Public Confidence in Government, and Government Service Delivery

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Executive Summary

Declining citizen confidence in governments in North America and elsewhere in recent decades has raised concerns that democratic processes could be adversely affected as a result. The main purpose of this paper is to determine whether empirical evidence suggests a close causal link between the efficiency with which governments deliver services, and the degree of trust citizens have in those governments. If such a link existed, it would provide an important reason in its own right for governments to continue to make best efforts to improve service delivery.

The paper is based on a review of relevant literature and a series of interviews with government officials currently or formerly involved in service delivery issues. It finds that government performance is an important determinant of citizen confidence, but government performance obviously encompasses much more than service delivery. It includes, for example, the success or otherwise of government policies in reconciling competing interests, and the competence and integrity with which officials discharge their duties.

Actual government performance is one thing. Given various possible media interpretations of government actions, and other factors which influence the ways in which citizens interpret information, public perceptions of government performance may be quite different than the reality.

In addition, important factors other than real or perceived government performance affect levels of citizen trust. For example, postmaterialism offers a persuasive explanation for declining confidence in most forms of authority, not just government, in developed societies.

The paper concludes that, given the fact that the impact of improved service delivery on confidence could be overwhelmed by the impacts of other factors in play, it would not be useful to justify service improvement efforts in terms of possible effects on confidence. Nor is it necessary to do so. The benefits which better service to its clients offers to governments as well as clients provide ample justification for ongoing efforts to improve service.

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1. Introduction

The Canadian Centre for Management Development's long-term research plan for the period 1999-2001 proposed substantial work on citizenship issues, with a part of this work examining the relationship (real or perceived) between the efficiency or otherwise with which government delivers services, and the degree of confidence or trust the public has in government. (Because "confidence" and "trust" are virtually synonymous, the terms are used interchangeably in this paper.)

This is an important question. The extent to which citizens' confidence in government has eroded in Canada, and elsewhere, in recent decades, has raised concerns that this might cause democratic institutions and processes to suffer. Take as an example one reaction to a recent Statistics Canada study which described Canadians' views on the criminal justice system.[1] "Four of five Canadians lack faith in justice system," said the headline of the *National Post* story on the report. Interviewed by the *National Post*, Special Counsel Scott Newark of Ontario's Office for Victims of Crime warned that, "The justice system is one of those public institutions that inherently relies on public confidence," and "You don't have a public justice system if you don't have public confidence in it."[2] While University of Ottawa law professor and former prosecutor David Paciocco believes that there is no actual crisis in the criminal justice system, he argues that the crisis of public confidence is almost as serious as a breakdown in the system itself would be:

> If the Canadian public, the proprietors of the Canadian justice system, do not have confidence in it, the system cannot function properly. People will not come to it when they are injured, and crimes will continue to go unreported. If Canadians do not have faith in the system, it becomes ineffective at performing one of its main functions to reflect and advance basic societal values and standards of behaviour... The very impression Canadians have of the quality of the society they live in is damaged, and this, in turn, damages the quality of their lives. It causes them to be angry, cynical, jaded, and needlessly afraid. A criminal justice system that has lost public confidence is a lost system.[3]

Given the efforts which governments have made in recent years to improve the way they serve citizens, it is natural to ask whether major new service initiatives have some potential to rebuild people's confidence in their governments. One of the first publications which resulted from the research program

of Canada's Citizen-Centred Service Network put the question this way:

> If service quality changes, do changes in attitudes toward government follow?...
>
> > This issue is of more than academic interest. If it is true that service quality affects attitudes toward government, it would create a powerful reason for providing the best possible quality of service. The rationale for improving service quality would cease to be (at least in some circles) a peripheral issue, something that governments might do when time and resources permit for the sake of pleasing citizens. Rather, it would be regarded as a central element of public policy, something that responsible governments must do to pursue citizen engagement.[4]

A related but more speculative question is whether online communication offers scope for building new and effective bridges between the governed and their governors. How this possibility might come about is described on the Government On-Line website:

> > The online channel can create opportunities for enhanced citizen engagement. Citizens can provide instant feedback on the services they receive online and identify their priorities for service improvement. As governments and citizens learn how to interact in an online environment, there is an exciting potential for greater citizen involvement in public policy making, and greater responsiveness from public figures and institutions.[5]

Two of the initial papers commissioned under CCMD's long-term research plan[6] looked at aspects of these questions, and there was some discussion of them at CCMD's May 2000 symposium which reviewed these and other papers. In general, participants were sceptical about whether improved government service delivery would enhance public confidence, and sceptical as well about whether citizens' ability to communicate instantaneously with government websites would lead to better policy making.

This paper follows up on that initial work on service delivery, public trust, and citizen engagement. It is based on a review of the literature, and interviews with officials or former officials of the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario with experience in the area of improving service delivery. The next section describes the factors which practitioners in this area argue affect the level of public trust in government, then examines the role government service delivery might play in that equation. Section 3 reviews empirical evidence relevant to the issues raised in Section 2, while Section 4 looks briefly at the citizen engagement/online communication nexus. The last section summarizes the conclusions of the paper.[7]

2. Public Trust in Government, and Service Delivery

A. What affects the level of public trust in government?

It is clear from much public opinion survey data that Canadians, Americans, and citizens of several although not all European countries[8] have lost trust in their governments and governmental processes in recent decades, even if they have not lost confidence in the fundamental features of representative democracy.[9] Falling voter turnout at elections in North America is read by some analysts as further evidence of falling confidence.[10] A few years ago, the head of the Minnesota Citizens League observed that "the number of people who have faith in government is about equal to those who believe in UFOs."[11] And it is not just ordinary citizens who are having trouble; one of the more sobering comments to appear in print in some time is Gordon Robertson's remark to Graham Fraser in January of this year that, "I guess I don't trust the government."[12]

Scholars have proposed a variety of factors as possible explanations for this phenomenon, while stressing that what has happened is complex and that much uncertainty is associated with it. The most important possible contributors to the loss in public trust in government usually cited include the following:[13]

- Unhappiness with how government has performed in delivering what people expect it to deliver, in both a government operations and a policy sense. This unhappiness is based on "objective" circumstances: the mail is or is not delivered, the Employment Insurance claim is or is not processed on time, a trade agreement is or is not negotiated. One of those objective circumstances which has received much attention was the slowdown in the rate of economic growth which distinguished the 1970s, 1980s, and the first half of the 1990s, from the rapid growth of the earlier postwar period. With the Keynesian revolution, governments in the postwar period accepted greater responsibility for macroeconomic management. They also accepted credit for good economic performance, and were left vulnerable to blame for deteriorating economic circumstances.

- Incompetent, ethically challenged, and/or downright corrupt political or bureaucratic leadership and its manifestations, including scandals such as Watergate in the United States, and the Somalia, the tainted blood, and the Walkerton water tragedies in Canada. The focus here again is on objective circumstances: Richard Nixon was indeed a crook; seven people in Walkerton who drank contaminated water died.

- The ending of successful wars: World War II, the Korean War, and most recently the Cold War. War and its sacrifices unite people and their governments in a common cause, and the

successful prosecution of war builds public confidence. That sense of a common cause and patriotic duty declines as the crisis is surmounted and gives way to peace.

- The public's more subjective impressions of government performance, which in some cases diverge sharply from reality. For example, a 1999 EKOS Research survey asked Canadians to identify any type of federal government financial assistance provided to families with children; 44 per cent of respondents named the family allowance, although that program had been cancelled six years earlier.[14]

- Expectations of what government should deliver, and how it should do so. Rising expectations unmatched by improved government performance will see that performance "marked down" by the public.

- The extreme negativity, typified by the "attack advertising" aimed at political opponents, which has recently become a fixture of election campaigns.

- The tendency since the late 1970s of politicians in different countries to run their election campaigns "against government," suggesting to unhappy voters that the problem with government is not the inherent difficulty of governing in the modern age, but the mere fact of government itself and its size and complexity. The rhetoric accompanying the subsequent implementation of policies to reduce the role of government often reinforces the idea that there is something inherently wrong in the very nature of government.

- Growing public distrust of and alienation from traditional political parties, with those negative feelings towards parties transferring to government itself.

- Increased globalization, working either directly through increased competition's impacts on jobs and wages, or through the limitations it imposes on national governments' macroeconomic policy capabilities, or through its contribution to a more general sense of a "loss of control" as the world shrinks and becomes more integrated.

- The dramatic wave of innovation which constitutes the information and communications revolution, which has brought great opportunities for some people, but dislocation and turmoil for others.

- The decline in "social capital," that is the decline in the number and scope of opportunities which allow people to work together in voluntary groupings and express trust in each other. As that kind of trust erodes, trust in government and most other institutions erodes as well.

- Comprehensive cultural change in developed societies. In the postmaterialism model, people

freed from economic insecurity become less willing to subordinate their individuality to authority, and instead place increasing importance on values such as self-expression and the quality of life. The result is declining confidence in and deference to most forms of authority, not only government, but business, unions, churches, parents, etc. Individualism increases at the expense of a sense of communal belonging and communal responsibility.

- Growing and rampant cynicism. People have "lost belief" and become cynical, and their cynicism is fed by what they regard as the transparently evident cynicism of their leaders.

- The changing role of the media, with special mention to the powerful impact of television. In the last three decades or so, the media has become much more interpretive in its reporting and critical of politicians and government, and accustomed to framing political coverage in ways which stimulate public cynicism. ABC's Cokie Roberts referred in 1994 to the view that "the press won Watergate," then went on: "My question now is, what have we won lately? And have we made it harder for the system to work? And is that clash, between politicians and the press, undermining our institutions so fundamentally that their very survival is called into question?"[15] David Zussman adds that, "The eight-second spot, the quotable quote, the sound-bite and live television in the House of Commons have all helped to turn a significant part of the political process into a public spectacle."[16] Most people learn most of what they know about government from the media, and are susceptible to manipulation by the media and those who know how to use it effectively.

