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MAKING THE CASE:

A Social Policy Framework for British Columbia

A Simon Fraser University
School of Public Policy Report
in cooperation with BoardVoice

August 2014

Produced by Simon Fraser University
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Executive Summary

Social policy processes in BC need reform, and a social policy framework (SPF) is the most appropriate instrument to achieve the needed reforms. Examples from social policy ministries are used to investigate the current processes by which social policy decisions appear to be made, drawing on current issues, government reports, statements from numerous parties, and informational interviews. Patterns and challenges are highlighted. Findings show that clear, consistent, and transparent guidelines should be established for government consultation, collaboration and decision making processes to increase consistency in the policy formation process, as well as public and stakeholder confidence in government.

With regard to funding impacts, program delivery, coordination, and values-based decision-making, it is necessary to ensure that the allocation of resources to programs and services occurs according to consistent shared principles. Policy assessment is critical for ensuring that public programs and services remain relevant, efficient, and effective. An SPF that mandates common reporting and data standards would increase consistency and provide reliable information for decision-makers. Data standards in an SPF must emphasize the use of valid measures and ensure standard measures across social policy domains. A social policy framework would be the most effective tool to address current challenges in social policy processes in BC.

Social policy frameworks in six Canadian jurisdictions are examined to derive lessons from the framework development processes. While not all of the jurisdictions analyzed were successful in the implementation of an SPF, their processes provide insight for BC. The process lessons that are most relevant to BC are that the process need not begin with government, but government does need to be involved; expectations must be managed, so that all parties understand the process and their roles; horizontal processes are needed for cross-ministerial engagement; SPFs should connect to environmental and economic plans; multiple modes of engagement in the consultation process are needed; consultation must be broad and create feedback loops with participants; and all groups need to take ownership of the framework to ensure uptake.

Successful social policy strategies implemented in other jurisdictions have facilitated clear communication, promoted the internalization of social policy principles, and established common reporting standards. When compared with other provinces, BC faces greater social policy challenges than most; including, child poverty and low-income rates, food insecurity, long-term employment, violent and property crime, and mental health needs. By improving outcomes in these areas, social policy contributes to improvements in social capital, which is a critical component of economic growth. The introduction of a social policy framework would result in improved social policy processes and improved social outcomes.

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PART 1
Current Challenges in Social Policy Processes in British Columbia

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Social Policy in British Columbia: Calls for Change

British Columbians today benefit from the provision of a wide variety of social services and programs, from health and education to legal and immigration services, home- and senior-care, and many more. Moreover, these programs and services are for the most part of high quality, being generally on par with the rest of Canada and certainly superior to many other jurisdictions. Despite these positive indicators, however, it is also apparent that British Columbia still faces significant social policy challenges. Evidence of this can be seen in the final report by the BC Progress Board in 2011 on the economic and social performance of BC compared with the rest of Canada: while there were a number of positive trends in Environmental Quality and Health Outcomes measures, there were also some very discouraging signs, with BC ranked tenth in percentage of the population living below the low income cut-off, ninth in long-term unemployment, and seventh in secondary school graduation. Just as noteworthy is that these and other issues have persisted for more than a decade, despite various attempts to address them.

There have been increasing calls from within both government and the social service provision sector to rethink how social policy is created, delivered, and evaluated. For example, in their *Guiding Framework for Public Health* (2013) the BC Ministry of Health proposed to "… [support] population health and health equity through information, education, leadership for healthy public policy and inter-sectorial approaches and partnerships across all levels of government and within communities" (p. 7). Similarly, in a 2011 Deputy Minister's review of Community Living BC (CLBC) the top two recommendations were

> 1. Develop a coherent 'one government' policy framework for persons with developmental disabilities.
> 2. Implement a more consistent assessment platform across the Ministries of Children and Family Development, Health, Education, and Social Development, along with CLBC, to ensure consistency and clarity of needs assessment and planning for individuals and their families. (BCMSD, 2011, p. 3)

The most prominent theme that emerges from this reform-minded discussion is the need for greater collaboration and consultation, not just within specific social policy domains such as health or education, but across social policy domains and between the government and service provision sector. BC needs greater coordination in the creation, implementation, and assessment of social policy in general.

Perhaps the clearest expression of this need has come from non-governmental social service providers. In 2007, the Vancouver Foundation held its first meetings between government and non-profit organizations involved in social policy as part of the Government/Non-Profit Initiative (GNPI, 2009), the aims of which were

- shared understanding and mutual trust between the sectors,
- a long-term commitment to collaborate on complex shared issues, and
- a forum for collaboration to shape the services that British Columbians need.

More recently, in 2013 BoardVoice, an umbrella organization comprised of the boards of directors of service-provision organizations in BC, expanded these aims by proposing a social policy framework for BC that would serve as the foundation for the creation, delivery, and assessment of social policy in the province, across all relevant ministries and the service provision sector. The rationale for such an approach is that

> Currently in BC there is no overarching framework to guide the work of social ministries and related community organizations in the province. No all-embracing vision, goals, and accountabilities which could assist in bringing new approaches to difficult to solve problems. (BoardVoice, 2013, n.p.n)

The creation of a framework for something as broad as social policy might sound ambitious, but this approach is not new in Canada. Most notable is the 2013 Alberta Social Policy Framework which aims to address social policy challenges very similar to those in BC, clearly demonstrating the feasibility of such an approach. However, the question remains, why is such an approach to social policy reform desirable?

1.2 Why a Framework-based Approach to Social Policy?

Social policy creation in BC occurs within the context of specific institutional mandates that establish boundaries for action. For example, policies relating to family legal services are ultimately the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice whose mandate is "…to lead law reform in British Columbia, see that public affairs are administered in accordance with the law and ensure that British Columbia is a province where people are safe" (BCMJ, 2013, p. 14). As such, any policy brought forward by the Ministry of Justice pertaining to family legal services must be consistent with this mandate. It is obvious, however, that this mandate does not and realistically cannot take into consideration all social policy-related impacts that might arise as a consequence of policy in this area: impacts on housing, health, education, and so forth. These additional impacts invariably fall under the responsibility of other governmental bodies, such as the Ministry of Children and Families or BC Housing. A great deal of collaboration does occur within government to address such cross-Ministerial issues, but because these collaborations are generally ad hoc, they tend to be operational rather than strategic, leading to the problems with consistency and common purpose highlighted in BoardVoice's statement.

Consistency and common purpose are important in social policy because they flow directly from what social policy is fundamentally concerned with: well-being. Although there are many notions of well-being, all such notions share two common features. First, any concept of well-being is based on a set a values. If social policy in BC is not guided by a shared set of values, then different policies or programs could be working towards different ideas of well-being, and in doing so, lack a common purpose. Second, well-being is something that develops and changes throughout a person's lifetime, so it is not accurately measured at any single point in time. This implies that to achieve greater well-being in BC, specific policies in the social policy domain must harmonize with one another across all stages of life and in different social contexts.

Given these conclusions, the desirability of a social policy framework for BC becomes clear. Such a framework would, by its very nature, make explicit the shared values that all social policy in the province should express, and thus promote common purpose. It would also function as a common reference point for all parties involved in social policy creation, delivery, and assessment across various domains and sectors, enabling consistency both in the present and over time. For these reasons, a social policy framework is the most efficacious means to address the challenges currently facing BC, and so drive greater well-being for all British Columbians.

1.3 The Role of Government in Social Policy: Challenges and Opportunities

Although the non-governmental social service sector has played an increasingly vital role in delivering programs and services and providing input on social policy, the ultimate responsibility rests with the provincial government. As such, the purpose of this paper is to provide a more detailed picture of the challenges and issues facing the government at various stages of the social policy process. In doing so, we support the twin arguments that reforms to the social policy process in BC are strongly needed, and that the creation of a social policy framework for the province is the best foundation from which to achieve these reforms.

We have focused our analysis on those ministries and agencies that are directly involved in the social policy process itself:

- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation
- Ministry of Advanced Education
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Labour and Citizen Services
- Ministry of International Trade (responsible for multiculturalism)
- Ministry of Community, Sport, and Cultural Development
- Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Training
- Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
- Community Living BC
- BC Housing

Drawing on examples from these ministries, associated agencies, and crown corporations, our analysis of the current state of affairs in BC proceeds along a broad three-stage model of the policy process, with a series of topics falling under each stage. These topics were chosen based on their relevance to the social policy challenges BC currently faces *(see chart on the following page.)*

Policy Stage	Topic	Topic Definition
Policy Formation	Consultation	Is input from stakeholders being taken into account?
	Collaboration	Are government organizations and non-governmental stakeholders working together effectively in policy formation?
	Decision Making	How are policy decisions made and justified?
Program Delivery	Implementation	How effectively are programs being implemented?
	Consistency	Are programs being implemented consistently across the target populations and geographic areas?
	Collaboration	Are government organizations working effectively with non-government service providers?
	Funding Decisions	How are funding decisions made?
Policy Assessment	Reporting	Is regular, standardized outcome reporting being done?
	Measures	Are the measures that are used in reporting sufficient and valid?

It should be noted that the intention of this report is not to assign blame for social policy failures, but rather to demonstrate the systemic nature of the challenges that the sector faces. We highlight positive examples of efforts made by ministries and other organizations to address these challenges, as well as possible sources of these challenges. A social policy framework would help focus and coordinate these efforts rather than supersede them.

Section 2: Analysis

2.1 Policy Formation

Policy formation is the process by which social problems are identified, defined, and assessed and recommendations are made to address them. This process can take from days to several years, is often non-linear, and involves many competing actors. Social policy formation, in order to address such complex issues as high poverty rates, long-term unemployment and low public school graduate rates, is involved and multi-layered. The term "policy formation" as used in this section spans from the identification of an issue, through its definition and assessment of available options, to the final decision reached to address the issue. The implementation of policy is addressed in 2.2 and 2.3.

This section focuses on the processes by which social policy decisions are reached in BC. Our inquiry was guided by key questions:

- Are policy formation and decision-making processes consistent?
- Are the processes transparent and clearly communicated to stakeholders, service users, and the public?

- Who takes part in the decision-making process?
- How are these decisions justified?
- Given the complexity and non-linear nature of the process, exhaustive description is difficult, but by looking at examples of policy reform initiatives and consultations, we can begin to identify strengths and opportunities arising from current practices. This section is separated into three components of the policy formation process: consultation, collaboration, and decision-making.

2.1.1 Consultation

Consultation is the process within which a decision-making body seeks input from those affected by the decision; here, the focus is on consultation between the province and various stakeholder groups, including the public, in social policy decision making. In recent years, consultation has increased in prominence as it is seen to increase efficiency, transparency, and public engagement in governance: the idea is that the more parties who are involved in consultation, the better the outcome will be for all.

The demand for consultation processes can be seen as emerging from the post-modern paradigm of multiple truths and perspectives, where one party's interests cannot be fully known by another since they are informed by cumulative lived experiences. The public today understands more than ever that policies have different implications for different groups and expects the government to take such nuanced perspectives into account in their decision-making processes, recognizing that such perspectives are essential to informing good policy. Moreover, with the ubiquity of the Internet and social media making certain kinds of consultation easier, faster, and less costly, consultation and engagement are often expected as standard practice.

The provincial government's recognition of the importance of consultation is exemplified by the province's four-year consultation to reform the *Water Sustainability Act*, the 2013 province wide consultation regarding liquor policy reform, and the 2014 Disability White Paper Consultations. These are just three examples of recent consultation processes that included online forums for feedback, in-person public forums across the province, and consultations with many key stakeholders.

The Disability White Paper Consultation that the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (MSDSI) recently launched is an illustrative example of a current consultation on a social policy issue. Arising out of a mandate letter from the Premier to the Minister following the spring 2013 election to make BC the best place in Canada for people with disabilities to live, the process includes community consultations across the province and six online engagement forums on related issues. All consultations under this mandate relate to increasing inclusion of people with disabilities, with an emphasis on labour force participation (GovTogether BC, 2014). The province is clearly demonstrating that public consultation on social policy issues is a priority.

The Ministry of Health also recognizes the need to include meaningful consultation in their decision-making processes. In their 2013 Guiding Framework for Public Health, the Ministry of Health explicates the need for a new decision-making model centered on consultative processes: "Several opportunities exist to enhance the current decision-making process for selecting new public health priorities, chiefly the deliberate and planned opportunity for broader consultation or input from key stakeholders" (BCMH, 2013, n.p.n).

While there are many examples of consultations that the province has engaged in, there are also examples where consultation did not occur and of stakeholder groups who were not consulted. The BC Association of Social Workers (BCASW) released a response to the Ministry of Children and Family Development's

(MCFD) 2007 *Good Practice Action Plan* that expressed their disapproval at not having been consulted in the generation of this plan, saying that "BCASW was never formally invited into the consultation process, and as a result significant practice and academic wisdom was lost from the process" (Nash & Jenkinson, 2007, p. 2). BCASW makes a number of recommendations in their response to the *Good Practice Action Plan* that could have been incorporated into the plan had they been consulted in the policy decision-making process.

Following these critiques, the Response to the MCFD *Good Practice Action Plan* goes on to point out that "The Deputy Minister appears to be actively consulting First Nations Directors re: the proposed regionalization plan, only after pressure was brought to bear by the First Nations Directors Forum" (Nash & Jenkinson, 2007, p. 13). This example highlights the expectation of stakeholder groups to be consulted by government on policy reforms. This example also highlights that while public consultations may occur on some social policy issues, professional organizations with extensive subject expertise have at times not been included in policy formation processes.

In some cases, no public consultations occur in the policy formation phase. In the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' (CCPA) 2008 report on the restructuring of home and community healthcare services for seniors over the years 2001-2008, several recommendations were made on how to reform health care for seniors. The 2008 CCPA report noted that there have been no consultations with families and communities on strategies for senior care in over a decade and that there are serious and widespread concerns about the performance of the system. The CCPA recommends province-wide, community based consultations to ensure that home and community care is restructured in a way that is responsive to the needs of families and communities in BC (Cohen, 2009).

Across interviews with the NDP MSDSI Critic, disability advocates, and a policy analyst with the CCPA, there was a consistent lack of trust in the government's Disability White Paper consultation process. During our research, we interviewed some stakeholders who expressed a general concern that the consultation process would be insincere and would not be fully inclusive of people living with disabilities. We cannot assess how justifiable their distrust of this process is, given that it has not yet concluded; however, it is worth noting that some stakeholder groups lack trust in the consultation processes because of a lack of follow up that occurs in some consultations. There is no consistent mechanism through which the province reports on the results from consultations. As a result, groups who participate in consultations do not know if their input was considered or if it affected the outcome.

This analysis suggests that the province of British Columbia sees value in public consultation and recognizes its importance in contemporary policy formation. The aforementioned examples also highlight the expectations of stakeholders and critics that government conduct meaningful, inclusive, and comprehensive consultations in decision-making processes. Nevertheless, the examples also highlight the ad hoc nature of current public consultation and the lack of consistent processes for consultations. Consultation occurs in some instances but not others, and at times includes the public and/or stakeholders while in other instances it does not. Public consultations could be more effective and trust in the process could be increased if guidelines were put in place and shared by all relevant parties. Additionally, guidelines for follow up could ensure that, even when recommendations arising from the consultations are not implemented, groups consulted understand that their perspective has been heard, increasing the transparency of the process. Given the public's expectations, consultation guidelines and communication of consultation results could increase public confidence in government.

2.1.2 Collaboration

Collaboration is the process by which groups work together to achieve a shared goal. In the context of social policy in BC, collaboration means that the government and other actors work together to improve the well-being of British Columbians. Collaboration can mean joint work, partnership initiatives, ongoing structures of consultation, or various combinations thereof: "Included in the collaboration continuum are information exchange, shared learning and training, integrated development plans and initiatives, consolidated application procedures and protocols, joint procurement and common evaluation" (CISP, 2009, p. 21).

Social policy delivery today is inherently collaborative. In BC, delivery happens through government ministries, crown corporations, health authorities, school boards, band councils, municipalities, and social service providers ranging in size from large organizations to smaller community non-profits. Social policy formation, however, is not inherently collaborative. It requires the provincial government to seek ongoing input and insight; to maintain a willingness to work collaboratively across its ministries and with social service providers to develop policies that address the complex social issues facing British Columbians.

The provincial government has embraced collaboration in much of their policy formation work. There are innumerable examples of cross-ministerial collaboration and collaboration between government actors and non-governmental organizations. The sheer quantity of collaborations occurring indicates that they are a key policy tool for the current government. Examples of current, ongoing collaborations are the Labour Market Agreement and Labour Market Development Agreement, which are being produced jointly by the MSDSI and the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training (MJTST). These agreements are also produced in conjunction with the priorities set out at the federal level by Employment and Social Development Canada (BCMSD & MJTST, 2012). This is an example of high level, inter-ministerial collaboration for the common goal of improved labour market outcomes.

