



# Theory and Practice of Public Involvement in Canada

SIPP Public Policy Seminar

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# Outline

- CPRN
- Citizen Engagement (CE) & Democracy
- Case Statement
- Challenges & Barriers
- Success Indicators
- CE Examples in Canada & Abroad
- Institutionalization
- References & Resources



# Canadian Policy Research Networks

- Mission to create a more just, prosperous and caring society
- Non-partisan, independent, not-for-profit creator of policy research to inform decision-makers
- Bring together Canadians – neutral space – to discover solutions to improve quality of life
- Research disseminated free to promote public good and foster dialogue and debate



# CPRN & Civic Engagement

- Citizen dialogues to surface values, inform public policy and foster civic literacy
  - Design/implement/report/share
  - 10+ dialogues since 1995
- Research to strengthen both theory and practice of political and civic engagement
- Build capacity: governments, communities, public



# Democratic Theory & Citizen Engagement

## Assumptions

- Democracy requires citizen participation for legitimacy
  - Right and responsibility; citizen dignity and citizen capacity  
(OECD, Taylor)
- Active citizenship requires a certain level of knowledge and skill
  - Levels of participation, knowledge and skill are contested  
(JS Mill versus Schumpeter)
- Normative/procedural and instrumental/purposes at play (Habermas, Barber, Guttman & Thompson, Mendelberg, Warren)



# Deliberative Democracy & Citizen Engagement

- Deliberative democracy: updating representative democracy
  - Democratic governance: participation, dialogue, critical analysis and reasoning (Barber, Habermas, Bohman and Rehg, Gutmann and Thompson)
- Fosters deliberative citizens (Putnam, Milner, Homer-Dixon, Fishkin)
  - Reflects shifts in societal values (Nevitte, Ekos)
  - Citizen engagement is to deliberative democracy what voting is to representative democracy



# Civic / Political Engagement & Citizens

- **Civic engagement**

- *“network of ties and groups through which people connect to one another and get drawn into community and political affairs”* (Skocpol and Fiorina)

- **Political participation**

- *“embraces multiple modes and objectives of political activity, including voting and elections, interest group and social movement activity, and protest behaviour”*  
(O’Neill)

- **Toward a culture of political participation**

- *“norm is for policy and decision-making to occur with direct input from citizens...reform which provides citizens with clear entitlements and procedures by which to exercise that input – from conception through to implementation...”*

(UK Power Inquiry)



# Citizen Engagement

- OECD

“Active participation recognizes the capacity of citizens to discuss & generate policy options independently. It requires governments to share in the agenda-setting and to ensure that policy proposals generated jointly will be taken into account in reaching a final decision” (2001)

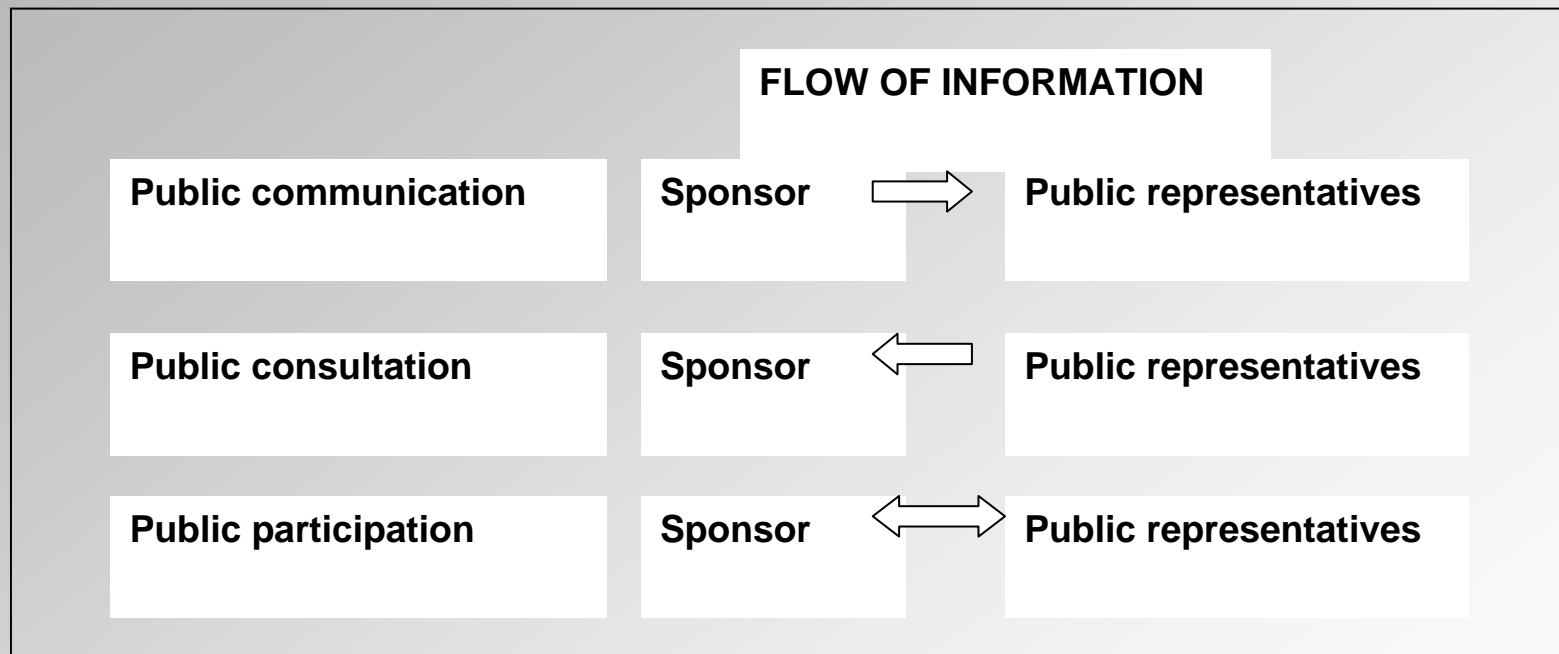
- Phillips & Orsini

“interactive and iterative processes of deliberation among citizens (& sometimes organizations) and between citizens and government officials with the purpose of contributing meaningfully to specific policy decisions in a transparent and accountable way” (CPRN, 2002)