- A more positive view of how public perceptions are formed, which stresses rising education levels, and people's ability to access more information about government from a variety of sources and assess what government is doing. But the effect is still negative: the more the public sees and learns, the less it likes.

A first observation about this list is that it is long. This seems reasonable; as noted earlier, the decline in public trust is a complicated matter in which a number of factors have probably played roles, varying over time and from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Thus the quality or lack of quality of government performance is only one among a relatively large number of potentially important causal factors. The corollary is that government performance could improve significantly without necessarily resulting in higher levels of citizen trust, or could even be accompanied by falling confidence resulting, say, from ongoing sea changes in values reflected in a generalized decline in trust in all institutions.

Second, "government performance" in a comprehensive sense is a complicated amalgam of what government is actually doing and what the public perceives it to be doing, and it is assessed in light of expectations. Joseph Nye alludes to the difficulty of measuring it:

> But performance is more complicated than it appears. To what should we compare government performance? Expectations? The past? The performance

> of other countries? That of other institutions such as private businesses or nonprofit organizations? Another problem with measuring performance is distinguishing general outcomes from specific outputs of government. People may be properly unhappy with poor social outcomes even though the quality of government outputs does not change. For example, American test scores in science and mathematics compare poorly with those of students in a number of other nations, but the role of schools may be less important than the role of family values and the general culture in explaining those differences.[17]

Whatever government performance is, exactly, it certainly encompasses service delivery but is considerably broader than that in its scope. This issue is examined in more detail below.

Before that, though, it is worth noting that while most of the discussion in the literature focusses on declining confidence and the reasons for it, there have been periods when people's confidence in government has increased substantially. This occurred in both Canada and the United States between the 1930s and the 1960s, for example, when levels of confidence rose dramatically. The 1930s were a decade of economic catastrophe which ended with the outbreak of World War II. The ultimate success with which the war was waged, the domestic prosperity which returned with the war effort and which carried over well into the postwar period, and the widely accepted roles which (to varying extents) Canadian and American governments played in establishing programs consistent with the vision of "a better postwar world," appear at least intuitively to have been among the most important factors which rebuilt North American citizens' trust in government. More recently, Americans' confidence in their federal government rose significantly in the early 1980s, fell again from the mid-1980s through the mid-1990s, but rebounded sharply at the end of the decade.[18] There is some evidence as well of a modest increase in trust in government in Canada during the mid-1990s,[19] although confidence may have fallen again later in the decade.[20]

Thus the news is not unrelievedly bleak – there is evidence that confidence once lost can be regained.

B. The Place of Service Delivery in an Assessment of Government Performance

Imagine that a citizen's dealings with government are limited to a single level of government which provides her with only one service which she recognizes as such – her pension, say – and collects a single tax from her. She has no other contact with the administrative processes of government or with politicians; she does not read a newspaper or listen to radio or watch television, and she certainly does not surf the net; she never discusses politics or government with family or friends (in fact she lives alone in a cabin in the woods some distance from town). In this very artificial environment, it would be reasonable to argue that her assessment of her government's performance would be based on how fair she feels her tax burden is relative to the value of her pension, how efficiently she feels that the pension is being delivered, and how smoothly any problems which develop are handled. Service delivery is clearly important in this assessment, but so are taxes.

Now complicate the situation slightly. Assume that she owns a small calibre rifle which she uses in order to supplement her diet with squirrel and rabbit from time to time. To promote a higher level of personal security for all citizens, the government of this jurisdiction passes a law requiring the owners of firearms to register them, and obtain a licence for the purchase of ammunition. Our citizen learns that she must comply with the new regulations or face the possibility of criminal charges being laid against her.

Here is now an additional interaction with government, this one obliging her to register her rifle and pay a licence fee in exchange for the intangible service of greater personal security, for her as well as others. The basis on which she judges her government's performance is now going to expand to include the perceived value of this service versus its cost to her, both in monetary terms and in terms of the time and effort needed to comply with the new rules, and in terms of the threat she faces if she does *not* comply. With the addition of only this one extra relationship with government, a purely rational assessment of overall government performance has now become quite a bit more complex, and there is the strong possibility of some powerful emotions being factored into that judgement.

Now set aside our citizen's imaginary and confined relationship with government, and consider the complexity of reality. She receives a wide range of government services: some as tangible as the removal of snow from her street (she has moved into town from her cabin for the winter), the provision of the water she drinks, the treatment she receives in hospital, others as intangible as national defence and the impact of environmental regulations. Three levels of government provide her with this range of services, and she pays municipal, provincial, and federal taxes, as well as a variety of user fees and charges.

Moreover, she is not simply a client of government, consuming its services and paying for them. She is a citizen of a town, a province, and a country. She is interested in the broad policy and program directions of her governments, some of which affect her own welfare directly while others do not. She has more knowledge about some of these issues than others, but she also has strong expectations and views, including on some matters she knows little about. She identifies with a particular political party, but she is unhappy about some of what it stands for. The only politicians she knows personally are two of the town councillors and the mayor, but she knows something about other local politicians from a number of sources including her friends and neighbours and her volunteer work and the local media, and she hears and sees much about the activities of provincial and national politicians from radio and television. In fact, she is bombarded with media reports about government-related matters from morning to night; she spends far more time reading about or watching and listening to commentary about government than she spends thinking about government services and dealing with the bureaucrats who deliver them.[21] She has concerns about the future, and she expects governments to be planning how to manage major long-term issues. She has a sense of right and wrong.

The first point which flows from this is as obvious as it is important. Just as government performance is only one of several general factors which affects the public's level of confidence in government, service

delivery is only one of several factors people would, in the ordinary course of events, take into account in assessing government performance. Depending on the individual citizen, that assessment could encompass views about the efficacy and fairness of government policy, the level of taxes, ethics in government, and other factors besides the quality of government services and the timeliness with which they are delivered.

The corollary is equally obvious and important. A citizen may be quite happy with some or most of the government services she is receiving, but the potential for that level of satisfaction to be overshadowed by other things is considerable. She may be unhappy about the quality of one particular service, and if she ranks that service as being crucial to her, this may sharply reduce her overall assessment of the quality of goverment services. Or she may bring a problem to her local councillor which he fails to solve. Or she may be unhappy about the level of taxes she is paying. Or she may be viscerally opposed to federal government policies on abortion or capital punishment. Or she may be shocked and appalled by a media exposé of venality in her provincial government. Any of these and other possible factors may cause her to rate overall government performance poorly despite her satisfaction with most government services. And it is possible for a reverse feedback effect to occur – her unhappiness with some non-service aspects of government performance could spill over and cause her to rate government service delivery more negatively that she otherwise might have.[22]

3. Empirical Evidence on Government Performance, Service Delivery, and Public Trust in Government

A. Government Performance and Public Trust

Several different approaches to explaining why public confidence in government has declined are reflected in the empirical literature. For the present purposes, probably the most important ways in which they vary pertain to the role they attribute to government performance, and how they define that performance.

Some authors argue at least implicitly that government performance is not important to the explanation of declining trust in government. Take as examples three recent quantitative analyses of the impacts of a range of explanatory variables ("predictors") on various measures of public confidence in government or other institutions.[23] Neal J. Roese's study of Canadians' attitudes toward government is one of these. Roese tests five predictors to try to explain the decline in trust in government between 1981 and 1990. The predictors include estimates of the extent to which people were becoming more politically active, and the degree to which their sense of control over their own destinies was changing (both of these variables showed up as being statistically significant); but Roese includes no measure of government performance in his analysis.[24] A recent Australian paper attempts to quantify the impact of various predictors of public confidence and mistrust in five sets of Australian institutions, including government (defined as Parliament, the federal government, political parties, and the public service). The author

observes that government performance is "difficult to evaluate" and alludes to the problem of distinguishing between the perceptions and the reality of that performance; he also does not report testing any measure of government performance for its explanatory power in his model.[25] A third example of the same phenomenon is an American study which probes for the impact of the media on public confidence in government institutions such as the Presidency, the Congress, and the criminal court system. The study controls for factors such as education and political partisanship, but makes no mention of government performance.[26]

On the face of it, this kind of analysis and its results are somewhat difficult to accept. It does seem only logical that if confidence in government is the issue, then government performance should at least be explored as a possible causal factor. Many analysts have done this, with their work differing considerably in how they define performance and in the relative significance they attribute to it.

One approach places strong emphasis on the importance of "objective" measures of performance. (The term "objective" is used here simply to describe variables which exist independently of public opinions, perceptions and expectations; its use implies nothing about the suitability or correctness of these variables in the context of the analysis.) A good example is Frederick Weil's multi-country examination of declining public trust. Weil proposes a model in which government's economic and political performance, plus the overall functioning of the main institutions of government, all affected public confidence in six countries (the United States, Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, and Spain) over four postwar decades. He employs three measures of economic performance: the so-called "misery index" (the sum of the unemployment and inflation rates); the rate of growth of gross domestic product; and public opinion about the state of the economy. He measures political performance with an "index of civil disorder," which picks up phenomena such as the incidence of demonstrations, riots, and political deaths. Of these four indicators, three are objective, one (public opinion about the economy) is subjective. He finds that the correlation coefficients between the performance measures and national "political trust indexes" are in most cases statistically significant and have the appropriate (positive or negative) signs.[27] Conclusion: public confidence is driven to an important extent by objectively measured government performance.

Derek Bok's work is similar in spirit although very different in detail. He focusses on some six dozen objectives which he believes most Americans would agree are important – controlling inflation and minimizing unemployment, improving housing standards, reducing air and water pollution, facilitating access to universities, and so on – and which for the most part have a significant public policy component associated with them. He then assesses whether progress was made in these areas in the United States between the early 1960s and the early 1990s; whether the rate of progress slowed down, speeded up, or remained the same; and how the American record compared with those of six other democracies (Britain, Canada, France, West Germany, Japan, and Sweden). He concludes that the United States made considerable progress in most of these areas, but that in many cases the rate of progress slowed, and – most importantly from his perspective the American record compared poorly with the achievements of the other countries in the study. The decline in public confidence in

government was thus rooted in the reality of government performance: "It is hard to look carefully at the overall record without agreeing with the majority of Americans that something is seriously amiss with the way in which our government goes about creating and executing public policy."[28]

Bok's conclusion preserves the importance of objective measures of government performance, but it depends for its validity on whether Americans actually do compare their circumstances in a comprehensive way with those of people in other countries. If they do not, and their trust in government has fallen dramatically while most indicators suggest that their quality of life has improved in part because of government policies and programs, then perhaps what really matters is simply public perceptions regardless of how closely or not they relate to reality.

