



Intelligent Governance: an alternative paradigm

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Estragon: *Let's go*

(the last line in Samuel Beckett's play WAITING FOR GODOT followed by the last scenic direction about the fact that nobody moves)

Introduction

This paper sketches an alternative paradigm to the traditional one in good currency in Canadian governments and public administration regarding governance – the one that may be held responsible for the extraordinary dysfunction that can be observed in the ways in which the apparatus of Canadian governments adapts to the new circumstances.

The traditional paradigm defends the view that government is about some combination of coordination, stabilization, redistribution and pedagogy while the primary function of the bureaucracy is to protect and preserve administrative institutions consistent with constitutional processes, traditions, values and beliefs – whatever these words may mean. For those holding these views, the notion of *administrative conservatism* tends to shape how senior officials, both political and bureaucratic, behave, “balancing the inherent tension in the political system between the need to *serve* and the need to *preserve*” (Terry 2003:29).

This conservatory bias may seem to be rather innocuous, but it can prove rather toxic: over time, the need to ‘preserve’ often overshadows the need to ‘serve’ for the bureaucracy while constraining the imagination and adaptability of the political system. This attitude has had an important impact on the Canadian scene where the tradition of an ‘independent professional public service’ has become a revered cornerstone of government. In the process of popularizing this gospel, a fair number of opinion-molders have seized on this philosophy to legitimize the senior public service being regarded rather like quasi-clergy.

In a constantly evolving world, this view has fed a most unhealthy tendency to sacralize the status quo, to regard stability as more worthy than adaptability or innovation, and to allocate to a handful in the government and the bureaucracy the role of divine intermediaries and definers of both democracy and what is essential to be preserved. This sort hijacking has been anointed by a plurality of public administration academics. While neither politicians nor bureaucrats are, in reality, selfless clergy – whatever may be said by those who regard them as missionaries (Kernaghan 2007) – this perspective has nevertheless guided the strategy of governments in defining what needs to be preserved and what is considered possible – not surprisingly, in terms of those things that help maintain their own power bases and putative dominion.

It has also seemingly immunized Canadian governments and the public service against any significant efforts at reform – despite recurrent internal attempts at change over the last decades, or when outsiders have revealed their ineffectiveness and failing collaboration role (Lenihan and Fox 2012; Hubbard and Paquet 2014). This does not mean that the failures of government have gone unnoticed, only that such perceptive diagnoses have never led to significant corrective action.

The Message from Michael Wernick in 2016

This diagnosis about the sad state of the Canadian federal bureaucracy, for instance, is not a whimsical or mean-inspired indictment by persons not fully informed about the state of affairs in the federal public service. In a recently published interview in the *Ottawa Citizen* (May 2016) on the occasion of the presentation of the *Twenty-Third Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada* (Wernick 2016), the new Clerk of the Privy Council suggested that the federal public service is in much need of repair.

Not surprisingly, he describes a public service that is *unproductive* (“load of rules, bureaucracy and process that isn’t productive”); that is *lacking in agility* (structures and processes that make it so difficult to “move dollars, people and information around, within and across departments”); that is somewhat *learning impaired* (hobbled by structures that make it too slow, rigid and risk-averse); that is *worn out* (“we are too slow and not very nimble”, and a public service workplace that is old, outdated and tired).

In his mind, the problem is not with public servants per se, but with the structures, processes and culture of the government that are no longer properly aligned to the realities of the day. Wernick identifies the principal challenge for public servants as the escalating pace of change, including technological change and the complexity of the issues being wrestled with.

In his view, governments no longer have all the knowledge, resources or power to realize what they intend to realize. Governing is no longer solely in government’s hands, governance has become widely distributed in society among many institutions, organizations, and actors, and pertains to a significant degree to forces entirely external to government, and over which government has little or no control. “All the important issues facing Canada” Wernick says, “are multifaceted and that require collaboration, and we have to get better working across silos internally. One of the real challenges ... is [the need for] a lot more space to collaborate and work with people outside the public service”

On these basic points, one can only be in full agreement. However, what this actually means in practice for the necessary public service reform is not entirely clear.

