COLLABORATION IN SETTLEMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT: EXPERIENCES FROM THE 2014 ALBERTA INTEGRATION SUMMIT

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In October 2014, the Alberta Integration Summit took place in Edmonton as a first step to initiate programmatic and policy changes to respond to the ever-changing backdrop of Canadian immigration and rapid influx of immigrants to Alberta. As part of a national initiative, the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) lead a unique summit which engaged a wide sample of organizations from the public, private, and non-profit sectors to improve understanding of gaps in service delivery and the needs of vulnerable populations. This paper will explore a comprehensive and collaborative approach to settlement and integration policy development using the New Public Management and New Public Governance public administration frameworks for its analysis. Drawing from the review of the Alberta settlement policy process, recommendations on avenues for system-level improvement will be introduced.

In order to promote the smooth integration of newcomers into Canadian society and the labour market, comprehensive and responsive settlement programs are required. Determining the funding priorities and strategic directions of these programs requires consultation among the multiple stakeholders who are involved in the settlement system. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) recognized the importance of engaging these key actors in discussion and, as a result, supported a series of provincial Integration Summits across Canada. The objective of these initiatives was to improve understanding of the service gaps, current trends and needs of the settlement system at both the national and regional level. The Alberta Integration Summit enabled key stakeholders to identify and discuss emerging priorities in the settlement system, as well provided the opportunity to facilitate multi-actor partnerships.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the Summit as a unique collaborative event, which contributes to an ongoing, evolving policy development process. In order to better understand the nuanced Alberta settlement policy and service delivery mechanism, this paper will proceed by examining the Summit as it exemplifies an event sustained by an understanding of the New Public Management and New Public Governance theoretical foundations which outline political-administration systems. A review of the Alberta settlement policy process will yield recommendations on avenues for system-level improvement.

THE NATURE OF COLLABORATION IN ALBERTA'S SETTLEMENT SECTOR

Recently, new forms of governing have been emerging in Western democracies (Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013, p.1). These new approaches to governance and policy development are tending towards collaborative, participatory, network and trust-based models in order to respond to growing expectations in a world that is becoming more diverse, complex and fragmented (Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013, p.1). Like most provincial policymaking environments, the Alberta settlement policy setting is best described as complex and plural. That is, multiple actors from the public, private, and non-profit sectors act upon policy processes.[1] Framed by this complexity, the policymaking exercise in Alberta's settlement sector is evolving and adapting—with the principal players such as the CIC, the Government of Alberta (GoA), and many Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) considering a versatile, cooperative method.

The emphasis on collaboration and cooperation is not arbitrary; the development of settlement policy is constructed and supported by the legislative *Agreement for Canada-Alberta Cooperation on Immigration* (2007) in which "an integrated approach within Canada and abroad will best serve Canada's and Alberta's best interests related to immigration" is identified as one of the essential values that direct the agreement (Article 1.13 a). The focus on integrative multi-stakeholder cooperation is encircled by the values of "bilingualism," "racial and cultural diversity," "equality," and "multiculturalism" which typify Canadian immigration policy (*Agreement for Canada-Alberta Cooperation on Immigration*, 2007, p.1-2). Furthermore, the Canada-Alberta Agreement (2007) sets out, as one of its main objectives, "to foster partnerships with stakeholders including community-based organizations, municipal governments, the private sector, official language minority communities, and other governmental agencies" (Article 3.1 f).

In the interest of demonstrating diversity and the broad values and trends underpinning the settlement policy environment, those of non-governmental settlement sector actors (predominantly SPOs) must be included. In a study commissioned by CISSA-ACSEI (2012), research revealed that partnership and integrated service delivery were two of the most notable emerging trends in the settlement sectors across Canada. These trends dually reiterate the values underpinning the Alberta settlement sector and system-level change.

