

Title: "Book Review: Trust – Twenty Ways to Build a Better Country"

Author: Myles McGregor-Lowndes

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Book Review: Trust – Twenty Ways to Build a Better Country

By Myles McGregor-Lowndes

Trust – Twenty Ways to Build a Better Country, David Johnston. Penguin Random House Canada, Toronto, Canada, 2018, ISBN 9780771047152

Old academic habits die hard. I read the first pages and the last pages of this text before settling down to assess the whole work. The prospects looked enticing with the author beginning with the rule of law as the bedrock and concluding with a reflection on the work of Mother Teresa (now Saint Theresa of Calcutta). I was not disappointed, as this is a thought-provoking book for all people of good heart who desire to contribute to building a better community.

Some scholars have suggested that society could not exist without trust. Henry Hansmann, a pioneer legal economist of non-profit theory, placed the demonstration of trust by non-profit organizations as the cornerstone of the reason for their existence in a market economy.

Recent global events, however, have undermined trust in many of society's major institutions and organizations. Following on from the global financial crisis, political parties, businesses, media publications, and social media networks have been exposed for significant breaches of public trust. Both global and national surveys of trust indicate a crisis in trust with reports that society's trust in business, government, and other public institutions is at an historic low.

A book on this topic is clearly timely.

The book is broken into three parts – those being personal trustworthiness, building personal trust, and, finally, influencing national trust. Within these three divisions are 20 chapters, each with its own focus on repairing, restoring, and increasing trust behaviours. An example of the issues tackled are consistency, listening, the distinction between law and justice, the place of personal faith, teams, planning, teachers, knowledge diplomacy, populist fears eroding civility, and even the Mennonite tradition of barn raising.

The author has a pleasantly easy-to-read style filled with personal reflections about trust from the unique perspective of the office of governor general. But these are no random thoughts, with each

having been carefully chosen and presented to focus on the issue being explored. They are then combined with a diverse range of credible evidence-based research and the serious considerations of prominent social commentators and philosophers. The works of Canadian writer Hugh MacLennan to Saint Teresa of Calcutta, the advice of mayors from across the country to the officeholders and royalty of a variety of nations are seamlessly woven together to draw the reader along a journey to discovering what is trust, why it is important, and how to grow it.

One of the themes emerging from the book is the imperative not to take democracy, the rule of law, and the trust which is their bedrock for granted. We need to cultivate civility for it to survive and even flourish. The metaphor of civilisation as a garden is used to illustrate that gardeners are needed to tend and nurture the seeds of that which is good and keep the weeds and jungle from choking out civility. We can all play a part in the ecosystem of the garden to ensure trust flowers and is prolific.

For those in the voluntary sector, whether philanthropist, charity trustee, manager, regulator, or policymaker, I urge you to take time out and use this book as a prompt for some personal reflection about trust and civility in community life. The nation and the world can only benefit from diligent gardeners of good faith tending to their communities and keeping the weeds at bay.