This is especially the case since it is not unreasonable to surmise, given the history around PS reform, that, whatever rhetoric is currently in use, conservatism will prevail, and that nothing meaningful is likely to be done to reform the public service. The conventional wisdom on governing suggests that ways will likely be found to exculpate both the governing arrangements and the bureaucrats. Indeed, the Clerk already seems to have ‘discovered’ the current culprit and has already announced his diagnosis and cure – he intends to put dealing with the mental stress and mental illness in the federal public service as his top priority – thus hinting at the fact that, in his view, this is the source of the bureaucracy’s dysfunction (May 2016a).

In our view, Wernick’s solution for the problem is somewhat off-base.

His narrow focus on mental stress and mental illness is extraordinarily reductive, and difficult to understand in the light of the significant list of flaws and failures mentioned in the body of the text of the Clerk’s report.

Our argument in a recent book (Paquet and Wilson 2016) is that much more fundamental repairs are required if the Canadian public service, and government generally, are going to be truly refurbished.

The Paquet-Wilson Paradigm Shift

It is surprising to see intelligent observers acknowledge the decrepitude of the Canadian public service but seemingly unable to track down its causes in anything but the most simplistic and unpersuasive terms. We believe this is clearly ascribable to the traditional paradigm, despite the fact that this paradigm has been subjected to systematic criticism by so many over the last decade.

The traditional paradigm is built on a number of assumptions that are today most unrealistic, and on theses that no longer fit well at all with the real world of public administration.

It is a paradigm that is in denial vis-à-vis a modern world that is characterized by uncertainty, non-linearity, unpredictability, and emergence. It presumes wrongly that, in a world where resources, power and

information are widely distributed, there is always someone who is in charge, who has sufficient power, resources and information to do what needs to be done. It also presumes that there are shared values that leaders can distill and ascertain, and that he/she can use to design a step-by-step strategy that will promote the agreed public good. In this world, failure is always ascribable to personal flaws and never to impersonal systemic factors.

To us, this is a fantasy world. The world around us is chaotic and not predictable, there are no shared values in our pluralistic societies, and no one has sufficient information, resources and power to be in charge, and those pretending to be in charge are often trying to run organizations on the basis of a truncated and flawed view of the world. Consequently, centralized top-down strategies are bound to fail. “When you concentrate the responsibility for innovation at the top, you’re holding your capacity to change hostage. It disempowers people ... Bureaucracy has to die” (Hamel 2013)

Traditional paradigm	Alternative paradigm
Simple and certain Newtonian world	Uncertain and complex Quantum world
Shared values	No shared values in our pluralist world
Someone in charge	No one in charge
The big lie of leadership	Social learning, and stewardship
Centralized Big G	Decentralized small g
Collaboration ignored	Collaboration essential
Technical rationality prevails	Epistemic rationality prevails

Our book has been constructed as a guide to interested parties to assist them in: escaping the mental prisons that plague the traditional paradigm; reframing the way traditional governance is approached; refurbishing their governance tool box; and scheming virtuously in our complex and uncertain world. The presentation of topics along the chapters was sequenced so that it could be shown that the *intelligent governance paradigm* we describe is based on solid foundations: sound criticisms of conventional but outdated or flawed governing practices; a presentation of emerging alternatives to conduct the business of governing; and a persuasive statement of a promising way to even better ways of governance in the future.

In our book, ours is a prudent and soft-spoken approach. One disadvantage of such an approach in *Intelligent Governance* is that it may not have emphasized sufficiently (to make the presentation less argumentative) both the need to revisit the assumptions of the conventional paradigm, and the need to accept, as a matter of consequence, the controversial theses which flow from our critique of the conventional approach, and which have helped us to sketch ways to improve it.

