society; partly it may be gradual acculturation to the ideas of a “public choice” school which emphasizes the self-interested motivations of all public servants or public agencies, and denies the possibility of decisions which are not irretrievably contaminated by a pervasive conflict of interest on the part of the individual in any organization which pretends to be driven by any motive other than return to the shareholder. In any case it clearly reflects a widespread sense that government at its present scale is both oppressive in its impact on individual choice and inefficient in its operations.

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2. This same technology has brought to the fore a new institutional form, that of the loosely-coupled network distinct from either government hierarchy or market decentralization. These networks can range from very formal contracting parties to very loose understandings, but all have the feature that there is a more sustained association than presumed in market transactions, without the hierarchical authority characteristic of state institutions or governments. The essential feature is a contracting foundation, and processes of shared decision.

3. To achieve a public purpose, in this vastly more interdependent world, it is necessary to address explicitly not only the question of choice of governing instrument, but the prior choice of appropriate organizational form or institutional structure for the activity, from a much wider range of possible institutional arrangements. The analysis of the most effective organizational structure to achieve an agreed purpose will lead, depending on the circumstances, to private markets, government agencies, voluntary organizations or other community-based structures--and most likely to combinations or alliances of these.

Thus, the minimal government, nation-state or third sector solutions can all emerge as special cases. In every case, the issue of the form of contract, partnership or alliance will have to be determined in light of criteria of organizational effectiveness. The cooperative emerges as the generic organizational form for many issues which have to be addressed at local level. We may get market agents, where pricing permits profit-making; a public sector agent where a collective will dictates provision of service or opportunities for memberships which cannot be priced; or appeal to a voluntary sector where motives of public-spiritedness dominate.

4. From the “citizen-centered” perspective, these criteria of organizational effectiveness will reflect a principal-agent relationship, in which the citizen is the principal, and faces the choice of appropriate agent in light of the usual issues of information asymmetry, monitoring and transactions costs, and so on (Williamson, 1995). That is, the central issues in the choice of institutional form will be the ancient tensions between accountability and autonomy of the agent, control vs. discretion, and the possibility of decomposability of the problem to local agents which still internalize all relevant spillovers.

5. It is crucial to note that there are two different ways of thinking about “citizen-centered” governance in this setting, corresponding to quite different concepts of the role of government. The first conceives of the individual, identifiable client, with specific demands to be satisfied. For this concept, one thinks of a customer-driven government, pursuing criteria that are already well-known from market experience. This is the domain in which public servants are enjoined not to think of citizens as “cases” or “files” to be managed, but as personalities to be served.

But crucially, government responsibilities do not end there. Push the citizen behind “the veil of ignorance” (Rawls, 1971), and ask then what can be made of the concept of “citizen-centered” governance. Now to be responsive, governments must ask what systems and what rules serve a general public interest. Will the citizen wish to be part of a national community willing to

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establish institutions to cushion the shocks of economic adjustment, to share the costs of operating in an uncertain and rapidly changing environment?

The identifiable individual and the abstract citizen veiled in ignorance of individual circumstances bracket the dilemma for the public servant: how to act as a responsible agent for the second, from whom informed consent can never be assured, while attempting also to provide responsive service to the first, whose specific demands will always test the general principles of a system designed for multitudes.

In the client-centered approach, organizational effectiveness is assessed by the individual citizen: one can think of client satisfaction surveys. In the citizen-centered approach, effectiveness is assessed by the analyst, in the aggregate, looking at a statistical (anonymous) concept of the public interest, and speaking also, ideally, for those who otherwise do not have voice in the structures of shared decision.

6. Subordinate issues then include impacts on both the two large agenda items mentioned above. Appropriate choice of institutional form may result in greater cost-effectiveness: it may permit progress in solving the debt problem. The superficial version of this argument is the “overlap and duplication” slogan--the reduction of administrative costs. In some cases, structural reform may achieve this goal. But it also may not--the goal may be greater effectiveness, better performance, more visible achievement of better service to the citizen. To the extent this is true, concerns with alienation and disaffection, rather than simply cost, may be alleviated.

