

CANADA'S GOVERNANCE CRISIS

Canada faces a systemic failure at both
the political and bureaucratic levels to
manage complex public policy issues

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Introduction

Richard Shimooka

An opaque regulatory process that has stymied oil and gas development efforts, deterred investment, and dampened competitiveness, while giving market share to Russia and other authoritarian energy producers. A \$35 billion Canadian Infrastructure Bank that has only finalized two projects, and failed to leverage any private sector dollars. A medicare system that struggles with mismanagement and governance complexity, alongside layers of state influence, special interests, public pressure, and much more. And a lack of planning to safeguard locally engaged staff in Afghanistan that led to catastrophic debacle when the Afghanistan state collapsed in August 2021.

At first blush these may seem like an unconnected series of anecdotes, coming as they do from different departments and contexts. Yet upon further examination, they are examples of a crisis of governance across a wide range of policy areas, reflecting a systemic failure at both the political and bureaucratic levels to manage complex public policy issues.

This is not without some irony, given the current government's election pledge to implement a system of "deliverology" management to improve program execution. Yet after seven years in office, the Trudeau government has displayed a remarkably consistent inability to do the difficult work of actually delivering – as opposed to simply announcing – its stated policy goals. The causes are not always the same, nor are the outcomes. But the corrosive effects are now evident in almost all areas of government operations, including areas

identified as high priority by our political leadership. The result has been the provision of substandard services, delays, and major cost overruns.

This paper consists of a collection of essays, each written by an MLI senior fellow, with the aim of documenting this phenomenon across multiple policy areas. Each essay will cover a specific topic and will show the immensely damaging consequences – not just in terms of the decay in state capacity, but also of public trust and morale within the civil service.

“*The key dynamic that underlines this issue is between the political leadership and the bureaucracy.*”

The key dynamic that underlines this issue is between the political leadership and the bureaucracy. At its core is the lack of political leadership to make decisions and push them through. This may partly be the result of greater centralization of policy-making within the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), which leaves ministers and their departmental staff without the actual authority to implement decisions.

There is also the political leadership’s focus on messaging, rather than deliverables. No significant policy planning has been made before an announcement, which then is realized to be far more complex than previously conceived. This often requires careful political leadership to effectively navigate, which is lacking. In other cases, the government may not want to actually push through a policy due to its political cost. In both these instances, the political leadership will attempt to use the bureaucratic process to imbue greater legitimacy to the policy.

The second part of this dynamic is the bureaucracy. While the political leadership has tried to offload decisions, the bureaucracy is not well placed to manage them. A key underlying issue within the bureaucracy is the subtle cultural shifts among its workforce over the past 30 years. This has shifted the focus away from providing unvarnished advice for the political leadership to defending its stated political positions.

To insulate itself from criticism, the bureaucracy has added additional layers of “process” in order to confer greater accountability and ultimately legitimacy to policies. Yet they are often wholly inadequate to deal with the challenge, leading to sclerotic progress on files as there is no ability or internal impetus to advance them. In cases where multiple departments or sub-departments are involved, policy gridlock occurs – as there is no authority to push forward decisions through the bureaucratic systems.

Compounding this syndrome of “performative governance” is the damage in other areas from inertia caused by the government’s failure to make any choices at all, which deprives the public, including the media, opposition and other actors from even offering criticisms or suggestions to course correct. Bad decisions can at least be fixed. Instead, Canadians face policy paralysis everywhere they look, caused by a government that appears to alternate between making announcements devoid of substance and follow-through, and simply not making decisions at all.

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The final turn in the CF-18 replacement saga

Richard Shimooka

On January 9, 2023, Minister of National Defence Anita Anand made the long-awaited announcement that the Lockheed Martin F-35 had been selected as Canada's replacement for the CF-18 fighter. Many Canadians must have been confused by the announcement because on March 28, 2022, the government had stated that Lockheed Martin was the preferred bidder – a decision that should have quickly resulted in a firm contract. Yet it took over 10 months to reach that point.

What accounted for the delay? That is the focus of this article, and it reflects the ongoing systemic governance challenge facing this government.

Much of the difficulty surrounding this particular decision is inherent in the unique nature of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Partnership program – a multinational program led and governed by the United States. Canada became a member of the program in 2006 when it signed the *Production Sustainment and Follow-on Development Memorandum of Understanding* (hereafter known as the MOU). The agreement created a legal structure by which the member countries would acquire the aircraft, and it established the key features of any potential contract.

The MOU contained several clauses that did not exist in any previous defence procurement project. The most significant was to deny the use of so-called “offsets”: a situation in which countries insist on acquiring 100 percent

of the contract value back in reciprocal investments. Instead, the JSF program offered countries the opportunity for their domestic firms to compete for contracts. These contracts were not guaranteed, a fundamental difference between this program and others with an offset component. That noted, Canada and the US both held wide expectations that Canada was much better placed than other partners to obtain contracts due to its large aviation industry and very high levels of integration with the United States aerospace supply chains (US Department of Defense 2003).

Furthermore, the MOU forced member countries to operate according to the US government's budgeting and contract cycle. Unlike selecting and acquiring systems in one big batch, as would be the case in the Canadian system, the United States acquires systems in yearly lots, with the funds appropriated through the US Congress. The JSF program operated under this system, which meant that Canada would need to acquire the aircraft in lot-by-lot batches too, and pay for it through that mechanism. However, the MOU also guaranteed that countries paid the same price as the United States for any aircraft acquired.

“While being part of the partnership incurred some complexity and risk (...), it would also likely have delivered aircraft at a lower cost (...).

While JSF's approach does increase the risk to the total completed cost of the project, the year-by-year cost of F-35A production is generally lower than the budgetary estimates that guide the multi-year procurement. Moreover, Canada was allowed to bypass the US Foreign Military Sales (FMS) process, which involves a number of levies that would inflate the unit cost by 5 percent. Thus, while being part of the partnership incurred some complexity and risk to Canada, it would also likely have delivered aircraft at a lower cost and with greater industrial benefits than a typical FMS program.

In Canada's earlier efforts to acquire the F-35, these issues affected the discussions but did not appreciably stall the acquisition of the aircraft. In par-

ticular, the lack of guaranteed contracts was a source of dissatisfaction among political leaders, including then Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Shimooka 2016), who raised his concerns in a number of meetings. In the end, however, Prime Minister Harper decided to proceed with the acquisition, which was to be announced in November 2014, but he back-tracked in October of that year when his plans were leaked and he faced intense opposition over the cost of the choice of fighter jet (Chase 2014). The process from decision to a nearly finalized and executed contract was completed in four months, with negotiations starting in July and concluding in early October.¹

The existence of this previous effort, where the same issues were overcome, provide a useful comparison to the more recent 10-month delay. As noted earlier, by signing the MOU in 2006, the potential contract terms were already largely established between Canada and the JSF Partnership, which facilitated a short negotiation for a finalized contract.