Another example of high-level, collaborative policy formulation is the Child/Youth Health and Well-Being Indicators (2013) project initiated by the Provincial Health Officer. This project brings together representatives from the Ministry of Health, MCFD, MSDSI, the Office for the Representative of Children and Youth, and the Canadian Institute for Health Information. While it is too early to know if this project will result in collaborative programming, protocols or assessment measures, the project demonstrates a desire and willingness for multiple groups to work together towards the common purpose of improving child and youth health and well-being. A similar example can be found in the 2009 *Cross-Ministry Transition Planning Protocol Agreement for Youth with Special Needs,* which exemplifies collaboration in response to this emergent and complex policy problem.

Another collaborative policy formation structure is the Supporting Increased Participation Committee of MSDSI. This committee includes people with disabilities, business representatives, and provincial disability advocates to inform policy decisions aimed at increasing the participation of people with disabilities in society. Despite their being no publicly available information regarding this committee, its existence was raised in an interview with MSDSI ADM Molly Harrington. While this limits our ability to analyze its functioning, it is an important example, standing alone in terms of including stakeholders outside the Ministries themselves and in particular, those who are served by the programs under review.

The ability to track collaborations within the Ministry of Education is muddied by the multi-layered nature of collaboration in that ministry. Where there may appear to be gaps at the provincial level, such as lack of collaboration with the Ministry of Health around development and delivery of health curriculum,

there are often local collaborations happening at the district level – in this case, between regional health authorities and school districts.. This example illustrates the importance of distinguishing the levels at which collaboration occurs in the policy formation phase. In the case of education, collaboration on a community level between school boards and regional health authorities may produce more appropriate results than higher level collaboration.

An example that shows collaboration arising out of conflict is the Moving Forward Steering Committee at MSDSI, formed in response to a conflict between poverty advocates and ministry staff at a public event. The committee involves quarterly dialogues between poverty advocates throughout the province and MSDSI staff, serving as an opportunity for advocates to identify issues around administrative fairness related to eligibility forms or appeal processes. There are then regional calls to communicate outcomes with staff throughout provincial regions. This structure indicates willingness on the part of both the government and advocates to work together to improve administrative processes related to income assistance and disability. There is, however, no public record of this committee.

The number of collaborations occurring in the realm of social policy indicates that the provincial government is committed to incorporating collaboration into their decision-making structures and processes related to social policy. That said, it also becomes apparent that there is no institutional framework guiding collaboration, so collaboration may be ad hoc and not widely publicized. Some of the structures outlined were established to formulate a single policy or report, while others are ongoing structures of collaboration with no outcomes reporting and no publicly available information. A framework for collaboration with coherent guidelines for structure and reporting could make collaborative processes more effective.

2.1.3 Decision Making

Decision making in the public policy context requires establishing objectives against which policy options must be evaluated in order to discern the best course of action. Such objectives are set out by the decision-making body and reflect the values and priorities of that body. With a clear set of objectives and criteria with which to analyze policy options, a policy option can be chosen for implementation based on consistent evaluation of alternatives and the best possible information.

Social policy is concerned with overall well-being, and increasing levels of well-being is the broad goal of social policy. Well-being is not just a person's current situation but also a result of conditions and of care throughout their life. In order to enhance well-being, the government must decide what well-being consists of and determine social policy objectives that reflect societal values. Outcomes of increased well-being are used to measure and justify social policy decisions made by government. However, there appears to be a lack of overarching values, objectives, and priorities throughout the ministries involved in social policy and in some instances, even within a department/ministry. Although each ministry produces a Ministry Service Plan annually, outlining the ministry's goals and objectives, these are not generally aligned with other ministries', and thus there exists a lack of coordination and unification, which impedes overarching commitment to methods of improving societal well-being.

With a lack of unified objectives and priorities, different priorities are set with regard to decision-making processes, resulting in outcomes that may be incongruent with the broader goals of society. Some ministries value public and stakeholder input, giving them heavy consideration in the decision-making process. Molly Harrington, (ADM, MSDSI) attests to this, saying that "we get a lot of on-going correspondence and we mine that for information. Almost all of the decisions were grounded in that" (personal communication, Jan 9, 2014). On the other hand, from a non-profit organizations' perspective, the decision-making

process can be unclear or appear politically driven. Kelly Newhook, Executive Director of the Together Against Poverty Society, expresses this concern when she describes her interactions with the government:

> If they thought the letters of advocacy were just coming in and stopping there, they wouldn't have done anything. It was when it became political, that's when they responded. Once they realized that this will speak to their supporters re: helps to facilitate employment. Fits with the ideology. Now that we've paid attention to it, and realize that it fits within our ideology, we'll go for it….Not sure how they made the decision really. Just came down to, they had to do something. They were getting lots of negative media attention. TAPS did play a major role in doing that. (personal communication, Dec 13, 2013)

When stakeholders are left feeling that a commitment to the well-being of British Columbians solidifies only when an issue becomes hotly politicized, questions arise. As is true of many of the processes we assess in this paper, we cannot know whether the process actually occurs as described or simply happens such that this perception arises, but in either case, trust in social policy decisions made is eroded. While each ministry has clear goals and objectives, the reality is that there are often barriers to achieving them, and when there are not shared goals and values that are transparent and clear to all, it can be difficult for stakeholders to understand the basis for any given decision. Sometimes the resulting decisions require *satisficing* —some sacrifice for a satisfactory outcome. As an ADM of MSDSI told us in an interview, sometimes you have to give up something in order to get something, and other times you are able to get limited items approved at a certain point in time. When such trade-offs are unknown to relevant stakeholders, however, decision-making processes may themselves be an impediment to the best possible outcome.

Another pattern of decision making that is of note is when the process itself is entirely unclear. One example comes from the 2011 *Internal Audit and Advisory Service Review of the Justice System,* which found that no business cases were created to guide decision making for the Small Claims Court Initiative, Downtown Community Court, or Bail Reform program, and only a high-level business case was created for the Small Claims Tribunal initiative (BCMF, 2011). The result, there seems to be no means of communicating why or how decisions are made. A Final Report to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General found "the frequent use in justice system decision making of data that was in substance anecdote" (Cowper, 2012, p.88). Any decision-making process driven by anecdotal data indicates a problem, but this is especially deleterious, given the nature of the MOJ's work. A final example of unclear objectives within the decision-making process comes from the Ministry of Health (MOH), which spent approximately $250 million on an electronic health records system. The MOH Auditor General indicated "It remains unclear how electronic health records will be deployed to users and what benefits will ultimately be realized" (OAGBC, 2010, p.10).

Within the Ministry of Education, there are indicators of budget-driven approaches to decision making. While some aspects of the education system are consultative and effective, such as curriculum development and evaluation, other areas seem highly budget-driven. For example, instead of the Ministry analyzing what students' needs are and then calculating per-student funding, a budget is given and then per-student funding and program availability are made to fit the budget (see, for example, Resource Management Division, 2009 and 2010). Program costs are definitely an aspect that government must consider, but when budgets appear to drive decisions, we again see a situation where there may seem to be no overarching values or objectives behind policy decisions.

The patterns in decision making shown in the preceding examples illustrate how there can be differing priorities within ministries and an appearance of disunity across ministries, leading to situations where

chosen policy initiatives may not support broader societal goals of well-being. On the other hand, as ministries do currently clearly publicize their goals and objectives, there is potential for considerable gains to be made in improving decision-making processes through unification of those objectives and goals, such that decisions are clearly tied to the values and priorities that underlie them. Inconsistencies in the decision-making processes stem from differing objectives and/or lack of clear connections between goals and policy decisions within and across ministries. Smaller-scale and short-term policy goals guided by and made within the larger context have the potential to meet societal objectives and increase well-being better than current processes in part because consistency in decision making is likely to lead to more predictable and reliable outcomes.

2.2 Program Delivery

Similar to what has been demonstrated through the processes of policy formation, social program delivery is another stage of the policy process where ministries face similar obstacles for several reasons. Most ministries have a large and diverse scope of programs and services that fall under their responsibility. Many programs also fall within multiple ministerial jurisdictions and those of non-governmental agencies; thus, strategies on approaching program delivery must be sound and consistent in the face of structural challenges. The BC government is responsible for a large number of services; without an overarching framework that outlines a consistent approach to service delivery, practices can be lost through program or structural change.

2.2.1 Implementation

Program implementation requires cooperation across different levels of government, administration, and with other groups. For example, a program targeted at mental health could, in theory, be connected to the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Child and Family Development, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Justice. Beyond the government, there are also crown agencies such as Community Living BC and non-profit agencies such as Family Services of Greater Vancouver who are involved in program delivery. All of these agencies, which subscribe to different mandates and have varied levels of impact with government and community, ostensibly have one thing in common: the goal of improving the social welfare of the people of British Columbia. Currently, there are great efforts being made in this area, but there is concern that these different agencies are siloed and receive little guidance on how to implement programs after policy is formulated.

In the implementation stage, some service deliverables and program initiatives are transferred from high ministerial levels to front line staff. The Integrated Case Management (ICM) system is an example of this transfer process. It was developed with the intent to make information easily accessible, improve information flow between users (such as case workers), and increase client interactions. Many issues emerged in the initial implementation phases due to project oversight. Both the Freedom of Information and Privacy Association (FIPA) and the Representative of Children and Youth BC issued statements regarding their concern with the number of technical issues, privacy concerns, and difficulties for front line staff in using the new system. While implementation of any new system, especially a new software system intended to replace 64 different programs, will face initial challenges, the major critique of the initial implementation of ICM was the lack of contingency planning in order to adequately meet challenges that arose during implementation (RCYBC, 2012). Contingency plans must be developed for such large-scale infrastructure change to ensure initial unexpected difficulties can be addressed promptly. It is surprising that there was

no contingency plan in place on a project that cost upwards of $300 million that dealt with such critical information. Having guidelines that incorporate these expectations and procedures is necessary to prevent such problems from arising in the future.

An example of implementation challenges in a program created for use by the public or qualified individuals is the Sexual Abuse Intervention Program. Sexual abuse is known to be a risk factor for severe mental health problems, and the Sexual Abuse Intervention Program (SAIP) was established in 1990 with a reallocation of $3 million across four ministries to the Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) budget of the Ministry of Health. In 1996, CYMH was transferred to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). This demonstrates the fragility of consistency within initiatives due to the possibility of transfers from one Ministry to another and changes in responsibility. A review focusing on this program identified four issues undermining successful program delivery that resulted from this transfer: the mandate of the program, program funding, supports for vendors to achieve deliverables, and the contract management process.

> The mandate of SAIP programs, as understood by providers, is inconsistent across the province in relation to the target population and the scope of services. Programs were found to adopt different client eligibility criteria and to differ in terms of the intensity and duration of services provided, as well as the model and orientation of treatments employed. Contributing factors include differing interpretations, and perceived obsolescence, of the provincial SAIP guidelines, inconsistencies or ambiguities in contract wording, and agency board or management decisions based on the philosophy and orientation of individual organizations. The result is an ambiguous program mandate and policy environment in which service procurement and program delivery decisions occur. (McEwan, 2006, p. 3)

The issues raised in this statement appear in many programs and initiatives. The annual Service Plan reports produced by each ministry show many areas where implementation challenges may arise because of insufficient transparency, connectedness, and goals that capture the extent to which service(s) are being used and/or delivered. In the review report of SAIP, there is mention of objectives and goals being unclear, vague, and in some cases, directed more towards family functioning than child sexual abuse (McEwan, 2006). This is inconsistent with the purpose of the program, may create inequities, and certainly makes it more difficult to identify necessary further program developments. A framework for guidance on implementing social programs has the potential to—at the very least—reduce the confusion so commonly associated with program implementation.

2.2.2 Consistency

The programs and services provided under various ministries are for the benefit and ultimate well-being of those who use them. In order to provide the best possible services and service levels, programs and services must be revised and altered when new information comes to light, new methods and processes are developed, and evaluations indicate effectiveness; however, in BC, programs and services may start up, stop, or change for many reasons other than effectiveness. While budgets and political priorities necessarily affect programs and services, a lack of overarching goals can cause negative impacts, leading to inconsistent service provision, whether of a specific program or in geographic or demographic availability of a program. In this section, we use the term consistency to refer to stable and common goals and outcomes within a single program, across programs, and longitudinally, over time.

One example where the consistency of program delivery is currently questionable comes from EmbraceBC's multicultural initiatives. While many of the programs supported are of high quality and address pressing needs, service providers may not be connected, may function differently, and may overlap

or leave gaps because there is no apparent overarching plan or strategy. This means there are potentially differing levels of service and differing levels of accessibility across the province to services that are important for helping all British Columbians realize the full benefits of the diverse society in which they live.

Some areas of service delivery are highly consistent. Community social service providers are often scrutinized and accused of lacking coordination and consistency, but Christine Mohr, Executive Director of Options Community Resources, says this simply is not the case. Mohr reports she is constantly working with other non-profits within Surrey to establish goals and objectives to guide decisions about what services will be offered in the community. Such coordination, however, does not eliminate the perception problems of service duplication and lack of coordination that may leave these programs and services at particular risk of cutbacks or elimination. This perception problem may then begin a feedback cycle, where perceptions of inconsistency lead to cuts, generating actual, and sometimes unjustified, variance in service provision.

Consistency is a fundamental aspect of equity insofar as it ensures that everyone has access to similar services to support their well-being. Both consistency and perceptions of consistency are important to achieving and maintaining such equity; moreover, inconsistency in the delivery of programs and lack of communication about program changes may have unintended impacts such as lack of engagement, barriers to program access, and public distrust.

2.2.3 Collaboration

Collaboration among the different parts of the social service sector is a vital part of program implementation because of BC's multi-layered service provision model; government agencies must work with community partners. Collaboration requires common best practices among ministries and relevant agencies. Several programs included in our research demonstrate how effective collaboration can be for service delivery but also illustrate how, without guidelines for the social service sector as a whole, collaboration can quickly become lost and chaotic.

Collaboration in program implementation occurs quite frequently. For example, ActNowBC is a cross-government health initiative geared at preventative lifestyle actions such as healthy eating and physical fitness. ActNowBC works with BC Parks and Recreation to promote and measure physical activity in communities. They work with BC schools to increase physical activity during school time and through extra-curricular activity, as well as with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Agriculture to deliver healthier food choices in schools. The Ministry of Health and Coastal Health Authority have recently developed an Aboriginal Health Authority, and the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation includes a focus on "…better education and job training, healthier family life, and strengthened cultures and traditions for off-reserve Aboriginal people in British Columbia" (BCMARR, 2012, n.p.n.), a focus that requires extensive inter-ministerial collaboration and cooperation. The extent to which ministries actively seek collaboration and are actually in need of collaboration is evidence of the need for guidelines on how to facilitate such collaboration.

A review report of Community Living BC (BCMF-IAAC, 2011) states that there are agreements between CLBC and ministries and other agencies on the coordination of services for persons with developmental disabilities, "However, there can be a lack of clarity over which organization is responsible for providing various aspects of client service needs, particularly when youths are transitioning to adult services," (p. 16). This shows that the intention for collaboration in service delivery is clearly present and underway in these ministry programs; however, there is need for refinement. According to a review of CLBC, there

are changes in service levels between child and adult systems due to inconsistent goals on how to care for adults and children, different tools used for assessing program eligibility, and an overall reduction in adult services offered in comparison to youth services. There is such a variety of services available, different types of organizations offering those services, and in most cases, numerous program-specific requirements to be fulfilled that many people in need of such services become confused or caught up in unnecessary bureaucracy.

> The government's intent to improve collaboration and coordination among public agencies has been difficult to fully realize, due primarily to different interpretations of roles and responsibilities for providing certain services and legislation. Additionally, transition into adulthood coincides with graduation from school, and unless youth find employment, the adult system cannot always fill the gap in services left by the absence of educational programs. (p. 15)

Several agreements and other mechanisms have been created to address this gap such as *The Cross-Ministry Transition Planning Protocol Agreement for Youth with Special Needs, The Services for Transitioning Youth MCFD-CLBC Operating Agreement,* and *The Guidelines for Collaborative Service Delivery for Adults with Developmental Disabilities*, but it is unclear at this time to what extent these guidelines have been successfully implemented or whether they are used consistently. Certainly, their proliferation hints that efficiency could be increased by having a standing framework to guide collaborative processes.

