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Repairing the management vacuum at the federal level in Canada

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“A fundamental mismatch exists between today’s workforce and workplace, and the institutions and policies that support and govern them”

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Introduction

In any governing arrangements, there are, at times, gaps and failings that generate performance failures. Some of these gaps and failures have only minor impacts, and may be tolerated without much inconvenience. Others, however, are so damning that they put acute pressures on organizations for adjustments because of their dramatic impact on performance. One would like to believe that such pressure manages to translate in quick and effective repairs and innovations to correct the situation. This is not the case. Rather often, the flawed arrangements that are socially costly are also personally gratifying to some individuals and groups, who draw benefits from such circumstances, and therefore oppose any repairs that would deprive them from what they have come to regard as their well-deserved entitlements in terms of power or perks.

In a recent book (Hubbard & Paquet 2014a), we have documented some serious inadequacies in the performance of senior executives in the Canadian federal public service. We have shown, as a result of exchanges with some 100 bright and engaged executives, that these inadequacies may be ascribed in good part to some organizational/institutional gaps, and to some cognitive/behavioral deficiencies (p.127) that call for repairs at the structural and competencies levels.

In both cases, what is called for is innovation:

(a) in order to refocus the federal public household on high performance, and to ensure a maintenance of this focus on eliminating waste as part of daily life; and
(b) in order to ensure a better match between the competencies required to perform ever more complex jobs, and the capacities of the workforce charged with those tasks.

Such innovations are bound to modify dramatically the standard usages in the Canadian federal services, and therefore to disserve those who have been building their power and authority on the existing arrangements.

In the rest of the paper, first, we make a succinct case for precise suggestions about the sort of innovation that is called for:

- \textit{at the structural level}, the creation of external boards of management for departments and agencies; and
- \textit{at the competencies level}, a new human resources management regime that gives an immensely more important role to a competencies approach.

Second, we spell out the way the innovation at the structural level would work (since we have spelled out the way in which the innovation at the competencies level in Hubbard and Paquet 2014b). Third, we remind the reader of the reasons why these very simple suggestions have not been implemented earlier but have been (and are still) vociferously opposed, and we suggest a promising way to kick start the process that might lead to their being widely adopted in the Canadian federal public service.
Driving out part of the fake in public administration

There are various ways in which the Canadian federal public household may be said to be less than optimally governed. But two specific interfaces are particularly problematic: first, the interface between the public household and the citizenry it is meant to serve, on the demand side so to speak; and second, the interface between the public household as a quasi-firm and its workforce, on the supply side.

The public household/citizenry interface

On the first front, all sorts of general forces have dramatically modified the interface between the public household and the citizenry over the last 60 years. One such force is a broad increase in the scope of government services provided to the citizenry with the advent of the welfare state, and consequently the significant growth in the size of the public household, and in the complexity of its operations. In a society that has become more variegated and where individuals and groups have become capable of expressing their preferences more and more robustly, the challenge of meeting these diverse expectations has also become more daunting.

Yet as the public household grew, it also became more and more inward looking and self-centered. The organizational challenge of running such a multi-faceted enterprise absorbed more and more energy, and the temptation to adjust the modus operandi to make the task less awkward and less daunting has triggered the development of more mechanisms of centralization and homogenization of services, and a certain desensitization vis-à-vis the idiosyncrasies of the different segments of the population. Effectiveness in reaching the citizen gave way to standardization and ways that were more convenient for bureaucrats. This created a cleavage between the bureaucracy and the citizenry, and a lesser concern for doing the right thing (effectiveness) as opposed to a greater concern for doing the thing right (efficiency) – i.e., according to rules likely to be audited.

To this broad and sweeping bureaucratization wave, one must add, in Canada, a particular ideological bent that materialized, from the 1960s on (as a result of the zeitgeist of the time), the plague of minority governments, a growth of activism on the union front, and a particular idealistic/romantic “progressive” virus that took hold of a significant portion of the elected officials, the media and the intelligentsia.

This maelstrom materialized in the form of a series of determining turns of events: (a) the pursuit of a so-called “model employer” philosophy by the Canadian federal government (with all sorts of concerns extraneous to performance like diversity, equality, and the like overriding concerns for effectiveness); and (b) a particularly weak reaction by government to illegal strike action by postal workers, by granting the right to unionize and strike to nearly all federal employees. These developments have shifted the focus of the public household away, even more, from concerns about effectiveness, performance and productivity, toward doing the thing right (process, inward concerns about labour peace, and the like).