7. So whether one starts from a fiscal motivation to placate capital markets or a performance motivation to reduce citizen dissatisfaction, one has to face the choice of agent and organizational form, the contracting options, and hence the issue of roles and responsibilities for the better functioning of the system overall.

Thus "governance" emerged unscripted from the narrower process of discussion initiated by this IPAC-KPMG partnership. We started with the hope of finding ways to improve intergovernmental relations by looking at the issue from the citizen's perspective. We realized along the road that in order to do so we must look more generally at the whole issue of governing instruments and institutional structures. We cannot debate roles and responsibilities, recognizing that traditional means will not solve contemporary issues anymore, without attending to the deeper questions of governance: we had to change the level of analysis.

6. Conclusion

What was said about the relations between the center of the Canadian government and the periphery in the federal system is still true today (Kubina, 2013). Provincial governments as well as the federal are managing today with shrinking resources and need more than ever to develop partnerships and intergovernmental relations that are efficient. Against all this background, there are some practical lessons to be drawn from the concrete cases reviewed in this research, and these lessons have been noted briefly above, along with a variety of complications, barriers and problems. Perhaps the key lesson, however, is that all these problems need not be solved in the abstract, ahead of time, definitively, once and for all:

a) There is a long history of dealing with concrete examples pragmatically and successfully, and concerns such as accountability or oversight have been effectively addressed on the ground in many different ways. Many organizational arrangements which may seem not to work in theory have proved to work quite well enough in practice to provide motivation for further efforts.

b) Who could be held accountable is a question that makes civil servants nervous when involved in partnerships, the formula we have heard about from Halifax to Vancouver. This problem has to be solved.

c) Though there is a tradition of administrative arrangements for delegation of responsibility (and these can usefully be extended in many settings), most of the action is on the ground, spontaneous, local initiative undertaken by pragmatic managers. It generally is constrained not by lack of substantive purpose or imagination, but by administrative requirements and accountability mechanisms constructed for a different world at a different time, in a different social and technological setting. These administrative arrangements can be adapted to encompass more flexible partnerships.

d) In this setting, if overlapping responsibilities are inevitable, inter-institutional alliances and strategic partnerships are key. Cooperation is forced upon all our public agencies. The concern we face is not to promote competition based on business plans and tight controls--it is to achieve cooperation based on trust.

e) We believe we heard a special message for the federal government in all this. It is necessary to recognize how great is the gap between what is seen as relevant on the firing line in the regions, and what is thought important in the national capital. Ottawa is not thought the natural center

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from which to manage many peripheral activities, and the core of federal policy is not thought the core of the most pressing management challenges. The federal government--and not only the federal government--will need to find a new attitude along with its new policies, one which recognizes that the capacities of local governments and voluntary agencies, along with provincial governments, are now substantial.

From this perspective, we face an urgent need to get on with the task of public service reform, in the absence of certain knowledge, and without assurance that all the old institutional principles of merit, accountability, Parliamentary oversight will necessarily be preserved intact and unmodified throughout the innovative arrangements proposed. Those principles in any case are not universally assured in the functioning of present structures; the absence of guarantees that they can be everywhere assured in new arrangements cannot be taken as sufficient barrier to stall moving along with some trials, some innovation, some learning from experiment. Asymmetry in inter-governmental arrangements already exists (Simeon, 2002); its embrace here is hardly revolutionary.

Confidence, legitimacy, competence are not words that spring to mind as increasingly highly-educated and increasingly demanding citizens contemplate their governments. Citizens should not have to worry about who deliver services. Governments should be user-friendly. Alienation could be diminished by improving the interdependent service delivery. But it is not only a question of roles and responsibilities. Partnerships raise questions of governance.

The lesson from this national discussion is that we have to try something. We cannot afford to deliver services exclusively through the state apparatus but we have to look at alternative mechanisms. By looking at the problem from a citizen view point, we might find a way to solve governance problems including the distribution of roles and responsibilities. The task, we were told in this study, is to get on with it, to continue building the track record experimentally and adaptively, and to return continually to the fray with improvements and new initiatives as we learn lessons from experience. What is frustrating is how slow change is.

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