

▶ THE TANSLEY LECTURE

Analysis and Evidence for Good Public Policy: The Demand and Supply Equation

Presented by Mel Cappe

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Former President, Institute for Research on Public Policy
Former Clerk of the Privy Council, Government of Canada*

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INTRODUCTION

It is a great honour to be asked to give the Tansley Lecture at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy (JSGS). I knew each of the three named icons of public policy: Don Tansley, Tommy Shoyama and Al Johnson. When Don Tansley was tapped by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to head the Anti-Inflation Board (AIB), I, a brash, young economist and a new public servant, was approached to work at the AIB. So, I met Don Tansley. He was already a senior official of great note on his third or fourth career, then working for the federal government.

Tansley was a senior official who went to work in government after the Second World War because he believed it was a calling. For him and senior officials like him, public service was a chance to “do good”: the noun “good”. Today, it remains a calling and indeed, one can do “good” from the perch of the senior official by helping elected governments make Canada a better place. While some believe this is naïve, it is true.

In 1976, I was working in the Treasury Board Secretariat and fought vigorously to avoid being involved in implementing wage and price controls that I felt were misguided despite Don Tansley’s very able management of the program. I narrowly avoided the appointment, but I am sure I would have learned much from working with Tansley.

In addition, I met Al Johnson in the late 1970s. Johnson was the former

Secretary to the Treasury Board and was then President of the CBC. He too was on his third or fourth career. Later in life, I got to know him even better after he retired because of his son Andy, who still works as a policy leader at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

I learned much from Tommy Shoyama. Gordon MacNabb, the then Deputy Minister of the then Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, was chairing a meeting on the fourth floor of the Langevin Block. My boss in the Treasury Board invited me to attend that meeting. Michael Pitfield, the then Clerk, was sitting against the wall reading the newspaper, apparently not paying attention to the meeting. Every now and then, he would lower the newspaper and look over the top at a deputy minister and glare. From that experience, I learned what not to do. This room of all-male deputy ministers kicked around the issues in a most thoughtful and sophisticated way.

That was true of everyone except one; halfway down the table, a diminutive, cigar-smoking, chair-tilting Japanese fellow just looked ahead, puffed on his cigar and rocked back and forth in his chair silently. Then, at the end of the meeting, Gordon MacNabb, who was chairing the meeting, looked down the table through the cloud of smoke and said: “Before we wrap up, what do you think, Tommy?” Shoyama leaned forward, stubbed out the cigar, paused for thirty or forty seconds, looked inscrutably down the table, and gave the most insightful, surgical, perceptive analysis of all the issues and turned the meeting on its head.

I forget now, through the haze of time, what his particular critique was. But without intervening, he had built up the tension. Everyone wanted to know what Tommy thought. Afterwards, he drew the meeting to the conclusion he wanted. I later ran into Tommy at the University of Victoria when I was Clerk. I asked him what he was doing; he demurred and said he was merely a pensioner tending to his garden.

These three giants of public service, who started right here in Saskatchewan, redefined the role of government for generations. Sure, they were not elected, but they served their political masters and they had ideas.

They cared. All three were admitted to the Order of Canada and gave life to the Order's motto "Desiderantes Meliorem Patriam": "They desire a better country". They were determined to make Canada a better place.

It was an honour to have known these three inspirational leaders. It is also a great honour to be asked to give the 2011 Tansley Lecture at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy. Tansley, Johnson and Shoyama were traders in the market of ideas. I will discuss the demand and supply of ideas in order to bring analysis and evidence to bear in the development of good public policy. We may end up saying that those were "the good old days". However, I have a friend who likes to remind me that "the good old days" are usually the result of bad and inadequate memories. Rather, I would like to argue that we are about to enter a new period: a Golden Age of Ideas—A New Enlightenment where analysis and evidence will be valued.

There will be an age where a new optimum quantity and quality of ideas will result in a reduced clearing price for an abundance of analysis and evidence. Call me naïve and call me wrong, but I would rather be accused of being misguided on that count than to be right and negative and pessimistic. The standard that Tansley, Johnson and Shoyama set can be a model for public policy once again.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES

Public policy issues are more challenging now than they were in the days of Don Tansley, or even in my day. They are particularly more complex than in the early days of Canada. It is complicated to build a railway across Canada, but it is complex to bring development to South African states in a post-Apartheid period, as Al Johnson and the Saskatchewan Government did. There is a significant difference between complicated and complex. Complicated is calculating the trajectory of a missile. Complex is raising a child. Complicated is building a railway. Complex is bringing democratic development to developing countries. Feedback loops, interdependence and linkages among issues make the problems we face now even more challenging and the requirement for solutions even more exacting.

