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**Poverty reduction strategies in Canada:
A new way to tackle an old problem?
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Poverty Reduction Strategies in Canada: A new way to tackle an old problem?

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Abstract: Since the end 1990s, jurisdictions across the world have adopted an innovative governance process called a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). PRS processes are a perfect example of a new governance dynamics in which collaboration between the public sector and the community sector is leveraged to develop policy solutions to complex problems such as poverty. Jurisdictions argue that this new process helps ensure continued prioritisation, improved information for decision making, and improved coordination between different units of government and other partners. In Canada nearly all provinces and territories now engage in a PRS process. This paper asks whether the PRS processes, as implemented by four Canadian provinces (Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario and Quebec), have the potential to deliver on the expected governance benefits. This research is the first to connect theory to a widespread yet under-researched practice in government. We review the collaborative governance and performance management literatures for theories and empirical evidence on the costs and benefits of similar practices. We use official documents to identify a theory of change which explains how PRS processes could result in more poverty reduction. We use public information to describe and compare PRS processes in the four provinces. Our research shows that each province makes quite different choices in implementing its process and that such differences likely influence the degree to which aspired governance benefits are realised. When legislation supports the PRS process, provinces have more continuous activities and, where legislation details the role of non-government stakeholders, stakeholder involvement is more substantive and visible. There is now more public information on government's actions but also still much scope for improvement, especially in linking fiscal expenses, effects of policy actions, and wellbeing outcomes. Whether new coordination mechanisms have been sufficient to yield substantive benefits in coordination is unclear.

Keywords: poverty reduction strategy (PRS), poverty reduction, collaborative governance, performance management, social policy

JEL: I30, I39

1. Introduction

For the past decade, stubborn poverty and rising inequality have concerned policymakers, academics, and civil society organisations in Canada and elsewhere. The big fear is that these developments translate into less social mobility across and within generations (OECD 2008 & 2011; Beyond GDP; Piketty 2014; Corak 2013; Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives). Traditionally governments have countered such effects through social policy, which in its broadest definition, covers policy areas such as taxation, social security, labour market, education, health, housing, and social services (OECD 2011; Banting & Myles 2013).

Yet, poverty is a complex problem and reducing it is also complex. Many factors determine a person's risk of poverty, and the power to eliminate, attenuate or remedy such factors is dispersed across groups in society. Since the end 1990s, jurisdictions across the world have adopted an innovative governance process, called a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), to improve policymaking in the afore-mentioned areas. PRSs were first implemented by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as part of a reformed process by which developing countries could qualify for conditional loans and debt relief (Levinsohn, 2003). In 1999, the UK was the first advanced economy to launch a PRS process, followed by jurisdictions such as the European Union (EU), its member states, and Canadian provinces (European Commission 2010; Collin 2007; Social Exclusion Unit 2004). Quebec was Canada's first jurisdiction to start such a process (2001) but now 12 provinces / territories either have or formally intend to launch one.

The core feature of these PRSs is that they provide a framework of goals, targets and indicators that enables a government and other stakeholders to monitor progress towards poverty reduction over the medium term (5-10 years). The governance process driving the development of such strategies is also breaking new ground. Stakeholders, including those outside the traditional government realm, are increasingly involved at more stages of the policy cycle from framing issues to evaluating results. Provincial governments have argued that in order to tackle a complex problem such as poverty, a new process is needed to ensure continued prioritisation, improved information for decision making, and improved coordination between different units of government (horizontally and vertically) and other partners such as those involved in policy delivery. These PRS processes are a perfect example of a new governance dynamics where collaboration between the public sector and the community sector is leveraged to develop policy solutions. Yet, each province has adopted a different approach that reflects their particular circumstances and relationships with partners.

In this paper we ask whether PRS processes, as implemented by provincial jurisdictions in Canada, have the potential to deliver on expected governance benefits. The paper first reviews the literature on collaborative governance and performance management to better understand how and why governance processes similar to PRSs are thought to be beneficial (section 2). Drawing on official government documents of four Canadian provinces, namely Manitoba,

Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, and Quebec, we set those governance dynamics in context and develop a theory of change based on the narratives of the provincial governments (section 3).¹ Then we describe and compare the PRS processes as they have been implemented in the four provinces (section 4). The studied provinces are early-adopters of a PRS process, which allows for a period of observation that spans multiple election cycles. This enables us to draw out what have been the consequences of province-specific implementations of this governance approach for reaping aspired governance benefits (section 5). The empirical data is drawn from government documents and supplemented with other publicly available information such as blog posts and reports from professionals, experts and third sector organisations. This research is the first to connect theory to an under-researched but widespread practice in Canadian and other OECD country governments. Section 6 concludes.

2. On collaborative governance and performance management

In public administration, scholars studying collaborative governance and performance management present distinct epistemological communities. The collaborative governance literature places relatively strong emphasis on the nature of interaction between different stakeholders in the policy process while the performance literature places relatively strong emphasis on the management and measurement mechanisms that translate strategic goals into actions. These schools of thought nonetheless share a common ground in the sense that they emphasise the importance of process, articulating the belief that a process can be traced by observables and, in fact, that such tracing is necessary for the process to result into the desired outcomes. The empirical analysis of PRS processes in this paper indicates that governments draw inspiration from both communities in combining collaborative governance with performance management practices. This section reviews both literatures as to how and why prominent elements of PRS processes may contribute to poverty reduction.

