

POLICY FORUM

Solutions for Canadian Digital Policy and Legislation

04 Panel: Advancing Collaborative Impact

The Canadian Internet Society Policy Forum: Solutions for Canadian Digital Policy and Legislation

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04 Panel - Advancing Collaborative Impact

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: So, when I was first asked to host a panel or to moderate a panel on digital policy, I thought, this is not the place for me. But when I heard about the topic, public engagement, it's something I feel very passionate about. And I'm really pleased with the panel that we've put together. Thank you, Franca, for putting this great panel together.

So let's get started. My first panelist here is . Rodrigo, did I get that right, Rosales-List, also known as Rod, and he's a Senior Executive in the Canadian Public Service currently serving as Senior Director, Service Modernization and Digital Transformation at Indigenous Services Canada.

Did I get that right? Yes.

He's an intrapreneur who has transformed departments into dynamic ecosystems reflecting the spirit of modern startups. And he's had many accomplishments, including the founding of Public Safety Canada, leading digital transformation, including AI adoption at Indigenous Services Canada, and I'm sure many more that we could talk about.

On the end here, I have Michele Austin. She's the Vice President of Public Affairs at Bell Canada. Prior to that, she held a similar role at Twitter. And she's going to be able to

provide a unique perspective, I think, on how larger corporations engage in public consultations.

And last but not least, we have Sue Gardner, who's a board member of the Canadian Internet Society. She is an Internet innovator, and we don't use those words lightly. She was the long time head of the Wikimedia Foundation, which operates Wikipedia. Before that she ran cbc.ca, the English language website of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. And today, when she's not involved with the Canadian Internet Society, she's a consultant. She's a board member on many other organizations, and an advisor to a variety of non-profits and startups, mostly in the realm of technology, media, and digital freedoms. So today what we want to do is we want the, we want to give the federal government, or we want some, maybe some guidance, some advice on how we could engage in public consultations in the future to make them more inclusive, make them more productive, make them more relevant.

And so to get the question started, I think maybe we could go to you Rodrigo. Ladies first, or? No, let's start with you, because you, with your background at Indigenous Services Canada, I think it'd be interesting to hear some of the successes you've seen.

Rodrigo Rosales-List - Indigenous Services Canada: Thank you so much, Valerie, and what a privilege to be here, and thank you to my co-panelists here.

It's an absolute honor to be here with you. So you rolled your R's very effectively. Thank you so much for that. Rodrigo Rosales. It's a great pleasure to be here with you. I'm going to be talking to you as we frame this conversation, a little bit about Indigenous Services Canada. And it's and you mentioned it.

I've worked at Public Safety Canada. I've also worked at other security related organizations, RCMP, and I have to admit, this is the first time in my career where it's so empowering to see the impact that you're having on Canadians and Indigenous Services Canada is relatively a new organization.

In the scale of government. It was created as part of the liberal government pledge to to really empower Indigenous people to do their own governance. So basically they created Indigenous Services Canada to basically put in one basket all the services to Indigenous so that we could provide those services in a culturally appropriate way.

But also, it was the first time in my career listening to the mandate of an organization which is to cease to exist one day. So they were talking about the devolution, the transfer of responsibilities. So that to me was, I mean, that was the first time that I even heard the word devolution, which is basically this transfer and empowering.

So the Indigenous communities would be able to govern themselves. They created two organizations out of the legacy departments. There was the CIRNA, which is Crown

Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, which negotiates treaties, make sure that our sovereignty in the North is protected as well.

That's an organization that will you always need to exist, but Indigenous Services Canada, our goal is to, within 10 years of the creation of the department, to be able to transfer control of all the services to Indigenous. Now, we're already at year five I'll let you make your own judgment on whether or not we'll meet that goal, but it's basically our big, hairy, audacious goal to, to transfer that ownership of services.

If you read the legislation that created our department, every single department in town has a piece of legislation that says, here's your sandbox, here's your mandate. Ours is very short, two pages. And basically in that legislation, you see black on white, that our goal in life is to provide services to Indigenous, to close socioeconomic gaps, that we do that within transparent service standards, and that we do it in a culturally appropriate way, in collaboration with the people that we serve.

And the organization? At first, It was a mishmash of different services, different cultures there were pieces from Health Canada, pieces from the previous what was ANSI, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, other pieces from other departments, and we didn't have a cohesive service culture.