The nature of public policy issues is becoming more interdependent and international. Almost no issue in modern public policy is without an international dimension. For example, when the financial crisis was beginning in 2007-8, many people discussed “decoupling” as if the American economy could collapse without having a profound, negative impact on the world economy. In a recent *Economist* article, Gordon Brown, the then Prime Minister of Britain, admitted that he was surprised at how interdependent the financial institutions of Great Britain were and how dependent they were on American financial institutions. Is this naïveté or silliness?

This internationalism manifests itself increasingly in the causes of public policy problems and in the nature of the solutions required. However, our global architecture is found wanting. The institutions of the G7 and G8 are inadequate for dealing with real world problems. In addition, the United Nations is too unwieldy to deal with most immediate questions. We also see the rise of internationalism in the creation of the G20—a welcome step in dealing with the post-modern challenges of the global economy and society, but one that does not solve the problems.

Furthermore, our challenges are becoming increasingly intergovernmental; neither the federal government nor the provinces can solve them alone. As such, these challenges are also becoming more interprovincial. The previously mentioned interdependence in international issues manifests itself in domestic issues as well. In fact, there is no contemporary issue that does not have federal and provincial dimensions.

Unequivocally, international trade negotiations are a federal government responsibility. However, they require collaboration because most require provincial implementation. Provinces need to be engaged in federal matters. For example, National Defence, clearly a federal responsibility, requires provinces’ involvement in base locations and closures and in aid to the civil power. In fact, the recent decision to reject the BHP Billiton (BHP) proposal to take over the Potash Corporation based in Saskatchewan has reverberations across all Canadian investment intentions. The national securities regulator should be a welcome simplification for

investors from abroad, but it seems governments cannot find a way to collaborate in the national interest. Moreover, even the public financing of health care, which had its creative and communal start right here in Saskatchewan, cannot be resolved by any one order of government.

Increasingly, our challenges relate to an order of government unknown to the Fathers of Confederation: cities. As such, solutions to these problems are missing from the Constitution. Perhaps the most important instrument of development for Canadians has no base in our constitution and no life in Canadian political discourse. However, this is problematic logically. Local issues are often the most important to individuals and local issues reverberate nationally and internationally.

Progressively, science and technology are having a dramatic impact on our ability to define and solve problems. Climate change is a fact. Based on scientific evidence, there is an overwhelming consensus that climate change is anthropomorphic—caused by humans. As such, the solution requires common instruments that meet the scientific test.

Social media is changing the dynamism and cohesion of Canadian society and we need to consider the implications. For instance, hewing wood and drawing water is now high tech in that, for it to be successful, it requires a skilled and continuously learning workforce as well as unrelenting innovation. Clearly, technology makes the solutions to our public policy problems that much more challenging.

Demographic shifts are another significant public policy concern. In fact, demography presents another insidious problem: older adults. On their behalf, veteran policy makers are going to be imposing intergenerational inequities that our children will not accept. Funding pensions, controlling health care costs, adapting to a new culture, and using a robust and resilient social infrastructure to improve productivity and economic growth are all going to be more difficult in light of changing demographics.

Another factor to consider is that the analytic bases of the solutions to our problems are becoming more interdisciplinary. Previously, “interdis-

ciplinary” meant no discipline. Now it means bringing together teams of people who are deep in their fields and who use their expertise in a coordinated fashion to analyze problems and bring evidence to the issues. Ultimately, they find solutions that work. Therefore, this means that more and more problems are what we now call, in typical technical jargon, “wicked problems”. Such problems require time, evidence, and analysis to understand and ultimately to find solutions.

Effective public policy comes from more than simply hiring intelligent people. It requires more than having sound statistical bases; more than just effort; more than time and treasure. Wicked problems require new ways of thinking and new ways of working. Solving them requires bright, young thinkers like those produced at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy.

In addition, in the current context of Canadian minority governments, there will be an even shorter-term focus on public policy debate. This will create an inability for governments to deal with wicked problems. Minority governments mean increased partisanship and petty, bitter bickering.