Collaborative governance entails a transformation of governance, away from top down hierarchical models of decision-making, towards decision-making processes that include a wide range of stakeholders beyond the confines of the state (Peters & Pierre, 2015; Rhodes, 2000; Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh, 2012). Bevir describes governance as “the processes and interactions through which all kinds of social interests and actors combine to produce the policies, practices, and effects that define current patterns of governing” (Bevir, 2011, p. 1). Governance involves a range of actors in the policy process from the outset. Indeed, Reed (2008) suggests a role for stakeholder participation that goes beyond policy implementation and involves aspects of policy-making such as problem definition, goal setting and policy design. In

¹ These four Canadian provinces launched their first strategy in the early or mid-2000s and thus offer a lengthy observation period (QC: 2001; NL: 2004; ON: 2008; MB: 2009; Caledon Institute). Once a PRS strategy is adopted it may take several years before policy initiatives are underway and because of our interest in linking PRS to intermediate governance benefits a focus on early adopters is warranted.

comparison to adversarial and managerial modes of policymaking and implementation, collaborative governance “promises a sweet reward” in that “we may avoid the high costs of adversarial policymaking, expand democratic participation, and even restore rationality to public management” (Ansell & Gash, 2008, p. 561).

Drawing from systematic reviews, scholars developed elaborate theoretical frameworks explaining collaborative governance processes and their outcomes (Ansell & Gash 2008; Emerson et al 2012; Emerson & Nabatchi 2015), some of which are also mentioned in the grey literature on PRSs. The institutional design of such processes is seen as an important factor driving collaboration. Macinnes et al (2014, p. 67) identify the creation of legislation and working groups as forms of institutionalisation that help keep momentum going around the implementation of PRSs. In a systematic review of environmental management, Reed (2008) identifies the institutionalisation of stakeholder involvement as key to productive decision making on national and international environmental policy. Reed also recommends that, where relevant, stakeholder participation should be considered as early as possible and throughout the processes (2008, p. 2,422). Macinnes and colleagues observe, however, that in PRSs, external stakeholders were particularly involved through consultations around the strategy but that there was often no ongoing dialogue regarding implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategies (2014, p. 61, 66).

However, with such complex interplay of actors there is also a need “to manage individual organisational resources and performance in an efficient and effective manner” and the forms and competencies needed for governing are likely different from those needed in hierarchical governance structures (Osborne, 2010, p. 414). Governments are increasingly aware that the legitimacy of governance arrangements is intrinsically linked to their ability to produce concrete policy outputs or outcomes (Peters and Pierre, 2015). This new focus on performance and results has significant implications for how a government approaches governance and for the tools and instruments of collaboration.

Performance management is a process that connects people and jobs to the organisation's goals, objectives and strategies (Mwita, 2000, p. 26). It “is the means through which employees' performance can be improved by ensuring appropriate recognition and reward for their efforts, and by improving communication, learning and working arrangements” (p. 27). This in turn helps “managers analyse performance problems, take corrective measures, and design work environments and management systems in which high performance will prevail and current behaviour be modified” (p. 22). The emphasis on explicit standards and measures of performance is one of seven elements that Hood (1991) identified as the doctrine of New Public Management, which he describes as a group of ideas on how governments should go about doing their business.

Strategic thinking, an integral part of performance management, also plays a central role in collaborative governance processes because it helps governments and their agencies focus on the long term. In the words of performance scholar Behn: “government needs to improve performance, and to do so, it needs a demanding and strategic approach” (2008, p. 2). Formulating a strategy involves identifying a vision, mission, goals and a plan of action. The strategy provides the framework for the design and implementation of policies / actions aimed at achieving a specific outcome such as reducing poverty. In comparison to the management contexts typically studied in the performance management literature, however, a collaborative governance context such as a PRS process requires sharing visions and strategies with a broader range of stakeholders.

The implementation of a strategy involves setting the frameworks for how government’s resources are allocated towards reaching its goals and it includes the management of a variety of initiatives all targeted to the reduction of poverty indicators. Behn’s definition of a performance strategy focuses on how a process of strategy implementation ought to look like: “A jurisdiction or agency is employing a [performance] strategy if, in an effort to achieve specific public purposes, its leadership team persists in holding an ongoing series of regular, frequent, integrated meetings during which the chief executive and/or the principal members of the chief executive’s leadership team plus the director (and the top managers) of different subunits use current data to analyse specific, previously defined aspects of each unit’s recent performance; to provide feedback on recent progress compared with targets; to follow up on previous decisions and commitments to produce results; to examine and learn from each unit’s efforts to improve performance; to identify and solve performance-deficit problems; and to set and achieve the next performance targets” (2014, p. 27).

To be successful, public executives need to develop their own appreciation of the cause-effect relationship between activities and outcomes (Behn 2008, p. 7). This requires improved information for decision making and better coordination across partners involved in policy delivery in order to track performance (Barber 2007)). Just going through the motions of the process will lead to failure. The regular meetings in which data are used to assess individual and collective progress relative to targets and learning experiences are exchanged, are thus an important activity that helps establish that crucial connection between an organisation’s goals and the behaviours of individuals working in it.

Empirical evidence on the track record of performance management practices to improve public outcomes is mixed however. In education for instance, research shows that New York State “schools that do a better job at performance management indeed have better outcomes in standardized test scores” (Sun & van Ryzin, 2012, p. 1) and that the presence of a target leads to larger improvements in exam results in English school districts (Boyne & Chen, 2007). Yet, other research documented that actual use of performance information is much less than initially

anticipated (for a review see McDavid & Huse, 2011), that ill-designed and poorly implemented performance management practices may do more harm than good (Bouckeaert & Peters, 2002), for instance by inducing perverse behaviours that involve a ‘gaming’ of the system and the mere perception of improved performance as suggested by performance metrics (Bevan & Hood, 2006).

Concluding, the collaborative governance literature emphasises a broader inclusion of stakeholders in the entire policy-making and implementation process as well as the importance of institutionalising the process. The performance management literature emphasises the need for strategic thinking and the critical role that management and measurement practices play in achieving better performance by aligning the behaviours of individuals, subunits and so on with the strategic policy goals. Aligning collaborative governance with performance management practices is expected to lead to a better policy process resulting in better societal outcomes, such as less poverty.