So my job was basically to look at our services and see how we could improve the services to Indigenous and how we could bring a culture of digital within the organization. And the first thing that we did was just at least try to find out how many services do we have. We didn't even know that. So we eventually found out we had 88 external facing services of which I can tell you that there's only one that is online end to end.

So, basically most of our services are still very much in person paper based, by mail and, I was confronted with a myth. I was confronted with the myth of Indigenous people are not technically savvy. And I just couldn't buy it and we did our research, we partnered up with CBC Radio Canada who have a media technology arm who conducted a study of the 1.8 million Indigenous people in Canada and we realized that we were wrong. They are absolutely very tech savvy. Matter of fact, of the 1.8 million Indigenous in Canada, 30 percent of them are under the age of 19. So it's a very young group of the population. The median age is 32. I think the median age in Canada is about 42 years old.

And then when we looked at their habits in terms of consumption of digital products and all that, we realized that 92 percent of adults had a smartphone or a tablet when you look at the general population, it's about 82%. So for us, that was that big aha moment that, Hey, we need to change things here.

And there was this. We needed a renewed culture to realize that if we really wanted to close the socio-economic gaps, we really had to aim to provide the best service possible

to the population so that we can actually make a dent. It's not just good enough to be the same as the rest. We had to actually try to make a big change, a leap forward, so that we can narrow that gap, actually.

So, that's in the space that we're in right now, and happy to turn it over to my colleagues, but that's maybe just a framing for the rest of the conversation.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: Okay, yeah, no, that's great. So, I'm going to take it over to you next, Michele. You know, you've interacted with the federal government on policy issues, particularly digital policy issues kind of from the other... On the other side of things, could you tell us a little bit about, in your experience, some of the things that have worked well in which you really felt like as one of the key stakeholders you were involved, like you were engaged from the beginning, and maybe just a little bit of perspective on some things that you think maybe didn't work quite as well.

Michele Austin - Bell Canada: Well, thank you very much, Valerie. And I was reflecting on the title of this session, and I think all three words are important, Advancing Collaborative Impact. So, in Ottawa, the number one way I feel like we transact with each other is through a consultation. Which is not my favorite way to talk about policy or any subject matter, generally.

So, governments tend to... like consultation, it tends to be a one way transaction. They ask you a question, you submit an answer, and you may see it again, you may not, it all depends. So, when I worked for Twitter and we did the online harms consultation or online news consultation. It was actually very strictly laid out.

They asked you seven questions and we would please answer those seven questions. Thank you so much. Versus when you can currently Bell is an Internet service provider, so hopefully, you know, everybody here is a Bell customer. And the way that we consult with the CRTC is a little bit broader. You have a consultation on a subject matter hearing, you get that.

But it's a very binary way to engage, it's not collaboration. I think the next one up would be communication, wherein you have the opportunity to actually have a discussion, a meaningful discussion, where each side learns a little something about somebody else.

So, I think maybe it was Mr. Denton who was talking about draft legislation. Draft legislation is really interesting really important to everybody here in the room, and hopefully it's a communication that where you could say, are you drafting something? What does it look like? Is there any way I can see it? Is there any way we can have a discussion about it beforehand? But then the final one, which I think is largely absent, but really important and much more dominant, I think, in the private and not for profit sector is actual collaboration, where there is some risk involved, and where both parties put something on the table.

So, I was really interested to hear Mark Schaan's talk about these practices of AI. Okay, well, that's really interesting. How can we collaborate in the AI space, how can we learn what the government maybe is using, and gosh, they must have so much data, versus what the private sector has. How can we collaborate, Not necessarily for monetary gain for either side?

Too many people also think of this as a procurement. Not necessarily as a procurement, but maybe to get better task law at the end of it. So, I think that collaboration is still something that we're working on, especially in the digital space, where savvy digital users actually collaborate faster, where digital companies are much more comfortable with the realistic collaboration than the governments are.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: Sue, do you have anything you would like to add to all that has been said in the last couple of minutes?

Sue Gardner -Tiny Ventures / TCIS: So thank you for your introduction, Valerie.

So you did kind of unpack my CV, but I will unpack, I guess, the part that is most relevant to this room, which is so I did work at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for a really long time. I ran a CBC LDA then I moved to the United States and ran the Wikimedia Foundation. So I was out of Canada for, I do not remember how many years, maybe 15 years, something like that.