Thus the production function of ideas has changed. Therefore, the supply of ideas has shifted. The marginal value of ideas, analysis and evidence in finding public policy solutions is increasing. The public policy solutions we need are going to be improved by applying analysis and evidence to the search for solutions.

In the 19th century, policy problems like building a railroad were indeed challenging. However, I argue the challenges of a bygone era, while challenging, were much easier to understand and much easier to address than many contemporary challenges such as climate change. Ultimately, the application of science, evidence, data, analysis, modeling and econometrics will improve our understanding of our identity, our problems and our solutions.

Decisions made following procurement and consideration of such analysis and evidence will be better decisions. They will be superior for

understanding the implications of doing nothing, for understanding the policy options before governments, and for understanding the potential consequences of action. The production function of “understanding” and of good policy choices has an increased marginal value attached to applying analysis and evidence to the process. Furthermore, the quality of public policy decisions depends much more now than ever before on the depth, breadth and quality of analysis and evidence brought to bear on the problem. So, if we are talking about the market for ideas, let us look at the supply of public policy solutions.

THE SUPPLY OF PUBLIC POLICY IDEAS

Mentioned earlier, there are unique challenges to contemporary public policy. As such, innovative and complex ideas are required to address them. Now, consider where these ideas have come from, are now coming from, from where they are going to come, and how they have been and will be produced.

This section will discuss public services in general, but due to my knowledge of the federal level, the following examples and the principles will have more traction with federal politics than with provincial concerns. Regardless, the examples are apt and recognizable to those more familiar with Saskatchewan policy. To begin, we must consider history by recalling the 1950s and 1960s.

First, let us analyze the public service. In the days of Don Tansley, Tommy Shoyama and Al Johnson, the public service had a privileged position in advising elected officials. In those days, public servants built analytic models and econometric models; they debated problems in structured and disciplined ways in order to find effective solutions. In addition, the public service was much less hierarchical. As such, recent graduates, enthusiastic new hires, could actually meet the Deputy Minister of Fisheries or Finance or the Secretary to the Treasury Board. These new public servants were all well-trained “experts” who brought the analytic rigour of planning, programming and budgeting systems to government.

When I joined the government in the Planning Branch of the Treasury

Board, an organization created by Al Johnson, anyone could take the government phone book, open it to a random page, and likely find a unit with the word “planning” or “analysis” in its title. This suggests that the public service once privileged people with Master’s degrees in political science and in sociology as well as those with Master’s of Public Administration (MPA) or Master’s of Business Administration (MBA). While not the case as much anymore, there were even Canadians with doctorates in economics and operations research from the best schools in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and France. These were intelligent people with ideas, not ideology—smart people with learning and thinking abilities—people like Tansley, Johnson and Shoyama. They took government positions at the provincial level with the goal of improving Saskatchewan.

In Saskatchewan, as in many provinces, political doubts about the non-partisan nature of senior provincial public servants often lead many dedicated officers to either leave for Ottawa of their own volition, or as often happened, they were forced out of the provincial service by incoming governments. Ottawa, the Government of Canada and the people of Canada received the benefit of generations of highly educated, well-trained and sophisticated public servants from Saskatchewan and several other provinces serving Canada. These public servants built econometric models and used pre-war-developed Keynesian analytic frameworks. In those days, technique and technology provided all-purpose models for each and every policy challenge.

Starting in the late ’60s and ’70s, as baby boomers graduated from university, the public service grew dramatically. New hires facilitated the growth of opportunity for careers in public services at both the provincial and federal levels. The growth of the welfare state, of active government policy, programming, and activity required analysis and evidence. In those days, the capacity of the public service was enormous. Academics were often hired to contribute in designing policy and solving problems. In the process, they became public servants.

However, in the early ’90s, Canada rediscovered fiscal responsibility. At

this time, there were incessant across-the-board budget cuts of three to five percent, three or four times a year on line items and on the overheads of government. Nothing changed. Then, in the mid-'90s, Program Review resulted in dramatic cuts to government programs, many of which were eliminated. In 1994, as the Deputy Minister of Environment, I led a 33 percent cut to program spending in the department, which meant an intended total rethink of program and organizational design. Yet, somehow, we had to continue to deliver these public services. We cut 35 percent of the staff in three years. We went from 72 offices across the country to 19. In doing so, we had to maintain the delivery of public services. So, we decapitated the public service, limiting its thinking capacity. In the end, we favoured operations and delivery for the present and in the process reduced future policy capacity.

