

Preface

This special edition of “Underneath The Golden Boy” provides a selection from presentations made in 2004 to “The Governance Conference” in Winnipeg, Manitoba, at The Inn at the Forks. Sponsored by the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Law—the Asper Chair in International Business and Trade Law and the Western Frontier International Group brought together leading academic, political and private sector individuals on the issue of governance within Canada. A variety of events made the conference timely, as reforms are being discussed in Canada in three major dimensions.

Canada is one of the last countries in the world that does not use any form of proportional representation system in its electoral systems. There has been much study and advocacy of late, regarding some modification of the first-past-the-post system; including efforts by the law Commission of Canada; a people’s assembly in British Columbia, and commissions and task forces in other provinces. The concern has largely been driven by the phenomenon of majority governments at both federal and provincial levels who have far less than 50% of the popular vote, and who are seen as being too readily able to disregard the perspective of other parties during their mandates.

The emergence of a minority Parliament in Canada, however, reignited discussion that internal rules of elected assemblies might be changed to better respect the rights of parties outside of government. It is only in a minority situation that the opposition parties have much hope of securing such changes. If accomplished, these reforms could establish traditions and expectations that will continue to be respected when a majority government re-emerges.

The corporate scandals in the United States that led to the Sarbanes-Oxley package of reforms, and Canada’s own “sponsorgate” scandal at the federal level have stimulated thought about reforms, which might increase the level of transparency, accountability and probity by corporate managers and government bureaucracies.

In all of these areas, Canadians have been alert to studying and learning the lessons from other countries. Prudent reform in all of the areas mentioned may prove to be necessary elements in maintaining Canada’s stature and competitiveness in the global economy in which it participates.

Through this national conference, which was televised across the country via CPAC, Canadians were able to hear and contemplate the dialogue which the conference provided on these critical issues.

Through the publication of these proceedings, it is the hope of conference organizers that the body of work assembled will provide

2 Underneath the Golden Boy

some reference point in the ongoing deliberations on these important issues.

Bryan Schwartz, Asper Chair of International Business and Trade Law,
conference chair;

Rick Mantey, Western Frontier International Group.