When the Liberal Party came into office in 2015 it viewed the F-35 purchase skeptically. The new government attempted to force through the selection of an interim fighter aircraft - the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet. However that purchase was cancelled in 2018 after controversy surrounded Boeing's trade complaint against Bombardier and when it became apparent that the costs of the program were going to be much higher than anticipated. The government restarted the fighter jet replacement competition at that time, and the result was the selection of the F-35 on March 28, 2022. As noted earlier, once the successful bidder has been selected the contract is normally signed fairly quickly thereafter. There has been no such quick turnaround in this case. This time, the JSF Program's unique features have caused serious consequences for the program's execution.

Normally, defence procurement projects are advanced as total packages where all the authorizations are included, which fits neatly with Canada's Treasury Board requirements that call for program costs to be fully defined as part of a formal submission. However, as the MOU requires yearly lot purchases, each of which generally fluctuates from their estimates, the total outlay cannot be assured. That situation goes against the Treasury Board's preferences.

Without the political leadership to push past this impasse and without the broader desire to employ bureaucratic processes to provide political legitimacy,

1 Interviews with former senior Department of National Defence officials.

otherwise surmountable political challenges become insurmountable. Consequently, little or no progress occurred on the fighter jet replacement file from March to August of 2022, as representatives from different departments forced discussions to prove, yet again, that there existed no alternatives to the MOU's acquisitions process. It was only in December that DND made a submission to the Treasury Board – a key hurdle that had to be cleared before a contract could be signed.

The consequences for Canada of this delay are significant. While the adherence to process is ostensibly intended to ensure that the government receives the best value for money, it can have the opposite consequences – and certainly has had such consequences in this case. The CF-18 has airframes that are now over 40 years old. Most clearly, delaying the replacement of these fighter jets has and is incurring significant financial costs and risks to Canada's security.

In the past 18 months, five non-partner countries have either signed contracts or indicated their interest in purchasing F-35s. As a result, future delivery slots are increasingly being allocated to these states, which in turn is pushing back the replacement of Canada's CF-18, perhaps by years. Delaying this transition means these antiquated and obsolete aircraft must struggle on, and in the process likely incur hundreds of millions of dollars in additional costs due to their extensive maintenance requirements. Furthermore, with Canada only upgrading 37 CF-18s with new radars and sub-systems (DND 2022), there will be barely enough airframes for the RCAF to meet its domestic NORAD requirements, and nothing for foreign contingencies. This situation was largely unavoidable, as transitioning to a new aircraft will always require a reduction in available capability. Yet the contract negotiation delay will exacerbate this issue, and the RCAF will need to operate the CF-18 for another year longer, which will result in more maintenance and effort to keep the aircraft flying.

In addition to the financial and security costs arising from the delays in signing the F-35 contract, the delays also affected the potential industrial benefits that Canada might have received from the program. Until Canada signed a final contract, it could not be considered for any of the program's additional contracts. This is particularly problematic as the program is in a critical phase – a significant portion of its sustainment and operations systems are currently being established. Only after the finalized contract was signed in January 2023 were Canadian firms able to bid for any of the JSF sub-contracts up for tender.

The latest twists and turns in the CF-18 replacement program exhibit a number of the systemic issues plaguing project management across government today. The unique process under which the fighters must be acquired has emerged as a significant encumbrance to the program, but that is mainly due to over-bureaucratization and the lack of political leadership to push the issue through. The inertia has added half a year to the program at a bare minimum, more if previous delays are counted, and with those delays come added costs to the Canadian taxpayer as well as diminished industrial prospects for the country.

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Canada could have been an energy superpower. Instead we became a bystander

Heather Exner-Pirot

Oil arguably remains the most important commodity in the world today. It paved the way for the industrialization and globalization trends of the post-World War II era, a period that saw the fastest human population growth and largest reduction in extreme poverty ever. Its energy density, transportability, storability, and availability have made oil the world's greatest source of energy, used in every corner of the globe.

There are geopolitical implications inherent in a commodity of such significance and volume. The contemporary histories of Russia, Iran, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq are intertwined with their roles as major oil producers, roles that they have used to advance their (often illiberal) interests on the world stage. It is fair to ask why Canada has never seen fit to advance its own values and interests through its vast energy reserves. It is easy to conclude that its reluctance to do so has been a major policy failure.

Canada has been blessed with the world's third largest reserves of oil, the vast majority of which are in the oil sands of northern Alberta, although there is ample conventional oil across Western Canada and offshore Newfoundland and Labrador as well. The oil sands contain 1.8 trillion barrels of oil, of which just under 10 percent, or 165 billion barrels, are technically and

economically recoverable with today's technology. Canada currently extracts over 1 billion barrels of that oil each year.

The technology necessary to turn the oil sands into bitumen that could then be exported profitably really took off in the early 2000s. Buoyed by optimism of its potential, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper pronounced in July 2006 that Canada would soon be an “energy superproducer.” A surge of investment came to the oil sands during the commodity supercycle of 2000-2014, which saw oil peak at a price of \$147/barrel in 2008. For a few good years, average oil prices sat just below \$100 a barrel. Alberta was booming until it crashed.

Two things happened that made Harper's prediction fall apart. The first was the shale revolution – the combination of hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling that made oil from the vast shale reserves in the United States economical to recover. Until then, the US had been the world's biggest energy importer. In 2008 it was producing just 5 million barrels of crude oil a day, and had to import 10 million barrels a day to meet its ravenous need. Shale changed that, and the US is now the world's biggest oil producer, expecting to hit a production level of 12.4 million barrels a day in 2023.

“ *For producers extracting oil from the oil sands, the shale revolution was a terrible outcome.* ”

For producers extracting oil from the oil sands, the shale revolution was a terrible outcome. Just as new major oil sands projects were coming online and were producing a couple of million barrels a day, our only oil customer was becoming energy self-sufficient.

Because the United States was such a reliable and thirsty oil consumer, it never made sense for Canada to export its oil to any other nation, and the country never built the pipeline or export terminal infrastructure to do so. Our southern neighbour wanted all we produced. But the cheap shale oil that flooded North America in the 2010s made that dependence a huge mistake as other markets would have proven to be more profitable.