Collaboration not only helps with effective program planning and delivery, but also with fundamentals such as knowledge on where to send clients. The review of CLBC found that staff focused on what services CLBC could provide and often failed to recognize other government programs (BCMF-IAAC, 2011). Engaging staff of organizations geared toward social initiatives to become involved with collaboration would help broaden all parties' scope of knowledge of programs available, better equipping them to ensure those who need services are able to access them.

2.2.4 Funding Decisions

How funds are allocated, how funding decisions are made, and how such decisions are communicated and justified are crucial issues for, and affect relationships with, the service provision sector, those in need of services, and the general public. Tensions arise as each ministry and program competes for funding allocations in a context of limited resources. These tensions can lead to a tendency to focus on funding levels when funding processes are also crucial in terms of ensuring positive outcomes.

As funding issues are contentious by definition, there is a tendency towards critique on all sides. In analyzing examples of funding processes for BC programs and Ministries responsible for social policy areas, a number of questions emerge: are funding allocations and priorities consistent; is there justification funding levels and changes to them; is there inconsistent, inequitable, and/or episodic funding; and is there perceived downloading of costs and/or responsibilities to community level organizations without necessary systems or supports?

Where there are questions about whether priorities stated by government match funding allocations or systems for allocation, part of the problem may be in communication between government, the public, or other relevant actors. Part of the problem likely also stems from the complexity of social policy and related programs, the multitude of programs, service providers, and relevant actors in the sector, and a lack of coordinated priorities across relevant ministries. We encountered this pattern in reviewing examples of programs under the Ministry of Health and of Child and Family Development.

In Health, issues of prevention and sustainability were highlighted by government in 2013, but 5% of

healthcare expenditures are going to programs that aim at prevention of disease and poor health, while short-term acute care expenditures account for more than 50% of health care spending (OAGBC, 2013). This mismatch, as identified in this report by BC's Auditor General, is an example of an apparent problem. Looking at those numbers, it may be concluded as it was in the Auditor General's report, that funding does not match priorities, or that priorities are insufficiently communicated, creating a perception of a mismatch. In the Ministry of Children and Families, there is an example of a possible mismatch between a program change and the structures to support the change. According to B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, $66 million was spent to try to improve measures for aboriginal children, but she says that the effects of the funding are unknown because there were insufficient structures for reporting and accountability. The goal was to shift programming to First Nations service providers, but the rationale for the way it was done is unclear.

That funding levels change over time for social policy programs and ministries is inevitable; changes arise, if nothing else, from the need to keep up with inflation, but also, as program results are monitored or priorities change, funding understandably shifts to the most effective or highest priority programs. Such changes are not a problem in and of themselves, but when stakeholders are not given reasons for these changes, the perception can arise that changes are either not justified or are politically motivated. This perception may be accurate or inaccurate; a lack of communication and/or transparency makes it impossible to know which is the case. This pattern around perceptions of funding changes arose in our examination of funding in particular in the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education.

In the *Ministry of Justice Reform Final Report*, the author notes that "As a result of the government's core services review several years ago, non-governmental organizations had substantial cuts made to their funding" (Cowper, 2012, p. 10). There is no stated justification for such cuts, or at least, none that is provided, and the author characterizes the cuts as political, which results in questions about how funding decisions are justified. Similar issues come up in the Ministry of Education with regard to the systems through which school boards, and thus schools, receive funding. Previously in this paper, the perceived problem of per student funding allocations changing based on a desired, fixed allocation to the Ministry is identified as problematic decision making, but it should be noted that this also creates perceptions of politicized funding decisions as no justification is provided for the per student funding allotments that result. Further, in the 2010/11 school year, reporting requirements were changed with no justification given. Previously, school boards had submitted annual enrolment figures in September that determined their funding allocations (BCME, 2009). After the change, school boards were required to submit such enrolment data three times per year (BCME, 2010), tripling the administrative workload attached to the funding allocation process. By making it harder to obtain funding, this change may be seen as evidence of a desire by government to decrease funding at a time when school boards were already facing funding shortfalls.

While funding may change for many reasons, the rate of change is important for service providers and recipients alike. Rapid change may allow a government to appear responsive and flexible; however, such change can destabilize programs and create inconsistencies because of the complex networks of community service providers in BC. Inconsistencies can create inequity across regions of the province, and inequity can also arise where groups or programs must compete for funding. These issues of instability, inconsistency, and inequity create a pattern that is concerning because it may directly impede the provision of necessary services. Within this pattern, information asymmetry may exacerbate the problem: if relevant actors were all kept abreast of changes to funding and reasons for, for instance, regional concentrations of funding, then service providers would be better able to plan for changes, which would help mitigate the problem.

Of the cases we examined, the Ministry of Children and Family Development is where this pattern emerged most markedly. Claire Trevena, the MLA for North Island and MCFD Critic, calls the current funding model where service providers reapply for grants each year "unacceptable." She characterizes lack of stable funding as an impediment to provision of consistent programs and services (Hewlett, 2012). While such critique is to be expected from someone in a critic position, the same pattern is substantiated in Queenswood Consulting's 2009 Review of Women's Transition Houses in BC, which found that the lack of a consistent and transparent funding model has resulted in disparities in service availability and access across the province. Their report also takes aim at the yearly-grant funding model, which they say means "that there is currently no standard framework to properly plan, allocate and account for program resources" (p. 4). One result of this is inequity: funding and thus service levels vary highly both between and within urban and rural areas.

Inequity, then, can occur as a by-product of inconsistency, but the funding model used by the Ministry responsible for multiculturalism shows that it can also be an inherent function of funding allocation. This Ministry spends approximately $197,000 annually on multicultural initiatives. This funding goes through another government agency, EmbraceBC; applications from organizations seeking funding go through BCBid, a competitive grant process (EmbraceBC, 2014). Clearly, funding for community multiculturalism projects is important, and a mechanism is required to make decisions about dispensing such funds, but it is concerning to see the use of a competitive bid system for multicultural projects so similar to what we might see for infrastructure projects because the stakes are so different: regardless of who wins out in the bidding process, a bridge is going to get built. The same cannot be said of, for instance, a community celebration of a holiday that is important to an ethnic or religious group in that community. The funding section of the EmbraceBC (2014) website includes the following stipulation: "Folk, cultural and ethno-specific festivals or projects that do not have an educational focus or do not engage broad and diverse audiences are not eligible for funding." The term 'broad' raises concerns; taken with other comments in the funding section, there arises the implication that bigger ethno-cultural groups are likely to have better success in the bid process. This may create an impression inconsistent with the very purpose of the Ministry insofar as it is not vested in the multicultural notion of the equal worth and value of all groups in Canada.

Finally, within MCFD, we see one last pattern that warrants consideration: that, at least in some cases, there is a perception that responsibilities and costs are being downloaded to communities and community organizations. This perception is no doubt connected to the community model of service delivery, which is in and of itself laudable, but which brings with it the risk of a lack of clarity about accountability and responsibility. A certain amount of this may be inevitable, but this perception seems to be held by so many within service provision organizations that it is impossible to ignore.

At the 2013 Annual General Meeting of BoardVoice, we heard this critique again and again. One member of BoardVoice said that when the organization that she represented formed, she felt they had a good partnership with MCFD, but that today, they felt abandoned by their partner. The NDP Critic echoes that concern, saying that "although the effort is housed within the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the management and cost is downloaded on individual community organizations" (Hewlett, 2012, n.p.n). With regard to spending for aboriginal children, BC's Youth and Children Representative, Turpel-Lafond, says that for over a decade, the BC government has sought to offload responsibility, and that they "…need to end the dream of having someone else do the job for them" (Hunter, 2013, n.p.n). Because of the number of funding mechanisms used by this ministry, it is challenging to get a clear

snapshot of their entire model, but these criticisms suggest that priorities are either unclear or not communicated, and that effort is needed to ensure the community service provision model does not impede clear accountability by the Ministry.

While there appears to be a number of funding challenges in social program delivery, issues with coordination and values-based decision seem pervasive. If ministries were able to communicate the values and objectives behind the funding models, then not only would decisions likely be better accepted by stakeholders, but the models themselves may be subject to review to ensure that the allocation of resources to the various programs and services under the social policy umbrella occur according to planned and principled priorities shared by all involved.

2.3 Policy Assessment

Although often relegated to the status of an afterthought, sound policy assessment is critical for ensuring the appropriate, efficient, and effective functioning of public programs and services. This importance is due to the role of such assessments in measuring the degree to which policies both meet specific program objectives and contribute to broader societal goals, information that can then be utilized to guide and inform subsequent actions, such as:

- creation of new policies to fill gaps
- modification of existing policies to better meet objectives
- changes to the structure of the policy process
- improvements to accountability mechanisms

Without timely, accurate information on the impacts and outcomes of policies, the ability of government to make informed decisions about the need for these and other actions is severely hampered. As such, this section is concerned with providing a general overview of the state of policy assessment in the social policy sector by examining first, the degree to which formal reporting is undertaken, and second, the validity of the measures used in areas where reporting is being performed.

2.3.1 Reporting

In this section 'reporting' is understood to refer to the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data related to specific policies for the purpose of assessing performance and guiding decision making. Although this concept of reporting is not new, over the last two decades, with the explosion of information technologies and the volumes of data now available, reporting has become much more valuable and vital to organizations. This value is particularly apparent in the context of government policy, where decisions that affect the lives of large populations are the norm, but assessing the causal impacts of those decisions is extremely difficult.

Clear evidence of recognition of this value at the highest levels of government is seen in the implementation of *The Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* of 2000/2001, which required all government ministries and organizations to produce an annual service plan outlining goals, objectives, and intended outcomes over the following three years. These documents are used primarily as a communication tool to inform the public of the nature of each ministry's work at a general level; however, there is also evidence of recognition of the importance of reporting at a more detailed, operational level as well. For example, in the Ministry of Health's 2013 *Guiding Framework for Public Health*, on the topic of health surveillance, which refers to tracking program use and outcomes, it is remarked that

> The foundational nature of public health surveillance means it will need to be considered as part of the planning process for all public health initiatives being undertaken or proposed in the future. Some aspects of surveillance are better developed than others. The development of a coordinated and collaborative system of public health surveillance is a priority in the years ahead to better integrate data, ensure effective public health planning, guide in the development of policies and strategies, direct resource allocation and support program evaluation. (p. 46)

Another clear example can be found in a 2006 report on oversight and accountability mechanisms at the Ministry of Children and Family Development, where it is noted that

> …the Ministry has made strong progress over the past several years in terms of adopting a relatively sophisticated workload monitoring tool, making improvements to its data collection and data reporting, and better measuring inputs and outputs. (Thorau, 2006, p. 16)

However, despite this evidence that the need for robust and coordinated reporting is recognized, the government social policy sector appears to suffer from a patchwork of reporting structures in some areas and an absence of systematic reporting in others; significant examples follow:

- In their report on community healthcare for seniors, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that the Ministry of Health performs no standardized reporting on service utilization and expenditures by type of service, leading them to argue for the need for "Annual public reporting on every home and community program…in each health authority, using a standardized format…" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 46)
- A 2009 BC Ombudsperson's report on income assistance in BC found that MSDSI kept no statistics on the number of approvals or denials of income assistance applications, and notes that

  > …the ministry indicated that the number of employable clients had declined by 70 per cent since 2002…However, the report doesn't comment on whether the reduction may also be due to fewer people being approved for income assistance – a number the ministry acknowledges that it doesn't track. (BC Ombudsperson, 2009, p. 43)

- A 2006 report on MCFD notes that

  > Measures and targets in the Ministry of Children and Family Development Service Plan…have changed regularly and significantly year by year. Also, the measures in the Service plan are limited to output measures for service delivery; there are no measures around outcomes for children receiving protection services. (Thorau, 2006, p. 36)

- A 2012 report on reform recommendations for the Ministry of Justice found that the Ministry needed to "…establish methods to systematically gather data respecting performance measures and other useful data which can be regularly reported on and featured as part of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Council's annual report" and to "…distribute key business intelligence information related to both the strategic system goals as well as branch-specific goals, to local professionals and staff and encourage discussion and debate on the information" (Cowper, 2012, p. 11).
- The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation provides statistics on the numbers of treaties and associated agreements, but provides no statistics on the implementation or impacts of agreements.
- Although the Ministry of Education reports on levels of graduation and standardized test scores, no statistics are measured that could help inform explanations of these changes, such as drop-out rates or demographic changes.

Although these examples by no means give a comprehensive picture of the state of reporting across the government social policy sector, they do indicate serious gaps in reporting coverage and coordination on issues

of significant impact. The reasons for these gaps and inconsistencies are varied and cannot be covered in any detail here, but it should be noted that they are often related to frequent changes in priorities and to a lack of resources. Despite these challenges, it is vital that the province move towards greater coverage across social policy domains and common reporting and data standards to ensure cross-policy consistency and reliable information for decision-makers. A social policy framework could help the province meet these objectives by mandating common reporting standards and shared data facilities, where feasible and appropriate.

2.3.2 Measures

Although standardized reporting is required for a robust reporting framework, it is not sufficient to ensure good reporting as it is also vital that the reports themselves use valid measures. In this section 'measures' are understood to be the criteria by which policy objectives and goals are assessed as being met or unmet. Such criteria are usually quantitative, e.g. number of people on social assistance, but can also be qualitative, e.g. focus group feedback on a given policy. With regard to a given objective, a measure is said to be valid when it provides strong justification for conclusions about causal links between policy actions and observed outcomes.

The importance of using valid measures in reporting is worth making explicit: first, valid measures allow us to reliably identify causal connections between policies and their impacts, or lack thereof. The second reason is that valid measures allow us to better assess the magnitude of these impacts – that is, to what degree an objective or goal is being met by a policy. Conversely, the danger of utilizing invalid or incomplete measures is that they can under-inform or mislead with regard to the existence and/or magnitude of impacts, and so contribute to uninformed decision making. Making these risks explicit clarifies how critical valid measures are for an evidence-based policy process to function effectively.

One of the most outstanding examples of government recognition of the necessity of valid measures can be found in a joint project by the Canadian Institute for Health Information and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer for BC on the development of child and youth well-being indicators (OPHO, 2013). The aim of the project was to use literature reviews and consultations with subject matter experts to identify the most relevant indicators of child and youth well-being and develop methodologies and documentation for data collection and measurement that could be used across ministries. Their 'Lessons Learned' section provides valuable insights into the challenges associated with developing valid measures, particularly across policy domains; such as, the difficulty in defining what counts as good evidence, finding a common language, and determining the link between concepts (e.g. literacy) and a proposed indicator (e.g. grade 10 literacy level). Their attempts to provide a comprehensive set of child and youth well-being indicators by working through such complex issues shows clear recognition of the issue of measure validity.

Unfortunately, within many areas of social policy, the measures used to report on objectives and goals are incomplete at best, may be of dubious validity, and are non-existent at worst. In the case of incomplete measures, this issue often comes in the form of an overemphasis on program utilization metrics without complementary measures of program outcomes (i.e. means rather than ends). For example, one of the primary objectives and the associated measure in the Ministry of Health's 2012/2013 *Service Plan* is:

> **Objective:** Individuals are supported in their efforts to maintain and improve their health through health promotion and disease prevention
>
> **Measure:** Per cent of communities that have completed healthy living strategic plans

Although this may be a perfectly valid measure for levels of program utilization, without further measures that assess links between program utilization and improved health outcomes, it is not possible to

discern the degree to which the objective is being met. This issue is not uncommon; for example, in a 2008 progress report on the ActNow BC (2006) program the section on measures explicitly recognizes a focus on program implementation goals only (ActNow BC, 2008), while the section on progress towards the 2010 goals only examines population-level trends related to the program areas (e.g. tobacco use and physical activity) without any explicit causal connection being made between the ActNow BC program and the population trends. Again, while both of these sorts of measures are valid and relevant to assessing the program, they are substantially incomplete and so do not provide adequate grounds for assessing the overall objective.

Our study also encountered examples of measures of questionable validity. A representative example of this can be seen in the revised 2013/14 – 2015/16 Service Plan of MSDSI, where the following objective and associated measure can be found:

> **Objective:** Accessible services that support increased independence and sustainable employment for those British Columbians in need
>
> **Measure:** Expected to Work and Expected to Work Medical Condition caseload as a percentage of the population aged 19-64

Although at first glance this measure appears to have validity, this impression quickly changes when we consider, first, that significant changes in this measure can occur due to factors that lie outside of the MSDSI's policy domain such as the province's economic performance, demographic changes, or levels of immigration; and second, that within the MSDSI's policy domain, there could be changes captured by this measure but have nothing to do with increases in independence or sustainable employment, such as changes to eligibility criteria for relevant programs.