And then I came back. towards the end of the pandemic for reasons related to Donald Trump version 1 and the pandemic itself. And the moment I came back so, so prior to that, I had, all of my work had been making digital things. That is what I did. When I was coming back to Canada, I was hearing from France here that Canada was on the cusp of doing a whole bunch of digital policy, which turned it into C11 and C18 and Online Harms.

And so I thought, well, that's great because I have all this digital experience and I will walk back into the country and I will help. I'll help them create their digital policies. And so I think that's why I'm on this panel is because, my sense, everybody else in the room is an expert who's dedicated their entire careers to this practice.

I have 60 minutes. I think I'm a fresh voice or something, and I'm hoping that my sort of high level experiences in coming back are a little bit interesting or useful for people. I did do -- Sorry, continuing to unpack my CV for one second -- I did a two year as a professor of practice at the McGill School of Public Policy, so this is this much actual credential, but public policy is not my background, not like you folks.

And I think that my experience has come back to getting a little bit involved in some of these things. It is interesting for me to hear what you say about the convalidation [?]

processes because I've experienced them as an outsider, you know, who's not an expert and not a lawyer and not a policy person.

Shortly after I came back, I had a couple of meetings with fellows from CRTC, because I was interested in what seemed to be happening with C11, and they told me, folks there told me very sincerely, I think that they were really interested in getting the opinions of like ordinary people trying to speak on behalf of the public, with the public interest as they understood it.

Can I just ask, isn't anybody here from CRTC? If it's okay, even if you were, I say this with love. But they did, I think, very sincerely want the engagement of people like me, as well as experts. And so I got put on some kind of mailing list where they would sometimes send me their consultation prompts, and I would visit the link.

And the most recent one that I visited, I think it is 50 questions. I think this is a 15 or 20 page form, and it's 52 questions, and they're unbelievably arcane. They're, like, this is your life, but for someone like me, they're unbelievably arcane, but I set up sessions, 647,000 point whatever, and I feel like that is legit.

And when you're Dana Louise doing Louise things, you need that. I'm sure that level of specificity is really super important, but I feel, and I'm already interested to hear from other folks here, but what I feel like, what seems to me to be missing from that process is a good basic grasp of what the people want.

What are the people thinking about? What are the issues that the people are thinking about? So, you know, when I think about digital policy all around, but when I think about a digital policy...

When I first came back to Canada. My uncle lives a 20 minute drive from here, and my uncle cannot get a high speed Internet. It just doesn't exist. And he's 20 minutes from here.

My uncle is hungry. He's a member of the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, now just friends, and I think he feels like they do a little bit of advocacy on his behalf. But he is dying to tell someone at the CRTC that he would really like high speed and Internet. It is very simple. It is not 50 questions, and it's not 20 pages, he would just like someone to be thinking about him and his needs in the different way for the industry.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: Very important. So you were nodding a lot when she was talking about the engaging and the communications challenges maybe with understanding what maybe the questions that the federal government is asking, or that we're being asked as we're engaging. Do you have any...

Rodrigo Rosales-List - Indigenous Services Canada: it might sound cliché to be talking about human-centered design, but I think that sometimes we may be our worst enemies because we think we know the answer.

We know what the end product should look like. I think that maybe even comes back from like Henry Ford, where he even said famously, if I listen to my clients, they'll basically would want a faster horse. But I think we should be past that. We should be past that and we should be actively listening in and trying to get some of that input at a very good level.

I can tell you, from my, first hand stories that I've heard from Indigenous communities, and it is so empowering to hear the experience that we've made them go through, and you're like, oh my god, you're right, that doesn't make sense at all. I mean, but we thought that would have been the best approach to do things.

I'll give you a very concrete example, and that's what I was nodding at. We, in Digital Services Canada, have the registration program, and it's a program where basically you enter your data, and we were kind of patting ourselves on the back because we managed to reduce the client experience from a questionnaire that took an average of 30 minutes, down to 10.

And we were patting ourselves on the back, and then we were consulting with the communities, this gentleman came to see me and said, well, I mean, if that's your measure, the thing that you have forgotten is that I actually have to put on my coat, grab my car keys, leave the house, travel over two hours from my community to get to one of your service kiosks, to get at the service, and the last time I went, I actually had to overnight because you weren't able to provide me a service.

So, your timer doesn't start at the moment that you're in there with the client. The timer starts the moment the client is actually thinking on allocating that service. So, that's where we have to change our paradigm and get closer to this citizen, that client facing-centered design, that human-centered design.