As these forces created a greater and greater disconnect between the operations of the public household and its performance, this schism was rationalized as responding to the fundamental discontinuity between the sort of ‘higher’ concerns that the public household has to deal with, and the usual concerns of interest in the private sector – and the assertion that those ‘higher’ concerns called for a totally different way to govern in which performance, effectiveness and the like are only part of a much larger equation.

This allowed the insertion of an immense fuzz factor in the administration of the public household as compared with what was happening elsewhere. All sorts of considerations were said to be of such import that they could ‘justify’ a generalized lack of concern with effectiveness and performance in the name of those ‘other’ considerations. Public administration became absorbed with processes, and more and more immunized from concerns about management and performance.
Bureaucratic imperatives became dominant, and an increase in sophistry helped to rationalize whatever aberration or bizarrerie needed to be rationalized. Indeed, among the public household clergy, nothing would appear to be more rational than a rationalization. This was to underpin a philosophy of ‘anything goes’ in the name of the difference of kind between the public and the private sectors. And to those who might object that this was hardly a way to run any business, the answer was simply that government is not anything like business. What ensued has been a centralized system of control that claims to run the public household top down with formal mechanisms that allow so much whimsicality down the hierarchy that Kafkaesque results ensued (Hubbard and Paquet 2010).

For a while such *obiter dictu* would appear to carry the day. It took disastrous performance of major proportion to open the door to the revolution of public choice, and to the temptation to initiate new public management processes. But by that time the public administration ideology had sufficiently crystallized that the public administration tribe (academics and practitioners) could enter the battle with the new barbarians (who claimed that much in the public household could share management tools with the private sector) well armed.

It became an epic battle of an inspired ‘progressive’ public administration clergy with a ‘common-sense’ public management posse. That battle has been fought and won quite differently depending on which battlefield is scrutinized. In the public administration literature, victory has been declared *ab ovo* by a clergy that has been satisfied with denouncing the barbarians who do not understand the quintessence of public administration. Everywhere else, the management vacuum of traditional public administration has been recognized, but corporate interests in the public household – quite comfortable with the prevailing fuzz – have understandably resisted: no one has committed hara-kiri, some superficial management improvements have been clumsily added on, but little has been done to eliminate the penumbra and the ‘fake’ that it makes possible.

*The public household/ workforce interface*

On the second front is the interface between the public household and its workforce. It has been allowed to slump into a state generating great inefficiency not only (a) as a result of the complete disconnect between the organization and performance imperatives, because of the lack of pressure to perform, but also (b) as a result of the disenfranchising of performance (and management) as not being central to the concerns of the public household. The focus on ‘model employer’ was allowed to run awry, letting the HR function become dysfunctional: instead of designing an HR function to achieve performance, the HR function was perverted into focusing on catering to the comfort of the workforce as an objective unto itself.

This has entailed a relaxation of the HR regime to the point of allowing (except in certain areas regulated by external bodies) the real matching of the capacities of the human resources and the complexities of the job to become somewhat subsiary in the staffing function – and the more so the more one climbs the hierarchical levels, since the job requirements tend to become fuzzier there, leaving much more margin of maneuverability for whims. The reasons for the ‘necessary’ looseness of the linkage between the capabilities of the human resources and the complexities of the job (especially at the upper end of the HR scale) – it is argued – are the difficulties of gauging these features. More realistically, it can be said that there has been a great care in avoiding any effort to develop and finesse any meaningful way to gauge these features because of the new constraints they would entail for executives in the running of the public household.

No one would deny that these features are difficult to define in useful and reliable ways. But in some agencies, like the Canada Revenue Agency, it has proved both possible and tractable a task. As for the
corporatist opposition to such gauging (again outside the realm of externally regulated competencies) in
the name of higher-order ethereal and ineffable qualities being necessary to the despatch the sort of
different in kind tasks in the public household, it may be hogwash but it has become a foundational myth
in the public administration tribe, and has been carefully sustained over time, in academe and elsewhere
with sponsored studies feeding on financial support from the federal bureaucracy itself (Kernaghan 2007).

This mental prison has been powerful enough to ensure that concern about the matching of capacities with
the complexities of the task has been kept at bay – as not relevant to the sort of public household work,
especially at the senior levels. The disinterest in finding ways to improve this matching has resulted in
poor matching – a problem exacerbated by the churn of senior executives among departments since Pierre
Trudeau’s days – and the cost of this mismatch, while it has not been quantified satisfactorily yet, can
only be conjectured to be enormous.

