

COBA SPEECH

November 20, 1998

What I want to talk about today is the implementation of agency reform. The time for philosophizing and theorizing is past — it's time to do. My message to you is that the sector and each agency in the sector must be:

- ! **client service** driven,
- ! **accountable** for its actions, and
- ! **efficiently** managed.

Ultimately, responsibility and accountability for agency reform rests with each agency, its ministry, and each one of you.

As agencies embark on change, we are committed to provide the central coordination and direction that will help make change possible.

The changes on which we have embarked are long term. Government also recognises the long-term need for overall sector co-ordination.

BACKGROUND

I'd like to start by revisiting how the work we're doing now came about. Those of you who attended last year's COBA conference will recall Garry Guzzo, chair of the Agency Reform Commission, spoke about what he and his fellow commission members had heard at their consultations with agencies and their stakeholders.

Many of you had an opportunity to participate in those discussions which you might recall were clearly focussed on a set of discussion papers covering the key areas under review, such as hearing process reforms and performance measures. The discussion papers were prepared with the help of folks from the agencies.

Several of the topics and issues discussed were ones which SOAR had turned its collective mind to in recent years. The quality of your participation and your work on sector-wide issues convinced the commission that they were indeed dealing with a ‘change ready’ sector. And that is indeed a great complement to you all.

The Commission’s Report entitled “Everyday Justice” was published in April of this year and its recommendations adopted by the Government. I hope that most of you have already seen the report — if not there are copies available on the side table.

It’s been said that if you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you there. For that reason, I think the commission’s vision bears repeating here, because it is what describes our destination.

Throughout its consultation, the commission found stakeholders and agencies ready — even eager — for change. There was strong consensus as to the specific actions the government needs to take to improve service. The commission believes agencies and stakeholders will embrace its vision of a regulatory/ adjudicative agency sector in which:

- the cornerstones of impartiality and fairness are preserved and enhanced;
- everyone who comes to an agency finds it accessible and easy to use;
- disputes are resolved and problems solved quickly, efficiently and cost effectively;
- standards for service are set and agencies held accountable by government and the public for meeting them;
- tribunals are treated by government as a valued resource and important face of government;
- members and staff are valued and appreciated for their expertise and professionalism and have the tools and training to do the job;
- agencies are well-managed with up-to-date technology and their resources are shared across the sector; and
- that government provides strategic coordination in improving service quality and efficiency in the sector and maintains momentum for these changes.

To realize the vision, the commission made recommendations in five key areas.

First: The public face of agencies which speaks to the public's ability to access and work with agencies easily.

Second: A set of behind-the-scenes recommendations addressing the need for effective case management and the technology to manage administrative and decision-making processes.

Third: The people who make it all work addresses the appointments process and the need for training and development for both appointees and staff.

Fourth: Accounting for results sets out requirements for performance measures and for memoranda of understanding.

And fifth: sharing and co-ordination, which speaks to the need for sharing and long-term coordination of the sector.

At the same time, the Commission was also cognizant of how readily momentum and direction can be lost and felt the sector as a whole should receive regular reviews to ensure that direction is maintained.

Following the Government's acceptance of the report, directions went to ministries and agency chairs in the summer with time lines for implementing changes.

While there are areas of change that require central action, (which I will touch on shortly), this leads me back to one of my earlier points: that responsibility and accountability for agency reform rests with each agency, its ministry, and ultimately each one of you. The onus and accountability lie with you, the agencies and your parent ministries to ensure that the Agency Reform Commission's recommendations are met in each and every one of the agencies across the sector. During consultations we heard often of the need to tailor change to each agency and you do now have the opportunity to do just that.

Many of you have a leg up with many of the recommendations in place— others have not. In a recent survey we conducted to assess where agencies were at, we found many good examples to share and many holes to be filled. For example, those of you with case management systems are a minority.

While this onus and accountability are clear, we are committed to provide the central coordination and direction that will help make change possible and to steer it in a common direction. I think it's important to note that both the commission and the government recognise that reaching our destination will happen more efficiently and effectively with some central co-ordination and direction.

To that end, the Agency Reform teams in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Management Board Secretariat continue to be active under the leadership of the joint agency/ministry working group which Brian and I chair. Our key function is to provide leadership in developing best practice guides and standards for implementation.

In addition, some areas of change require central action. These are:

- Hearings reforms, which require a small number of amendments to the SPPA; and,
- the appointments policy.