We're still not there yet, even if it sounds cliché now, this isn't what we're here for, so thank you for the question.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: Okay, so, if you could design a consultation process from the federal government, what would that look like? What would be the best case scenario?

You talked a little bit about some of the things, being kind of put on the spot with questions that maybe, did it give you the opportunity to provide the info that you wanted, and so, what would the ideal consultation process look like for, and as a stakeholder, from a stakeholder's side of it?

Michele Austin - Bell Canada: Well, the fun thing about the private sector is most of us usually have a product in the real world that has to be sustained, and so it would be super fun if the government would take some time to get to know what our product was, and on a regular basis, so I don't even think I would start with a qualification, I would start more on a experiencing what it is that the private sector does.

So, come on over to [name]'s central office across the street here and see what it takes to coordinate fibre. Or, you know, come on a dig with us, actually just up the street from where the Canadian [inaudible] starts. And then see how fun that is. So I think that it was started with a much more openness from governments to understand that it is not just an academic exercise.

I mean, in complications, or sometimes it's buried in legislation, where you are required to do this sort of complication and kind of that, what would be very helpful would be for the way the government is, without thinking that it's lobbying, or without thinking that it's biased, which is a very sort of oral mindset to say, okay, what is it that you do?

So, status card, really interesting. So, you have a one time transaction with a status card, but then that status card goes out and lives in the real world, and then you go to Tanger, and then you try and get the discount that, or you know, pay hack and all the privileges that come with a status card. So, maybe there should be a QR code that is on a status card that can be universally accepted by retailers, so that the 16 and 17 year olds who never have seen a status card, know what it is, know what it means, and are able to, or the privileges that come up with the status card.

So I think that it, to start with, an open institute collaboration does assume a sort of risk, and then it does ask you to set up out of what is a large bureaucratic process. Maybe we can look at some different perspectives, so, that is not terribly helpful, but what I would say at all is, we have product. We have products. . So, that would be our star.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: So, consultations, I'm assuming, have changed a lot in recent years with the new technology and stuff like that? No? There we go. This is going to be your question. So, maybe you could tell us a little bit about how some of the technological changes of the federal government or your department were specifically implementing to deal with this?

The [inaudible], some of the other stuff, and then maybe we could follow along, along with the

Rodrigo Rosales-List - Indigenous Services Canada: Yeah, that's great, for sure. So, the one thing you've got to understand about Indigenous Canadians is that when you talk about Indigenous, there's not one group that represents all the issues of Indigenous community in Canada.

I was getting a question at the beginning of the session today, about how many indigenous communities do we have in Canada? And I can't even answer, because I think there's over 600 communities in Canada and there's different groups. There's First Nations, there's Inuit, there's [inaudible], and all these groups have their own vision of what they want Canada to look like, so there's not one group that represents all of these interests.

And this is how this is a society as well. Where I want to take this is into an analogy to a consultation process that exists within Policy Safety Canada, where I think they've done a great job in terms of trying to embed different perspectives from Canadians.

And they have the vehicle, which is all the Cross-Cultural Roundtable on State Security, where basically they have community leaders from various community groups that are acting almost as a sounding board before policies, or before big changes are happening in the public safety space.

So, you have people who might represent the Black community, might represent the Jewish community, the Tamil community, and I think that should be a best practice across not just public sector, but also private sector, in terms of having kind of a sounding board where you can close some of those big, I would say, big blind spots that you may have, because we might not be surrounding ourselves with enough of the diversity in the population to drive that change.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: Sounds good. Did you want to?

Sue Gardner -Tiny Ventures / TCIS: It's so interesting you would say that because, when I first got back, and I was following C11, I was interested in who the government was talking to, who the CRTC, etc. was talking to. And so, I did an analysis of to what degree were they talking to industry and to what degree were they talking to civil society.

And I have numbers. I have a tiny chart, I have a tiny table, and it was really interesting because, and I can't read it because I don't have my glasses but something like north of 80 percent I think on average across, this was the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, the Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, and lobbyist communications to Heritage and to the CRTC, and they were almost all to industry. That's what I found striking. There were actually a couple of striking things, but that was one of them, was something like four fifths, north of four fifths, were industry organizations that the government was talking to.

And you can understand why. Because they are right there, and they are paid to think, to answer your 50 questions. They're paid to do it, and they have skills, and they're lawyers, and et cetera. But it really does leave aside, I think, not on purpose, but it has the effect of leaving aside a whole bunch of civil society groups, and groups that aren't even, or demographics that aren't even represented by a civil society organization.

