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RCMP Ombudsman Model

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Introduction

When I started to prepare this report, I was initially struck by the title of the report by the Independent Investigator into Matters Relating to RCMP Pension and Insurance Plans (David A. Brown) of June 2007 that had led to the appointment of the Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP. The title – “A Matter of Trust” – was remarkably similar to that of a report in March 2007 by the Ontario Ombudsman on that province’s lottery corporation entitled “A Game of Trust”. Obviously, the contents of the two reports are substantively different; however, they stress in common the notion of **trust**, specifically the importance of fiduciary trust on the part of public institutions and how fragile that imperative is a democracy.

The fact that there have been breakdowns for various reasons within the governance of a public institution was not new. Administrative wrong-doing in all its forms has often been a problem not only in Canada but in other jurisdictions that place an emphasis on democratic imperatives. The difference today is that we live in an age of post-materialism in which ethics in governance is a higher priority, and there is less tolerance of administrative wrong-doings. In such a situation, the **Ombudsman idea** is a proven means to ensure trust in governance, and merits consideration in respect to the RCMP.

The remainder of this report will clarify the traditional (or the so-called classical, parliamentary) Ombudsman idea as found in Canada, as well as note the specialised forms that have emerged in recent years. Consideration will then switch to

what appears to be a more proactive role that a number of Ombudsman officeholders have assumed in exercising their mandated responsibilities. A final section will conclude by drawing upon the preceding discussion to suggest the establishment of a “**RCMP Ombudsman.**” But, before delving into the ombudsman theme, let us pause to set the broader context of our focus – trust in governance.

Trust in Democratic Administration

Ethics in modern governance has been one of the more enduring themes in the study of government at least since the time of Machiavelli. This is especially true with democratic governance where so much depends upon mutual trust whether it between the general public and its elected politicians and appointed public servants, or amongst those who occupy positions within public institutions. According to Ian Greene and David Shugarman (1997, 22), mutual trust requires public officials to act impartially in the administration of law, to be accountable for their activities and decisions, and to fulfill a fiduciary responsibility not to abuse the trust placed in them. They go on to state (24):

Because public officials always act on behalf of the public, they are trustees of the public interest. A fiduciary relationship with the public is not a form of paternalism – we know what’s best for you and it’s too bad if you don’t understand our superior wisdom – but rather a responsibility to protect and promote the public’s best interests in ways the public is fully informed of and approves.

But what happens if and when a public official does not act in the public interest, or if there is a question or complaint about an administrative decision or action? Within this context, we can view the role of the Ombudsman as a type of oversight mechanism that can have the impact of ensuring trust in the administrative state.

Just as Shugarman and Greene used the phrase “trustees of the public interest” in the preceding quotation to describe the role of public officials, Larry Hill (1982, 428-29) has specifically described the role of an Ombudsman in terms of being a trustee rather than a delegate. This distinction in representational role styles is crucial because an Ombudsman is not an advocate (or delegate) of those who lodge a complaint, and is not driven by any self-serving or hidden agenda. Instead, as we will see below, an Ombudsman has a fiduciary trust to act as an impartial investigator of public complaints or other instances of administrative wrong-doing.

The Ombudsman Idea

The year 2007 is the 40th anniversary of the Ombudsman idea in Canada, having been initially adopted in the provinces of Alberta and New Brunswick. While of relatively recent origins, the Ombudsman idea is now firmly embedded in the administrative state in Canada. (Hyson 2007) Today, all provinces except Prince Edward Island have the classical, parliamentary Ombudsman office that oversees administrative decision-making; as well, the territory of Yukon has an Ombudsman. Although the federal government does not have one of these “all-purpose” (i.e., responsible for the whole public service) Ombudsman offices, it does have a few specialized offices (such as the official languages commissioner and the military ombudsman); similar specialized Ombudsman offices are also found in the provinces and territories. In fact, such is the popularity of the Ombudsman idea that many private entities in more recent years have adapted the moniker in apparent effort to improve in the public’s eyes the image of their

corporate governance.

In any case, before we wander too far off topic, we need to identify more concretely the attributes of the Ombudsman idea. The Ombudsman has unique characteristics that allow it to serve effectively as an oversight mechanism to ensure that officials fulfill their responsibilities effectively and are legitimate in the eyes of the public. To appreciate fully the Ombudsman idea, it is first necessary to acknowledge how and why it was adopted in Canada.