Subsequently, successive Clerks of the Privy Council mandated reviews and reinvestment in policy capacity. Jocelyne Bourgon, me, and my successors set up processes to increase policy capacity. Bourgon's initiative was to set up the Policy Research Initiative and to encourage Deputy Ministers to increase policy units and capacity. I started an 'elite' recruitment initiative (now called Recruitment of Policy Leaders) where we got the Public Service Commission to give the Privy Council Office delegated authority to make instant offers to Canadians studying at Oxford, Cambridge, the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), the Sorbonne and Harvard. That program now extends to all universities. While we were not encouraged to use the word "elite", the people we hoped to hire were just that. This was despite the fact that the Public Service Commission believed the public service did not have a recruitment problem because they received thousands of applications for every advertised position. However, it seemed less than ideal to want thousands of regular folk. Instead, 100 very qualified, impressive public servants each year is a superior hiring model. Ultimately, this focus on elite candidates can transform the public service.

Today, many believe young people will not pursue a career in the public service because they prefer to have several careers in their lifetime. However, Johnson, Shoyama and Tansley were each on their third or

fourth career by the time they were established in the public service. In fact, it is common that many people, like me, including those who intend to be academics, join the public service for one-year assignments, intending to return to their preferred profession, but end up making a career of their temporary appointment. The reason for this is that the public service offers fascinating challenges and the chance to work with stimulating colleagues. Eventually, many end up in their original chosen profession, but not before spending decades improving Canadian society.

Many public servants did not need these bright young hires in order to feel motivated to stay in the public service. Rather, if they came for a year or two, several would stay for longer and contribute to hiring other good people. If they happened to leave for the private sector, or to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), they would carry with them an understanding of the public service that would be valuable in the public. After several years, there developed a cadre of intelligent people with the capacity to influence positive change on the public sector. However, as in any field, employees need to feel utilized for them to remain. All employees have to find value and satisfaction in their job and they have to feel as though they are making a difference by being given an opportunity where their analysis and evidence is used. Oftentimes, deputy ministers were committed, but their direct reports were intimidated.

However, the capacity for public servants to feel involved and important has been declining secularly over time. Instead, now more than ever, ministers need the public service to be a filter that sifts through the ideas promulgated by some legitimate and some illegitimate proponents of wacky policy ideas. Ministers need a public service that can apply what academics might term “discernment”. Scholars have the capacity to abstract, conceptualize, and theorize from crass, rude language. Their “discernment” is a much more elegant and polite way of saying “bullshit filter”. Whatever you call it, ministers need a discerning bullshit filter. Over the last few decades, the focus of analytic policy capacity has been shifting. For example, NGOs have grown in importance as the public service has lost its privileged position as advisor. However, the quality of

analysis by NGOs is highly varied. In the environmental sector, there are groups like the World Wildlife Fund (or the Worldwide Fund for Nature) that base their positions on science and evidence and use analysis. As such, it is very difficult to dismiss their positions without addressing the analysis with a counter argument. There are others, like Greenpeace and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that merely take positions and use rhetoric to achieve their goals.

In addition, some special interest groups have become more important, which means that the perspective of the public interest is now either missing, or is in competition with the private pleadings of these groups. For instance, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) used to be just a lobby group. Then they hired a Vice-President of Policy who hires academics for the purpose of analysis and argument development in order to lobby with legitimacy.

Analysis and evidence is increasingly moving in to corporate interests as well. In fact, many business groups base their positions on discipline and analysis. The Canadian Council of Chief Executives, for example, have always mobilized strong analytic bases for their positions going back to the *Competition Act*, on the *Patent Act* amendments in the '80s, on free trade in the '80s and '90s and on several other issues more recently. In contrast, the smaller trade associations do not have the capacity to analyze and are better known for their private pleadings, which are marred with rhetoric instead of analysis. However, the public, the media, and, unfortunately, ministers, do not make these particular distinctions.

Furthermore, banks have developed into powerful analysis machines. Charlie Bailey, the former Chair of TD Financial Group, decided to make TD a policy player. He hired Don Drummond from the Department of Finance. As such, TD Economics has become a source of strong and forceful economic analysis that is now required reading in government departments. The other banks, BMO, RBC, CIBC and Scotiabank all have a new capacity to do analysis and marshal evidence in order to legitimize their private pleadings and societal policy analysis.

