Public and APEX Perspectives on Trust and Ethics:
What Do the Public Really Want?

APEX Symposium
October 7, 2004
Broad Historical Context
Canadians indicate a low level of confidence in government

- Larger government disaffection is observed across generations and, to some extent, regions
- The overall public perception of government’s ethical standards is low but higher than for business (and arguably not particularly enflamed)
- Highest trust given to professions working for the public interest (e.g., nurses, doctors, NGOs), lowest to elite/decision-maker occupations
- APEX members view public institutions more favourably
  - but consistent with previous research their views of the media are far more severe than those of the general public
Tracking Trust in Federal Government

“How much do you trust the government in Washington/Ottawa to do what is right?”

Per cent who trust just about always/most of time
Generally, those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with people

**Elites**
- APEX: Agree (61%), Neither (12%), Disagree (25%)
- Municipality: Agree (65%), Neither (19%), Disagree (16%)
- Corporate: Agree (75%), Neither (11%), Disagree (11%)

**General population**
- August 2004: Agree (60%), Neither (15%), Disagree (25%)
- May 2004: Agree (67%), Neither (16%), Disagree (16%)
- July 2003: Agree (61%), Neither (20%), Disagree (18%)

- Disagree (1-3)
- Neither (4)
- Agree (5-7)
Tracking Political Cynicism in Canada

% agreeing


Gov’t does not care
Elected lose touch
Gov’t crooked
Politicians less honest

Main Drivers of Trust in Government Legitimacy

- Sense of Security
- Government Finances
- Information Revolution and Mass Media
- Government Conduct/Contact
- Background Factors
- Structural and Value Shifts
- Political Leaders/Systems

Blue: Short-term Drivers
“Overall in the area of..., what would you like to see the federal government do in the future?”

### Health Care
- 1995: 36%
- 1996: 45%
- 1997: 77%
- 1998: 80%
- 1999: 75%
- 2000: 76%
- 2001: 74%

### Education
- 1995: 42%
- 1996: 43%
- 1997: 65%
- 1998: 77%
- 1999: 74%
- 2000: 67%
- 2001: 63%
- 2002: 63%

### Environment
- 1995: 42%
- 1996: 57%
- 1997: 53%
- 1998: 66%
- 1999: 61%
- 2000: 59%
- 2001: 62%

% indicating “increase involvement”
**Greatest Influence on Public Policy (paired choice)**

“Which of the following groups HAVE/SHOULD HAVE the most influence in defining public policies in Canada?”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Have</th>
<th>Should have</th>
<th>Influence gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior business leaders</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>+24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>+36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premiers/PMO</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political advisors</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobbyists/special interest groups</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>+15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentarians</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior public servants</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollsters</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average citizens</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>-58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Presented in series of random paired choices. Per cent indicates average number of times option is selected over all others.

**Base:** All Canadians; Aug. 04
Influence On Government Decision Making

“When the federal government makes decisions, whose interests do you think are given the greatest importance?”

- Big business: APEX 18% (General public 39%) Gap = -21
- Politicians and friends: APEX 18% (General public 32%) Gap = -14
- Overall public interest: APEX 29% (General public 16%) Gap = 13
- Special interest groups: APEX 28% (General public 11%) Gap = 17
- DK/NR: APEX 7% (General public 2%) Gap = 5
Public and APEX Perceptions of Ethics
Ethics as a Relative Priority

- Citizens in Western democracies are becoming more critical and demanding, and have shown signs that they are bringing into question the general principles of deference
- Ethics is a major priority for the public and seen as problematic
  - BUT it is not the dominant issue
- Longer term trends are unclear, but there is no evidence of recent decline
  - Some contradictory signals on ethics
Perceived Honesty of Various Individuals and Institutions (I)

“Please rate the following offices/organizations on a scale from totally honest to totally corrupt”

- Your municipal government: APEX 50%, General public 38%, Gap: 12
- Catholic priests: APEX 44%, General public 32%, Gap: 12
- The national media: APEX 28%, General public 28%, Gap: -
- Your provincial government: APEX 50%, General public 24%, Gap: 26
"Please rate the following offices/organizations on a scale from totally honest to totally corrupt"

**Federal government of Canada**
- **APEX** (60%)
- **General public** (20%)
  - **Gap**: 40

**Federal bureaucrats**
- **APEX** (82%)
- **General public** (19%)
  - **Gap**: 63

**Federal politicians**
- **APEX** (35%)
- **General public** (17%)
  - **Gap**: 18

**Large multinational corporations**
- **APEX** (17%)
- **General public** (15%)
  - **Gap**: 2

Per cent saying “honest”
Ethical Standards of Occupations

“How would you rate the ethical standards of each of the following occupations in Canada?”