There is no need, however, to review in this report all of the details of the origins of the Ombudsman concept in Sweden nor of how the institution spread around the world including its arrival in Canada. This material can be found in the sources listed in the bibliography, especially the items by Bernt and Owen 2000; Caiden 1983a and 1983b; Gregory and Giddings 2000; Hill 1974; Hyson 2007; Levine 2007; Llambias 1979; Lundvik 1981; and several of the sources by Rowat. Suffice to say that, during the early and mid-1960s in Canada, there were several private members' bills and opposition parties' proposals to adopt the Ombudsman idea, along with supportive academic works by such scholars as Professor Donald C. Rowat. The visit in 1964 of New Zealand's first ombudsman, Sir Guy Powles, which included an address to the Canadian Bar Association (CBA), was also instrumental in introducing the Ombudsman idea to a most influential audience, removing any suspicions that the Ombudsman idea was limited to Scandinavian countries and was thus unsuited to governments founded on the Westminster model. Finally, it cannot go without mentioning that the successful advent of "open line shows" in broadcasting during the 1960s as well as the remarkably popular

CBC television public affairs program, “Ombudsman”, which first aired in 1974, did much to familiarize Canadians to the practice of complaining to an impartial person (albeit in this case in the form of a radio or television host) who would listen to and investigate their grievances.

Rather than elaborating the chronological sequence of events of this history, it is more appropriate to reflect on the essence of the arguments as to why the Ombudsman should be established. A most succinct description of the need for the Ombudsman institution is to be found in the federal government’s 1977 study of the Ombudsman which observed that, although citizens had “gained access to a wide range of government services and support systems” with the growth of government over the decades following the Great Depression, they had “also become increasingly vulnerable to the decisions of civil servants.” (1977, 5) In fact, professor Rowat later observed in 1982 (33) that some victims of administrative errors were resorting to extreme forms of protest in the absence of a more accessible and effective means by which to seek redress for their complaints.

It was in this context then that the advocates of the Ombudsman idea emphasized the institution’s organizational attributes. First, the fact that the Ombudsman would be an independent officer of the legislature, rather than being part of the public service subject to the executive chain of command, meant that the institution would have greater impartiality in operation. The office would consequently possess legitimacy in the eyes of the general public to deal with allegations of administrative unfairness or wrongdoing. Actually, this notion of an officer of the legislature with “official independence” is

a well-established practice in Canada that is found with similar institutions including the Auditor General, Chief Electoral Officer, and Commissioner of Official Languages. (Thomas 2003, 287-314) A second organizational attribute that has usually been stressed is that the Ombudsman is able to handle a wider range of complaints, including those about bad manners and questions about the exercise of administrative discretion, rather than being limited to issues concerning illegal behaviour or malfeasance that may better be dealt with through the judicial system. Both of these attributes are applicable to the case of the RCMP as we will see in later discussion.

Perhaps the strongest reasons for adopting the office of Ombudsman, however, relate to how this particular institution conducts its investigation of complaints. First, the Ombudsman, like a traffic director, is able to weed-out complaints about matters falling outside the government's jurisdiction; this is particularly pertinent in a federation like Canada where a complainant is not always acquainted with the division of powers between the federal and provincial governments. Actually, the lines of accountability are further blurred in respect to the RCMP which is often under contract with the provinces and municipalities to provide police services.

Second, in a similar fashion, many complaints arise from simple misunderstandings, and, in these cases, the Ombudsman can immediately offer clarification and redirection.

Third, in respect to legitimate complaints, the Ombudsman has the advantage of being able to conduct its investigation quickly. Usually, within a few days of having received a complaint, the Ombudsman is able to start by requesting the public official

who made the decision in dispute for an explanation of the decision, which may be followed by an examination of the file documents and possibly even the initiation of a more formal investigation.

Moreover, the Ombudsman in many jurisdictions possesses the authority to initiate an enquiry, rather than having to wait for a complaint to be officially lodged by a complainant. The fact that the Ombudsman conducts its investigations outside the public spotlight, with access *in camera* to officials and documents, not only ensures quickness but also avoids unnecessary embarrassment of officials that is often the case when allegations are made public. Another advantage often cited is that the cost of the investigation is borne by the Ombudsman, and not by the person lodging the complaint, which facilitates greater accessibility than would otherwise be the case. On the other hand, critics argue that the practice of the Ombudsman bearing the full cost of investigating complaints encourages a greater number of trivial complaints.