Another issue affecting contemporary public policy is the media. The media is becoming simultaneously more and less analytic. The drive for the 30-second sound bite diminishes the quality of news. On the other hand, the *Globe and Mail's* redesign intends to leave news to the Web and deeper analysis to the printed page.

In addition, the public is looking to new sources for ideas. In fact, the growth of online news aggregators—commentators and bloggers who lack editing—are a relatively new phenomenon. Remember, editors play a very useful function. The lack of an editor makes most bloggers not worth reading. However, that does not stop others from using such sources, most of which lack quality control. The role of the academy in public policy has changed as well. Academics once existed above the fray, but as the issues became more complex, the professoriate has become an important source of op-eds and analytic media pieces as well as serious scholarly work. In terms of these publications, it is challenging to find the optimal degree of simplicity without oversimplifying. The development of MPA, MPP and other programs, and the proliferation of public policy schools like the one here at JSGS and at the School of Public Policy and Governance at the University of Toronto, as well as the proliferation of other such schools at Canadian universities, facilitates the production of analysts for significant policy. These are interdisciplinary and high-powered schools that do good work. They contribute to the supply of analysis and evidence through the production of graduates and research.

This amalgamation of academia, media, and policy has created a class of political and policy actors that is much more prevalent in other countries than in Canada: “Public Intellectuals”. *Prospect* magazine in the UK and *Foreign Policy* magazine in the US each publish lists of public intellectuals—people that contribute to the public discourse in a way that elevates the public debate. In other countries, they are becoming very influential. In Canada, we cut down our tall poppies—when one voice becomes too influential, we ignore it. In fact, in the *Prospect* listing, only John Ralston Saul and Michael Ignatieff have ever been listed. Unfortunately, they are no longer on the list.

Think tanks play a crucial role in the agenda setting and the public policy analysis and development process. Publications from institutions like the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP) have become suggested readings at Canadian public policy schools. These schools, and the academics doing research at them, pass on their research findings to decision makers such as ministers, deputy ministers and other senior officials.

However, it is important to note that not all think tanks have the same mandate: some are ideologically based, some are contract research based and beholden to funders, and some are truly independent and focused on stimulating public debate. Some think tanks ask questions first, while others start with answers. For example, IRPP's independence is guarded by an endowment that allows IRPP to decide what research will be completed, irrespective of the interest of outside funders and a distinguished Board of Directors. For most think tanks, you cannot tell the players without a program. Thus, we need a professional, non-partisan public service.

Political parties were once a source of great ideas. For instance, Chaviva Hosek, now the President of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, used to be the Director of the Liberal Party Research Bureau. This organization developed counter evidence for MPs to use in committees and party platforms for elections. Anne Golden, now the President of the Conference Board of Canada, used to be the Director of Research for the Liberal Party of Ontario. Hugh Segal, now Senator Segal, Professor of Public Policy at Queen's University's School of Policy Studies, was Chief of Staff to Premier Bill Davis in Ontario and Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Once creators of innovative ideas, now the successors to these research bureaux and political party apparatchiks prepare MPs for Question Period and have the sole goal of refuting the opposition's perspective. As a result, policy and analysis are no longer the objective and the method of solving problems.

In addition, we have to recognize that these elements apply to the municipal level as well. Of course, municipalities deliver real services to real

people. But they too need some policy analytic capacity. Moreover, they are notoriously weak in meeting that test. Municipalities have always focused on operations for obvious reasons, but need policy capacity to improve the effectiveness of programs, including their targeting and their delivery. When IRPP Immigration and Integration research was presented to the City Manager of Toronto, she bemoaned the incapacity of her staff to absorb and keep up with the literature because they were preoccupied with the day-to-day responsibilities of delivery.

Finally, Parliament and provincial legislatures should be hotbeds of new ideas. Unlike the public service, they get renewed and revitalized every four years at least in the House of Commons. However, it seems that the Senate is the last bastion of serious, non-partisan thinking on tough problems. Senate committees can put issues on the agenda and deal with complexity better and in a less partisan fashion than the House. Regardless, partisan bickering prevents marshalling evidence and analysis.

So, we have the shifting of production and supply of analysis and evidence. The public service is still active in some areas of analysis and evidence. However, the centre of this function has declined and shifted from the service to the other groups.