- **NGO volunteers**: 78% (APEX: 82%)
- **Doctors**: 75% (APEX: 85%)
- **Small business people**: 67% (APEX: 52%)
- **Public servants**: 49% (APEX: 86%)
- **Journalists**: 43% (APEX: 30%)
- **Lawyers**: 32% (APEX: 31%)
- **Union leaders**: 28% (APEX: 25%)
- **Execs of large business**: 25% (APEX: 24%)
- **Politicians**: 21% (APEX: 20%)

Per cent saying “high ethical standards” (5-7)
Trust in Governments

“To what extent do you trust governments to do what is right most of the time?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elites</th>
<th></th>
<th>General population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APEX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low trust</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Low trust</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High trust</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>High trust</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low trust</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Low trust</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High trust</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>High trust</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low trust</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Low trust</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High trust</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>High trust</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- Low trust (1-3)
- Moderate trust (4)
- High trust (5-7)
Government as a Positive Force

All in all, government is a positive force in my life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree (1-3)</th>
<th>Neither (4)</th>
<th>Agree (5-7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elites</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APEX</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General population</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2004</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2003</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regional variations in issue priority

“Which of the following do you think will be the most important issue for the next federal election?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>ALB</th>
<th>PRA</th>
<th>ONT</th>
<th>QUE</th>
<th>ATL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social issues (health/education)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The economy (jobs &amp; growth)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics and accountability</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal issues (taxes)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All Canadians; Feb. 04, n=1,020
Ethics and Accountability Within Broader Priorities and Preferred Solutions
Prescriptions

- Yes, there is a problem, but must understand key contextual factors
- There is a stable consensus about what to do
  - Clear lean favouring transparency and reporting, less so policy shifts and audits
- APEX members nearly as concerned as general public with current ethical safeguards for politicians’ behaviour but dismiss concerns with safeguards for public servants
- For Canadians a key component of rebuilding trust is inclusion and engagement
  - APEX members show openness to this but more muted
“All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction? »

Base: All Canadians; most recent data point Sept. 04
“All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?”

Satisfaction with Government Direction

- **General population (September 2004):**
  - Right Direction: 48%
  - Wrong direction: 42%
  - DK/NR: 10%

- **APEX:**
  - Right Direction: 61%
  - Wrong direction: 18%
  - DK/NR: 20%

- **Municipality:**
  - Right Direction: 58%
  - Wrong direction: 27%
  - DK/NR: 15%

- **Corporate:**
  - Right Direction: 48%
  - Wrong direction: 34%
  - DK/NR: 18%
“I think that our system of government has sufficient safeguards to ensure that federal public servants/federal politicians conduct themselves in an ethical manner.”
Best Method for Improving Honesty (paired choice)

“Which of the following actions would improve the level of honesty and reduce corruption in the federal government?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>2003 Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Require fuller, immediate disclosure of all contracts and subcontracts within 30 days of the date it was awarded on a central website</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require all donations to federal parties or leadership campaigns to be immediately disclosed and posted on a single website</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a truly independent ethics czar who reports to Parliament</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the resources and authority of the Auditor General</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow all Canadians to vote for leadership candidates of any national federal party</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double the resources and efforts of the RCMP in investigating these issues</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that all “volunteer” work done with political parties and/or leadership candidates is disclosed and posted on a single website</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Presented in series of random paired choices. Per cent indicates average number of times option is selected over all others.

{Base: All Canadians}
Input From Average Citizens

“To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement?”

I would personally feel better about government decision-making if I knew that governments sought informed input from average citizens on a regular basis

**APEX**

- Disagree (1-3): 21
- Neither (4): 21
- Agree (5-7): 57

**General population (May 2004)**

- Disagree (1-3): 7
- Neither (4): 11
- Agree (5-7): 81
Final Thoughts
Final Thoughts (i)

- “Ethics” is a serious problem
- Much of this problem is rooted in broad culture shifts in western society
- Recent trends paint mixed picture but not conclusive evidence of unusual inflammation (compared to past decade and other sectors — e.g., media, corporate)
- APEX members largely in step with general public on most of these issues
  - Tendency to lionize public service and even greater tendency to demonize other actors like the media
  - We would find similar tendencies amongst other elite groups, such as corporate elites’ somewhat disparaging views of public sector – “no view except from a viewpoint”
Final Thoughts (ii)

- While a serious issue, the current level of focus on ethics and accountability is likely out of touch with where Canadians are at
  - Far higher priority items are out there

- Among current threats and exposures, perhaps the largest is an overreaction to recent ethical woes
  - Pendulum swinging too far, stifling creativity, agility, partnership and results
  - Transparency and inclusion remain keys