If one were to bet on the design of public organizations in the twenty-first century, it would seem foolhardy to gamble that bureaucracy has a future. Virtually all prognoses suggest that bureaucracy is a model whose time has passed; its demise will occur in the new century, if it is not extinct by then. Reformers thus speak of “banishing bureaucracy” and “breaking through bureaucracy” to conform to the “post-bureaucratic paradigm.” The call to go “beyond bureaucracy,” in other words, is both prescriptive and predictive. In the Canadian context, the norm for the future of organizational design is universally described as “alternative service delivery”; and while this means different things to different people, at the very least it means alternatives to bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy has no future, it is widely assumed, because we have supposedly concluded that its three chief characteristics – hierarchy, specialization and standardization – are highly dysfunctional in an age and global environment where well-performing organizations must be characterized instead by empowerment and self-managed teams, horizontal policy development, integrated service delivery, and management discretion and flexibilities tailored to the particular circumstances of each organization. In contrast to this ideal, bureaucracy is taken to mean centralized decision-making as well as command and control systems; organizational fragmentation and turf protection; and rules, regulations and procedures imposed on those who manage the operations of government by armies of program and functional specialists in both central agencies and line organization headquarters. In order to overcome these perceived organizational pathologies, “bureaucratic systems” must be replaced with “entrepreneurial systems.” Or so the script reads.

If we take “bureaucracy” to mean unnecessary, self-serving or outdated...
rules and regulations that impede the productive use of resources (money, staff or technology), uncoordinated and disjointed program or functional units that act as barriers to integrated, shared or seamless services, or command structures of decision-making that do not allow decisions to be made by those best placed to make them, then we do need to "de-bureaucratize" public management. But these deficiencies in organization design and management practice are not pathologies inherent in the bureaucracy model; they are the products of poor designs and bad management, or, at the least, designs left unattended or practices maintained despite recognition of their dysfunctional consequences.

In this paper, I argue that bureaucracy will survive into and in the twenty-first century. It will do so because the bureaucratic model is essential to good public management and good public management is essential to good governance. Bureaucracy is to good public management, what constitution is to good governance. Indeed, it was most appropriate that Henry Parris would characterize the development of the British permanent public service as the creation of "constitutional bureaucracy." Bureaucracy, so defined, is not a sufficient condition to good public management, but it is a necessary condition (in much the same way that good government is a requirement for a good marketplace). Good government, at a minimum, requires organizational designs that promote democratic direction, control and accountability. Public bureaucracy contributes to good governance to the extent that it is designed in ways that support these requirements and thus help to secure adherence to the rule of law and public-service values and ethics, public-service impartiality in policy advice and service delivery, and the faithful stewardship of the public trust. Public bureaucracy serves these ends to the extent that it has the following features:

- *hierarchy*, so that the exercise of public authority is structured in ways that make roles and responsibilities as clear and transparent as possible;
- *specialization*, so that the objectives, missions and tasks of government are assigned in ways that best secure competence for the provision of policy advice and service delivery; and
- *standardization*, so that the work of public management is subject to best practices for achieving results in ways that meet the tests of equity, economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In order for bureaucracy to contribute to good public management, and thus to good governance, it must obtain a reasonable fit with transformations in the political system, the challenges and opportunities extant in the socioeconomic order, and the changing character of the public workplace with respect to both technological developments and the expectations of those who work therein. There is thus no contradiction in stating that public
management must remain bureaucratic but, at the same time, be practiced in ways that enable, even require, public servants to exercise greater authority, accept increased responsibilities, and be subject to enhanced accountability. The challenge in organizing public management for the twenty-first century is not to banish bureaucracy; it is to design bureaucracy in ways that best adapt the requirements of hierarchy, specialization and standardization to serve the ends of democratic direction, control and accountability, as well as the ends of effective public policy, productive public management and responsive public service.

**Bureaucracy-bashing: getting the diagnosis wrong**

One of the major tenets, if not the principal premise, in current conventional wisdom respecting public administration is that the deficiencies and problems we experience in the management of public organizations are the consequence of its bureaucratic structure. This is what “bureaucracy-bashers,” as opposed to “bureaucrat-bashers,” would have us believe. As David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, perhaps the two best-known bureaucracy-bashers, put it: “the people who work in government are not the problem; the systems in which they work are the problem.”