As a result, the reader of our book may not appreciate as fully as he/she might, the sort of Augias stable cleansing of conventional thinking that it requires, or be conscious of the extent to which reframing, restructuring and retooling of the governing apparatus is required. The sort of reframing we propose cannot be envisaged seriously without some sort of accompanying ‘revolution in the mind’. Indeed, unless the appetite for reform includes a willingness to embrace new assumptions and theses about the art of governing – no matter how controversial they might be – not only will reform efforts amount to little, but one can anticipate that the long standing decline in public sector trust will continue to erode government legitimacy.

Our alternative assumptions about the lack of common values, about the fact that no one is fully in charge and the fraud of leadership, the clergy-like nature of the public service, etc. have led us to identify some

critical theses about how conventional governance practices contribute to the current dysfunctions of government and weaken its capacity to address issues of importance to citizens.¹

One cannot seriously imagine tackling the enormous task of generating intelligent governance practices and designing more efficient, effective, smart and wise governing apparatuses, unless parties are willing to at least identify and then put on hold their commitments to conventional assumptions. Otherwise, they might be led to default to existing practices, fantasizing about partially understood problems in the Canadian public service, and suggesting spurious remedies that will do nothing to refurbish the actual processes of governance.

No organization – private, public or social – can experience dysfunction and continue to endlessly fantasize about change without actually changing.

Governments, therefore, should have at this point a reasonable expectation of radical change in recognition of the fact that they can no longer control anything of consequence in the lives of their citizens. This must inevitably mean shifting from the old top-down ‘Big G Government’ approaches to more nimble ‘small g governance’ practices that are geared towards more of a guiding and steering role that can help reduce social conflict and maximize social innovation.

This would also have the effect of significantly revitalizing the value-adding legitimacy of both politics and the technocracy. Such a shift must entail a shift from the increasingly ineffective practices of leadership and management towards developing the tools, the skills and the trust that are essential to experience a distributed, ‘co-governance’ approach that would be inclusive and be focused primarily on learning.

In adopting an *intelligent governance* approach, Canadian governments would likely be

- adding new value as collective brokers, facilitators, educators, angel investors, and conflict mediators inspiring new relationships with businesses, not-for-profits and citizens that foster social learning and innovation; and
- developing the skills, processes, mechanisms and practices that promote collective stewardship by design, and using technology to connect to citizens and groups of citizens to co-learn, help generate new resources, conduct joint experiments, co-develop prototypes, be mutually accountable, and to co-govern.

It is fair to say that little of this type of action would appear to be predictable from the sibylline public statements of the Clerk – even though he is regarded as one of the most enlightened of federal bureaucrats. In describing the Public Service, he says it’s “a bit of a fixer-upper... It is a fixer-upper in the sense that the foundations are good” (May 2016). He regards the foundations of the Canadian Public Service – the people, the mission, the benefits of government -- as good. And consequently, it would seem, he does not feel that radical reforms are needed. We don’t know how most readers would react to this metaphor, but if we were buying a house and the realtor started emphasizing “it’s a fixer-upper” and talking about how good the foundations were, we’d suddenly be thinking of a tear down.

The Clerk seems to miss the point that in social systems, the people may be inherently good, but still produce bad or dysfunctional results due to systemic failures – primarily badly designed relationships among the parts and defective information flows. Unfortunately, at is point in time, to truly get the best results from the people and the mission of government, one must engage in some serious redesign and rebuilding and not, as the Clerk’s predecessors have done, simply focus on interior redecoration.

¹ Some of these traditional assumptions have been critically appraised in earlier books (Paquet 2013; Paquet 2014; Hubbard & Paquet 2014; Hubbard & Paquet 2015) and these criticisms will not be repeated extensively here

How significant is this shift?