Like, when I first started talking to people in government about the Internet stuff. I was constantly saying, I'm speaking in the public interest as I understand it. And people seem to find that a little bit confusing. It was like, what? Aren't you with a company? Like, aren't, who is paying you to be here?

You know?

I just find it interesting. And I also would like to make an add on comment, which was the other thing I discovered when I did this number crunching, was that the other piece that was really, I felt, very underrepresented. We have to understand we're operating in the context of 21st century today.

And, almost everybody who was being consulted with, was what I would call like a legacy organization, not a digital first thing. And that was also really interesting because we're talking about digital policy and they're just, the folks who were being consulted with were typically not digital first.

One thing that was interesting watching C18 and C11, in those processes, new organizations formed to talk to the government. We saw, I think it was a digital media publishers association of some kind formed halfway through C18. And in C11, I think the YouTube creators, a bunch of creators got together and formed some kind of association.

And it's, oh, people are starting to get a PhD in government because that's what's required to make sure that your interests are represented at the table. But it's very new. It's very nascent. Like that government relations expertise doesn't quite exist yet.

There's a sort of separate subsequent question, which is audit to exist. How much of that should be necessary? But, at this time, it is necessary in this country. And yet it isn't really there. And so I think that has a distorting effect on outcomes. If you're hearing primarily from legacy organizations and you're hearing primarily from private sector organizations.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: Wow. Yeah, that's a perfect segue for...

Michele Austin - Bell Canada: Well, I mean, if you're going to say that a telecommunications company are guilty as charged of burying everything in process, you would be right. We are a federally regulated industry and there is, we have so much process coming out of every corner, and we have professional process people who will, you know, work with answer your 87 CRTC questions in great detail in a way that I can't understand what it is, because that's the way that we've always done it, and that's the way that clogs up the system, and sometimes that's the best way to get going.

So, what's the best way to improve process? It's not going to be rocket science for you. Plain language, right?. Plain language would be really helpful on all sides. Go to, where people are. So if everybody's on Facebook slash Meta, go have your discussion there on Facebook Meta. If everybody's on Blue Sky, go over there.

Is there going to be an opportunity to game the system? Absolutely. Is telecommunication gaming the existing system? Absolutely. And then the other thing I think that's really important, and again, tying back into what Mark said, and this is age where I know Google knows instantly what's happening with me and they have a dashboard and they have feedback instantly and that's the feedback that Google gets is in real time and it's really helping them make decisions.

Why are the rest of us not doing that? Why don't we have a dashboard for every CRTC consultation? Why don't, are we not able to publish statistics in real time in this country? Why is it five years after the census comes we get that information out? There's no, I don't know what the disincentive is.

Well, there's probably lots of it, but there should, there's so many tools and now there's AI in order to be able to have us have these conversations in real time, be able to analyze the data through new technologies and sift that conversation forward. So I think there's a ton of opportunity to hit the impact side of what this panel is to, wants to discuss, but it's going to involve risk and on all sides.

Rodrigo Rosales-List - Indigenous Services Canada: I don't know if I should feel better now knowing that Bell is also buried under process. I thought it was only government. Any federally regulated organization will tell you. All right, sounds good. So, in terms of this In terms of, um, technology like a, how we could, you talked about plain language, about going where people are, about, are there things right now that are being implemented at the public service to engage with, maybe with these audiences that are more remote, to You've mentioned what you've discovered.

What are you, what are your plans in terms of changing how you So, I think like Mark mentioned, he was optimistic. I'm also very optimistic, but I think the promise of AI, robotics and process automation, which, by the way if I had that one extra dollar in my pocket today, that's exactly where I would put it, rather than AI, because there's so much process and there's so much promise to make processes more efficient.

So I think we're at that point in time where we're cautiously optimistic about how we can embed more of these practices and we're really conscious about bringing in extra efficiencies and I think the writing's on the wall as well in terms of what could happen in the near future with change in government.

So I, we're really cautious with government is getting a squeeze right now, as you know, in terms of like the budgets. So it's how can we make more with less or really focus on the things that matter most? So I think that's where technology has this promise. The

one area I have to be super, transparent with you is about education, making sure that employees, that personnel are well educated in terms of the tools, what they can do with it.

And also for us in IT, as IT experts is also trying to learn how to get out of the way, because we often are our own worst enemies in terms of instating process or instating processes. I mean, rules or instating frameworks that don't allow necessarily employees to be empowered to work at the speed of technology today.

