



President and CEO John Reed's Address to the Parliament of Rwanda

Remarks delivered in Kigali, Rwanda, on January 23, 2019.

Right Honourable Speaker, Members of Parliament, Auditor General of Rwanda, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation, thank you for the invitation to be with you today. It is a great honor and very humbling indeed.

I know that accountability is a serious business in Rwanda.

It is a serious business in Canada, too.

And, as you can tell by our name, it is the business of the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation.

You have already heard from other speakers this morning about the importance of effective accountability, the role of the Auditor General, the role of the Public Accounts Committee, and about Canadian experiences. Their remarks were truly inspiring.

I would like to focus my brief remarks on four main areas:

First, who are we?

The Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit, premier research and education Foundation dedicated to strengthening public sector audit, oversight and accountability. We are in the business of capacity building.

Our programming is based on the Westminster parliamentary system of accountability. There are three pillars in this system:

- Parliament,
- the ministries and agencies that deliver services to citizens, and
- the Auditor General.

In this system, Parliamentarians provide authority and resources to the public service who provide products and services to citizens. The public service, in turn, is accountable to Parliamentarians for reporting on its use of public resources and for its performance.

This is the accountability relationship between Parliament and the public service.

The Auditor General serves and supports this accountability relationship by auditing the public service and providing Parliamentarians with the results of those audits—the information Parliamentarians need to hold ministries and agencies accountable.

We believe that accountability is best served by:

- auditors with the knowledge and skills to produce reports that make an impact,
- oversight bodies, such as the Public Accounts Committee, that are able to effectively discharge their responsibilities, and
- public service managers who can implement audit recommendations to improve their organization's performance.

We provide these parties with the resources, tools, and training they need to carry out their responsibilities, and we provide opportunities for knowledge-sharing and networking to foster collaboration.

Second, why are we here?

We are here as part of a seven-year program of cooperation with the Office of the Auditor General of Rwanda and, by extension, the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament.

The objective of this program is to build and sustain the capacity of the audit office, and the PAC, to hold public sector administrators accountable for their stewardship of public resources and their performance in delivering services to Rwandans.

This program is funded by, and would not be possible without, the support of, the Government of Canada provided through Global Affairs Canada.

Representing Global Affairs Canada today, we have with us Ms. Julie Crowley, Head of Office for the High Commission of Canada in Rwanda.

The workshop that we just completed with the Rwandan PAC and Budget Committee [held January 21-22, 2019] is the first of a series of training events and capacity-building activities that we will be delivering over the next several years, both for the PAC and the Office of the Auditor General.

"... whether we are talking about health, education, housing, infrastructure, gender equality, the environment, or sustainable development, this is all for the benefit of Rwandan citizens."

Later this afternoon, the Auditor General and I will be signing a Memorandum of Understanding that will formalize our partnership and cooperation together.

The Auditor general and I take this MOU very seriously. We, and the people in our organizations that we represent, are committed to success.

And I must tell you that our funder, Global Affairs Canada, has high expectations of us. They expect us, the Foundation, to demonstrate results.

And rightly so! The stakes are high. Very high indeed!

After all, whether we are talking about health, education, housing, infrastructure, gender equality, the environment, or sustainable development, this is all for the benefit of Rwandan citizens.

So, with this in mind, I hope that all of you will join us in committing to achieving results for Rwandans.

Third, how do we approach capacity-building for PACs?

Our approach combines research and training.

We have been conducting research into the practices of effective PACs for decades. And we have issued dozens of seminal research publications and informative resource materials.

We use this research to develop training workshops, which we have delivered extensively and continuously to PACs in Canada and in the many countries that we have partnered with.

Our latest research publication is called [Accountability in Action: Good Practices for Effective PACs](#). It was developed by my colleague, Dr. Lesley Burns, the Foundation's Director of Parliamentary Oversight.

It is based on extensive research and consultation with experts around the world. It is, in my opinion, and the opinion of many others, the new gold standard.

Accountability in Action describes good practices that PACs can employ to be effective, as well as indicators that they can use to measure their progress.

I would urge every Parliamentarian in this House to read this publication.

One important point to emphasize: We deliberately called this document GOOD practices. Not BEST practices. This is because each jurisdiction, each country, must decide what is appropriate in its context and in its legislative system.

This is of course true for Rwanda: It is not our role, as a Foundation, or as Canadians, to tell Rwandans what do. Only Rwandans can decide what is good for Rwanda.

Our role is to share good practices and our experience, and to support you when asked.

Fourth, and lastly, what are the next steps in our cooperation program?

It is the role of the Auditor General to examine how well public sector programs are working and how well services are being delivered, to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to make recommendations for improvement.

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And it is the role of the Auditor General to give this information to Parliamentarians.

Why? Because it is the role of Parliamentarians to hold ministries and agencies accountable for making these improvements. As you have heard many times this morning, this is the specific role of the PAC.

So how is the Rwandan PAC doing?

I can honestly say that my colleagues—David Christopherson [Vice-Chair of Canada's Standing Committee on Public Accounts] and Lesley Burns—and I were very impressed with what we have seen this week. Having worked with many PACs in Canada and internationally, I can sincerely say that the Rwandan PAC is strong and is on a good path.

But is there room for improvement? Of course there is. In the spirit of continuous improvement, every organization can get better.

And as you have heard from the Chair of the PAC, they are committed to doing this.

Whether we are working in Canada, Africa, or anywhere else in the world, we have encountered passionate and committed politicians. Whether they were farmers or lawyers, shopkeepers or school teachers, they share a passion for improving their local region and their country.

And this is what we encountered here this week.

In closing, I would like to say that we are truly honoured to partner with Rwanda. We look forward to celebrating with you as you achieve the goals that you set for yourselves.

With a strong base of good practices and dedicated Parliamentarians, Rwanda has the opportunity to be a regional, if not global, leader.

Which reminds me of one of my favorite African expressions. It goes like this:

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

So, I say to you, Members of Parliament: If this is your ambition—to be a regional and global leader—we, the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation, will be with you every step of the way.

Thank you.