



What Leads To Impactful Foresight

30 years of Canadian Government Foresight

Jonathan Calof PhD Telfer School of
Management, University of Ottawa

Brian Colton, NRC

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**FUTURE
IN THE MAKING**

Research Study

- Challenge: Initiated from interested senior Canadian government foresight practitioners and Dr. Calof.
- Examine the development of foresight in the Canadian Government since its inception.
- Learn from those involved why the changes arose
- Identify lessons learned, what worked, what did not work and critical success factors

The opportunity

- Significant recent changes in Canadian government foresight
- New executive director for Policy Horizons Canada and new Assistant Deputy Minister
- Results will be discussed with relevant bureaucrats after FTA 2018

Methodology

Phase 1: Based on researchers experience and literature review, develop preliminary history, CSF/impact factors.

Phase 2: Present phase 1 results to expert panel of Canadian government foresight leaders for validation, modification and ranking. (Friends over coffee)

Phase 3 – Delphi approach, present phase 2 results to current Canadian government foresight practitioners (phase three to begin tentatively Fall 2018)

Departmental units – Kind of lasted

1990- today	Department of National Defense with input from various groups Issues: Foresight report Flight Path 2020 on the future of the Air Force	Department – Defense
1996- today	Policy Research Secretariat Created in Privy Council Office, 2000 it becomes Policy Research Secretariat medium term horizontal projects. 2011 becomes Policy Horizons Canada*	PCO, HRDC
2001- 2007, 2012-	National Research Council creates the Office of technology foresight. 2012 re-opened. Today it is co-located with knowledge management unit (former CISTI library) and staffed with a director, senior analyst and .5 admin support	Department – NRC, IC, PCO
2012- today	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) commences Foresight program for a five year research program	Department – SSHRC
2014- today	DFATD (now Global Affairs Canada) formed a small foresight unit (Foresight and Global Trends Analysis), with 2 FTE's. The primary focus is on Climate Change, and its impacts on the economy and government systems. *	Department – GAC
2016	ACOA intelligence unit	Department – ACOA

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Departmental units: shutdowns

2007-2012	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) foresight initiated within the Research Branch. Used various foresight processes, including scenarios and environmental scanning to support programs addressing climate change and agricultural innovation. Had a +\$2.3M budget, and 5 FTE's, and internal in-kind staffing supports.	Department – Agriculture
2008-2012?	Health Canada developed a Decision-Making Framework that took into consideration both Evidence Based criteria, and STEEEP issues, to provide Senior Management with regulatory options on the approval (or not) of emerging technologies which the Canadian public and international partners identified as issues.	Department – Health Canada
2008-2017	There were two formal foresight initiatives at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency . Supported building awareness within the Plant Business Line (Science Branch) on intelligence gathering and foresight related tools and activities, and their application in future focused proactive planning. Continues informally.	Department – CFIA
2008-2014	Public Health Agency of Canada ran a comprehensive foresight and intelligence gathering program out of Winnipeg and Guelph, with 5 FTE's from 2008 to 2014. Main client was Chief Medical Officer of Health – Dr. David Butler-Jones. With his retirement, the unit is no longer formally operating.	Department – Public Health Agency
2010-2013	Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO): Developing their foresight program, and created the Science Policy Integration Directorate to foster the development of an internal foresight capacity to support longer term strategic planning within the department. Efforts currently underway to develop scanning capacity, with a view to bring back a small foresight function.	Department – DFO

Support central infrastructure

1989	Inter- departmental Committee for Futures and Forecasting (ICFF) is set up by the Canadian Government. A network of experts from 40 federal departments and agencies specializing in strategic trends
1991	NRC hosts the futures and synergy network: FSN 1
2003-2016	Environmental Scanning Practices Group (ESPG) initiated by policy sector Director General in the department of Justice. Initial chair was Environment Canada, then Defence, then Indian Northern Affairs
2006	Foresight Synergy Network (FSN2) created in Ottawa and housed with University of Ottawa, Telfer School of Management
2009	Government Foresight Leaders Forum (GFLF) inaugural meeting in the UK. GFLF is a global forum for government heads of foresight
2010-2011	Telfer Foresight Leaders Forum (TFLF) is established at the Telfer School of Management at the University of Ottawa for government directors of foresight
2011	Discussions around creating a network of foresight practitioners in the public service prior to the World Future Forum (WFS) involving Canadian government foresight practitioners lead to the development of the Public Service Foresight Network (PSFN)
2012	Inaugural meeting of the Public Service Foresight Network, Toronto. Extensive involvement from Canadian Government Foresight personnel.
2014-2016	Emerging Technologies Community of Practice (ETCOP) is formed and co-chaired by the NRC foresight unit and the Emerging Technologies directorate of Industry Canada. This brings together foresight practitioners and those interested in foresight from science based departments and science units of other departments