So I think that's an area where we're trying to push and change the culture internally within government to be able to remove some of those barriers. Some of you may have heard about citizen development programs. I think that's where we want to move the space to because you cannot be the only ones in IT in terms of the monopoly when technology nowadays is so accessible.

So, for us, that's where we're trying to push education and as well making sure that there are frameworks for people to be able to accelerate about development.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: Is this something that the private industry like a private public partnership, you were talking about budget cuts, and sometimes in things are sexy, and sometimes they're a little less sexy depending on the political climate.

Is this an area where the public and the private sector could come together to better inform policy to in the digital space?

Michele Austin - Bell Canada: I think absolutely, and I don't think there's any of it necessarily going on. So, I mean, there's, it's hap, I always say digital policy shouldn't make digital policy separate from what's going on in the real world.

If you're able to do it in the real world, you should be able to do it in the digital world, and vice versa. If you're doing something in the digital world that the government wants to regulate, stop, control, well, hopefully you're doing the same thing in the real world as well. So, Public Private Partnerships Canada, I think, is, like, truly the only 3P existing organization for the government and it's for infrastructure.

I think that it would be really interesting to start that from a digital point of view. I think you want to be very clear though what the problem is you're trying to solve and then have the ability to work together.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: I want to come back to this concept of a checklist. So you mentioned, Michele, very briefly while you were speaking, it was just a line that you said, , it's a checklist. There's a process for consult, consulting, and sometimes it feels like somebody's just checking off boxes. Obviously, as part of

education, sometimes a checklist could be useful. You need to do A, B, C to make sure you're reaching the different people.

But, how could we keep these standard, maybe built into policy process of consulting people and have certain standards.

We're going to give 30 days, we're going to, I don't know. But, how could we do that and, at the same time, remain flexible and responsive to the changing needs without necessarily relying on this checklist and saying, okay, we sent out our three questions. They've been sent out. People had two weeks to answer them. We got our answers. This is, that was your chance.

How could we change it so that we go beyond a checklist into meaningful engagement? What are some things that we could do? I don't know if you want to take that away or Sue?

Rodrigo Rosales-List - Indigenous Services Canada: I could just get us started. I think, believe it or not, there's such a thing as consultation fatigue.

And we see it in, in the indigenous space where they basically get bombarded with questions from various groups. So there's, there might be a lack of coordination from different government departments. And then it's the same groups over and over that get bombarded. All the same questions all the time.

So, I think there is that need to have better federal coordination and better relationship in terms of making sure that we are sharing within ourselves whatever it is that has come as information and being more open in terms of that feedback that we have received in the government space, in the federal space.

So, that is something that I am really conscious as well, making sure that We're not overdoing it and that when we're doing it, we're doing it in a meaningful way and that the findings are shared. So, I think that's part of I guess my lessons learned from there.

Sue Gardner -Tiny Ventures / TCIS: I think that's super real.

And I've heard Indigenous people talk about that. That there's always someone knocking at their door, asking that questions. Yeah. I tend to come at this from the perspective of of again, ordinary people. And I think that they don't feel over consulted with. They don't feel like people are asking questions, a lot of questions about what they want and need.

And to me, I think at its heart, it is a culture question. I think you said this earlier. It's a culture question, which is you have to, if you're in government, you're in the CRTC, whatever, you have to want to know what people think. And I know you know, when I

ran the Wikimedia Foundation, our organization is ridiculously transparent and ridiculously consultative, and everybody had an opinion about everything, and we did it with very old technology. We did it with mailing lists and stuff like that. We didn't have anything fancy. And It can be, of course exhausting to sort of wade through everybody's input, and try to figure out who to pay attention to, and what really matters and etc. It's hard, but you have to do it, and you have to engage in it with an open mind and wholeheartedly.

If you don't really want to do it, people can tell. They can feel it. And then they just opt out. And if they stop giving you their input, that's even worse than if they give you too much of their input, because that means they've checked out.

And you were talking earlier about trust. Trust in the system, trust in the systems. If people Don't think you're interested in what they have to say, trust goes down. If you don't ask them what they think, trust goes down. One way to push trust up, behavioral economics taught us this. I think Dan Ariely wrote about how, if you ask someone their opinion, they immediately like you more.

Of course we do. So, we should ask, and we should listen, and we should care.

And an observation I would make again, in my time back here, has been that my sense is that folks who should be asking for input and grateful to get it, often seem to see it as a burden.