Both flawed interfaces re-enforce each other

Both these flawed interfaces in the Canadian federal public household are consequential, and they re-
enforce each other: less concern about performance breeds laxity in matching capacities and complexities
of the tasks, and poor matching can only breed ineffectiveness, poor performance and waste.

It is our view that innovation on both fronts at the same time could dramatically transform the
effectiveness and performance of the public household. There are obviously many ways in which
improvements might be achieved on both fronts. But there is much merit, in a zone of waste that for a
long time has neglected to deal with precise management discussions about mechanisms to achieve better
focus on performance and matching, to proceed not with general wishful statements, but with very precise
proposals so as to be able to explain clearly what might be done and how it would work.

The tool we propose on the first front is the creation of boards of management for all departments and
agencies in the Canadian federal government (unless it can be claimed that it might be totally unsuitable
for important reasons) – boards that would focus explicitly on performance – not in complete ignorance of
the overall mission of the unit but as a subsidiary board charged with performance within the constraints
defined by the policy framework and the senior board, and charged with continuous feedback with the
senior board (the whole-of-government board) so as to ensure that there is no disconnect between the
policy level and the management level, and that mutual social learning ensues.

The tool we propose on the second front is a competencies approach to the HR regime that would ensure
the matching of capacities and the complexities of the tasks. It is not a matter of mechanically imposing a
particular scheme, but to use a generic framework and vocabulary to develop a made-in-Canada framework that would fit our particular circumstances and traditions.

In both cases, there will be opposition to these proposals. Some will claim it impossible to implement;
others will argue that it would prevent public sector executives from doing their ineffable jobs. We argue
that there is a need to set up an inquiring system not only to find the best fit on both the structural and
competencies fronts (given the Canadian circumstances), but also to enable the appropriate social learning
and the requisite time to learn and adapt well when changeovers are required.

We suggest that these innovations be developed experimentally in half a dozen departments or agencies
first, and that, once the prototypes have been played with sufficiently to finesse them and have proven
resilient but also capable of making the system antifragile (i.e., capable of becoming stronger as the
challenges they meet are more robust), they be generalized to all department and agencies where it is
suitable (Taleb 2012). This might be accomplished fully within one decade. The main purpose of this
transition period is to have ample time to drive out the fake – not only to finesse the right organizational
instruments that are needed in particular circumstances, but also to allow mental prisons to be unlocked, and the cosmologies to adapt, so that the mental blockages, that have played such a destructive role in preventing these innovations to take hold up to now, could be neutralized and attenuated if not made to disappear.

**Boards of management**

This is not a new idea but one whose time has come, albeit in a form somewhat different from what has been proposed up to now by the likes of Peter Aucoin.

Concern about the under-performance of the traditional departments and agencies of the Canadian federal government (but also elsewhere) began to be felt strongly in the 1970s and 1980s but were systematically underplayed by the choirmasters of the public administration enterprise in Canada. Only the financial crisis of the early 1990s – that forced onto the government’s agenda the program review exercise – managed to bring forth real concern about increasing service delivery efficiency. It materialized in the form of the 1995 framework for alternative service delivery (Canada 1995).

The key word was *efficiency*. This framework was not really directed at making government more *effective* (i.e., doing the right thing) but at making it more *efficient* (i.e., doing the thing right). This led to a tendency to tinker with the technology of service delivery segment at the tail end of the policy funnel – going from policy formation, program design, to the mechanisms for service delivery – in quasi-complete isolation of what was happening upstream, and, therefore, without the crucially important feedback loop with the policy end of the policy funnel. This echoed the view of some academics like Aucoin who felt, wrongly, that the policy funnel can be tightly segmented into disconnected pieces without important malefis ensuing (Aucoin 1995, 1996).

This sort of deeply flawed thinking was based on a strong version of three ill-founded assumptions:

(a) the separability of policy formation, program design and delivery mechanism;  
(b) the sacredness of accountability to the minister Westminster-style; and  
(c) the presumption that detailed contracts would suffice to ensure that the policies intended by ministers and senior officials are carried out down the policy funnel most effectively.

Aucoin (first period in the 1990s) held these assumptions dear, and he was wrong: separability is toxic because it stunts social learning; and ministerial accountability, conceived for a Big G world, has become attenuated in a small-g world (where power, resources and information are widely distributed in many hands); in a small-g world, detailed contracts do not suffice to link the various segments of the policy funnel – social learning loops are required. The cartoonesque characterization based on the above assumptions may explain why the alternative service delivery (ASD) initiatives built on it failed: one cannot tinker separately with service delivery without some serious rethinking of all the other segments of the whole policy funnel (Paquet 1997).

