

VIEWPOINTS OPINION

John Robson: How 'Rule of the Expert' Is Displacing Genuine Self-Government in Canada



A swimming pool in Vancouver in a file photo. The Canadian Press/Darryl Dyck



John Robson

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Commentary

From sea to shining C-minus, the authorities do not trust Canadians, and we trust them not to. Nova Scotia banned walking in the woods lest we dunces set the place ablaze with incandescent hiking boots, while Vancouver [banned teaching your own kid to swim](#) in city pools. Welcome to government of the expert, by the expert, for the expert.

It's a dangerous convergence of bog-standard public-sector arrogance with a general modern attitude of *Machbarkeit*, the notion that anything developed through trial-and-error, human or even evolutionary, can be done better by experts using abstract logic and linear algebra. Hence, meat from factories, or the bizarre recent [item](#) saying "Scientists Create 'Living' Material That Sucks Carbon Dioxide From The Air."

Um, would that be "wood"? Heck no. Who wants a grubby old tree cluttering the place up, or walls and furniture made by hand from brown gunk our ancestors thought looked nice? Instead, science finally got photosynthesis right, or so we're told. As we're also told solar panels are more efficient than those silly old plants, by people who claim to revere nature before clearcutting it to install acres of shiny "green" glass and metal.

This convergence is also manifest in government-licensed "arm's-length" professional bodies [doing the dirty work of censorship](#). The state clearly approves, but benefits from an alibi and the cloak of expertise to cover this raw exercise of illegitimate power. As when politicians cite "judicial independence" to resist any kind of accountability on that credentialed branch of government appointed by... them.

There's also a bit of Hudge-and-Gudge when the Vancouver Park Board says: "Parents are welcome to support and guide their children at our pools. However, organized and structured private swim instruction, including formal lessons, is not permitted unless it is provided by authorized aquatics staff or through an approved private business." So it doesn't have to be a government expert. It can also be a government-approved expert. But it won't be you just because you swim well and love your kid. That approach is as passé as government of the people, by the people, for the people.

Instead, the Vancouver Park Board defends its Sargasso Sea of red tape because "These standards help ensure that all instruction is delivered safely, consistently, and in alignment with facility guidelines." Which requires you to consider government guidelines the epitome of rationality and traditional knowledge (except aboriginal) a load of old fishheads.

The whole premise of free societies is that we the people know better than the self-anointed what actually works for us. So we're not facing a trade-off between liberty and efficiency here; instead, in Vancouver parents are

frustrated at the ban “even as demand for lessons far outstrips supply.” And it’s not irrelevant that the experts are so often as wrong as they are arrogant.

We are not meant to remember public health officers flipping their flops on the efficacy of masks, or notice their shrill resistance to a proper investigation of various governments’ pandemic responses or the plague’s origins in a Chinese Communist laboratory. Nor are we meant to ask politicians, often conspicuously unskilled outside of trolling for votes, how they knew which experts to trust.

Blacklock’s Reporter [recently revealed](#) that the federal Safe Restart Agreement Contribution Program handed out over \$200 million “with untrained staff and little oversight,” relying on those who got the money to say whether it was well spent. Which olde-tyme common sense would have forbidden with a horse laugh if allowed onto the premises... so it’s not.

It would also forbid the state from banning hiking in the woods to stop fires, especially if it [did not also ban homeless camps in the woods](#) where people routinely light cigarettes, joints, campfires, and cooking stoves, as everybody knows. Except the right sort of experts, apparently.

Blacklock’s [also](#) uncovered a \$130 million giveaway that apparently didn’t fund a single startup or create one job, though the then-minister droned: “The Women Entrepreneurship Strategy in Canada is working. Our ecosystem is helping Canadian entrepreneurs grow.” Her office naturally employed scads of college-educated experts... mostly in Buzzword Bingo.

Speaking of COVID, earth sciences academic Matthew Wielicki, [warning](#) that Nova Scotia’s ban on hiking made those lockdowns look like preparation for even harsher climate ones, observed, “The sweeping controls are sold as science, yet the long-term wildfire data do not show a national, CO₂-driven escalation.” Precisely that egregious combination of ineptitude, arrogance, and mendacity self-government was intended to prevent, from tax policy to foreign policy to social policy.

From Magna Carta on, we developed institutions to require that laws and policies receive the consent of the people because we think, or thought, ourselves the best judges over the long run of which rules are vindicated by experience. And discarding that assumption in practice and undermining it in theory leaves us drowning in foolish regulations.

Views expressed in this article are opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

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