A paper by Arthur Miller and Stephen Borrelli illustrates the approach which puts major emphasis on perceptions of performance as the driving force behind changes in confidence. Miller and Borrelli focus on the changing patterns of public trust in the American federal government which I referred to earlier – the increase in confidence during Ronald Reagan's first term in office, and its subsequent sharp decline. They use regression analysis to test for the explanatory power of three sets of variables: one measuring the popular appeal of the president according to people's assessments of his personal characteristics such as integrity and leadership ability; a second consisting of citizens' evaluations of economic performance and government economic policy; and a third aimed at capturing the public's satisfaction or lack of it with government policies in areas such as national defence. These are all subjective measures of government performance, based on responses to public opinion survey questions. Miller and Borrelli find that all of them contributed significantly, with differing relative impacts over time, to the changes in public confidence from 1980 to 1988.[29] Conclusion: public confidence in government is influenced mainly or entirely by perceptions.

Another version of this kind of approach reports survey results, with varying degrees of interpretation. The Pew Research Center in the United States, for example, describes a close relationship between perceptions of federal government performance and trust in government, based on the results of its polling in the late 1990s. Only one-quarter of its survey respondents rated government performance in managing programs as excellent or good; three-quarters rated that performance as fair or poor. The Center reports that "the government's *perceived* (my italics) performance failures significantly undermine trust. Fully 70 per cent of those who give the government a fair or poor rating say they basically distrust government. The inverse is also true: 76 per cent of those who are satisfied with government performance basically trust the government."[30]

A second well-known example is the mid-1990s survey conducted by *The Washington Post*, the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Harvard University Survey Project, which explored the theme, "Why Don't Americans Trust the Government?" Respondents were asked to explain what accounted for their low levels of trust in the federal government, and their answers were widely reported. Very large majorities of respondents explained that the federal government was inefficient, wasted too much money and spent money on the wrong things, was overly influenced by special interests, and didn't do

enough to help people who needed it most. And politicians were dishonest and unethical.

One of the particular merits of this project, though, was that it tested respondents' knowledge levels, and found that their grasp of facts about politics, government, and government performance was often weak – that an overwhelming majority incorrectly believed, for example, that air quality had deteriorated rather than improved during the previous 20 years.[31] Bleak conclusion: those perceptions about government which drive confidence can be very badly flawed indeed, shaped as they are by biased media reporting coupled with the public's own ignorance and prejudices. The impressions that government is inefficient and wastes taxpayers' money and is unduely influenced by special interests are unsubstantiated impressions, but they are all-powerful. They, and not the reality of government performance, are the important reality.

But pushing the argument to the point of proposing a total disconnect between government performance and perceptions of that performance surely goes too far. A fourth and more satisfying approach to the problem of declining public trust is the one which says in effect, "Government performance in an objective sense matters; but so do the public's perceptions and its expectations; and so do some other social and economic and cultural phenomena which will vary in importance from country to country and from time to time." The rigorously quantitative testing of the relevant hypotheses may not be possible, but a simpler form of empiricism may serve just as well.

In the United States, for example, the most accepted and widely used index of public confidence in government is based on a question which has been asked every two years since the late 1950s by the University of Michigan's National Election Studies Survey.[32] That index began its decline in the mid-1960s, plummeting from a value of 75 in the early 1960s to 35 by 1974. There is little reasonable doubt that Americans' enormous loss of confidence in those years stemmed from objectively poor federal government performance – first the Vietnam War, and then the corruption of Richard Nixon's administration. Few people following events in the United States closely during those years would probably dispute that.

The work of a team of Harvard scholars led by Joseph S. Nye Jr. also leaves little room for doubt that the ongoing post-Vietnam/post-Watergate decline in Americans' trust in government has been fueled by other factors, most notably the secular rejection of authority in general, the massive economic changes which the information and communications revolution, and globalization, have set in train, an increasing polarization of politics which has widened the gap between political party activists and the public at large, and the media's adoption of an adversarial and negative stance toward many institutions including government. Nye and his colleagues have been careful to emphasize, however, that their multi-causational approach "is not an apologia for the federal government. The culture of bad government has a firm basis in real failures and real problems in the way our politicians now practise their trade."[33]

Another example of multi-causational analysis is the work of Ola Listhaug and Matti Wiberg done under the Beliefs in Government research program of the European Science Foundation. They examine

trends in confidence in both government and private institutions in 14 European countries during the 1980s; part of the analysis is augmented by the inclusion of data for Canada and the United States. They find that objective measures of government performance, such as the frequency of changes in government, and the unemployment and inflation rates, have the expected directional impacts on confidence in government institutions, but their impact is weak. (As a model of scholarly modesty, it would be hard to beat their nuanced assessment of what their analysis shows: "At best it has hinted that the structure of government, primarily instability in government, and weak economic performance – notably unemployment – might have a negative impact on confidence in public institutions."[34]) On the other hand they find evidence that changing values and beliefs is a stronger determinant of confidence. And in a companion paper, Listhaug reports evidence of links between public perceptions of performance, including economic performance, and trust in government in Norway and Sweden.[35]

The decline in Canadians' trust in government since the 1960s has almost certainly been caused in part by some of the same factors which have been at work in the United States and elsewhere. Take as an example the postmaterialist rejection of authority. Using the World Values Surveys for 1981 and 1990, Robert Inglehart has found evidence that in most of the 21 countries for which data were available, including Canada, trust in authority fell during the 1980s as the postmaterialist model predicted. But the decline in Canada was considerably larger than would have been predicted, making it one of several countries which Inglehart argued were experiencing the added impact of other specific factors.[36]

Those specific factors almost certainly included demonstrably poor government performance.

In 1984 *Maclean's* magazine had Decima Research conduct the first of what became its annual poll of the opinions of Canadians about issues ranging from how optimistic or otherwise they felt about their own and the country's future, to their sexual proclivities. The results of each survey were analyzed by Allan Gregg and his colleagues at Decima, and reported extensively in the year-end edition of the magazine.[37]

Each year the survey asked people questions about their attitudes toward politicians and government policies. Some questions changed over time, and the soundings were carried out in greater depth in some years than in others. Overall, however, these readily accessible results provide considerable useful information over a 16-year period both on what happened to Canadians' confidence in government,[38] and their perceptions of how effectively government was performing.

Some slide in Canadian trust in government and its capabilities had occurred during the 1970s and early 1980s.[39] But the results of the first *Maclean's* survey in 1984 were interpreted by Gregg as reflecting a still confident nation, weary of the Trudeau era which had just ended, but looking forward to the future with optimism and showing no signs of rushing to judgement on the new Mulroney government. Canadians did not seem to be disenchanted with government in general – fully half of the respondents said that they looked to government (rather than to business, unions, or anyone else) to best look after their economic interests.[40] Despite the early problems of the Mulroney government, including a spate of

ministerial resignations and the furor over the proposed partial de-indexation of Old Age Security, the mood of the country did not sour dramatically in 1985; nearly 80 per cent of those polled in 1985 indicated that their expectations of what political leadership could accomplish had not declined.[41]

But this changed quickly. By the end of 1986, people were "distancing themselves from the political process," as one writer put it delicately; everywhere he went, Queen's University's Richard Lipsey was quoted as saying, he was finding that people were fed up with government.[42] By late 1989, only 25 per cent of respondents thought that government would best look after their economic interests, and Gregg wrote that Canadians "have never had less faith in government than they do now."[43]

It got worse by 1990. That year's poll found that far more respondents had become less proud rather than more proud to be Canadian, and blamed governments (particularly the federal government) for this shift in their feelings. Over 60 per cent of those polled said that government had become less effective in responding to people's needs, and that they had a less favourable opinion of politicians than they had had 5-10 years earlier.[44] One of *Maclean's* editors wrote that, "The last comparable loss of pride may have taken place during the Depression," and quoted Pierre Berton as saying that, "What you had then and what you've got now is a feeling that nothing was working, that the system was screwed up, and that the politicians were no good."[45] Former Mulroney advisor, Marcel Côté, said that Canadians were "simply turning their backs on politicians. The levels of rage and frustration have never been higher."[46] A study for the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing judged that the level of cynicism in Canada had by 1990 "reached or surpassed the level observed in the United States, by most indicators."[47]

Here was a stunning drop in Canadians' trust in government in general and in the federal government in particular, which continued through the first half of the 1990s. The *Maclean's* polls of those years continued to find extraordinarily high levels of political alienation and distrust of government among Canadians, and a continuing erosion of confidence and optimism. In early 1994 the magazine quoted an unnamed advisor to Prime Minister Chrétien as saying that Canadians "have a state of cynicism about government that borders on nihilism."[48] In his analysis of the 1995 poll results, Gregg called them "the blackest I have ever examined."[49]

Year by year survey respondents identified the various factors which were turning them against government:

- Repeated spending cuts and tax increases, and the introduction of the GST.

- The free trade agreement with the United States, the central and divisive issue of the 1988 election.

- The exhausting and ultimately unsuccessful efforts to forge new and broadly acceptable constitutional arrangements.

