

Community University
Research Alliance
**Activating Change Together
for Community Food Security**

The Political Economy of Food Policy Change: A Framework for Analysis

Prepared by the Policy Working Group
Activating Change Together for Community Food Security (ACT for CFS)
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November 11, 2012 (32 pages)

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1.0 Introduction

Note: Words in bold are included in a glossary at the end of the document.

Despite the importance of **policy** to our everyday lives, many of us only have a rough understanding of what policy actually is and how it is developed. This lack of clarity can be made worse by oversimplified explanations of policy-making processes. These processes are actually quite complex and can be influenced by many different interests, goals and perspectives. Understanding the deeper dynamics of policy making is an important starting point for thinking about **capacity building** to achieve policy change, one of the key goals of ACT for CFS.

The goal of this document is to provide ACT for CFS participants with an overview of what policy is, how it is created, and how it can be changed. The paper presents a framework for analysis of community food security based in the theory of political economy, which is a way of understanding the deeper power dynamics of policy-making. At its most basic, this **political economy** approach emphasizes the way economic factors (such as how people earn a living, and how property is owned and used) shape political outcomes (including policies, but also broader social trends such as the wage gap between men and women) and vice versa.

After laying out the key components of a political economic framework, this paper will “apply” the framework to the experiences of five people located at various levels of the policy making process to better understand how policy change occurs (or not). The purpose is to better understand how policies are created, whether or not they are helping to achieve the goals associated with community food security, and how they might be changed to better meet these goals. The political economy framework provides some tools to help us think through these issues.

We do not assume that everyone involved in ACT for CFS will accept this framework as the only or best way to think about food policy. ACT for CFS is based on a model of participatory action research in which academic ideas (like political economy) offer just one way of understanding policy. ACT for CFS is rooted in the belief that community voices, including those most affected by food insecurity, are at least as

important in shaping our analysis as academic ones. One indicator of the ‘success’ of ACT for CFS will be the extent to which we bring different “ways of knowing” together to improve food security in Nova Scotia. We invite comments from everyone involved in ACT for CFS on the framework and ways for improving it to better reflect experiences and perspectives across ACT for CFS.

2.0 What is Policy?

Policy can be defined as a plan or course of action (or inaction) adopted by a level of government (also known as the **state**) or other institution to guide decisions, with the goal of achieving specific outcomes. Policies include the laws passed by governments, as well as regulations and many other types of directives and decisions that indicate how governments will act on a given issue. These government decisions are collectively known as **public policies**.

However, policies are not just established by states. They are also developed by other actors and institutions including companies and **non-governmental organizations** (NGOs). This is why policy is often talked about in terms of **governance** rather than just in terms of government actions. Governance includes a variety of formal and informal rules for organizing social and economic life that have been determined by third parties rather than by government authorities (e.g., how organic” food is defined and marketed, or how often someone is allowed to visit a food bank each month).

When thinking about policies relevant to community food security, it quickly becomes apparent that there are no national or provincial “food” policies in Canada and few municipalities have yet adopted comprehensive policies on food. Instead, food policy is a collection of policies at different levels of government (from global agreements on trade to local bylaws) on agriculture, fisheries, consumer protection, income support, public health, etc. as well as a range of policies established by businesses, and NGOs among others. Food policy involves many diverse actors and institutions at local, national, regional, and international levels, and not all are “immediately apparent or open to scrutiny” (Lang et. al., 2009, 23).

2.1 The problem with traditional understandings of policy-making processes

There are many different ways of thinking about how policies are made but here we focus on two common models: the Hourglass Model and the Policy Process Model. Each helps us understand a prominent view on how policy is made.

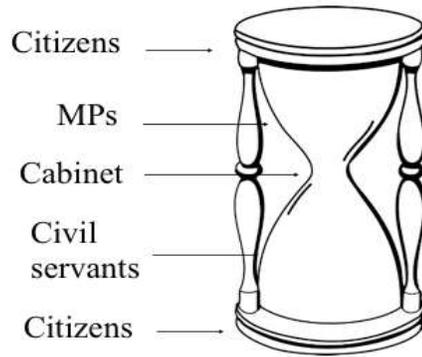
a) The Hourglass Model

The Hourglass Model suggests that citizens are the ones who get new laws and policies adopted by lobbying their Members of Parliament (in the case of the federal government). These laws and policies eventually receive the approval of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and are then implemented through the work of civil servants in the relevant government ministries. We refer to this as the “hourglass model” of policy development, since it assumes that everything passes from the top of the hourglass (the citizens) through its choke point (the PM and Cabinet) to the bottom (the civil servants) before policies are implemented. Along the way, choices are made according to the priorities of the political parties that control the government.

While some aspects of this model are accurate, it misses a lot of what happens in the real world. Even if policy ideas are created at the top (by the citizens), those ideas are then re-interpreted and reconfigured at every stage of the hourglass. This creates the potential that the final policy looks very different at the bottom than it did when promoted by the citizens at the top. Policies may also be created at the bottom (by civil servants), who then send them up in to the narrow part of the hourglass for approval and adjustment by their political bosses before being implemented. Many policy ideas also enter the process from the ‘sides’ of this hourglass, rather than from the citizens at the top. These policy ideas may come from interest groups who are in regular contact with politicians and civil servants and who work to ensure their priorities are reflected in the laws and policies adopted by governments.

b) The Policy Process Model

In the Policy Process Model, the decision-making process is presented as a series of steps: These steps are thought of as taking place in an orderly fashion. Analysis of policy options may involve cost/benefit analysis and environmental impact assessments. **Policy-makers** see the results of these analyses and choose the best course of action to solve the problem. The evaluation of these choices after they have been implemented may then lead to the identification of a new set of problems, and the whole cycle repeats itself.



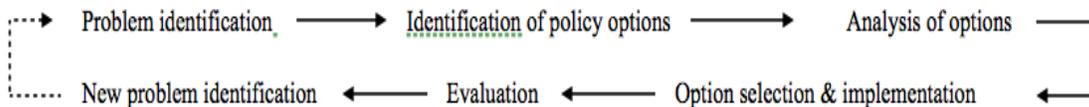
However, the Policy Process Model does not tell the whole story. How are the policy problems identified in the first place? How are policy options identified? Whose perspectives have the greatest influence? Why are some policies implemented fully, while others only get a half-hearted attempt?

When it comes to how policy actually gets made or changed, both the Hourglass and Policy Process Models are too simple to capture all the dynamics involved. What appears to be missing most in these models is attention to **power relations**. Power relations refer to the full range of **social forces** that can influence a policy issue, and the ability of these forces, relative to one another, to shape processes or outcomes. It is these power dynamics that a political economy approach tries to bring to the surface for analysis. For example, a political economy approach would consider which groups in society have both the interests and resources to be in regular contact with government officials and other policy-makers in order to promote their views and interests.

3.0 A Political Economy Framework for Understanding and Acting on Community Food Security

Drawing on a long tradition of research in Canada and elsewhere (see Clement 2001), a political economy framework recognizes that political outcomes are mainly shaped by economic factors. In this context, political outcomes refers primarily to policy decisions (or lack thereof). Economic outcomes can include whether or not these policy decisions will create or sustain jobs, allow certain groups to prosper, etc.

However, the relationship between political outcomes and economic factors applies in both directions, as



economic outcomes are also the product of political decisions. Economic factors can refer to whether or not we can buy and sell certain things, and who benefits or is harmed by these markets; in addition, the political decisions that determine them can be taken at many different levels of governance, from local to global. A

political economy approach also takes into account factors such as geography (including differences in urban and rural perspectives) and the impact of gender relations, **class** and culture on policy making.

The political economy framework underlying ACT for CFS draws on the thinking of Antonio Gramsci, an Italian revolutionary who was imprisoned for his political views. Unlike the more static policy process models described above, Gramsci believed in a more fluid idea of politics (and thus policy reform). He observed that dominant groups in society (including government institutions and groups within **civil society**) have the most influence because they have a majority of consent from other groups. Maintaining power depends on a constant reassertion of consent through repositioning of the relationships and networks between those with power and those without (Jones, 2006, 3). For example, to remain legitimate, a government has to be flexible enough to respond to new circumstances and interests from the society it oversees.

The model sees social or political change, including policy change, as dependent on finding support within and across three broad realms of power relations, each critical to successful social and political change. The three realms of power are: 1) ideas, 2) organization, and 3) economic relations. It is the intersection of the three realms - ideas, organization and economic factors - which eventually becomes critical for impacting policy.

Each realm is a field or arena where one set of forces is able to override or co-opt competing forces. The dynamics in each of the three realms is related to what is happening in the others, but also has a degree of independence that makes it a field of power relations on its own. Change, whether social or policy change, depends on the balance of the relations of force at any given time. Change can occur slowly (through incremental changes over time in the ways of doing things) or through more abrupt revolutionary transformations. However, as an ongoing process, the capacity for change can occur at any time.

3.1 Ideas

The realm of ideas includes concepts such as **discourse**, **norms** and **ideology**. Big ideas, such as democracy, Aboriginal rights and community food security can be very powerful in shaping policies. These ideas arise from many places, including shared social values or the private interests of specific groups in society. They are debated by NGOs, researchers, governments, media and others, each of which may **frame** the idea slightly differently than the other(s) to reflect their own interests and priorities.