If shale oil took a hatchet to the Canadian oil industry, the election of the Liberals in 2015 brought on its death by a thousand cuts. For the last eight years, federal policies have incrementally and cumulatively damaged the domestic oil and gas sector. With the benefit of hindsight in 2023, it is obvious that this has had major consequences for global energy security, as well as opportunity costs for Canadian foreign policy.

Once the shale revolution began in earnest, the urgency in the sector to be able to export oil to any other market than the United States led to proposals for the Northern Gateway, Energy East, and TMX pipelines. Opposition from Quebec and BC killed Energy East and Northern Gateway, respectively. The saga of TMX may finally end this year, as it is expected to go into service in late 2023, billions of dollars over cost and years overdue thanks to regulatory and jurisdictional hurdles.

Because Canada has been stuck selling all of its oil to the United States, it does so at a huge discount, known as a differential. That discount hit a staggering US\$46 per barrel difference in October 2018, when WTI (West Texas Intermediate) oil was selling for \$57 a barrel, but we could only get \$11 for WCS (Western Canada Select). The lack of pipelines and the resulting differential created losses to the Canadian economy of \$117 billion between 2011 and 2018, according to Frank McKenna, former Liberal New Brunswick Premier and Ambassador to the United States, and now Deputy Chairman of TD Bank.

The story is not dissimilar with liquefied natural gas (LNG). While both the United States and Canada had virtually no LNG export capacity in 2015, the United States has since grown to be the world's biggest LNG exporter, helping Europe divest itself of its reliance on Russian gas and making tens of billions of dollars in the process. Canada still exports none, with regulatory uncertainty and slow timelines killing investor interest. In fact, the United States imports Canadian natural gas – which it buys for the lowest prices in the world due to that differential problem – and then resells it to our allies for a premium.

Canada's inability to build pipelines and export capacity is a major problem on its own. But the federal government has also imposed a series of regulatory burdens and hurdles on the industry, one on top of the other, creating confusion, inefficiency, and expense. It has become known in Alberta as a “stacked pancake” approach.

The first major burden was Bill C-48, the tanker moratorium. In case anyone considered reviving the Northern Gateway project, the Liberal government banned oil tankers from loading anywhere between the northernmost point of Vancouver Island to the BC-Alaska border. That left a pathway only for TMX, which goes through Vancouver, amidst fierce local opposition. I have explained it to my American colleagues this way: imagine if Texas was landlocked, and all its oil exports had to go west through California, but the federal government banned oil tankers from loading anywhere on the Californian coast except through ports in San Francisco. That is what C-48 did in Canada.

“For producers extracting oil from the oil sands, the shale revolution was a terrible outcome.”

Added to Bill C-48 was Bill C-69, known colloquially as the “no new pipelines” bill and now passed as the *Impact Assessment Act*, which has successfully deterred investment in the sector. It imposes new and often opaque regulatory requirements, such as having to conduct a gender-based analysis before proceeding with new projects to determine how different genders will experience them: “a way of thinking, as opposed to a unique set of prescribed methods,” according to the federal government. It also provides for a veto from the Environment and Climate Change Canada Minister – currently, Steven Guilbeault – on any new *in situ* oil sands projects or interprovincial or international pipelines, regardless of the regulatory agency’s recommendation.

The Alberta Court of Appeal has determined that the act is unconstitutional, and eight other provinces are joining in its challenge. But so far it is the law of the land, and investors are allergic to it.

Federal carbon pricing, and Alberta’s federally compatible alternative for large emitters, the TIER (Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction) Regulation, was added next, though this regulation makes sense for advancing climate goals. It is the main driver for encouraging emission reductions, and includes charges for excess emissions as well as credits for achieving emissions

below benchmark. It may be costly for producers, but from an economic perspective, of all the climate policies carbon pricing is the most efficient.

Industry has committed to their shareholders that they will reduce emissions; their social license and their investment attractiveness depends to some degree on it. The major oil sands companies have put forth a credible plan to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. One conventional operation in Alberta is already net zero thanks to its use of carbon capture technology. Having a predictable and recognized price on carbon is also providing incentives to a sophisticated carbon tech industry in Canada, which can make money by finding smart ways to sequester and use carbon.

In theory, carbon pricing should succeed in reducing emissions in the most efficient way possible. Yet the federal government keeps adding more policies on top of carbon pricing. The Canadian Clean Fuel Standard, introduced in 2022, mandates that fuel suppliers must lower the “lifecycle intensity” of their fuels, for example by blending them with biofuels, or investing in hydrogen, renewables, and carbon capture. This standard dictates particular policy solutions, causes the consumer price of fuels to increase, facilitates greater reliance on imports of biofuels, and conflicts with some provincial policies. It is also puts new demands on North American refinery capacity, which is already highly constrained.

“The emissions cap is an existential threat to Canada’s oil and gas industry (...) at a time when our allies are trying, and failing, to wean themselves off of Russian oil.”

The newest but perhaps most damaging proposal is for an emissions cap, which seeks to reduce emissions solely from the oil and gas sector by 42 per cent by 2030. This target far exceeds what is possible with carbon capture in that time frame, and can only be achieved through a dramatic reduction in production. The emissions cap is an existential threat to Canada’s oil and gas industry, and it comes at a time when our allies are trying, and failing, to wean themselves off of Russian oil. The economic damage to the Canadian economy is hard to overestimate.

Oil demand is growing, and even in the most optimistic forecasts it will continue to grow for another decade before plateauing. Our European and Asian allies are already dangerously reliant on Russia and Middle Eastern states for their oil. American shale production is peaking, and will soon start to decline. Low investment levels in global oil exploration and production, due in part to ESG (environmental, social, and governance) and climate policies, are paving the way for shortages by mid-decade.

An energy crisis is looming. Canada is not too late to be the energy superproducer the democratic world needs in order to prosper and be secure. We need more critical minerals, hydrogen, hydro, and nuclear power. But it is essential that we export globally significant levels of oil and LNG as well, using carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) wherever possible.

Meeting this goal will require a very different approach than the one currently taken by the federal government: it must be an approach that encourages growth and exports even as emissions are reduced. What the government has done instead is deter investment, dampen competitiveness, and hand market share to Russia and OPEC.

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Putting government mismanagement of Indigenous affairs in the rear-view mirror

Ken Coates

In an era of a mounting number of interconnected complex and difficult problems, one feels sorry for the politicians and civil servants attempting to produce policies, programs, and funding that will make real and sustained progress. We are often confronted with the frightening realization that government, as it is currently structured and directed, is simply not up to the challenges of the 21st century. This is certainly the case with Indigenous affairs in Canada, where the federal government struggles to find the right path forward.