Training, long-term sector coordination, and standard setting.

I'm pleased to say that overall, implementation of reforms is well under way. Between us, Brian and I will give you a thumbnail sketch of what has been and will be happening in terms of central direction and

assistance. There are also more detailed workshops later today looking at specific parts of the reform agenda (Rules, accountability and appointments come to mind).

In updating you on activity, I'll follow the report sequence:

First: Access — what the report refers to as 'the public face of agencies' — includes: creating documents and information material in plain language; making information available in appropriate places; and having processes that clients can understand.

Plain language is up to you, though we hope to provide resource material to all agencies so that common approaches and standards are applied.

Centrally, we are working with the various government offices and projects which are providing the "customer service face" of government and with agencies to ensure that agency information is consistently included in databases used by them; databases such as PACE, which is the online government phone book and KWIK index. In addition, we are working to ensure that agencies will be part of pilot development for interactive or special services such as Ontario Business Connects and ServiceOntario.

For those of you who are not familiar with these, it is the opportunity for business and the public to use a variety of channels, such as call centres, kiosks, and the Web to access government information and requirements. For example, some of you may have already used the kiosks — there's one located in the Macdonald Block — where you can

renew your vehicle licence plate sticker. There are also common counters being developed across the province — 13 pilot counters are already operating — which will provide more convenience in accessing government services and better information on where to go for which services.. (The remainder of access relates to hearing process reforms which Brian will speak to later)

On the behind-the-scenes piece, a case management team drawn from agencies is developing standards for business processes and as part of that specific case management systems. You can expect to see a how to guide for reviewing your business processes, and a process chart laying out the standard case management steps and their tie in to your other business needs, such as performance measures.

Finally, advice will be provided on how to tie your needs together with options for software support. At present, quite a number of agencies are building their own unique case management systems. This may seem like the ideal solution...until suddenly you are staring at the issue of resourcing design and construction and more important supporting the system over time. You should see the results of the teams' work in all these areas in the early part of the new year.

Another important tool of communication we are looking at is Web sites — and some consistency is needed here so that a prospective client can easily find an agency site and once there finds the information she needs which is up to date. A government Standards Council is examining these questions for government as a whole. Mark Frawley from the Environmental Assessment Board sits on this on behalf of agencies to

ensure that agency data standards fit **but** are separate as appropriate. For example: an independent look for Web sites for agencies, but access to them through government. Guidelines will be developed to assist with Web design and maintenance.

For those of you wondering where the computers are going to come from to support some of these directions, one of the directions to ministries is to ensure that you are all equipped in concert with the government's corporate Information and Information Technology Strategy. This will give you the power you need to manage your organizations internally and to communicate with each other and the world. You will be able to maintain information security and at the same time have communication channels. (Target for completion is the year 2000).

An area I know is of great interest to many of you is the appointments process, an area discussed in 'the people who make it work' section of the commission's report. A project team is now in place. It's task is to review the process, working to a goal to enhance, support and maintain an effective public appointments process for Ontario's regulatory and adjudicative agencies to ensure the highest standards of administrative justice and credibility with stakeholders and the public - whew. Under the leadership of Peter Allen of the Public Appointments Secretariat, the team will examine functions, core competencies, terms, training, the selection process, etc and make recommendations for policy by the end of the fiscal year next April. Peter is on a panel later today and can speak in greater detail then.

Accounting for results is the next big area. As you know, it is one that is near and dear to this government's heart. Over the past three years, a business planning process which includes performance measures has been put in place for ministries. Those of you who are in agencies who are deemed to be part of your ministry's core businesses will be familiar with this process.

The Agency Reform Commission recommendations bring all agencies into the accountability fold. In order for agencies to be accountable it must be clear what roles and responsibilities they are expected to fulfill and what services and information they can expect to receive from their ministries in order to do so effectively. Agency chairs are required to complete Memoranda of Understanding with their ministers clarifying these roles and responsibilities. These are to be completed for existing agencies by the end of this fiscal year and the end of the calendar year for agencies in the middle of consolidations.

Work is nearing completion on a best practice guide for memoranda of understanding. It should be distributed to agencies and ministries in early December. Past work on model MOU's by SOAR and others, good examples and the thinking of many has gone into the guide. I am sure that those of you sitting down to the task will find it helpful.