Alongside other **social forces** like government institutions and corporations, ideas are thought of as “forces” in their own right, because they have the ability to change what we do and how we do it. Gramsci argued that ideas are most powerful when they are widely adopted and accepted as “common sense”. He pointed out that media or intellectuals can be as important for creating change as formal governmental processes because of their ability to influence popular culture.

Whether or not an idea has enough power to determine whether specific policies are adopted depends on the persuasiveness of the idea itself, how well it is justified in research, how well it connects to the values people accept as “common sense”, and on the ability (and resources) of the groups who support the idea to convince others in society to accept it.

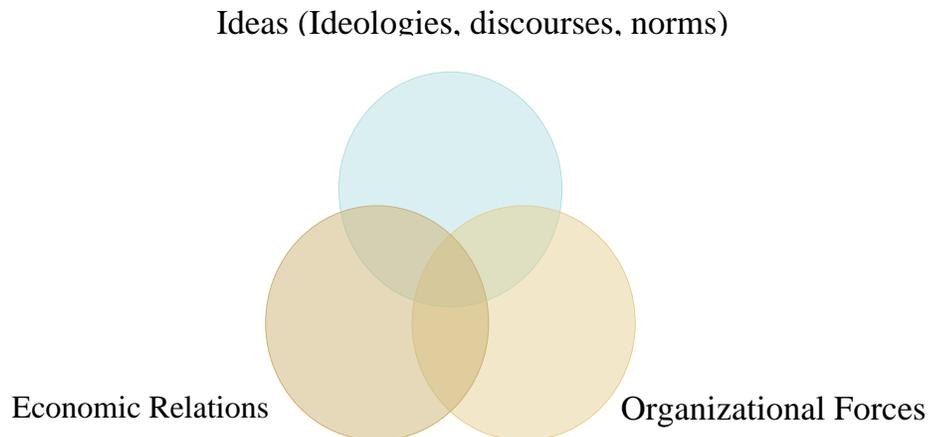


Figure 1. Realms of Power within a Political Economy

In using this framework to understand policy change, some questions related to ideas are: What ideas are being circulated in policy circles, media and popular culture? Where have they come from and whose interests do they appear to serve first and foremost? What power do these people/organizations have in shaping public debates and policy outcomes? What ideas are they replacing or pushing aside?

3.2 Organizational Forces

The realm of “organizational forces” is the place where individuals and groups organize around some agendas and against others. It includes both formal and informal power dynamics. Formal dynamics include those of **institutions** such as governmental departments and inter-governmental bodies, which must generally be ‘on side’ for social or political change to take place. Informal dynamics are those of **civil society**, where groups representing both public interests (like NGOs or university researchers) and private interests (such as corporations) come together around shared goals.

Both informal organizations and formal institutions have mandates, goals and agendas for achieving their goals and shaping the directions they take. They make strategic choices about where to focus their efforts and resources. Sometimes an institution’s priorities and processes overlap with those of other groups (including the overlap between different levels of government). All these factors affect the balance of organizational forces (ie. who has more power) in any particular contest over the adoption of specific policies.

For this realm, understanding policy change brings up questions such as: What organizations support particular policy options? What is their capacity (financial, social, etc.) to shape policy? Who are their allies? Who opposes them? What are the mandates and goals of institutions that appear to have a role in establishing policies? How do these institutions overlap with one another in their mandates and goals? How are they structured, and how do these structures affect their ability to influence, or to be influenced by, outside groups, etc.?

3.3 Economic Relations

The third realm in the political economy framework is economic relations. For most political economists, this is the realm which affects and determines power relations the most. Economic relations are about “the way a society creates and sustains itself” (Clement 2001) - not just how physical things are produced,

distributed, and used but also how these things are controlled (ie. through ownership, land rights, fishing quotas, etc.).

The economic realm encompasses the full range of economic relationships - from consumers, to farmers, to corporations and governments. Economic relationships and interactions determine which groups have more or less power to ultimately influence and make decisions.

Some questions related to economic relations include: What are the economic relations that underpin particular policy directions? Which actors have the greatest economic clout, and what are their interests in relation to food, agriculture and fisheries policies? How do larger trends in the economy affect the possibilities for advancing specific kinds of food policy?

4.0 Talking with People Involved in Policy Change to Improve Food Security

One of Gramsci's goals in developing his political analysis was the desire to promote change for the better. The political economy framework is also designed to help activists think strategically about creating positive change. With the PE framework in mind, five interviews with individuals in different sectors and at different levels of policy processes were conducted to analyses real-world examples of policy change.

The interview questions sought to draw out how each interviewee experienced (or not) the three different realms of the Political Economy approach - ideas, organizational forces, and economic relations by considering a particular policy issue they had worked on. In seeking to comprehend power relations, a political economy framework also included analysis of forces in support, against, or neutral to the desired policy change.

The interviews conducted included:

- **Michelle Murton**, NS Department of Health and Wellness

Michelle Murton's experience in developing a Provincial Food and Nutrition Policy began with the acknowledgment of a lack of healthy and affordable food options in the public school system since the 1980s. Through continuous capacity building, progressive changes in mindset, and through constant communication and understanding with their opponents, policies proponents were ultimately able to successfully develop and implement a policy that improved access to healthier, safer, and more affordable food and beverages since 2006.

- **David Upton**, Community Business Development Coalitions (CBDC)

Building a bridge between government and businesses, David Upton's policy experience involved developing a more cohesive plan to support the development of Social Enterprises (SE) and to increase government support for SEs in the Province. Re-framing the role of SEs under economic terms particularly persuaded the government that policies supporting SE were a viable way of promoting greater social, cultural, environmental, and economic activities and reducing the divide between urban and rural communities. By seeking to satisfy both government and business groups' agendas to their greatest ability, the ACCSE helped secure SEs their first M\$2.2 provincial funding package in mid-April 2012. While the funds may not have been allocated as envisioned, it was still recognized as being "a definite and important first step."

- **Vince Calderhead**, Nova Scotia Legal Aid

Vince Calderhead, a Staff Lawyer for Nova Scotia Legal Aid for over 25 years, has worked predominantly with increasing support and housing and for low income people. Because "the political climate has never been very positive vis a vis political change," their team has generally pursued policy reforms through the courts system, relying on a human rights framework. In response to an incoming NDP government,

previously highly supportive of reforms as an opposition party, NS LegalAid are re-attempting advocacy strategies at both the court-based level and through high-level political lobbying. At this point, policy reforms have been unsuccessful despite slow “signs of progress”. Setbacks have been attributed to the fact that most governments do “a lot of talk but no action” when dealing with issues of poverty and low income groups.

- **Frazer Hunter**, Knoydart Farm, Organic Dairy Farmer

Constrained by the limited opportunities to increase farm income under the supply management regulations of the Canadian Dairy Board, Frazer Hunter sought to increase his farm’s income without having to buy more quota. To do so, he became a pioneer of the organic dairy movement in Nova Scotia. Despite a lack of willingness from their peers to consider organic dairy because of fears it would take away from their own market, Frazer Hunter formed a small co-operative of organic dairy producers and engaged in “a continual lobbying process” with the farming community and with regulators. Though a fairly internal process, more major advocacy efforts included significant public and media outreach, partnerships with successful organic co-operatives in PEI and Ontario, and ultimately involved some government lobbying for support. Though their efforts were successful, it took almost a decade for Hunter’s co-operative, which dropped from 6 members to 4, to have their products approved.

- **Michelle Proctor-Simms**, NS Advisory Committee on AIDS

Michelle Proctor-Simms is the Director of the NS Advisory Commission on AIDS, an arm’s length agency of the provincial government advising them on HIV/AIDS and its impact on Nova Scotians. Since 2003, the Commission has coordinated the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Nova Scotia’s Strategy on HIV/AIDS to help reduce risk of HIV infection, reduce stigma, and provide those living with HIV/AIDS with optimal care, treatment, and support services. Using a population health and social inclusion approach, the Commission has been able to engage stakeholders to address the recommendations actions in the Strategy. While progress has been slow, through awareness campaigns, engaging stakeholders in key initiatives (e.g., HIV testing, income security), linking the Strategy to relevant community and government initiatives and contributing to research, there has been progress in increasing access to services in some areas of the province. Still, Proctor-Simms is waiting for a “perfect storm” of momentum between changes in framing/discourse, increased resources, the right networking opportunities, and time to see their efforts follow through.

- **Patricia Williams**, co-lead of the ACT for CFS project, and **Lynn Langille**, co-lead of the ACT for CFS Policy Working Group

Under the framework of food security, Dr. Patricia Williams, co-lead of Acting Change Together for Community Food Security (ACT for CFS), and Lynn Langille, co-lead of ACT for CFS’s Policy Working Group, have been working to increasing income assistance rates for low income groups in Nova Scotia since the early 2000s to address food insecurity. Much of their research has involved work on food costing, and collecting data and evidence to show the inadequacy of assistance in Nova Scotia. The project has engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders and multiple levels (national, provincial, municipal) to gain the broadest and most inclusive understanding of the issue possible. Through an open and collaborative and participatory research methods and active community and government engagement, both Williams and Langille believe that the issue of food security and income have gained a lot of ground in Nova Scotian discourse and within the common mindset, and as such will be able to gain traction within policy making circles.

More detailed descriptions of the five policy experiences described above and key lessons learned can be found in Appendix 1.