3. The governance benefits of a PRS process

The PRS processes that have been launched at the provincial level in Canada over the past decade are perfect examples of new governance dynamics at play where collaboration between the public sector and the community sector are leveraged to develop policy solutions to complex problems. Indeed, the promise of increased poverty reduction is embedded in the conception, planning, and implementation of a PRS.

A PRS is a strategic, government-led governance process that strives to achieve a social goal, namely the reduction of poverty. A key step in a PRS process is the production of a medium-term action plan, which states the long-term policy goal and explains how the government expects to make and measure progress towards this goal over the medium term (typically 5 or 10 years). The plan is produced and implemented through a governance process involving many stakeholders. The start-up of the process often involves the creation of legislation and new organisational structures such as an executive committee and advisory bodies. The process is cyclical – achieving the goal in one cycle is not realistic – and often consists of the following sequencing of activities:

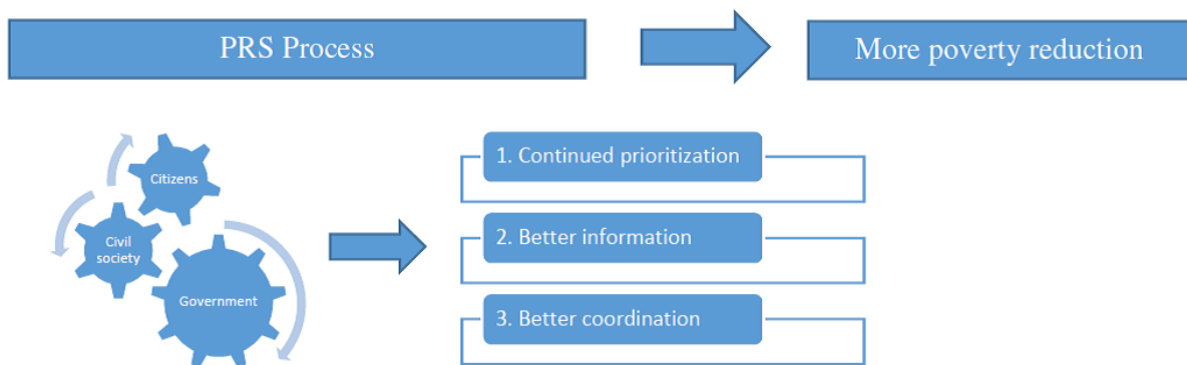
Consultations > Action Plan > Implementation > Monitoring > Consultations > Action Plan

Even a cursory glance at official PRS documents suggests a governing environment that is considerably more complex than the ones that are the focus of much empirical research on performance management. Unlike for health, social services and education, governments do not have a ministry of poverty. Yet, public policies regarding the economy, labour market, taxation, health, education, social services and migration significantly affect the likelihood of poverty and its consequences. Public service delivery systems are also complex vertically (i.e. organisation from executive to front line delivery). Thus control over poverty is only partially in the hands of

any given government/department. Furthermore, poverty is influenced by external forces such as the policy recipient’s own agency and the global economy. This provides a rationale for involving a wide range of stakeholders, i.e. groups and individuals with an interest or concern, in the policy process to reduce poverty.

The design and implementation of a PRS process is believed to be key to achieving the desired outcome because the process enables continued prioritisation, improved information and coordination. According to the World Bank’s PRS source book, a PRS process should be results-oriented, comprehensive, partnership-oriented, and based on a long-term perspective (World Bank, 2002, p. 3). A strikingly similar narrative is used by jurisdictions in advanced economies as governments have implemented similar processes for other complex issues such as crime, mental health, affordable housing and community development. In the context of provincial poverty reduction strategies, Ontario’s first action plan, for instance, emphasises the importance of a long term plan, collective efforts, broad government action, as well as comprehensive measurement of progress (GoO, 2008).

Figure 1: Governance benefits of a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) process



Source: Author.

Thus, the PRS process is the instrument and poverty reduction is the desired social outcome. The above-described activities are expected to lead to better government action, which in turn leads to improved well-being outcomes, especially among those in poverty or at risk of poverty. Figure 1 visually captures the narrative underlying this ‘theory of change’. PRS activities can lead to better government action through three channels, namely continued prioritisation, better information and better coordination. Because traditional policy processes are more fragmented and reducing poverty is complex, they are seen as less equipped to capture such governance benefits. A focus on continued prioritisation enables policymakers to maintain long-term efforts and momentum on a complex issue when faced with relatively short budgetary and electoral cycles. Better information leads to more informed decision making by enabling policymakers

from the outset of the process to consult the right stakeholders, follow the right information collection methods and track their progress against benchmarks. Finally, better coordination enables governments to come up with a joint understanding and coherent response to complex problems when the power of action is diffused among many agencies. Together, they enable governments to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy that is effective and efficient.

The four provinces we study in this paper also used this ‘theory of change’ narrative presented in Figure 1 to justify launching a PRS process. The official PRS documents of all four provinces include multiple, and prominently placed, references to each of the three intermediary governance benefits: continued prioritisation, better information and coordination.²

4. Comparing provincial PRS processes

Sections two and three argued that the nature of a PRS process is key to achieving intermediate governance benefits which in turn are supposed to result in poverty reduction. Yet, in practice there can be great variability in terms of the governance mechanisms that governments put in place to achieve those intermediate outcomes. Indeed, this section shows Canadian provinces have adopted diverse approaches and strategies to implementing their own PRS process and therefore they offer a rich site for comparative analysis and for examining the variation in terms of the intermediate outcomes that have resulted.