To make it more likely for departments/agencies (a) to put more of a focus on management and service to the citizenry in an *effectiveness-cum-efficiency mode*, as well as (b) to maintain a strong traditionally higher-order ‘partnering’ with government policy work upstream, effective arrangements need to be found: an appropriate structure providing both freedom and flexibility while accepting the constraint of effective central oversight and accountability for a performance that is mission-driven.

An effective external but embedded board of management must remain a subsidiary board, and this can be accomplished if the deputy head is always a member of that board, and ensures continuous liaison
between the whole-of-government board and the board of management of the department/agency – a liaison that works both ways by providing and receiving feedback at both ends.

Aucoin (second period in the late 2000s) may have appeared to have evolved toward a position calling for continuous necessary feedback loops between segments (Aucoin 2007), and Heintzman and Juillet (2012) may also have appeared to concur and adopt a softer position than Aucoin (first period) if only by not addressing the issue head on. In fact neither paper is entirely clear about the extent to which the authors adhere strongly or loosely to the basic assumption of absolute separability among the different segments of the policy funnel. However, to the extent that they all seem to embrace separability of an extreme sort upstream – between politicians and senior bureaucrats, for instance – to the point of denouncing a culture of promiscuity wherever less paranoid observers would only see effective collaboration, they must be suspected of still harbouring the same ill-inspired devotion to absolute separability, and to an anti-promiscuity bias, all the way along the downstream segments of the policy funnel.

Most certainly the tone of the last paper by Peter Aucoin, (before he passed away) would still appear to embrace somewhat incoherently (Aucoin 2012):

(a) a tightly segmented view of how the different portions of the policy funnel should interface (and, with it, a phobia of promiscuity);
(b) an ultimate deference to the integrated and hierarchical Westminster system as sacred cow; and
(c) a presumption that one can define detailed contracts among the segments of the policy funnel to ensure that the policies intended by the senior board and senior officials are carried out down the policy funnel most effectively

It would suggest that Aucoin would not support our sort of board of management: one that does not presume that such detailed contracts can be drawn, and therefore calls for active collaboration among segments of the policy funnel, and therefore some promiscuity in order to ensure synoptic social learning, even though en dernière instance, the political authority would prevail. Our sort of board of management is briefly described below.

What these boards of management board would do

In many countries, the experience with boards of management has been initiated with the creation of agencies as an alternative for the traditional departments to escape many of the constraints inherited from department-centred structures that are hierarchical, centrally-controlled organizations, slow to adapt to changing conditions, and inadequately responsive to the interest they serve (Schick 2002).

Unlike Aucoin, Schick would appear to see boards of management as focusing on performance and management, but subject to the broad direction of the whole-of-government board, and committed to functional integration by working hard at striking a balance, at the operational level, between coordination and subordination, cooperation and conflict.

In the case of the boards of management that we propose, this would entail that they would take responsibilities for finance, human resources, procurement, assets management and information

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1 These speculative reflections about what academic disputations might support are of minimal interest, since, in recent times, Canada has experimented in real time and in real life with an initiative that has already been implemented successfully at the Canada Revenue Agency – one that has met with great success, and has led to CRA initiating also a competencies approach to its HR regime as a fringe benefit (Hubbard & Paquet 2014a).
technology, and the like. The two boards would work in tandem with as much autonomy as possible granted to the subsidiary board, but an explicit recognition that, depending on the nature of the work involved, more or less of the above mentioned activities might be abandoned – more or less fully – to the subsidiary board.

The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) provides an example. Its mission is to “… administer tax, benefit, and related programs and to ensure compliance on behalf of governments across Canada …” (CRA 2011: 3). It assesses, collects, and administers hundreds of billions of dollars in tax revenue every year, including directly delivering billions in benefits and tax credits. To do this, in 2012-13, it had the equivalent of about 40,000 people full time and a budget of over 4.25 billion dollars.

For our purposes, CRA activities can be thought of as involving three levels of players: 1) the whole of government (the ‘big’ management board (Treasury Board and its supporting secretariat), the responsible minister (the Minister of Revenue), and the Governor-in Council); 2) a subsidiary Board of Management in order to keep a clear focus on performance; and 3) the Agency itself headed by its commissioner (the uppermost bureaucrat).