# Three levels of Public Involvement



Source: Rowe G and Frewer LJ. "A Typology of Public Engagement Mechanisms". Science, Technology, and Human Values 2005, 30(2): 255.



# Public involvement continuum

International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)'s spectrum of public involvement

- Inform→ consult→ involve→ collaborate→ empower

Health Canada

- Inform and educate→ gather information→ discuss and involve→ engage→ partner

Calgary Health Region

- Information→ input→ consultation→ partnership→ delegation



# Making the Case - Why Engage?

- Disconnect between citizens and governments
  - Symptoms include declining voter turn out coupled with low trust in politicians & governments
  - Demands for more accountable and transparent public institutions
  - Less deferential, more educated public that demands a say
    - Fireweed Democracy Poll: 61% think our democratic institutions need a major overhaul (Canada)
    - EKOS Citizen Engagement Surveys



## Making the Case - Why Engage? (2)

- Legitimacy and sustainability
  - Of policy and programs depend on fit with citizens' values
  - Needed to implement public policies successfully
- More effective policies and programs
  - Citizens' input needed along with experts and stakeholders
  - Policy complexity requires more perspectives and types of knowledge



## CE: Procedural & Substantive Purposes

- Process and outcome both valued
  - Creates social capital & fosters social cohesion
  - Contributes to more educated & active citizens
  - Achieves more informed, effective, accountable, legitimate & horizontal policy making
- Should result in a stronger democracy and more resilient communities
  - Support healthier relationships between citizens and governments
  - Greater equality (avoid governments being captive of narrow interests)



# Challenges & Barriers to CE

1. Resistance to change: institutions & elite political culture lag behind public
2. Scepticism
  - Decision makers/experts – what do they know?
  - Citizens – will our voices be heard?
3. Civic literacy decline & politics in disdain
4. Spaces for public discourse shrinking
5. Resources, skills & time pressures (for all)
6. Research and evaluation gaps (Abelson & Gauvin, Goodwin & Dryzek, Mendelberg)



# CE in Canada: Examples

- CPRN: 10+ citizen dialogues, including:
  - Future of Health Care in Canada- Romanow (2002), Canada's Future: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Social Contract (2003); Long-term Management of Used Nuclear Fuel; Youth (2005) etc.
- Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (in progress)
- British Columbia Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform (Second referendum Oct/09)
- Participatory budgeting (Toronto Social Housing, Guelph)
- Xeno-transplantation (Canadian Public Health Association)
- BC Regional Forum on Clean Air (PPF / Environment Canada)
- Sub-Committee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities (House of Commons)



# CE Examples: Abroad

- European Citizens' Consultations on Future of EU (in progress)
- UK National Health Service (NICE) Citizens and Health Policy
- German Planning Cells (Consumer Protection)
- Danish Consensus Conferences
  - Over 20 technology issues [e.g. biogenetic foods, nanotechnology]
- W. Australia (City of Perth- future plan) / Australia (form of government)
- Fishkin Deliberative Polling (e.g. UK, Australia, Denmark, Germany, China)
- AmericaSpeaks 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Hall - Listening to the City (redevelopment of the World Trade Centre)
- New Zealand Consumers' Forum on Food Safety





# Citizen Engagement: Success Indicators

## 1. Clarity of purpose and objectives

- Well defined and understood

## 2. Opportunities for learning and contribution

- Credible and balanced information
- Policy or program delivery influence is possible
- Commitment to respectful consideration

## 3. Participatory process, quality design & implementation

- Inclusive of diverse perspectives & backgrounds
- Learning; generative or deliberative processes
- Active and reflective



## Success Indicators (2)

### 4. Adequate resources & realistic timeframes

### 5. Transparency and feedback

- Results provided and made public
- Reasons provided for what use was made of input

### 6. Evaluation

- Clear objectives
- Designed to support learning

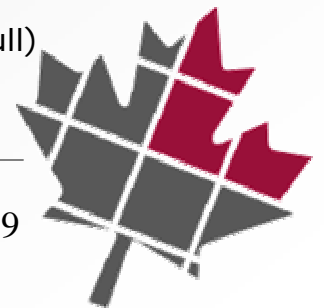


# Institutionalization of CE

“ requires that it become a stable, regular component of the policy process and that the value of citizen involvement is understood by other policy actors and by the public” (Aucoin & Turnbull)

## 4 Criteria

- Core element embedded in policy process
- Public input given substantial weight in policy development (not token in perception or reality)
- Government-wide commitment
- Includes public service and legislatures (Aucoin & Turnbull)



# Reducing Barriers To Institutionalization

- Structural barriers
  - Start with Parliament
  - Public service
- Cultural barriers
  - Policy elites & public
  - Civic education
- Practical barriers
  - Costs & geography



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- Canadian Conference on Dialogue and Deliberation [www.c2d2.ca](http://www.c2d2.ca)
- CPRN Public Involvement Network (Primer on Public Involvement and other resources)  
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