

The Yellowhead Institute: Decolonizing Canadian Notions of Governance

Canada's history of colonization continues to govern the racist relationship with Indigenous communities. The Yellowhead Institute, a First Nation led research centre based out of Ryerson University, contributes to Indigenous resistance against oppressive structures by critically examining government policy from community driven evidence-based perspectives.

Rooted in community-based research practices, Yellowhead Institute scrutinizes government policy and advocates for decolonization, promoting innovative and progressive models for First Nation jurisdiction. Through knowledge mobilization, the Institute also acts as resource for Indigenous self-determination, translating research into accessible tools for practical application.

POLICY BRIEFS

As a platform that highlights perspectives from key thinkers on First Nation issues, the Yellowhead Institute publishes short topical briefs on Indigenous policy. Policy briefs are a means of monitoring, analyzing, and understanding how policies are going to impact

communities from an indigenous perspective. Based in a community grounded approach, the institute works directly with Indigenous groups to focus attention on policies, legislations, and regulations that impact their communities.

The library of policy briefs are accessible online, and act as both a resource for communities who are concerned about particular issues, and as an educational tool for non-Indigenous people to learn and engage with policies, legislations, and regulations that affect Indigenous peoples.

COMMUNITY GROUNDED APPROACH

The Yellowhead Institute values the notion that knowledge should benefit communities. Based in community-first perspectives, the outcomes of research become tools and resources that are accessible for community needs. Downloadable resources accompany research and publications, ranging from overviews of important policies and legislations, to key facts and critical analyses that are more accessible and tangible for practical use.

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

Currently, the Yellowhead Institute is bringing attention to the implementation of the Federal governments *Indigenous Rights, Recognition and Implementation Framework*. Trudeau, in his campaign, committed to a new "nation-to-nation" relationship that would recognize Indigenous rights, encourage cooperation, and engage in partnerships. The *Indigenous Rights,*

Recognition and Implementation Framework was established as Trudeau's plan to transform the existing system. With the announcement of the Framework, the policy and legislation has quickly been implemented. Researchers from the Yellowhead Institute have analyzed the Framework in the special report, [Canada's Emerging Indigenous Rights Framework: A Critical Analysis](#). King and Pasternak raise concerns that the current approach further domesticates Indigenous self-determination with a narrow perspective that refrains from challenging existing models of governance. In addition to the special report, there is a policy brief and community resources on the issue. Going forward, the Institute will continue to engage with communities, researchers, and others on this subject.

To learn more about the Yellowhead Institute, check out their [website](#). To get involved, contact Director Hayden King at hayden.king@ryerson.ca.

Content for this article was sourced from conversations with Director, Hayden King and website material.

Mondernization in the Ontario Public Service

February 2017 marked the start of an ambitious project to transform the Ontario Public Service (OPS). The Public Service Renewal project was started with the release of a discussion document, [Transforming the Ontario Public Service for the Future](#), launching a year-long engagement process on how to build a more innovative and inclusive public service. Through in-person and online engagement activities, OPS employees and stakeholders provided feedback

and contributed to the development of the [OPS of the Future: 2018 Action Plan](#).

In recent years, public services across the world have undertaken significant steps to re-think how they can more effectively and efficiently improve service delivery. Adopting principles and theories of innovation and design, public service transformation is presented as an essential step in addressing complex challenges and wicked policy problems in a world of emerging technologies. OPS of the Future: 2018 Action Plan is a reflection of this growing trend and the OPS is just one of the many entities engaging in public service renewal.