The socio-economic data is clear. Indigenous peoples lag well behind the non-Indigenous population on almost all measures: personal income, access to clean water, educational outcomes, rates of incarceration, health outcomes, opioid deaths, tuberculosis cases, overcrowded homes, and many others. Language loss is endemic, many communities struggle with intergenerational conflict, too many cultural traditions are at risk, and long-term systemic poverty continues to take its toll.

Most Canadians think that the government of Canada is doing a great deal – some people think too much – to address Indigenous challenges and opportunities. They point, as the government often does, to billions of dollars in annual expenditures, formal and public apologies, major court judgments in

favour of Indigenous defendants, a seat at a growing number of political tables, and concessions on language, values, and priorities.

The juxtaposition of these two realities is troubling – despite the massive expenditures on Indigenous affairs there are continued and major shortcomings in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit outcomes and achievements. Frustration burns deep in many Indigenous communities, as it does among the general population. Canadians at large have heard the many apologies, hundreds of program announcements, billions in spending, and the near-constant uncertainty of legal processes, and they too are deeply concerned about the failure of decades of concerted government efforts to make things better.

“*While media coverage focuses on conflict and despair, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities have made substantial improvements.*”

Of course, there have been major achievements. While media coverage focuses on conflict and despair, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities have made substantial improvements, even with the current difficulties in mind. Post-secondary attendance remains strong, with continuing challenges with the high school to PSE transition. Indigenous entrepreneurship is a bright spot in the Canadian economy. Modern treaties and self-government agreements are changing how the government manages Indigenous policies, funding, and decision-making. And impact and benefit agreements have secured Indigenous communities an important place in resource and infrastructure development.

But frustrations with the government of Canada’s management of Indigenous affairs continues. Communities complain of long-delayed negotiations, difficulties with payments, the omnipresent influence of the *Indian Act*, files lingering on the desk of the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada, the inability to get promised money out the door quickly and efficiently, the imposition of complicated accountability provisions, and many other problems. Even major settlements, like the \$40 billion allocated to address shortcomings in child and family services, has been bogged down in unrewarding negotiations.

The failures of governance on Indigenous affairs represents an unhappy situation where the problem is, simultaneously, too much government and too little governance. Starting well before Confederation, paternalism became the hallmark of federal policy towards Indigenous peoples. Government officials believed that they knew best and managed Indigenous affairs with scant consideration of Indigenous ideas and goals – and often with a firm, manipulative hand. To the degree that Indigenous peoples escaped the dominance of Ottawa, it was largely due to the shortage of government workers and money, which meant that most northern peoples were left largely alone until the 1950s.

In the 1950s and 1960s, in a massive wave of self-justified paternalism, government intervention expanded rapidly. Indigenous peoples were required to live in government-established and run settlements, typically in government-built houses and under the control of a growing cadre of paternalistic Indian Agents. Residential and day school education became standard fare – as did acute language loss and the disruption of harvesting activity and traditional cultures. Welfare dependency, extremely rare before the mid-1950s, replaced harvesting and the mixed economy as the economic foundations of Indigenous life, with all of the controls and intrusions that attend any reliance on government cheques.

Well-meaning state officials inherited the paternalism of their predecessors, believing that government-designed and -run programs would provide Indigenous communities with pathways to the mainstream economy and the benefits of the dominant society. A few achievements stand out, but generally the effort did not work. Indigenous communities were transformed into frustrated supplicants, relying on a steady stream of applications and approval processes to provide what were typically short-term grants that would fund core community operations.

The arrangements prioritized federal budget-making and administration over Indigenous decision-making and community priority-setting. The budgets grew dramatically. Federal officials made countless announcements. The number of federal civil servants grew dramatically. And individual Indigenous people continued to suffer. Through decades in which state funding and programming continued to expand, the gap between Indigenous well-being and non-Indigenous social and economic conditions scarcely narrowed at all. What did grow dramatically was social dysfunction, self-harm, and family disarray.

It turned out that too much government “help” could be as bad as neglect and inattention to Indigenous needs. Ottawa continued to supply earnest and well-meant programs, but they were built with diminishing enthusiasm from Indigenous peoples. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities understood what the government of Canada did not: that community control was much more important and effective than Ottawa-centred policy-making. Much of the Indigenous effort since the 1970s has focused on righting the imbalance, establishing more self-government processes, expanding own-source revenues, and returning to Indigenous peoples the autonomy that had sustained them for centuries.

“ *Indigenous peoples have their own agendas – and they have largely succeeded in changing the core foundations of Indigenous governance in Canada.* ”

Indigenous peoples have their own agendas – and they have largely succeeded in changing the core foundations of Indigenous governance in Canada. Modern treaties have, for some people, eliminated some of the more pernicious aspects of the *Indian Act* and its associated bureaucracies. Self-governing First Nations are becoming more common and increasingly successful. The Inuit secured their own territory – Nunavut – and acquired considerable autonomy in Labrador and northern Quebec. Impact and benefit agreements and resource revenue sharing have given communities the funding they require to establish their own spending priorities. Duty-to-consult and accommodate provisions have given Indigenous communities a major role in determining the shape and nature of resource development. Major Supreme Court of Canada decisions continue to extend Indigenous authority.

This story of Indigenous re-empowerment has not yet fully unfolded, although the returns to date have been more than promising. Self-governing First Nations in the Canadian North and elsewhere have used their autonomy to very good effect. Communities near the oil sands in Alberta have used their

involvement in resource extraction to create substantial autonomy for themselves. Near-urban and urban First Nations are supporting metropolitan redevelopment. Joint ventures and economic cooperation have become the norm rather than the exception. Struggles continue; generations of paternalism and government oversight are not overcome in a flash.

But the primary lesson is simple. State paternalism has been a force for disruption and manipulation of Indigenous communities. Re-empowerment, autonomy, and economic independence have demonstrated the potential to rebuild, enhance, and strengthen First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. Decades of government mismanagement of Indigenous affairs must be put in the rear-view mirror. It is time for the re-empowerment of Indigenous communities to become the new normal.

