

*MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY*

**Third Wave, Third Sector: Comparative provincial governance of third sector relations**

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## Introduction

As in most countries, Canada's relationship between the state and the third sector is as old as the emergence of institutionalized governance. Since the early 1600s third sector organizations have worked side-by-side with governments at all levels, often identifying and providing services and supports governments were either unable or unwilling to provide (Elson, 2011b). Faith organizations set up hospitals, schools, and social services with nominal state support while immigrant groups self-organized support groups to adapt to their new country (Bélanger, 2000; Lautenschlager, 1992; Valverde, 1995). Generally, provinces were reluctant to intervene in social issues, except in emergencies, leaving the heavy lifting to parishes and municipalities (Fingard, 1989) .

This reluctance carried over to Confederation, resulting in provincial control over health, welfare, and education, including hospitals, charities and asylums in the *Constitution Act, 1867* (Guest, 1997; Privy Council Office, 2010). Yet in 1930 when charities were first recognized by statute, it was the federal government's revenue department, not the provinces, that took charge (Elson, 2011b). As a result, with recent exceptions, it has been the federal government, through their interest in national unity, social policies, multiculturalism, heritage and regulation of the Income Tax Act, which has dominated policy discourse on third sector-government relations in Canada.

In the 1970s a first wave of sector-wide consultations took place in several countries, including Canada, comprised of formal reviews of the role and functions of voluntary organizations. Foremost among these national commissions were the National Advisory Council on Voluntary Action in Canada (1977), the Wolfenden Committee in England (1978), and the Filer Commission in the United States (1976) (Van Til, 2000). Among many other observations, the reports pointed to a serious lack of detailed statistical information about the size and scope of the voluntary sector. These commissions also led to the first recognition of the very existence of a third sector and initial forays into bilateral relations (Elson, 2011b). However, many of the identified governance, funding, policy, and capacity issues were also left unresolved, only to resurface in the mid 1990s.

A second wave of sectoral consultation processes started in Canada in the mid 1990s with the formation of the sector-led Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR)<sup>1</sup> in 1995, followed by Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector (1998-9), the federal Voluntary Sector Task Force (1999), and the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) (2000-2005) (Lindquist, 2008; Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector, 1998; Social Development Canada, 2004). An independent, second wave consultation process also occurred in Québec about the same time for very different reasons. In the province of Québec, the *March*

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<sup>1</sup> The twelve national organizations were Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, Canadian Conference of the Arts, Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Canadian Council on Social Development, Canadian Environmental Network, Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, Community Foundations of Canada, Health Charities Council of Canada, the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations, United Way of Canada/Centraide Canada, and Volunteer Canada (Voluntary Sector Roundtable, 1998).

*for Bread and Roses* in 1995 by tens of thousands of women demanded government action against high rates of poverty and unemployment. This march for social and economic justice led to numerous policy changes and, over time, to the formation of the Chantier de l'économie sociale and the Réseau québécois de l'action communautaire autonome (Chantier de l'économie sociale, 2010; Elson & Rogers, 2010; Réseau québécois de l'action communautaire autonome, 2008).

Events and processes surrounding the VSI and its impact on the federal government have been the focus of substantial and in-depth policy analysis (Brock, 2005, 2010; Elson, 2011b, 2012; Good, 2003; Phillips, 2003; Phillips & Levasseur, 2005). This paper will focus on the third wave of sectoral consultation processes and institutional forms that have been developing at the sub-national level in Canada during and following the Voluntary Sector Initiative (Elson, 2012). The specific question this paper seeks to address is how provincial governments are organizing themselves to address the third sector file.

The National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations, a key Voluntary Sector Initiative program, gave both a comprehensive picture at a national and provincial level of the scope, composition and economic size of the voluntary sector in Canada (M.H. Hall, et al., 2003). As third sector organizations gained an appreciation for the sector of which they were a part, the survey also opened the eyes of senior bureaucrats and politicians at the provincial level. While the provinces were well aware of the relationship they had with the non-profit sector on a ministry-by-ministry basis; this was the first time a statistical profile of their collective relationship was revealed. The sheer size and scope of the third sector in Canada, where seventy-five percent of nonprofits are engaged in some form of service delivery, profiled in the National Survey of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, caught the attention of provincial politicians and third sector leaders alike (M. H. Hall, et al., 2005).

The province of British Columbia, for example, saw the extent to which the voluntary sector was the primary vehicle for the delivery of public services and the millions of dollars invested by the province to deliver human services (Round Table on Government and Non Profit Relations in British Columbia, 2007; interview comment, 2009). The Premier of Saskatchewan specifically noted the national survey in his rationale for the development of his Premier's Council (Hamilton & Mann, 2006). This realization brought the importance of acknowledging and strengthening this relationship to the fore and provided a point of departure for a 'mutual discussion of issues' at senior levels within the provincial bureaucracy.

This was a realization that took place, to varying degrees, across most provinces. In some provinces this statistical profile was carried by lead voluntary sector agencies to engage in a new level of policy dialogue with their provincial government counterparts, while in other provinces it was the government who carried agenda for increased dialogue forward to the voluntary sector (Elson, 2011a) .

In Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, the Canadian Volunteerism Initiative, another VSI product, appears to have had a catalytic effect. The Canada Volunteerism Initiative provided the means for community groups to come together in a wide variety of ways for purposes generally or specifically connected to volunteering (Nova Scotia CVI Network, 2006). Regardless, both the voluntary sector and government in this province have moved toward a more comprehensive policy agenda, based on a signed Collaboration Agreement.

Substantive changes at the provincial level started to emerge. A cautionary note must be sounded. Not all provinces have moved to establish a structured policy forum, and most are still

in the developmental stages of their policy relationship, thus these observations must be considered preliminary. Of Canada's ten provinces, nine are now engaged in a sustained voluntary sector-government relations policy forum (Campbell & Speevak Sladowski, 2009; Carter & Speevak Sladowski, 2008; Elson, 2010).