Another variation on the theme of questionable measure validity appears in the 2012-2013 *Service Plan* of Ministry of Justice where the following objectives and associated measures are listed:

Objectives:
- Clear Governance
- Common Understanding
- Performance Focus

Measures:
- Percentage of British Columbians who have a 'great deal of' or 'quite a lot of' confidence in the justice system
- Number of Ministry data sets available on the DataBC website
- Cumulative number of binding British Columbia Provincial Policing Standards approved for implementation

In this case, it is unclear which measures apply to which objectives and if the measures are valid indicators of any of the objectives. Thus, the validity of the measures is further clouded by the structure of the objectives and measures.

A final, and perhaps the most severe, example of the measure validity problem can be found in the Ministry of Education's 2012-2013 Service Plan, where the following objective is listed:

> **Objective:** Effective Support for Teachers

Unfortunately, no measures at all are defined for this objective, only strategies for communication and support. The usefulness (or lack thereof) of an objective without any associated measures requires no comment, but the example helps make apparent the implication of neglecting measure validity in any of the three ways covered: an under-informed or distorted understanding of policy outcomes results, due to deficits in relevant information.

From this brief sample, we observe that the issue of measurement validity has been recognized within government, and concerted efforts have been made in some areas to address it, but that despite these efforts,

the issue remains widespread. One possible approach to addressing these measurement challenges for each ministry to formulate explicit standards for measures to be used in reporting, but given the integrated nature of social policy, this could create further consistency and coordination-related problems across social policy domains. For this reason, a preferable approach would be to integrate broad standards for measures into a social policy framework to ensure cross-domain consistency. This could take the form, for example, of mandating the use of both program utilization and outcome measures where appropriate and feasible, or the formulation of common definitions of concepts used across social policy domains and standard measures for them. Although this would not guarantee the use of valid measures, it would set a common and explicit standard upon which reforms could be based.

Section 3: Conclusion

3.1 Summary of Key Findings

The intent of Part 1 has been to provide evidence of the significant challenges currently facing social policy in British Columbia and to locate these challenges within the context of the overall policy process. Using this framework, our key findings are as follows:

Policy Formation:

- While consultations to solicit input from various stakeholders have been, or are being, performed in certain cases, there appear to be few guidelines in place to provide direction on when and how consultations should take place – this in turn has facilitated distrust in the sincerity and effectiveness of consultations by the government when they do occur.
- Cross-ministerial/agency collaborations on social policy issues appear to be common, but the lack of any institutional framework guiding these practices appears to have reduced their potential effectiveness through wasted effort and duplication.
- Differing priorities and standards of decision making in ministries and agencies have led to decisions that appear to be at odds with the broader goals of social policy, creating an apparent disunity in policies across the sector.

Program Delivery:

- Complex program implementations appear to frequently suffer from a lack of transparency, communication, and shared goals among the participating organizations.
- A lack of program consistency in quality or access, whether real or perceived, has adverse or unanticipated impacts on both public well-being and the public's trust in government to deliver programs effectively.
- While collaboration within government and between government and non-governmental organizations on program delivery is common, these collaborations often lack clear guidelines to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.
- Funding decisions in the social policy sector frequently appear to be based on insufficient evidence or non-evidence-based motivations, and where clear rationale does exist it is often not clearly communicated to stakeholders.

Policy Assessment:

- There appear to be significant gaps and inconsistencies in reporting across the social policy sector, potentially resulting in under-informed decision making and cross-policy inconsistency.

- Measures used in reporting in the social policy sector often appear to be either incomplete, invalid, or missing altogether. This creates risks for under-informed decision making and cross-policy inconsistency.

From these findings, it is evident that major gains in the effectiveness of social policy in BC could be made through reforms focused on shared prioritization of issues, a common understanding of values, and clear processes.

3.2 Next Steps

There are many forms that the coordination needed in BC social policy could take, but given the scope and number of parties involved, the broader the premise and reach of the coordination, the better. Following on this research, Part 2 examines how such coordination has worked in other jurisdictions, and what, if any, of those experiences may be transferable to BC, including exploration of the unique benefits and challenges to any such processes that may arise in BC. Following this, Part 3 offers a preliminary assessment of what would be needed to make such a tool successful in BC and what the potential impacts could be given the specific challenges that the province currently faces.

PART 2
Policy Framework Processes: Lessons for BC

Introduction

Part 2 undertakes an exploration of processes by which social policy frameworks or other similar policy structures have been created. Section 1 explores processes that have been used in other jurisdictions and derives lessons from them. While the research team examined a number of international examples of such processes, these tended to be based on values or history that is not applicable to the BC context and/or occur through systems that are substantially different from those in BC. As a result, this section focuses on Canadian examples. Processes in Saskatchewan, the BC Ministry of Health, London Ontario, and Nova Scotia, are analyzed, but the bulk of the section focuses on Newfoundland and Alberta, where the framework processes went far enough to permit more substantive assessment. These two provinces present the most appropriate guides for development of a social policy framework in any Canadian jurisdiction.

Section 2 focuses on applying lessons learned in the cases examined to the BC context. Seven key lessons are presented with detailed discussion of their application to and implications for BC; recommendations selected for analysis have been deemed to be of greatest importance and those that need to be considered or applied differently as a result of context or circumstances that are unique to BC.

Section 1: Processes and Lessons from Canadian Jurisdictions

Several jurisdictions across Canada have attempted to put a social policy framework in place – some more successfully than others. This section summarizes the policy frameworks and highlights key processes that contributed to their success or failure.

1.1 Saskatchewan

The ***Saskatchewan Disability Inclusion Policy Framework*** was produced in 2007 to complement the *Saskatchewan Disability Action Plan*. It was developed by the Office of Disability Issues and was criticized immediately upon release (Watson, 2011). The stated purpose the framework consultation process was to "provide advice on issues affecting individuals with disabilities, to obtain direct input from individuals with

disabilities on issues related to government programs, policies and priorities and to assist in the development of a government policy framework" (p. 9).

There were two main critiques that arose from the 2007 *Saskatchewan Disability Inclusion Policy Framework*. The first critique was that the consultations were "too little, too late" as the process had started many years earlier (Watson, 2011). The second critique was that there was a lack of consultation with persons with disabilities, despite consultation and inclusion being central to the *Disability Framework* and the 2001 *Disability Action Plan* (Watson, 2011). This lack of consultation with persons with disabilities led to a framework that was not based on a disability lens and therefore did not offer much substance beyond listing values and goals (Watson, 2011). Even the document's values and goals were questioned, as critics felt its vision statement was "too narrow in focus, lack[ing] substance and reaffirm[ing] the binary us/them dichotomy that pervades the experience of minority populations" (p. 10), especially in comparison to the much more inclusive *Action Plans* already in place in other policy areas. Another point of contention was the framework's lack of actual plans or strategies for disability inclusion; much of the document reported progress to date (Watson, 2011). This reflects the Office of Disability Issues' disconnect with the community's wants and needs.

1.1.1 Lesson from Saskatchewan

- Consultation with those affected is a key component to the success of a social policy framework.

Good consultation has the potential to create buy-in. A key piece to gaining acceptance for a plan or program is to ensure affected groups feel heard by representing their needs and voices accurately.

1.2 BC Ministry of Health

In 2013, in preparation for a planned report on health and well-being indicators for children and youth, the Office of the Provincial Health Officer for BC partnered with the Canadian Institute for Health Information and engaged in a process with the Ministries of Health, Children and Family Development, Education, and Social Development, as well as the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth, and "other stakeholders at the national, provincial, and regional levels" (BCPHO & CIHI, 2013, p. 2) to develop a framework on child and youth health and well-being, as well as the indicators that would be used by the ministries involved to report outcomes. The summary document from this process walks through many considerations, presents a framework, and develops related indicators.

In reviewing what was developed, there is little indication of public involvement; consultation seems to have been largely intra-governmental. No information is readily available regarding the extent of the process engaged in, and that itself is telling in terms of the limited depth and breadth of the process undertaken. Most crucially, the planned report does not seem to have been produced, and the ministries involved are not using the common measures developed. There may be many reasons for this failure, but process seems to play a role insofar as it suggests limits on buy-in and uptake of the framework and indicators. Without broad public or sectoral engagement or awareness, there is little external pressure to adhere to the model developed.

1.2.1 Lessons from BC

- A sense of involvement and ownership by the general public and the service provision sector is vital to uptake of policy frameworks

In order to ensure that similar uptake problems do not occur with an SPF developed in BC, it is important to heed this example and identify what must not be repeated from this past process. A sense of ownership of the SPF should be created through a broad-based process such that external pressure from those who participated in the process ensures use of the framework that results.

1.3. London, Ontario

As a complement to London's corporate strategic plan, the Department of Community Services developed a social policy framework to identify issues related to well-being and quality of life and to establish the role that the City of London would take in addressing those issues (DCS, 2006). The document attempts to be accessible to a broad audience, as it explains what an SPF is and the need for one; the document explains "the changing roles of government in relation to policy creation and service delivery, the existing research which was used to create the framework as well as explanations about how and why the City of London *Social Policy Framework* was created" (Watson, 2011, p. 12).

The SPF was developed through three related processes; in particular, the use of other jurisdictions' models is of note. London adapted successful models developed in other jurisdictions to meet their local needs and context. Vancouver's sustainability model and Hamilton's *Vision 2020* social development strategy are just two examples from where best practices were identified and applied to London. These models from other jurisdictions, however, are not a substitute for primary research and bottom-up consultation. London complemented its review of documents and models with engagement with the public and stakeholders (Watson, 2011).

The framework also makes it clear that the City of London recognizes that a change in strategy for service delivery requires a change in government operations and relationships (Watson, 2011). The city has proposed a Social Planning Council to coordinate between other sectors and the Municipal Council (DCS, 2006). London's SPF requires more time before the full extent of its effects can be seen as it is still relatively young (Watson, 2011). A positive sign, however, is that initiatives that have come out since the framework's implementation that are guided by the overarching goals of the framework.

1.3.1. Lessons from London, Ontario

- A social policy framework should work in conjunction with existing economic or business frameworks
- Being clear what social policy is and what needs it intends to meet makes the process accessible

This approach will allow the public and stakeholders to understand the objectives of a social policy framework: what it does and does not do. Clear goals and objectives have the potential to create buy-in, which is essential to framework success.

- Use existing research or similar frameworks from other jurisdictions and adapt them for the target jurisdiction

Using existing models and research reduces research time, and learning from other jurisdictions' successes and failures may increase success of a framework. However, to avoid duplicating Saskatchewan's lack of consultation, it is imperative that persons affected by any policy be engaged and part of the process. Using others' models must complement other methods of developing a framework.

1.4 Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia's 2007 *Weaving the Threads: A Lasting Social Framework* is an SPF that integrates economic plans and environmental plans with social sustainability (Watson, 2011). While mechanisms and methods for achieving social prosperity are absent in the document, the framework is grounded in a common set of values and ideals of Nova Scotians, to serve as a cross-government guide for further actions. The framework recognizes overarching goals and cross-ministerial collaboration as being central to all policy areas: Nova Scotia does not have a sole department responsible for social policy; rather, social prosperity is an integrated part of all policy areas (Watson, 2011).

The framework is founded upon measurable outcomes with commitment from high levels of government. Various ministers and deputy ministers have a shared responsibility to uphold and monitor social policy issues and ensure all other plans and policies are in line with the SPF (Watson, 2011). While government is held accountable, it is assumed that the responsibility for social prosperity is shared amongst "government, communities, families and individuals" (Watson, 2011, p. 7). There has not been much in the way of outcome reporting, but many programs have been developed in line with the social policy framework since its arrival.

1.4.1. Lessons from Nova Scotia

- Decipher the region's overall values and ideals and integrate them into multiple departments and levels
- Connect social policy planning to economic and environmental goals

In recognition that social prosperity is highly intertwined with multiple areas in life, such as the economy and environmental sustainability, having clear values to guide objectives ensures that any plan or strategy proposed is aligned with the social policy framework.

1.5. Newfoundland

Having realized as early as 1976 that an overarching framework was required for policy decisions, by 1985 the Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador "called for a long-term strategic plan within the social policy sector, to work in tandem with economic development initiatives" (CURA, 2008, p. 2). By 1993, it was recognized that a social policy framework was needed to accompany the economic strategic plan, and in 2000, the plan was fully implemented: *People, Partners and Prosperity: A Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador* (SSP) (Watson, 2011).

One of the fundamental principles of the plan was that policy needed to be from the bottom up and responsive to local needs by implementing place-based strategies. The SSP was designed to avoid the siloing of traditional services that might not take into account the possible contributing factors to the problem or the ability for local communities to address problems in their own way (CURA, 2008). The SSP was founded on the following ideals:

> The SSP endorsed the concepts of building on community and regional strengths, linking social and economic development, prevention and early intervention, and evidence-based decision-making for the design, delivery and evaluation of policies, programs and services… the SSP was designed to both address current social and economic development needs and anticipate and respond to new challenges as they arose at community and regional levels. (CURA, 2008, p. 4)

One of the main objectives was to change how government interacted with the service provision sector; the SSP strived for horizontality (CURA, 2008). The SSP recognized the critical importance of the

voluntary sector in delivering services and required the dismantling of barriers between governmental departments and outside organizations. This was imperative so as not to undermine each other's efforts (CURA, 2008).

Three bodies were created to implement and coordinate the SSP: the Premier's Council on Social Development, made up of appointed experts from the voluntary sector who engaged in community research and advised the premier and the cabinet; the Strategic Social Plan Regional Steering Committees was tasked with regional coordination, so the committee represented six regions and was composed of people who sat on other boards and demonstrated leadership in their community; and the Strategic Social Plan Office, which was the link between the other bodies (CURA, 2008).

With a change in premier in 2004 came a change in the social policy plan. The new premier created the Rural Secretariat and, while not dismissing the SSP until a year later, the Rural Secretariat "adopt[ed] a different approach to citizen and community engagement" and "focus[ed] more on advancing sustainable development and [was] intended to create vehicles for government and citizens to work cooperatively" (CURA, 2008, p. 7).

Despite the SSP's short duration, those involved felt there were positive improvements to the community. Some such examples are

- Greater strength than boards and departments would have had alone, as most regional social and economic development funds flowed through member organisations
- Bureaucracies in regions were able to engage communities to some extent
- Increased collaboration across sectors in some cases allowed more integrated responses to clients, communities and regions; barriers between organisations were reduced
- Program delivery was somewhat more flexible than was possible for individual organisations
- More trust was developed amongst agencies, departments and organisations as well as greater awareness of each other's goals, programs and initiatives. (CURA, 2008, p. 8)

The volunteer and service provision sectors endorsed the SSP, as they felt the plan and structure recognized their importance in service delivery and supported their work. However, one major critique of the SSP was a lack of awareness of SSP (CURA, 2008). Some organizations were unaware of the program, creating barriers to engagement. Some organizations and individuals, both within government and in the service provision sector, were unclear of the committee's objectives. This lack of awareness and clear objectives prevented many formal linkages between community groups and government. The organizations that were involved with the SSP found it difficult to report to other groups; essentially, the silos remained (CURA, 2008). As a result "The relationship between SSP Committees and the sector continued to be one of service provider to client rather than a partnership" (p. 10). Additionally, there were few government personnel promoting the horizontal action across government, as proposed by the SSP; traditional hierarchical structures continued (CURA, 2008).

1.5.1. Lessons from Newfoundland

- The process should be community-driven and responsive to local needs

Information must flow from community levels to organizers of the process and substantively inform the results more than simple reviews of models or reports traditionally allow. This will not only facilitate public buy-in but also more accurately reflect local needs.

- Design an engagement process that has multiple levels and coordinating bodies at each level

Community engagement and consultation is clearly imperative for deciphering pressing community needs. Connecting communities to the government policy-makers is essential for information to flow and best policy to be implemented.

- Successful engagement requires an information and awareness campaign to bring people in
- Organizers and government partners need to be clear about roles in the engagement process
- Structural linkages are needed within and between the different groups and levels involved in decision-making

Everyone must have an opportunity to engage and be heard, with clear roles and responsibilities to facilitate information flow. Information and policy outcomes should be communicated throughout the networks of government and with front lines.

- When government is to be involved, there needs to be a high level "champion" of the project to generate government-wide buy-in

Social prosperity can be affected by multiple dimensions and thus requires complete government commitment throughout its departments. To ensure framework longevity, the government must fully understand the scope and purpose of the project and be committed to its success.

- Commit resources for staffing, consultations, developing capacity, and sustaining structural linkages.
- Collaboration will be threatened if ownership of the framework is vested largely in government rather than also in the public and service provision sector

This process will take time; take the time to do it well and allow for revisions and evolving practices. Governments are accountable to the electorate, so the only real way to protect a policy framework from cyclical changes in government is to ensure the public upholds both the plan and the expectation that government abide by it.