- Concerns about growing levels of crime, concerns that immigrants were not adapting to and embracing Canadian ways quickly enough, a feeling that the physical environment was deteriorating, the overall sense of "loss of control" which these concerns engendered.[50]

- Poor macroeconomic performance. In the early 1990s, with the economy recovering only slowly from recession, 43 per cent of respondents blamed the federal government for that situation; this was a much higher proportion than thought any other single factor was to blame.[51]

These were certainly all public policy areas, in which citizens were passing judgements on (mainly) federal government performance. The interesting issue is the extent to which these judgements were or were not well-informed. Perhaps the massive loss of public confidence in the federal government reflected the public's (and the media's) inability to appreciate good government performance on difficult issues – with respect to the free trade agreement, for example, or the introduction of the badly needed but much misunderstood and deeply hated GST. The public certainly wanted the government to focus on other things, as Gregg alluded to when he wrote in early 1993:

> Think about it – what have been the predominant issues occupying the political agenda for the past decade? Free trade, the GST, deficit reduction and the Constitution. Not one of these is a people's issue – zero... You get the sense that the political system's running the political elite. And the reaction is, "You don't understand what we're going through. You don't listen to us, and you don't seem prepared to do things on our behalf."[52]

And under this line of reasoning, when the federal government continued to pursue good but unpopular policies, the people turned their backs on Ottawa with a vengeance.

There is undoubtedly some truth to this view. Canadians' attitudes towards free trade with the United States and then with Mexico, for example, have changed profoundly since the policy was proposed, negotiated, and implemented. In 1993, only 31 per cent of respondents to one survey said that they supported NAFTA, and most of those opposed to it were strongly opposed. By 1999, the level of public support for NAFTA had risen to 72 per cent, although it subsequently dropped back marginally.[53] This is a remarkable change in sentiment, which suggests that the initial opposition to free trade was at least in part based on misunderstanding and ungrounded fears of the likely impacts of the policy.

However, the period beginning in the mid-1980s also saw a fundamental change in the relationship between the level of services the federal government provided to citizens and the cost of those services to them. The nature and the readily quantifiable extent of this (objective) change goes far towards explaining why Canadians' attitudes towards government turned so overwhelmingly negative.

For most of the postwar period until the mid-1970s, the federal government's revenues and expenditures were broadly in balance. When deficits occurred they were usually small, and there were surpluses in some years. Thus there was a close correspondence between the level of federal program spending and the taxes raised to pay for that programming. In fiscal year 1970-71, for instance, federal program spending was $13.77 billion and federal tax revenues were $13.75 billion. The ratio of the one to the other was almost exactly 1:1; a dollar of taxes paid for a dollar of programming.

This changed in 1975 when the federal government began to run large deficits, and made only sporadic and ineffective attempts to reduce them over the next decade. During the initial years of deficit financing, Canadians received more government programming in aggregate than they paid for through their taxes. Thus for example by 1978-79, the ratio of program spending to tax revenue had jumped to 1.27:1; a dollar of taxes was now buying $1.27 worth of programming. The ratio rose even higher in the early 1980s, peaking at 1.35:1 in 1983-84, just a few months before the 1984 election.

The problem is that a dollar of taxes cannot buy $1.35 of programming indefinitely. Large deficits year after year push the public debt up rapidly, which in turn pushes up public debt charges, which is the one category of government current expenditure which cannot be cut arbitrarily. At some point ballooning public debt charges force government to raise taxes and cut program spending, and this process has to continue until the deficit – the source of the problem – is eliminated. This means that the relationship between the level of programming which government is providing, and the taxes which citizens are paying for those government programs, must shift fundamentally.

The Mulroney government began trying to bring the deficit under control in the fall of 1984, and continued to try to do so during most of its two terms in office. Income, excise, sales and payroll taxes were increased repeatedly, the GST was proposed and then implemented, and federal program spending was cut and cut and cut again. The government froze public servants' salaries and cut staffing levels. It reduced transfer payments to provinces, and imposed a cap on social welfare transfers to Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia. It introduced clawbacks on Old Age Security and family allowances. It cut defence spending, foreign aid, subsidies to private businesses and to Crown corporations such as the CBC, transportation subsidies such as those to VIA Rail, funding for social housing, student loans, and a wide range of interest groups.

The effect of these measures was to pull the ratio of program spending to tax revenue down steadily during the Mulroney government's first six or seven years in office. By 1989-90, the ratio had dropped to 0.99:1 – in other words, a dollar's worth of taxes was now buying slightly less than a dollar's worth of programming. But the deficit remained large, because the government had to continue to borrow to pay the interest charges on its still rapidly growing debt.

The Mulroney government was never able to persuade Canadians that bringing the deficit under control, the faster the better, was crucial to the survival of the federal government's ability to maintain its core program responsibilities and ultimately expand them again. It was also never able to explain

convincingly that the GST was a necessary replacement for a highly ineffective but quite invisible existing federal tax. What Canadians saw was simply that they were paying more, and paying it in some painful new ways as well as the old ones, and getting much less programming in return from Ottawa than they had in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They reacted angrily. By 1990, Allan Gregg said later, nobody needed to conduct a poll to learn that people were cynical.

What made matters worse was that the Mulroney government's approach to deficit reduction was too gradualist, which left its fiscal position and strategy vulnerable to several risks, including the risk of recession. The risks materialized and wreaked havoc with the government's fiscal planning, and when the Chrétien government took office in late 1993, the deficit was higher than it had ever been. The painful exercise of raising taxes and drastically reducing program spending had to be intensified, and dominated the Chrétien government's first mandate and part of its second. By 1996-97, the year of the last federal deficit, the ratio of program spending to taxes had fallen to 0.79:1. By 1999-2000, it was down to 0.71:1 – that is, a dollar of taxes was now buying taxpayers $.71 of programs (and $.29 worth of public debt interest payments). The February 2000 budget forecast the ratio to average about 0.75:1 over the short-term planning horizon.

As was clear to most practitioners at the time, the federal government's budgetary policies and fiscal planning for most of the 20 years beginning in 1975 were inadequate, and could not help but result in a major deterioration in the cost effectiveness of federal programming. The objective measure of this poor performance is that a dollar's worth of taxes now buys citizens about 25 cents less in federal programs than it did in the early 1970s. The loss of public confidence in the federal government beginning in the mid-1980s had firm roots in the reality of federal fiscal performance, and not simply in mistaken perceptions about performance on fiscal and other issues. This is so despite the facts that for the most part, Canadians were slow to understand the problem which the initial years of deficit financing would create, and they were reluctant to support the deficit-reduction efforts required to address that problem. What they could see and feel clearly, however, were the real and painful impacts of that problem.

Canadians' attitudes toward the criminal justice system provide a second useful example of the relationship between public perceptions and actual government performance. The first section of this paper referred to a Statistics Canada report published late last year on how Canadians viewed that system. The report analyzed data collected under Statistics Canada's 1999 General Social Survey, and compared the results to those of previous years in those cases in which similar questions were asked. Its main findings were that:

- Respondents were by and large happy with their local police forces, and their levels of satisfaction had not changed much over the period since 1988.

- They were much less happy in general with the criminal courts. Their levels of satisfaction had increased since 1993, but remained lower than they were in 1988. Most respondents felt that

the courts did a good or at least an average job in ensuring fair trials, but were much more dissatisfied with the courts' ability to determine the guilt or the innocence of accused persons, to help the victims of crime, and to provide justice quickly.

- They did not give the prison system high marks for supervising and controlling prisoners, and they assessed its ability to help prisoners become law-abiding as being low. There were no comparative data here; the 1999 survey was the first to ask questions on these topics.

- Finally, they felt that the parole system was doing a poor job at releasing only prisoners who were not likely to re-offend, and then supervising those offenders on parole.[54]

The survey itself did not ask respondents why they felt as they did, but Special Counsel Newark of Ontario's Office for Victims of Crime, interviewed for the *National Post* story on the report, suggested the following possible explanations: high-profile criminal trials which do not result in convictions or which produce sentences which seem very light; miscarriages of justice such as occurred in the cases of Donald Marshall, Guy Paul Morin, David Milgaard and Louise Reynolds; increased media coverage of and public interest in so-called "faint hope" hearings (such as Colin Thatcher's recent such hearing and Clifford Olson's attempt to get one); and media reports of prison escapes and parole violations. He added that Canadians' anger and concern about the prison and parole system was entirely deserved and constituted "a very damning indictment of the corrections system in this country."[55]

Is the operation of the criminal justice system, excluding the police but including the courts and its correctional and parole components, such as to justify Canadians' judgements on it? Or are people misreading the situation, by attaching too much weight to press reports of exceptional and sensational events which do not reflect the normal outcomes of the criminal justice system? There is certainly no shortage of these reports; during the space of a few weeks in early 2001, a sampling of newspaper headlines included "Victim of paroled rapist gets $215,000 (settlement from the Correctional Service of Canada)," "Gangster gets full parole after serving 9 months in prison," "Pedophile's early release sparks furore," "You do the crime, you do some of the time," "Teenaged killer was released to go shopping," "Man wrongly jailed of rape wins acquittal," and "Violence escalating at halfway houses."[56]

While it is almost certainly true that the criminal justice system does a much better job of determining guilt or innocence than the public gives it credit for,[57] there appears to be substance to at least some of the public's other views. Justice can be dispensed slowly. The Supreme Court addressed this issue in its 1990 *Askov* decision, when it ruled that an accused had the right to be brought to trial without excessive delay. A recent analysis of the disposition of criminal cases in the bulk of the provincial and territorial court systems, though, shows that the median elapsed time from an accused's first appearance in court to his last was 15 per cent higher in 1998-99 than it was four years earlier.[58] It is also true that the criminal courts do not do much to help the victims of crime, for the simple reason that that is not their job: our system treats criminality as an offence not against the victim but against the state and deals with it accordingly.[59]

With respect to the parole system's supervisory capacity, law professor Paciocco writes that:

> In 1995-96, 120,300 offenders were serving sentences in the community. Of these, 16 percent were on parole or statutory release, while the rest were on probation. This number represents a 50 percent increase over the last decade. In the 1987 Sentencing Commission report, surveyed corrections officials reported, in significant numbers, that their caseloads were too high to allow for effective supervision. Since then, government spending on adult corrections has decreased in real terms. We have far fewer resources than we did ten years ago when things were already bad.[60]

In this regard, the analysis of a recent nationwide survey of 450 judges concluded that judges were reluctant to impose conditional sentences (custodial sentences of less than two years which are served entirely in the community rather than in jail) because of their concerns that adequate supervision resources were not available.[61]

With respect to the success or otherwise of parole, a 1998 Canadian survey found that nine of 10 respondents overestimated the rate of parolee recidivism, with over half of the sample believing that between 50 and 100 per cent of parolees commit new offences. But the rate at which parolees return to prison is not minuscule, either. In 1997-98, for example, 67 per cent of federal prisoners released on full parole successfully completed their paroles, 22 per cent returned to prison for breach of a parole condition such as failing to abstain from alcohol, and 11 per cent were charged with the commission of a new offence.[62] The overall success rate of similar paroles in 1998-99 rose to 72 per cent, but of the 27 per cent of parolees who returned to prison, nearly half (13 per cent of the total) were charged with new offences.[63]

It thus appears that part although certainly not all of Canadians' negative assessment of the criminal justice system is grounded in the way the system functions, just as Canadians' negative assessments of the federal government writ large during the bitter years of the 1980s and 1990s were grounded in the reality of poor budgetary performance. Here is further evidence that actual government performance, and not just uninformed and biased perceptions, does influence levels of public trust.