Confidentiality characterizes the Ombudsman's investigation which fosters a greater confidence on the part of officials to be open and more forthcoming with the Ombudsman. At the same time, the guarantee of privacy for those who make complaints is a source of empowerment that encourages people to step forth with their concerns about administrative decisions.

A final procedural attribute is that the Ombudsman relies upon words of persuasion to correct administrative wrong-doings. S/he does not have the legal authority to overturn or change an administrative decision that is found to be wrong, so that parliamentary sovereignty and the prerogatives of the Crown are not infringed by the

Ombudsman's findings and recommendations. .

These structural and investigatory attributes have come to define the classical, parliamentary Ombudsman as a public institution. Larry Hill has identified a useful and frequently quoted ten-point list of attributes that exhaustively defines the Ombudsman:

... the classical ombudsman is (1) legally established, (2) functionally autonomous, (3) external to the administration, (4) operationally independent of both the legislature and the executive, (5) specialist, (6) expert, (7) nonpartisan, (8) normatively universalistic, (9) client-centered but not anti-administration, and (10) both popularly accessible and visible. (1974, 1077)

These points are consistent with the preceding discussion and require little additional elaboration. The office must be established and mandated by statutory law in order to have the authority as well as the legitimacy to fulfill its tasks; above all, it must not be based upon discretionary whim. Points 2, 3, and 4 serve to ensure the Ombudsman's independence, while point 10 ensures recognition, acceptance, and trust by the public. The Ombudsman – both the officeholder as well as staff - are able to specialize within their field of jurisdiction, are experts in handling complaints, and assume their duties from a nonpartisan perspective. To handle effectively a wide variety of complaints, the Ombudsman needs to be appreciative of the different situational circumstances that give rise to complaints and must be well aware of diverse imperatives and norms that come into play. Finally, point 9 about not being anti-administration is critically important if only because many public officials are immediately suspicious if not defensive about coming under the monitoring of a watchdog. This point is particularly pertinent to this report because there may be an initial reluctance due to unfamiliarity to accept the RCMP

Ombudsman proposal. Thus, it needs to be stressed that by being an external, oversight mechanism, the RCMP Ombudsman would not be anti-RCMP; indeed, as studies show, an Ombudsman often finds that complaints are not justified and rules in favour of the administrators.

The discussion so far has been about statutory provisions and procedural attributes, these are insufficient alone to guarantee an effective Ombudsman. In addition, the leadership style of the officeholder is of immeasurable importance: is the incumbent passive in that s/he primarily responds to specific complaints, or proactive by taking the initiative to comment upon systemic problems?

The Proactive Ombudsman of the 21st Century

Over the years, many of Canada's Ombudsman officeholders have been outstanding leaders who have contributed to the institution's emergence in this country. Still, there has been a most definite change of leadership style within the first decade of the 21st century – to a more proactive style. This change is perhaps most evident with the Ontario Ombudsman that has the largest office in the country and with the appointment to that office of André Marin in 2005. Marin's proactive orientation is captured by the title of the keynote address that he gave to the United States Ombudsman Association in September 2006: "Innovate or Perish." Along with his other statements (publications, presentations, and speeches) that are available on the Ontario Ombudsman web site, Marin's position is that the Ombudsman institution needs to adjust continuously to changing circumstances in order to remain effective.

Unlike other officeholders in Canada, Marin came to office with prior experience as an Ombudsman having served for six-and-a-half years as Canada's first Military Ombudsman. This differentiated him from most other Canadian ombudsman officeholders who were lawyers, judges, academics, and activists who assumed office with good intentions but little or no practical experience. Marin also had related experience as Director of the Special Investigations Unit of the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General (1996-98), investigating police actions that had resulted in serious injury or death. It is pertinent to note Marin's previous experience because it goes to the heart of the question as to what abilities and skills are necessary to be an effective Ombudsman?