Some provinces were catalyzed into initiating a service provision alignment policy strategy to foster more productive relations where substantial provincial resources were being allocated. In other provinces a re-aligned and re-energized voluntary sector-government relationship was a manifestation of a provincial commitment to an "all-of-government" poverty reduction or community economic development policy strategy (e.g., Manitoba, New Brunswick), two areas where a significant proportion of voluntary sector organizations are active. In other provinces attempts are underway to engage the whole voluntary sector, independent of funding relationships (e.g. Ontario, Nova Scotia), in the desire to identify and build policy, administrative, and service delivery capacity of the voluntary sector.

Like the changes in government at the federal level, most recently the election of a majority conservative government, provincial voluntary sector and government representatives wait with baited breath to deal with the consequence of a potential change of government. Across provinces studied to date, most policy forums have been able to adjust to changes in government, both in lead departments and political parties, which speak well for the desire by both governments and the sector to build a sustained, long-term policy relationship.

### **Methodology**

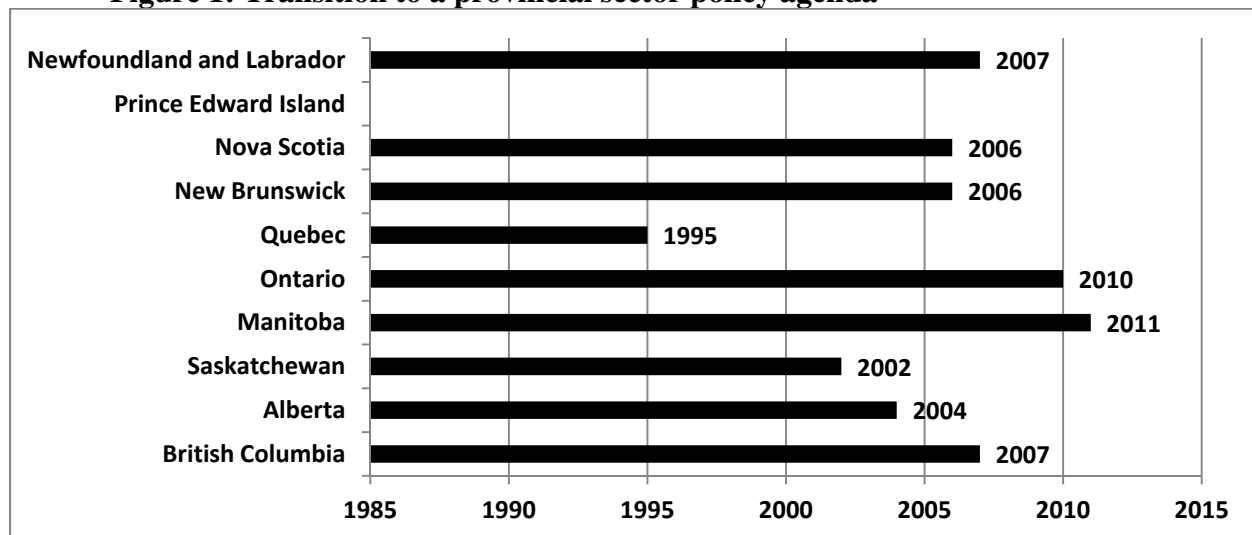
To address the question of the institutionalization I utilized a comparative case study methodology (George & Bennett, 2005). The relationship between Canadian provincial governments and their respective voluntary sectors has been systematically monitored by this author to identify institutional changes that have occurred between 1995 and 2013. This monitoring includes the retrieval, documentation, and analysis of reports; committee structures; policy, program and funding announcements; web site changes; media reports; and personal interviews. This documentation was used to create a timeline for each province, divided by key provincial and federal developments on one side of the timeline and voluntary sector developments on the other (Elson, 2011a, p. 140). Interviews of matched voluntary sector representatives and provincial government officials took place in 2009, 2011 and with government representatives in 2013. Interviews included government representatives in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. At the same time, changes in provincial political leadership, provincial elections, and relevant provincial ministry configurations have been noted.

The operational definition of the third sector for this study is a functional-structural one: "the structural configuration of multiple voluntary sub-sectors designed to engage in systematic policy dialogue with their provincial government counterpart(s)". Bilateral policy discussions between individual ministries and their voluntary sector constituency in areas such as human services, arts, or recreation, for example, were not included. Multiple sub-sector representative organizations had to be involved as did multiple ministries, unless one ministry acted as a 'gatekeeper' for the government as a whole. The results will examine the trends in these developments across multiple provinces rather than examining each province on a case-by-case basis.

## Findings

Between 2004 and 2010, eight of Canada's ten provinces initiated an agenda to address issues associated with the third sector. As illustrated in Figure 1, six of ten provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia) initiated a voluntary sector-provincial government policy agenda following the completion of the VSI. Two provinces, Saskatchewan and Alberta, initiated their own policy initiative while the VSI was still underway. In 2002 Saskatchewan's Premier Lorne Calvert launched a Premier's Voluntary Sector Initiative, co-chaired by the Legislative Secretary to the Premier and a voluntary sector leader (Hamilton & Mann, 2006). In 2004, a group of leading Voluntary Sector organizations in Alberta initiated a "Leaders Group" that progressed over time to form the Alberta Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Initiative (ANVSI) (van Kooy, 2008), again co-chaired by representatives from the provincial government and voluntary sector. Prince Edward Island is the only province that has yet to open an agenda window for provincial government-voluntary sector policy dialogue, and there have been few attempts by voluntary sector organizations in that province to push for one.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1: Transition to a provincial sector policy agenda**



In 2001, with the exception of Quebec<sup>3</sup>, there was no articulated policy agenda for the collective voluntary sector in any province. By 2011, seven of ten provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador) have an affiliated minister or deputy minister responsible for the relationship of the provincial

<sup>2</sup> The Community Foundation of Prince Edward Island recently issued a "Building on the Capacity of PEI's Third Sector" report, with consultations with both the government and the voluntary sector are pending (Community Foundation of PEI, 2011). This report also directly refers to statistics from the 2005 National Survey on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations.