5.0 Using the PE Framework and Real World Experience to Understand and affect Policy Change

Gramsci believed that creating successful change depends on strategic and unified actions across all three realms of power. Through these examples of policy contexts and processes, the political economy framework can be used to think through the “real” dynamics of policy change in and across these realms of power. Common themes drawn from the experiences of the individuals featured above highlight some of the major aspects of the three realms of the PE approach: ideas, organizational forces, and economic relations.

5.1 Ideas: Strength of Vision and Creating a New “Common Sense”

The political economy framework stresses that ideas are a critical element of policy change – they create the drive behind people’s interests and actions. Leaders and coalitions who possess a strong vision for community health will likely be more successful in ensuring that their goals will not be co-opted by other actors or neglected in favour of stronger ideas.

Because ideas are forces in their own right, they can help neutral or opposing forces come around to another point of view (or at least block them from gaining ground), and affect the way opponents act. In seeking stronger support for social enterprises, David Upton noted that they were “just trying to get people to reframe the discussions of things that they already do, rather than change the way people are doing things just let them see it in a different light.”

Advocacy and outreach are also important in strengthening the power of ideas and changing the mindset of others. Upton “always advocates on behalf of [his] sector, to keep building capacity within it but also to create public awareness.” As such, it may be useful to understand the ideas and mindsets of opponents, in being able to use language that they will be able to understand and ideally relate to.

The realm of ideas includes discourses, or how things are communicated. Successfully communicating one’s ideas to others often requires using their language to talk about one’s own perspective. This approach was described as “appealing to [other actors’] approaches, reframing their thoughts, [and] framing the argument in a way that the people you are talking to will better understand” (Upton), “adapting depending on who you are talking to and what interests them” (Langille), or “seeking to engage people on their own terms” (Calderhead). When approaching a topic as broad as income inadequacy, Williams stressed the importance of finding how the issue connects to different people in their own terms and their own experiences; she also noted that hosting workshops with a variety of stakeholders to ascertain their needs and interests allowed the ACT for CFS project to develop “a checklist of things we knew we needed to have in dealing with food security and income inadequacy”. Using a participatory and collaborative model to engage with many different stakeholders also allows ideas to be generated by a larger number of participants to “co-create and mobilize knowledge” (Williams). In addition, both Calderhead and Upton agreed that making economic arguments tended to appeal to government the most, especially when money can be saved, not only as it makes politicians feel as though “They are making strategic investments” but also because “nobody can argue with the math” (Calderhead).

When successful, the language used in seeking reforms “will become indoctrinated in the key strategies” of those with power in the decision making-process (Upton). However, efforts are not always successful. Some resistance may come from “fear” (Frazer Hunter, Williams), “misunderstanding, or ignorance” (Williams) rather than outright opposition. These difficulties can be dispelled by increased communication, but some opponents can simply get “stuck in a paradigm” or get “too heavily invested in a point of view” (Upton) to either consciously or subconsciously move away from it.

Gramsci argued that the most powerful ideas are assumed and accepted as “common sense.” For example, despite grassroots efforts to bring healthier foods into schools, Murton noted that it was not until new studies began to come out on high instances of obesity and Type II diabetes in students that policy circles began to seriously consider a School Nutrition Policy. Scientific research, along with a general increase in interest in consumers and the media in healthy eating was what made the issue truly take off. Setbacks were due to most people having “a different mindset on food. It isn’t valuable to them, they don’t understand

how important it is, or don't appreciate what it takes to get real food [...] The new levels of awareness were important and really helped" (Murton).

In addition, Williams and Langille noted that participatory research methods has allowed for a much more credible body of evidence to support their advocacy efforts and "shift public opinion" (Langille). Having research conducted with partnership actors at all levels of the policy-making scale can not only create the broadest understanding of an issue possible, but also allows activists to generate the best tools to affect the general mindset on any given issue (Williams). The ACT for CFS project has particularly understood the importance of ideas in being able to allow "people to see the value in policy change both within their community and their institutions, and the ripple effects those changes have" (Williams). By changing common sense thinking, Langille has noted "deeper and broader conversations about food in Nova Scotia, [from] people asking more questions about their food at the grocery store, in schools, on community health boards or in workplaces".

Ideas can also be perpetuated by the media, though Michelle Proctor-Simms was cautious of how the media can sometimes mis/reinterpret messages especially around contentious issues. Groups should be fairly certain that media exposure will work in their favour rather than criticize or discount their effort. Murton suggests "being comprehensive and having key messages" when speaking publicly about an issue to reduce possible distortion. Similarly, Williams mentioned that whenever publishing media releases, groups should make sure they have a main issue or message to stick to that they can then tie other smaller messages to; in their case, any conversation should be framed within the broader context of food security. Upton suggests "honesty, transparency, and being upfront" at every stage of the process. In doing so, some cases, such as Hunter's allowed for a significant amount of positive media exposure from CBC's Land and Sea program, to radio and printed press. Similarly, Murton said the development of School Nutrition Policy ultimately benefited from a high degree of media exposure, as close monitoring of public debate in editorials allowed them to outdo negative press with positive letters from supporters and sharing success stories.

5.2 Organizational Forces: Building Alliances & The Role of the Government

a) Networking

"Organizational forces" are found in all sectors, and at all levels of society. Power in most organizations (governments, corporations, schools, etc.) is associated with a hierarchy where some people have more power (sometimes much more) than others. When trying to change public policy, it is important to create networks within and across these hierarchical systems: the wider one's involvement, the more "organizational force" one has to drive their idea(s) through. Hunter stressed that support can be moral as well as monetary, and both are important. Strong alliances create "collective ownership of the process. It was our job. We had to figure it out. It's not just you, it's us" (Murton).

All interviewees mentioned the importance of creating both formal and informal ties to key players in the policy process. Networking is foundational to having power. Due to its relatively small size, Nova Scotia benefits from a unique context of being able to create strong networks. Both Murton and Calderhead noted that "relationships are really serviced here [in NS]" (Murton) and it is very reasonable to expect to have "personal connection" (Calderhead) with key government players. However, the importance of having both person-to-person and more general contacts was made obvious to Langille and Williams whose strong relationship with the NS Department of Agriculture was somewhat lost when their contact person changed departments. Though they maintained a relationship with the department, losing a strong singular contact "never really allowed for that good connection to rejuvenate to where it was" (Langille).

Alliances should be as broad and diverse as possible to "avoid missing things" (Murton) and be able to have a strong position on any facet of an issue. The more spread out ones network, the more likely people are to have a say in policy processes. To get the best understanding possible on their issues, both Murton and Upton "ran the gamut," (Upton) talking to hundreds of groups and individuals to get the greatest support possible for their issue. Complementing broad support networks, Calderhead and Proctor-Simms also highlighted the need to approach groups that might have specific knowledge or skill sets in parts of one's research or advocacy requiring an understanding of a specialized issue or topic (eg. Proctor-Simms

working with the NS Participatory Food Costing Project to access the degree to which people with HIV/AIDS can access a nutritious diet). Langille also noted that bigger numbers and broader networks also “definitely makes you stronger to make broad scale change”. “The larger the conversation, the more government can see the broader impact of what you are doing and feel more legitimized in making an investment” (Upton).

Creating strong relationships and collaboration allows for “mutual understanding, for people with different understandings of an issue to work towards a solution together” (Williams). As stated by Langille, part of ACT for CFS’s work has been to try and lessen the boundaries between government workers, researchers, and civil society, “to work across boundaries, and develop a common language, way of thinking, and theorizing rather than look at the differences between how each of person approaches the issue”.

The importance of “finding champions at every level” (Murton) or “key players” (Upton, Proctor-Simms, Calderhead) to create stronger momentum and motivate others were seen as vital. Similarly, in dealing with income inadequacy, ACT for CFS partnered with key advocacy organizations, who could serve as “mouthpieces [capable] of building the necessary critical mass or strong voice around our issue” (Langille). Sharing success stories also helps people see how positive change is possible, and creates motivation and energy to work toward change (Murton, Langille, Williams). In contrast, because Hunter’s group was faced with a degree of passive resistance from their peers, and despite sharing success stories from other provinces, a few members of the reform efforts eventually dropped out because of the lengthy and defeating advocacy process.

Though groups often come together around shared goals, it is not critical that they come to the table with the same agendas and interests. Instead, focus should be on the “serious overlaps on which folks can all agree to make things possible” (Upton). Allowing for a variety of voices to be heard yet focusing on commonalities promotes a feeling of inclusion amongst participants because “almost everybody was already at the table” (Upton). Williams notes that one of the main goals of ACT for CFS is to create “a mutual understanding” around a given issue. Murton noted that those most adverse to policy change “ultimately said it was because they hadn’t felt included enough or didn’t have enough information to understand.” Ultimately, creating organizational force requires listening, understanding and networking.

b) The Role of the Government

Even though the political economy approach recognizes civil society as having significant capacity to change policy, “the state (government) is clearly absolutely central in articulating the different areas of contestation, the different points of antagonism” (Hall, 1987). In other words, while getting governments on board may not always be enough to create social change, they are necessary to institutionalize that change.