Indigenous realities have changed dramatically, particularly related to Indigenous rights, expectations, capacity, financial settlements and community expectations. Government administration and policy-making, as current constituted, is not sufficiently community-centric, properly funded, appropriately responsive or driven by Indigenous imperatives. Despite generations of large-scale spending and many programs and announcements, basic conditions are far too often seriously substandard and real progress slow and unimpressive. With Indigenous people and their governments in the forefront, Indigenous governance and support requires a dramatic rethinking and Indigenous empowerment in order to respond properly to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

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The failed promise of the Canada Infrastructure Bank

Aaron Wudrick

It is apparent to even casual observers of the political process that the current federal government is finding it difficult to bring its many big project announcements to fruition – in other words, to get big things done. Completion of the Trans Mountain pipeline is late and billions of dollars over budget. The process of procuring jets for the air force and ships for the navy has been plagued by interminable delays and skyrocketing price tags. Even more pedestrian duties like issuing passports and conducting airport security screening in a timely manner have proven challenging in recent years.

Nor is it simply relatively routine management tasks that the government has had difficulty executing; it is struggling with the high-profile projects, too. In 2016, the Trudeau government announced that it was going to create a brand new federal agency, the Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB). The bank was being set up for the purpose of leveraging \$35 billion in public dollars to secure much more in private capital and jointly fund new infrastructure projects ranging from roads to bridges to ports. It sounded like a win-win idea in theory. Governments could spend less, but Canadians would get more.

It is difficult to understate the fanfare at the time: the CIB's launch event was held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Toronto with bank presidents and pension fund CEOs among those in attendance (Wells 2016).

While public-private partnerships (PPP) are nothing new and have a mixed track record, both in Canada and in other countries, the vision for the CIB was to expand the concept further and build a one-stop wicket for global capital markets wanting to invest in Canada. In the budget documents announcing the establishment of the \$35 billion CIB, the Trudeau government suggested that the new bank would be able to leverage private investment at average ratio of four to one – or four private investment dollars for every public dollar.

The reality turned out to be a lot more complicated. Despite all the fanfare and high expectations, the CIB's promise failed to materialize. A 2021 report by the Parliamentary Budget Officer revealed that since its establishment in 2015, the CIB had received a total of 420 project proposals – but had publicly committed to just 17 and only finalized investments in two (PBO 2021, 6). For both of the two finalized projects – a transit project in Quebec and an irrigation project in Alberta – the only funders were federal, provincial, and municipal governments. The total amount of private sector dollars leveraged was zero.

So what went wrong?

The first warning sign for the Trudeau government should have been the lack of comparable international precedents for such a strategy. It is inconceivable that no other government on earth would have examined the viability of leveraging private capital to benefit public ends. Signs of proper due diligence to examine where else it might have already been tried and what lessons could be learned from a “failure to launch” elsewhere are entirely absent. On the contrary, this obvious omission seems to have been overlooked and obscured by nothing more than the optimism and hubris inherent in many newly elected governments that come to office bursting with ambition and a can-do spirit.

But even assuming that by some unknown metric the experiment was worth the risk, the government was clearly unable to recognize a second problem: that the most appealing projects to private sector partners would be the ones that offered the highest and most secure returns, especially those with reliable revenue streams. Unfortunately for the government, these sorts of projects – which often impose visible user fees on the public – are politically problematic, as critics can easily frame them as private businesses profiteering off what would otherwise be publicly owned infrastructure. This in turn could easily tempt governments to interfere with these projects by, for example, pressuring or mandating partners to reduce fees, thereby reducing the rate of return for investors.

This also highlights a third and related risk that many governments fail to appreciate: private investors are allergic to political meddling. For most investors, this is not their first rodeo. Claiming that an institution is “arms length” from political interference is an easy claim for governments to make, but a difficult one to maintain when they start to face political headwinds. To help overcome this risk either the government of the day or specific entities like the CIB need a demonstrated track record that will give investors peace of mind. That is to say, an established government with a history of non-interference might be given the benefit of the doubt when it sets up a new entity; or a longstanding, respected institution may be able to cancel out any misgivings investors have about an untested new government. But a rookie government setting up a brand new institution is extremely risky.

“ *There is some evidence that the bank was doomed from the start.* ”

There is some evidence that the bank was doomed from the start. In his recent book former Liberal Finance Minister Bill Morneau recounts that at one point he proposed selling Canada’s airports and using the proceeds to fund the CIB (Ibbitson 2023). In his view this was a matter of unlocking government assets to free up funds for other important purposes, but his idea was shot down as being politically untenable. One can only wonder if those siding against Morneau even realized that much of what they hoped the CIB would ultimately build would inevitably give rise to similar political risk.

By 2020 and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government essentially abandoned the original stated objectives of the CIB (Wudrick 2020) and the pretext of it being an arms-length entity, repurposing it as a funding source for uneconomic but politically desirable projects, such as zero-emission school buses (CIB 2021). Notably, the House of Commons transport committee took a different view of the CIB’s reinvention, recommending last year that it be abolished altogether (Curry 2022). It continues to languish in obscurity – except perhaps when it is making headlines about expensive executive severance payments (Curry and Hannay 2020).

Perhaps the CIB was a project doomed from the get-go. But it is equally likely that it represents an early example of what ultimately became a well-established Trudeau government pattern: put a heavy focus on a big announcement, invest little thought into after-the-fact execution, then move quickly on to the next announcement. If so, it is a cautionary tale about the damage that prioritizing politics over policy can bring – and an illustration of the types of failures that can undermine confidence in government’s ability to get things done – not just big things, like the CIB, that it announces with great fanfare, but increasingly the smaller, more routine things that society relies on government to execute smoothly and competently.

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Health care governance in Canada: Complexity, overlapping magisteria, and the need for clarity of purpose

Shawn Whatley

Canada is a country of perpetual pilot projects.

-Monique Bégin, Laura Eggertson, and Noni Macdonald (2009).

Going back to 1975 Canada has struggled with an “addiction to pilot projects.” Provincial governments remain leery of expanding pilot projects into permanent programs. Pilot projects can be cancelled without political outcry whereas cutting permanent programs when budget priorities change invites backlash. Provincial governments resist turning pilots into programs, because they worry about losing control of spending, services, scope, and scale.

Provinces would rather risk being accused of poor performance than taking on a new commitment that they cannot govern. This approach is evident with health care performance. The 2021 Commonwealth Fund study ranks Canada’s health care system 10th out of 11 top-income countries (Schneider et al. 2021). The Fraser Institute’s Mackenzie Moir and Bacchus Barua (2022) found that Canada ranks first for spending and 28th for the number of physicians per thousand people compared with 30 other universal-access health care systems in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Canada struggles to perform, because governments struggle to maintain control. The “perpetual pilot projects” complaint remains true today. Governments cannot experiment with new health care programs without creating political risk. The 1984 *Canada Health Act* governs what provinces must do to qualify for federal Canada Health Transfer payments, and solidifies the perpetual-pilot-project deadlock-by-design.