DEMAND FOR PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE

So, if supply is changing but is not in bad shape, then how does demand factor into the equation? Who are the demandeurs of public policy ideas?

First and foremost, senior officials like Tansley, Johnson and Shoyama were clear demandeurs of analysis and evidence. When I was in the Department of Finance, I vividly remember how the whole organization would jump to attention, mobilize the junior analysts, and swing into operation with a simple scribble on the edge of a memo by the deputy minister.

Moreover, when Shoyama was Deputy Minister and I was Senior Economist, a note I had written arguing against supply management of milk

and in particular an export subsidy program for cheese of some thirteen million dollars went to the Deputy Minister. He scribbled in the margin: “How much is the entire real cost to Canadian consumers and taxpayers?” In response, we developed a little supply and demand model of dairy products, imposed the quantity constraints and the subsidy, and measured the welfare loss triangles as well as the transfer rectangles. Another note went up to Shoyama with the measures of the costs to consumers. Because of that little inquisitive question from the Deputy Minister, we were able to muster the analysis that killed that export subsidy. Granted, we failed at the death of supply management, but we had this modest success on the export subsidy: all attributable to evidence and analysis.

Incidents like this prove that analysis can directly change a policy outcome for the good of Canadians. The deputy minister simply had to ask the right question. Therefore, senior officials are key demanders of analysis and evidence. When the deputy minister is the demandeur of analysis, all the way down the line, assistant deputy ministers, director generals, directors and supervisors follow the role model and become demandeurs of analysis. Each subsequent official in the line then becomes a role model for his or her staff. Ultimately, the power of the deputy asking the right questions should never be underestimated.

And of course, the deputy follows the lead of the minister. Eventually, the minister sets the standard. If ministers are curious or interested; if ministers recognize they are always in negotiations and need analysis and evidence to convince their international, federal/provincial, or other ministerial colleagues; then they are the most powerful of demandeurs.

However, if ministers come to office with answers instead of questions; if ministers arrive in capitals with ideology instead of curiosity; if ministers come to office selling instead of buying; if they come to their jobs with conclusions and not introductions, then analysis and evidence are unnecessary. As such, it is up to ministers to be demandeurs that set the standard for their operations.

In addition, of course, ministers follow the premier or the prime minister. So, a prime minister or premier with all the answers does not need analysis to help him or her come to conclusions. For that matter, if that is the case, they do not need ministers either.

Oftentimes, officials have preconceived conclusions and simply need evidence to support their claims. This, of course, represents policy-based evidence. This applies at all levels of government. Councillors, mayors and aldermen of municipalities fall into the same category in that if they are interested in understanding the nature of complex problems and in finding solutions that accomplish their objectives, then they have to be demandeurs of analysis and evidence. The city chief administrative officers need to know what they do not know, ask the right questions, and have the staff to be able to do the analysis and marshal the evidence.

However, let us not forget that we expect extraordinary results from those who are, respectfully and complimentarily, really quite ordinary people. Those who put aside a career in other areas and let their name stand for elected office deserve a great amount of respect. They have taken on a brutal life. Politics is increasingly becoming a contact sport. Many believe that ego drives these people, and because of this they are not deserving of our respect. Although, if one believes in a representative democracy, we owe these politicians a great debt.

While it looks like politicians live a glamorous life, this is not true. It is difficult work. For example, the Minister of Foreign Affairs jetting off to Qatar for an international meeting on Libya looks exciting. However, it is difficult work, and I am positive the Minister would love to spend a weekend home with his family every now and then. Similarly, the member of the House of Commons for the Northwest Territories (NWT) that spends a day and a half getting home each weekend is not living a luxurious life. I recently sent an email to berate the CBC reporter who giggled when he noticed the Member of Parliament for Yukon falling asleep during Question Period. Anyone in that MP's position might need to nod off now and then.

We take these small-town lawyers, business people, teachers, and provincial administrators and put them in charge of billions of dollars of spending. We expect these people to not make mistakes or do or say the wrong thing despite dealing with inordinately complex and complicated issues. In fact, we expect perfection. Well, they are not perfect. They are human. They have human foibles and inadequacies. Their dogs die, and their children get sick. They have a fight with their spouse one morning and are expected to go to work and not let it affect them. Moreover, we expect them to make myriad decisions on extraordinarily sophisticated problems and to make the correct decision every time. These are just unreasonable expectations.