A subsidiary Board of Management was established to oversee the CRA’s organization and administration. The 15-person majority external (including the Chair) Board, sits between the responsible minister and the Agency. The accountability of the most-senior bureaucrat (the Commissioner) for day-to-day management rests with the Board and its four committees: audit; governance; human resources; and resources (e.g. financial).

The Commissioner is de facto a member of the Board, and is responsible for the Agency’s management, the supervision of its employees and the implementation of its policies and budgets. The agency’s decision-making body (the Agency Management Committee (AMC) chaired by the Commissioner) is supported, in turn, by six subcommittees that deal with: strategic direction, resource and investment management, human resources, strategic operations, and tactical operations including making recommendations on matters to be decided by AMC. The sixth subcommittee – Management Audit and Evaluation – (responsible for oversight of internal audits and program evaluations) reports to the Board’s Audit Committee rather than to AMC.

*How these boards of management would work*

As hinted at above, the working arrangements between the two boards might be modulated (with a different division of labour and a greater or lower degree of full autonomy for the junior board) depending on the nature of the mission of the unit. But whatever arrangements might be deemed workable, some crucial imperatives would prevail.

Depending on the relative importance of policy work in the daily activities of the unit, more or less of the operational activities may be ceded to the subsidiary board with more or less important liens being imposed as constraints. To fix ideas, one may partition the units into three batches (α: those where all the activities mentioned above are ceded completely to the subsidiary board; β: those where only some of the activities with diverse liens are ceded; γ: those where a minimal set of activities – regarded as the minimum minimorum required for the system to function – are ceded) according to circumstances and the relative omnipresence of policy concerns or not in the operations of the unit.

Overriding all these idiosyncrasies, it should be understood that (a) the proposed principles of operations of the board of management for the management of the unit would be scrutinized by the senior board and subject to discussion and negotiations, and ultimately to a directive of the senior board establishing what will need to prevail in the final analysis; and (b) a continuous process of exchange of information between the two boards would ensure effective social learning.
Finally, any such refurbished agency/department may remained somewhat constrained by other authorities within the overall governing apparatus – provincial constraints being respected, wide-ranging authority of commissioners of one sort or another, etc.

Again, the CRA provides a concrete example. The government as a whole uses three main levers to situate and control the CRA. They deal with: (a) management overall; (b) the grey zone between management and policy as well as matters materially affecting public finance and (c) the appointment of members of the CRA Board of Management. The CRA Board maintains an overall degree of control over CRA management (e.g. approval of its corporate business plan and negotiating mandates with unions) including requiring a degree of consistency in presentation of material with respect to public finances (e.g. approval of annual resource requests, and performance results set out in terms of strategic outcomes). It may also (via the responsible minister) issue a written directive to that Board on any matter within the Board’s authority that affects public policy or could materially affect public finances. It may also (via the responsible minister) receive advice on management matters from that Board.

The oversight framework enables the CRA Board to assess performance with respect to the five areas of oversight that are required (organization, administration, resources, services, and personnel) (CRA 2013-14). The framework includes expectations for each area, assessment criteria, information considered in arriving at a rating, and ratings of strong, acceptable, opportunity for improvement, or unacceptable (requiring immediate attention).

A list of competencies has been developed for the CRA Board Chair (e.g. communications and public relations, corporate governance, strategic outlook and alignment) and individual directors (e.g. collegiality and mature confidence, ethics, integrity and accountability, informed and sound judgement) as well as the overall need of that Board (e.g. change management, complex multi-dimensional client service, human resources and labour negotiations) (CRA 2012-13).

Social learning of all key players is enabled in a number of ways: (a) from the formal reporting that is required by the government along with any written directives to the CRA Board or advice from it; this formal reporting feeds into the senior management board and is necessarily potentially affected by it, including by any written directives from the responsible minister and any advice from the Board to that minister; (b) by the use of the CRA Board’s performance assessment that ‘informs’ the objectives in the Commissioner’s Performance Agreement as well as the Board and its committees’ work plans (CRA 2011); (c) by the on-going activities of internal audit and program evaluation, and via the results of the CRA Board’s overview of risk and change management.

The tasks are tractable, and the resistance can be overcome, so an experiment is warranted

Any initiative of such a magnitude at the level of the Canadian public service is bound to run into a number of stumbling blocks – the most important ones being anchored in the structure and culture of the federal public service that has generated over time bad habits and rigidities of all sorts. It is both unlikely and unreasonable to anticipate that this sort of situation will not generate opposition from those whose habits and gratifications are challenged.