It is not at all surprising that bureaucracy-bashing has constituted the counter-offensive of public managers (and public-management gurus) to the bureaucrat-bashing unleashed in the 1970s and 1980s by pro-private sector, pro-market crusaders. The theoretical bases for the attack on bureaucrats were essentially critiques of bureaucracy, as best represented by public-choice theory. But the anti-bureaucrat politicians who capitalized on the increasing public tolerance, let alone support, for this abuse of public-service personnel delivered their message in ways that stung public servants as individuals and as a profession. Bureaucrats were considered the problem: lazy, wasteful and incompetent, at best; rude, self-aggrandizing and corrupt, at worst. In contrast, bureaucracy-bashers, such as Osborne and Gaebler, seek to deflect the criticism by proclaiming “systems” to be the source of all defects. In this view, bureaucrats are portrayed as the “victims” of deficient public-management architecture.

This tactical ploy to deflect criticism from people to systems cannot but strike a responsive chord with public servants. They view themselves as unfairly criticized for matters over which they have little control, since they are subordinates of political executives. They also see themselves as inappropriately compared to managers in the private sector, who, in fact, are not their counterparts, since politicians hold the most senior executive positions in government organizations (and political aides are often their most influential advisers). Given the hostility of the anti-bureaucrat political environment within which public servants must work, they perhaps should be
forgiven for the extent to which so many of them have enthusiastically embraced the anti-bureaucracy posture of bureaucracy-bashing.

In fact, however, the maladministration that obtains at any point – the "problem" in question – is never merely the result of defective "systems"; it is also the result of "the people who work in government." This is so in two respects. First, individual persons make technical mistakes, exercise poor judgement, and even engage in unlawful behaviour. Public services vary across political jurisdictions in terms of their quality and culture, precisely because they vary in terms of the quality of the people whom they are able to attract and retain and the values and norms that govern their actual behaviour. Second, while many bureaucrats have precious little, if any, control or influence over their work, some do. The latter are not merely cogs in a machine; rather, they are participants in the management of public affairs. They are subordinates of political executives to be sure, but, as public administrators, they both exercise delegated executive authority and advise the political executive on matters of public policy and administration. Although the reality varies across different democratic political systems, public servants virtually everywhere play a major role in creating, enforcing and evaluating the "systems" that are meant to govern what is done in bureaucracy. They are neither the powerless minions of political masters nor the pawns of some impersonal superstructure.

Bureaucracy-bashing assumes that systems, as formal structures, alone determine behaviour and organizational performance. According to this script, if we do away with bureaucratic systems, we do away with bureaucratic behaviour, or, more specifically, if we do away with hierarchy, we do away with that which muzzles change and innovation; if we do away with specialization, we do away with the "stovepipes" and "silos" that impede cooperation in providing advice to policy-makers and service to citizens; if we do away with standardization, we do away with the red tape that obstructs a focus on citizens (or customers, as the enthusiasts of entrepreneurialism would have it).

The error in this script, of course, is that it ignores the consequences of individual behaviour in organizations, especially the behaviour of those officials who have a major influence on what their organizations do and do not do. For instance, "red tape" – if taken to mean inane rules, regulations or procedures serving no public-policy purpose – is not a natural or inevitable consequence of the bureaucratic process of standardization; rather, red tape, so defined, is the result of decisions to establish or apply rules, regulations or procedures in cases where standardization is not the best or most appropriate means of coordination. The fact that many hands, over many years, may have accounted for the rules, regulations or procedures in question, or that many are involved in their misapplication, does not transform the bureaucracy into a leviathan; numerous individuals
along the way had an opportunity to call foul or take appropriate action and failed to do so.