From a government perspective, Murton observed that one role of government is seeking consent from civil society in addressing its interests. She stressed that part of the success of developing a strong School Nutrition Policy in Nova Scotia was that “the government didn’t take the lead, they followed the lead, so it began and lasted through what was happening on the ground.” Similarly, Langille also highlighted that “the public voice is often what moves politicians to do things. They do actually listen when people call in, email, or write in talk about particular issues that they think government should be addressing”. As such, those seeking policy change should actively seek government participation.

For non-government groups, the most important way to gain organizational force in relation to government institutions was “to find out what the government needs or feels that they need, and help them understand how the agenda you are pushing will help meet that need” (Upton). Similarly, Calderhead mentioned the need for “a fairly sophisticated and concerted political advocacy strategy [...] when approaching governments,” which requires well-researched and concrete proposals on issues ideally consistent with government’s policy directions. The policy changes being pitched should be based on evidence and ‘doable’ solutions, effectively helping government move towards its own goals.

In working toward policy change, it is important to determine which departments and politicians within government might be inclined to support ones position “to help build strong support across the government as best as [you] can” (Upton). In the context of Nova Scotia, it was seen as realistic to try to pitch issues at “a very high level of government” (Calderhead) or “senior policy makers, as high up the ladder as you can” (Langille). For example, “both at the senior bureaucracy, the deputy level, but also one-on-one meetings with [...] key ministers, and there only really are a small handful of them” (Calderhead).

It was also noted that opposition parties should be approached as often as ruling ones, as they can help draw attention to more marginalized issues. If they come into power, the groundwork to work with them will have been laid. However, it should be recognized that having entered into power, (former) opposition parties may no longer be as willing to talk under the new circumstances. For example, in the case of supporting action against high energy costs for low income groups, NS Legal Aid approached the NDP when it was in opposition. Since the NDP came into power, Calderhead was surprised by “their failure to do more for the poor [though] there is a new receptivity to at least talk.” William and Langille also expressed that while the expectations around the new NDP government “were very high, [they] did not meet with the high expectations people had” (Williams). However, they also noted that the current government still presents a unique opportunity and is “still probably the best shot we’ve got, so we’ll keep working on it with them because we can see there is a lot of potential” (Williams).

It may not be as important for some groups to heavily engage with government. In bringing organic dairy production to Nova Scotia, Frazer Hunter and other members of his group had a strong desire to keep government involvement “very much at arm’s length.” Already working under government regulations on dairy production, their reform process mostly required support from their peers rather than government. Nevertheless, his reluctance also came from the belief that “the government looks after history, not the future. [...] In most instances, government talks the talk, but does not walk the walk, and I don’t blame the politicians, there are a lot of bureaucrats that have become very stale too.”

5.3 Economic Relations: Restructuring Current Systems and the Place of Marginalized Groups in Policy Processes

The realm of economic relations plays a major role in policy outcomes. For almost a decade, Hunter has been a strong advocate in reshaping economic relations within agriculture. He does not believe that the high levels of government regulations requested by farmers themselves have served them in the long run. Especially within the heavily regulated dairy market, the system has become stale and uncompetitive instead of vibrant and entrepreneurial. Hunter strongly believes that the economic relations on which Canadian agriculture is based need to change. Rather than relying on government supported commodity agriculture, he supports a return to market-oriented production; “producing an actual product for the market.” Hunter stated that most of agriculture’s problems stems from a loss of producer-consumer relationship. However, through farmers markets, and local or organic food movements, he is seeing a slow revival. “We can’t blame processor or retailers for everything. Over the years, the farmer has become completely divorced from the consumer, and we have to get that power back one small step at a time,” a potential he sees in producing organic milk.

Most of the people interviewed stressed the relatively overlooked place of marginalized groups in policy processes. Having worked as the legal voice for low income groups for over two decades, Calderhead assessed that “the government has very little interest in resolving the interests of the poor. [...] Issues to do with the poor have historically not been seen as important public policy issues.” Similarly, on the issue of income inadequacy, Williams and Langille stated that senior bureaucrats or other government officials rarely have a real understanding of what people deal with on the ground, and that poverty is inherently an “unsexy” topic (Williams). Though the NDP appears to have a stronger willingness to engage with the issues of low income groups, “it’s still an open question”. Civil society groups have traditionally held little decision-making power, and thus little chance of affecting policy outcomes.

Advocating for the rights of those living with or more at risk for HIV/AIDS, Proctor-Simms has faced similar issues. She believes reluctance to properly fund or resource organizations and initiatives that support this population segment has often been a result of stigma and/or lack of attention to addressing

inequalities such as poverty. There is also often been a failure to acknowledge the reality on the ground that community-based service providers deal with to better the situation of those they serve. For example, one of the more controversial issues is increasing supports to reduce risk of HIV and Hepatitis C in correctional environments, including implementation of clean needle exchange programs.

Despite opposition, policy change advocates continue to express optimism that things can change. Under the assumption that everyone ultimately should care for social causes, Upton believes that “if you make a human case, it should be really easy.” Murton also asked groups seeking positive policy changes “to trust that human and social goals are more valuable than finances”; or as Langille states “these are societal problems, so we need to all work together to figure things out”. Interactions in the economic realm are clearly major determinants of which groups have more or less power to ultimately get to make decisions. Economics shape the interests of all political actors - from consumers, to corporations, to institutions, and across all levels of government.

6.0 Issue Converge: When Ideas, Organizations and Economics Come Together

A final concept from Gramsci's approach is the notion of "convergence," the moment when seemingly separate spheres, actions, actors, or ideas are drawn together to create a fundamental connection between them (Jones, 2006). Moments of convergence are hard to pin down, Murton, Proctor-Simms, and Upton all referred to a “perfect storm” of events and opportunities. It was acknowledged in both Murton and Upton’s cases that the process had to first be driven by the community: “after enough people make a lot of noise, the government has to hunker down and try to figure out how to respond” (Upton).

In their work, Langille and Williams have sought to make conversations happen at as many different levels as possible, simultaneously engaging in both top-down and bottom-up approaches to policy change. Shifting societal perspectives on any given issue requires “working towards change from all fronts” (Langille) to create a “tipping point” (Williams). More so than achieving policy change, Williams and Langille noted that engaging with ‘big picture thinking’ generally allows for other positive ripple effects; for example, they have seen an increase in community cohesion, helping children to better in school, and other outcomes related to improving food security.

Convergence can occur at any point, but all interviewees seemed to agree that it takes at least a change in mindset and a release of “the old way of thinking” (Hunter) for things to really start moving. Constant advocacy, alliance building, and perseverance are key, though convergence also seems to come out of desperation for other options. Upton suggested that governments may begin to listen to ‘external’ options when they have no other options: “We’ve tried everything else, so why don’t we try those people over there in the corner?” Calderhead continues to see potential convergence on failed or stalled policy reforms to support low income groups through the new NDP government. Williams and Langille offered that the economic downturn may have actually helped to make their issue more visible, making a larger number of people aware of the difficulties of income inadequacy. Hunter believed that the local food movement, though a small segment of the population, has helped increase public awareness “and has had a lot of traction in the press and across the country.”

Because convergence often appears random, persistent effort and constant readiness to act are key. Langille sought to remind anyone seeking policy change not to get discouraged, to remember that “one action is not going to single-handedly change things. It takes multiple actions and multiple levels to change things”. It was unanimously stated that patience, even stubbornness, are assets in being a part of the policy process, as it usually takes a long time (years for Hunter and Upton, and decades in the other cases) for any type of convergence or sufficient “level of readiness” (Murton) to occur. Hunter called the process a “marathon.” Mr. Hunter’s group dropped from 6 members to 4 due to the length of the process. He stated that “most people expected all of us to fall by the wayside, because we were not conforming to the context of the status quo,” but perseverance and waiting for the moment of convergence ultimately saw them through.

In summary, the experiences of the seven policy champions interviewed align with the political economy framework. Their experiences show that achieving policy change requires constant work at multiple levels. It means having good ideas and being able to promote them to the point where they are seen as “common

sense” over competing ideas. It means having the capacity to build networks both in civil society and through formal political institutions to advance policy proposals rooted in those good ideas, while paying careful attention to the ability of groups with different interests to do the same. It means that policy ideas need a broad level of support across many sectors of society. Finally, it means knowing how and when fundamental relationships in society need to be changed or brought to light to have certain voices heard.

6.1 Processes for undertaking a political economy analysis of policy forces: Stakeholder Analysis and Policy Mapping

a) Stakeholder Analyses

A Stakeholder analysis can be carried out to understand the interests and perspectives of key players on a given issue. It involves identifying the relevant “policy community” of the given issue. A “policy community” refers to the actors who make up the “interactions and relationships that have consequences for the development and delivery of policy.” (Pal, 2001, 234) Stakeholder analysis involves understanding a policy issue from the perspectives of the actors and organizations involved: public interest groups, social movement organizations, various levels of governments, academic researchers, and others. It can provide guidance for actions and a foundation for policy mapping.

By considering the stakeholders in a system, one can assess, compare, and contrast their roles and interests (stakes) in relation to a particular policy issue. Stakeholder analysis can involve collecting data through reports, web searches, meeting minutes, news releases and consultation with individuals and groups. Murton noted “the first thing to do is to listen, to understand what is the context, where are people coming from, where are they at, so there is some sort of coming to an understanding of what is. It’s asking, listening, appreciating what [each person] has to bring, their perspective and their wisdom because we might not understand it.” More in depth analyses may require interviews or focus groups to probe for information to fill gaps in the analysis and identify opportunities for collaboration and/or action.

b) Policy Mapping

Policy mapping means creating a visual diagram of a specific policy environment surrounding a proposal for policy change. It includes identification and analysis of the main institutional processes, and the stakeholders involved in or seeking to influence those processes. Its goal is to create a holistic picture of the policy process including key stakeholders, their interactions and relationships, potential areas of friction, overlap, or agreement, the resources available to them, and their interconnections.