<sup>3</sup> There was a Minister for the Voluntary Sector in British Columbia between 1999 and 2001, but this position was terminated, as were many of their sector-focused initiatives when the New Democratic Party was defeated by the provincial Liberals in 2001.

government with their voluntary sector, and two other provinces (Saskatchewan<sup>4</sup> and New Brunswick) currently have significant bilateral policy forums with the community human service segment of the voluntary sector. Saskatchewan launched a Saskatchewan Network of Nonprofit Organization in the fall of 2012 (Elson, 2011a; personal communication, 2012). Like any initiative that operates within the context of policy cycles, and Saskatchewan is a case in point, the impetus for policy dialogue was dropped by the provincial government; only to be picked up after a hiatus by nonprofit sector leaders.

When the first National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations was released in 1995, there was a new appreciation by both provincial governments and their respective voluntary sector constituencies that this was a substantial relationship that could be measured not only in policy proposals, services rendered, and volunteer efforts, but also in terms of employment and economic growth.

British Columbia for example, saw the extent to which the voluntary sector was the primary vehicle for the delivery of public services and the billions of dollars invested by the province for this service (Round Table on Government and Non Profit Relations in British Columbia, 2007; interview subject, 2009). This realization brought the importance of acknowledging and strengthening this relationship to the fore. This was a realization that took place, to varying degrees, across many provinces (see Table 1).

The Canada Volunteerism Initiative, another component of the VSI, provided the means for many community groups across Canada to meet and identify common issues (Nova Scotia CVI Network, 2006). The Canada Volunteerism Initiative was a five-year federal initiative introduced in 2001 to encourage Canadians to participate in voluntary organizations; improve the capacity of organizations to benefit from the contribution of volunteers; and enhance the experience of volunteering.

In some cases, groups such as the Cape Breton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations were formed as a consequence of this VSI initiative (King & MacIntyre, 2005). In Manitoba, the VSI program, Sector Involvement in Policy Development (SIDP), provided the means for the Manitoba Voluntary Sector Initiative to conduct some specific research on the nonprofit sector in the province, host a multi-sector policy summit and launch a web site (Carter & Speevak Sladowski, 2008). This initiative subsequently led to the formation of the Manitoba Federation of Non-Profit Organizations.

A major policy issue from the third sectors' perspective is a lack of capacity to deliver needed services in communities. The same issue from the government's perspective was a lack of alignment of their support for this capacity with their own human service policy goals. Multiple ministries with different funding timelines and different reporting schedules and methods created unnecessary work and transaction costs for the government and the voluntary sector. Table 2 outlines the major third sector policy focus identified by each province. There are certainly others not included here, but resources and structural alignments have clearly invested in the identified problems, particularly with respect to the delivery of human services.

**Table 1: Provincial Third Sector Policy Issues**

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<sup>4</sup> Saskatchewan also has a significant bilateral relationship with their sport, culture and recreation community as these three sub-sectors are collectively manage the provincial lottery scheme.

Province	Third Sector Policy Issue
British Columbia	Support capacity to deliver human services
Alberta	Improve sectoral relations and generic capacity
Saskatchewan	Support capacity to deliver human services
Manitoba	Support sectoral capacity (esp. human resources, labour market)
Ontario	Improve sectoral relations and generic capacity
Québec	Economic and social inclusion and integration
New Brunswick	Support economic and social inclusion
Nova Scotia	Support sectoral relations and generic capacity
Prince Edward Island	
Newfoundland and Labrador	Support sectoral relations and generic capacity

In some provinces this statistical profile was carried by lead voluntary sector agencies to engage in a new level of policy dialogue with their provincial government counterparts (Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec). In other provinces it was the government who carried forward the agenda for increased dialogue with the voluntary sector (Saskatchewan, New Brunswick); or there was a mutual recognition that started with informal meetings and grew to a collaborative or mutually defined agenda (British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador).

### Policy Arenas

How then, are provincial governments organizing themselves internally to address the third sector file?

In the third sector as a whole policy entrepreneurial intermediary organizations, in concert with large and/or representative umbrella groups play an important advocacy role. Examples of such organizations include the Community Sector Council in Newfoundland and Labrador; Phoenix Youth Programs and the Federation of Community Organizations in Nova Scotia; the Ontario Nonprofit Network; The Manitoba Federation of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations; and the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations in Alberta. These policy entrepreneurs, among others, (see Table 2), engage provincial governments, articulating the specific consequences of policies and verify or counter the credibility of various policy ideas.

**Table 2: Provincial Third Sector-Government Policy Voices**

Province	Policy Voice	Type
British Columbia	Multiple non-formal clusters of voices (e.g. Board Voice)	Sector partnerships
Alberta	Multiple non-formal clusters of voices (e.g. CCVO)	Sector partnerships
Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan Network of Nonprofit Organizations (SNNO)	Sector voice
Manitoba	Manitoba Federation of Non-Profit Organizations (NFNPO)	Sector voice
Ontario	Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN)	Sector voice
Quebec	Chantier de l'économie sociale / Réseau québécois de l'action communautaire autonome	Sector voice
New Brunswick	Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation	Advisory role
Nova Scotia	Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia	Sector voice
Prince Edward Island	n/a	n/a

Newfoundland and Labrador	Community Priorities Implementation Plan (2010 - )	Advisory role
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There are a number of ways in which the policy ideas have been pre-tested at a provincial level, the most common being regional roundtables. British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador each conducted their own survey or organized regional and local dialogues with voluntary sector organizations. In Quebec the two major sector intermediaries, Le Chantier de l'économie sociale and Le Réseau québécois de l'action communautaire autonome, have both developed an association infrastructure to lead policy deliberations on behalf of their respective constituencies since the late 1990s. Ontario has followed a similar path with the creation of the Ontario Nonprofit Network (Eakin, 2006; Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2010).