Methodology

In this section we analyse differences and similarities across provincial PRS processes by focusing on three variables identified by governments as important determinants for achieving desired change: institutional arrangements, stakeholder involvement, and strategic management and measurement. Institutional arrangements refer to the legislative and organisational structures that are created or used to promote opportunities/offer incentives for achieving one or more of the intermediate outcomes (sustained prioritisation, better information and better coordination). Such arrangements can be ad hoc or permanent. Stakeholder involvement refers to the range of stakeholders that are included in the process, at which stage(s) and in what role(s). These include stakeholders from different parts of government (executive, civil service), arm’s length or private sector partners (i.e. service delivery), civil society organisations (unions, social movements, persons with lived experience, community-based organisations) and other groups (academics, think tanks, professionals, businesses, foundations). Stakeholders can also be involved at

² Appendix 1 lists quotes from the provinces’ action plans and other key official documents which provincial governments released as part of their PRS process. The selected quotes illustrate phrasing that is consistent with a causal interpretation between the PRS process and/or the outcome of poverty reduction and the three intermediary effects. Words such as ‘long-term’ and ‘sustained’ identify the importance of continued prioritisation. Likewise, words such as ‘consultation’, ‘stakeholder’, ‘evidence’, and ‘measuring progress’ are associated with needing better information and words such as ‘collaboration’, ‘coherence’, and ‘integrated’ are mentioned in phrasings emphasising the need for better coordination.

different stages of the PRS process (before, during strategy formulation, during implementation and/or monitoring) and with different engagement goals (advise, decision-making, delivery). In terms of strategic management and measurement, we look at the ideas and practices that jurisdictions adopt and/or the tools that jurisdictions use to determine goals and to monitor progress on those goals.

This research is the first to document and compare the characteristics of such processes, and can thereby assess how likely it is that the PRS process in a particular province is generating intended governance benefits. This is a first step towards assessing whether PRS processes contribute to continued prioritisation, better information and coordination, and thus contribute to poverty reduction.³

The analysis involves the systematic interpretation and comparison of qualitative information retrieved from publicly available information such as official government documents and information provided on their websites, documents produced by civil society organisations and think tanks, blog posts and other media commentary, and the very few academic publications on PRSs in Canada.

To support this analysis, we used pieces of that information to develop a visual tool that maps key events / activities in each province's PRS process over time. These so-called PRS timelines facilitate a systematic comparison of such activities between provinces. This paper uses screenshots of the PRS timelines to support the analysis. The interactive PRS timelines are available online and can be used by third parties for independent analysis (Website: www.onpovertyreduction.ca; Aucoin, Hills & Notten, 2015). The PRS timelines currently hold information from (roughly) the announcement of intent to launch a PRS process up to March 2016. When available, specific events are linked to an online library containing the official documents that were released as part of the event.

Socio-political context

The provinces' PRS processes emerged from very different socio-political contexts, which in turn shaped the strategic goals and the design and implementation of their PRS process.

In Quebec, the adoption of Bill 112 (a law to combat poverty and social exclusion) was the result of a long and a significant process of collective action and public deliberation (Noël, 2006; 2002; Un collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté, 2000). A key objective of the civil society movement was to ensure not only the participation of poor and marginalised people in the process but also to enable them to drive the processes that shape their lives (Dufour 2004, Labrie 1999). This empowerment approach to influencing the policy agenda involves a range of approaches and

³ In follow up research we will use interviews to assess the degree to which the intermediary outcomes have materialised and we will collect and analyse cross-jurisdictionally comparable policy and well-being data.

methods, including not only traditional research, but also dissemination, knowledge translation, popular education initiatives, and dialogue.

By contrast, the decision-making process that led to the adoption of Bill 152 - The Poverty Reduction Act in Ontario in 2009 involved civil society organisations in a very different capacity. Ontario's anti-poverty movement sought to make poverty reduction an election issue prior to the 2007 election and therefore they invested most of their resources and energy in research and evidence-based analysis. They worked from within the institutional channels in order to exert influence in the policy process, conducted public events, organised petitions, and drafted open letters to push the government to create a poverty reduction plan with concrete targets and timelines (Maxwell, 2009). Premier Dalton McGuinty then promised that, if re-elected, his Liberal government would develop a PRS within their first year and make progress on poverty reduction throughout its term (Maxwell, 2009).

In Manitoba, civil society organisations and the NDP government did not collaborate or consult but developed separate strategies instead. The Make Poverty History Manitoba (MPHM) network was created in the mid-2000s as part of the larger Make Poverty History Canada campaign. This mainly Winnipeg-based collection of organisations started collaborating, consulting various stakeholders, conducting research, and advocating for a PRS (CCPAM, 2009; Bernas, 2014). However, the stakeholders were caught by surprise when the NDP government released its PRS in May 2009. Shortly thereafter, civil society organisations released their own strategy.

Similarly, it was Danny Williams, leader of the Progressive Conservative party, who initiated the PRS process as a follow up on his electoral promise to reduce poverty (Collin, 2007). Civil society organisations in Newfoundland and Labrador were involved in the PRS process once it was started.

It is not surprising, then, that the political narrative around PRS process varies across provincial contexts, particularly as it relates to which causal mechanisms - coordination or information management - actually get emphasised. Manitoba, for example, emphasises coordination at a provincial level, whereas Quebec emphasises coordination at a more regional level. Ontario, on the other hand, underscores the importance of information management and, within that, the role of evidence; and Newfoundland and Labrador maintain an emphasis both on information management and coordination.

Moreover, while all four provinces view poverty as a complex and multidimensional problem, each formulates their long term goal differently. Manitoba and especially Newfoundland and Labrador focus on remedying the economic dimension of poverty for a broad range of population groups affected by or at risk of poverty. Ontario's first strategy also focuses on poverty in an economic sense but prioritises breaking the vicious cycle of poverty for children. In their second

strategy, Ontario maintains the focus on children (and their families) but adds ending homelessness as a new priority. In addition to poverty reduction, Manitoba and especially Quebec's strategies also give a prominent role to social inclusion.