Policy mapping involves examining all stages of the policy process from issue identification, to agenda setting, to implementation and evaluation. It helps to identify the ‘spaces’ for participation and influence in policy change.

In the context of a political economy framework, policy mapping would also pay attention to power relations (e.g., which actors seem to have more say in decision-making processes), geography, race, class, gender and culture in shaping policy outcomes.

A summary of questions to consider when conducting stakeholder analyses and policy mapping through a political economy framework, as well as examples of both these exercises are listed in Appendix 2. Examples of how to visually map stakeholders and policy change are shown through Appendix 2.1 and 2.2.

6.2 Participatory Models for Stakeholder Analysis and Policy Mapping

In the context of participatory action research, both stakeholder analyses and policy mapping exercises allow participants to see who their allies are, and whose perspectives they might need to change (or accommodate) in order to move their own vision forward. Policy mapping emphasizes institutional processes and strategic opportunities to shape them, while stakeholder analysis puts more emphasis on the actors with an interest in the issue and their resource base.

A number of workshop tools have been developed in recent years to integrate critical political economy framework with the basic elements of stakeholder analysis and policy mapping for use in participatory research and social change projects. Some of these tools are listed in Appendix 2.

Within ACT for CFS, a political economy framework emphasizes the way economic factors shape political outcomes (including not only policies, but also broader social trends such as the wage gap based on gender) and vice versa. In other words, a political economy approach encourages us to paint a fairly large policy map that incorporates more than the immediate actors interested in a given issue; as a bigger picture, it gives us a better sense of power dynamics and potential points of convergence.

Glossary

Capacity Building: An approach to the development of skills, organizational structures, resources, and commitment to health improvement. Capacity building can take place at individual, organizational, community, and systems levels.

Civil Society: The arena of voluntary collective action around shared interests, purposes and values where individuals work together to achieve collective goals. Civil society includes non-governmental organizations, churches, professional associations, advocacy groups, business coalitions, etc.

Class: Economic or cultural arrangements of groups in society, such as lower, middle and upper classes, but classes can also be defined by other characteristics such as “elites”, the “professional class”, the “working class”, etc. Social class generally pertains to material wealth and can be distinguished from social status which refers more to honour, prestige, religious affiliation, and so on.

Community Food Security: a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritiously adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice (Hamm and Belows 2001).

Discourse: verbal communication or a formalized way of thinking that can be manifested through language. Discourse can determine social boundaries defining what can and cannot be said about a specific topic. As [Judith Butler](#) puts it, discourse is "the limits of acceptable speech"—or possible [truth](#).

Economy: The economy includes all production (both paid and unpaid) and consumption activities undertaken by the state/public sector, private (business) sector, as well as in the “social economy” of the cooperative/ non-profit/ voluntary sector.

Framing: the act of presenting an issue in a way that is consistent with your overall goals or interests. Framing also refers to the packaging of an idea in such a way as to encourage certain interpretations and to discourage others.

Governance: The management of a system, usually political, economic or organizational, involving negotiation and accommodation between the parties involved rather than direct control. Governance can involve both state and non-state mechanisms. It can involve informal structures (such as the cultivation of new norms), formal structures (such as law) and non-state mechanisms, such as private certification bodies (eg. organic standard certification organizations, Fair Trade certification bodies, environmental standard certification groups, etc.)

Ideology: A reasonably consistent set of beliefs that not only explain what may be wrong with society, but also provides a vision of what society should be like. Ideology reflects the beliefs, needs and goals of an individual, group, class or culture. Specific ideologies become the basis of all political, economic, and social systems.

Institution: an organization founded and maintained for a specific purpose

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO): A non-profit group or association organized outside of formal political structures to realize particular social objectives (such as environmental protection) or serve particular constituencies (such as indigenous peoples).

Norms: accepted behaviors within a society or group.

Policy is a plan or course of action adopted by a government or other organization (including any group of people with the power to carry it out or enforce it) to guide decisions with the goal of achieving specific outcomes. Personal policies are standards an individual may use to guide her/his own decisions and actions. It is important to emphasize that not acting on a given issue may be as strong a policy as acting.

Policy Change: Change to policies and practices that takes place within governments, universities or other social institutions or corporations at macro (cutting across different sectors and concerning global and domestic structures, e.g. neo-liberalism, globalization, corporatization), meso (organizational and sector specific, e.g. networks) and micro (concerning individual and community behaviour and attitudes, e.g. buy-local movement) levels.

Policy-Makers: Anyone involved in formulating and eventually choosing specific policies, including politicians and government officials, but also citizens groups and other actors involved in influencing their choices.

Political Economy emphasizes the way economic factors shape political (and what we might think as more broadly social and cultural) outcomes and vice versa. As an interdisciplinary field of academic study, political economy draws on sociology, political science, economics, geography, history and other disciplines. The approach is used to better understand the inter-relationships between governments, the **economy**, and the rest of society (with the latter often called “**civil society**”).

Power Relations: The full range of social forces that can influence a policy issue, and the ability of these forces, relative to one another, to shape the process or outcomes.

Public Policy: Whatever governments (at any level) choose to do or not to do.

Social Forces: The wide range of ideas, people, organizations and economic forces that are able to affect or change society, social organization, and human behaviour.

State: A legal and political entity encompassing a particular geographic area over which it exercises sovereignty. The term “state” includes all levels of government, including municipal, provincial and federal governments (in the Canadian context).

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Appendix 1: Examples of Policy Pathways

Example 1. Policy Pathway to a Provincial Food and Nutrition Policy

Interview with Michelle Murton, NS Department of Health and Wellness
March 28, 2012

Problem: Lack of healthy and affordable food options in the public school system

Desired Policy Outcome: Full implementation of a Provincial Food and Nutrition Policy

Initiative Summary:

Michelle Murton's experience in developing a Provincial Food and Nutrition Policy began with the acknowledgment of a lack of healthy and affordable food options in the public school system since the 1980s. However, it was only following a "grassroots groundswell" of interest and successful initiatives led by a few local school board in Nova Scotia in the mid to late 1990s that changes truly began to occur. Through "new levels of awareness" brought on by research, success stories, media exposure, and fierce networking by proponents of school nutrition, very strong collaborative efforts were made between representatives from the NS Government (including the Department of Public Health, Health and Wellness, Department of Education, Department of Agriculture), researchers, members of the school system, parents, students, and civil society organizations to draft the framework for a provincial Food and Nutrition Policy. Through continuous capacity building, progressive changes in mindset, and through constant communication and understanding with their opponents, policies proponents were ultimately able to successfully develop and implement a policy that improved access to healthier, safer, and more affordable food and beverages since 2006.

Forces in support of policy change:

- Government Actors
 - Provincial Departments including NS Department of Health and Wellness (formerly the Department of Health Promotion and Protection), NS Department of Education, and the Department of Agriculture
 - Local School Boards
- Educators
- Health practitioners
- Parents groups and other community organizations
- Researchers
- Media questioning unhealthy food trends and their effects on youth
- Entrepreneurial local companies (who adapted or saw business opportunity in these changes)

Supporting Reports, Outreach, Advocacy:

- Publishing of reports, policy drafts and supporting materials
- Round table discussions, press conferences, media interviews and news articles
- Research including national and provincial environmental scans, costing analyses, interviews with school boards, students, etc.
- Funding to all provincial school boards for proper policy implementation, and to build capacity for implementation
- Getting success stories to the media and having advocates write in to counter negative press
- Monitoring and evaluation two years after policy implementation to allow time for the policies to be fully established
- Outreach and inclusion of opponents to help them better understand perspectives

Forces against or neutral:

- Certain media groups debating the position of governments
- Most food industry groups reluctant to change processes or adapt to new requirements and costs

- Fundraising companies for their inability selling chocolate bars in schools
- Most convenient stores and local businesses adjacent to schools continuing to sell and market unhealthy foods to students, and belief that their profits would be cut into due to new policies
- Certain staff members within government
- Parents hesitancy to change the ways things have always been done
- Media and public debate arguing against the role of government involvement in feeding children

Social and Economic Forces contributing to policy change:

- New mindset in society and policy circles that schools are an environment that should promote health, nourishment, and tools for successful growth (including through the food they provide) rather than a more targeted focus of school food programs only addressing the needs of and accessibility for students of low income families
- Greater emphasis on health and nutrition surrounding new requirements of Canada Food Guide
- Greater emphasis on health and nutrition awareness due to new health studies on rates of obesity and type II diabetes in Nova Scotia

Other Key Lessons Learned

- Important of communicating and listening to others
- Understanding context (where people are coming from, where they are at, who is involved)
- Importance of diversity of supporters to maximize clout but also to get biggest picture of issue possible and not miss important facets
- Finding “champions” in each supporting sector
- Keeping and “setting the bar high” so that the policy outcome stays closest to the initial vision sought out by its supporters
- Trusting that most people understand that social/humanist goals are more valuable than monetary goals

Example 2. Policy Pathway to Supporting Social Enterprise (SE)

Interview with David Upton, Atlantic Council for Community and Social Enterprise
April 12, 2012

Problem: Lack of cohesive strategies to advance recognition and funding for Social Enterprises (SE) in Nova Scotia

Desired Policy Outcome: Development of a more cohesive plan to support the development of SE

Initiative Summary: David Upton, as part the Community Business Development Corporations (CBDC) of Nova Scotia and the Atlantic Council for Community and Social Enterprise, has been working to develop a concrete strategy to develop social enterprises (SE) and to increase government funding opportunities for SEs in the Province. Successful strategies included advancing the agendas of both SEs and their supporting organizations and the government at all levels of the policy process. Re-framing the role of SEs under economic terms particularly persuaded the government that policies supporting SE were an economically and socially viable way of promoting greater social, cultural, environmental, and economic activities and reducing the divide between urban and rural communities.