In the absence of formal representative organizations, lead sector organizations or established leaders came together as policy entrepreneurs, to use Kingdon's term, to initiate a common issue or 'problem' discussion (Kingdon, 1995) (see Table 3) (e.g. British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador). This initial step, encouraged by positive signals within the provincial government, was usually followed by a series of consultations, both within and between the voluntary sector and government. In several provinces this in turn led to a signed mutual agreement, policy statement; followed by a mechanism or policy structure to continue to discuss the identified issues on an on-going basis. Common elements of such mutual agreements included a vision statement, values and guiding principles, and relational-operational principles. Thus the agreements, where they were signed (e.g. British Columbia, Alberta, Nova Scotia) may be viewed as 'rules of engagement' rather than identifying specific policy objectives with implementation strategies.

Conducting regional discussions culminating in provincial "summits" has been another theme across provinces where there is a conspicuous absence of strong and inclusive apex organizations to speak on behalf of the sector. This collaborative voluntary sector-provincial government process built the legitimacy and political capital of the process, and provided both the provincial governments and voluntary sector leaders with a gauge of the scope and depth of issues that would need to be addressed.

Newfoundland and Labrador, for example, completed a series of regional meetings in 2010 and a provincial "Community Priorities Summit" led by the provincial government's Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat. British Columbia also catalyzed their first provincial summit in 2008 by holding a series of regional forums, and the Government Nonprofit Sector Initiative now hosts a provincial summit on an annual basis. New Brunswick, through their Community Non-Profit Organizations Secretariat, held a series of regional conferences to discuss how to move forward on the *Blueprint for Action*, the result of an earlier consultation process which culminated with the appointment of a Minister and deputy minister responsible for Community Non-Profit Organizations (Premier's Community Non-Profit Task Force, 2007).<sup>5</sup> This initiative has since been eclipsed in New Brunswick by their economic and social inclusion agenda.

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<sup>5</sup> Note that this initiative did not survive a provincial election in 2010 that saw the election of a majority conservative government.



In British Columbia, a core group of senior provincial bureaucrats and voluntary sector leaders met to identify issues and assess their feasibility prior to presenting the idea of a collective initiative to their respective constituencies (Lindquist, 2008). While not always documented, interview respondents (2011, 2013) have reported similar scenarios in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Given the on-going and collaborative relationship that most lead provincial associations have with their provincial counterparts, one may assume that informal ‘soundings’ both across and within the sector and provincial government preceded most formal initiatives.

As it turned out, most provinces that went in this direction decided to establish some form of collaborative policy forum or policy ‘think tank’ as one respondent described it. Only in British Columbia are the costs of such a configuration equally borne by the two sectors. In all other provinces the provincial government has allocated resources to sponsor the policy forum. The focus of the policy forums also varies, as noted in Table 3. The inter-sectoral policy forum for government and voluntary sector participation is primarily human service focused in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick. In other provinces, the representation in such forums, where they exist, are broader and work to address cross-sectoral issues such as capacity building, insurance, funding, and volunteering.

The Government Non-Profit Initiative in BC, for example, have initiated a Full Cost Financial Model Working Group and a joint *Understanding & Responding to Government Procurement Processes Course* for both sector organizations and government employees to participate in together (Wightman & Siebe, 2011).

In British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador there is either a joint or collaborative policy forum or an advisory committee in place. In Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia the sector has developed its own policy forum in the form of a broad sector network or federation.

### **Inter-sectoral policy structures**

The inter-sectoral representational forums vary considerably in size and are generally non-formal in nature (see Table 4). In British Columbia, for example, the Government Non-Profit Partnership Initiative (GNPI) is seen as a policy ‘think tank’ rather than a formal forum for policy formulation. That is not to say that policy issues do not find their way to and from government policy decision makers, it is just that the connection is non-formal.

Participation on provincial inter-sectoral representational forums also varies considerably. Where there are representative umbrella organizations, representatives are internally designated. In the case of joint committees, voluntary sector members are nominated by leaders in the field or appointed by a governing steering committee or government minister. Voluntary sector representation doesn’t have a direct bureaucratic counterpart, but most representatives are Executive Directors or CEOs of umbrella or provincial voluntary organizations.

In British Columbia, 97 government and voluntary sector representatives sit on five sub-committees and an additional 17 sit on a Leadership Council comprised primarily of senior sectoral representatives and government deputy ministers. The Alberta Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Initiative is coordinated by a 22 person committee with equal representation from government departments and the voluntary sector. In Newfoundland and Labrador nine sectoral

and government representatives comprise a non-formal inter-sectoral accountability team and in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia a representative advisory committee has been established.<sup>6</sup>

Where joint sectoral partnerships like BC's Government Non-Profit Initiative exist, there are typically co-chairs representing government and the voluntary sector and an equal number of representatives from government and the voluntary sector on sub-committees. Such voluntary sector appointments may or may not require approval from the provincial government. Currently this is the case in Alberta, but not in BC. Where there is a sector voice model, representation is determined or negotiated on an issue-by-issue basis. Where the sector plays an advisory role, there is usually a consultation process leading to the announcement of appointments, but ultimately, the government determines the size and composition of these committees.

Advisory or standing bilateral policy forums have not been established in all provinces. In Ontario and Quebec, where the voluntary sector has developed an independent voice and substantial policy capacity, there is no standing forum, but active and dedicated policy tables are certainly in place.

### *Policy Alignment*

Several provinces, including Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador have a broad poverty reduction strategy (PovNet, 2008), and the relationship with the voluntary sector is connected to this broader socio-economic policy. British Columbia has configured its current relationship with the sector around improving the capacity to deliver human services, whereas in New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, this relationship is embedded in the functional structure of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation and the Social Services ministry respectively (Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, 2011; Human Services Integration Forum, 2010; Ministry of Housing and Social Development, 2009).

Beyond social and economic inclusion, Quebec is poised to recognize the social economy as a foundational dimension of the whole provincial economy, partners with the public and private economies. This recognition, reflected in a recently introduced Social Economy Law, will integrate the social economy into every facet of provincial government policy and programs, including procurement, labour, services, and the newly proposed Economic Development Bank (M. Sylvain Gaudreault, 2013), personal communication, April, 2013).