In spite of nuances in the poverty reduction objectives, there is nonetheless large overlap in policy areas where provinces take remedial action (Kindornay et al, 2015). All strategies mention addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, employment, education (including early childhood) and health (including mental health); and, most strategies emphasise the need to strengthen communities and to improve coordination and collaboration (p. 24).

Institutional arrangements

Provincial governments have put in place various institutional arrangements to support their PRS process. These range from legislation, executive level structures, administrative support offices, to advisory bodies. The legislative arrangements have the intent to encourage sustained prioritisation of the poverty file, whereas the executive and administrative arrangements are primarily geared towards coordination between different parts of government. Still other arrangements create a structure for the engagement of non-government stakeholders.

In table 1, we can see that all provinces except for Newfoundland and Labrador, introduced legislation obliging the government to have a poverty reduction strategy. Legislation can help with sustained prioritisation of a PRS process as it commits current and future governments to specific responsibilities. Indeed, if a future government wants to change or abandon such legislation, it will need to get parliamentary approval first. It should be noted that Quebec's legislation is unique in the sense that it even details the substantive strategic goals and range of government actions through which those goals should be attained thereby leaving less room for future governments to choose alternative policy directions.

Moreover, legislation may also encourage new information to be considered or created as part of the process and it may give legislative backing to coordination mechanisms. In all jurisdictions with poverty reduction legislation, the law specifies details on what kinds of stakeholders the government must involve and it requires the government to regularly report specific types of information. In the case of Manitoba and Quebec, legislation also details what governance bodies will support the PRS process as well as their mandates. With legal backing such bodies are more likely to have and maintain their influence as legitimate players in the policy process.

Some provinces also created new structures at the executive and administrative level to facilitate coordination between Ministers and their respective bureaucracies. Manitoba and Newfoundland and Labrador, for example, use ministerial committees to coordinate a dozen or so ministries. Manitoba's ministerial committee receives legal backing from the poverty reduction legislation.

Ontario originally had structured a ministerial committee, however, the provincial government mandated a single Minister in 2014 to be politically responsible for coordinating efforts through a Minister’s Table. This is similar to the approach adopted in Quebec where the poverty reduction legislation specifies that it is the Minister of Work and Social Solidarity who is politically responsible, though potentially any other Minister can be held to account if that Ministry’s actions have a direct and significant effect on persons living in poverty and social exclusion.

Table 1: Overview of institutional arrangements supporting PRS processes

Type of arrangement	Manitoba (2009)	Newfoundland & Labrador (2005)	Ontario (2007)	Quebec (2001)
Legislation	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Executive	Ministerial Committee	Ministerial Committee	Minister’s Table, Treasury Board (since 2014) Ministerial Committee (before 2014)	Minister of Work, Employment & Social Solidarity
Administration	Part of division Interdepartmental working group	Own division Interdepartmental working group	Own division	Own division Research centre
Other	The Ministerial Committee includes 4 civil society representatives Premier’s Advisory Council			2 advisory bodies (at the national and regional/local level)

Sources: See Appendix 2 for sources and more detailed information.

At the administrative level, the PRS process in most provinces is supported by one or several civil servants, often grouped in a dedicated unit, having the strategy as their main file. Some

provinces also have interdepartmental planning groups (MA, NL) or a research centre dedicated to measuring progress on poverty reduction (QC).

The variation in executive and administrative level arrangements suggests that it is difficult to set up institutional structures that hold political officials or bureaucrats accountable while also facilitating coordination between Ministers and Ministries. Nevertheless, it is not clear to what extent these new bodies improve coordination between different Ministries. Other than referring to their existence, and in some cases their mandate and representatives, not much information is publicly available on these coordinating bodies. The mandates are often formulated in broad terms, the frequency of meetings seems low (i.e. Manitoba's Ministerial Committee reported meeting 5 times in 2012-13), and, especially in the smaller provinces, the number of civil servants responsible for the poverty reduction file also seems very low.

The importance of consulting a broader range of stakeholders as part of a PRS process is touted in the action plans of all provinces and is a key element contributing to a broader information base feeding into the policy process. Yet, as we can see in Table 1 only Manitoba and Quebec created institutional arrangements to engage non-government stakeholders in the PRS process. Indeed, because of the strength of civil society movement in some jurisdictions, these two provinces have created *institutionalised consultation* platforms as part of their PRS process. Some of those arrangements even have legal backing from the jurisdiction's poverty reduction legislation. Generally, these bodies offer advice within a specified mandate on a continuous basis, and consist of civil society leaders but sometimes also include persons with lived experience and/or users of public services.

Manitoba's interministerial committee has 4 representatives of civil society take part in a government body together with 11 ministers. The Committee has a legal mandate to offer advice to the Executive Council on the development and implementation of the strategy and is supposed to meet at least four times a year (Poverty Reduction Strategy Act). The legislation does not offer any insight if political and civil society members of the Committee have the same rights in terms of voting and agenda setting and the like. Other than a brief reference in a progress report, no information is publicly available on the activities of this committee.

The institutionalisation of stakeholder involvement is deemed important for effective stakeholder engagement (Reed, 2008). Yet, only Quebec and Manitoba have undertaken efforts in that respect. Moreover, for only two of these bodies (Quebec's Advisory Committee and Quebec's Research Centre's Steering Committee) public resources are available to see how these bodies are using their mandate. Whether the Minister takes up on their advice or not, these are the only bodies where civil society organisations are able to offer independent advice to the government while being provided with resources to exercise their mandate.

Stakeholder involvement

Civil society organisations have long played an important role in poverty reduction (McKeen 2004). As discussed earlier, in the years leading up to a government’s announcement to launch a PRS process, there was often a coalition of civil society organisations campaigning for such a process (particularly in Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec). What is interesting is that these coalitions were not equally successful in influencing the design and substance of the PRS process that governments adopted.

