

“Transformational Leadership”

Notes for Remarks to the Town Hall Meeting
of the
Infrastructure and Environment Group of DND

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Introduction

- Good morning,
- Thank you for inviting me back to your Town Hall session. It's always a pleasure to be asked to speak. But it's a special privilege to be invited back.
- Last year, I talked about the ethical responsibilities of the people in this Group. I talked about duty and obligation, and about the challenges of spending money responsibly in a challenging political environment.
- Your theme this morning is "Transformational Leadership of the IE Community". It won't be a surprise if I tell you that that's what I want to talk about too – *transformational leadership*.
- You're in the midst of a transformation in your Group, one that is intended, if I understand it, to transform how you serve -- and how you lead – the defence team in the provision and management of defence infrastructure, and in addressing the environmental responsibilities of DND and the CF.
- You have taken major steps to redefine and re-articulate what you do, and how you intend to add value to the defence mission in future.
- You've got a vision. You have a campaign plan and strategy. You've defined your objectives. You have mapped out how it all fits together.
- This looks like a planner's dream. The question is, how do you make it all work for you? And, more importantly, how do you make it work for the entire integrated defence establishment?
- I'm sure I'm not the first one to say this to you, but as I see it, you're going to do it through *leadership*.
- Not the usual sort of leadership that one would find in an infantry company, or on board a frigate, or in a directorate in DND or in any one of a hundred departments and agencies or across the government.
- Not the leadership that is represented by the usual ingredients of clear direction, people-sensitive management, integrated HR planning, effective financial control and clearly defined objectives and results.
- Those things are all important. And I'm sure you've got them here too. But if you're going to change how you play your role in the integrated headquarters, and in support of the CF mission and DND programs across the country and around the world, you're going to have to do more than lead in the usual way.
- The agenda that you've defined for yourselves calls for what can only be described as "transformational leadership".
- You're going to have to change not only how you do your work, but how you fit into the rest of this huge and complex organization. And you're going to have to change how others see

you and what they expect from you.

- That's the hard part – changing, indeed *transforming*, your role and your place in the universe.
- If you succeed, you will get the resources and the support and the engagement from the rest of DND and the CF that you need to fulfill your mission.
- If you fail – well, don't worry. There's always a successor!
- But I think you will succeed. In fact you're fortunate, because you have the benefit here of a striking example of transformational leadership, close at hand.

What We Can Learn from Rick Hillier

- I want to say a few words about how I understand the truly transformational leadership shown by former Chief of the Defence Staff Rick Hillier.
- Now, I want to be duly modest here. You saw him 365 days a year. Many of you worked for him, and some of you worked closely with him. Some of you may have served in the Army with him.
- Generally, I saw him at a distance. But I followed his career closely because I have long been engaged with this department and with the Canadian Forces. And I have reflected carefully on what he did in three and a half years as CDS to transform the Canadian Forces in the same sorts of ways you have set out to change yourselves.
- Under his leadership, the CF was surely transformed:
 - in terms of its place in the larger framework of government and in the eyes of Canadians;
 - in terms of how it operates, and how it sees itself;
 - in terms of how it is regarded by allies and by those who are not our friends;
 - and in terms of what is now expected of the Canadian Forces by the government and by Canadians.
- Now I'm not here simply to sing the praises of a former CDS. Like all of us, he wasn't perfect and everyone will have their own views on specific elements of the change agenda that he drove during his time as CDS.
- But I think there are important lessons we can learn from what Rick Hillier did as a transformational leader inside the defence establishment.
- Let's take a step back and think about what he did and how he did it.
- I think there are three important lessons to be drawn from Rick Hillier's successes as a transformational leader of the Canadian Forces.