In embracing this paradigm, important consequences follow in terms of a redesign of the research process:

- first, the much broader perspective adopted by the modern paradigm raises questions about the *self-imposed constraints* of the traditional paradigm – mental prisons of all sorts (disciplines, ideologies, leadership, etc.);
- second, the much more open process of inquiry and the much more relaxed sort of acceptable methodology envisaged in the modern era raise questions about the *narrowness and rigidity* of the traditional paradigm;
- third, the growing centrality of cooperation together with the historical failure of current practice to achieve much in the way of social coordination (except in attempts to mitigate these coordination failures through unsustainable redistribution) underscore an urgent need to be concerned with the physical and social technologies of coordination in a more modern paradigm, and to raise serious questions about *how to meaningfully and effectively foster them* in light of the still strong adherence to the traditional paradigm.

The sweeping changes in the research process that had to be introduced as a result of adopting the new paradigm led us to introduce many significant developments about the way in which a governance inquiry has to be conducted in order to accomplish its many complementary tasks.

A. To reveal the dysfunctions of the conventional governance practices, such as:

- Reliance on technical rationality, the myth of shared values and other mental prisons
- Futile strategic planning, the fraud of leadership, and unaccountable accountability
- The misplaced focus of culture governance on redistribution rather than on coordination

B. To elicit what is required for intelligent governance practices, including:

- Learning while doing
- Renewed focus on coordination and collaboration
- Stewardship by design for wayfinding
- Practical systems of inquiry and integrative thinking
- Designing for collaboration in the absence of *affectio societatis*
- A fuller appreciation of the technology revolution, like blockchain devices, that continue to erode government's monopoly on social coordination

C. To probe the possibilities beyond the present state of affairs, incorporating:

- Imaginative, transdisciplinary, multi-stakeholder inquiry
- Experimentation and social learning
- Self-organizing, co-governance catalyzed by government

From the perspective of our *Intelligent Governance*, even a less than careful reader will have no difficulty spotting a full explanation of why such a refurbished methodology is necessary if the flaws of traditional governance are to be detected, and if the power of the inquiring approach of *intelligent governance* is to prove fruitful in suggesting the sort of redesign likely to be efficient, effective, smart, wise, etc. But it may still be useful to flesh out in a lapidary way, the contrast between the traditional paradigm and our alternative inquiry process.

Traditional Paradigm	Alternative Paradigm Inquiry Process
Problem definition presumed to be given	Inquiry must construct the problem definition
Answers are advocated and negotiated	Answers are evolved
Mental prisons	Possibility conversation
Disciplines	Multi-disciplinarity, multi-stakeholders, imagination
Ideologies	All the -isms must be factored in and exorcized
Positivism	Social learning as wayfinding
Restricted notion of knowledge	Various sorts of knowledge
Silos	Integrative thinking
Governance culture permeated by redistribution	Governance culture permeated by coordination
Collaboration is assumed or ignored	Both physical and social technologies of collaboration are a central part of the design of governance regimes
Design: quasi absent	Design: omnipresent

The upper part of the above tableau highlights how the alternative process kicks in to repair and correct some of the well-known flaws of the traditional process (with the inquiry needing to construct a problem definition first; but also striving to avoid the mental prisons that are likely to stunt or distort the inquiry; and also free itself of the strictures imposed by positivism; the siloed perspectives imposed by disciplines which prevent the development of an integrated perspective; and the heavy hand of a governance culture that may derail inquiries from following fruitful directions – like the pursuit of effective coordination over ever more redistribution.

The bottom part pertains to the new imperatives of the alternative research process: fundamentally rooted in systems thinking but still remaining incompletely developed in the different versions proposed in the text, because the most promising avenues -- at a conceptual level (Grandori 2013) or an empirical level (Brown and Lambert 2013) or an exploratory level (Paquet 2013) -- are showing the way in general, but are not providing a step-by-step guide for the sort of combinatorial work necessary for the redesign governance regimes. In all cases, these approaches remain strongly conditioned by field experiences and, despite their usefulness, they have not generated a general template for successful inquiries. While these successful experiences are based on the imaginative combinatorial work of principles, mechanisms, and rules inspired by these promising avenues – in all three cases – they remain without an integrative scheme to mix these promising components into unified approach.