On the basis of what can be observed in these four provinces, we can identify four clusters of stakeholder engagement (Table 2). By and large, the main role of stakeholder involvement is advisory even though some provinces also involve stakeholders for purposes of collaboration around service / program delivery and evidence building. In the subsequent stages of strategy formulation and implementation, all provinces included stakeholders though not necessarily in the same way. Interestingly, none of the provincial initiatives involved stakeholders in joint decision-making though.

Table 2: Clusters of Stakeholder Engagement

Clusters	Used by
1: Traditional consultation	MA, NL, ON, QC
2: Institutionalised consultation	MA, QC
3: Expert consultation	ON
4: Innovation & evidence building	NL, ON (and likely MA & QC)

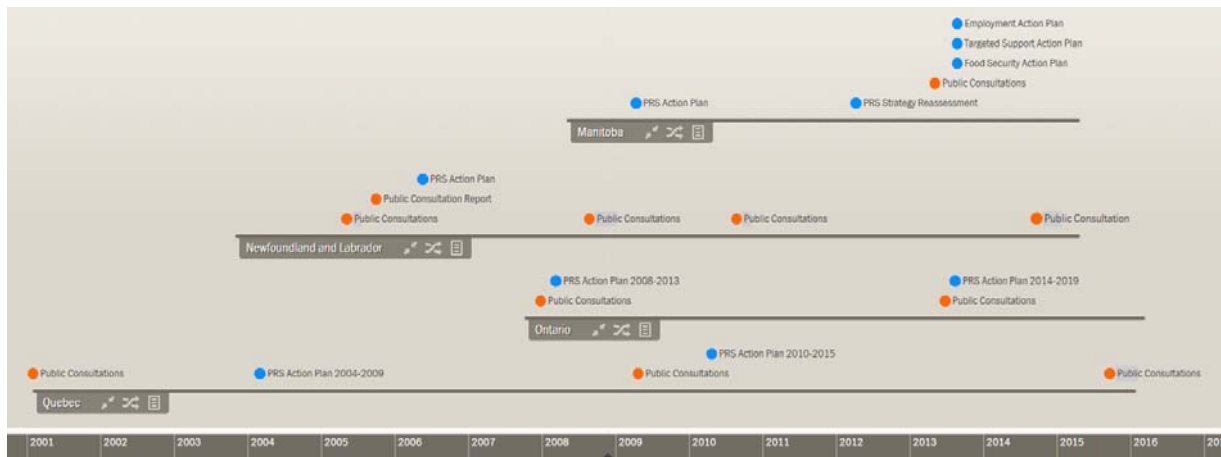
Source: Authors. This paper only discusses specific initiatives in Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador for clusters 3 and 4.

All provinces make use of ***traditional consultation*** platforms such as the organisation of town hall and community meetings, email drop boxes and focus groups. There are, however, some important differences in how and when stakeholders were engaged in the poverty reduction strategy through this platform. These differences are captured in Figure 3 with the timelines of consultation. Traditional consultations often take place before the formulation or renewal of the PRS but is sometimes also used during the implementation phase.

Figure 3 shows that with the exception of Manitoba, all provinces held public consultations during the strategy formulation phase. Manitoba and especially Newfoundland and Labrador also use this platform a couple of years into the implementation. In most cases, any member of the public can participate though governments make special efforts to reach out for feedback from persons with lived experience, service users or representatives of frontline service organisations,

community organisations, unions, advocacy groups or other organisations representing vulnerable groups. The main purpose of such platforms seems advisory, and in particular the gathering of perspectives on what the major issues are and what would be potential solutions. As governments do not usually summarise or disclose such input (with Newfoundland’s first focus groups report being a notable exception) or attribute specific decisions, one can only speculate on the influence of such information on decision-making.

Figure 3: Timelines of (traditional) public consultation and the release of strategic documents



Source: Data collected by authors and visualised using Timeglider software. The images reflect the timeline from start of PRS process up to March 2016.

When it comes to opportunities for feedback during a strategy cycle, there is also large variation in the mechanisms used. As explained in the previous subsection, Quebec and Manitoba use *institutionalised consultation*: Quebec relies on national and regional advisory councils and Manitoba has four civil society representatives in its ministerial committee. Manitoba and especially Newfoundland and Labrador organise *traditional consultations* while there is no evidence of sustained interaction between government and non-government stakeholders in Ontario.

The last two clusters (expert consultation, innovation and evidence building) also involve an institutionalisation of stakeholder involvement but differ in nature from the above-mentioned cluster in the sense that involvement is organised on a project basis. Since the launch of the PRS process, Ontario has organised various *expert consultation* groups among which a Commission for the Review of Social Assistance and an Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness. The Commission’s mandate was “to develop specific recommendations and a concrete action plan for reforming the social assistance system” and was set up for a period of 22 months and received extensive administrative assistance from a secretariat (Commission, 2012, p. 135). The Expert Advisory Panel’s report offered advice on how to define and measure homelessness and consisted of 14 members representing organisations involved in issues around housing and

homelessness, some of which have experienced homelessness themselves.⁴ The reports from these groups were based on broad stakeholder consultations and received broad attention in the media and seem to have influenced ensuing government actions (i.e. the government referred to specific recommendations when announcing policy changes in their press releases).