- The first is that he had a clear vision for the future role of the institution that he was appointed to lead.
 - He knew what the challenges were ahead of him (and money was the least of those challenges!).
 - He knew what the problems were in the Canadian Forces and the Defence establishment.
 - He was very clear about the business of the Canadian Forces -- what they are there to do for Canada, and what they're not.
 - Most importantly, he had a vision for where he wanted to go – he spelled it out loud and clear and he stuck to it.
- The second lesson is that he didn't just talk, he acted.
 - He saw his opportunity, and he took it.
 - He built on the achievements of predecessors such as Mike Jeffrey (especially in relation to the transformation of the Army).
 - He mobilized the support of the political leadership – in his case, it was the Prime Minister. In the case of ADM/IE, it's the Minister of National Defence.
 - He stuck to the plan, notwithstanding obstacles along the way.
 - He was absolutely determined in pushing through the kinds of changes to the Canadian Forces that he knew were necessary to achieve the goals he had set for the institution.
 - And, though he was often portrayed as a lone wolf, he built effective partnerships inside and outside the defence headquarters. (If you read his book, you will see that he is very proud of that.)
- The third lesson, the one that is most important for our purposes today, is that he relied on the active engagement of many hundreds – even thousands – of men and women inside the Canadian forces and the defence team to join him in the process of transformation.
- You might say, he looked to all of them to be transformational leaders.
- In his autobiography, he says something that I think is both true and important, and it applies to you as much as it did to him:
 - *“Individuals make a difference, and when you get three individuals [or in your case, several thousand] each focused on their area of expertise working toward one vision, and they complement each other so well, anything is possible”*
- That is what it seems to me your ADM and associate ADM are trying to do when I look at your transformation agenda.

- They are trying to bring about a major change in how you do your business. But they won't succeed unless all of you take responsibility, in one way or another, for leadership in the process of change.
- If he were here, I think Rick Hillier would have said that was precisely what he expected of the men and women of the Canadian Forces. Each of them, in their own way was expected to show leadership in transforming that vital national institution.
- Here in the ADM/IE group, you face the same sort of challenge, even if on a slightly smaller scale. In some ways, your challenge is all the more difficult, because Scott Stevenson and General Benjamin have to deal with other Groups, other ADMs, and other Level Ones. Their scope for leadership inside NDHQ and the CF is necessarily constrained.
- Yours is too. Like General Hillier,
 - You have to pick your spots.
 - You don't have unlimited resources.
 - You have to build support for what you're trying to do.
 - You have to stick to the plan, even when people are resisting.
 - And you have to have faith in the plan, even when people are questioning the wisdom of what you're doing.
- But like him, you can succeed if you try, and if you work with your colleagues inside and outside the I&E Group.

Service Canada

- The CF is not the only institution that I've seen transformed through what I can only call "collective transformational leadership".
- I don't know if you've noticed, but it's been happening in Service Canada – a large and little noticed organization of some 17,000 people that has done an absolutely amazing job of integrating and transforming what used to be a diverse collection of relatively standard, bureaucratic service operations.
- Working under the radar, they have taken charge of their own destiny. They have innovated in the use of technology, in how they are organized to deliver services, in how they train and manage their people, and how they relate to partner organizations throughout the government.
- At a time when public servants are not the most popular people in the world, they have shown Canadians what the word 'service' really means. My academic friends who study this tell me that in many ways they are setting an example for the world.
- They have done all this themselves through transformational leadership at all levels of their organization. This was not the work of just the Deputy or the senior management team – it was the whole organization that did it.

- There are not many other examples of transformational leadership in the government of Canada – but I can give you a few:
 - Industry Canada under Kevin Lynch, which re-thought itself as a department for the new economy, with new analytical skills and a new ethos;
 - the Immigration and Refugee Board, where successive Chairmen transformed the culture and the modus operandi of the world's largest administrative tribunal;
 - and most recently, Infrastructure Canada, which collectively rose to the challenge of delivering on the \$20 billion Government's *Economic Action Plan*.
- The message? It's not easy, but it can be done.

Don't Forget Values

- As you think about the objectives set out in your Campaign Plan and Business Plan, as you check off this or that result along the time line you have set for yourselves – don't forget the values that got you where you are today, because it's the values underpinning your new vision that will sustain the process of transformation.
- Don't forget the essential purpose set out in your statements of mission and vision:
 - “to be the leader in providing innovative infrastructure and environmental solutions to enable CF mission success and excellence in D&D programs”.
- As I said, this agenda is all about leadership in a larger defence organization that doesn't always appreciate your role, your contribution, and your priorities.
- You can't lead if people don't understand where you want to go, or if they don't believe that you can get them there.
- I know that sometimes a Base Commander's values of mission-focus and sharp end may appear to conflict with your values of sustainability, longer-term readiness and stewardship.
- It's your job to show them that *your* mission serves the needs and objectives of the CF and the broader defence team.
- You're doing all this transformation at a time when the department as a whole is going through Strategic Review. This can be unsettling, but it's not a time to pull back. Rather, it's an opportunity to move forward, with your plan and your vision.
- Don't forget who you're trying to serve, and why. Your client isn't the Treasury Board -- it's the CF and the defence team.
- To serve them, you have to lead them in the right direction.
- That's not a job for senior management – it's a job for all of you.

Thank you.