Large public bureaucracies (and large private bureaucracies, for that matter) are normally slow to change their structures and procedures. The public service, as a subordinate institution, furthermore, operates within a constitutional structure wherein the laws, regulations and policies that govern its conduct of public business constitute "systems" that do not necessarily accord with its preferences or best judgement. Parliament and ministers, on their own and/or in response to political forces (such as partisan political interests, the demands of public-service unions or the critiques of the media), must accept ultimate responsibility for the systems within which the public service functions. But this does not necessarily mean that public servants are "trapped" in these "systems." As the clerk of the Privy Council in her 1997 report on the federal public service noted, "more often than not" the rules and red tape that public servants, and others, characterize as "bureaucratic," because they are "impediments to improved service delivery," are "self-imposed," even "self-inflicted."

The danger to good public management implicit in the ideas upon which the bureaucracy-bashing rhetoric is based is that it essentially absolves "the people who work in government" from the maladministration, including inane red tape, that does obtain at any given point. Its central message is that a particular kind of organizational design, namely, the bureaucratic system, is the problem; the solution, accordingly, is to be found in the adoption of another organizational design, namely, an entrepreneurial system. One problem with this message (a second is noted below) is that there is no evidence to support the hypothesis that structure alone determines behaviour and thus performance, even though structure may be a more important determinant of organizational performance than some wish to believe. "Organization matters," James Q. Wilson, the leading American public-organization theorist, states succinctly. But even he could not subscribe to the view that "the people who work in government are not the problem; the systems in which they work are the problem." For Wilson, this would be claiming too much for organization, for good or for ill. For those who seek to absolve themselves of personal blame for organizational failures, however, this view offers a convenient excuse. Whenever confronted by a charge of a misdeed, another Wilson from America – comedian Flip Wilson – was wont to claim "The devil made me do it!"; bureaucracy-bashing, it appears, justifies bureaucrats claiming "The systems made us do it!"

However inaccurate it is as empirical description, it might be argued that bureaucracy-bashing still serves a useful function, that is, as the political rhetoric required to help promote change. A degree of rhetoric is normally required in any attempt to mobilize political forces in order to effect change, because all change has a critical political dimension: the status quo, with its
structure of vested interests, is being challenged and altered. This argument cannot be accepted in this instance, since the rhetoric in question is not innocuous. Although not always made explicit, its fundamental implication is that the essential dimensions of bureaucratic organization — hierarchy, specialization and standardization — are nothing more than elements of a management "paradigm" whose passing away has no consequences for good public management or, therefore, good government. Pseudo-anarchists, such as Tom Peters, whose bestsellers *Thriving on Chaos: Handbook for a Managerial Revolution* and *Liberation Management* have sought to undermine those ideas and ideals most associated with the bureaucratic model, obviously would welcome such a passing. But, organizational disorder and dysfunctionalism, not to mention corruption, are the likely outcome of those attempts to "reinvent" or "re-engineer" government organizations that do not address the need for hierarchy, specialization and standardization as the organizational means to promote democratic control, direction and accountability.

Both the political and socioeconomic exigencies of the times and the changing dynamics within public management demand increased attention to teamwork and horizontal coordination, flatter management structures and integrated delivery, and more delegation and decentralization. But the first set of conditions does not eliminate the requirement of hierarchy; the second does not do away with specialization; and the third does not imply an absence of standards. In the design of new organization forms to meet these challenges, great care must be taken not to diminish effective democratic direction, control and accountability over the state apparatus and its coercive powers. To the extent that these characteristics of good government are diminished by changes to public bureaucracy, they can hardly constitute prospects to be welcomed.

**The challenge: getting bureaucracy right**

Among the major challenges to public management in support of good government, three are invariably considered central to the question of new organizational designs. These are organizational designs (1) to provide integrated service delivery; (2) to develop policies to deal with horizontal issues; and (3) to devolve management authority for government operations. These challenges are especially interesting from an organizational-design perspective in that, taken together, they appear to call for government to move in different, even contradictory, directions.