Medicare struggles mainly due to governance failure, not a lack of resources. Governance refers to how groups make decisions, delegate authority, and control operations. Medicare faces similar governance challenges to individual corporations, plus added layers of state influence, special interests, public pressure, and much more.

What follows offers a brief overview of Medicare’s governance complexity. Even this brief review will suggest that we should think differently about federal, provincial, and local input. Instead of thinking of them as linked governance units, perhaps we should think of them as overlapping magisteria” – entirely separate and unique mandates for healthcare.

If the notion of overlapping magisteria fits, it should allow us to move on from unsolvable difference between federal, provincial, and local voices. We could start asking more fundamental questions about purpose: Why does Medicare exist? What is Medicare supposed to accomplish? Armed with agreement on purpose, we could plot a path towards true governance reform.

For our purposes here, “Medicare” refers to the Canadian approach of organizing all publicly funded health care services. Medicare emerged and evolved over the last 75 years and has been shaped by legislation, including (but not limited to) regulatory oversight, legal precedent, labour settlements, and much more.

Overwhelming complexity

Governance addresses decision making. Who gets to decide? Who is in charge? Who or what influences decisions? On the surface, authority for Medicare appears to rest at the provincial level. Provincial legislation provides the ultimate shape of care in each province. However, provincial-level authority has expanded exponentially over the years and now includes control of regulatory bodies, educational colleges, bureaucracies, funding agreements, and partnerships with industry.

However, legislation often matters less than informal influence. A comment made in the media by the minister of health or a suggestion made by civil servants to hospital administrators can create cascades of meetings to prepare for the possible changes the comments imply might be coming.

It gets worse.

The federal government adds its own complexity with promises, pronouncements, and warnings. For example, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised a family doctor for every Canadian in 2019 (Ballard 2019). In March 2022, Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos (2022) announced federal health priorities, essentially dictating performance outcomes to the provinces. In December 2022, Prime Minister Trudeau commented on federal-provincial funding talks and said, “There is no point in putting more money into a broken system” (Major and Barton 2022).

Medicare offers endless opportunities to improve, and almost everyone agrees on the need for change (Lau 2023). But having agreed, no one knows where to start, what to do, or who should take responsibility for the outcome.

A framework to understand health care

Health care governance combines three separate conversations, each vying for prominence.

Stephen Jay Gould, the late American paleontologist, proposed a popular truce between science and religion, which he labelled “Nonoverlapping Magisteria” (Gould 1997). Gould argued that each domain represented a distinct and separate magisterium of instruction and authority. Each one addresses entirely different things, so according to Gould, debate should stop.

Debate never stops in Canadian health care, because it tries to do the opposite. Medicare overlaps three magisteria – federal, provincial, and local – and attempts to govern by trying to satisfy all three. The incoherence between them is a key factor behind the system’s challenges. Each magisterium has its own goals, scope of authority, and individual risk profile.

Goals

The federal government’s goal is to ensure universal health care from coast to coast that is comprehensive (for the most part), portable, publicly administered, and accessible (no user fees or extra-billing).

Provincial goals focus on health policy and programs, funding and oversight. Provinces must fund and ensure delivery of the care they have promised.

Local authorities focus on hospitals, labs, outpatient facilities, care homes, and clinics. Local clinicians aim to provide care, even when they cannot cure. All actual care is provided locally.

Authority

Canada's *Constitution Act* seems clear: Section 92 identifies health care as a provincial responsibility. The federal government has no direct authority. The federal government can cajole, heckle, and embarrass the provinces, but its only functional tool is "spending power."

On the other hand, provincial authority seems vast. Provincial governments or institutions can legislate, regulate, fund, licence, promote, develop, punish, and plan health care. However, provinces lack the ability to implement. Even a majority government remains relatively powerless to fundamentally change clinical behaviour. Fee changes and bonuses might tweak clinical care, but they cannot create fundamental change in delivery.

Local, clinical authority depends on legitimacy and trust. Legitimacy starts with (state) licensure and gains stature from performance guided by evidence and outcomes. Trust flows from the millions of medical services provided each day. At the facility level, administrators are accountable to funders and legislators. At the bedside, clinicians are accountable to patients, regulators, and the facilities in which they work.

Risk

The federal government carries the political risk for health care performance but lacks the authority to manage outcomes, which seems unfair. However, the federal government created its own problem when it chose to fund health care with transfer payments rather than tax-point transfers. The federal government used its "spending power" to bribe the provinces into creating programs they may not have built otherwise. Now, the federal government must carry political risk for something it cannot (fully) manage.

Provinces also carry risk they cannot fully control. Headlines about horrendous patient outcomes always demand a provincial response. Despite efforts to blame outcomes on a lack of federal funding, provinces ultimately pay for care. Voters know this.

Political risk aside, no politician or civil servant gets fired for broken promises or failed performance on health care. Real risk only exists at the local level. Every patient complaint must be investigated, no matter how small or time consuming. Every clinical encounter can result in a lawsuit, loss of licence, or worse. Provincial governments can close or amalgamate facilities, with impacts to clinicians and staff that are irreversible. Because of this, new hospital administrators learn that the first rule in hospital administration is never embarrass the government.

Even our brief review of how goals, authority, and risk differ between federal, provincial, and local demonstrates the fundamental differences between each. They are not just different governance units in a coherent system. They are different domains.

Of course, we could multiply differences beyond those outlined in our discussion of goals, authority, and risk. For example, each magisterium has its own approach and traditions for processing information, creating policy, and adapting to change; each region differs slightly from its neighbour; and provinces face unique challenges within the corporatist-style iron triangle of government, unions, and doctors.

Recovery begins with purpose

Glenn Tecker, governance consultant, teaches that governance does not start with organizational charts. It starts with purpose: “Form follows function, and function follows purpose.”¹ First decide what we want to do, why we exist. Then decide how to organize.

Dr. David Naylor, physician and former president of the University of Toronto, described Medicare as “private practice, public payment” (Naylor 1986). In his book by the same title, Naylor argued that doctors practised and governments paid, end of story. But that dream was dying even before the book went to print.

Today, some argue that “Medicare in Canada is not an insurance program” in the usual sense. “It is a defined set of services administered and delivered provincially under a national framework and paid for through taxes paid to both provincial and federal governments” (Campbell and Marchildon 2007, 9).

1 Personal correspondence with Glenn Tecker, February 2023.

Roy Romanow, former NDP premier of Saskatchewan, goes further. In a piece outlining his experiences in “the Medicare battle,” Romanow warns that “this great, redistributive program we call Medicare may not yet be safe” (Marchildon 2012, 290).