B. *Perceptions of Service Delivery and Overall Government Performance*

Beginning in the 1980s, and with increasing momentum since the mid-1990s, governments in Canada and elsewhere have made enormous efforts to improve the ways in which they deliver services to citizens. These efforts, driven by determined political and bureaucratic leadership, have been stimulated by a variety of factors, including:

- The influence of the "customer-first" revolution in the private sector, with its focus on higher quality, easier and expanded access to goods and services, continuous improvement in business practices, and exploitation of information and communications technology, as keys to commercial success. This has served as the basic model which governments have been both attracted to and pushed to emulate.

- Governments have recognized the advantages which the new paradigm offers them. It provides them with the opportunity to play transforming and catalytic leadership roles in society, reflected, for example, in the various federal and provincial initiatives aimed at promoting e-commerce and making Canadians the most connected citizens on earth. Other payoffs from providing better service to clients include increased client/voter satisfaction, the reductions in operating costs which the use of best practice and best technology make possible, and the fact that good service means fewer complaints and makes life easier for those who deliver it as well as for its recipients. Processing employment insurance claims in a timely way makes it less likely that claimants will disrupt the operations of HRDC offices and force staff to call the police to restore order, for example.

- "Push" factors include crises of both specific and general natures. One of the earliest and best known examples of a departmental-specific crisis which had to be addressed on an urgent basis involved Revenue Canada. By 1983 and 1984, Revenue Canada's heavy-handed collection and enforcement methods had become a public scandal, with serious negative consequences for the government of the day. Determined efforts to make improved customer service a prime focus of Revenue Canada began in the mid-1980s and have continued with considerable success to the present time with the operations of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. The general crisis which forced widespread transformation in the way governments operate was the impact of the almost-out-of-control deficits of the early and mid-1990s. These demanded massive cuts in the operating budgets of departments (for example, through Program Review at the federal level). These cuts in turn forced the governments concerned to re-engineer their business processes and embrace information and communications technology in order to cut costs while protecting service delivery through higher productivity.

- The "push" factors also include, most fundamentally, the public's expectations. People's experiences with better private-sector service have spilled over into what they expect from government, and their expectations are high. Canadians now expect their governments to provide service at least as good as the private sector does.[64] They want better access to better quality service, through both traditional and electronic service channels; they have limited tolerance for slow performance. Governments are finding that for business clients in particular, they cannot provide online services fast enough. A recent Deloitte Research survey of some 250 government departments in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, found that customer needs and demands have been the most important driver of

service improvements, by far.[65]

The thrust to establish a culture of client service and improve service delivery takes a number of forms. There are corporate approaches. Examples include the federal government's current efforts lead by the Treasury Board Secretariat's Service and Innovation Sector to promote system-wide improvements in client access to and improvements in the quality of services; CCMD's emphasis on the importance of citizen-centred service in its training program for new federal government executives; the Ontario government's new Integrated Service Delivery initiative, which flows from years' worth of service improvements spearheaded by the Cabinet Office's Restructuring Secretariat. There are many other such examples.

There are cross-corporate approaches, most notably from a Canadian perspective the Citizen-Centred Service Network. Established in 1997 as the result of a CCMD initiative, the CCSN comprises over 200 service delivery practitioners working in the federal, provincial, and municipal governments, as well as academics and other experts. The CCSN's focus is on research required to support public sector service improvement – it identifies important gaps in relevant knowledge, commissions the necessary research, and shares the findings within the CCSN itself and with other interested organizations, through its publications program and its other activities.[66] Its path-breaking analysis of what clients see as the critical elements of good public service delivery, is an example of the CCSN's commitment and ability to deepen practitioner understanding of clients' requirements.[67]

And there are departmental measures, ranging from simple and basic improvements such as putting a receptionist in a walk-in office to ensure that clients are served in their order of arrival, to massive overhauls of telephone systems. There are staff training and upgrading, merit and awards programs to encourage and recognize high staff performance. There is the establishment of formal and precise service standards. There are ongoing efforts to assess what clients want, through polling, through the solicitation of feedback comments about the service they receive, through information collected automatically about clients' main questions and concerns, through focus groups, through consultations with advisory groups. There are both internal and external audits of service provision. There are problem resolution mechanisms to address those issues which cannot be dealt with successfully in the early stages of client/government interaction.

There is plenty of evidence from internal polling that people are responding positively to the better, quicker, more accessible government services now available to them, online as well as through the more traditional delivery channels. For example, respondents to a 1996-97 HRDC survey of employment insurance claimants who had had a previous claim reported a vast improvement in the way their current claims were being handled. Industry Canada has had very favourable feedback from the public on its connectedness programs such as SchoolNet. Satisfaction ratings with Service Ontario's 60 kiosks, at which clients can undertake transactions such as renewing their vehicle licences and registering health insurance address changes, range from 94 per cent ("kiosks are conveniently located") to 97 per cent ("kiosks save time"). Ontario's Business Connects program, a single window for business registrations

and other services, reports a 96 per cent customer satisfaction rating.[68]

The first survey done for the CCSN in the spring of 1998 (which was followed up by a second survey in 2000 whose results are just becoming available) provided more comprehensive evidence on this issue. The 1998 survey probed Canadians' assessments of the quality of services delivered by the three levels of government, and how these compared to assessments of selected services provided by the private sector. It asked respondents about their actual and recent experiences with individual government services, as well as what they thought about government services in general. It found that Canadians did not rank individual government services lower, on average, than private sector services. On a scale of 0-100, the average client satisfaction level for the 50 government services (federal, provincial, and municipal) covered by the survey was 62, exactly the same as the satisfaction level averaged across (seven) private sector services.[69] The follow-up survey last year found the same average level of client satisfaction with government services. These are clearly positive results.

Everyone understands that maintaining citizens' satisfaction with government services (as occurred between 1998 and 2000), let alone improving them, requires ongoing and innovative efforts. This is especially the case given citizens' expectations for faster and better delivery of services. But assuming that satisfaction levels can be maintained and even increased, a key question is whether that result would be likely to translate into higher levels of confidence in overall government performance.

One of the CCSN 2000 survey results is suggestive here. The survey found a tight positive correlation between respondents' ratings of government services they had recently received, and their ranking of government performance – the higher they rated services, the more likely they were to rank government's overall performance as being good. Thus 43 per cent of the respondents who rated the services they received as being good gave government a good overall performance ranking, while only 25 per cent of those who rated services as poor thought overall government performance was good. This is certainly an intuitively plausible correlation which one would, *ceteris paribus*, expect to find. To see it confirmed will be encouraging to those managing the processes of service delivery improvement.

However, service delivery, no matter how good it may be now or become in the future, remains only one aspect of performance. Overall performance ratings can go up or down depending on other factors and the public's perceptions of them. Thus continuing with the example of the CCSN 2000 survey respondents who rated service delivery as good, their overall-performance-satisfaction index could rise from 43 to 55 per cent, say, in the context of strong economic performance attributed to government policy, or fall to 30 per cent in the context of scandals which called government ethics or competence into question. And government performance remains only one factor, albeit an important one, driving citizens' confidence in government. Nothing in the literature reviewed for the purposes of this study suggests a one-to-one link between service delivery and levels of trust; none of the officials or former officials interviewed believes that service delivery is more than one (often small) contributor to citizens' feelings of confidence or lack thereof.

The two CCSN surveys, and EKOS Research's recent survey findings reported in its *Rethinking Government 2000* series of publications, provide further information which is relevant in this context. The CCSN surveys asked respondents not only about their experiences with individual government services, but what they thought about government services in general. Questions about services in general, observed the 1998 CCMD/CCSN *Citizen's First* report, invite stereotypical responses which tend to be substantially more negative than people's responses about their recent experiences with particular government services:

> Each citizen's stereotype of government service is built on a lifetime of experiences, probably amplified by accounts in novels, misrepresentations by interest groups, news accounts of instances where the system failed, a certain influx of opinions from the political realm, and so on. Asking a person to rate government service "in general" accesses this stereotype.[70]

The findings of both CCSN surveys confirm the negativity which general questions elicit. Respondents to the 1998 survey, for instance, indicated a satisfaction level of 47 with federal government services in general, while the average ranking across the 17 particular federal services covered in the survey was 60. Provincial government services in general also got a ranking of 47, versus an average of 62 across the 20 provincial services covered. The corresponding rankings for municipal services were 53 (general) and 64 (the average across 13 individual services).[71]

These are important results. Citizens can be quite satisfied about individual services they receive from their various levels of government. But as soon as they are asked to rate government services in general, their satisfaction with this component of overall government performance drops sharply, in the case of the 1998 results by over 20 per cent.[72] Precisely which factors are involved to produce this result – the stereotypical thinking pointed to in the *Citizen's First* report, other factors as well – is impossible to say. It seems unlikely, however, that *every* other factor which could affect citizens' ratings of overall government performance would be picked up in questions dealing with government service delivery in general. This in turn means that there could well be a significant difference between satisfaction with government services in general and assessments of government performance.