The first two appear to call for designs that reduce or overcome the degree of specialization or differentiation of government organization; the third, for designs that enhance, even entrench, these very features. The first two are inclined to see specialization or differentiation as fragmentation, that is, an
obstacle to servicing citizens as whole persons with multiple needs (or businesses with multiple requirements) or to formulating policy that cuts across the organizational boundaries of government. The third, in contrast, sees specialization or differentiation as a prerequisite to the design of organizations that focus specifically on clearly defined and demarcated missions, management tasks and clientele. As has been the case in the private sector, government organizations appear to be pulled in different directions by the contradictory prescriptions of contemporary management theory.\textsuperscript{12}

At the same time, all three appear to call for a separation of policy and operational responsibilities that runs counter to an important tenet in public administration, at least in the Westminster tradition of ministerial departments and central corporate management agencies.\textsuperscript{13} A separation of policy and operational responsibilities is necessary in the first case, because integrated service delivery assumes that the "integration" of services, at least beyond the simple integration of information services, must be accomplished primarily by those responsible for service delivery. A separation is necessary in the second case, because horizontal policies, by definition, cut across the line operations of government; they thus add a measure of separation between policy and operational responsibilities even in cases where the line operations in question are part of otherwise integrated policy-operations structures, as in the case of ministerial line departments. In the third case, a separation is deemed necessary so that managers of operations have the authority to deploy financial and human resources as economically and efficiently as possible in implementing policies.

**Integrated service delivery**

Integrated service delivery constitutes a challenge that is not entirely novel, but that has taken on a new salience as a consequence of the conjunction of several developments. These include increased citizen frustration with and expectations about the quality of service delivery, new methods of delivery made possible by new information technologies, and the more insistent demands of public servants that they be able to deliver services in ways that meet the needs of whole persons. Although it is possible in some cases to facilitate integrated service delivery by designing organizations that serve particular clienteles with a range of services, such as the federal departments of Indian or Veteran Affairs, it is not possible to organize the specialized parts of an entire government around this principle; citizens have not only multiple but also cross-cutting identities insofar as the policy functions of the modern state are concerned. Nonetheless, citizens increasingly expect services to be made accessible or delivered in ways that do not require them to coordinate, on their own, the several dimensions and requirements of the services in question. Rather, they expect public servants to provide them with integrated, or seamless, service. The coordination required between the
different parts of the state apparatus to effect such service, in short, should be undertaken by specific officials who are assigned these tasks.

Integrated service delivery comes in several degrees of "integration" – from shared information services ("single windows"), to shared office locations ("service clusters"), to shared service delivery ("case management"). At one extreme, the organizational units in question (departments, departmental units or agencies) remain fully separate but coordinate the delivery of their separate services on the front lines; at the other extreme, the organizations remain separate identities, but their services are delivered by an organizationally distinct and integrated delivery system. In every case, at least two challenges need to be met.

First, providing integrated service requires a kind of structure for the front lines that few organizations have experienced. For service delivery to be seamless, individuals on the front lines must address the multiple requirements of the services in question. This means that those on the front lines cannot be organized to provide parts of the service as discrete or separate procedures. In other words, the front lines should no longer constitute the base of a triangularly shaped organization, that is, an organization whose specialization is most fully reflected at the delivery end of its services. Rather, in an integrated delivery system, those of the front lines form the bottom point of a diamond-shaped organization. In this structure, the specialized parts of the system do not extend to the front lines; they are located back in the system and up the hierarchy, whether these specialized parts be units of a department or even whole departments, that is, in cases where the services in question come from two or more departments. On the front lines, the organization presents itself to citizens as an integrated organization that is able to provide a seamless service of interrelated components. In the back offices, however, the organization needs to be highly specialized. It is not a matter, as some would put it, of "inverting the pyramid," with citizens at the top and chief executives on the bottom, for that does not address the need for integrated service delivery.

Second, in many, if not most, cases of integrated delivery, the services in question are delivered by those who are not directly accountable to those responsible for their design and implementation; indeed, in some cases they are not even members of the same organization (as in department or agency). In all these cases, but especially in the latter, this requires that direction, control and accountability be realized by means other than by direct supervision as expressed in the conventional chain of command that is found in vertically integrated bureaucracies. In some instances, this can be achieved primarily by the department or agency responsible for the services in question, providing clear specifications for the delivery of their services by others, in the same way this would be done if the organization was to contract or partner with a third party to deliver its services. This approach
entails using standardization of outputs and/or processes as the primary means of coordination. In instances where this first approach is not deemed appropriate or sufficient, the necessary coordination can be effected primarily by way of what Henry Mintzberg calls "mutual adjustment," that is, the managed communication and cooperation of individuals who are not in direct superior–subordinate relationships but whose collaboration is necessary for integrated service delivery.¹⁴