1.6 Alberta

The province of Alberta developed and adopted an SPF in 2012, after six months of consultation and engagement. According to Leann Wagner, Director of Strategic Policy Initiatives for Alberta Human Services, who was one of the eight people assigned with overseeing the development of the SPF, the project capitalized on the philosophy of the incoming Redford government but was initially driven by board members of social service organizations. Wagner points out that without pre-existing pressure in support of an SPF, the government might have looked at other ways of actualizing its philosophy, but because the movement for an SPF was in place in the sector, it marked a clear way for government to engage the service provision sector in reform (personal communications, 2013).

That pressure was in place because three years prior, the Alberta College of Social Workers (ACSW) had embarked on a project called *Closing the Disparity Gap*, looking at the costs of inequality in Alberta, and based on the needs identified, went on to develop an SPF. The ACSW framework was used as an advocacy tool by the College and by others in the sector, as well as being distributed to Members of the Legislature (Watson, 2011, p. 6). The process of developing the framework, which involved extensive consultations across the sector, aimed to "turn public discourse into policy directions" (Watson, 2011, p. 22); that is, it presented a way to turn the conversations happening between organizations in the sector into something that spoke to government in their own language. The ACSW partnered with the University of Alberta to provide robust evidence in support of the priorities put forward in their framework (ACSW 2010).

Alberta's Redford government did not adopt the SPF developed by the ACSW, but they did set out on a process to create such a framework for the province. Wagner says that the process of creating the framework created unity of purpose and renewed relationships between government and the service provision sector; indeed, the actual content of both frameworks is relatively unsurprising, which suggests that the process itself is essential to achieving the desired outcomes of an SPF (personal communication, 2013). This awareness seems to have guided the Redford government, as they allocated substantial resources to the process of developing an SPF. They also linked the project with similar frameworks already in use, such as one used for land-use planning, which helped stakeholders and the public to understand the project and how the framework would be used. Wagner also points out that successful engagement required managing expectations, clearly communicating what an SPF was and what it entailed, being clear that it did not constitute a commitment to increased program spending but rather coordination and guidelines to facilitate more effective spending.

Because the call for the development of the SPF came from the premier, Wagner says it was structured as a governmental priority, but the project was framed as belonging to the province as a whole. The engagement process, called "Speak. Share. Thrive." spanned six months (Alberta Government, 2013, p. 7), and considerable time and resources were devoted to it. The process used existing networks in the service provision sector as well as connecting with municipal governments to hold "community discussions" for which small grants were available; there were hundreds of these discussions held (Alberta Government, 2012, p. 1).

The Alberta process also made heavy use of technology, with an extensive website devoted to the project, which both provided additional methods by which Albertans could participate in the process (wiki, twitter, email, blogs) and was a crucial tool for transparency. Wagner emphasizes that hearing people's input is important, but showing them that it has been heard and being transparent about how input is used are equally important. This is consistent with what our research team heard from many BoardVoice members in discussing consultations – that giving input felt worthwhile or valuable only when there was follow-up and transparency in terms of the results of consultations actually shaping outcomes. In Alberta, the results of each community discussion, as well as every letter received from a stakeholder, were put up on the public website, and summary documents published at regular intervals showed how input was being compiled, analyzed, and used to build the framework.

Broad public engagement led to a sense of province-wide ownership of the SPF, according to Wagner, who cites this as a key to successful uptake of the framework itself (personal communication, 2013). At the end of the process when the SPF was presented to the cabinet, it was brought before them already completed with only a brief window for input. Cabinet was asked not to approve it but simply to endorse it, as other organizations in the service provision sector had done. Because the framework is seen as belonging to the province, Wagner says there is pressure across government to use it. Broad engagement, then, is definitely an important aspect of Alberta's success, but their process did also face challenges that suggest ways the process could be improved upon.

One shortcoming of the Alberta process came from their lack of success engaging First Nations in the process, a point Wagner readily concedes. She says they were relatively unsuccessful getting First Nations to host or attend community discussions and identifies that as a demographic group that had low participation through online fora as well (personal communication, 2013). What is crucial here is that the Alberta process offered all demographic groups the same tools and modes of participation, and these clearly did not work for First Nations, which suggests that engagement processes ought to identify groups for whom

the general process may not work or be appropriate and consider other ways to engage such groups.

Another group that the Alberta process was relatively less successful in engaging was front line social service workers. Wagner attributes their low levels of participation to a culture of silence in terms of commenting on actions taken by the government, as well as a sense among front line workers that the process was not going to address their immediate concerns. This challenge reveals a failure to frame the process in a way that clearly met the needs of front-line workers, again suggesting the need for a variety of means for engagement.

The Alberta process did, however, manage successful engagement with policy organizations and the broader labour organizations representing front-line workers, groups with whom the government had often had an acrimonious relationship, so who were initially seen as a potential impediment. The openness and transparency of the process contributed to this success; Wagner indicated that the closing of "back channels" was important, and that the government was able to work with these organizations, who eventually gave their input in the form of a blog linked to the government's public SPF site. By allowing that group to help shape their mode of participation, potential opposition was re-directed into successful participation. This successful engagement was also an indicator to other groups of the government's serious intentions with regard to the project, and so may have also been a factor in successful engagements with the public and other organizations.

1.6.1. Lessons from Alberta

- Start with strong evidence of the need for social policy improvement to get support for an SPF
- Do not wait for government to decide to pursue an SPF; begin the process within the service provision sector

The Alberta case clearly shows that the process leading to the creation and implementation of an SPF does not have to begin with government. This may make committing the necessary time and resources feel risky to early participants as there is no guarantee of governmental involvement, but if a broad base of support is built, government will be incentivized to get involved. Relevant government officials should be invited to participate, but early failure to secure their involvement should not be seen as a defeat.

- Manage expectations by being clear what a policy framework is and is not, maintaining a forward-looking perspective
- Avoid pre-supposing outcomes of the engagement process

While these lessons were derived from the Alberta government's process, they apply to any parties embarking on an engagement process of this nature. If the sector unites around the idea of an SPF because they believe it will bring higher funding levels, government is less likely to get involved. If, instead, the goal is explicitly related to coordination and guiding decision making, so that existing funds are put to the best possible use, all parties will stand to gain by being involved, including government. This message is important within the sector but also for all others involved; it suggests the necessity of not allowing the process to lapse into criticism or blame with regard to past social policy issues. Additionally, it is essential that the process be seen as genuine in order to secure high levels of engagement, buy in, and ownership. Those leading the process likely have pre-existing ideas about desired content for the SPF, but any presupposing of outcomes will undermine the process and thus the framework that results.

- Connect to other plans or frameworks in use in the jurisdiction that are widely known and used
- Because the process of engagement in the creation of an SPF can itself lead to better

coordination across the sector and between government and service-providers, it warrants substantial time and cost allocations
- Offer multiple modes of participation in the engagement process, including using online fora where appropriate, and ensure that input is received and shown to be received and valued

Funding considerations should be part of early planning, and long time horizons should be established. Broad public consultation is time consuming, and no matter what processes are used, some groups will have better access than others, so funding will be needed to help facilitate the engagement of those with less access.

- First Nations may require different modes of engagement
- Front-line workers need to feel that the process will be relevant to their work in order to participate and may require safe-guards to participate openly
- Anticipate groups where opposition may be encountered and have them determine how they will participate, within the established parameters of the process

Additional consideration may need to be given to certain groups who are less likely to engage through traditional channels. Allowing everyone to participate equally and fairly need not require everyone to participate the same way. Efforts should be taken to ensure that no group is left out, and where some groups engage differently, organizers should be able to clearly explain to all groups why differentiated participation is occurring.

Section 2: Implications for BC

All of the lessons derived from the cases presented here apply to any process aimed at creating an SPF, however there are several that are particularly crucial for BC. These lessons are presented in this section alongside commentary suggesting interpretations and applications based on the BC context. It should be noted that, because information about the processes used in the cases considered in Section 1 is highly variable, it is not possible to rank or identify points that are the most pressing requirements for success, but instead, we have identified those that we consider to be the most necessary practices for BC.

1. The process does not have to begin within government, but government does need to be brought to the table

There are many actors involved in social policy in BC, and while final decision-making authority is vested in the government, other actors may underestimate the critical influence that they exert. While service providers may depend on government for funding, government is dependent on service providers to do exactly what their name entails, and that translates into some quantity of real leverage. As noted in the Alberta case, the existence of an SPF that was being used among service providers, and for which service providing organizations were advocating, was important to the government's decision to develop one. Wagner emphasized in her discussion of the sector that they exert undeniable influence on the direction of social policy.

The strength and influence of this sector is absolutely present in BC as well. Many examples attest to it – one that was discussed in the first part of this paper is how government has worked to reduce their

involvement in services for First Nations children in favour of funding First Nations service providers. While the process has been a challenge, there can be no doubt that the cause lies in pressure from the service provision sector in response to historical abuses under the guise of service provision. The implication flowing from this is that because of the leverage the sector has, the Alberta strategy of starting in the sector could yield success in BC as well.

After the process has started, however, there comes a point where government must be involved or the impact of the SPF will be limited. If a goal of the SPF is to change how government fulfills its role in the social policy process, then government will need to be a partner in the process. The best way to get government involved is to begin the process; attention should, however, be paid to framing the undertaking during the early stages. A frame that is not focused on funding levels or past problems is likely to be the most fruitful. Deborah Stone (1989), an expert on agenda setting in policy processes, describes a framing she terms "complex systems" approach to causation, which would be useful in this context. This framing essentially says that blame cannot be assigned because of the complexity of the systems involved in a given issue. Advancing this framing for past social policy problems in BC is likely to be valuable both in establishing scope and encouraging government uptake.

If the service provision sector is engaged in a process of trying to improve coordination, collaboration, and related systems due to the complex interplay between service networks and provision mechanisms, and that process is showing signs of success and popular support, government has little to lose and much to gain by involving itself. One of Wagner's messages to the sector when it comes to improving processes is that if the table is set, government will come – because like everyone involved, they too are hungry for better outcomes.

2. Manage expectations such that all parties understand the purpose and scope of the project

Many a consultation process has failed because of a lack of congruency between the expected or desired outcomes of participants. If the service provision sector sees the creation and implementation of an SPF as an avenue by which to leverage more funding across the board, then government will be less likely to come to the table, but also, those in the sector are likely to be disappointed, and the result may be counter to the purpose of the SPF project. The early stages of the process, then, should be concerned with aligning interests and establishing an understanding of what the SPF ought to do and contain – Part 3 offers some guidance on this matter, but the focus here is on the alignment. Early alignment is essential to other stages of the process fulfilling their purposes and thus achieving the necessary outcomes.

In defining scope, time horizons are another important factor. The process of creating the SPF will take a period of months at least, and it may take many years of use and revision to achieve the desired results. All parties will need to maintain focus on the goals of the SPF to ensure that it does not succumb to pre-emptive declarations of failure simply because success is not right on the heels of development. In addition, while history and context can be important in informing the content of the SPF itself, the engagement process itself must be forward-looking in order to be amenable to action.

Perhaps most crucially, since the process must include non-experts, the ideas and purposes of the SPF must be explained and presented in ways that are comprehensible to the general public. Phraseology of engagements and policy frameworks has the potential to be alienating to groups whose inclusion in the process is essential. Descriptive terminology will need to be developed for public engagement. In Alberta, the process

was titled "Together We Raise Tomorrow," a descriptive phrase that is clearly tied to creating better future outcomes for the people of the province but in a manner that is more intuitive and thus more appropriate for a non-expert audience. Public engagement will require that the public develop a good understanding of the process, its goals, and their role within it.

3. Create processes of horizontal engagement across ministries and sectors within government

Several jurisdictions reviewed here indicate framework failure due to unclear roles of government officials and lack of a driving force within government. To develop a truly overarching framework, horizontality across government is essential. Horizontality is the idea of cross-communication and collaboration between government ministries. From our assessments in Part 1, it is evident that communication and collaboration challenges exist within BC's social service sector. Our examples illustrate that ministries and even departments within a ministry may operate within siloes, and thus programs and services do not always complement each other.

Horizontality is not only an important consideration in achieving desirable outcomes, but it is also essential to the development phase of an SPF. Ministries and departments must work together with common goals and understanding of what an SPF is and their role within it. Clear communication of roles and responsibilities across government is likely to create inter-ministerial buy-in, leading to expectations of the usage of the SPF and thus its success.

4. Connect to existing frameworks or strategic plans, especially economic and environmental plans

Currently, the BC government's focus is on the economy and a 'secure tomorrow.' This involves investment in technology and innovation to help expand various industries and create jobs – the BC Jobs Plan is one such plan. Other BC plans include the *Agrifoods Strategy, Forestry Strategy, International Education Strategy, Mining Strategy, Natural Gas Strategy, Transportation/Pacific Gateway Strategy,* and *Tourism Strategy*. These plans all fall under BC's economic plans. The *BC Jobs Plan* is highly dependent on expanding BC's natural resource industries (e.g. LNG). With resource extraction comes environmental sustainability issues, which are also at the forefront of the political agenda in BC. Social well-being is inherently linked to economic well-being and has a relationship with environmental sustainability. An SPF should complement economic and environmental action plans. Coordinated policy frameworks have the potential to enhance outcomes as opposed to operating in isolation.

The Liberal Government recognizes the importance of social services, healthy supported families, and assistance for the most vulnerable. Through the promotion of economic investment and growth, social services can be better supported and funded (Strategic Plan, 2013/14). Yet, as part of achieving economic efficiency, the BC Liberal Government plans on reducing its spending and achieving a balanced budget. An SPF that works in conjunction with economic action plans has the potential to guide tough decisions on social services spending, increasing not only for economic efficiency but also social service sector efficiency.

5. Offer multiple modes of engagement, including working with groups for whom traditional engagement may not work or be appropriate

Some of the implications of this lesson may be obvious, but others may be less so. Considering the diversity of BC's population, there will need to be many modes of participation and mechanisms to facilitate broad participation. In the cases we have examined, coordination of and processing of input was crucial. Effective use of technology was a contributor for success in the Alberta case that could be replicated in BC, where according to Statistics Canada, Internet access rates are the highest in Canada. Online tools are also increasingly viewed as a superior mechanism for engagement with those under 35, as many years of recent voter turnout campaigns has shown, and this is a crucial yet typically elusive group with which to engage.

British Columbia			
	2006	2011	
	% of Population	% of Population	Population
English	71.5%	71.7%	3, 062, 430
Punjabi	3.9%	4.3%	182, 915
Cantonese	3.3%	3.1%	133,245
Chinese, n.o.s.	3.2%	2.8%	120,045
Mandarin	1.8%	2.2%	94,055
German	2.2%	1.7%	73,625
Tagalog	1.3%	1.5%	66,120
French	1.4%	1.3%	57,275
Korean	1.2%	1.1%	48,975
Spanish	0.8%	1.0%	40,795
Persian (Farsi)	0.7%	0.8%	36, 045

(Immigration Forecasting & Analysis, 2012, p. 3)

Linguistic diversity poses a distinct problem in British Columbia, where the 2011 census identified 146,605 people who do not speak English; there are many more for whom English levels may be low enough to substantially impede their participation should it need to occur in English. As the table below shows, creating a process in which all British Columbians can engage will require considerable translation of materials and working with civil society groups with non-English speaking memberships in order to engage with those communities.

BC is also a jurisdiction where the legal relationship with First Nations is different than in any other province; while full treatment of that topic is beyond the scope of this paper, it is nonetheless a vital consideration. Because historic or contemporary treaties do not cover most of BC, there are legal requirements with regard to consultation with First Nations. These requirements are generally thought of in connection to land use, but modern treaties such as Nisga'a and Tsawwassen include aspects of social policy jurisdiction. This means that when First Nations' interests are at stake, First Nations must be consulted, and that consultation must be genuine. This is tied to the duty to accommodate, which essentially means that First Nations' jurisdiction should not be infringed (Province of British Columbia, 2010) – in the context of an SPF process, this means that the framework should only apply to First Nations where they are under provincial jurisdiction or should they choose to participate in the framework.

What this could mean in practice for an SPF engagement process is that the first step would be to connect with First Nations and their provincial-level organizations to determine the extent to which First Nations want to participate in a province-wide process, a process internal to one or several First Nations, or perhaps only a local process. A First Nation that has, or is seeking, social policy jurisdiction may prefer developing a framework within which to exercise such jurisdiction rather than participating in a provincial SPF – then again, they may well benefit greatly from a provincial SPF; the key is that there be connections made very early on, and that those initial engagements happen in a context of choice.