A new philosophy and a new methodology entail new autopsies and new governance designs

Even though this new paradigm has been in the making for quite a while and has been provisionally synthesized a few times over the last few years – the last time in May 2016 – it remains incomplete. This does not mean that it has not been in use, or that it has not been useful for critical forays exposing governance pathologies of various sorts (Paquet and Perrault 2016), or that it has not been used to sketch provisional designs for new forms of governance regimes (Paquet and Ragan 2012; Paquet 2013).

As we explain in the preamble of *Intelligent Governance*, the central element of our approach to governance is not to produce a plan leading to formulaic applications, but to generate social learning as a tool for wayfinding and exploration through the use of prototypes and indications along the way. It does not propose a blueprint or a recipe to be blindly followed, but an invitation to prototype a system of wayfinding and inquiry that has the capacity to nudge coordination inquiries into successful directions. Its milestones are mindfulness, imagination and understanding. Mindfulness is a central element at the diagnosis phase; imagination is crucial at the design phase; and a capacity to understand and feel comfortable with the many complex dynamics of the system in the implementation and mobilization phase.

This entails a fundamental transformation in the mind of the practitioner *cum* designer: it is not a matter of simply applying scientific theories and techniques, but a matter of learning by doing, of reflection-in-action, of knowing-by-doing, and of “knowing inherent in intelligent action” (Schön 1983: 50). As Schön (quoting the philosopher Gilbert Ryle) would put it: “intelligent cannot be defined in terms of “intellectual”; or “knowing how” [understood] in terms of “knowing that”. Medicine is not applied biology; business is not simply applied economics.

We explain in chapter 4 of *Intelligent Governance* – following Schön – that professional knowledge production proceeds in an obverse way from the direction of basic science, from the ‘issue’ rather than the theory, while reflection-in-action eliminates misfits, ensures goodness of fit, and crafts new knowledge (Schön 1983:51). We have called that sort of knowledge *delta knowledge* (Gilles and Paquet 1989).

Delta knowledge is acquired by practice; it is a form of ‘learning-by-doing’.

It enables professionals to diagnose pathologies better on the basis of practice, and to imagine better sorts of repair on the basis of practice. Delta knowledge emerges from concerns for the particular, the local, the timely, and the oral. It flows from a reflection on experience, a conversation with the situation. New knowledge is therefore acquired by doing more and doing differently. This process is best exemplified by the challenge faced by the designer who must search for some kind of harmony between two intangibles – a form which has not yet been designed and a context that cannot be properly and fully described since it is still evolving (Gilles and Paquet 1989: 20; Alexander 1964).

Delta knowledge is the sort that emerges from case studies: it provides a basis for reflection in action, not just an occasion for storytelling or for illustrating general principles as it is so often assumed. Finally, production of delta knowledge follows rules that are largely implicit, overlapping, diverse, variously applied, contextually dependent, subject to exceptions and to critical modifications (Schön 1988).

Therefore, our book does not suggest recipes but constitutes an invitation to prototype and experiment, with the promise that expertise will come with exposure to a multitude of case studies and of experiences in the field. This is why we wish to conclude with a mini-case.

The new paradigm as critical lens on the upcoming debate about election reform

Two recent articles, one by [Andrew Coyne](#)² and the other by former conservative MP [Brent Rathberger](#)³, underscore the fact that the upcoming ‘debate’ on the replacement of the current ‘first-past-the-post’ (FPTP) election process is likely to disregard the core issue surrounding the current illegitimacy of our legislatures and MPs, and will not be about collective learning, or adapting an outdated, 150-year old system to modern

² Andrew Coyne. “A guide to arguments having nothing to do with electoral reform”, *The National Post*, 13 May 2016

³ Brent Rathgeber. “Resist reforms that strengthen parties rather than individual MPs”, *The Ottawa Citizen*, 13 May 2016

realities, let alone discovering and embracing governance innovation that might herald a whole new era of social coordination.