Proper reframing allowed the government to change their framework in favour of SEs, turning it into the government's new "common sense." By bridging the gap between politicians and bureaucrats on the one hand, and social enterprises and related groups on the other, as well as seeking to satisfy both groups' agendas to the greatest ability, SEs have successfully received their first M\$2.2 funding package by the provincial government in mid-April 2012. The government has also invested \$100,000 in the development of business plans for not for profit organizations preparing to engage in social enterprise. While the funds may not have been allocated as envisioned, it was still recognized as being "a definite and important first step. [...] It doesn't mean the discussion is over, it's just where we have gotten so far. Overall, we're moving in the right direction."

Forces in support of policy change:

- Government Actors
 - 5-6 Provincial Government Departments (including HRSDC, Council On Accreditation)
 - Municipal Governments
- Community organizations and representatives
- Businesses Groups (eg. Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses)
- Small Businesses (including co-operatives)
- Researchers and academics
- NGOs
- Aboriginal Governments

Supporting Reports, Outreach, Advocacy:

- Conferences (including the National Conference on SE in November 2011, with NS Premier as the key note address)
- Round table discussions
- Outreach to government through meetings with bureaucrats and politicians to understand the social and economic benefits of SE support
- Outreach to local organizations and businesses to understand opportunities within the SE sector
- Advocacy on behalf of sector to supporter groups mentioned above
- Research including surveys and analysis of SE through Mount Royal University, Simon Frasier, Cape Breton University

Forces against or neutral:

- Minor opposition from individuals both within and outside of government who were “stuck in a paradigm” that misunderstands the purpose/benefits of SE or who do not believe SEs are “real” businesses
- No significant opposition because the issue was not about “trying to change way anybody did anything” but about engaging in new activities that benefit the most amount of people

Social and Economic Forces contributing to policy change:

- “Huge deficits, dwindling revenues, and a lack of other questions” allowed for greater desire for government to explore new options
- Greater drive in policy circles to bridge the rural urban divide (and thus being more open to listen to innovative ideas on how to do so)
- Potential in increase of receptivity for SE support under new NDP government

Other Key Lessons Learned

- Importance of framing issue depending on your audience
- Supporters with different interests are not a problem so long as they all work to achieve the same goal
- Recognizing that there are always relative winners and losers (an ideal process still has everyone better off than they started even if it is to different degrees)
- Trusting that most people understand that social/humanist goals are more valuable than monetary goals
- Understanding (especially when approaching government or businesses) that making an strong economic case is generally most successful because it is difficult to “argue with the math”
- Requirement of having the strongest possible relationship with the government, because from the outside “the best we could do is influence those decisions so that they [the government] were making them, without making them a vacuum, not solely based on what they thought were political expediencies.”

Example 3. Policy Pathway to Lower Energy Costs for Low Income Groups

Interview with Vince Calderhead, Nova Scotia Legal Aid

April 12, 2012

Problem: Insufficient levels of social aid for low income people faced with increasing energy costs

Desired Policy Outcome: Higher income support for low income groups to compensate for high energy costs

Initiative Summary: Vince Calderhead, a Staff Lawyer for Nova Scotia Legal Aid for over 25 years, has worked predominantly with increasing support and housing and for low income people, and more recently on reducing their energy costs. Because “the political climate has never been very positive vis a vis political change,” their team has generally pursued policy reforms through the courts system, relying on a human rights framework. With the recent incoming NDP government, the political environment was assumed to become more receptive to change (as an opposition party, the NDP often supported reforms).

In response to this potential, NS LegalAid has attempted to balance out their advocacy strategies from simply court-based lobbying to political lobbying as well. Though using the human rights framework within the legal system has been what Mr. Calderhead feels their team’s expertise is best suited to support, the new NDP government has allowed for renewed efforts in “high level lobbying” at the deputy and ministerial levels. By working in conjunction with low income groups, they presented research and successful case studies from other provinces to lobby “key officials.” At this point, policy reforms have been unsuccessful, with slow “signs of progress”. Setbacks have been attributed to the fact that most governments do “a lot of talk but no action” when dealing with issues of poverty and low income groups (they are not a prioritized public policy issue).

Forces in support of policy change:

- Government Actors
 - Provincial Government (deputy ministers and ministers)
- Low income advocacy groups
- NGOs including the Affordable Energy Coalition
- Researchers and academics, including CURA, CCPA
- NDP (when part of the opposition government)
- The Occupy Movement (indirectly, through their questioning of current government systems)

Supporting Reports, Outreach, Advocacy:

- High level lobbying with deputy ministers and ministers
- Proposals made through the justice system, appealing to the Charter of Rights, etc.
- Research, including costing analyses
- Meetings with low income advocacy groups and other NGOs

Forces against or neutral:

- “The political climate has never been positive vis-à-vis political change and as a result any reform” so efforts are usually pursued through the court system
- “the government has very little interest in resolving the interests of the poor”
- mainstream mindset that “the poor are to a greater or lesser degree, the authors of their own misfortunes, so society should do something but not be overly concerned about them”
- Ministers discrediting studies as being “speculative”

Social and Economic Forces contributing to policy change:

- Potential increase in receptivity for low income support under new NDP government
- Political context in Nova Scotia allows for easier contacts/networking opportunities with high level politicians (“it’s reasonable to think that you will know two or three cabinet ministers”)

- New awareness due to media and attention on the Occupy Movement
- Potential for new lobbying strategies through innovation in social policy research (framing for governments that strategic investments in certain policies can reduce overall costs, due to reduction of costs in other policy areas)

Other Key Lessons Learned

- Importance of framing issue depending on your audience, “finding research [to use] framed in their own terms”
- Know your issue well (do research, go over policy documents, speeches, etc.)
- Lobbying needs to occur at a very high level for it to be most effective, target “key ministers, of which there are only really a small handful in Nova Scotia”
- Understanding that governments tend to be more interested in issues framed in a sound economic way than relying on social causes (governments will always choose to “save money” regardless of their ideology)
- Having a “multi-pronged, sophisticated and concerted political advocacy strategy” which involves 1) a public arm through links with NGOs for public outreach and advocacy; 2) a political arm through high level lobbying and networking; 3) a legal arm, potentially using litigation strategies (or potential threats)
- Always give concrete proposals (not just proposal about how the system is flawed, but giving concrete steps on how it can be fixed)
- Do not personally critique or accuse individual politicians

Example 4. Policy Pathway to Organic Dairy Farming in NS

Interview with Frazer Hunter, Organic Dairy Farmer

April 26, 2012

Problem: Obstacles to produce organic dairy products in Nova Scotia as per Canadian Supply Management regulations

Desired Policy Outcome: Support and recognition from Dairy Board of Nova Scotia to produce organic dairy products

Initiative Summary: Working under the limited opportunities to increase farm income under the supply management regulations of the Canadian Dairy Board, Frazer Hunter sought to increase his farm's income without having to buy more quota. To do so, he became a pioneer of the organic dairy movement in Nova Scotia. From an economic point of view, Mr. Hunter felt that by going the organic route and adding value to his product (by developing a cheese processing plant for his organic milk) were his two most viable options. Despite a lack of willingness from their peers to consider organic dairy because of fears it would take away from their own market, Frazer Hunter formed a small co-operative of organic dairy producers and engaged in "a continual lobbying process" with the farming community and with regulators.

Though they wished to keep the process internal to the farming community and regulators and did not want to get the government involved, "in the end, we did have to put pressure on the government to get things to move along" by asking politicians to pressure bureaucrats to allow farmers to set their own prices. Along with minor political lobbying efforts, other activities included significant public and media outreach through spots on television, radio, and printed press. The increased interest in local and organic food and the changing mindset of civil society in regards to food also helped push the issue along the way, as well as partnerships with successful organic dairy co-operatives in PEI and Ontario. Though successful, it took almost a decade for his co-operative to have their products approved ("It's a very regulated industry, so it's very difficult to be entrepreneurial. It's crazy that it takes 8 years to get a product on the market.") In that amount of time, Mr. Hunter's group dropped from 6 members to 4 due to the length of the process.

