**O Canada!** By Dawn Ringrose

Over the last few years, it seems that Canada has lost its’ way. As Canadians, we can all see what is going on around us through our own research, experience and observation. With respect to research, there are valuable statistics we have ready access to and allow us to draw conclusions and contemplate next steps. Noted below are some of my favorite sources and some thoughts about what we can do to strengthen Canada.

1. **Social Progress Index**

The 2022 Social Progress Index (SPI) fully ranks 169 countries on a wide number of variables that show whether a nation is satisfying basic human needs (e.g. nutrition, water, sanitation, shelter, personal safety), allowing access to foundations of well being (e.g. knowledge, information and communications, health and wellness, environmental quality) and providing opportunities (e.g. personal rights, personal freedom and choice, inclusiveness, advanced education). Over the past two years, Canada dropped from a rank of 6th in 2021 to 10th in 2023 (Source: <https://www.socialprogress.org/static/052f8d5f912a0d7b3fa690a8463944ab/can-scorecard_1.pdf>).

The country is overperforming on a few variables such as: lead exposure, discrimination and violence against minorities and women with advanced education. That said, it is underperforming on quite a few more: child mortality rate, housing affordability, interpersonal violence, money stolen, mobile phone subscriptions, young people not in education, employment or training, equal protection index, access to public services.

1. **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development**

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an intergovernmental organization with 38 member countries that focus on economic progress and world trade.

Over the last five years, it is apparent that economic and productivity growth in Canada has lagged behind the top 5 leading countries:

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| Year | Variable | Canada | Top 5 Countries |
| 2022 | GDP per employee  | $89.8 US | $144.5 US |
| 2022 | Unemployment rate | 5.3% | 2.8% |
| 2021 | Households with high-speed internet | 87.2% | 98.5% |
| 2021 | Businesses with website or home page | 84.3% | 92.6% |
| 2019 | Business R&D expenditure on IT | 0.4% of GDP | 1.4% of GDP |
| 2020 | Labour market expenditure per unemployed | 6.8% of GDP | 37.5% of GDP |
| 2019-2021 | Share of renewables in energy mix | 18.5% | 55.5% |
| 2018 | Impact of socio-economic status on reading scores | 31.6% | 25.8% |

(Source: OECD (2023), “Canada”, in Economic Policy Reforms 2023: Going for Growth, OECD Publishing, Paris).

1. **Citizen First (Institute for Citizen Centred Service)**

Citizen First research offers a comprehensive analysis of how government services are perceived by residents along with their expectations for the future. During the past year, 6,347 Canadians were surveyed.

Results show there has been a marked decline in satisfaction (20%) with government services across the board (i.e. municipal, provincial, territorial, federal). With the exception of public library, there has been a drop in ratings across service areas over the past year. The most dramatic drops have been ambulance, road maintenance and transit services.

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| Service | % | Change | Service | % | Change |
| Drinking Water | 81 | -3 | Canada Post | 69 | -2 |
| Public Library | 80 | 0 | Customs and Border | 65 | -6 |
| National Park | 77 | -3 | Provincial / Territorial Ambulance | 59 | -18 |
| Recycling | 75 | -6 | Snow Removal | 59 | -7 |
| Leaf / Yard Waste | 71 | -6 | Provincial / Territorial Transit | 58 | -11 |
| Municipal Recreation Centres | 69 | -3 | Municipal Road Maintenance | 45 | -13 |

(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpPafvW6fgY>).

Citizens noted the most pressing issues to be: issue resolution, access, timeliness and ease of use. When examining expectations versus experience, there was a significant gap for telephone inquiry (9 minutes versus 24 minutes) and online inquiry (6 minutes versus 18 minutes). When asked about the use of emerging technology, such as apps and chatbots, citizens were not keen to use these technologies at all.