Innovation and evidence building initiatives are taken as part of the implementation of a PRS and are particularly focused on how service provision can be improved and better coordinated among the different organisations involved in services delivery. The initiatives involve the creation of a platform where representatives of these organisations interact and/or the funding of specific initiatives. Examples are NAVNET in Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario's Local Poverty Reduction Fund. Navigators and Networks (NAVNET) is an initiative that aims to improve services to persons with complex needs in the St. John's area.⁵ Its steering committee includes regional representatives of public and community based service providers. The group has monthly meetings and has undertaken a range of activities since its instalment in 2009, including a one year pilot program to test a new service delivery model (Eastern Health, June 2013). The evaluation of the pilot mentions that the initiative has led to "to increased information sharing and collaboration among both the NAVNET Steering Committee members and among the multisystem planning team members." (Eastern Health, June 2013, p. 10). As part of its PRS renewal in 2014, the Ontario Government dedicated 50 million dollars of funding to a Local Poverty Reduction Fund, "a six-year initiative [...] to support innovative, community-driven projects that measurably improve the lives of those most affected by poverty" (GoO, 2014; Website Ontario Trillium Foundation⁶). Organisations get at maximum three years funding, are encouraged to work together with other community partners, and have to budget resources for a third-party evaluation (either process or impact evaluation). Thus the fund's main purpose is not to fund poverty reduction initiatives but to build an evidence-base for assessing the degree to which innovative poverty reduction initiatives work.

Strategic management and measurement

For strategic management to be successful, Behn emphasises the importance of an intensive process of coordinated efforts, with specific responsibilities and targets for sub-units and a heavy use of information to assess the performance of each unit and the agency as a whole (2014, p. 27). While it is not realistic to expect detailed information on the provinces' management practices in public sources, the lack of virtually any mentioning of (changes in) management

⁴ Government Website: <https://news.ontario.ca/mah/en/2015/01/expert-advisory-panel-on-homelessness-members.html>, accessed on 15 May 2016.

⁵ Website NAVNET: <http://navnetnl.ca/>.

⁶ Website Ontario Trillium Foundation: <http://www.otf.ca/what-we-fund/investment-streams/local-poverty-reduction-fund>.

suggests that provinces have not significantly changed the way in which their bureaucracies operate and respond to political executives.

Instead, the expectation seems to be that the added executive and interministerial layers of governance in combination with enhanced programming will lead to the desired increase in performance. Such steering mechanisms may indeed facilitate information flows and coordination between units of government, but from the sparse information available on their functioning, the frequency, content and consequences of these encounters are a far cry from the intense and information heavy process envisaged by Behn. With the exception of Newfoundland and Labrador, which specifically mentions the intent to integrate “poverty reduction into existing strategic exercises and accountability mechanisms” (GoNL, 2006, p. 16, 23), none of the strategic documents mention how provinces intend to stimulate that crucial link between strategic goals and the actions of its personnel and their resulting effect. This also holds for the Minister’s mandate on the portfolio. The wording of the mandate letters of Ontario’s and Newfoundland’s lead ministers on poverty reduction emphasises expectations in terms of process but certainly not outcomes.⁷

All provinces formulate a specific strategic goal to improve the way in which their government operates emphasising, in particular, better service provision, but the actions they list to achieve that indicate they rely on programming instead of different managerial practices. Manitoba wants accessible and coordinated services (GoM, 2012), Newfoundland and Labrador wants to improve access and coordination of services for those with low income (GoNL, 2006), Ontario emphasises smarter government (GoO, 2008), and Quebec wants consistent and coherent measures (GoQ, 2004). Provinces work towards achieving these goals by actions such as the introduction of one stop service locations or portals, the review and reform of specific programs and their interaction with other programs and services, and the creation of new departments or programs to serve specific population groups.

All provinces use performance indicators to measure progress on poverty reduction including one or several low income indicators (the appendix offers an overview of the indicators). Manitoba has the most and most diverse indicators, totalling 21 indicators varying from the total number of social housing units, low income rates, post-secondary participation, and continuity of physician care to teen birth rates. Newfoundland’s 15 indicators cover low income, housing affordability, earnings, unemployment, social assistance rates and a range of child and youth indicators. Ontario’s 10 indicators cover the domains of low income, early-development and education, health, unemployment and housing affordability. Quebec’s 6 indicators focus on low income, inequality and disposable incomes of various transfer recipient and other vulnerable

⁷Newfoundland and Labrador: http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/exec/cabinet/ministers/pdf/Minister_Gambin-Walsh_Mandate.pdf; Ontario: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2014-mandate-letter-treasury-board-secretariat#section-5>.

groups such as those working on minimum wage and an initiative to additionally measure social inclusion is underway.

Table 3: Targets and indicators

	Poverty Reduction Target	Performance Indicator
Manitoba	No	Market Based Measure (MBM)
Newfoundland & Labrador	Yes	Low-Income Cut-offs (LICO), also reports three other indicators (MBM, NL-MBM, LIM)
Ontario	Yes	Low Income Measure (LIM) fixed at 2008 level, also reports poverty depth of LIM at 40% of median, calculated for children only
Quebec	Yes	Market Based Measure (MBM), Low Income Measure (LIM, at 50 and 60% of median), also reports different poverty measures.

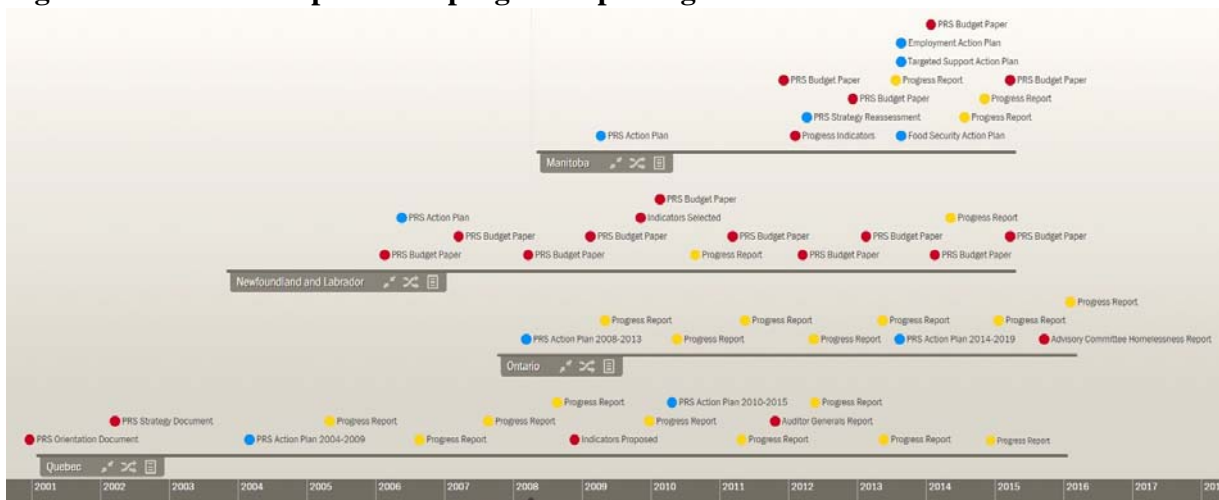
Sources: See Appendix 3 for sources and more detailed information.