THE CONTEXT OF THE NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND NEW PUBLIC GOVERNANCE

Of particular interest for the examination of the policy development process are the distinct approaches to the administration of public services in Canada. In Alberta, the systems which influence settlement sector policy are the New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Governance (NPG). The study of government, its political and administrative capacities, has been enlivened over the last two decades by a debate over the fundamental managerial aspects for government to become more competent. The standard approach, as in much of the public administration field, relates the efficiency and effectiveness of governments usually by means of its performance. Pursing this goal necessitates, among other things, mechanisms of enhanced performance which are likened to notions of management. The NPM's rhetoric has been embedded in a more efficient, effective, equitable and responsive manner while redefining the role of government to seek a better balance *vis a vis* other institutions (Adrinisani et al., 2002).

The New Public Management is rooted in new institutional economics, which view politics as a market phenomenon (Foster & Plowden, 1996). In other words, NPM assumes that the relations in political-administrative systems are strategic games between rational actors who intend to makes these systems more efficient and consistent (Boston et al., 1996). The NPM urges the separation between policymaking and service delivery, which signifies a shift away from the policy-administration continuum.

The influence of institutional economics and management on governments is reflected in the change of core public sector values. The emphasis on results forms the very heart of the NPM conception of administration. Cost efficiency rather than the compliance with formal rules must be the final and major determinant of the legitimacy of service provision. The citizen's place in the decision making process is comparable to the one in the market. In this regard, citizens are considered self-interested participants motivated largely by price and individual incentives. For this scheme to work, the NPM assumes that population is reduced to a collection of custom-

ers engaged in a commercial relationship rather than a political one with the government (Polidano, 1999).

The NPM concentrates on the voluntary motivations of citizens which facilitate processes of bargaining and deliberation. Hinging on the possibility of interaction creates a situation where the main activity of government is to build up citizens' support and mobilize their resources. Furthermore, the democratic quality of a network depends on participant knowledge and bargaining. That is, the extent to which the network supports bargaining among powerful stakeholders or free deliberation among all affected citizens, voluntary associations and public institutions is important (Polidano, 1999). Unlike the conventional way to measure accountability for inputs, the NPM gives responsibility for outputs or performance an unforeseen role in the procedural controls over management (Polidano, 1999).[2]

It is not surprising, therefore, that this approach has resulted in a reformulation of the practices in public administration... With a decrease in the power of government, the Weberian traditional model of governance finds itself under attack.[3] According to the NPM discourse, government must delegate responsibilities either to the private or non-profit sectors. Peters convincingly argues that government thus is justifiably diminished from acting as the main provider of public services, though, engaging in such provision, as Osborn and Gaebler (1991) suggest, in a more indirect and enabling fashion.

Connected to the previous point is the measurement of accountability. In the New Public Management approach, focus on performance is quite relevant. Peters compares the two perspectives to conclude that in the conventional tradition of public administration, it was customary to look at the performance of public organizations on legal and accounting grounds, rather than on the basis of the actual performance of tasks and the outcomes for citizens.[4]

As a result of the complexities of service delivery and the inter-institutional nature of social and public programs in Canada, a departure from NPM to a more synergetic approach to political-administrative systems helps to guide one's understanding of transformative thinking in the settlement policy process. With this in mind, the response to public policy thematic discourse—the call to reform public services and increase innovation—articulated by Osborne (2010) positions NPG by asking those in policymaking to "start asking new questions about public service delivery" (p. 1). Osborne (2010) suggests that policy makers reconsider an approach that emphasizes the governance of interorganizational relationships and public service delivery systems (p. 1). Of special interest, the NPG model stresses processes instead of output controls and discretionary management while promoting collaboration.

The New Public Governance departs from the NPM by reconceptualising the relationship between the public and private sectors. Even the name signals a new logic. Concerning this, Rhodes (2007) argues that governance refers to "a new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule" (p. 1246). Seen from the perspectives of administration and public policy creation, the key to governance is that it is marked by a broad scope, a considerable interdependence between organizations that continually interact and engage with policy network members in order to share resources and to negotiate purpose (Rhodes, 2007, p. 1246).