Whereas the first Ontario Ombudsman, Arthur Maloney (1979, 400) had once stressed the ambiguous notion of being an "expert in humanity" and whereas many ombudsmen in Canada in the past were chosen for their impartiality, does the choice of Marin based on his previous experience as an ombudsman-style investigator represent a change of direction? This question not only relates to Ontario but to the rest of the country, as Marin was chosen in May 2007 as president of the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman and he has been the North American Regional Vice-President of the International Ombudsman Institute since July 2006. Marin, in a way, has become the model for ombudsmanship in Canada. Actually, this is a matter that bears watching in future research endeavours: are we in fact witnessing a shift in Canada (as in the case of André Marin and Bernard Richard in New Brunswick) in terms of appointees to the

position of Ombudsman – from people with impartial credentials to proactive people with experience in investigating alleged maladministration?

It is one thing to consider Marin's background and to conclude that he is proactive, but what does this mean? What has Marin done to distinguish himself from his predecessors? There are three areas where Mr. Marin has been pushing the envelope: his choice of words and communication strategy; his use of the Internet; and his use of Special Ombudsman Response Teams (SORTs).

Marin has not given to understatement, and his critical comments about government are eagerly received by the mass media. Annual reports and SORT reports usually receive front-page coverage in daily newspapers and are one of the lead stories on evening television news programs. The Ontario Ombudsman's organizational chart, which is available online, reveals a "Communications and Media Relations" unit that reports directly to Mr. Marin, and serves to coordinate the publication of reports and nurture relations with the media. One key reason why Marin has been a "media favourite" is his choice and use of colourful and "pointed" words to criticize the government. "Puffery" was such a term; it was used in the most recent annual report to direct attention to the fact that some government departments and agencies have frequently used self-flattering descriptions to mask their failure to deliver.

When asked in an interview for another study, if this use of words like "puffery" was a calculated risk that might backfire by causing resentment on the part of those in positions of authority, Deputy Ombudsman Barbara Finlay was not worried. As she pointed out, the Ombudsman's reports are always based upon thorough investigation and

documented evidence, and the Ombudsman's opinions are reached through a fair and impartial process. Finlay went on to stress that the Ombudsman has been balanced in his reports and public statements by noting not only cases of puffery but also praising the administration where it has improved its service. Finally, the Ombudsman has been very successful in having his recommendations accepted, and he has maintained the support of the Premier for his efforts.

At the same time, in response to the cyber-age and the advent of the Internet and personal computers, we see that the Ontario office of Ombudsman has developed one of the most complete Ombudsman web-sites in the country – its portals allow ready access to a plethora of information, and it is a “user-friendly” site that is easy to navigate. Since June 2006, the number of “hits” (or visits to this web-site) has often been over 15,000 per month, and was over 25,000 for March 2007. Unfortunately, in analyzing web-site hits, we do not know who was accessing the site (journalists, community activists, general public) or for what purpose. Nevertheless, the very idea of connecting with 15,000 plus people per month far exceeds the number that can be served by mobile teams and regional offices.

A second use of the Internet relates to how complaints and inquiries are made. Despite the enthusiasm that proponents have for electronic communication, we see that most people still prefer to use the telephone, letter, or fax when complaining to the Ombudsman. Is this an example where people prefer the more personal touch of communicating by talking and writing to somebody rather than filling out an online form? If that is the case, then an Ombudsman may wish to complement the web site and

use of the Internet with the use of regional and mobile offices for those who prefer the option of face-to-face contact.

Finally, Marin recently made another move into the e-government field by having an hour-long online chat with the public the day after the release of the *2006-2007 Annual Report*. Although the Ombudsman received questions from people scattered across the province, it is not known how many people followed the “chat” or have since read the transcript that are currently available online. Nevertheless, it was an honest and inexpensive effort to be in contact with and accountable to the general public, and, as such, a way to build trust.

We thus see that Marin’s proactive style has been evident in his choice of words and communication strategy and in regard to e-government; in addition, and most significantly, the proactive style has been evident with the use of SORTs. The idea of establishing Special Ombudsman Response Teams (SORTs) had been pioneered during Marin’s time as the Military Ombudsman. Each SORT usually consists of about five to six investigators (or more) chosen from a pool of approximately twenty-two investigators and each is assigned a systemic issue to investigate by the Ombudsman. The investigations are usually based on the intensive examination of information gleaned from documents and “in the field” interviews, and are conducted over a time frame set by the Ombudsman. SORTs have proven to be a viable option in Ontario in large part because of the large staff complement; other jurisdictions with very small staffs and fewer resources can only look upon Ontario’s SORTs with envy. For example, Bernard Richard, New Brunswick’s Ombudsman, exhibits a similar proactive style but has to

conduct systemic investigations mainly by himself. In any case, SORTs have been used in a number of high profile cases in Ontario including children with severe disabilities, spousal support, victims of crime, “insider” lottery wins, drugs to treat rare diseases, municipal property assessment, children’s aid society, counseling for school children at the military base at Petawawa, and screening for newborn infants.