There are some Canadians on the scene who are just incredibly knowledgeable. And if I were Writing legislation or working on regulatory stuff. I would make them my first call. There's some people who are just like really knowledgeable. They know lots of stuff. It would be a joy to pick their brains.

And it doesn't seem like that's the orientation. It's funny. It seems like the folks who should be seeking feedback, see it. Often more as a problem and something to be sort of managed. You have to do the minimum or people will get mad at you, as opposed to seeing it as a rich wealth of resource and knowledge and information that can help you do your job in a much better way.

That must come from, like you alluded, a scarcity mindset. Like it must come from a sense that you're overburdened, there's too much to do, there's not enough time, there's not enough money. It must come in part from that, no? One of the things I have been trying to pitch to the organization is Imagine there was like a TripAdvisor, but for government services.

I don't think any of our services would score five stars. So I think that's a very, it's a wealth of knowledge that we're missing out in terms of having systematic feedback built

in, into every single service interaction that you have with a citizen. How was our service? Rate it.

So I think to your point. I mean, there must be a better way to, to get that feedback in. And that reminds me of a, of an experience I had, again, I don't know why I'm picking on the CRTC. I don't mean to, but the CRTC has a map. It publishes a map, which is access to high speed broadband Internet.

And when I live in the forest and when I moved back to this part of the world, I checked that map and it told me I had six options for high speed Internet. I have zero options for high speed Internet. I talked to my uncle...

Rodrigo Rosales-List - Indigenous Services Canada: My ally.

Sue Gardner -Tiny Ventures / TCIS: My uncle is yeah, no kidding. Welcome to my world. But that is trust diminishing, and I would not give that a good rating on TripAdvisor, I just would not. Because someone's not checking, someone's put it up, but not checking it and validating it. So, not awesome.

Michele Austin - Bell Canada: You know, the product in the real world. I would say two things. When I first arrived at Twitter, and I had spent a lot of time in government, for every product that we put out, and product can mean an actual tangible thing or a service, or it can be a submission, at the end, we had to do a retro. And I was like, what is this retro business? I really was terrible at retros, and I couldn't figure out why. And it's because I think it's because I came from government where the success is getting the thing out the door. And you not necessarily think, oh now, what has happened to that thing?

I'll give you an example. C18, which is the Online News Act, which the response from Meta was they stopped linking, or they stopped publishing Canadian news. At Bell, we have radio stations, and METIS scoped us in, that if your country radio station had on its website a blurb about news you were scoped into Meta's ban.

And, we never figured that would be a consequence of what that was. But there was no way to go back on to the government and say, wait a minute, wait a minute. We actually, in Quebec, we launched, because we're crazy, new broadcasting services. And they were doing really well in terms of attracting new listeners on Meta. And when we were no longer allowed to publish anything related to Nouveau on Meta, it had a real impact on our bottom line.

Which brings me to my second point, is that we tend to forget that a lot of these consultations do have an enormous impact on the bottom line of companies. And the bottom line of companies isn't just revenue, it's jobs.

And so I'm not saying that consultation shouldn't be done. I think consultation is exceptionally important and exceptionally should be formal, especially when there's a bottom line that's involved, which there is all the time in telecommunications and broadcasting. The CRTC could make a decision that will stop us from making an investment.

Why would we do this if it's going to be regulated or it has to be shared? We're not going to make that investment. So, the other thing that I think that is extremely important is to understand the economic impact of your consultation, collaboration, communication. Can I ask, does Bell have a position on C18 now?

Why would we have a position on it? It's done. So, so, I think that that's a great example where we did have a position. I think we were supportive of C18 quietly in the background through the Canadian Association of Broadcasters. In reality, when C18 came to fruition, Bell was shocked by the outcome of what happened because we hadn't anticipated it.

So, but there is, you know, I guess the question is where would that position live at night now? Because that's done.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: So, I want to go back to something that you mentioned, Sue. . So I want to take it back to a point you made about, you mentioned something about a whole bunch of new associations forming in the wake of C11 or C18. I can't remember which one it was that you were ...

And then we talked a bit about fatigue. And those key experts, I think we call on you often, Michele, you know, like the, those experts, they're also very taxed, and all these associations are, what could we do in terms of putting aside the federal government, not that you're not very important, but what could we do as different associations, organizations to work better collaboratively, to better engage those experts and to maybe...

Sue Gardner -Tiny Ventures / TCIS: I kind of want to sort of challenge the premise of that a little bit because what I've been thinking about...