Some evidence on this and related issues appears in the EKOS findings. First, EKOS repeatedly asked respondents to rate the overall performance of the federal, and their provincial and local governments, on a scale of good/neutral/poor. Over the three-year period 1997-1999, the performance rating of the federal government fell steadily, with the percentage of respondents rating its performance as "good" dropping from 38 to 32. Provincial government ratings also fell from 38 to 32, although more erratically, while local government scores dropped from 49 to 37.[73] This was the period during which some of the first and most highly visible improvements in services at both the federal and provincial levels were being made.

The responses to other questions EKOS asked in surveys conducted during the past few years point to

what some of the other factors affecting assessments of overall performance probably were:

- Over the period October 1998 to March 2000, a majority of respondents indicated that they wanted the federal government to provide "a bold new vision for the future of the country" and govern accordingly; this was about three times as many respondents who thought that the government was actually providing such a vision. This suggests that Canadians wanted a more visionary leadership than they felt they were getting.[74] In this regard, it is interesting to note that in surveys conducted in 1996 and July 2000, more respondents identified the vision ("building a country that can be a source of pride," and "planning for future generations") as an appropriate future role for the federal government, rather than "efficiently delivering services" as an appropriate role.[75]

- In July 1999, 44 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that they received little or no benefit for the taxes they paid. This was more than the people that disagreed with that statement, and the results were similar to the views of Americans who were asked the same question in a survey conducted a month later.[76]

- 68 per cent of respondents in November 1997, and 72 per cent about a year later, agreed with the statement that governments had "lost sight of the needs of average Canadians," which was about five times the number of people who disagreed. In comparison, 70 per cent of Americans surveyed in August 1999 felt the same way, that their governments had lost sight of the needs of ordinary people.[77]

- Canadians also felt that governments had lost sight of the public interest. In April 1998, responses to the question "When the (federal or provincial) government makes decisions, whose interests do you think are given the greatest importance?" were: the public interest, 18 per cent; big business, 32 per cent; politicians and their friends, 28 per cent; and special interests, 19 per cent. These proportions shifted only marginally during the next two years, but the small changes which did occur represented a further deterioration in trust.[78]

- Their assessments of politicians' ethical standards were harsh. In May 2000, only 18 per cent of respondents rated the ethical standards of politicians as being "high"; this score put politicians well at the bottom of a list of 10 occupations rated according to perceived ethical standards. In terms of how much the public thought they could be trusted, politicians ranked 17th out of 18 occupations. Another interesting dimension of these results is that business leaders scored much higher than politicians in terms of ethical standards and trust factors, at the same time as respondents reported a sharply higher incidence of first-hand experience of unethical behaviour in businesses than in governments.[79] This suggests a degree of disconnection in people's minds between the leadership of large public and private sector organizations, and the behaviour of those organizations.

EKOS has also periodically asked its survey respondents to rate the federal government's performance in 10 specific policy areas. Performance ratings rose either significantly or marginally in nine of the 10 areas from November 1997 to December 1999, at the same time as the government's overall performance rating was dropping (see above). "Health" was the one policy area in which the government's rating fell (a substantial majority of respondents in five surveys conducted over this period thought that the health care system was deteriorating[80]), and the decline was significant. EKOS mused, "Is it possible that concern with the country's health care system is so great that dissatisfaction in this single area accounts for the decline in the federal government's overall performance rating?"[81] If that were true, it would represent a very important source of slippage between assessments of service delivery and overall performance. So also would the fact that the three areas to which respondents indicated they attached the highest priority – education, child poverty, and of course health care – were all areas in which they rated federal and provincial government performance poorly.[82]

The Pew Research Center's findings on Americans' attitudes towards government service providers are also relevant here. The study cited earlier also reported that survey respondents in the late 1990s ranked 18 of 19 federal agencies and departments favourably ("favourably" defined as 50 per cent or more of respondents giving a positive rating). Only the Internal Revenue Service received an unfavourable rating. The approval ratings given to seven of these organizations were significantly higher than they had been a decade earlier – or example, the Postal Service's score rose from 76 to 89 per cent; the ratings for five other rose marginally.[83] But as was noted above, only one-quarter of respondents thought federal government performance was excellent or good – at the same time as they were saying that they by and large approved of individual departments and agencies.

This evidence supports the view that there is not a direct and powerful link between improved service delivery and citizen's confidence in government. This seems reasonable, for reasons suggested earlier – overall government performance consists of more than service delivery, and factors other than performance affect feelings of trust. This in turn suggests that the fundamental importance of improved public service delivery lies in the direct benefits it provides for clients and governments both, and not in its possible impacts on confidence.

4. E-Government and Citizen Engagement

Beyond its role in enormously facilitating governments' ability to improve service delivery, there is the question of whether online interaction between governments and clients can evolve in directions which rebuild the relationship between governments and citizens. Put another way, the question is whether online communication really does hold, as the Government On-Line website suggests, "the exciting potential for greater citizen involvement in public policy making, and greater responsiveness from public figures and institutions."

There are many ways in which e-government is seen as having the potential to do this, to turn online clients into active partners with government. The discretionary (as well as the automatic) feedback

which customers can provide instantaneously about the government services they receive are a key driver of improved services. People can communicate directly via email with their elected representatives (or their offices) as well as with bureaucrats (or their offices). Consultative processes, one of the main venues of citizen/government interaction between elections, can be broadened and deepened through the various forms of the "electronic public domain" – electronic public meetings, or policy forums in which panels of citizens "meet" regularly to discuss and deliberate policy issues, with the results of the subsequent polling providing an informed source of advice to elected politicians. Governments can use their web-pages in imaginative ways to educate citizens about key public policy choices and tradeoffs. Online voting may increase voter "turn-out" – in last year's Democratic presidential primary in Arizona which experimented with online voting, six times as many people who had voted in 1996 cast ballots. The most enthusiastic proponents of e-democracy foresee the day when representative government is replaced by direct digital democracy.[84]

On the other hand is a well-known set of concerns about e-government. The effect of the so-called "digital divide" may further marginalize those people whose access to elected and appointed officials is the most limited now. Any failure to protect the privacy and the security of transactions risks a severe erosion of trust. As governments capture masses of information about individual citizens, they can be combined into dossiers which have the potential for misuse; this was the concern which quickly forced HRDC to dismantle its huge database when news of that database's existence became public last year.[85] Learning about policy issues and the choices governments face is hard work which takes time, and most people may be no more willing to do it in the days of the Internet than they were in previous years. The process of electronic government/citizen interaction has to be managed, and Rainer Knopff suggests that, "we might well be capable of running an electronic town hall for a large nation, but the real rulers would be the small elite that structures the process, poses the questions and manipulates public passions."[86] And while people can register their voting preferences instantaneously, this is a far cry from the process of deliberation which characterizes responsible decision-making in a democracy. Charles White makes the point in noting that, "deliberation is a public act, in which opinions must be advanced and defended in the full light of public scrutiny, not in the shadows of electronic anonymity. It is through such deliberation that an electorate becomes an informed citizenry."[87]

There is an important cautionary point implicit in the following observation by Christine Bellamy and John Taylor, who argue that the client-centred revolution in government:

> is being asked to deliver much more than straightforward improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of public services . . . (many enthusiasts) are attaching an explicit democratic value to consumerist initiatives, by emphasizing the need to empower users as direct stakeholders in the material outcomes of public administration . . . . (Consumerist initiatives are) *increasingly being asked to stand as surrogate for the discredited processes of representative democracy by operationalizing such basic democratic values as accountability, responsiveness and participation* (my italics). On this reading

> the new consumerism represents one response to the growing cynicism which exists on the 'input' side of politics: that is, elections, parliaments and parties.[88]

To the extent that Bellamy and Taylor are correct, and e-government techniques were viewed as ways to finesse fundamental problems in how governmental institutions function, disappointment and frustration would be the most likely outcomes. Trying to make problems go away without addressing their root causes typically does not work. Thus for example, if citizens believed that government consultation exercises were no more than public relations exercises because the policy choices had already been made, they would most likely tune out. The basic principles underlying successful consultation exercises, such as honesty, transparency, flexibility, the willingness of government to learn from and respond to legitimate public concerns,[89] remain more important than the technical means through which such consultations are carried out.

Another recent EKOS Research publication provides a useful perspective on one aspect of citizen engagement and e-government. *Rethinking Citizen Engagement* reports the results of surveys conducted during 2000 which explored how Canadians and Americans see their relationship with their governments. Respondents in both countries felt that average citizens have far too little influence on public policy,[90] and overwhelming majorities agreed that they "would feel better about government decision-making if (they) knew that government regularly sought informed input from average citizens."[91]

While this is not a very surprising result, the responses to the follow-up question on how government should get that input were highly interesting. That question was, "There are a number of ways the government . . . can gather the views of (average citizens). How useful do you think each of the following ways are?" Respondents were offered ten possibilities. The order in which Canadians ranked them is as follows (the percentage of respondents saying the particular option was "highly useful" is in brackets): national elections (82); public opinion polls (68); 1-800 numbers to register citizen choices (67); letters, calls, e-mails to political representatives (67); referenda (67); public hearings by government bodies (66); information technology, e.g., Internet (63); town hall meetings (60); through the activities of voluntary organizations (59); through the activities of interest groups (52). [92]

Taking these results at their face value suggests that so far, Canadian citizens themselves do not attach particularly high significance to information technology as a way of interacting with government on the issues of the day. This may well change with the passage of time – the Americans who responded to the same question attached a higher relative importance to Internet communication.[93] But at this point at least, Canadians seem to be saying that "multi-channel" access to political and governmental processes is as important to them as is multi-channel access to government services.

Citizen engagement in so-called "unconventional forms" of political activity – signing petitions, participating in boycotts and demonstrations, working to put tax-limitation initiatives on ballots, joining activist groups – has been on the rise in Canada and elsewhere since the 1970s. This reflects some of

the forces noted earlier, including rising education levels, declining deference to authority, disenchantment with more traditional forms of political action. It also includes the greater access to information and the ability to disseminate it which the communications revolution has made possible – the same factors underlying the possibilities of e-government.