These statements show a fundamental disagreement of purpose. Does Medicare exist to provide patient care, or does it exist to serve a redistributive vision? Is Medicare an insurance program, managed care, or a cog in fiscal federalism?

We must know why Medicare exists, before we can fix its governance.

Medicare started as a nationalized health insurance plan to cover “medically necessary” care. But Tommy Douglas said paying for care was only the “first phase.” In his mind, and as he articulated in a 1979 conference, Medicare always included a second phase: a quest to “fundamentally redesign” medical services and delivery (HealthCoalition 2010).

Form follows function, and function follows purpose. If we follow that rule, we should focus our efforts on finding agreement on why Medicare exists before we debate who is in charge.

Beyond pilot projects

Canada will continue to be a country of perpetual pilot projects, if we do not address governance. But we cannot start addressing governance, if we keep thinking of the federal, provincial, and local voices as linked governance units. They are more like overlapping magisteria – distinct domains with differing visions of what they hope to accomplish.

If we can think beyond the linked-governance-units model, we could open space to start addressing true governance reform. We could focus on first principles, starting with purpose: for example, why does Medicare exist? What is it supposed to accomplish?

Canadian healthcare offers enormous opportunity for improvement, and it starts with governance.

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The darkest of stains: Canada's evacuation mission to Kabul, August 2021

Richard Shimooka

In an era defined by dramatic images of foreign events, few are starker than the scenes of Afghans trying to flee the collapsing government in Kabul in 2021. Several western countries launched efforts to evacuate Afghans from the clutches of the Taliban, but Canada's response has come under significant scrutiny and criticism for being too slow, ill conceived, and poorly implemented. Ottawa has put forward a number of explanations for the poor showing, including that the rapidity of the collapse overtook Ottawa's planning, and that Canada's bureaucracy responsible for overseeing the evacuation was in a caretaker mode due to the imminent federal election.

This piece will examine one particular phase of Canada's effort to aid current and former locally engaged staff (LES) from the collapsing Afghan state – the frantic evacuation efforts that took place from June to August 2021. It will not cover the post-collapse effort to pull LES members from the country. The focus is for narrow convenience but also due to the practical realities of the research. Despite it being two years after these events, major parts of the story remain unclear even with Access to Information requests and first-hand interviews.

What befell the Afghan LES was essentially a decade of inaction based on

political and bureaucratic callousness, followed by a policy reversal that was far too late in coming. Canada's lack of sense of urgency and general disregard for the plight of the Afghans involved would essentially lead to thousands of LES members being left stranded in their homeland in the clutches of a brutal and vengeful regime. It is a tale of poor governance and policy-making that likely led to untold suffering and death.

Perhaps one of the more tragic aspects of the entire episode was how easily the consequences could have been mitigated before they even occurred. Canada at one point operated a special immigrant measures program, which until 2012 resettled approximately 800 Afghan individuals and their families.¹ However this program was effectively discontinued that year as Canada's military operation withdrew from the country.

The government's policy was that it had already opened a window for these individuals to leave the country, and that that window was now closed.² After 2012 a number of former LES members had fled Afghanistan to neighbouring countries or states with favourable asylum policies, such as Germany (Warmington 2017). This flow increased significantly as the Afghan security situation deteriorated into the mid-2010s, and Ottawa faced increasing pressure from other countries to assist these former allies.

A key challenge was the government's "duty of care" to its locally engaged staff. Essentially there is no standard policy outlining the federal government's responsibility to non-Canadians contracted in foreign countries.³ Considering how widespread and essential the LES are for the day-to-day functioning of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and other departments operating abroad, as well as the danger some of these individuals face once they agree to cooperate with a foreign government, this is a troubling area – and not one that was previously unknown. The lack of policy had caused issues over the years, but it came to a head in the summer of 2021 when the Afghan state collapsed.⁴ Essentially the government's difficulty in crafting criteria for who was eligible for resettlement stopped it from developing any policy for those Afghan LES that had escaped to third countries.

1 Access to Information and Privacy Request (ATIP) 2A-2021-57788, number 00037, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

2 (ATIP) 2A-2021-57788, number 00037 (IRCC), "Afghan Interpreters."

3 See Access to Information and Privacy Request (ATIP) (2016), ATIP A-2017-02171, "Gurkha Guards Debate," Global Affairs Canada (GAC).

4 Access to Information and Privacy Request (ATIP) 2A-2021-57788, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

Another concern was current LES members still living in Afghanistan. The government had failed to develop a contingency plan for these individuals after 2012 and their safety was at risk as the Taliban extended their reach. The impending collapse of the Afghan state in the spring of 2021 put renewed internal pressure on Ottawa to develop a response. Ottawa started working on plans to evacuate current LES staff members in early May,⁵ and a month later it seemed to have a working plan in place for those individuals.⁶ However, as late as July 12, former interpreters and other LES inside Afghanistan remained explicitly excluded from any response “due to the complexity of such a measure.”⁷

While plans for dealing with existing LES members were starting to become well developed, Canada’s political leaders seemingly changed course sometime over the weekend of July 17-18 (CPAC 2021). They started contemplating expanding the scope of the evacuation measures to include individuals who had formerly supported Canadian efforts.

What precipitated the expansion is not presently clear. Certainly, the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and the likely Taliban takeover required a response. However, some Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) veterans and other private Canadian citizens had increased their own efforts to facilitate the evacuation of interpreters and former LES members trapped in the country. Their very public efforts were becoming a source of embarrassment to the Liberal government mere days before the election writ was dropped.

In particular, the bureaucracy focused on the prime minister’s public commitment to support

the people who have put their lives at risk to support Canadians... in Afghanistan interpreters, guides, drivers, locally engaged staff who have been there to help Canada make a difference in that country and around the world.⁸

The government’s response changed dramatically after the prime minister’s statement. His pledge undermined the government’s existing position that

5 Access to Information and Privacy Request (ATIP) 2A-2021-57788 Pg 47. “Request for KABUL Locally Engaged Staff Special Immigration Measures, May 3rd 2021” Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada IRCC

6 Access to Information and Privacy Request (ATIP) 2A-2021-57788 Pg 35 “Issue paper” Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada IRCC

7 Access to Information and Privacy Request (ATIP) 2A-2021-57788 Pg 37 “Afghan Interpreters” Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada IRCC

8 Access to Information and Privacy Request (ATIP) (2021), 2A-2021-57788, number 00028, “DGO meeting with GAC Resettlement of Afghan Locally Engaged Staff to Canada July 26th,” Global Affairs Canada (GAG) .

it had no responsibility to former LES members. The bureaucracy scrambled to follow the new, expanded political direction. Their efforts culminated three days later on July 22, when the minister of immigration, Marco Mendicino, signed Public Policy P23 and Public Policy P24, which became the key blueprints for Canada's evacuation efforts.