The other part of accountability is, of course, performance measurement. By this we mean performance measurement for the

agency — not the individual. It is also performance accountability about HOW the agency goes about its work NOT about WHAT decision it makes in any case or cases.

The commission identified eight common goals as critical to effective and efficient performance and quality service. These should form the basis for performance measures in all agreements.

- 1) **Fairness:** The provision of service and performance of statutory functions in an impartial, lawful, unbiased and just manner.
- 2) **Accessibility:** The ability to provide information and services that are simple and easy to use.
- 3) **Timeliness:** The performance of tasks within established time frames based on reasonable expectations.
- 4) **Quality and consistency:** The production of accurate, relevant, dependable, understandable and predictable information and results, with no errors in law or fact.
- 5) **Transparency:** The use of policies and procedures that are clear and understandable to everyone involved.
- 6) **Expertise:** The possession and use of the skill, knowledge and technical competence required to discharge all statutory responsibilities and maintain public confidence.
- 7) **Optimum cost:** The provision of services at a cost that is based on best practices and is cost effective for everyone involved.
- 8) **Courtesy:** The demonstration of respect to everyone who comes into contact with the agency.

In this area, work is well advanced. Kent McClure of CRAT and

Zeynep Onen of WSIAT laboured long and hard in their spare time to provide a guide to help agencies prepare their performance measures. All agencies have a copy of the guide and have had the opportunity to attend a one-day workshop on developing performance measures.

Government direction required that agencies provide a progress report on measures to Management Board. The Chair of Management Board has established a Special Review Committee chaired by Bill Grimmett, the Parliamentary Assistant to the Chair of Management Board, for performance measures. The committee has been asked to review agencies' draft measures and provide an overall report on the strengths and weaknesses of what they see. The report would be provided to agencies to take into consideration in finalising their performance measures for fiscal 1999/00. To meet the needs of this process, draft performance measures will need to reach us via your ministries in December. The Committee is not expecting perfection in round one but they will certainly expect your best efforts. I know agencies will respond. Once measures are in place, agencies must report on results annually to government and the public including measures of client satisfaction.

There are two more pieces to the management improvement puzzle I want to talk about — sharing services and ongoing sector coordination.

It is clear from the information we received from agencies, as we surveyed the state of play out there, that there is a real use for common information on hearing rooms, video sites, etc but that it needs to be constantly kept up to date and have enough detail for agencies to assess

usefulness for their needs accurately. We will be looking at how this can be achieved as part of ongoing sector coordination.

It is equally clear, if not patently obvious, that sharing services is easier where agencies are co-located and, in the case of specialised services, where their mandates are related. It is up to agencies and their parent ministries to seek opportunities for sharing. To assist with the process, we will carefully evaluate the examples already under way, such as Board of Inquiry and Pay Equity Tribunal, and share the results. The Ministry of Labour's agencies are in the process of co-locating in one building. This provides an ideal opportunity to test sharing arrangements for a group of related agencies. We will be monitoring both the establishment and ongoing functioning of shared arrangements to share the successes and pitfalls with others.

By the way, huge savings in this area are not expected, but rather that there are opportunities for enhancing service and management particularly for smaller agencies. It's an opportunity to raise the bar for all.

Overall sector co-ordination for the long term is critical to maintaining momentum and strategic direction. It is one thing to mount some special training sessions now, share charts and brochures, etc. It is another thing entirely to embed new and improving ways of doing business over the long haul. Make no mistake this is long term change. And we must ensure it happens bringing to bear the best practices and minds from across the sector without wasteful duplication of effort.

This conference is a great opportunity for sharing your work — long may it continue — but it's not enough. SOAR has done a great deal towards setting voluntary standards for adjudicators and providing training, but more is needed. Form and content are not resolved on sector coordination but a team will be in place shortly with agency and ministry people involved to come to ground on how best to manage ongoing coordination and standard maintenance incorporating and accessing the best of what we have now.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, when you put these changes together with the work Brian will describe on SPPA and rules, I believe you will agree that you will soon have the tools to meet the challenges put to you by the Agency Reform Commission and the government. I say that fully aware that it's a heck of a lot easier to tell someone how to do something than it is to get on with the doing. In the doing, you have to wrestle all the issues small and large to the ground and make it all work in real time. The challenge will continue, but it is one worth meeting. It will position you to serve your clients and the public well into the future. And with that I will turn the mike over to Brian.