Another group that warrants extra consideration is front line workers; BC is likely to have similar challenges to Alberta in this regard. Wagner's comments about this challenge emphasize two things front line workers need in an engagement process: a way to engage that feels connected to their day-to-day work and immediate needs, and some protection so that they can participate freely without fearing repercussions. An initial consultation of front line workers may work best if begun by small engagements, perhaps focus groups, aimed at developing a consultation process especially for front line workers. While this adds more complexity to the process, front line workers' experiences give them valuable insight that is likely to lead to better outcomes in the SPF if their voices are included.

Finally, the policy and labour relations branches of organizations representing and comprised of front line workers in BC, as in Alberta, have had a tense relationship with government and may rightly be seen as a potential source of opposition unless they are brought in early and given some ability to help shape their participation. Taken together with the other considerations raised by this lesson, the overall message is that a one-size-fits-all consultation model, which according to Wagner was the goal in Alberta, is not likely to work best for BC. Variability should be built into the model, and early engagements should focus on where engagement challenges are anticipated.

6. Structure engagement processes to facilitate broad access, and make sure input is shown to have been received and considered

Equity is an important social policy objective, and to meet this objective it is imperative that all groups are engaged and represented in consultation and decision-making processes. However, it is not sufficient to simply consult with various groups and then go on to make policy decisions. The engagement process must consist of feedback loops, allowing participating groups to confirm that they were heard and that their needs were taken seriously. This is an essential part of creating trust and buy-in.

There is a general distrust in BC by some social service providers, especially those in the non-profit and private sectors, towards the BC government. In recent years, numerous advocacy groups have emerged to ensure that vulnerable groups' interests and needs are being represented and met by the government. The need for these advocacy groups is likely indicative of distrust in decision-making by the government service providers. A lack of common ground and understanding has led to breakdowns in communication and high distrust of intentions. Groups will not participate in consultations with the government if they feel that their needs will not be taken seriously. Where there are strained relationships, there is a need to repair the damage to get these groups engaged in dialogue.

From general public sentiments, as well as through our interviews conducted with stakeholders, there was a sense that when consultation was being done, nothing was resulting from it – government policy actions did not reflect stakeholders' input. However, it is not always the case that the government disregards the advice and information of stakeholders. Sometimes policy-makers are forced to make tough choices or are constrained by present circumstances in achieving their goals. Opening lines of communication would allow for understanding of how and why certain policy directions are chosen and reflect that stakeholders' concerns were being heard. Ideally, transparency in the decision-making process via clear feedback loops would promote participation and encourage buy-in.

7. Process needs to create ownership among all groups involved

In order for an SPF to be successful, both the government and stakeholders must buy into the idea. For stakeholder/public support, policy decision-making needs to be community-driven and responsive to local needs. The engagement process must guide the outcomes. Giving recognition and consideration to stakeholders' needs whether they are ultimately implemented or not is an important part of generating support. Participation in the formulation of the framework will likely increase buy-in and ownership of the results.

Ownership must also exist within government. There must be government officials who are clear in their roles, clear in the framework's objectives, and willing to champion the framework. As indicated in the second lesson in this section, the BC Government currently does not have an SPF on the agenda. While the government need not be the initiator of a framework, eventual government buy-in is required.

Additionally, when government has initiated frameworks without consulting the public and stakeholders, a lack of buy-in from the affected groups has resulted, contributing to framework failure. The Saskatchewan Disability Framework is as an example of this, as is the BC Health case evaluated in Section 1 . These plans were developed primarily from within government. Lack of public engagement and awareness of the framework meant an absence of public expectations of use, which contributed to its abandonment. Having committed parties at all levels will ensure a framework survives initial challenges. An effective SPF must be flexible and responsive to new ideas and new information.

Section 3: Conclusions

3.1 Summary of Key Findings

We find the following to be key process considerations for BC:

- The process does not have to begin within government, but government does need to be brought to the table
- Manage expectations such that all parties understand the purpose and scope of the project
- Create processes of horizontal engagement across ministries and sectors within government
- Connect to existing frameworks or strategic plans, especially economic and environmental plans
- Offer multiple modes of engagement, including working with groups for whom traditional engagement may not work or be appropriate, to develop ways that they can engage
- Structure engagement processes to facilitate broad access, and make sure input is shown to have been received and considered
- Process needs to create ownership among all groups involved

Organizers working toward an SPF will need to give due consideration to what resources can be allocated to the task because significant time and commitment will be required for success; however, guided by these lessons, success is achievable.

3.2 Next Steps

If a BC SPF is to be created, additional research into affects would be helpful in establishing a base-level understanding of possible outcomes. Such an understanding will be important to keeping all parties on the same page as they go through the process together. Consideration must be given to what should be included in the SPF and what kinds of commitments regarding its use will be required to achieve the desired results. Part 3 in this paper begins this task.

In terms of the process, guidance here might best be considered directions for drawing the real road map; that is, a process will need to be fully developed. Before that can be done, organizers should begin identifying groups and organizations whose participation in the SPF process is essential. In addition to developing shared understandings of the process and desired outcomes, guidelines for participation should be developed. For any of this to occur, it is necessary to secure sufficient commitment and resources such that it is possible to see the process through.

PART 3
The British Columbia Social Policy Framework: Hypothetical Impact Assessment

Introduction

There is ample evidence that a more comprehensive approach to social policy is needed in BC, and that a social policy framework (SPF) could be the most effective tool for achieving a comprehensive approach. This leaves the question of what impacts an SPF could have in BC. This question is examined by first, investigating the impacts of similar policy strategies other jurisdictions; second, pulling out the broad features of these frameworks that contributed to their successes; third, providing a snapshot of persistent social policy challenges in BC; and fourth, examining how the features that contributed to the successes of other frameworks could apply in the BC context.

Section 1: Impacts of Similar Policy Strategies

Within Canada, *Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy*, launched in 2008, emerges as the best example of a comprehensive provincial plan that includes measures and indicators for progress in its formation. This plan is also the first in Canada to have reported measurable progress.

While other provinces have launched plans such as the *Provincial Wellness Plan of Newfoundland and Labrador* or Nova Scotia's *Weaving the Threads: A Lasting Social Fabric,* these social plans are not accompanied by reports that include indicators for determining progress. The impact of these plans therefore cannot be assessed or quantified. Manitoba's *All Aboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy* launched in 2011 identified 21 indicators of progress. At this time, the strategy has established a baseline for the indicators, but has yet to assess and measure the strategy's impact. Additionally, Alberta launched *Alberta's Social Policy Framework* in February of 2013, however given the recent launch of the policy there has not yet been an annual report outlining the impact of the implementation of the framework.

1.1 Breaking the Cycling: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy

As stated in the 2011 *Breaking the Cycle Annual Report*:

> An important part of our Poverty Reduction Strategy is setting targets and reporting on our progress. We recognize that if you want to improve something, it must first be measured. Measuring progress will help us understand where progress is being made and inform decision-making. (Government of Ontario, 2011, p.18)

This fulfills three of the essential features of a successful social policy framework. First, that key targets and objectives are determined at the outset. Second that measures for the objectives are measured consistently over time to determine progress. Third, that these outcomes inform subsequent policy decision-making.

In 2008, during the development of the provincial strategy, eight indicators were selected to measure progress:

1. School Readiness	5. High School Graduation Rates
2. Educational Progress	6. Birth Weights
3. Low Income Measure (LIM)	7. Depth of Poverty
4. Standard of Living (Deprivation Index)	8. Ontario Housing Measure

The data for these indicators are from Statistics Canada and provincial sources. The standard of living indicator is measured by a newly developed deprivation index. This index was developed by the Caledon Institute for Social Policy in conjunction with the Daily Bread Food Bank in 2008 as part of the formation of the *Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy* (Matern, Mendelson, & Oliphant, 2009). The measure is now collected by Statistics Canada as a supplement to their Labour Force Survey under the sponsorship of the Government of Ontario (Matern, Mendelson, & Oliphant, 2009).

Breaking the Cycle: the Fourth Progress Report, Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2012) presents compelling data for what outcomes are achievable only three years after the implementation of a provincial social policy strategy.

Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Strategy			**Launch of PRS**	**Year One**	**Year Two**	**Year Three**	**OVERALL TREND**
Indicator	**2006-07**	**2007-08**	**2008-09**	**2009-10**	**2010-11**	**2011-12**	
Birth Weights*		**80.0%**			**80.7%**		**Progress**
School Readiness* (Early Development Instrument)		**71.5%**			**72.4%**		**Progress**
Educational Progress** (Combined Grade 3 and Grade 6)			**67.0%**	**68.0%**	**69.0%**	**70.0%**	**Progress**
High School Graduation Rates			**79.0%**	**81.0%**	**82.0%**		**Progress**
Low Income Measure			**15.2%**	**14.6%**	**13.8%**		**Progress**
Depth of Poverty			**8.5%**	**7.3%**	**7.1%**		**Progress**
Standard of Living (Deprivation Index)			**12.5%**	**8.7%**	**9.9%**		**Progress**
Ontario Housing Measure			**5.4%**	**5.0%**	**4.2%**		**Progress**

Notes: *Reported on a three-year cycle.
**Educational Progress (EQAO) scores for 2011-12 were released in Summer 2012. Other 2011-12 data will be available in 2013.

The above table, extracted from *Breaking the Cycle: the Fourth Progress Report* (Government of Ontario, 2012, p.6), simply yet powerfully illustrates how a commitment to a comprehensive plan with consistent indicators can achieve measurable population-wide outcomes.

1.2 Social Reports (New Zealand)

- New Zealand's annual *Social Reports,* though not a policy framework in the traditional sense, illustrate what a comprehensive approach to social policy can accomplish. These annual reports assess social well-being and quality of life across ten domains: health, knowledge and skills, paid work, civil and political rights, cultural identity, leisure and recreation, safety, physical environment, social connectedness, and economic standard of living (WHO, 2010), and are published publicly.

In assessing the impact of the *Social Reports* within government, the World Health Organization found that there was, on average, an encouraging degree of uptake. For example, the New Zealand Ministry of Health argued that

> [the Social Reports] increased the understanding of other public agencies with respect to how their initiatives impact on other sector's outcomes (i.e. health). The Social Reports were also attributed an important function in terms of raising awareness of the [social determinants of health] and they were viewed as useful tools for health officials to influence others sectors towards also adopting a determinants-approach. The report was also seen as an important step to raising awareness of government officials to the root causes of outcomes inequities, disrupting a sole focus on outcomes disparities alone. (WHO, 2010, p. 22)

The Treasury saw great value in the reports, which provides a "more systematic tool for assessing the impact of social policy" (WHO, 2010, p. 22). This feedback from the Treasury shows engagement on social issues from governmental organizations not traditionally concerned with social policy. At the regional/local level of government, researchers found that

> The publication of the Regional Indicator Reports… increased the use of the Social Reports amongst these users. One application of the Social Reports was to brief councilors about their communities' social outcomes by reference to these authoritative statistics. (WHO, 2010, p.23)

These examples highlight how the *Social Reports* have had varied uptake across sectors and levels of government. What is significant is that they create a common reference point across sectors for debate and discussion about social policy as a whole.

A similar pattern is seen in the uptake of the reports by non-governmental organizations. In interviews with the authors, grass-roots organizations "shared the opinion that the Social Reports have been a useful stimulus for civil society groups and have generated significant public debate and discussion about the causes of social inequalities" (WHO, 2012, p. 24). Public health advocacy agencies utilized the reports to inform their advocacy work, in particular to "argue for health impact assessment of significant government policies such as those involved in budget commitments" (WHO, 2012, p. 24). The popular media too was found to provide a great deal of coverage of the findings in the reports each year, facilitating further discussion and debate on social issues in the public sphere.

The authors of the WHO study note a variety of general impacts that the reports have had, three of which relate to social policy frameworks. The first is the use of the reports to facilitate collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in social policy creation and delivery. On this subject the authors conclude that the reports

> have indeed been successful in fulfilling the Minister's original intentions; they have started to assist a higher level of coordination amongst social policy initiatives, which interface with public policy from several sectors. (WHO, 2010, p. 32)

The second impact is the achievement of a broader understanding of health and health determinants

across government organizations. The use of the *Social Reports* in the New Zealand Ministry of Health provides a salient example of the impact that this broadened understanding has had. Here the use of the *Social Reports* was "…seen as counter-acting in-house pressures to focus more exclusively on the reduction of disease" (WHO, 2010, p. 32). This provides encouraging evidence that the reports have success in counteracting the tendency for social and health policy to become too narrow defined and fragmented.

The third impact has been to raise awareness of the importance of timely, neutral social reporting. As the *Social Reports* have become established as a reliable source of information, concerns about continued reliability and neutrality has gained prominence, with the authors finding that

> many key-informants to this case study…were of the opinion that the establishment of a S*ocial Responsibility Act* to directly mirror the existing 1994 *Fiscal Responsibility Act*, which requires the Treasury to publish their accounts before every election, would be a central, desirable step and should include government obligation for social reporting. (WHO, 2010, p. 35)

The establishment of the reports has led to substantive public discussion about the government's obligation to provide reliable and timely social reporting, and so have raised the profile of social policy in the public discourse.

Quantitative evidence of the impact of the *Social Reports* is difficult to come by; however this brief review of WHO's impact assessment provides grounds for concluding that the reports have made a substantial contribution to increasing collaboration between policy sectors, raising awareness of the unified nature of social policy issues, and prompting greater public participation in the creation and delivery of social policy.

1.3 Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families (UK)

The *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families (FACNF)* was created in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2000 after significant problems were found by investigations into the adequacy of child protection services by the Department of Health and the Social Services Inspectorate. The primary finding of the investigations was an overly narrow focus on incidence of abuse and neglect (Cleaver et al., 2004, p. 81). The result was the *FACNF*, whose primary objective was "...[to promote] a holistic, multi-agency approach towards the assessment of children in need" (Cleaver et al., 2004, p. 81). This model was applied through a three-step process of referral, initial assessment, and core assessment. The initial and core assessment steps are notable for mandating collaboration between agencies to provide the necessary services for the children involved in the assessment, and put in place a formal system of records management.

As part of a two-year assessment of the implementation and outcomes of the *FACNF,* researchers outline a variety of impacts that can be grouped into three broad categories. The first category concerns the improvement in the quality of assessments as a function of a formal system of records management, with the researchers noting that

> Two-thirds of managers and over half of the practitioners reported an improvement in the quality of assessments. Managers found that the assessment records improved the quality of social workers' record-keeping, which resulted in them having greater confidence in their own decision making and planning for children. (Cleaver et al., 2004, p. 87)

The second category of impacts concerns inter-agency collaboration on assessing the need for and delivery of services. One-third of social work practitioners and professional staff from non-social service agencies reported that collaboration had increased after the introduction of the *FACNF* (Cleaver et al., 2004, p. 87).

The third category of impacts concerns consultations with families, with Cleaver et al. (2004) finding that "it is in relation to the involvement of families that the Assessment Framework has had its most significant impact" (p.88). By including the children and families in all steps of the assessment process, from consultation to status updates, families reported a higher degree of satisfaction with the assessment process.

In summing up the impacts of the *FACNF,* the authors (2004) remark that "it provided an opportunity and focus for agencies and practitioners to review current inter-agency policies and practice, and both these areas were strengthened as a result" (p. 88). This result provides important insights into how policy frameworks that focus on facilitating collaboration between organizations, consultation with affected parties, and strong data and record management practices can contribute to improved social policy outcomes.

1.4 UK Impact Assessment Systems

The UK government uses a formalized impact assessment system for all policy interventions and reforms. While not a social policy framework, the impact assessment system has led to many of the policy process changes that are sought from a social policy framework. In 2010, The Evaluation Partnership and Centre for European Policy Studies (TEP & CEPS) partnered to assess a number of European Social Impact Assessment systems, including the UK's.

The UK government has a long history of impact assessment (IA) mechanisms (TEP & CEPS, 2010) that are mandated by law and applicable across levels of government.

> According to the central guidance, an Impact Assessment needs to be completed for **all forms of intervention** proposed by any part of central government where the responsible department or regulator considers that the effect will be to **increase or decrease costs** on business or the third sector… IA is generally applicable to all government interventions that affect the private sector, the voluntary sector or public services. (TEP & CEPS, p. 193)

While IAs were not originally designed to assess social impacts, "IA procedures in the UK have gradually moved towards a more integrated and inclusive system that considers not only the impact on business, but relevant economic, environmental and social impacts on society as a whole" (TEP & CEPS, p. 193). Having a consistent assessment mechanism for all policies in every ministry or branch of government ensures that economic, social and environmental impacts are considered for all policies and reforms across all domains. IAs "ensure that policy development is joined up and that individual policy proposals take account of the government's priority objectives" (TEP & CEPS, 2010, p. 194). The IA structure requires the government to both take an integrated approach to policy development and have transparent, explicit priorities through which policies are assessed.