I was driving in to be on this panel, and I was listening to, do you guys know Jen Gerson who is the co-founder of The Line? So I was listening to Jen, to their podcasts.

And I wrote down what she said because I thought it was just so striking. She was talking about how Canada functions, and she said, In Canada, the people who get ahead in this country are the people who are best at navigating the federal government. And then she went on to be critical of that, and to talk about how that mitigates against innovation and productivity, and instead leads to insider dealing and rent seeking.

And so, I was kind of sad when I saw the YouTube creators and the other sort of indie creators forming their association because I thought that.,.

And, my feelings have some ambivalence in them...

but, I thought generally that it was kind of awesome that there were these creative people doing this stuff in the absence of any sort of interaction with government, that they were just making stuff. And they had such interesting stories about how they started their work, and then they were responsive to feedback they were getting.

I think there was a company where the woman who founded the company started off, I think her original goal was to teach babies English with songs, and then through iteration and responding to audiences, and giving people more of what they seem to want, she ended up making this company that I believe teaches people who don't speak English, but want to live in Canada, how to speak English through songs.

It was like, what? No one would have predicted that she would have never set out to create that. But, just by following desire paths, just by responding, that's where she ended up.

And it's just so interesting, all this sort of fecundity, all this sort of creativity and stuff happening. And it made me a little bit sad when those people decided that they now need to form an association to send people to Ottawa with briefing documents and whatever.

And the same was true for the digital indie people, and the digital indie people, the news people, talked extensively during the C18 process about how their preference is to pay attention to their audiences. They want to delight the people who are there trying to serve, and so they want to spend all their time.

When I was at the Wikimedia Foundation, I created the business model for Wikipedia, which is everybody gives two dollars, and that is a lot of money, and so the thing is financially totally fine. I was thrilled when we were able to make that work because I wanted to pay attention to the readers of Wikipedia. I didn't want to pay attention to the Knight Foundation, or something, or the government of whatever.

And the digital news producers, that is how they see the world. They want to pay attention to their end user. They want to delight that person, give them news that is useful to them. They want a podcast, they get a podcast. They don't want to be sitting in government environments, speaking to government people. And I think that that is a good impulse. It's a good impulse.

So, where that would leave me an answer to your question is maybe, you know, although I'm all in favour of collaboration, I'm all in favour of people talking all the time

and learning more about each other's worlds, maybe there's something to be said for people just doing their thing, you know?

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: True. Did you want to add anything to that?

Michele Austin - Bell Canada: Just to say, to encourage everybody, including myself, to go out and find voices that you wouldn't usually listen to. It's on you. And I think it's on corporations too, like, who can we get? Well, go out and find somebody. You're listening to podcasts. There's lots of really interesting people out there who we're not tapping into. So, it's really important, especially for somebody like me, to make the effort to find them.

Rodrigo Rosales-List - Indigenous Services Canada: I know I'm not the one asking questions here, but I'm wondering we all have heard podcasts about the DOGE, the Department of Government Efficiencies. So, is that something that you're welcoming kind of thing, or is that something that also...

Michele Austin - Bell Canada: Are we talking about Elon Musk, here?

Rodrigo Rosales-List - Indigenous Services Canada: Yes. You're like me, curious? I have my popcorn set aside to watch what's going to happen.

Michele Austin - Bell Canada: So I said this earlier today, don't forget, I have PTSD from Elon Musk, who invited me to leave, along with 70 percent of the company.

And so, here's the thing about Elon Musk, he's asking people to do things differently. He's challenging your assumptions. He's looking at things in simple language. We're going to let go everybody whose Social insurance number ends in an odd number. Okay. Wow. That's a really interesting thing to look at.

You're shifting my paradigm. You're asking me to do things differently. So I think it's very clear that he's on to something generally with his view of the world. I don't subscribe to it, but I do think it's important to have voices like that, and counter voices, out there and to consider what he's asking us to do.

Rodrigo Rosales-List - Indigenous Services Canada: Balance.

Michele Austin - Bell Canada: No, not necessarily balance, but how about insight? There we go.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: Sue, did you want to respond to that quickly?

Sue Gardner -Tiny Ventures / TCIS: That was very generous.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: I love it.

Rodrigo Rosales-List - Indigenous Services Canada: Planted question.

Valérie Gervais - RKESTRA Communications: And did you have anything to add to that or it was just the question? So I think we're going to wrap things up. Thank you very much.