Neither of these features of integrated service delivery means that the bureaucracy model is irrelevant to the organizational tasks at hand. The way in which citizens receive services is changed, and the change is partly due to the ways public servants are organized on the front lines and partly due to the ways they relate to the various specialized units that are responsible for the full range of services delivered on the front lines. At the same time, it needs to be underlined that these new organizational designs must be complemented by an emphasis on those managerial tasks that seek to motivate staff and to promote cooperative behaviour that is above and beyond what is considered necessary in organizations designed to function in a highly mechanistic or procedural manner. Machine-type bureaucracies cannot be put on automatic pilot, but the interorganizational structures that characterize integrated service delivery demand a level of professional management not always found, or required, in machine-type bureaucracies.

Even in the most complex of integrated delivery systems, nevertheless, there still must be hierarchy, specialization and standardization. Contrary to what is implied in much of the rhetoric, organizational specialization does not disappear because citizens are serviced as whole persons. Indeed, the whole point of integrated service delivery is not to simplify or diminish the specialized character of public services. Rather, it is, first, to shift the burden of coordinating the specialized dimensions of service from the citizen, as service recipient, to the front-line public servant and, second, to force those responsible for the specialized dimensions to cooperate with each other so that front-line public servants, who are the subordinates of superiors who are back up the multiple chains of command, can actually provide seamless public service. In order to achieve and maintain these conditions, there must be hierarchy; the collaboration of the separate organizations in question does not just happen because integrated service delivery has been deemed a good thing. Standardization is also a feature of well-managed matrix structures, because it represents the mutual understandings between those responsible for the services in question on what constitutes the best practices to be promoted on the front lines. Those responsible, in other words, can still be held accountable, even though they have collaborated with others in deciding on policy (i.e., best practices) and have agreed to delivery separated from their direct supervision.

The net effect of all this, of course, is to retain the specialization that char-
acterizes the work of modern government and that builds on its technical competence, while diminishing its negative, and unintended, consequences. Viewed in the context of history, this attempt may be seen as little more than the inevitable corrective, however belated, to the increase in specialization that governments, even relatively small local governments, experienced as a result of the expansion in public services and regulations in the post-Second World War period. It is not surprising, accordingly, that most initiatives in integrated service delivery, while regarded by citizens as welcomed changes perhaps, are not greeted with the politically charged reactions, positive or negative, that accompany significant innovations in public policy. The long-term consequences of these corrective measures, however, may well be significant in enhancing both policy effectiveness and public confidence in government.

**Horizontal policy development**

Designing organizations to develop horizontal policies for those matters that extend across the existing boundaries of government departments and agencies is not all that different from designing integrated delivery systems. The need for such organizations also proceeds from the conjuncture of several developments. These include the demands of executive and legislative authorities for policies that require the collaboration of a number of organizations rather than reorganizations; changes in the socioeconomic order that require increased attention to the interdependencies of policies across several broad areas of government operations; and reduced opportunities for government either to engage in certain kinds of activities, as a consequence of international trade agreements, or to afford duplication and overlap across organizational boundaries, with the result that policies must be subjected to a greater degree of horizontal coordination.

The challenge of horizontal policy development is obviously not new to government; organizational designs to deal with this challenge have been prominent in many of the major restructuring in government over the past thirty years. Indeed, in the Canadian government, for instance, the demise of the so-called “departmental cabinet” in the 1960s heralded the first explicit effort to overcome the shortcomings emanating from what then was called “departmentalism” and what today is referred to as the phenomena of organizational “silos” or “stovepipes,” that is, excessive protection of organizational jurisdiction, mutual isolation among organizations with shared or overlapping interests, and a narrow-minded view of how best to address those issues that cut across organizational boundaries.