Lest it be overlooked in the preceding paragraph with its focus on SORTs, most if not all Ombudsman offices in Canada are initiating investigations more than ever before, rather than just responding to individual complaints. Essentially, when a recurring type of problem comes to light, possibly due to media coverage or to the magnitude of the problem, the Ombudsman will take the lead by initiating an enquiry into the systemic nature of the problem. As intimate above, the Ontario Ombudsman uses SORTs to conduct such forensic investigations while smaller offices in other provinces have had to initiate and pursue less elaborate, but not less relevant, investigations.

An RCMP Ombudsman?

Arthur Maloney stated in his final report in 1978 that the “ombudsman’s job is a lonely one,” which was a curious yet revealing comment. On the one hand, the Ombudsman deals with the public, politicians, and administrators, which suggests a very involved role with connections and interactions with many people. Yet, to fulfill the task of handling complaints and dealing with alleged administrative wrong-doings, the Ombudsman must maintain a certain distance from others in order to make fair and impartial decisions. Like a referee in hockey or other sporting activity, the official is a

necessary participant but not a player. Maintaining a distance from the complainants and officials is the only way for the Ombudsman to develop and maintain credibility in the handling of complaints, and thereby generate trust.

It was noted earlier in this paper that the Ombudsman institution fulfills a key role in a democracy to ensure trust by serving as a watchdog of administration; as such, it is a fiduciary responsibility to act as a trustee for the public by helping to: clarify cases of uncertainty, settle individual cases of administrative wrong-doings, correct systemic problems, educate the public of their rights, and improve administration in general. Or, in Marin's words, the ombudsman institution works to put "serve" back into public service.

But how does this theoretical and comparative discussion relate to the case of the RCMP? How would a "RCMP Ombudsman" work? Indeed, is the idea of a "RCMP Ombudsman" feasible? We may begin by reflecting back upon David A. Brown's report of June 15, 2007.

While it is true, as the preceding discussion has shown, Canadian experience with the Ombudsman idea has mainly been in respect to the regular public service (departments, crown corporations, and agencies), the idea can be adapted to the RCMP. Although the RCMP is often referred to as being paramilitary in structure and role, it nevertheless delivers an essential service to the public. Just as the Military Ombudsman has proven itself effective with the military, there is no reason that a specialized Ombudsman could do the same for the RCMP.

In chapter 7 of his report – "Governance and Culture"- David A. Brown describes the existing governance and cultural issues at the RCMP as allowing for the problems

with the pension and insurance plans to occur. Rather than regurgitate the report's discussion, it is more important to proceed with describing the RCMP Ombudsman model. (I cannot proceed, however, without noting that there have been other issues, besides the pension and insurance plans, that have tarnished rightly or wrongly the reputation of the RCMP.) The model includes two stages: 1) the establishment of the office, and 2) the recruitment of the right person (and staff).

First, in establishing the RCMP Ombudsman, it would be wise to emulate the example of the Military Ombudsman (www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca).

- Although the name "RCMP Ombudsman" is being used here, another official title may later be formally adopted. Nevertheless, in common usage over time, the more informal title will probably be most commonly used. (Just like the term "Military Ombudsman" is more commonly used than the wordy official title, "National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman.")
- Perhaps most importantly, the RCMP Ombudsman needs to be established by statutory law. This requirement provides the Ombudsman with the independence and sense of mission or direction that is required to fulfill its duties. It is most critically essential that the RCMP Ombudsman not find itself in a situation subject to partisan political direction of administrative whim. The enabling statute must specify the RCMP Ombudsman's mandated responsibilities and provide it with the capacity to be in charge of its investigations and other operational activities. At the same time, this

statutory basis would allow the RCMP Ombudsman “to be seen” by the public as a credible organization that has the ability to investigate complaints impartially and fairly.