Forces in support of policy change:

- Organic dairy farmers and co-operatives from Ontario and PEI (eg. Organic Meadows)
- Consumers (that support organic and/or local foods)
- Local food and organic movement
- Numerous local and national media outlets (eg. CBC, the Coast)
- Research groups (eg. Organic Agricultural Center)

Supporting Reports, Outreach, Advocacy:

- Meetings to convince peers to support new organic dairy farmers
- Media Outreach (Land and Sea Program on CBC, radio, press)
- Research on benefits of organic farming with the Organic Agricultural Center
- Meetings with politicians to allow organic farmers to set their own prices (at later stages of the process)

Forces against or neutral:

- Passive opposition from other members of the farming community, out of "fear that it would take away from their own market" and general "conservative" leanings
- Barriers of milk policies, over-regulation
- Over-dependence from overall farming community on government support, creating lack of entrepreneurship, responsiveness, and desire to change
- Reluctance to engage with politicians because "They are very short-term, only being there for four years usually, and most bureaucrats do not want to deal with innovation."
- "it was more of a negative environment rather than a war against us."

Social and Economic Forces contributing to policy change:

- New awareness for organic food in civil society and policy circles due to growth of social movements in support of local and/or organic food
- New awareness of benefits of sustainable agriculture within the farming community due to new farming initiatives to increase producer-consumer ties (eg. farmers markets)
- Growing mindset in support of sustainable agriculture due to “young people with a more sustainable vision getting into agriculture”

Other Key Lessons Learned

- Importance of having the opposition understand your issue (the fears from the opposition were generally unwarranted)
- Understanding the time it takes for reforms to occur, “it’s like running a marathon; you try to sprint, but it’s hard.”
- Patience, and “stubbornness” are key parts of the process because it takes a long time and many have a tendency to get discouraged.
- Utility of hiring an administrator or spokesperson to do the negotiations; it was less confrontational than when the group itself spoke out because she was at more of a distance from the issue
- Reducing ties and dependence on government for subsidies and regulation is key to innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability
- The consumer has to educate the farmer (and ultimately those who make regulations)
- Importance of “just starting. Who was going to represent us? We just had to get a bunch of people stand and hopefully not lose their shirts.”

Example 5. Policy Pathway to Social Aid for Persons Living with HIV/AIDS
Interview with Michelle Proctor-Simms, NS Advisory Commission on AIDS
May 4, 2012

Problem: Lack of social aid providing income security for individuals with HIV/AIDS

Desired Policy Outcome: Development of stronger policies providing income security for persons living with HIV/AIDS

Initiative Summary: Established in 1989, the NS Advisory Commission on AIDS is an arm's length agency of the provincial government that advises the government on HIV/AIDS and its impact on Nova Scotians. Since 2003, the Commission has coordinated the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Nova Scotia's Strategy on HIV/AIDS. The Commission serves as a liaison between community-based organizations and people living with HIV/AIDS, and government for discussion and collaborative action on HIV/AIDS and related issues. Using a population health and social inclusion approach, the Commission has been able to engage stakeholders to address the recommendations actions in the Strategy including policies that will help reduce risk of HIV infection, reduce stigma, and provide those living with HIV/AIDS with optimal care, treatment, and support services. Given their unique role and position between government and civil society, the Commission focuses more on engaging with stakeholders already affected by or engaged in a specific policy issue.

Challenges to this work has generally stemmed from HIV/AIDS and related stigmas (e.g. homophobia), lack of visibility of HIV/AIDS as an issue, lack of meaningful action to address factors (e.g., housing, food security, mental health, addictions) that increase vulnerability and marginalize those most at-risk, and misinformation relating to HIV/AIDS. While it has been slow, there has been progress in increasing access to services in some areas of the province.. Awareness campaigns, engaging stakeholders in key initiatives (e.g., HIV testing, income security), linking the Strategy to relevant community and government initiatives and contributing to research have been the base of their activities while waiting for the "perfect storm" of momentum between changes in framing/discourse, increased resources, the right networking opportunities, and time to see their efforts follow through. It has been acknowledged that most issues dealing with marginalized groups often take longer to reform as early stages of policy reform processes require dismantling old mindsets and labels.

Forces in support of policy change:

- Government
 - Members of certain Provincial Departments
- Community groups
- Service Providers
- Persons living with HIV/AIDS and supportive civil society members
- HIV/AIDS awareness advocacy groups and other NGOs
- Research groups targeted to specific issue topics

Supporting Reports, Outreach, Advocacy:

- Meetings with key provincial departments
- Meetings with HIV/AIDS and community groups
- Partnering with "broader groups" for specific issues (eg. CURA on food security component of policy reforms)
- Research

Forces against or neutral:

- No specific opposition because the process was fairly internal and discussions were not made known to the public, though it was mentioned that in any policy process "there will always be people who are resistant"

- Stronger political opposition to “touchier” subjects (eg. clean needle exchanges) due to failure of acknowledging that certain things happen anyway but that there is a safer/healthier way of allowing them to happen

Social and Economic Forces contributing to policy change:

- “Changes in mindset are often what cause the most motivation and change in any context.”
- There is a seemingly random “magic moment” in which the “perfect storm” of momentum gathers between key players, government actors, and changes in mindset that allow for changes to happen and follow through (this can occur relatively quickly or very slowly depending on the issue/time/place)

Other Key Lessons Learned

- Patience and humor, recognizing that policy reform processes can take a long time and requires “continuous effort”
- Know your issue well (do your research, have strong supporting ideas, initiatives, and questions)
- Identify key stakeholders early on in the process and be in constant communication
- Know the right people in the decision making process and have good relationships
- Always be looking for new opportunities for your issue to be presented or under which the issue can be reframed
- Importance of framing issue to make it relatable/relevant to the people enacting the change (find out how it can relate or fit into existing policies or frameworks)
- Have a strong support base before you bring an issue to the table, the more your idea will be heard
- If advocating through the media, make sure it does not backfire on you (that the press will be negative)

Example 6. Policy Pathway to Increasing Income Assistance Rates in Nova Scotia

Interview with Lynn Langille , Co-lead of the ACT for CFS Policy Working Group
and Patty Williams, co-lead of the ACT for CFS Project
September 21, 2012

Problem: Food insecurity and income inadequacy within certain groups in Nova Scotia

Desired Policy Outcome: Increasing income assistance rates in Nova Scotia

Initiative Summary:

Under the framework of food security, Dr. Patricia Williams, co-lead of Acting Change Together for Community Food Security (ACT for CFS), and Lynn Langille, co-lead of ACT for CFS's Policy Working Group, have been working to increasing income assistance rates for low income groups in Nova Scotia since the early 2000s to address food insecurity. Much of their research has involved work on food costing, and collecting data and evidence to show the inadequacy of assistance in Nova Scotia.

Vital to this work has been the use of collaborative and participatory research methods to “co-create” solutions for change and allow all “partners to feel that they can play an active role in improving things” (Williams). The project has engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders and multiple levels (national, provincial, municipal) to gain the broadest and most inclusive understanding of the issue possible. The goal was to reduce the boundaries between government, researchers, and civil society as much as possible to work towards common language, theories, and solutions. Key organisations and government actors serve as the main “mouthpieces” to mobilize awareness and knowledge around food security and income assistance to build a critical mass of interest. As researchers and advocates, a participatory model to collect data has allowed for the creation of a very credible body of evidence to support them. Involving groups directly affected by the policies in question has also allowed ACT for CFS to come up with feasible real-world suggestions for policy change. To avoid misunderstandings and alienation of certain groups, the goal of mutual understanding amongst all players has been taken on as the best way to lead to lasting change. Through an open and collaborative process and active community and government engagement, both Williams and Langille believe that the issue of food security and income have gained a lot of ground in Nova Scotian discourse and within the common mindset, and as such will be able to gain traction within policy making circles.

Forces in support of policy change:

- Government
 - Federal Government Departments including the Public Health Agency of Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health, Health Canada
 - Members of certain Provincial Departments (Departments of Agriculture, Health and Wellness - formerly the Department of Health Promotion and Protection, Community Services, Employment Support and Income Assistance, and Community Services)
 - NS Legal Aid
- Research Groups (Provincial Participatory Food Costing Project, Participatory Action Research and Training Centre, Mt. St. Vincent University, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives)
- Nova Scotia Food Security Network
- Nova Scotia Nutrition Council
- Family Resource Centre and Projects in NS funded by the Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) and Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP)
- Community Organizations (Women's Resources Centres, Communities Advocates Network, Nova Scotia Poverty Reduction Strategy Coalition)
- Industry and Businesses, namely grocery stores across the province helping with data collection for research

Supporting Reports, Outreach, Advocacy:

- Meetings with key federal, provincial departments, and community organizations

- Participatory and Academic Research (involving academic researchers, community activists and case communities)
- Media releases
- Presentations and workshops with partners, policy advisory councils, communities, and government officials

Forces against or neutral:

- No direct opposition but misunderstanding and unintentional alienation of certain groups. (For example, because the project dealt with “income inadequacy,” some producers did not believe the work applied to them or that “accessible food” might mean lowering prices and threaten their income.)
- Some political opposition or lack of awareness on poverty-related subjects (eg. realities low income families face in trying to purchase health foods), failure of acknowledging reality of low income groups on the ground makes it difficult to discuss appropriate strategies to take when government workers and politicians cannot relate or because they “don’t like to see the hardship, it’s not comfortable for them” (Langille).
- From 1993-1997, the increased deficit and debt faced by the Nova Scotia government resulted in cuts in health care, education, and welfare that did not help the cause

Social and Economic Forces contributing to policy change:

- “Changes in mindset are often what cause the most motivation and change in any context.”
- More recently, the NDP gaining a majority in the NS government created a lot of expectation that policy change would be easier to occur, but expectations have not yet been met by the new government though there is still the belief that this government holds “a lot of potential, [and] that it is the best shot,” they have gotten so far.
- Though a negative impact on government capacities, the economic recession from 2008 tended to raise awareness on the need for income assistance, and made the issue more visible

Other Key Lessons Learned

- Building and maintaining good relationships with as broad a variety of stakeholders is key
- “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket;” always seek to broaden the frames of reference your issue can be looked through, it will resonated with more people and increases the ways your issue can be brought to the table
- Importance of framing issue to make it relatable/relevant to the greatest number of people
- Help people see that their issues and all levels of policy-making are connected; creating these connections allow groups to gain greater perspective on their work, and helps keep the momentum going from many different angles
- Do not blame or point fingers at anyone specific at any level of the system; “it’s a societal problem and we need to work together to figure things out.”
- Do not make assumptions of where people are coming from
- Do not get discouraged; one action will probably not single-handedly change things because it does take multiple actions and multiple efforts to change things. It is better to “take a deep breath and look at the landscape and think about how else

Appendix 2: Stakeholder Analysis & Policy Mapping Examples and Tools

Returning to the questions addressed in section 3.0, a political economy framework suggests that in addition to a conventional stakeholder analysis and policy map, we also seek to address the following questions:

On ideas:

What ideas are being circulated in policy circles and media? Where have they come from and whose interests do they appear to serve first and foremost? What power do they have in shaping particular debates and policy outcomes? What ideas are the replacing or pushing aside?

On organizations:

What organizations support particular policy options? What is their capacity (financial, social, etc.) to shape policy? Who are their allies? Who opposes them? What are the mandates and goals of institutions that appear to have a role in establishing policies related to food? How are they structured, and how do these structures affect their ability to make decisions, be influenced by outside groups, etc.? How do these institutions overlap with one another in their mandates and goals?

On economic relations:

What are the economic relations that underpin particular policy directions? Which actors have the greatest economic clout, and what are their interests in relation to food, agriculture and fisheries policies? How do larger trends in the economy affect the possibilities for advancing specific kinds of food policy?

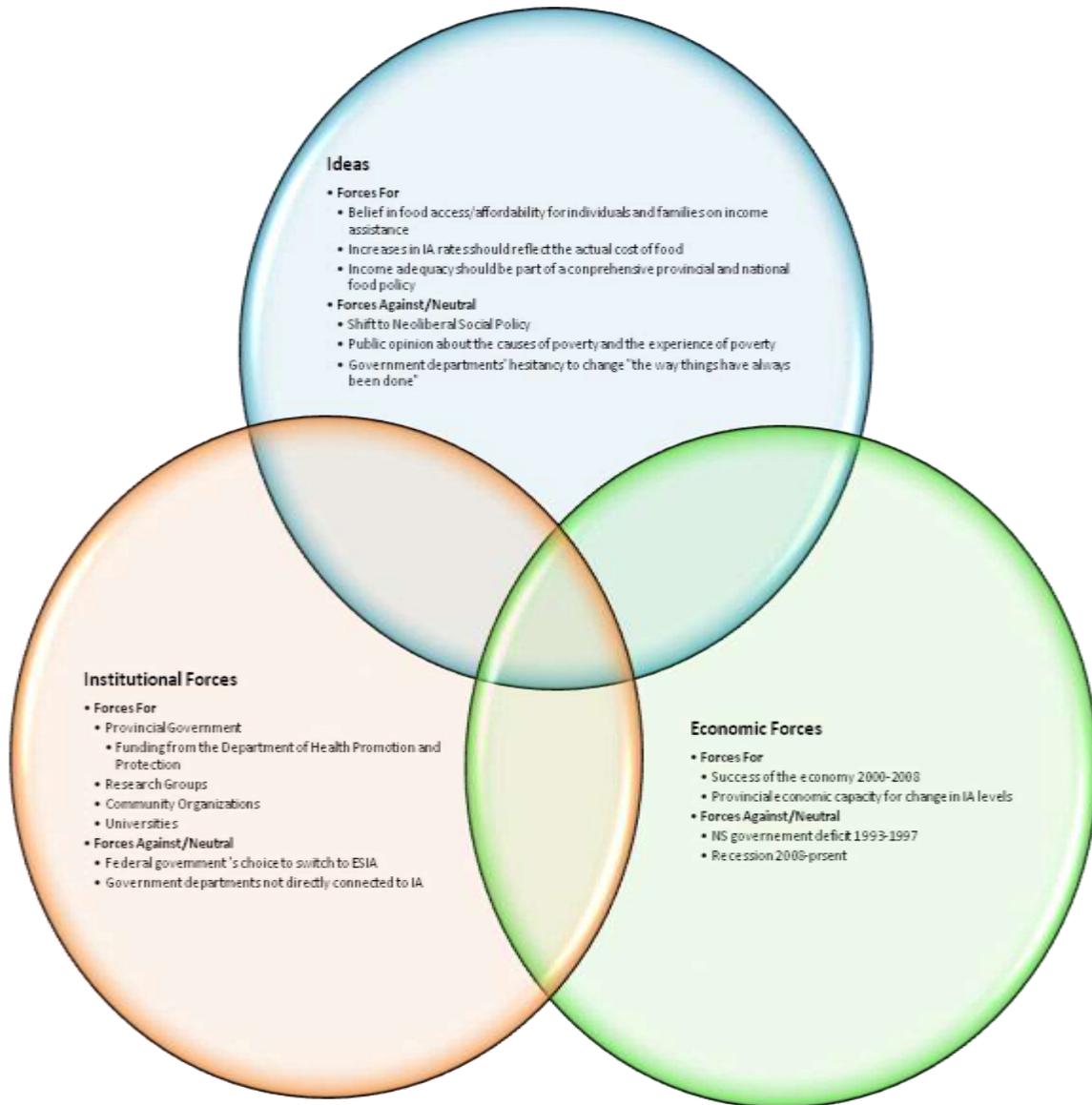
For more information, examples of policy mapping can be found at:

- Jean-Paul Vanderlinden’s “The SPICSA Stakeholder-Policy Mapping Users’ Manual,” as part of the Science Policy Integration for Coastal Systems Assessment Project in December 2010, available at: http://www.coastal-saf.eu/design-step/support/Stakeholder_Policy_Mapping_Users_Manual.pdf
- Kathleen Sifer et al’s “Using Policy Mapping and Analytics to Understand Complex Policy Environments and Improve Decision-Making,” published by Booz Allen Hamilton in March 2011, available at: http://www.boozallen.com/media/file/Policy_Mapping.pdf
- NIFU STEP’s “Service Innovation Policy Mapping Template,” as part of the SSA Inno-Net Project, available at: www.proinno-europe.eu/doc/norway.pdf

For examples of participatory policy mapping, please refer to:

- Jacques Chevalier and Daniel Buckles in their SAS2 book, available at <http://www.sas2.net/>
- Deb Barndt’s “Naming the Moment” process created as part of the Moment Project from the Jesuit Centre in Toronto in the 1990s, available at http://www.catalystcentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/Naming_the_Moment_Manual.pdf.
- Lorena Patiño’s “Report on Participatory Mapping Sessions” to facilitate the adaptation of farming communities to potential impacts of future climate change on water, developed through the University of Regina’s Institutional Adaptation to Climate Change Project in 2008, available at <http://www.parc.ca/mcri/pdfs/papers/iacc062.pdf>

Appendix 2.1
Visual Example of a PE Approach to Policy Mapping (data from Example 6)



How Ideas, Organizational and Economic Forces Affect the Desired Policy Outcomes

Appendix 2.2

Example on Drawing a Table using a PE Approach for stakeholder and policy mapping (data from Example 6)

		FORCES FOR	FORCES NEUTRAL/AGAINST
IDEAS		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief in food access/affordability for individuals and families on income assistance • Increases in IA rates should reflect the actual cost of food • Income adequacy should be part of a comprehensive provincial and national food policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift to Neoliberal Social Policy • Public opinion about the causes of poverty and the experience of poverty • Government departments hesitancy to changes the ways “things have always been done”
ORGANIZATIONAL FORCES	RESEARCH GROUPS & NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial Participatory Food Costing Project • Nova Scotia Food Security Network • Participatory Action Research and Training Centre, MSVU • Family Resource Centre and Projects in NS funded by the Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) and Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) • Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives • Women’s Resources Centres • Community Advocates Network • Nova Scotia Poverty Reduction Strategy Coalition • NS Nutrition Council 	

	PROV. GOV.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NS Department of Community Services (Employment Support and Income Assistance) • NS Department of Health Promotion and Protection • Poverty Reduction Strategy • NS Department of Community Services • NS Legal Aid • Department of Agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Department's not directly related to IA
	FED. GOV.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health Agency of Canada • First Nations and Inuit Health • Health Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal government's switch to ESIA
ECONOMIC FORCES	INDUSTRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grocery Stores across the province (for data collection for research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
	OVERALL ECONOMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive growth of the economy beginning in late 1990s • 2001 province had second highest provincial GDP growth in Canada • Recession of 2008-2010 helped increase awareness of issue (but hindered application) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1993-1997 NS government faced increased deficit and debt, resulting in cuts to health care, education, and welfare • Recession 2008-2010