In the UK policy development process, not only is producing IA reports required, but publicly publishing the reports is as well. This allows stakeholders, the public, and politicians to be equally informed of considerations relating to proposed policies.

> The outcome of the IA process in the form of the (draft) IA report is intended to ensure that those with an interest in a given policy understand and can challenge why the government is proposing to intervene, how new policies may impact on them and the estimated costs and benefits of proposed and actual measures. (TEP & CEPS, 2010, p. 195).

Monetization of the costs and benefits of policy interventions is the cornerstone of the IA system; "social impacts are expected to be included in the monetised costs and benefits" (TEP & CEPS, 2010, p. 197). Social impacts can then be assessed alongside economic impacts. This enables the government to use a

more integrated approach when tackling these divergent issues.

The TEP & CEPS report on the UK's IA system outlines how and why social impacts were seriously considered in the majority of IAs, despite not being a requirement.

> All interviewees agreed that social impacts are taken very seriously in most UK IAs, partly because social policy is reportedly a priority for the current government, partly because the often intense scrutiny of IAs by stakeholders, MPs and others means it is in the best interest of policy makers themselves to consider all relevant impacts (rather than risk being challenged at a later stage on why certain aspects were omitted). (TEP & CEPS, 2010, p. 199)

This quote shows how having publicly available reporting on social impacts increases public and political scrutiny on these issues. IAs are often "taken into consideration by MPs" and used in debates in Parliament (TEP & CEPS, 2010, p. 205). The TEP & CEPS (2010) report outlined how IAs "are very often read and scrutinised in detail by MPs and/or their assistants" (p. 205). This system leads to more informed parliamentary debate, and thinking and debating about social impacts has become internalized into government process and parliamentary and public discourse.

Consultation is another important aspect of the policy making process in the UK (TEP & CEPS, 2010). There is a strong relationship between the IA system and consultation processes. In some instances of consultation, the IA report must be published alongside the proposed policy on which the government is consulting (TEP & CEPS, 2010). The IA reporting process is not merely intended for policy makers, but is integrated into consultation processes that involve feedback from public and stakeholder consultations.

The IA system addresses many of the policy development process concerns outlined in Part 1: collaboration, consultation, information sharing, transparent objectives and social impact. The example of the UK system of impact assessment demonstrates how developing a structure for social policy can address many of the current social policy challenges in BC.

Section 2: Lessons From Impacts in Other Jurisdictions

The examples above offer clear illustrations of how a coordinated approach to social policy results in positive impacts on both processes and outcomes. These strategies share a set of general features that have facilitated such positive outcomes.

2.1 Facilitation of Clear Communication

All of the above examples had clearly defined and articulated goals and objectives. This allowed for the creation of explicit accountabilities and the promotion of public understanding of the principles guiding government decisions. This can be seen in New Zealand's *Social Reports* and the UK's impact assessment system, both of which are published online and are publicly accessible. The communication component of these strategies contributed significantly to its positive impacts. Furthermore, the strategies became used as reference points for discussions of and justifications for social policy by both governmental and non-governmental organizations.

2.2 Internalization of Social Policy Principles

In explicitly setting out objectives and goals, the reviewed strategies create normative principles regarding how social policy should be understood and what the best practices are to achieve those goals and objectives. These principles are only effective if they are used consistently across government. When this occurs, the principles tend to become internalized over time by external institutions and individuals as standard practice. Because governments in New Zealand and the UK promoted and regularized the use of the frameworks, the principles became internalized, contributing significantly to the observed successes. For example in New Zealand, non-health sectors moved towards adopting a collaborative determinants-of-health approach. In the UK the impact assessment system has become standard across government operations, and the child assessment framework has shown indications of broadening how practitioners and agencies approach the problem of child neglect and abuse. This indicates that successes are a function of the consistent application of the strategy and the internalization of the strategy's principles.

2.3 Establishment of Common Reporting Standards

One feature central to all of the reviewed frameworks was the use of common standards by which outcomes and impacts are defined and assessed. The Social Reports are a clear example of the standardization of definitions and measures, as is the records management system implemented in the UK for the child assessment framework. Although less structured, the UK Impact Assessment framework also contributes to common reporting standards through standardized documentation and processes. The common reporting standards then facilitate data sharing across organizations, which contributes to a common understanding of the issues, greater policy consistency, and more accurate assessments across programs.

Section 3: Persistent Social Policy Challenges in BC

BC faces a number of persistent and significant social policy challenges that have resisted efforts over the last fifteen years to address them. Progress has been achieved on many of these issues, but where progress has been made it has been uneven or cannot be clearly attributed to provincial policies. It is not possible to provide a comprehensive overview of these challenges within this report due to the broadness of social policy as a topic, the large body of research surrounding social policy, and a lack of consistent measures of social indicators in BC. Instead, a snapshot of outcome challenges provides context for the types of challenges that a social policy framework could help address in BC. The BC Progress Board *Final Benchmark Report* (2011) provides a reliable source of valid indicators for guiding this discussion.

3.1 Child Poverty and Low Income Rates

Over the last fifteen years BC has consistently ranked either last or near last on low-income rates[1] as compared to other provinces. The BC Progress Board notes that "People with low incomes may experience more physical and mental health problems, rely more on charity, attain lower levels of education, or have higher secondary school drop-out rates" (2011, p.65). What complicates this picture is that there has been an absolute reduction in the low-income rate, from 16.4% in 1999 (BCPB, 2011) to 10.7% in 2011 (CPJ, 2013). The claim that no progress has been made is not accurate. However, similar reductions have

occurred in all provinces over this time period, with BC remaining in last place amongst the provinces on this measure. The lack of change in *relative* standing calls into question the extent to which the reduction in low-income rates in BC can be attributed to provincial policies, rather than economic trends or policy factors occurring at the national level. Under this interpretation, low-income rates in BC remain a persistent issue despite absolute improvements.

A similar trend can be seen in the case of child poverty rates. Between 2003 and 2008 the child poverty rate in BC declined from 19.2% to 10.4%, without any change in BC's relative ranking amongst all provinces (OPHO, 2010). This pattern again calls into question the degree to which policy in BC adequately addresses this issue.

3.2 Food Insecurity

Food security is defined as having "…physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet [one's] dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle" (OPHO, 2010, p.28). According to a report by the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, in 2008 32.3% of those living on less than $20,000 per year in BC faced a state of food insecurity (OPHO, 2010), putting this population at risk for malnutrition, obesity, chronic diseases such as diabetes, and food-borne illnesses (CNCBC, 2004). Given that BC has persistently had the near highest proportion of individuals with low incomes nationally, it follows that BC has a persistently high number of individuals living with insecure access to nutritious food.

The personal and public costs associated with food insecurity are significant, with the American Dietetic Association finding that "Nutritional risk is the single best predictor of physician and emergency room visits, hospital readmissions, and increased length of stay" (CNCBC, 2004, p.21). Food bank usage in BC has increased by a net 28% since 2003, almost four times the average 7% increase in food bank usage across Canada over the same period of time (Food Banks Canada, 2013). Additionally in 2013, 29.5% of food bank recipients in British Columbia were children, which is relatively better than the national figure of 36.4% of individuals assisted who are under 18 years of age, but is still an alarming figure (Food Banks Canada, 2013). This is concerning given the relatively high levels of child poverty in BC, as food insecurity can have serious developmental consequences that will limit children's future social and economic prospects and increase societal costs associated with these effects.

3.3 Long-Term Unemployment

Unemployment has been linked to higher incidences of physical illness, mental illness and mortality through such mechanisms as financial stress, loss of self-esteem, social status, loss of interpersonal contact, and increases in behaviours with significant health risks (Statistics Canada, 2010), long-term unemployed persons being especially vulnerable[2]. As of 2010, BC ranked ninth in Canada on this measure, or second last, with 11% of the unemployed population meeting the criteria for long-term unemployment (BCPB, 2011). While this is an improvement over the peak of 13% in 2003 there has been little change in BC's relative ranking amongst the provinces over this period (BCPB, 2011). One potentially worrying statistic in this context is the relatively low proportion of unemployed people who are on income assistance in BC compared to the national average, at 3.5% and 5% respectively (BCPB, 2011). Relatively high rates

1 Low income rates measure the proportion of the population living on an annual income falling below the designated low income cut-off (also known as LICO).

of long-term unemployment in the context of relatively low numbers of people on income assistance are a cause for concern as this relationship could compound the negative social and economic consequences of long-term unemployment.

3.4 Violent and Property Crime

Social policy challenges are often reflected in crime rates, as crime rates are "…a reflection of community safety and security and an indicator of economic problems. It can reflect a lack of employment opportunities, inadequate education or social dysfunction" (BCPB, 2011, p. 69). As with low income rates, BC has persistently had the highest or near-highest level of violent and property crimes rates of all the provinces. The absolute level of violent and property crimes fell throughout the 2000's, from 10.5 to 6.7 per 100 persons (BCPB, 2011), however, as with low income rates, BC's relative performance on this measure compared to the other provinces did not change significantly, falling from tenth to ninth among the provinces. Here too the absolute decline in crime rates masks a persistent problem for provincial policy.

3.5 Mental Health

A 2010 summary health report by the Provincial Health Services Authority found that in 2008 22% of British Columbians suffered from depression or anxiety, defined as having either one hospitalization or two medical claims related to the disorders over the previous year (PHSA, 2010). This was an increase from just over 17% in 2002 (PHSA, 2010). Similar trends have been found in incarcerated populations in BC, with a Corrections Canada study (2012) finding that 32% of a sample of new inmates had a current diagnosis of a mental disorder, with 12% satisfying the criteria for a serious mood or psychotic disorder. There is also a strong correlation between homelessness and mental illness, with a 2011 survey on the health of homeless populations in BC finding that 65% of participants met the criteria for a non-substance related mental disorder, a particularly worrying statistic given the significant increase in the number homeless persons in BC over the last thirty years (Krausz, 2011). Mental illness is, and has been, a widespread problem across many areas of society in BC, with innumerable negative social and economic impacts that will require new approaches for successful management.

3.6 BC's Economy: From a Social Policy Point of View

3.6.1 Social Capital, the Economy, and British Columbia

As outlined above, BC ranked tenth for percentage of the population living below the low income cut-off, ninth in long-term unemployment, and seventh in secondary school graduation nationally (BCPB, 2011). These and other issues have persisted in BC for more than a decade, despite attempts to address them. Given these low rankings, it is clear that by improving social capital in BC, the province's current economic goals are more likely to be achieved—specifically those outlined in the BC Jobs Plan. An SPF will build social capital, strengthening the probability of economic growth, and strengthening the probability of achieving BC's economic plans for the benefit of all, current and future.

2 Long-term unemployment is defined as being unemployed for 52 weeks or longer

3.6.2 The BC Jobs Plan

The BC Jobs Plan forms a central component of the current government's mandate. The plan includes 19 measurable targets, with progress reports produced every six months. According to the *24-Month Progress Report,* BC had achieved 11 of the targets by the two-year mark and the remaining targets are expected to be complete between 2014 and 2020. This report appears to demonstrate progress, however a report published in early 2014 by the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives challenges these claims. The report, The *BC Jobs Plan: Reality Check,* found significant weaknesses in the plan (Ivanova, 2014). The author (2014) found that private job creation has actually been weaker now since the introduction of the Jobs Plan than in the first two years of recovery, with the private sector losing over 12,000 jobs in 2013. The report outlines how BC's recovery is behind the Canadian national average and how employment rates are still significantly below pre-2008 levels.

Perhaps the most concerning critique against the effectiveness of the BC Jobs Plan is that it leaves behind vulnerable groups. The increase in unemployment after the recession affected aboriginal and young workers more than any other groups, and there has been no decrease in the unemployment rate for these groups since the introduction of the BC Jobs Plan, with aboriginals suffering most of all (Ivanova, 2014). Ivanova (2014) recommends in her report, economic policies that address vulnerable groups and social issues such as poverty, affordable housing, childcare, and classroom support for teachers.

The BC Jobs Plan includes the establishment of an Aboriginal Business and Investment Council to increase Aboriginal presence in the BC economy. This addresses inclusion of Aboriginals in economic participation through business development and investment into their communities. Aboriginal education is another priority of the Jobs Plan, as well as creating ten new non-treaty agreements. The non-treaty agreement goal has already been reached with over 21 treaties signed and seven more in progress. Despite gains on several aboriginal related targets, aboriginal peoples in BC continue to have the highest unemployment rate of any other vulnerable group in the province (Ivanova, 2014).

The BC Jobs Plan focuses heavily on job creation and the promotion of BC's labour force. An important part of the plan is its emphasis on job skills development. There is a proposed $500 million annual investment in skills training. With such a significant annual investment into skills training, and given the challenges outlined in Part 1 of current social policy implementation and delivery, there is concern that this investment may not be effectively distributed. One desired outcome of a social policy framework would be to increase transparency and fairness in social policy distribution. Given the skill and income level disparity in BC, there is a need to ensure that those at different skill levels have equal access to programs.

The skills and training plan touches on student skill development for the workforce, meeting the needs of the industry, developing the immigrant workforce, and capital investment. Unfortunately, the plan does not specify how to increase social capital and address skills development for vulnerable groups. This is disappointing as there are vast economic and social benefits arising from increasing the labour force participation of vulnerable groups. The *24-Month Progress Report* claims that the Jobs Plan has reached many of its plan targets and fostered economic growth in BC. The question remains however, who is benefiting from that growth.

While the plan does address some Aboriginal needs within the provincial economy, the plan focuses heavily on outcomes that will for the most-part benefit highly skilled workers, falling short on addressing the inclusion of vulnerable groups, and people in the greatest financial need. BC needs a social policy framework to ensure that no one is left behind in its economic plans.

Some economists (Fukuyama, 1995) claim that the effectiveness of economic policy implementation is

dependent on social capital. Low social capital increases the risk of ineffective economic policies. Thus the development of a social policy framework that improves BC's social capital becomes imperative for the success of BC's economic plans.

Section 4: Impacts of a Social Policy Framework Based on BC's Challenges

BC faces many persistent societal problems. A social policy framework cannot by itself alleviate child poverty or reduce the number of people experiencing long-term unemployment in BC. However, a social policy framework could improve social policy processes including policy formation, delivery and assessment processes that would facilitate improved outcomes on BC's persistent societal problems. A framework could also work alongside economic policy plans to ensure success for both British Columbians and the BC economy.

4.1 Improving Social Policy Processes

Part 1 in this report outlined current social policy process challenges in BC. These challenges include a lack of consistency, consultation, and collaboration in social policy development processes. Both the New Zealand Social Reports and the UK Impact Assessment system facilitated high degrees of collaboration and consultation in social policy development. The UK's Impact Assessment report also streamlined many of the stages of policy development and made those stages transparent to the public. A social policy framework could also increase horizontal collaboration between ministries on social policy development. A social policy framework would enable the desired culture of collaborative, consultative social policy development to develop in BC.

Policy implementation and service delivery challenges are other areas where there is room for improvement in social policy in BC. A social policy framework could address issues around uncoordinated policy implementation and service delivery by increasing horizontality between government departments, and by increasing integration between government and the social services sector. Increases in collaborative policy implementation and service delivery could have a significant impact on challenging areas such as youth transitioning out of foster care or youth with developmental disabilities transitioning into adult community living services. A social policy framework could also improve consistency in service delivery across regions and within sectors, which could improve programs such as women's transition house services and the BC Sexual Abuse Intervention Program.

A cohesive framework, internalized into government processes, could ease service delivery challenges of funding insecurity and inconsistency. Having clear and transparent government priorities might assist government programs and subcontracted non-profits have more clarity regarding their program's future. Publishing results in New Zealand and the UK's social policy systems increased public awareness and scrutiny on social policy issues. This increased pressure on government and politicians to take action on these issues. A social policy framework, such as the one in Alberta that involved extensive public buy-in during its development, could achieve a similar increase in public engagement and public awareness on social policy.

Part 1 also documents numerous disparities in social policy assessment in BC. These challenges include

insufficient reporting, issues with measurement validity and inconsistent data standards. The UK's Impact Assessment system integrates assessment into each policy stage from option consideration, to implementation, to evaluation. Assessment measures are fed back into every stage of social policy. New Zealand's *Social Reports* have similar effects. The popularity and widespread use of the *Social Reports* created an expectation that the reports would remain consistent, reliable, neutral and valid over time. Their annual release is accompanied by widespread media coverage.

Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy made explicit that setting targets and reporting on progress is essential to achieving improved social outcomes. Measuring outcomes and reporting on those measures formed a central feature of *Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy.* The examples in Section 1 highlight how creating a system of measurement and reporting as part of a policy framework is crucial to ensuring its success. Additionally, as the fourth annual report of *Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy* demonstrates, measuring outcomes can help identify areas where improvements have been consistent year to year, and areas where there have not been steady improvements. A standard system of program assessment as a component of a social policy framework could help BC move towards improved societal outcomes. A social policy framework that includes consistent assessment and reporting could lead to significant policy and program improvements and could enhance the public's knowledge of how poorly BC is faring on these important issues.

4.2 Improving Social Policy Outcomes

Building off the snapshot of examples of persistent social challenges in BC, it is worthwhile to explore the hypothetical impact an SPF could have on these persistent social issues. It is challenging to quantify the diverse impacts that an SPF will bring, because many of the outcome improvements flow from process improvements. Nevertheless it is important to examine in general terms what improvements an SPF could facilitate.

4.2.1 Addressing Child Poverty and Low Income Rates

Reducing the proportion of British Columbians living below the low-income cut off level and reducing rates of child poverty would be an obvious outcome goal for an SPF. Achieving this objective will require a collaborative approach involving many stakeholders. These stakeholders include but are not limited to the Ministry of Children and Families, the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, BC Housing, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills, family serving social services, and municipal social planning offices.

Lessons from policy frameworks in others jurisdictions show that an overarching framework that defines the government's priorities in relation to social policy issues can lead to the type of integrated and collaborative policy development and implementation required to improve the complex issue of low income and child poverty rates. Additionally, addressing a quantifiable social issue like low income and poverty levels requires the consistent, standard social reporting that emerged as a key lesson from the examples of social policy systems in Section 1 of this Part. Progress for this indicator might look like reducing the proportion of British Columbians living below the low-income cut off rates to eight per cent and increasing British Columbia's standing on these measures nationally.

4.2.2 Addressing Food Insecurity

Addressing food insecurity requires recognition that food insecurity, homelessness or housing instability,

and income are connected. Thus any attempt to address food insecurity requires addressing income, shelter, and access to nutrition simultaneously. Some of the groups that would be involved in addressing food insecurity would be the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, the Ministry of Children and Families, the Ministry of Agriculture, municipal school boards, community social services and regional food banks. Measures of food insecurity could be collected by regional food banks and health authorities, with school boards contributing data on meal assistance programs. This example highlights the need for a standard definition of food insecurity and standard measures of it. An SPF would create the necessary guidelines to concurrently address income, shelter and access to nutrition.

4.2.3 Addressing Long-Term Unemployment

Improving long-term unemployment rates would require a multi-faceted approach, including access to education, skills training, and basic literacy for those experiencing long-term unemployment, and policy linkages with economic and labour market plans. Such an integrated approach to public policy, which takes into account both social and economic factors, is the only way to tackle long-term unemployment rates, and would be greatly facilitated by an SPF. This integrated approach was one of the most significant impacts of the UK's impact assessment system and New Zealand's *Social Reports*.

Some of the groups that could be involved in addressing long-term unemployment would be the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training, the Ministry of Finance, the federal Ministry of Employment and Social Development, the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, the Ministry of Advanced Education, the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Work BC, large and small businesses across BC, Chambers of Commerce, and employment service agencies, such as GT Hiring.

Developing consistent, reliable and standard measures for assessing patterns and changes in long-term unemployment in BC would ensure the government develops the most suitable approach to tackling such a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional issue. Indicators of success for this issue would be a decrease in the percentage of people who are experiencing long-term unemployment in BC and a relative improvement in BC's standing on this issue nationally.

4.2.4 Addressing Crime Rates

While BC's crime rates in absolute terms have been on the decline throughout the 2000s, there is room for improvement in terms of BC's ranking on crime rates nationally. Addressing crime rates would involve collaboration amongst, but not limited to, the Ministry of Justice, regional police forces, the RCMP, Corrections Canada, BC Corrections, the Ministry of Health's Mental Health department. In this case, an SPF would facilitate greater consistency between, for example, the use of punitive versus rehabilitative sentencing and other social programs. The increased knowledge dissemination of social issues across government that emerged from the social policy systems outlined in Section 1 above could lead to a more integrated and effective approach to this complex issue. Shared measures on crime rates, changing demographics of the incarcerated population, and changing recidivism rates could ensure the government's approach on this issue is responsive to recent trends.

4.2.5 Addressing Mental Health

Improving population-wide mental health would require participation from almost every ministry in government. Mental health is related to life stress, amongst other factors. Additionally with one in five of British Columbians suffering from depression or anxiety, this issue transcends traditional ministerial jurisdiction. Improving the mental health status of British Columbian's is a significant challenge, in particular

for such vulnerable groups as incarcerated and homeless individuals. However if a social policy framework explicitly made population mental health a priority, then all socially oriented ministries and government-funded social programs would have greater incentive to ensure that their initiatives are consistent with population-wide mental health improvements.

4.3 Policy Feedback Loops

From the information above it is clear that an SPF could contribute substantially to improvements within each stage of the policy process, and in doing so create better social policy outcomes in BC. An additional feature not captured in this picture, however, is the ability of an SPF to serve as the foundation for robust policy feedback loops. A policy feedback loop can be understood by considering the difference between a policy process that proceeds in a linear fashion from policy formation through implementation to assessment (Fig.1), and a policy process in which each stage of the process feeds back in a non-linear fashion to previous stages, where appropriate (Fig. 2).

Although useful for analysis, the linear process in Fig.1 does not accurately reflect how most social policy processes proceed in the real world. For example, unforeseen issues that arise during implementation can necessitate changes to the policy being implemented and so require a return to the policy formation stage. Alternatively, an assessment performed on a particular program might reveal problems caused by inadequate implementation practices, and so require a return to the implementation stage. Or, assessments of a

Fig.1 Linear Policy Process

Fig.2 Non-Linear Policy Process

program could reveal flaws in the policy unrelated to implementation practices, and so necessitate a return to the policy formation stage.

These types of scenarios are not uncommon in current social policy processes in BC today. What is significant is that the current environment lacks a consistent methodology to ensure that these feedback loops operate effectively and consistently, particularly with complex policy issues involving a variety of stakeholders from multiple government organizations and external groups. These are the sorts of major policy issues facing BC that were highlighted in Section 3: child poverty and low-income rates, violent and property crime, mental health, food insecurity, and long-term unemployment. One of the most important functions of an SPF is to provide enough structure to ensure robust policy feedback loops in the context of such complex issues. The broad outlines of this structure can be summarized in two points.

The first point is the need to facilitate increased collaboration and consultation amongst government organizations, and amongst government, non-governmental organizations, and the general public. Based on evidence from other jurisdictions, enshrining these practices in an SPF will help establish explicit norms and expectations regarding collaboration and consultation. This would increase the chances for outcomes where, for example, stakeholders involved in policy implementation are consistently given the opportunity to provide input on the content of policy, or that findings from program assessments by one ministry that bear on the content of policy falling under another ministry are consistently shared.

The second part of this structure concerns the need for shared indicators and shared data across the social policy sector. One of the frequent impediments to successful cross-sector engagement is disagreement over the validity of indicators or terminology, or a lack of reliable data altogether (for a clear example of these issues see CIHI, 2013, p.30). This in turn weakens policy feedback loops even where collaboration and consultation across the policy stages do occur. Conversely, by providing an impetus for the creation of shared indicators and shared data across the sector, an SPF will increase the robustness of feedback loops through the establishment of a common language. In addition to facilitating improvements at each stage of the policy process, an SPF also strengthens the links between all stages of the policy process. In doing so, an SPF will help ensure that social policy in BC is informed by the best available information at all stages of the policy process.

PART 4
Conclusion

Section 1: Recommendations

- Continue consultations with external parties, and extend them where possible to include:
  - First Nations: contact provincial level organizations – BCUIC Executive Director Don Bain and BC Assembly of First Nations Health Council Chair Chief Elmer Moody (Gitxaala First Nation)
  - Private Sector: potential corporate partners and BIAs/Chambers of Commerce
  - Municipalities
- Connect with experts in other jurisdictions where frameworks or similar are further along in terms of use and assessment than Alberta (possible theme for BoardVoice AGM?):
  - Martin Tobias, University of Washington, Former principle epidemiologist at New Zealand, Ministry of Health (New Zealand Social Reports)
  - Deb Mathews, Chair, Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction, Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, Ontario (Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy)
- Develop framing for the SPF conversation that emphasizes the interconnectedness of social and economic outcomes
- Capitalize on the timeliness of the SPF conversation in BC: we have a chance to avoid social problems that Alberta experienced during their recent resource-driven economic expansion if we start this project now
- Host conversations with BoardVoice members and others in the social policy sector about the values underlying social policy in BC
- Work within the service provision sector to shift conversations about social policy challenges to processes and how they could be improved (in place critiques that focus on funding amounts/levels)
- Use existing political networks to identify possible champions within government and keep them abreast of developments and opportunities for constructive engagement with partners in the service provision sector

Section 2: Moving Forward

BC's current social and economic climate presents both opportunities and challenges. With increased economic growth comes great opportunity, but also the risk of increasing social inequity and social ills. Sustainable future prosperity requires a strong foundation in and coordinated approach to social policy that helps all British Columbians contribute to and benefit from this prosperity.

Our research shows that there is an appetite for improved social policy process, and that processes in BC are in need of such improvements. Further, there is evidence from other jurisdictions that the development and use of social policy frameworks and similar instruments do achieve the kinds of change needed in BC. With a framework, collaboration that was once challenging, expensive, and/or episodic can be institutionalized, leading to improved communication, consultation, and outcomes. The establishment of shared principles and priorities to drive policy decisions can improve consistency, and through implementation of common measures and reporting standards, outcomes can be improved based on empirical evidence and the evolving needs of British Columbians.

The establishment of a social policy framework that increases BC's social capital will help achieve the province's economic and labour market goals. Other jurisdictions that use such tools have experienced improvements in many seemingly intractable social issues such as child poverty, labour market inequities, and food security. Social policy frameworks that facilitate a more unified, cohesive approach to bring all parties together and enable government and the service provision sector to define new relationships and processes to support their work and help build a better BC for all.

Establishing a social policy framework is not a short-term fix; frameworks require time and resources to be effective. Jurisdictions have developed processes that can be applied directly to or easily adapted for BC to help make the process more manageable. Changing public discourse around social policy can occur when the public is engaged in conversations about our province's future and the role of social policy in getting us there. The process through which a framework is created is part of achieving the desired outcomes of a framework, so the resources and time allocated to it are well used.

BC currently ranks last in the country in child poverty, and is among the worst in LICO, and employment measures, but it does not have to be this way. We can strive to be the best in Canada and can certainly be better than we are today, but only if we commit to real change. Changing the conversation starts with those of us who see the need for change; we need to turn from focusing on what is lacking to what can be built, establishing the foundations for BC's social policy framework.

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APPENDIX 1
Social Capital

1.1 A Social Policy Framework to Enhance Social Capital

Many of the existing frameworks explored in this report included social policies that impact economic outcomes. For example, New Zealand uses paid work and economic standard of living measures as assessment tools for social well-being. In order to understand how a social policy framework has the potential to impact economic outcomes, we must comprehend how social policy leads to improved social capital, which contributes to economic growth. A successful social policy will improve social capital in BC. Social capital is defined by the World Bank website as

> the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions, which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together. (World Bank website)

This suggests that a successfully implemented social policy framework will lead to stronger economic growth. A social policy framework sets the foundation for a strong economy.

1.2 Social Capital and Economic Growth

Economic growth is the most recognizable measure of a country's 'success' and is usually measured in GDP. Growth is also a signal of how well developed the social capital of the country is. Often, if not always, a country with low economic growth has low social capital and those with high economic growth have high social capital (Woolcock, 1998). Social capital cannot be overlooked when measuring economic performance (Knack & Keefer, 1997).

Economic theory did not always recognize people as a vital part of growth. This changed in the 1960's when neo-classical economists such as T.W. Schultz (1961) and Gary Becker (1962) argued that healthy, educated, and trained workers determine how productively other critical factors such as land, labour, and physical capital are used. The potential for each person to contribute to the economy, and to contribute to economic growth, is dependent on his or her access to needed resources. This suggests a link between social capital and economic growth and is supported by economic sociology, an emerging area of academic research (Woolcock, 1998).

Evidence suggests that social capital is a key factor and indicator of economic development. In fact, economic policy and social policy have ties so close that similar indicators and measures can be used to assess both types of policies. International analyses have highlighted social capital as one of the most important parts of a country's economic performance (Temple and Johnson, 1998). Therefore social capital is a determining factor in BC's economic development, growth, and ability to remain competitive with the rest of Canada and on a global scale.

Economic behaviour is entrenched in the social relationships that make up social capital (Granovetter, 1995). Social capital is an influential factor in shaping economic outcomes at micro and macro levels

(Rodrik, 1997). The World Bank identifies several areas where social capital and economic growth intertwine:

Micro Level*	
Family	▪ Social capital is used among the poor to insure themselves against shocks, such as bad health, inclement weather or government cutbacks and to pool their resources, such as food, credit or child care. In addition to enabling poor people to start up small enterprises and increase their income, informal relationships often mean the difference between day-to-day survival and despair.
Firm	▪ Dense and overlapping social networks increase the likelihood of economic cooperation by building trust and fostering shared norms. The social capital generated within and between firms is especially important for lowering risk and uncertainty at the local level (Fountain, 1998). ▪ Social capital facilitates valuable information exchange about products and markets and reduces the costs of contracts and extensive regulations and enforcement. Repeated transactions and business reputation provide the necessary incentives for parties to act in mutually beneficial ways.
Community	▪ In Tanzania, social capital at the community level impacted poverty by making government services more effective, facilitating the spread of information on agriculture, enabling groups to pool their resources and manage property as a cooperative, and giving people access to credit who have been traditionally locked out of formal financial institutions (Narayan, 1997).
Macro Level	
Public Sector	▪ Constructive state participation in economic development hinges on a delicate balance between external social ties and internal cohesiveness. Ideally, highly skilled and well-respected state bureaucracy utilizes its close working relationship with business leaders to enhance the market performance of private and public sector organizations. Government effectiveness, accountability and the ability to enforce rules fairly directly impact economic growth be enabling or disabling the development of domestic firms and markets and encouraging or discouraging foreign investment (Rodrik, 1997; Putnam, 1993).
Private Sector	▪ Fukuyama (1995) found that more expansive social networks of the United States and Germany generate a greater number of large corporations than do societies like China, in which family networks form the foundation of private enterprise. ▪ Simultaneously fostering economic development at micro and macro levels is critical in order to promote growth and alleviate poverty in ways that are sustainable. ▪ There is increasing evidence that trade at the macro level is influenced by social capital --a common property resource whose value depends on the level of interaction between people. While most work on social capital is microeconomic, social capital has implications for the effect of trade and migration, economic reform, regional integration, new technologies which affect how people interact, security, and more.

**Content in this table is taken directly from the World Bank website*

The correlation between social capital and economic growth is apparent when considering individual scenarios. For instance, an individual working to improve their low social capital has a direct effect on his or her personal economic performance. If a person loses social capital it will be more difficult for them to recover from a job loss or unexpected crisis. When a strong social support system is encouraged and supported in community, it can be easier for those in need to build, or rebuild, their own social capital.

Employment is an important determining factor in people's lives, leading to the development of their individual social capital. Finding employment can be one of the most prominent challenges for those who do not have strong social capital. Strong social capital is not only an important component of economic growth, but also potentially a factor in facilitating a faster recovery from a recession.

1.3 A Snapshot of Social Capital and Economic Crisis: Iceland

Iceland ranks above the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development average on the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index, and had almost full employment prior to 2008 (Shelkle, 2012). Because Iceland had such high employment, public spending on social security was relatively low. Even when the economic crisis hit in 2008, which impacted Iceland quite heavily, rates of unemployment rose but were still favourable compared to other advanced economies (Shelkle, 2012).

While Iceland was one of the worst hit countries in the financial crises of 2008, they also had one of the most expedient recoveries. With the help of a strategic plan to recover from the crisis, which included strategic social policies, and previously high social capital, it did not take long before Iceland found its way to recovery (Gylfason, 2012). Gylfason (2012) argues that financial crises can never defeat middle to high-income countries because human and social capital is their strongest asset. With a strong social capital, Iceland is in recovery and pre 2008 GDP is expected for 2014 (Gylfason, 2012). Strong social policy is fundamental then if social capital is a nation's strongest asset.