In addition, we take these people, who we hope are well formed and well trained and who we want to have good judgment, and say, “do your best”. Well, they have two ways to make decisions. One, they can be open to the analysis and ideas that are going to come at them from their officials, from their constituents, from academic experts, from NGOs and special interest groups and from business people and think tanks. They can weigh this evidence and analysis, take advice and use their judgment in order to come to a decision they hope is best.

Alternatively, they could use their biases, ideologies and preconceptions and ignore the evidence and analysis and bull ahead with the decision that first comes to their mind, never wavering despite an abundance of cajoling, lobbying, pressuring and convincing. Unfortunately, more and more, politicians are using the latter approach to decision making. They ignore new ideas. The shift from the former to the latter is subtle, insidious, and irrefutable.

Consider two examples: one positive and one negative. In addition, I will use two recent “conservative” governments to make my point to avoid appearing partisan. In Saskatchewan, Premier Brad Wall, facing enormous pressure on the potash decision, asked the Conference Board to do a full, in-depth analysis of the risks and opportunities for the Province and its citizens regarding the BHP purchase offer. I found flaws in the analysis, and I disagreed with the decision, but I could not fault the

process. The Premier's position was taken with the benefit of analysis and evidence.

However, let us examine the decision to scrap the Canadian Long Form Census. Besides the fact that Minister Tony Clement used what any dictionary calls "a false statement made with deliberate intent to deceive" when he said he had been advised by Statistics Canada that it was acceptable, the decision to stop the Long Form Census basically undermines the evidentiary basis of who we are, what our problems are, and what we can usefully do to address them. If we do not want to know about the policy challenges we face, then stop collecting useful data. Blame the bureaucrats for recommending it even when they did not. This is not just about Industry Minister, Tony Clement, but also about Canadian International Development Agency Minister, Bev Oda. She had every right to refuse the advice of her officials. However, she said that she was following the advice of her officials. She did not. It seems as though it is becoming common to blame the bureaucrats.

Call the census coercive, but continue to coerce people to stop at stop signs because there is a public good involved, or to fill out the Labour Force Survey in the public interest. Call the census intrusive, even though we oblige all kinds of other data like the Census of Agriculture etc. Call the census a violation of privacy, even though there has never been a divulgence of census data in our history. But use these hot button words as justification for stopping to collect data that is a genuine public good, competently collected, used in quality control of other sample surveys and helps us understand our problems and find policy solutions.

In other words, if crime statistics are going down and society is becoming more adept at isolating and dealing with the causes and determinants of crime, then we may be better off. However, if we use fear as a political instrument by talking up crime, then we can ignore the evidence. In addition, as the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety told the Standing Committee on Privilege and House Affairs, singing over and over again, we have to "let the punishment fit the

crime”, like a 21st Century Mikado. If singing, “let the punishment fit the crime” is the justification for public policy, then we will get public policy by Gilbert and Sullivan instead of public policy based on evidence and analysis. We will get policy-based evidence.

So, yes, we have mere mortals expected to make immortal decisions. Not surprisingly, we get mortal quality decisions. However, can we improve that quality by improving the decision-making process? Can we improve the decision-making process by using analysis and evidence in coming to judgment? The answer is “yes”.

SHIFTING DEMAND AND SUPPLY CURVES

The model I have described has analytic value. I will apply the model to public policy challenges in the abstract.

If we hire more good people or invest in training of the officials we have, we can shift the supply curve of ideas down and to the right. That is, for a given quantity of ideas, there will be a lower price or cost for those ideas to enter into the decision-making process. Similarly, if ministers put aside their ideology and become open to analysis and evidence, they will essentially shift the demand curve up and to the right, increasing the value of ideas as they are put into action. This increases the quantity of ideas used for every price or cost of analysis we face. Thus, we will have a new equilibrium equating supply and demand of ideas, with more ideas available to inform public policy decision making and to improve the quality of such decisions. Ultimately, in the production function of good public policy, the quality of decisions made will improve.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I return to my thesis: We have seen a secular decline in the use of analysis and evidence in public policy. However, the underlying production function of good public policy decisions has not changed fundamentally. Rather, the changing nature of public policy challenges has increased the marginal value of analysis and evidence.