Another example of policy alignment has developed around labour market issues. Massive retirements across all sectors of the economy have started to occur, and general completion for workers in the public and private sectors, have put pressure on the nonprofit sector to rethink traditional strategies and to examine their existing and future workforce requirement in great detail. This has been the case in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia.

### *Governance Structures*

Nine of ten provinces have an affiliated cabinet minister and a dedicated deputy minister. In British Columbia the Government Non-Profit Partnership Initiative (GNPI) operates at the

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<sup>6</sup> The status of these two advisory committees is in flux as structural changes in sector representation take place.

deputy ministerial level and in Ontario the Minister for Citizenship and Culture has taken the lead on initiating a discussion concerning voluntary sector-government relations. In Alberta, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador, an affiliated minister and dedicated deputy minister have been assigned the voluntary sector-government portfolio. The term ‘affiliated minister’ is used to reflect that all ministers to date simultaneously hold other portfolios of which voluntary sector-government relations is often a minor file. Nevertheless, it does signal a clear intention by these governments that voluntary sector-government relations are valued and are worthy of a voice at the cabinet table.

British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador have each established a secretariat within their provincial government. More recently, Manitoba and Nova Scotia have each established a nonprofit sector council, tied to labour force adjustment issues, and linked to a broader labour market sector council strategy. This latter configuration appears to have provided a platform on which broad nonprofit sector representation could take hold. Only in British Columbia is the cost of the secretariat shared with the voluntary sector. In all other cases where a dedicated secretariat has been established, the costs are born by the provincial government. In most cases a deputy minister is either associated or dedicated to the task of overseeing the secretariat. The actual structure of the secretariat and associated voluntary sector advisory committees varies from province to province. These structures range from ‘separate-but-equal’ representation to advisory and by provincial appointment only.

Government representation in these initiatives are generally more organized, resourced and institutionalized than the more non-formal voluntary sector,<sup>7</sup> although there is evidence that this may be changing.<sup>8</sup> Existing structures within government are used as a conduit for internal policy dialogue. For example, issues about voluntary sector-government relations are raised at standing deputy minister committee meetings (interview respondents, 2009, 2011). Government representatives in an inter-sectoral representational forum seldom meet independently, although informal discussions with secretariat staff, for example, are common. There is also variation in the bureaucratic level of representation from each department. It is common for these representatives to be senior bureaucrats, often at the Assistant Deputy Minister or Deputy Minister level. Because designated government representatives have reporting and representational responsibilities for their home department, together with formal reporting structures, a more formal institutional structure governs the representation from government.

## Policy and Governance Network Structures

I will turn to the recent social movement network structure typology developed by Willems and Jegers (2012) to analyze the third sector file governance structure within provincial governments. While applied to social movement network structures, this framework (see figure 2), is consistent with institutional theory, particularly the characteristics of formal and informal network structures. Institutions are “*building-blocks of social order*: they represent socially

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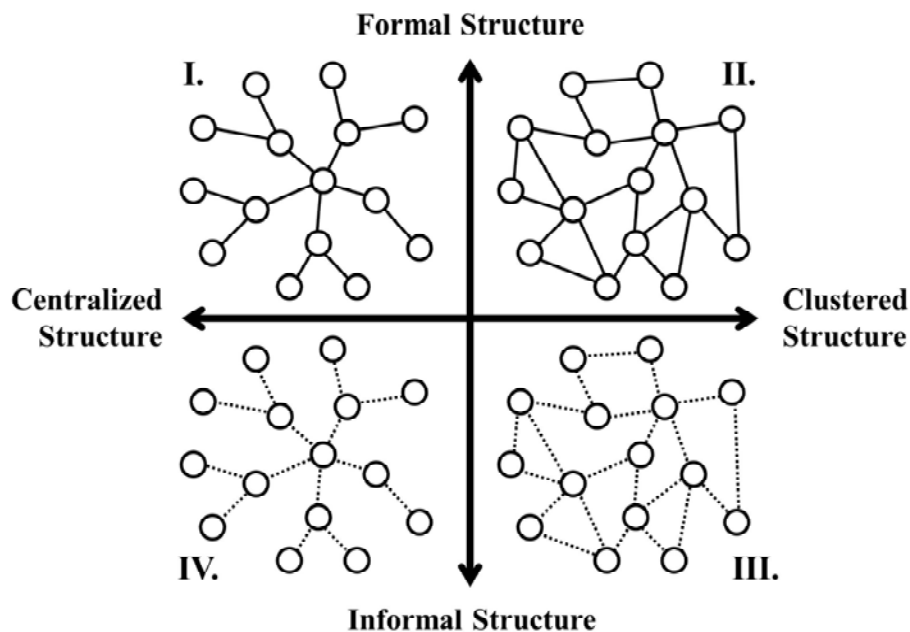
<sup>7</sup> By non-formal, I specifically mean transitory representational and reporting protocol which is non-transferable across time. For example, coalitions that collaboratively make a deputation on one issue, but do not formally transfer this experience or expertise to another issue.

<sup>8</sup> Provinces where there is a growing solidarity of representation are Manitoba, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. The solidarity of representation is well established in Quebec.

sanctioned, that is, collectively enforced expectations with respect to the behaviour of specific categories of actors or to the performance of certain activities” (Streeck & Thelen, 2005, p. 9).

Consistent with the work of Willems and Jegers, it is important to examine the reinforced expectations of behaviour or performance. Institutions involve mutual rights and obligations for policy actors and are a formalized presence in a political economy (Streeck & Thelen, 2005). These rights and obligations include sanctions for non-compliance and clear expectations for compliance, regardless of an actor’s volition. This institutional paradigm assumes a formal dynamic among policy actors. As has been demonstrated elsewhere, this is not always the case and there are many variations among informal, non-formal and formal institutional structures (Elson, 2011b). What Willems and Jagers introduce is a second dimension, namely that of centralized or clustered structures. This adds a locus of control variable within the formal or informal reporting dynamic; resulting in the four dimensions profiled in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Governance Network Structures (1)



**Source:** Willems, J., & Jegers, M. (2012). Social Movement Structures in Relation to Goals and Forms of Action: An Exploratory Model. *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research*. p. 72.