Sadly it will, in the end, change nothing of significance. Both papers suggest that the ongoing decline in the *perceived legitimacy of the public sector*, and in the *public's confidence in the ability of government to effectively deal with matters of importance to Canadians* (now at record historical lows) will not be staunched by it. Therefore, one can anticipate that the government's efforts will do little in the way of fostering democracy or improving the quality of government actions. The various parties will predictably come to the table simply to advocate and negotiate around some pre-established positions and gimmicks, which they believe will provide them with some comparative advantage in winning the next election.

From the perspective of *Intelligent Governance*, a social learning inquiry would be willing to start by asking some serious and fundamental questions:

- about the institutional status quo and its degree of 'fitness' with the environment of the modern world;
- about the need to change, revealed by experience; and
- about the better ways one may design to deal with the present challenges without toxic side effects.

Is the way the current system operates still fitting?

Our Westminster system of representative government was crafted the way it is because, unlike ancient Athens, we had many people spread over large distances with no availability to real time access tools, which meant that if people were to have conversations about issues of importance they would have to do it through trusted intermediaries. Simultaneously, since very few people at that time had any education at all, citizens were willing to delegate their 'voice' to those few virtuous, knowledgeable people who could work on their behalf to develop public policies that were assumed to be based on objective knowledge and free of vested interests.

With no way for citizens to connect with each other, to share their knowledge and experience, or to collaborate together to produce change, they opted to elect agents to do these things for them. The best way to coordinate was to bring all the agents, knowledge, resources and power to the centre, and then put some 'wise' person in charge.

Now, with universal education, universal connectedness (virtually) and universal access to information, none of the original rationales for old-style representative government exist. The Athenian model of direct participatory democracy is today, not only doable, but, with [blockchain](#) technologies, it can be more reliable than Athens ever was, and it can be more innovative and effective than our representative style of government has ever been.

In addition, because today's world is filled with uncertainty, unpredictability and self-organizing phenomena, the implication is that no one, including governments, is in charge or has all the answers, let alone all the knowledge, resources or power to control an outcome of any significance. These things are spread across society among many people, hearts and minds. Thus we need to find better ways to work together, and not be so ready to cast off our ownership of problems and solutions to others. In effect, we, meaning all Canadians, are the solution.

Is the need for change being felt?

Brent Rathgeber has made a few points very sharply. Democracy is premised on effective representation. Party platforms and discipline distort effective representation. Responsible government requires government to be responsible to the legislature, and elected members to their electorate **not** their parties.

He also underlined that the suggested electoral reforms would reinforce the dominium of political parties, and would disempower even further both the legislatures and the MPs, and so could hardly be regarded as reforms that would work in the right direction.

At present the MPs are supposed to be “representative of the voters to parliament” but the mechanics of caucuses, whips, etc. transform “the elected representative of the people into “a partisan spokesperson to the people”. As for legislatures that are supposed to exist to “hold government to account”, they have become consumed by parties that perform poorly at advancing anything but partisan interests. These flaws call for corrections. But preferential or ranked voting systems are unlikely to do this. Such systems would reinforce the power of the political parties.

Given the growing complexity of policy making and the declining confidence in both governments and leaders, the current system, combined with public fears about security and the economy, may well force us to step backwards towards some anti-democratic, strongman solution. While we continue our teenaged obsession with romanticized leaders and their siren promises to fix all that ails us – a promise they can never deliver on – we avoid the adult choices that stem from our ownership of both problems and solutions. If we can embrace our shared ownership, then we can apply our innate creativity to create a platform for human cooperation, one that would most likely resemble the Internet itself: networked, open, inclusive, collaborative, innovative and adaptive – or at least something that would bring us closer to this ideal. Anything that reduces the importance of the agency role our elected representatives embrace and increases the power of party influence should be avoided.