Since the 1960s, governments in various jurisdictions have experimented with organizational designs to address these shortcomings. In the Westminster systems, among others, the most prominent designs have been new formal structures for cabinet decision-making, including policy sector
committees; the enhancement of the mandates of central agencies (some existing, some newly designed) to coordinate interorganizational efforts at horizontal policy development; and the consolidation of ministerial portfolios to provide greater coherence to the major policy sectors of government, while simultaneously reducing the volume of interorganizational issues that require interministerial agreement to effect coordination.

The extent to which Canadian governments have structured ministerial portfolios in response to demands for cabinet representation by various constituencies, combined with a reluctance to structure governments with an explicit hierarchy of ministers (some in cabinet and some not), has exacerbated the shortcomings of Canadian government in designing effective machinery to address horizontal policy issues. More recently, however, these constraints have been diminished by the extent to which fiscal restraint has propelled organizational streamlining. This has resulted in fewer "representative" ministers and fewer decision-making points in the policy process. Restraint has also required greater collaboration in response to centrally mandated corporate exercises to address horizontal issues. A consequence in many areas has been an even greater appreciation of the policy interdependencies within and across portfolios (and across governments).

Beyond changes to cabinet, central agency and portfolio structures that facilitate corporate responses to horizontal policy issues, the design of certain portfolios implies a mandate that by definition encompasses the responsibilities of several portfolios. Two examples from the Canadian government would be the portfolios of regional development (variously titled) and environment. In these cases, the portfolio mandate, if not authority, extends to matters under the jurisdiction of several other portfolios. In order to fulfil those parts of such a mandate that require the cooperation and collaboration of other portfolios, cabinet (and prime minister) usually must be committed to a corporate approach. Securing the required commitment over time is no easy task, as has been well illustrated in the ebb and flow of these two portfolios.

Beyond these kinds of portfolios, the Canadian experience also entails "horizontal policy ministries" (or "ministers, and ministries, of state for designated purposes" as they are designated in law), that is, portfolios with mandates for developing policy for designated subjects that fall within the scope of several portfolios but without being given any authority to intervene in the administration of these operations. This portfolio design was based on the proposition that "knowledge is power," but the "policy knowledge" that ministries of state were able to develop proved to be the weakest of the instruments at the disposal of ministers. Ministers of state, such as those appointed for Science and Technology and Urban Affairs, became known chiefly for their limited capacity in the corridors of power to coordinate other portfolios and their organizations.
There are two major problems with the minister/ministry-of-state design. First, it presupposes that a policy ministry, on the basis of policy research, can create meaningful new policy alternatives on demand. This, of course, is an overly optimistic view of what policy research can achieve. Second, it assumes that coordination of policy development and implementation by a minister/ministry can be achieved on the basis of a mandate to coordinate. This, too, is excessively optimistic. Beyond perhaps the initial burst of cabinet support that greets each new portfolio, a mandate to coordinate the work of other portfolios does not carry a great deal of weight unless cabinet heavyweights, including the prime minister, have agreed that the subject constitutes a corporate priority. In short, at any given point, only one or two ministries of state are likely to have the degree of ministerial support necessary to make a contribution to the corporate management of horizontal issues.

Because policy knowledge in itself cannot win over the entrenched interests that naturally resist change, and because the system can accommodate only so many special corporate initiatives whose success depends upon strong collective ministerial support, the corporate management of horizontal policy issues must rely on organizational designs built on interorganizational collaboration as the means to coordination. This means that structures such as interorganizational task forces, committees or project teams are the most likely candidates. They are so for at least two reasons. Organizational designs that assume mutual adjustment across organizations to effect coordination must engage officials from the several organizations whose collaboration is necessary. And, if, in pursuing the corporate objectives in question via horizontal coordination, the structure is not to override the specialized knowledge and knowledge networks of the several affected and participating organizations, it must be interorganizational in its structure.

Such interorganizational mechanisms are not novel, of course. What is novel is the extent to which these kinds of organizations have begun to take on roles well beyond what is usually expected of the proverbial “interdepartmental committee.” In doing so, they become “virtual” organizations, even if most, if not all, of the important participants must wear two hats. As such, they may appear to have gone well beyond bureaucracy. Their ad hoc, temporary character, as well as their flat management structures, their collaborative and interactive modes of operation and their collective responsibilities might be viewed as contradicting the basic tenets of bureaucracy.