As this paper was being written, the security measures being deployed in Quebec as Canada prepared to host the Summit of the Americas responded to one manifestation of these unconventional forms of engagement. This illustrates, if an illustration were needed, that an important part of the future engagement between citizens and their governments will continue to be on issues and in venues determined by citizens.

5. Conclusions

The client-centred revolution which has taken hold in the way governments in Canada and in many other countries operate has considerable momentum behind it. Businesses used to conducting their transactions electronically and citizens used to being able to do their shopping and banking on a 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week basis have demanded better and more accessible service from their governments. Governments have made considerable and often extremely successful efforts to respond to those demands and expectations. A number of payoffs for both clients and for governments which accompany the better and more productive service delivery, such as cost savings and higher client/voter satisfaction, are clear and evident.

The primary purpose of this paper was to examine whether there was another payoff associated with the client-centred revolution. In North America and elsewhere, citizens' confidence in their governments has declined sharply in recent decades. Is there empirical evidence suggesting that by providing better services, governments could rebuild some of that trust which citizens have lost in them, and could this therefore provide a further powerful rationale for ongoing efforts to continue to improve services?

The evidence reviewed here suggests strongly that government performance does influence the degree of trust which citizens accord their governments. But "government performance" is the outcome of highly complex processes involving much more than service delivery: policy and program design which affect many facets of people's lives, which attempt to reconcile often widely different interests, and which are always subject to constraints of one form or another; the balancing of the public's demand for services with its willingness to pay for them; quick responses to the unexpected or emergency situations which only government can deal with; issues of competence and probity in the conduct of public business.

Beyond the reality of government performance is the manner in which that performance is framed and reported by the media, and the way it is perceived by the public and weighed in light of its expectations. As well, factors other than actual and perceived government performance, such as the comprehensive

cultural changes which have occurred in developed countries in recent decades, have clearly affected the level of citizens' confidence in governments.

It is entirely reasonable to suppose that the better the job governments do in delivering their services to people, the more confidence people will have in them. But given all of the other forces which affect trust in government, it is entirely possible for the positive impacts of improved service delivery to be swamped by other events and circumstances.

This suggests that it would be neither useful nor appropriate to justify continuing efforts to improve government service delivery in terms of their possible impacts on confidence or trust. Nor is it necessary. The easily identifiable payoffs to better service provide plenty of justification by themselves for those efforts. In addition, ongoing private sector service improvements and their effects on people's expectations will continue to push governments in the same direction.

There is as well an implication for CCMD's ongoing research program, in the thrust of this paper's argument. The prime purpose of the research which CCMD undertakes is to generate information and analysis to help government officials do their jobs better. Further exploration of the determinants of citizen confidence in government is unlikely to be fruitful in this regard. The important elements of the equation which are under officials' control, such as the need for sound analysis to underpin policy development, competent and ethical behaviour, and ongoing service improvement, are well known and have been for some time. They are, for example, among the critical issues on which CCMD already provides training for new federal executives and managers. And the many other factors affecting citizen confidence, such as the way the media does its job, are beyond the power of officials to influence. No amount of research into them is likely to lead to any payoff in terms of improved government efficiency or performance.

There is likely to be ongoing interest among academics in the determinants of citizen trust in government for some time. For purely practical reasons, it would probably be useful for CCMD to leave that field of research to them.

Endnotes

1. Jennifer Tufts, "Public Attitudes Toward The Criminal Justice System," *Juristat*, Statistics Canada Catalogue 85-002, Vol.20, No. 12, pp. 1-21.

2. Tom Arnold, "Four of five Canadians lack faith in justice system: survey," *National Post*, 5 December 2000, pp. A1, A7.

3. David M. Paciocco, *Getting Away With Murder: The Canadian Criminal Justice System* (Toronto: Irwin Law, 1999), pp. 4-5. The single most visible and deadly outcome of years of declining confidence in government and the accompanying bureaucrat-bashing in the United States was the April 1995 bombing of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City. Melvin J. Dubnick and David H. Rosenbloom, "Oklahoma City," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 55 (Sept./Oct. 1995), pp. 405-406.

4. Erin Research Inc., *Citizens First* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre For Management Development, October 1998), p. 81.

5. *Government On-Line*, http://www.gol-ged.gc.ca/pub/serv-can/serv-can02_e.asp, p. 1.

6. Jane Jenson and Martin Papillon, "The Changing Boundaries of Citizenship: A Review and A Research Agenda," and Paul Thomas, "The Future of Representative Democracy: The Impact of Information Technology," in *Modernizing Governance: A Preliminary Exploration* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development, November 2000.

7. I am an economist, and worked in the Department of Finance and the Privy Council Office during the years in which Canadians' trust in their federal government plummeted, and more recently in Johannesburg with the South Africa/Canada Program on Governance. As a private citizen, I have been extensively involved in a fight over serious municipal conflict-of-interest violations in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. My perspectives are thus those of a former public servant and an interested citizen familiar with both good and bad government, rather than those of a political science practitioner.

8. Ola Listhaug examined changing patterns of political trust from the 1960s through the late 1980s in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands, and reports that trust in politicians declined steadily only in Sweden. In the other three countries, the patterns were more mixed, with several of the trust indicators rising from the early 1970s into the middle or late 1980s. Ola Listhaug, "The Dynamics of Trust in Politicians," in Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Dieter Fuchs, eds., *Citizens and the State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 261-297, pp. 273-276.

9. This is the strong conclusion of the substantive research effort of a team of European scholars, which is summarized in Dieter Fuchs and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, "Citizens and the State: A

Relationship Transformed," in Klingemann and Fuchs, op. cit., pp. 419-443. As well, Frederick Weil reports that the 40-year decline after World War II in public confidence in governments in six countries – the United States, Britain, France, West Germany, Italy and Spain – was not accompanied by a "legitimation crisis," that is, a decline in support for democracy. Frederick D. Weil, "The Sources and Structure of Legitimation in Western Democracies: A Consolidated Model Tested with Times-Series Data in Six Countries Since World War II," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54 (October 1989), pp. 682-706, pp. 690-693. A common observation of American analysts is that the American public hates politics but venerates its institutions of government. See for example William Chaloupka, *Everybody Knows: Cynicism in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 72. Neil Nevitte reports that Canadians' degree of satisfaction with democracy is similar to levels found in Ireland and the Netherlands, but lower than those in some other Western European countries. Neil Nevitte, "Value Change and Reorientations in Citizen-State Relations," *Canadian Public Policy*, Vol. XXVI, supplement 2, 2000, pp. S73-S94.

10. See Thomas, op. cit., and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "In Government We Don't Trust," *Foreign Policy*, Issue 108 (Fall 1997), pp. 99-111.

11. Penelope Lemov, "Educating the elusive taxpayer," *Governing*, Vol. 10. No. 12 (Sept. 1997), pp. 68-69.

12. Graham Fraser, "A question of trust," *The Toronto Star*, 6 January 2001, pp. K1, K4.

13. Here I have drawn mainly on Joseph N. Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "News Frames, Political Cynicism, and Media Cynicism," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (July 1996), pp. 71-84; Chaloupka, op. cit.; Geoff Dinsdale and D. Brian Marson, *Citizen/Client Surveys: Dispelling Myths and Redrawing Maps* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development, 1999); Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Media and Declining Confidence in Government," *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 2, Issue 3 (Summer 1997), pp. 4-9; Nevitte, op. cit.; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Phillip D. Zelikow and David C. King, eds., *Why People Don't Trust Government* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Thomas, op. cit., and David Zussman, "Do citizens trust their governments?" *Canadian Public Administration*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer 1997), pp. 234-254.

14. EKOS Research Associates Inc, *Rethinking Government 2000. Wave 1: Draft Final Report January 2000*, p. 78. Surveys uncover many instances of questionable public perceptions. Another striking example was the mid-1990s finding of the University of Virginia's Post-Modernity Project, that a full 20 per cent of Americans believed that the "government elite" was "involved in a conspiracy." William A. Galston and Peter Levine, "America's Civic Condition," *Brookings Review* (Fall 1997), pp. 23-26, p. 26.

15. Cappella and Jamieson, op cit., p. 84.

16. Zussman, op. cit., p. 250.

17. Nye, *Foreign Policy*, op. cit.

18. Gary Orren, "Fall from Grace: The Public's Loss of Faith in Government," in Nye, Zelikow, and King, op. cit., pp. 77-107, p. 81; the Pew Research Center, "Deconstructing Distrust: How Americans View Government," www.people-press.org/trustpt.htm, p. 4; and Jonathan Rauch, "After the Revolutions, Reality," *Brookings Review* (Spring 2000), pp. 44-46, p. 45.

19. Dinsdale and Marson, op. cit., p. 10; and Zussman, op. cit., p. 239.

20. EKOS Research Associates Inc., *Rethinking Citizen Engagement* (December 2000), pp. 9-10.

21. For example, Dinsdale and Marson, op. cit., p. 15, note that a 1997 EKOS survey found that over 60 per cent of respondents had not had a "direct service experience with the federal government" for over three months.

    Here is an exercise which illustrates the comparative volume of media reporting about government. Take the front section of a national newspaper and (ignoring full-page advertisements) try to find a page which does not include at least one story or substantive reference to government. You may have to look at the front sections of several editions before you succeed.

    One American observer of the impact of television suggests that "even when voters feel politically alienated, they do not necessarily feel politically inert because of television. Each day, the nation's media drench them in politics: photographers popping flashbulbs, the president running from his helicopter, crowds milling about at abortion clinics, minicams waving unsteadily as the candidate jogs past, talk show guests ranting when they are not raving, UN diplomats scurrying away from overeager reporters, a new charismatic whipping up the crowds." Roderick P. Hart, "Easy Citizenship: Television's Curious Legacy," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (July 1996), pp. 109-119, p. 112.