What about better ways?

It would be well for governments to keep in mind that if social coordination is the main objective, there are a growing number of options that are being developed, or are already available, that can “replace” governments and the electoral process somewhat.

These might involve the creation of: community-based groups; partnerships among businesses and not-for-profit organizations; technologies like [Bitcoin](#) that eliminate the ‘central authority’ role of governments in an economy; [MOOCs](#) (massively open online courses) which drastically reduce or eliminate the role of governments in education; software, like [DemocracyOS](#) and [Loomio](#) – online tools which can reduce or eliminate the role of elected parliaments. More and more of these options are being produced every day, continually eroding the once pristine monopoly of governments in the social coordination space. With this increasing number of practical alternatives, coupled with the declining effectiveness and trust in existing governments, there is growing motivation to move away from governments.

Yet, there are other functions of government pertaining to stabilization, redistribution, etc. that may still require governments to be involved in interfering with the governance of the socio-economy. In such cases, government reforms to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, smartness, wisdom, etc. would appear to call for way to reform the electoral process and the behaviour of elected officials.

On this front, it would appear crucial to act in such a way as to ensure that legislatures and MPs act more fruitfully in their representative role instead of being more and more relegated to some servitude to the political parties.

To do this, governments need to acquire a different toolbox: the knowledge, skills and practices for collaboration. They would need to become stewards rather than leaders. They would need to develop systems to share information and knowledge as widely as possible. They would need to foster and facilitate forums so that those citizens most interested in an issue could hold an effective, learning conversation. They would need to adopt an attitude of “how can we help?” as opposed to the old directive attitude of “thou shalt do this”. The promise to governments is that if citizens can be successful on the basis of their help, then the reputations and legitimacy of governments will soar.

Which electoral system – first-past-the-post, ranked ballot, proportional representation – best fits this scenario of empowered citizens and a ‘helpful government’? We honestly don’t know.

Blockchain technologies, for instance, can supersede many of the voting practices currently being proposed. One might expect that if the reform process is truly about enhancing democracy as we’ve been led to believe, then we might need to consider the possibility that we really don’t need people to represent us any longer – unless of course they can add value in producing better quality conversations among citizens (but certainly not the childish behaviour that currently passes for Parliamentary debate). Shouldn’t any real electoral reform process consider all these possibilities?

The whole idea of rushing to a decision on a new voting system so it can be implemented before an arbitrary 2019 deadline is insane. The question should be: if we were to recreate government anew today -- with all that we know and all the tools that we currently have at our disposal -- how would we design it to meet our modern coordination needs?

Conclusion

In the real world, there are many other complex, wicked problems which Canadians look to their governments to solve on their behalf. But government actors – both political and bureaucratic – remain largely constrained by a model of thinking and operating that severely limits their capacity for innovation and their ability to collaborate and cooperate. They become like blind men in that old adage arguing about their partial experience of an elephant. Their incomplete knowledge encourages a bias towards readymade, pre-disposed answers.

This has discouraged the pooling of their experiences and the construction of a more comprehensive understanding that may lead to truly effective innovation. As a result, instead of admitting that they may not fully understand the context they are operating in or have all the right answers, they compete to impose their incomplete solution over others.

The paradigm shift with *Intelligent Governance* begins with the simple and honest observation that one does not have all the knowledge, resources or power to effect one’s intents. It is an admission that no one is in charge; but it is also an extraordinary creative challenge: if I can’t do it myself, maybe I can do it with others. Instead of wasting time and effort to control a complex and unpredictable array of factors, one can have the freedom to bring together those who can contribute to the understanding of the problem and who have ownership in shaping its resolution.

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