As is the case with integrated service-delivery systems, it would be a mistake to think that horizontal policy organizations need be non-bureaucratic. Exactly the same argument applies, and it need not be repeated here. It needs to be emphasized, however, that horizontal policy mechanisms are likely to succeed in their corporate endeavours and thus secure the required collaboration, only to the extent that they respect the integrity of the
arrangements for hierarchy, specialization and standardization that apply to the participating organizations. The successful pursuit of the horizontal tasks of government requires not only collective executive commitment but also (and especially over the long haul) a healthy measure of mutual accommodation, given that the participating organizations must accept changes to what would otherwise be their preferred arrangements for hierarchy, specialization and standardization.

**Devolving management authority**

Enhancing management performance is a priority of public-management reform for a number of reasons, two of which are the need for greater efficiency in the management of resources as well as the need for greater effectiveness in responding to citizen demands for service quality.¹⁶ Both call for greater devolution of responsibility for the management of financial and personnel resources. The two objectives come together as efforts to enhance management performance by setting performance targets and measures, addressing both efficiency and service quality, and by requiring managers to report on them.

These pressures apparently push organizational designs in the opposite direction of that taken to meet the first two challenges. For example, the fragmentation that one might expect to result from the increased differentiation that accompanies some organizational designs to achieve enhanced performance management (such as "executive agencies" in Britain; "service" and "special operating" agencies in Canada) could be seen as specialization taken to excess were it not for three developments. First, some of this specialization has been a corrective to the tendency, especially in the Canadian government, to force integrated departmental structures onto distinct, if related, organizations that fall within a minister’s portfolio, which, in many instances, would have been better structured as separate organizations but managed within a portfolio framework. Second, the need for integrated service-delivery systems has constituted a break on the kind of fragmentation that leads to efforts to deliver service to citizens in ways that treat them as whole persons. Third, the greater willingness, in the Canadian context, to think of a minister’s portfolio as a set of distinct but related organizations has made it possible to acknowledge the legitimacy of separate organizational identities while designing ministerial structures to build bridges between these organizations in order to better develop and promote portfolio policy objectives.

The organizational form that best represents the response to this third challenge, the non-departmental agency, is characterized by at least two features that distinguish it from a ministerial department: first, ministerial direction and control are exercised primarily by way of explicit framework agreements or contracts in contrast to ongoing ministerial directives or
approvals; and, second, the chief executive officers of these agencies have a more focused set of responsibilities and possess a greater degree of delegated authority from central management agencies with which to manage the resources committed to their operations than do deputy ministers of departments. In neither of these respects is the non-departmental agency novel, however. What is new, nonetheless, is the extent to which governments are willing to use non-departmental designs either as the model for service delivery or operations generally, as in Britain, or at least as the preferred option for those operations that do not have to remain under the tight control of ministers for political or policy reasons, as in the Canadian government at present. Organizational designs once labelled by J.E. Hodgetts as "structural heretics" are now deemed to be orthodox.

In accepting the idea of a separation of policy and operational responsibilities, either enthusiastically as the means to greater performance or simply as the means to greater economy in a context of budget restraint, governments have pushed many services and operations out from under the management of the departmental public servants to government agencies of various kinds, some more independent than others. In some instances, the same logic has driven governments to partner or contract with third parties to deliver public services, including other levels of government, voluntary and non-profit private organizations, and private commercial companies.

The separation of policy and operational responsibilities between organizations under the authority of ministers (let alone between government and private-sector organizations) assumes two things. The first is that the administration and delivery of public services can be effectively directed and controlled by using contractual-type arrangements in place of direct supervision structures found in ministerial departments. If this design is not to mean simply giving greater autonomy to those who manage operations, ministers must be assisted by officials (or independent advisers), separate from the operating agency, who are competent both to provide sound policy advice on service objectives and standards, as well as performance targets and measures, and to monitor and evaluate the delivery of the services under contract. The second assumption is that the push on performance management with respect to the management of operations will not diminish adherence to public-service values and ethics.