22. On this last point, see Dinsdale and Marson, op. cit., p. 11.

23. There are others, for example, David C. King, "The Polarization of American Parties and Mistrust of Government," in Nye, Zelikow, and King, op. cit., pp. 155-178, pp. 174-176.

24. Neal J. Roese, "Are Canadians Becoming Less Trusting of Government?" Northwestern University, *mimeo*., 1999, Table 3.

25. Elim Papadakis, "Constituents of Confidence and Mistrust in Australian Institutions," *Australian Jornal of Political Science*, Vol. 34, Issue 1 (March 1999), pp. 75-93.

26. Patricia Moy, Michael Pfau and LeeAnn Kahlor, "Media use and public confidence in democratic institutions," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, Vol. 43, Issue 2 (Spring 1999), pp. 137-158.

27. Weil, op. cit., pp. 693-694.

28. Derek Bok, "Measuring the Performance of Government," in Nye, Zelikow and King, op. cit., pp. 55-75, p. 65.

29. Arthur H. Miller and Stephen A. Borrelli, "Confidence in Government During the 1980s," *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (April 1991), pp. 147-173.

30. Pew, op. cit., p. 7.

31. Robert J. Blendon et. al., "Changing Attitudes in America," in Nye, Zelikow, and King., op. cit., pp. 205-216.

32. The index is constructed as the sum of the percentages of respondents who answer "always," or "most of the time," to the question, "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?" Orren, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

33. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., and Phillip Zelikow, "Conclusion: Reflections, Conjectures, and Puzzles," in Nye, Zelikow, and King, op. cit., pp. 253-281, pp. 275-276.

34. Ola Listhaug and Matti Wiberg, "Confidence in Political Institutions," in Klingemann and Fuchs, eds., op. cit., pp. 298-322.

35. Listhaug, op. cit., pp. 287-294.

36. Robert Inglehart, "Postmaterialist Values and the Erosion of Institutional Authority," in Nye, Zelikow, and King, op. cit., pp. 217-236, p. 224.

37. The results of the seventeenth and most recent poll were reported in *Maclean's*, 25 December 2000/1 January 2001, pp. 26-54.

38. These results are consistent with the results of other public opinion surveys reported from time to time.

39. André Blais and Elizabeth Gidengil, *Making Representative Democracy Work: The Views of Canadians*. Vol. 17, Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991); and Peter Aucoin, "Political Science and Democratic Governance," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. XXIX: No. 4 (December 1996), pp. 643-660, p. 644.

40. *Maclean's*, 7 January 1985, p. 14.

41. *Maclean's*, 6 January 1986, p. 19.

42. *Maclean's*, 5 January 1987, p. 25.

43. *Maclean's*, 1 January 1990, pp. 22, 24

44. *Maclean's*, 7 January 1991, pp. 33-34.

45. *Maclean's*, 7 January 1991, p. 11.

46. *Maclean's*, 7 January 1991, p. 13.

47. Blais and Gidengil, op. cit., p. 39.

48. *Maclean's*, 3 January 1994, p. 16.

49. *Maclean's*, 25 December 1995/1 January 1996, p. 14.

50. *Maclean's*, 2 January 1989, pp. 10, 28-29; 7 January 1991, pp. 30-31; 4 January 1993, pp. 24, 26; 3 January 1994, p. 24.

51. *Maclean's*, 4 January 1993, p. 37. The 1992 survey found a direct relationship between views about the economy and views about politicians. Of those respondents who feared that the economy was continuing to deteriorate, 52 per cent also said that their faith in politicians had decreased significantly during the previous few years; of those who thought the economy was improving, only 29 per cent reported a significant drop in their faith in politicians (*Maclean's*, 4 January 1993, p. 20). Gregg's unsurprising conclusion from these results was that "much of the political alienation is linked directly to economic dissatisfaction" (*Maclean's*, 4 January 1993, p. 28).

52. *Maclean's*, 4 January 1993, p. 16.

53. Matthew Mendelsohn and Robert Wolfe, "Can't live with it, can't live without it," *The Globe and Mail*, 31 January 2001, p. A15; Simon Tuck, "Fewer Canadians support free trade," *The Globe and Mail*, 5 February 2001, pp. A1, A6.

54. Tufts, op. cit.

55. Arnold, op. cit.

56. Robert Matas, "Victim of paroled rapist gets $215,000," *The Globe and Mail*, 9 January 2001, pp. A1, A8; Adrian Humphreys, "Gangster gets full parole after serving 9 months in

prison," *National Post*, 30 January 2001, p. A5; Shannon Kari, "Pedophile's early release sparks furore," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 9 February 2001, p. A3; Christie Blatchford, "You do the crime, you do some of the time," *National Post*, 10 February 2001, p. A14; Robert Matas, "Teenaged killer was released to go shopping," *The Globe and Mail*, 15 February 2001, p. A3; Canadian Press, "Man wrongly jailed of rape wins acquittal," *The Sault Star*, 23 February 2001, p. A9; and Kevin Cox, "Violence escalating at halfway houses," *The Globe and Mail*, 26 February 2001, pp. A1, A7.

57. In the Provincial Division of the Ontario Court of Justice in 1992, for example, 286,160 pleas were entered. Of these, 230, 414, or 81 per cent, were guilty pleas. Most of the cases which are tried result in guilty verdicts. As one defence attorney ruefully told a prosecutor, "Of course you usually win. You have the truth on your side." Paciocco, op. cit., p. 173.

58. Julian V. Roberts and Craig Grimes, "Adult Criminal Court Statistics, 1998/99," *Juristat*, Statistics Canada Cat. No. 85-002, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 1-19, p. 7.

59. Paciocco, op. cit., pp. 354-355.

60. Ibid., p. 80.

61. "The survey found that four out of 10 judges believed programs for substance abuse, anger management or psychiatric counselling are either rarely or never available in the community. One in three said it is rarely or never possible to find out what resources – such as work programs or supervision for house arrest – are available. The judges called overwhelmingly for the creation of more such programs." Kirk Makin, "Judges raise alarm on alternative sentences," *The Globe and Mail*, 1 October 1999, p. A1.

62. Julian Roberts and Micheline Reed, "Adult Correctional Services in Canada, 1997-98," *Juristat*, Statistics Canada Cat. No. 85002, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 1-13, p. 12.

63. Jennifer Thomas, "Adult Correctional Services in Canada, 1998-99," *Juristat*, Statistics Canada Cat. No. 85-002, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 1-16, p. 15.

64. Erin Research Inc., *Citizens First Summary Report* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development, 1998), p. 7.

65. Jeff Breen, "At the dawn of e-government: the citizen as customer," *Government Finance Review*, Vol. 16, No. 5 (Oct. 2000), pp. 15-20.

66. Canadian Centre for Management Development, *Citizen-Centred Service: Responding to the Needs of Canadians* (Ottawa, 1999), p. 1.

67. *Citizens First*, op. cit.

68. Art Daniels and Dorothy Chan, "Ontario Public Service Innovations Achieve International Recognition," *Canadian Government Executive*, Issue 3 (1999), pp. 13-15.

69. *Citizen-Centred Service: Responding to the Needs of Canadians*, op. cit., p. 6.

70. *Citizens First*, op. cit., p. 7.

71. Ibid., pp. 6, 60, 65,69.

72. This is the average level of satisfaction for government services in general across three levels of government (49), compared to the average of the satisfaction ratings for particular services (62).

73. EKOS Research Associates Inc, *Wave 1*, p. 23.

74. EKOS Research Associates Inc., *Rethinking Government 2000, Wave 2: Final Report June 2000*, p. 15.

75. EKOS Research Associates, *Rethinking Government 2000, Wave III: Final Report September 2000*, p. 24.

76. EKOS Research Associates Inc., *Rethinking Government 2000, Compendium Report: Volume 1, 2000*, p. 163.

77. Ibid., p. 164.

78. EKOS, *Wave 2*, p.8.

79. Ibid., pp. 31, 33, 35-36.

80. Ibid., p. 66.

81. EKOS, *Wave 1*, p. 25.

82. EKOS *Compendium Report: Volume 1*, pp. 26. 36-37.

83. Pew, op. cit., www.people-press.org/trusttab.htm, p. 3.

84. Christine Bellamy and John A. Taylor, *Governing in the Information Age* (Open University Press: Buckingham, 1998), pp. 115-116; Mark Strassman, "Could the Internet Change Everything?" *Spectrum*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1999), pp. 22-23; Don Tapscott and David Agnew, "Canada Leading in Digital Governance," *Canadian Government Executive*, Issue 4 (1999), pp. 15-17, p. 16.

85. Privacy Commissioner Bruce Phillips raised the issue of what quickly became known as the Big Brother database in his annual report released May 16, 2000. A wave of public concern built quickly, which in less than two weeks resulted in the announcement that the database would be dismantled. By the time of that announcement, 18,000 people had applied to get access to their dossiers. Shawn McCarthy, "Ottawa pulls plug on Big Brother database," *The Globe and Mail*, 30 May 2000, pp. A1, A7. People are worried about privacy: the greatest fear Canadians have about using electronic government services is a loss of privacy. EKOS, *Wave 1*, p. 69. Americans of course have that same fear. Hart-Teeter for The Council for Excellence in Government, *E-Government: The Next American Revolution* (September 2000).

86. Rainer Knopff, "Populism and the Politics of Rights: The Dual Attack on Representative Democracy," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. XXXI: No. 4 (December 1998), pp. 683-705, p. 692.

87. Charles White, "Citizen participation and the Internet: prospects for civic deliberation in the information age," *The Social Studies*, Vol. 88 (Jan./Feb. 1997), pp. 23-28, p. 26.

88. Bellamy and Taylor, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

89. Katherine A. Graham and Susan D. Phillips, "Citizen engagement: beyond the customer revolution," *Canadian Public Administration*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer 1997), pp.255-273, pp. 268-269.

90. EKOS, *Rethinking Citizen Engagement*, pp. 11-14.

91. Ibid., p. 22.

92. Ibid., pp. 23-24.

93. Ibid.

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