Formal, centralized structures (I) have a central actor with control over information/knowledge shared and/or the actions of others (e.g. the PMO). In a formal, clustered or lateral relationship (II), parties operate under formal agreements, yet the actors have equal power and status in the relationship (e.g. Cabinet or ADM committee). There is reciprocity in this relationship, and the relationship is based on a mutual exchange of information and knowledge. In an informal, clustered structure (III), rules, if any, are flexible, implicit, and unwritten. The content of the relationship is based on culture, habits and beliefs (e.g. internal patterns that emerge with a sustained party in power). In an informal, centralized structure (IV), the relationship may be based on an particular ideology or sense of “community” (e.g. community consultation) (Willems & Jegers, 2012). Willems and Jegers clearly note that while this framework is divided into quadrants, that the reality is much more of a continuum.

Where then, do internal governance structures within provincial governments fit within this framework? Figure 3 provides a preliminary schematic of this internal governance network structure within seven provincial governments.

### *British Columbia*

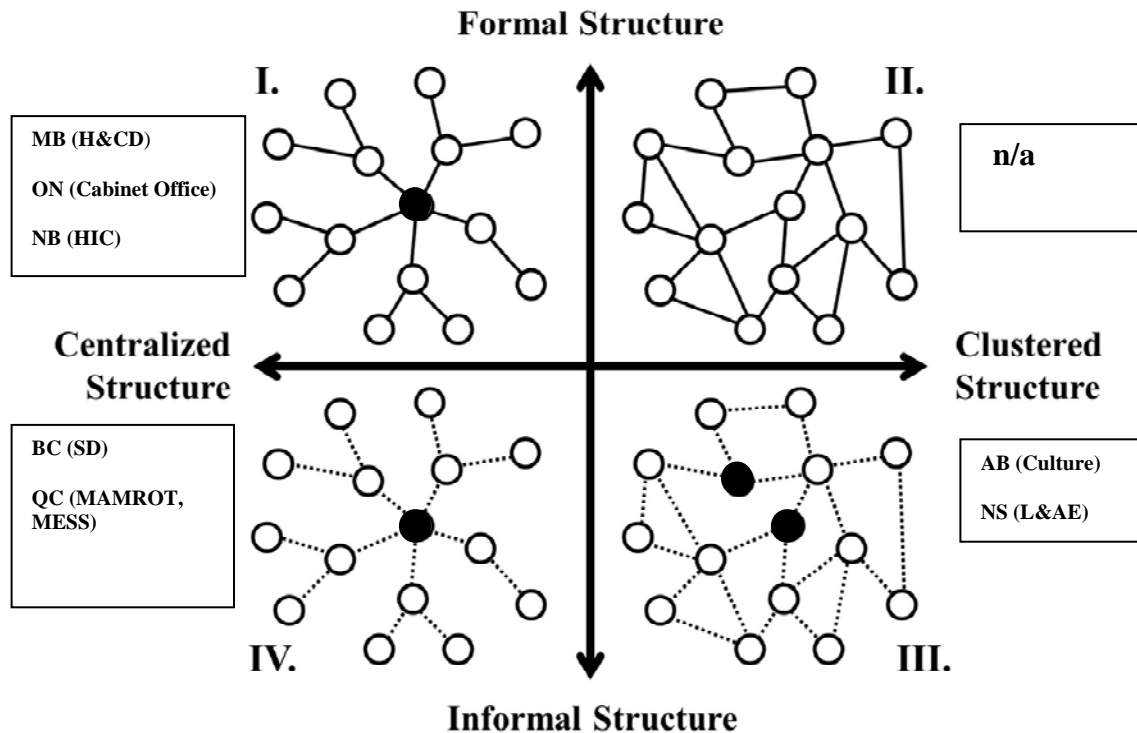
Moving from West to East, the Ministry of Social Development in BC has co-hosted the GNPI since its inception, operating the government side of the GNPI secretariat. The deputy minister of Social Development has acted as co-chair of the GNPI Leadership Council. While the GNPI is currently on hiatus,<sup>9</sup> it still serves as focus for nonprofit sector-government relations. Internally, there is an active yet informal consultative liaison between the Ministry of Social Development and other Ministries, through the Secretariat staff and the deputy minister. The investment by the Ministry of Social Development in the GNPI has established a level of nonprofit sector experience and expertise that is called on by, and reaches out to, other ministries; without replacing or usurping the specific business of these other ministries. This relationship appears to be built on credibility and trust, without any formal or informal power/authority over the other ministries. This puts the BC governance structure most closely aligned with Structure IV, centralized, yet informal (See figure 3).

### *Alberta*

In Alberta, the Alberta Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Initiative (ANVSI) has been shelved for similar reasons as in BC. There has been a significant change in political leadership and a massive internal re-organization into five policy pods. While a new structure has not yet been announced, there appears to be a movement toward greater policy alignment, and having the right players around the table to not just build better relationships, but to implement public policy. Alberta Culture, specifically the Community Engagement and Inclusion Branch, has taken the lead on the ANVSI for a number of years, and until recently, so has their Deputy Minister. On the other hand the Ministry of Human Services is a major contractor of the sector for service provision and the lead on workforce issues through the provincial Workforce Alliance. In this context the Ministry of Human Services is focused and instrumental, rather than sectoral. What this author sees as emerging in Alberta are two solitudes, a dominant instrumental relationship with the nonprofit sector converging around human services and a more expressive relationship evolving from Alberta Culture. Within the provincial government, the relationship is more diffuse, and while Alberta Culture certainly gives the nonprofit sector serious consideration, its influence across ministries is limited. Striking a balance between convening and managing policy discussions is a serious challenge. In this context allies are established on the basis of identifying common policy agendas, and thus Alberta Culture is likely to be closer to an informal, clustered structure (Structure III) than an informal centralized structure (See figure 3).

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<sup>9</sup> This hiatus has occurred for two reasons. First, the policy landscape has changed enough in five years that a recalibration was required; and second, there is a desire to have a closer social policy program representational alignment.