Beyond what governance means is the issue of what encapsulates the governing process. According to Huque and Zafarullah (2006), governance has qualitative and quantitative attributes. With respect to the qualitative attributes, governance seeks political pluralism, rule of law, economic arrangements, efficient and effective government and empowerment of people. On the other hand, the quantitative attributes are concerned with smaller public sector, social protection and better social and economic services (p.25). From this, a number of normative and theoretical appeals plague the conventional wisdom around governance. The fascination with the managerial attributes of governance stands in alignment with its emphasis on economic efficiency. It expresses not the complex processes through which citizens voice up their demands but a discernible market orientation. Much of the rhetoric of governance departs from the belief that this model encourages citizens to be more actively engaged in the decisions that affect their lives. Within this discourse, the participatory element of such a system and the role of the non-profit sectors have become synonymous of governance.

In this environment, collaboration can serve as a technique for change in policy creation while promoting system-level improvement. In fact, the result of cooperative relationships, as opposed to NPM's focus on competition, is best articulated as:

> *"the exchange and pool public and private ideas and resources through negotiated interactions in order to enhance effective and democratic governance, while a further goal is to facilitate mutual learning and build joint ownership of new and innovative solutions"* (Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013, p. 10).

The significance of cooperation, trust and power-sharing is noteworthy; in increasingly more competitive markets the alignment with such values can result in flexible funding supports that occur over longer time periods across a networks of service providers (Phillips & Smith, 2011, p. 4-6), thereby improving service delivery.

Taking into consideration some of the shortcomings of NPM and the desire for progress and innovation, as articulated by CIC, settlement SPOs, and the provincial government of Alberta at the Alberta Integration Summit, an alternative political-administration system presents the opportunity to improve settlement policy and therefore services. Within the context of settlement policy development, it is important to acknowledge that one of the most significant foundational characteristics of New Public Governance theory is the recognition of the "interrelatedness of both the policy making and the implementation/service delivery processes" in a diverse and plural environment (Osborne, 2006, p. 384). The value of shifting towards a new model is the improvement of policy formulation and public service delivery through a process that favours participation and negotiation of relevant stakeholders, not just customers, each contributing their "knowledge, ideas and resources" (Torfing and Triantafillou, 2013, p. 5). To put it another way, NPG finds its strength in pluralism and the diversity of stakeholder contributions and knowledge instead of their economic performance.

The benefit of orienting the Alberta Integration Summit towards the NPG method of service delivery is that is promotes a fluid, relationship-based approach focused on service process and outcomes instead of the inputs and outputs of service delivery (Osborne, 2007, p. 383). Just as with the NPG model, settlement services in Alberta are situated within a plural environment. A recent trend in the settlement sector has been a transition from an NPM delivery approach to incorporate NPG tenets. Unsurprisingly, the pre and post-Summit documentation reveals that a multi-stakeholder approach to service delivery was, and remains, an important concern.

THE ALBERTA INTEGRATION SUMMIT[5]

In recognition of the influence of NPM in Alberta's settlement sector as well as the changing tides of policy development, the Alberta Integration Summit serves as a metaphor for a strategic shift towards relationship building and power sharing espoused by NPG. Principles from this system were incorporated through the strong inter-organizational collaboration enabled by the Summit's diverse attendance and specific methodology. Building relationships was a particular focus of the Summit, as it was designed to provide participants with the opportunity to develop multi-stakeholder partnerships (Moorthi, 2014). One of primary objectives was to develop partnership from the participation and attendance of more than 250 traditional and non-traditional actors in Alberta's settlement system which can set the tone for policy making in the coming year. With a wide-range of initiatives and visions, participants truly exemplified plurality. By way of example, 61% were from the non-profit sector, 37% from the public sector and the remaining 2% came from the private sector.[6]