P23 related to current LES, of which 275 were identified. The government's planning over the prior two months, as well as the relatively small number of individuals identified, ensured their relatively quick and orderly evacuation. The current LES identified in P23 were always going to be the easiest group to evacuate – they were in daily contact with Canadian officials while discharging their duties.

This was in stark contrast to Public Policy P24, which was intended to cover Afghans who had worked for Canada at some point in the past. P24 presented all of the same difficulties that had preceded action on the LES – there were no established criteria outlining who was to be included in the evacuation efforts; the bureaucracy had to develop those guidelines. Initially, the only direction that bureaucrats were given was that individuals had to “have a substantial link to Canadian efforts.” From that, Global Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence (DND) were directed to develop lists of people to be evacuated.⁹ The vagueness of the initial direction was reflected in the fact that the initial documentation identified no quota. Instead, GAC and DND were to send lists of individuals who were candidates for resettlement to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for processing.¹⁰

By the end of the week, GAC and DND had identified an initial number of about 333 individuals, which seemingly ballooned to around 3000 people a few days later. However, on August 13, two days before the collapse of the government in Kabul, Ottawa announced a third group of people it was considering for resettlement – a humanitarian program for individuals outside of Afghanistan. It was at this time that the government also first announced that it intended to resettle 20,000 people in Canada.

9 Access to Information and Privacy Request (ATIP) 2A-2021-57788, “Afghan Special Immigrant Measures Operational Update, July 26,” Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), p. 41.

10 Access to Information and Privacy Request (ATIP) 2A-2021-57788, number 000039, “Afghan Special Immigration Measures Operational Update: July 23,” Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

While these cumulative decisions meant that some Afghans were able to evacuate the country, Ottawa then had to develop a physical system to extract them. IRCC opened its operations centre in Ottawa to process the P23 and P24 applicants, while GAC reinforced its presence in Kabul with additional personnel to assist with processing.

On July 30, the CAF began to airlift identified individuals out of Kabul. As with the general thrust of the government's efforts, the primary focus of *Operation Aegis* was to evacuate existing LES members. Initially, and for several reasons, former staff members that were covered in P24 were not a major focus of this operation.

First, there was the highly fluid question of precisely who qualified for the program at the time. While GAC and DND had started to compile names on a master list and submit that list for processing, IRCC's vetting had yet to start in earnest. Second, thousands of individuals who likely would have qualified were by then stranded behind Taliban lines, largely in Kandahar, where the weight of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan was heaviest between 2006 and 2011. These individuals would require alternate arrangements to leave the country.

Originally the P24 stream was not publicized, yet it was revealed by error in early August. This precipitated an increasing number of queries by Afghans to various government members and representatives. However, even as late as August 18, the official guidance developed to support the evacuation activities in Kabul stated that only approved individuals would be accepted for resettlement.¹¹ Furthermore, IRCC did not have the resources to process the volume of applicants that started to come forth.

The actual airlift portion of the mission started on August 4 and involved a series of flights that included C-130s, C-17s, and specially chartered aircraft. The flights continued for the next three weeks, ending on August 24. US evacuation efforts continued for another week after that, but by August 30, they too ended.

11 Access to Information and Privacy Request (ATIP) A-2021-01464 00002 "Guidance for Evacuation Support Activities Kabul" Global Affairs Canada (GAC)

Conclusion

By the end of the airlift, the Royal Canadian Air Force had evacuated 3700 individuals from Kabul, but tens of thousands of individuals eligible for resettlement remained in the country. Many have since perished under Taliban rule while others live in fear each day. Canada's failure to remove more of its LES support staff cannot be simply attributed to the rapidity of the Afghan state's collapse. Prior to July 23 government policy was explicit: former LES members would not receive evacuation support. Nor could anyone seriously claim that an impending federal election, leaving the bureaucracy in a caretaker mode, had hindered the government's ability to respond. Clearly, the bureaucracy was able to act following the major political decisions announced in July that would launch the evacuation in August.

Instead, the failures that led to this debacle must be attributed to the lack of planning for over a decade, and particularly in the years leading up to 2021. The government had received ample warnings from across Canadian society about the dangers facing LES in Afghanistan, but took no action. When the policy reversal did come, the actions that resulted were unsurprisingly haphazard and confused. This is in contrast to the evacuation of existing LES members, which seemed to run much more smoothly, and which can be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that the government and the bureaucrats had begun planning their relocation months earlier.

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Conclusion

In a recent *National Post* column, John Ivison made the provocative statement that Canada is not broken but it's not working up to its potential - it's an apt description of the nature of the governance breakdowns facing Canada across a range of issues.

Each chapter in this paper illustrates the breadth of these issues - they are not limited to any single policy area, and they even extend to files that one would regard as political priorities for the governing Liberal Party. This makes these governance failures particularly interesting – its plainly not for a lack of effort or attention that these issues are cropping up, but the style of governance, the very approach the government has taken to a broad spectrum of issues, is itself the problem.

Regardless of where one falls on the political spectrum, regardless of one's political leanings or ideals, they're ought to be substantial agreement that the government's method for running the country isn't panning out in substantial ways across the issues brought forward in this paper. In other words, this isn't a partisan issue so much as a broader governance issue. What we need is not *necessarily* a government with different goals (that is a different discussion entirely) but a government with a different approach to accomplishing whatever goals they set their mind to.

While not a comprehensive overview, this paper demonstrates that some cross-cutting governance issues are apparent, such as, primarily, the general preference to defer to bureaucratic preferences or perspectives on issues, rather than provide leadership to change them. While all policies are in some degree a dance between these two parties (political leaders and government departments), this collected volume suggests it is not an equitable distribution

of weight or control. This may account for the systemic nature of these issues across government. If we are to see public trust in government restored and improved morale in the civil service, we, as Canadian citizens, need to demand a focus on deliverables over performative governance, and on clear decision making and leadership over an acceptance of bureaucratic gridlock.

This report is really a preliminary study of the topic – a sketch of worrying trends rather than a comprehensive portrait of the issues at hand. There are plenty of different avenues to explore and we hope others will carry the baton further in an effort to push Canada to live up to our ideals of peace, order, and *good government*.

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