**Figure 3: Governance Network Structures (2)**

**Source:** Adapted from Willems, J., & Jegers, M. (2012). Social Movement Structures in Relation to Goals and Forms of Action: An Exploratory Model. *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research*. p. 72.

### *Manitoba*

In Manitoba the Manitoba Federation of Non-Profit Organizations (MFNPO), while existing for some time, has gained considerable traction with both the provincial government and the nonprofit sector since it joined the provincial human resource council and focused its attention on labour market issues. In Manitoba, this initiative is supported by the Department of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade. The lead ministry with respect to the nonprofit sector as a whole is the Department of Housing and Community Development. In fact, community economic development in Manitoba can be seen as the social economy of Quebec, providing one policy lens through which the activities of all departments are reviewed.

Manitoba has taken a very pragmatic and systematic view of their relationship with the nonprofit sector, providing critical infrastructure support to build capacity and making sure that programs have concrete outcomes at a community level. The Minister of Housing and Community Development is the government lead on nonprofit strategy. Internally, the nonprofit strategy was developed by central agencies (e.g. Treasury Board Secretariat, Community Economic Development, Priorities and Planning Committee of Cabinet Secretariat) with the Minister of Housing and Community Development as chair.

An internal advisory committee comprised of representatives of these same central departments plus others oversee policy implementation, particularly the alignment of ministries with corresponding nonprofit organizations involved in the multi-year funding pilot project. Unlike some other provinces, this hasn't resulted in a dedicated nonprofit secretariat, but it has

resulted in something which is better than most: sector-specific programs such as the two-year pilot project to streamline funding and reporting. The formal reporting and policy monitoring mechanism in place in Manitoba at the Ministerial and Deputy Minister levels place it in a centralized formal governance structure (Structure I).

### *Ontario*

Ontario has multiple ministries that have brought the nonprofit sector into its purview. Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, and the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment are two of the main policy actors. Under the governments' Open for Business strategy, the nonprofit sector has gained recognition as an economic as well as a social driver. Associated funding reforms and the Partnership Project<sup>10</sup> are being led by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, in partnership with the Ontario Nonprofit Network; whereas the Office for Social Enterprise operates under the auspices of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. While specific ministries take on specific nonprofit sector issues (e.g. Ministry of Consumer Services and the Non-for-Profit Corporations ACT); overall, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration is considered the lead ministry for the governments' relationship with the nonprofit sector. In this regard, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration is consistently represented on inter-ministerial committees. Otherwise, nonprofit sector issues are a contextual subset in broader deputy and assistant deputy ministerial committees (e.g. social policy, policy innovation).

From a policy coordination perspective in Ontario there is a strong policy coordination function at the centre of government, that is, in the cabinet office. The cabinet office supports cabinet subcommittees and works closely with both the Premier's Office and Ministers' offices. The Ontario Nonprofit Network has built its capacity to make solid and credible representation at these highest levels of policy making in the government. Examples would include the Partnership Project, social enterprise, transfer payments, and police checks for volunteers. While possibly not as clear cut at other provinces profiled to date, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration has a centralized, yet informal relationship with other ministries (Structure III); whereas it appears that the cabinet office has a more directive and coordinating role, putting it in Structure I.

### *Québec*

For almost two decades in Québec, the social economy and social justice movements have built and consolidated its representation in the Chantier de l'économie sociale and the Réseau québécois de l'action communautaire autonome (RQ-ACA) (Mendell & Neamtan, 2010; Réseau québécois de l'action communautaire autonome, 2013). As early as 1996, the government of Québec recognized the value of the social economy, while autonomous community organizations, represented by the Réseau québécois de l'action communautaire autonome (RQ-ACA) struggled for a longer period to be recognized. In 2001 they eventually were, and now more than four thousand community groups are funded to represent and advocate for social justice issues. The main forum for the RQ-ACA representation in the provincial

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<sup>10</sup> The Partnership Project is a statement of the importance of the not-for-profit sector, its impact on Ontarians and Ontario's communities, and the significant role the sector plays in the economy of the province (Hoskins & Burstyn, 2011).

government is the Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome within the government Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity. The Chantier's structural point of entry, although by no means the only one, is le Ministère des Affaires municipales, des Régions et de l'Occupation du territoire. It is the Minister of this department that has sponsored the recently introduced *Social Economy Law*, designed to consolidate the inclusion of the social economy across all government ministries, departments, policies and programs (M. Sylvain Gaudreault, 2013).

Like Ontario, there is a move in Quebec to bring the social economy into line with more mainstream financing instruments. To this end, the recently announced Bank of Development for Quebec will include social economy organizations. Compared to other provinces in Canada, Québec has a high degree of integration between policies and services, right down to the regional office level. Québec is also one of the few provinces that has conducted multiple censuses of social economy organizations (Charpentier, 2012).

Internally, the office for the social economy within the Ministère des Affaires municipales, des Régions et de l'Occupation du territoire and the Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome within the government Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity are the two parallel loci of control for these policy files. There is an inter-ministerial committee comprised of all ministries that fund social economy organizations, but this is not a senior committee and the implementation of policies varies considerably across ministries. It is hoped that the new *Social Economy Law* will support more consistent and in-depth relationships and renewed action plans for social economy organizations (Affaires municipales des Régions et de l'Occupation du territoire, 2008). Otherwise, the Québec government internal relationship between the lead ministries and other departments appears to be represented by Structure IV, centralized and informal (See figure 3).

#### *New Brunswick*

With the creation of the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities in 2012, New Brunswick aligned its internal departmental structure with the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, a crown agency mandated under the Economic and Social Inclusion Act to reduce poverty and increase employment by marginalized populations. This internal and external policy focus is a clear policy alignment strategy, providing a hub for policy development and coordination within government and an operational mandate through the crown corporation, together with 12 regional Community Inclusion Networks throughout the province. In addition there are deputy minister's committees dedicated to addressing broad policy issues (e.g. youth). As with any re-organization, there is a re-adjustment period, but there is a clear intent to increase the level and depth of coordination across departments. The minister is also co-chair of the board of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation. A recent manifestation of this mandate is the approval of a social enterprise policy framework for the province (Advisory Committee on Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds, 2012). Given the seniority and focus of this new department, Structure I would appear to be the best representation of its network governance structure (See figure 3).