Resistance

We have referred in passing throughout the text to some of these mental prisons and other potential blockages to overcome. They may be summarized in the form of propensities

(a) to give dominant priority to the policy formation end of the policy funnel to the detriment of management;
(b) to centralize unduly in order to gain control of the process, and to presume that whatever is ordained at the higher level will be carried out down the chain of command; much of the recent literature has shown how ineffective this Big G form of governance is both because of cognitive limitations at the top and behavioral, organizational and institutional obstacles down the implementation road;

(c) to grant clergy-like status to senior executives in the Canadian public household, and to immunize them from the sort of constraints imposed to mere mortals;

(d) to anthropomorphize much of public administration and thereby being led to ignore important systemic dimensions that have an impact on the capacity to transform of the governance of the public household; such systemic dimensions not only prevent individuals to take reasonable decisions but also extinguish innovative capabilities altogether;

(e) to allow the public household to fall into pneumopathological states – the state of those who are morally insane, living as it where in a fantasy world of self-righteousness, and in denial vis-à-vis the toxicity of the arrangements in place; this leads to indulging systematically into plausible deniability and accepting uncritically surreal schemes;

(f) to restrict debates about reform to general principles instead of recognizing that the devil is in the details, and carrying out precise experiments that can demonstrate whether an initiative is indeed or not a good answer to the present challenges2.

We have documented all of these over the last few years (Hubbard and Paquet 2010, 2014; Paquet 2014). Not taking these factors into account can only increase the risk that the innovative initiatives will be successfully torpedoed.

While it is natural for the bureaucracy to protect its corporatist interests, it is criminal negligence to allow such pressure to remain unchecked when it threaten to sabotage the effectiveness of the public household. So it is essential that critical thinking kicks in, and that the initiative be accompanied by explicit discussion of these toxic propensities in order to ensure that they are tamed to a sufficient extent that they cannot prevent the implementation of necessary reforms.

The fact that a pre-experiment has been run with great success for some ten years at the Canada Revenue Agency, and that ways were found there to overcome resistance and blockages should be grounds enough to argue that the time has come to extend the experiment to a representative group of departments and agencies, so as to be able to determine whether these innovations may be safely generalized to the whole of the Canadian federal public service, and whether there should be exceptions to this regime – where and why.

*Kick starting the innovation process*

The process could be kick started by building on the suggestions made by James Lahey that six departments/agencies would be logical candidates for experimenting in this direction: Canada Border

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2 It is not very useful for navigation to be satisfied with recommendations that the public service should be focusing on the long term, that it should not be fearful of failure, that there should be more “independent, evidence-based decision-making” (whatever this may mean), and that the Canada School of Public Service should transform from an innocuous and not very useful institution to become a more daring and controversial think-tank. Fortunately to this somewhat ethereal wish list, David Mclaughlin added one useful suggestions “stop the churn of deputy ministers turnover” – a practical suggestion that would help much in ensuring that the capacities of the senior executives would match the complexities of the task (Mclaughlin 2014).
Services Agency; Service Canada; Correctional Service of Canada; Statistics Canada; Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada; and Public Works and Government Services (Lahey 2007).

This group of units in the federal public household represents a reasonable variety of organizations of sizes, of types of activities, of mixes of policy and operations; and of variegated sort of constraints to provide a meaningful experiment. The results would help design a workable strategy of extension to the rest of the federal public household (or at least to a major segment of it) of the proposed two-punch reform (board of management + competencies approach).

Conclusion

It has become clear that there is a management vacuum in the Canadian governance regime. Observers from all perspectives would appear to agree with this diagnosis. Yet, very little of substance has been put forward as precise and implementable reforms that might contribute significantly to repair this flaw.

We have put forward the suggestion that two innovations might do the job.

We have explained what these innovations entail, how they would work, and we have conjectured that they would appear to promise much in terms of performance improvement, if the lessons of the CRA experiment are a reasonable basis to build on.

We have underlined a number of blockages that might stand in the way of such innovations, identified the sort or mental prisons and corporatist interests that underpin the blockages, and argued that there are no reasons to believe that such obstacles could not be overcome.

The arrival on the scene of a new Clerk of Privy Council is creating a window of opportunity for public service renewal. There will be many suggestions made to Janice Charette in her first months in office. This paper constitutes our offerings.

REFERENCES


