

## **“Governance, Government and Leadership”**

**Speaking Notes for Paul G. Thomas,  
Duff Roblin Professor of Government, University of Manitoba,  
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- I thought about entitling my remarks “Buddy Can You Paradigm” but I decided that was not a sufficiently dignified title for this distinguished audience.**
- During the 1980s and 1990s the leading paradigm in the field of public management was New Public Management. It was controversial, but NPM brought fresh ideas into the study and practice of public administration. On balance, NPM served a valuable purpose, even though in the world of practice the accomplishments never matched the rhetoric. NPM may be on the decline, but it leaves behind a residue of ideas which will continue to be used selectively.**
- There is no dominant paradigm similar to NPM around today to guide the design and delivery of programs and services. To the extent that any idea is in the ascendancy, it is the concept of public sector governance.**
- The term “Governance” has become a cliché and in the process has lost much precision of meaning. Put simply, it refers to the process of direction setting and the management of change within society.**
- Governance is a different and wider process than governing. Indeed, I would argue that the distinctive processes of government and of governance are diverging.**
- Government has become increasingly centralized, vertical and personalized through the focus on the person and the office of the Prime Minister. The process of governing is increasingly technocratic and manipulative through the use of political technologies like polls, focus groups, and sophisticated communications strategies used to shape public opinion, define problems and to manage agendas.**
- Political parties have become almost exclusively electoral machines and party discipline in Parliament supports prime ministerial power. Parties have shallow roots in communities,**

**do not engage and educate their members about how to act politically, they do not develop bold policy ideas and they have little identity beyond that of their leaders.**

- In contrast, governance, involves sweeping, impersonal forces of economic technological, social and political change. Government plays a role in these processes, but it is no longer at the apex of society providing direction and steering the processes.**
- Governance involves dispersed, connective and shared leadership operating through decentralized, shifting networked relationships. Governance networks involve the initiation and maintenance of horizontal links. Governance involves interactions among shifting issue-oriented coalitions rather than the smaller number of actors with better defined, more stable and predictable roles that exist within government.**
- Technology is driving globalization, but the governance processes within and across national boundaries are increasingly beyond the control of national governments.**
- The tensions between centralized government and decentralized governance are heightened by the public mood of cynicism, suspicion and mistrust towards institutions, most notably government. When unwanted events occur in the more complex governance environment, the tendency is to blame government in general and the Prime Minister in general.**
- These broad trends and developments have a host of implications for the future of the public service, many of which cannot be clearly foreseen at this point. History has a way of surprising us.**
- In simple terms, good government involves three requirements: sound policy ideas, capable leadership and effective management.**
- The public service must contribute importantly to all three of these requirements, which are interrelated in practice.**
- Today, I want to focus on leadership. Our understanding of leadership is changing. Leadership is seen, not as a set of attributes possessed by exceptional individuals, rather it is**

**viewed as an interactive process in which people within groups or organizations identify and pursue shared goals.**

- This understanding reduces the traditional distinction between leaders and followers. Leaders “energize” groups and organizations, not just control them. Whether a person carries the title of leader or not, they are exercising leadership when they stimulate action and support change.**
- Leadership within government has traditionally been dual – it involved the interaction between ministers and senior public servants. In the governance era, the exclusivity of this dual leadership relationship has been challenged by the openness to outside pressures and demands. Also, strict control by prime ministers and central agencies limits the policy and managerial freedom of ministers and their departments. There are risks to successful policy-making – including garnering public support – when decision-making is concentrated in the hands of a small group of political insiders.**
- The declining legitimacy of the political process and the weakness of the traditional key institutions of political parties, Parliament and individual MPs puts additional pressures on the public service to generate policy ideas and to negotiate with outside groups over their adoption. In the new joined up world, protecting important public sector values – like representation, equity, legitimacy and accountability – is important at every stage from initiation to maintenance of the networks.**
- The leadership knowledge and skill requirements of politicians and public servants are converging. The key leadership abilities of the future will include:**
  - strategic thinking and the ability to cope with complexity and ambiguity;**
  - interpersonal, intragroup and inter-group relationship skills;**
  - an understanding of the limits and potential of power and a commitment to use it in an ethical manner;**
  - teamwork, problem solving, negotiation, mediation, collaboration, communication;**
  - intelligence gathering, analysis and evaluation skills;**

- **critical ethical reasoning, judgement and behaviour which corresponds with elevated ethical standards.**
- **These and other critical leadership skills can be learned, not from courses mainly, but rather on the basis of experience and reflection.**
- **There are always good leaders on the political and on the administrative sides of government. However, more money and time is spent developing administrative leaders than political leaders.**
- **Political parties need to invest more in the development of policy and the policy knowledge of their candidates. Parliament needs to become the “graduate school” of national politics with both opportunities to deepen policy intelligence and to use that knowledge to contribute more meaningfully to government and governance.**
- **Leadership is based on responsibility and leads to accountability. One of the serious challenge for the future is to protect accountability when there are multiple institutions and actors involved. There needs to be a shift away from the present individualistic, vertical, negative and blaming approach to accountability. For the future there must be greater emphasis on a collective, horizontal, constructive and learning approach to accountability.**