Through their participation at the Summit, these diverse actors played a critical role in informing CIC's settlement policy. While the first day of the Summit consisted of presentations on Alberta's settlement system from various sectors, the second day provided participants with the opportunity to discuss issues affecting settlement in an inclusive and interactive environment. By engaging in these in-depth conversations, or Working Group discussions, participants collectively identified settlement priorities and supplied policy recommendations.[7] The use of Working Groups, the dissemination of the Alberta Integration Summit Report, as well as the Summit Advisory Committee clearly demonstrates the importance of power sharing in the policy development process.[8] The Working Groups were designed to ensure an equal representation of each sector in order to prevent one stakeholder sector from dominating the conversation (Moorthi, 2014). Additionally, each Group contained three roundtables of ten participants. These smaller divisions provided the setting for engaging, interactive and directed discussions. The findings from these discussions were compiled into the Alberta Integration Summit Report. In order to ensure the voices from all stakeholders were heard and accurately represented, the Summit Report was sent out to participants for their feedback prior to its official release. This feedback was incorporated into the final report and made publicly available for all to benefit from the insights gained about Alberta's settlement system.

A NEW DIRECTION - RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALBERTA

The value of reading the Alberta Integration Summit within the NPG framework is that it facilitates an understanding of the plural, dynamic, and ever-changing background of settlement policy, while promoting a process that is relationship-based. The need to continue building on these principles is evident from discussions and learnings from the Summit. As outlined in the Alberta Integration Summit Report (2014), participants collectively identified the following priorities as critical in promoting an improved, inclusive and cooperative settlement system:

- **Developing a Collaborative Model of Thinking and Coordination in Services:** Stakeholders emphasized the importance of collaboration and coordination of settlement services to reduce redundancy and information silos

- **Knowledge Mobilization and Access:** Sharing best practices and increasing access to information between actors was identified as a key priority for the settlement system

- **Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships:** Stakeholders highlighted that multi-actor partnerships were critical in developing innovative solutions for the settlement system

Meeting these priorities would ultimately promote Alberta's transition from the current NPM framework to a more interactive NPG structure. By addressing these issues, the policy and public service environment in which the settlement system operates will be built on mutual trust and interdependence.

In order to achieve and sustain these strategies for improved stakeholder cooperation, policy creation and service delivery, we would suggest the following:

- **Continued Thematic Working Group Discussions**: By hosting Thematic Working Groups throughout the year to discuss emerging and cross-cutting settlement and integration issues, key actors would be able to continuously benefit from this knowledge mobilization process while informing policy priority areas.[9]

- **Annual Integration Summit:** The findings from the ongoing Working Group conversations can serve as the model of presentation and discussions of a yearly Integration Summit. One of the chief benefits of organizing an annual Integration Summit would be to maintain the momentum created by building and sustaining multi-stakeholder partnerships. Another gain would be the opportunity created for multi-sector actors across the province to congregate to share best practices and develop collaborative approaches to service delivery.

- **Information Dissemination:** Information dissemination is a crucial component in promoting far-reaching and lasting change. For example, the Alberta Integration Summit Report was distributed throughout the settlement system and made publicly available. Following an annual integration summit, it is recommended that a report be distributed throughout the settlement sector and made publicly available so as to capture policy priorities and best-practices, but also to encourage knowledge transfer.

These recommendations provide a structure for continued cooperation in settlement policymaking and service delivery while responding to national and global trends that favour stronger inter- and intra-organizational relationships, mutual trust and ultimately increased efficiency in these processes.

Across the sector, the Summit was viewed as an inclusive experience, concerned more broadly with the process than with highly specific inputs and outputs. Overall, through diverse multi-sector participants, engaging discussions, information dissemination, and coaction with the federal government (CIC), the Summit provided a cooperative, inclusive and interactive environment for participants to inform settlement policy and create system-level momentum in the areas of policy development and administration. Indispensable information gathered from this event revealed key priorities for the improvement of the settlement system through continued incorporation of NPG principles, such as relationship building, power sharing and collaboration to improve the complex process of settlement policy development and service administration.