- The RCMP Ombudsman should report directly to the Minister of Public Safety in order not to be subject to the executive chain of command; this might be the case if s/he was to report to the Commissioner or others within the RCMP. At the same time, like other Ombudsmen, the RCMP Ombudsman should be required to report annually to Parliament in order to establish transparency and accountability.
- At the same time as reporting to the Minister and to Parliament, it would be appropriate to have an advisory committee like that of the Military Ombudsman. The reason for this recommendation relates back to Mr. Brown’s report and the mandate of this Task Force. That is, what better way is there for the RCMP to remain in “sync” with changing governance and cultural values than through the RCMP Ombudsman who is in turn advised by the Advisory Committee? Presumably, emulating the Military Ombudsman model, this committee would be composed of retired RCMP officers with extensive experience in policing; senior legal experts, former Ombudsmen, representatives of current RCMP officers and their dependents, and representatives of civilians employed by the RCMP and their dependents. This list is not exhaustive; representatives from other groups could be added to the advisory committee in response to changing

societal circumstances.

- In terms of operating procedure, this RCMP Ombudsman would serve as the first-contact person, or “clearing-house”, for all complaints and enquiries. Enquiries would be handled immediately while frivolous complaints would be dismissed. Obvious “policing” matters would be directed to the RCMP Commissioner or police officer. Matters that concern the RCMP’s internal administration (such as the pension and insurance plans), as well as complaints from the public, would be investigated by the RCMP Ombudsman. In respect to this last point, it needs to be stressed that, within the Ombudsman model, the RCMP Ombudsman would only come into play once existing oversight agencies had fulfilled their tasks.
- As part of its investigative tools, according to the Ombudsman idea, the RCMP Ombudsman would have access to officials and pertinent documents. Such investigations would be conducted *in camera*, and subject to privacy and confidentiality rules. As well, given the sensitivity (including the potential element of criminality involved with the RCMP), it would probably be advisable to set a code of procedure for the RCMP Ombudsman.
- Another critical tool must be placed in the enabling statute, namely the specified authority to initiate an investigation. As pointed out earlier, in the early years of the 21st century, the Ombudsman is no longer solely

preoccupied with handling individual complaints. There is a greater tendency than previously for the Ombudsman, when s/he sees a systemic problem, to initiate an investigation. Depending upon the RCMP Ombudsman's caseload, it is not necessary to use SORTs although this option should not be prohibited; more importantly, s/he should have the authority to initiate a forensic investigation when necessary whether it is conducted individually by the RCMP Ombudsman or by a team of investigators.

- Like the Ombudsman model in general, after fairly and impartially investigating a grievance, the RCMP Ombudsman would have to rely upon persuasion to rectify a wrong decision. S/he could not unilaterally reverse the decision, but must respect parliamentary sovereignty, responsible government, and other features of constitutional government as found in Canada.

Second, once the RCMP Ombudsman is legally established by statute, the position – both the officeholder and his/her staff - must be filled. As suggested in earlier discussion, there has been a discernible shift in the choice of Ombudsman officeholder in Canada in recent years. Rather than just use an impartial process to appoint someone with impartial credentials, the trend today is to appoint a person with a sense of fiduciary responsibility and with a proactive commitment to pursuing that objective. At the same time, the officeholder as well as staff must be well versed (or trained) in the arcane art of

forensic investigation - able to ask pertinent questions and to decipher “truth” from amidst diverse and sometimes conflicting opinions. Yet, the RCMP Ombudsman cannot be abrasive or confrontational; otherwise, it would be impossible to develop a constructive relationship with the RCMP community. It can thus be seen that filling the RCMP Ombudsman position and recruiting staff with appropriate people will be a difficult, but not impossible, task.

In addition, the RCMP Ombudsman must be cognizant of the need to adopt an appropriate communications strategy, including the use of an effective and interactive web site. E-government is now an essential component of modern governance in respect to public institutions. Even though there are still some digital gaps (i.e., portions of the general public who are not online), these gaps are decreasing with the passage of time. Feeling a sense of empowerment in a Charter-age and at a time of post-materialism, in a cyber-world, Canadians increasingly expect to be in touch electronically with their public institutions. The old hierarchical world upon which many of public institutions (including the RCMP) were found need to adjust to these changing circumstances. (Although I have not provided references to support these last few assertions, I only wish that I could take the reader into one of my political science/public administration classes to witness first-hand the current changes.) Above all, the person appointed to the position of the proposed RCMP Ombudsman will need to be innovative in terms of communication strategy to make his/her position known to both the mass media and the diverse publics served, in order to achieve the maximum potential.

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