



# Canada 2030: Scan of Emerging Issues

## Government in 2030

Today, we find ourselves with political systems based on 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophy, run with 19<sup>th</sup> century administrations, built on 20<sup>th</sup> century technologies, attempting to confront 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges.<sup>1</sup>

Canada is experiencing significant societal and technological changes that could disrupt some of the roles and structures of government. As a result, there is growing pressure to rethink how government could meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In this context, the next 10 to 15 years could be a transformative period for the relationship between Canada's government and broader society. This scan of potential disruptive changes highlights Policy Horizons Canada's initial exploration of this issue and introduces next steps.

### What is changing?

**New actors (digital communities, decentralized autonomous organizations, emerging mega cities, state-like private companies, transnational institutions, civil society organizations, crowds, and individuals), aided by the use of technologies like social media and blockchain, are impacting governments at local, national, and global levels.** These influences are largely "external" to government, meaning that citizens and companies could have new avenues to influence government decision-making or provide public goods in new ways. At the same time, these technologies could be used by governments to reform "internal" processes and structures.

**Boundaries and borders are less relevant to an increasing number of citizens who frequently travel, work, or virtually telework from outside their home jurisdiction and expect access to information and services anytime, anywhere.** For government to adequately respond to their needs and expectations, local, national, and global boundaries may become more fluid, transforming the responsibility and scope of government organizations.

**Technological developments such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and virtual telepresence could disrupt the environment within which government operates.** Government could transform its organizational design and its roles and responsibilities (e.g. highly responsive policy development, personalized and customizable services, real-time feedback, direct and open consultations, platform-based government-citizen interactions, etc.).



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**Many parts of Canadian society are transforming.** Family structures, living arrangements, gender identity, biological sex determinants, and employment models are all undergoing fundamental changes. As a result, many current government assumptions about “average” Canadians and Canada’s social fabric may be disrupted.

**The rise of a data-driven knowing society is changing the relationships between individuals, information, and privacy.** As a result, citizens may expect greater accessibility, more personalized and flexible government service, while also expecting increased privacy protection. Government could use data to improve policy (conception, implementation, evaluation) or to transform it (e.g. China’s reputation system), while managing privacy concerns.

**Government roles are changing.** What, how, and why the government legislates and regulates could change. For example, the ability of the different levels of government to provide economic opportunity and stability could be impacted by an emerging global digital economy that calls into question many longstanding economic and regulatory levers. The role of the government in providing public goods could be impacted by the growing prominence of the private sector in shaping what public goods actually look like. Additionally, the government’s role in fostering national identity could be impacted by an increasingly digital and globalized world.

## How Horizons is Contributing to the Conversation

Policy Horizons Canada is conducting a foresight study to explore plausible futures for Canada over the next 10 to 15 years in the area of government, with a particular emphasis on the future of Canadian government roles and responsibilities.

The exercise is exploring questions such as:

- What disruptions are likely to impact the Canadian system of governance?
- What opportunities and challenges could systemic disruption bring to government?
- How could the roles, structures, processes and/or responsibilities of government evolve?

With the active participation of experts from governmental and other organizations, the foresight study is identifying the key factors driving change, looking for potential surprises, exploring plausible futures in the form of scenarios, and identifying key emerging policy challenges and opportunities.

## Note

1. Richard Lum, <http://www.slideshare.net/richardl91/designing-native-hawaiian-governance>

*Policy Horizons Canada (Horizons) is a strategic foresight organization within the Public Service of Canada with a mandate to help anticipate emerging policy challenges and opportunities and to experiment with methods and technologies to support resilient policy development. This document is a scan of some emerging issues with potential implications for public policy over the next 10 to 15 years. It does not attempt to predict the future. The purpose is to stimulate reflection and dialogue and support the development of public policy that is more robust and resilient across a range of plausible futures. The views contained in this document do not necessarily represent the views of Horizons, the Government of Canada or participating departments and agencies.*