NOTES

[1] Examples include actors such as politicians, researchers, settlement practitioners, journalists, and advocates.

[2] By subordinating performance to profit gains, the logical conclusion is that the process is merely evaluated with finances the benchmark for measuring success (O'Brian, 2006).

[3] The Weberian model of governance in which political leadership, party and bureaucracy which are essential to coping with the complexity of modernity and for delivering order.

[4] Thus far, in all of these respects, the distinctiveness of government power and functions are much less than it used to be. Schick (1996) points out that the NPM ignores traditional values such as fairness, equality, probity and impartiality. More generally, as Schick asserts, NPM's focus on output controls and discretionary management rather than rule-based systems and procedures.

[5] This section is based off of Moorthi, G. (2014). Alberta Integration Summit Report. Retrieved from http://aaisa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Alberta-Provincial-Summit-English-Report-SrtV5-FINALRG.compressed.pdf

[6] The participants have been compiled into three main groups, the Non-Profit, Public and Private sectors. The Non- Profit sector also included the Settlement Sector, while the Public Sector included all three levels of government, Education, Health and Justice sectors.

[7] These priorities and recommendation formed the basis of the Alberta Integration Summit Report, which served to inform both CIC and the key stakeholders of current trends and strategic directions of the settlement system.

[8] The Summit Advisory Committee is a body that provided feedback on the design and execution of the Summit, through its diverse composition. Members of the Committee included settlement agencies, federal and provincial governments, and various immigration research networks. The Summit Advisory Committee was composed of professionals coming from the following organizations: AAISA; Alberta Human Services; Alberta Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour; Alberta Rural Development Network; Association canadienne-francaise de l'Alberta; Citizenship and Immigration Canada; Pathways to Prosperity; and Immigration Research West.

[9] These methodological pillars are Welcoming Communities, Core Settlement Services, Language Training and Assessment, and finally, Labour Market Participation. The pillars are categories for the services and programs in which newcomers directly or indirectly require to effectively integrate into Canadian society and the labour market. Both traditional and non-traditional stakeholders deliver or facilitate the delivery of the services and programs which fall under this framework.

COLLABORATION LORS DE L'ÉLABORATION DES POLITIQUES D'ÉTABLISSEMENT : EXPÉRIENCES TIRÉES DU SOMMET SUR L'INTÉGRATION EN ALBERTA DE 2014

Deniz Erkmen est agente de recherche à la Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies. Grâce à son implication dans le secteur universitaire, privé et à but non lucratif, Deniz a accumulé une grande base de connaissances en recherche sur l'immigration, le droit et les politiques. Deniz Erkmen détient un baccalauréat en relations internationales de l'Université de Calgary.

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Le Sommet sur l'intégration en l'Alberta (*Alberta Integration Summit*) a eu lieu à Edmonton en octobre 2014. Ce Sommet est une première étape visant à amorcer des changements au niveau des programmes et des politiques qui cadrent le paysage en constante évolution de l'immigration au Canada et l'influx croissant des immigrants vers l'Alberta. Dans le cadre d'une initiative nationale, l'*Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies* (AAISA— association des agences d'aide aux immigrants de l'Alberta) a organisé un sommet spécial qui a rassemblé un grand éventail d'organisations provenant du secteur public, privé et sans but lucratif; l'objectif de ce sommet était de tenter d'améliorer notre compréhension quant aux lacunes dans la prestation de services et aux besoins des populations vulnérables. À travers cet article, nous allons discuter d'une approche globale et collaborative lors de l'élaboration des politiques en matière d'établissement et d'intégration en nous référant au modèle de la nouvelle gestion publique (New Public Management – NPM) et au nouveau modèle de gouvernance publique (New Public Gouvernance – NPG) lors de son analyse. En nous inspirant de l'examen du processus politique dans le secteur de l'établissement en Alberta, nous allons formuler certaines recommandations visant à l'amélioration de ce système.