#### *Nova Scotia*

The launch of the Nova Scotia Community Sector Council represented more than two years hard work by key nonprofit sector organizations to align itself and its policies and put it on a better footing with the provincial government. Like the Manitoba Federation of Non-Profit



Organizations, the Community Sector Council is focused on labour force issues and as such has aligned itself with the provincial labour market policies. It is also beneficial that the Ministry of Labour and Advanced Education, under which labour force issues reside, is also responsible for provincial government relations with the nonprofit sector. While there has been some consideration of a collaborative body where government and sector representatives can meet, this is still in the exploratory stage. In Nova Scotia there appears to be a gradual shift from a pure “volunteerism” perspective of the nonprofit sector to one that incorporates co-funded organizations. There is considerable work to be done internally to coordinate relationships with the sector, although numerous and long-standing relationships exist at the individual department level.

External nonprofit advisory committees, now disbanded, were comprised primarily of representative nonprofit sector leaders and met at the discretion of the minister. Internal committees have met a similar fate, likely due to competing program priorities and a lack of a clear nonprofit sector policy agenda. There appears to be an appetite for a nonprofit sector policy agenda within government, but if the Nova Scotia government was to take a page from other provinces, they would focus and align their agenda with a core policy file. Internally, the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, incorporates four other portfolios, including the voluntary sector. While there is a designated Volunteerism and Non-Profit Sector Division within Labour and Advanced Education, an informal governance network structure dominates their activities, providing advice and guidance to other departments, much like Alberta Culture’s Culture, Community and Voluntary Services Division.

## **Discussion**

The evolution of non-profit sector/government relations at the provincial level in Canada is undergoing a remarkable third wave of change. Some of this change has been driven by the mutual recognition of a substantial and hidden relationship, brought to light, in part, by the 2005 National Survey of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations. In other cases, provincial issues of poverty, unemployment, and uncoordinated and under resourced service delivery systems have brought the two sectors to the policy table.

The burgeoning sectoral policy relationship that developed relatively simultaneously across multiple provinces was based on a number of common issues. Some of these issues, particularly those related to funding, human resources, capacity building, and volunteer management, were profiled in VSI related reports in aggregate form for the first time. The fact that these issues existed were not new to either the voluntary sector or provincial governments. What helped to raise these policy issues on political agenda was that voluntary sector issues were raised from anecdotal stories to system governance issues, particularly when placed in the context of the dominant role Canadian voluntary sector organizations play in service delivery.

The existence of individual or collective voluntary sector representation, while necessary for a sustainable policy dialogue to be established, is not sufficient. Political will on the part of governments is also required, and this willingness appears to be tied to the alignment of the voluntary sector to poverty reduction, community economic development, service delivery, and to a lesser extent, volunteerism (Elson, 2011a). At the time these third wave initiatives across Canada were launched, the economy was still relatively strong and surpluses, not deficit reduction, was the order of the day. It is likely therefore that the instrumental “contract culture”

relationship between governments and the voluntary sector that took hold in the mid 1990s will continue to define provincial voluntary sector policy agendas (Elson, 2011b).

The proximity and jurisdictional power of Canadian provinces to issues and opportunities addressed by the voluntary sector justifies a sustained and collective policy relationship. While there is nothing unusual in provincial governments having a relationship with individual voluntary organizations or their umbrella associations, the development of sustained sub-national policy forums to engage in sector policy dialogue to address policy issues is a new “third wave” development.

The governance network structures developed within provincial governments have been examined in some detail, although it is fair to say that more need to be done, particularly to monitor changes and developments in this governance arena. The more formal governance network structures appear to exist in Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick. Each has a centralized governance structure at multiple levels up to and including cabinet ministers. There is a vetting process to ensure that policies are implemented and programs are consistent with these policies, going as far, as is the case in New Brunswick, to have multiple sectors actively engaged in the policy process.

A less formal, yet centralized governance structure was found in British Columbia and Quebec. In these cases there is a centralized policy focus and responsible ministry. Yet the monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance across multiple ministries appears to be a question of mutual program goal identification and knowledge exchange (e.g. Structure III, IV), rather than formal sanctions or compliance monitoring (e.g. Structure I, II). These ministries however, do retain considerable status across the government and are recognized internally and externally as the loci of third sector/ social economy policy.

In Alberta and Nova Scotia, the governance structure is less formal and occurs in multiple ministries. In Alberta, Alberta Culture plays an active role as does Human Services, in some way dividing the sector into expressive and instrumental organizations respectively. However, one would be hard pressed to find a singular focus for third sector policy either within the government as a whole, or in one particular ministry. In Nova Scotia, there is a small and dedicated voluntary sector staff complement within the Ministry of Labour and Advanced Education; and there are also significant initiatives underway through the Department Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. This governance structure is reflected in the two black circles in Figure 3.

## **Conclusion**

There is considerable value in examining the governance network structures within provincial governments. Third sector relations do not neatly fit into aligned ministries such as agriculture or tourism, and thus there has to be a deliberate ‘placement’ of third sector policy within the overall governance structure. Where and how this policy portfolio is placed says a great deal about the value and status of this file. If the third sector file is aligned with human services (e.g. BC), poverty reduction, or economic inclusion (e.g. NB), then it has a tendency to take on an instrumental, policy alignment mandate. Broader sectoral policies are also tending to gravitate toward the instrumental (e.g. NS, MB), as sector councils focus on labour market issues. This is not surprising, as a recent international sector survey indicated that 85 percent of

nonprofits in Canada are involved in service delivery (Salamon, Sokolowski, Haddock, & Tice, 2013).

In this analysis, the more formal governance structures in Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick (and potentially Quebec) are tied to clear policy goals and oversight by the highest levels of government, including the cabinet office. Over time, it will be of considerable interest to examine how these governance structures change, and if so, how these changes influence the internal priority given third sector policy file.

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