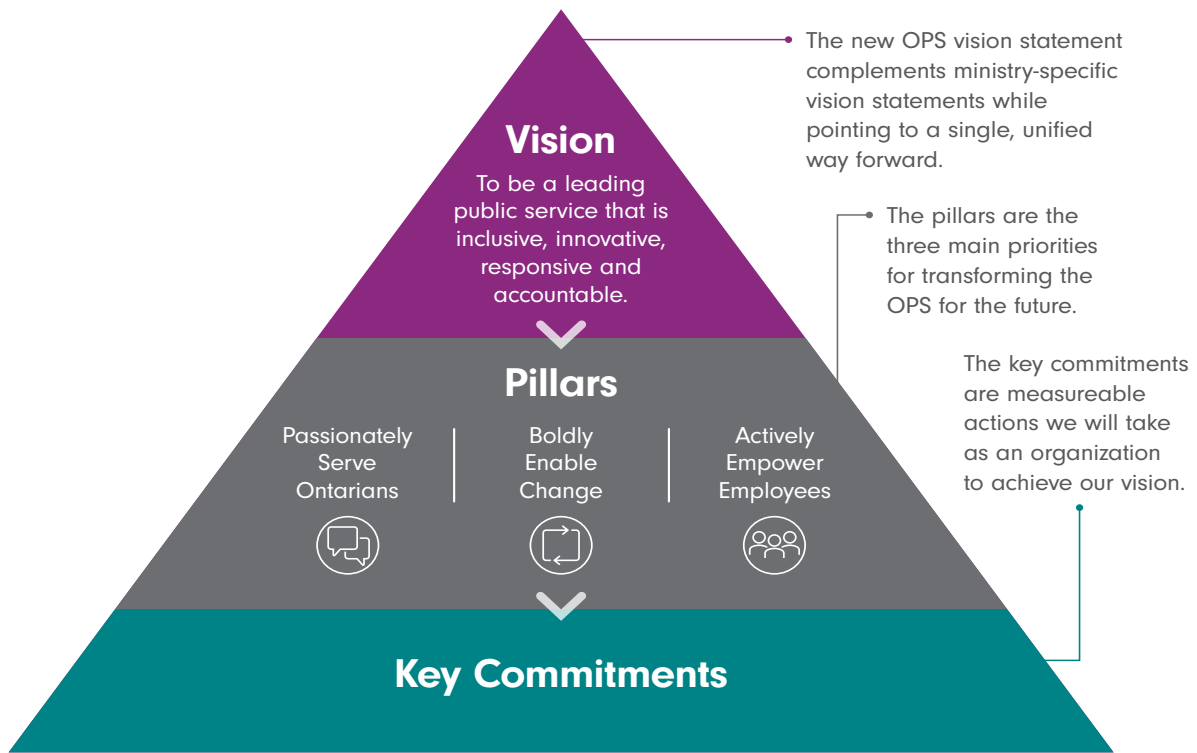
THE ACTION PLAN

The action plan for OPS renewal outlines a single, unified vision for the organization, with priorities, key commitments, and activities that are to be adopted across all ministries.

The action plan aligns with standard themes in current public sector renewal projects. Key commitments and actions range from flexible organizational structures, modern tools, innovative practices, as well as inclusive and diverse environments.

Commitments under the pillar “Passionately Serve Ontarians” are rooted in ideas of making service delivery more efficient and effective through citizen-centered design, and evidence-based decision making. The purpose of this pillar is to improve service delivery to better meet the needs of Ontarians.

For the second pillar, “Boldly Enable Change,” the OPS commits to moving away from risk-averse practices, and embracing innovation and transparency to provide more efficient



and responsive solutions. Under this pillar, actions include more collaborative and flexible working teams that cross both ministries and disciplines.

Under the third pillar, commitments and actions to “Actively Empower Employees” speak to fostering a workplace that provides employees with opportunities to grow and learn in an environment that is accountable, flexible, digital, inclusive, and diverse.

IMPLEMENTATION

Under a decentralized implementation process, the action plan states that, “ministries, divisions and teams should find ways to align with and build upon the three pillars in their strategies and initiatives” (OPS of the Future: 2018 Action Plan, pg. 28). As an appendix to the plan, the Making it Real section provides some practical ideas for integrating the actions into their day-to-day work activities.

It will be interesting to see how this action plan trickles down to impact the day-to-day activities of employees, transform functions of the OPS, and improve delivery of government services to Ontarians.

Since the launch of the action plan, OPS employees have been generating ideas about how to make government more efficient and effective through the Big Bold Ideas Challenge, which launched internally alongside the [Planning for Prosperity public consultation](#).

Content for this article was sourced from the [Ontario Public Service of the Future: 2018 Action Plan](#) and the Future of the OPS team.

Featured Publications

Understanding policy workers' policy innovation capacity: An expository and qualitative mixed methods evaluation study of a policy hackathon program in Prince Edward Island, Canada

In 2018, the Government of PEI, Veterans Affairs Canada, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Start-Up Zone brought together 49 individuals from the public and private sector to participate in a Policy Hackathon Program. A series of learning sessions were delivered while participants moved through a public policy case competition. This paper evaluates and studies this program and makes design recommendations for future policy hackathon programs. In the process, the paper draws attention to not only the relevance, performance and impact of the Program, but also larger discussions related to the unique attributes of the islandness of public policy, policy innovation, and austerity on an island.

The rise of policy innovation labs: A catalog of policy innovation labs in Canada

The purpose of this directory, and the Centre, is to create a community of practice that will connect policy innovators with other innovation lab

professionals. Shining light on the activities and projects taking place in the innovation space will serve to build this community from within, as well as highlighting the successes of policy innovation for those working outside this space in academia, government, and industry. CPIPE serves as a platform where innovators can learn from one another and showcase their accomplishments, and promote the values of policy innovation on a larger scale.

CPIPE is currently in the process of updating the inventory, with a focus on on government labs.

We invite you to share any labs that should be part of the inventory.



Contact Us

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