Most concerning were some of the words that citizens used to describe Canada in the coming year (2024): stressful (79%), unfair (66%), political corruption (65%), spiraling downward (65%), embracing diversity (63%), inclusiveness (59%), out of control (57%), political correctness (55%), intolerance (53%), order (40%) , peace (39%), good governance (26%), getting better all the time (22%).

1. **Global Organizational Excellence Index**

The Global OE Index is a unique research study has captured the current state of organizational excellence by size, industry sector and region (Source: <https://organizationalexcellencespecialists.ca/workshops-events/global-oe-index/> ).

In doing so, it has provided feedback on the extent to which organizations are characterized by a culture committed to excellence (9 Principles) and have deployed best management practices (9 Key Management Areas) that are common to high performing organizations.

Participation of Canadian organizations has been good to date with 317 out of 2,931 respondents (end of 2022). The respondents have been predominantly from the business sector (180), followed by the government (91) and non-profit (46) sectors.

With respect to a culture committed to excellence, a subjective rating scale (0.0 to 10.0) was used to rate the 9 Principles. Higher ratings were provided by respondents on Alignment (7.73), Leadership Involvement (7.63) and Focus on the Customer (7.56) and lower ratings were provided for Data Based Decision Making (5.34) and Prevention Based Process Management (5.61).

On the deployment of best management practices (Micro size = 51, Larger size = 102) across 9 Key Management Areas, an objective rating scale was used (0.0 to 10.0). The overall average rating was 4.43 and significantly lower than Other Countries (6.00). There were no Practices that received a high performance rating (7.6 to 10.0) and there were several Practices that received a relatively low rating (0.0 to 3.5): Using risk management to assess strategic goals & objectives (3.24), Linking senior management rewards and recognition to performance (2.07), Developing contingency plans for unforeseen events (3.20), Conducting capability gap analysis for resources (2.25), Reallocating resource requirements to adjust for change (3.43), Monitoring and reviewing the business plan regularly (3.36), Using research to define and segment customers (3.27), Encouraging employees to be innovative and take risks (3.47), Analyzing processes on a regular basis and making changes (3.48), Involving stakeholders in designing and analyzing processes (2.70), Using external data to compare performance to others (3.28), Involving suppliers and partners in the development of new products & services (2.84) and social & environmental standards (2.72).

**Some Thoughts**

SPI data suggests more can be done to address basic needs and security of citizens and to prepare for the future. OECD data reveals more can be done to stimulate economic progress and trade by delivering services that enable business, improve productivity and prepare youth for employment. Citizen First advances more can be done to operate the government more efficiently and effectively and to earn back trust. Global OE Index discloses a number of Practices that, if strengthened, would contribute to making good decisions, responding to change and strengthening productivity.

On the latter front, one of the best ways to strengthen performance is for leaders to engage a good cross-section of employees in self-assessment of the organization, consider an action-oriented report to address gaps and involve employees in improvement activities. It is also possible to scale such an effort by establishing improvement clusters where leaders from relevant bodies (i.e. government, business, non-profit) work together to strengthen the sector, learn from benchmark organizations and meet annually to celebrate progress.

By working together, I believe we can move Canada from where it is today to where it should be tomorrow. Such an approach would align the stakeholders on a common aim, allow for an ongoing exchange of data and information and use measurement to keep the exercise focused.

**About the author:****

**Dawn Ringrose**MBA, FCMC is Principal of Organizational Excellence Specialists and Author of the Organizational Excellence Framework publication and accompanying turnkey toolkit. Building on her work with organizations over the past 40 years, she was driven to make the improvement journey more simple, straightforward, time efficient and cost effective. Her work has been recognized with client organizations earning national excellence awards, articles and chapters being published in reputable journals and encyclopedias, presentations being made at international conferences and the toolkit being selected for nation building projects. She currently serves on the Executive Team of the Organizational Excellence Technical Committee QMD ASQ and the Board of the ISCM Foundation. She can be reached at*dawn@organizationalexcellencespecialists.ca*