Don Tansley, Tommy Shoyama and Al Johnson mastered the art and science of public policy. Yes, they may have lived in the Golden Age of the use of analysis and evidence. However, the New Enlightenment of the valued application of analysis and evidence will return. We will see scholarly application of the disciplines of the social sciences and the new professionalism of graduates who have truly mastered the art and science of public policy. These graduates will apply their skills in a way that will prove their necessity to our political leaders.

Lest you think I am bemoaning the lack of intellectual leadership in our political class, let us review the political leadership we have across the country. We often berate the quality of political leadership, but consider: Greg Selinger has an MPP from Queen's University and a PhD from LSE. Stephen Harper has a Master's degree from the University of Calgary in economics, lectured at the University of Calgary, and was on the Board of IRPP before returning to politics. Michael Ignatieff has degrees from Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, and the University of Toronto. He also taught at Harvard. Bob Rae, a Rhodes Scholar with degrees from Oxford and the University of Toronto, is the former Chair of the Board of IRPP. In addition, Stéphane Dion has degrees from Laval and Sciences Po in Paris. He taught at the Universités de Montréal and Laval. Jack Layton has degrees from McGill and a Doctorate from York and taught at Ryerson, while Danny Williams was a Rhodes Scholar with degrees from Memorial, Oxford, and Dalhousie.

Obviously, these are not inherently anti-intellectual people. These are not dummies. They do not need the text that I sometimes think we need in graduate schools of public policy called *Public Policy for Dummies*. These people should be natural demandeurs of and consumers of analysis and evidence.

At the end of the day, because of the changing nature of public policy problems, we need to maintain or increase the supply of analysis and evidence in the public policy process. We also need to increase the demand for analysis and evidence in the public policy process. I am sure that our political institutions have the wherewithal and robustness to in-

duce us to see the value of shifting those curves to the right—to increase supply *and* demand.

So, permit me a concrete suggestion in the search for big ideas. I have always avoided Royal Commissions, but in the absence of a big-ideas, priorities agenda for Canada, let us explore the possibility.

In the 1950s, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent asked Walter Gordon to head a Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects. Douglas LePan of Queen's University was the Director of Research. They produced shelves of background studies and analysis. This generated big ideas like foreign investment review.

In the 1980s, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau asked Donald Macdonald to head a Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada. The Other David Smith, the economist from Queen's, was one of the five Directors of Research. Again, shelves of background studies and analysis were produced, and they generated big ideas like free trade.

Perhaps we need a Royal Commission every thirty years.

Therefore, I propose the creation of a Royal Commission on the Economic, Social, Cultural, Environmental and International Prospects of Canada. I further propose that a distinguished public policy scholar be named Director of Research. Maybe then we would get an increase in both the supply and demand of good ideas.

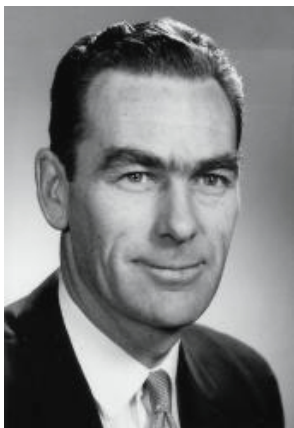
In addition, in my traditionally optimistic perspective on life, I will suggest that we are about to embark on a new Golden Age of public policy that would have made Al Johnson, Tommy Shoyama and Don Tansley proud. At least, I hope so.

Thank you for your attention.

► THE TANSLEY LECTURE

Named in honour of Donald D. Tansley and his remarkable career as a senior civil servant in Canada, this lecture highlights the various organizational approaches which have been used to implement innovative and often contentious policy decisions by governments. Each lecturer is selected on the basis of knowledge of, or experience with, using or adapting the machinery of government or the non-profit sector to achieve an ambitious policy objective or better serve the public interest. At times, this requires a major restructuring of government and its agencies or a reorientation of the public sector relative to other sectors in society.

Donald D. Tansley (1925 - 2007)



Born in Regina on May 19, 1925, Donald D. Tansley served overseas with the Regina Rifle Regiment. He joined the Government of Saskatchewan in 1950 after graduating in arts and commerce from the University of Saskatchewan. During his time in government, Mr. Tansley played a pivotal role in several areas, including chairing the committee that implemented the country's first working model of medicare. Mr. Tansley spent four years as a key deputy minister in the modernization of the

New Brunswick government before moving to Ottawa where he served the federal government in various positions, including Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. Mr. Tansley was noted for his great organizational skills and his ability to work in challenging public policy environments.

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