Overall observations on the units

- Little staying power except with Department of National Defence, Horizons Scanning Canada and to a limited extent National Research Council.
- Attempts made to shut down key units
- Lots of reshuffling, moving to other departments
- Very little increase in all years in overall foresight budgets
- Some interesting recent developments

Central Infrastructure Observations

- Many initiatives designed to bring together government foresight community
- Significant Government/Canadian involvement in the establishment of professional and other groups
- Academic involvement as well
- But..similar to Departmental units lots of starts and stops

What's worked in Canada

- Great knowledge and ongoing training in foresight methods
- Entrepreneurial project management (strength or weakness?)
- The key foresight leaders work together friendships
- Strong relationships between government foresight leaders and academics/practitioners of foresight
- Strong international linkages/relationships
- Good coverage and scope of projects
- Significant stakeholder engagement and involvement
- Strong emphasis on foresight publication

Quotes on Impact

- “It’s more about people benefiting from the process”
- “The process gets people thinking to make better decisions..shows you how to think, not what to think
- “Lands softly and had an impact on decisions indirectly”
- “They love our stuff but don’t know what to do with it but it supports decisions”
- The organization certainly useful, but not necessarily influential” Kevin Page (2018 - Past Parliament PBO)
- Policy Horizons creates “a framework in which specific policy initiatives are examined or considered, so we inform [the decisions] in some way.” (Ballinger PHC Senior Researcher)

What has harmed the growth of foresight in Canadian government: Ranked

- Lack of understanding regarding what foresight is (wrong word/term)
- Champion changes and function loses
- No real commitment – nice to have vs need to have
- No real ownership of it – who owns it?
- Government managers have gone from outcome orientation to output orientation – does not support foresight *
- Some of today's leaders do not think it's important
- Culture has gone to shorter term decision making
- Poorly aligned wildcards, black swans and blowback analysis/scenarios to what eventually happens." Missed the big one"
- Less emphasis on decision making with today's government management

Harming factors continued

- Desire for the latest technique – foresight vs intelligence vs analytics
- New managers (senior) read less/People do not read long read reports
- New “younger” managers do not do what the old managers did
- The leaders of foresight are retiring and no one seems to be coming in to take their place
- Skilled resources (people) keep getting moved up in the Department/taken out of foresight as their skills are seen as important to the Department leaders
- Appetite and ability to consume and process the products of foresight may be contrary to the aims of the senior leader making the decision

What experts said were foresight Critical Success Factors (CSF'S): Ranked

- Need to understand political and bureaucratic “pressures”
- Foresight results have to be consistent with the policy and planning cycle
- Need to maintain sustained participation and interest
- Need to manage expectations of impacts at all levels
- Messaging has to be practical and not too technical
- Keeping within time and budget.
- Strong requirement for good project management and political skills
- Dealing with the constant creep of short-term thinking i.e. a failure to look sufficiently forward

CSF's continued

- Need for skill development and renewal of senior foresight leaders
- Have direct links to senior policy-makers
- Close relationships with policy analysts/decision makers
- Client focus
- Educating the clients – foresight literacy
- Review of successes and failures (win/loss analysis) which are then communicated to back to stakeholders and used to improve the system.
- Senior public servants need to be active in ongoing foresight conversations
- Focus on a clearly identified client need

CSF's continued

- Foresight has to match the policy and planning cycle and deliver well in time for key deliverables to be acted upon or incorporated.
- Find the “pain points” to find solutions for problems
- Have a clear communications strategy
- Integrate stakeholders into the foresight program
- Create strong partnerships/relationships with academe and private sector
- Employ methodologies and skills not generally used by other departments
- Make sure you have citizen engagement in your foresight

- My ask from you: Before I send the lists to practitioners feel free to email me additions based on your experience/knowledge
- Next research step: Submit lists to Canadian government foresight practitioners for validation, supplementing and ranking
- For more information :calof@telfer.uottawa.ca