As with the issue of fragmentation, the separation of policy and operational responsibilities is not nearly as radical a departure from practice or tradition as some might wish to portray it. The risks are not necessarily great, and, in any event, some of these risks have been with us for some time. For instance, in many large, multipurpose ministerial departments, there have long been organizational patterns that reflect a de facto separation between these two sets of responsibilities. In addition, of course, most substantial portfolios have long contained more than a department, and
their various portfolios agencies, commissions and corporations have been subject to different corporate policy and administrative regimes.

More importantly, the separation of policy and operational responsibilities does not have to result in organizational designs that conflict with the principles of good public management. The extensive Canadian experience in attempting to design appropriate regimes for the direction, control and accountability of Crown corporations and regulatory agencies, and our limited, but informative, experience in the design of ministerial portfolio organizations, are relevant here. Each in its own way confirms that the principles of hierarchy, specialization and standardization are crucial in obtaining democratic direction, control and accountability. We also know that where these principles have not informed organizational designs for delegated authority, good government has been diminished. More specifically, the lessons confirm that the bureaucratic model does not rule out designs (1) to accommodate an arm’s-length relationship between a minister and an operating (service or regulatory) agency in order to distance the former from certain kinds of decisions; (2) to recognize the importance of separating responsibilities for certain kinds of functions by establishing distinct organizations for each of them; and (3) to delegate a considerable measure of authority over corporate management responsibility to such agencies.

That it is possible to accommodate a devolution of management responsibilities, even within the Westminster tradition, ought not to surprise anyone familiar with the evolution of the systems in this tradition. This tradition has always had to seek a balance or resolution between what some might consider to be contradictory requirements, beginning with the twin principles of individual and collective ministerial responsibility and soon joined by the twin principles of partisan party government and neutral permanent public service. The different ways by which the bureaucratic criteria of hierarchy, specialization and standardization can be met are but manifestations of these dynamics at play in organizational designs.

Conclusion

It is not likely that the pejorative connotation of “bureaucracy” will disappear in the very near future. The rhetoric of bureaucracy-bashing has done severe damage to what was once an essentially technical term to describe organizations developed on the basis of certain principles of management. Some who use this rhetoric of bureaucracy-bashing will claim that when they use the term pejoratively they simply mean the dysfunctional attributes or perverse consequences of contemporary government organizations. But this misses the point. If hierarchy, specialization and standardization – the chief characteristics of bureaucracy – are necessary for good public management, then one cannot define bureaucracy by its corrupted expressions.

At the same time, a lamentation for language itself is hardly worthwhile.
Good public management does not require that we label its essential principles of organizational design “bureaucratic.” Good public management, nevertheless, does require that certain principles be realized in public organizational designs if they are to advance the cause of good government. It is for this reason that we will continue to adhere to the bureaucratic ideal in our organizational designs, even as we adjust them to new realities. To the degree that we seek to “banish bureaucracy,” we shall soon discover that we have placed not just good public management but also good government at risk. However, as we seek to adopt new designs to promote integrated service delivery, horizontal policy development and devolved management authority, we need to be conscious that organizational designs are not the only factor at play in promoting good public management. Performance management regimes help here; but, as with the case of new organizational designs, they will be implemented in ways that promote good public management only to the extent that public managers provide leadership by banishing bad organizational designs and bad management practices, to the extent that it is within their authority to do so, and by speaking truth to power (ministers especially, but also, where possible, Parliament) about that which must be done by the political authorities of the state to promote good public management.

Notes
1 See David Osborne and Peter Plastrik, Banishing Bureaucracy (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1997).
7 David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector From Schoolhouse to State House, City Hall to Pentagon (New York: Plume, 1993), p. xviii [emphasis in the original].
8 Osborne and Plastrik, Banishing Bureaucracy, p. 13.
9 Canada, Clerk of the Privy Council Office [Jocelyne Bourgon], Fourth Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada (Canada: Privy Council Office, 1997), pp. 25–6 [emphasis added].


15 Peter Aucoin and Richard French, *Knowledge, Power and Public Policy* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1974). In addition to ministers of state for designated purposes, a second category of minister of state was created – ministers of state to assist, that is, junior ministers to portfolio ministers.