Target setting is a key aspect of performance management because it connects strategic goals to activities and to the outcomes of such activities. It entails the translation of a substantive goal into something that is measurable and, at the same time, indicates the performance gap one wants to close (Boyne & Chen 2007). Three provinces have formulated only one measurable target related to their primary objective (Table 3). Manitoba does not have a poverty reduction target, though it sometimes uses targets for specific government commitments such as the number of new social housing units or subsidised child care spaces (Tamarack, May 2009). Newfoundland and Labrador wants to transform from “a province with the most poverty to a province with the least poverty” over a period of ten years (GoNL, 2006, p. 9). During the 2008-2013 PRS cycle, Ontario aimed to reduce child poverty by 25 percent over five years (GoO, 2008). Because the target was not met, Ontario readopted the same target but, as it did not announce a timeline, that aspiration technically falls short of what a target is supposed to be (GoO, 2014). Quebec’s first target was less specific and aimed to place the province among the industrialised nations with the least amount of poverty by 2013 (GoQ, 2004). Quebec’s second action plan is somewhat less

ambitious by expressing the intent to consolidate, if not improve, Quebec’s position in the next five years (GoQ, 2010, p. 49).

The reporting styles of provinces are similar in some aspects but quite different in others. All provinces publish progress reports in which they summarise the main actions taken and take stock of changes in their performance indicators. Manitoba and Newfoundland and Labrador further publish annual budget updates which specifically mention the spending of the budget dedicated to poverty reduction initiatives. Manitoba launched its strategy in 2009 but only started publishing annual budget papers since 2012 and annual progress reports since 2013. Newfoundland and Labrador had the intention to publish bi-annual progress reports but the actual frequency of reporting is much lower. While published annually, Newfoundland’s budget papers are media releases which are sometimes accompanied with a table detailing all relevant expenses. Ontario and Quebec aim and generally succeed to report on an annual basis. After selecting performance indicators in 2009, Quebec’s progress reports switched from summarising policy actions to reporting progress on indicators. Figure 4 summarises the frequency of reporting activities for the provinces.

Figure 4: PRS Actions plans and progress reporting



Source: Data collected by authors and visualised using Timeglider software. The images reflect the timeline from start of PRS process up to March 2016.

Monitoring progress on the poverty reduction targets and other performance indicators has been challenging in part because of cost and data issues. The provinces rely on data collected by Statistics Canada and, if they want customised information, they have to pay to obtain these statistics. Worse though are the substantive changes in the federal surveys which seriously hamper the ability of provinces to compare changes over time. For instance, because of breaks in the data one cannot know for certain by how much Ontario failed to meet its poverty reduction target because the 2008 and 2012 data are not comparable (GoO, 2015). Another key data

challenge is that most of the performance indicators become available with a two to three year lag, which greatly limits the use of such information for a timely steering of policy.

Moreover, factors that are largely outside the control of governments can greatly affect the performance indicators and/or a province's (fiscal) capacity to take remedial action. Recent examples are changing demographics, booming housing prices, the 2008 global economic recession and low commodity prices such as crude oil. The global recession increased unemployment and low income rates in Canada and, consequently, increased caseloads of provincial income support programs. Separating the effects of such factors from the effect of policy actions under a poverty reduction strategy is difficult (though not entirely impossible).

While acknowledging the above challenges, the provinces' progress reporting falls short of what could be done to assess whether government actions under the umbrella of the poverty reduction strategy contribute to poverty reduction. Changes in performance indicators are noted but are not accompanied by an interpretation of what factors have likely influenced the change. It is very difficult to assess spending under the PRS, especially in the provinces that do not publish budget papers, as the amounts mentioned in progress reports are often not on an annual basis. While the progress reports typically mention both policy actions and performance indicators, there is often not much information provided to establish a link between a particular action and a performance indicator. For instance, announcements to build or refurbish a certain number of social housing units or to expand the number of subsidised day-care spaces are made without a relevant benchmark such as the number of persons on a waiting list for social housing or subsidised day-care. Notable exceptions in this respect are actions that affect a family's income such as increased child benefits and minimum wages. Especially Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec consistently report the effects of such measures on low incomes. Quebec is also the only province that systematically supports external research on the effects of policy actions and monitoring progress on poverty reduction. Third parties can do research for which there is no internal capacity in ministries and the analysis and presentation of results is less likely to be influenced by politics. Yet, Quebec's auditor general released a critical report in 2011 regarding the province's efforts to monitor progress (Vérificateur général du Québec, 2011).

In sum, our comparison of PRS processes shows that, despite commonalities in the use of language, there is considerable variation as to how these processes are implemented. There is a large variation in the way the process is institutionalised, with the province of Quebec adding a completely new layer on top of already existing institutions, Manitoba and Ontario adding a few new institutional elements, and Newfoundland and Labrador largely relying on existing institutions. There is also considerable variation in the nature and timing of consultations, and more broadly the degree to which non-government stakeholders contribute to motivating and shaping the PRS process. The nature and timing of performance management practices such as target setting and public reporting on progress also varies by province. Nonetheless, across the

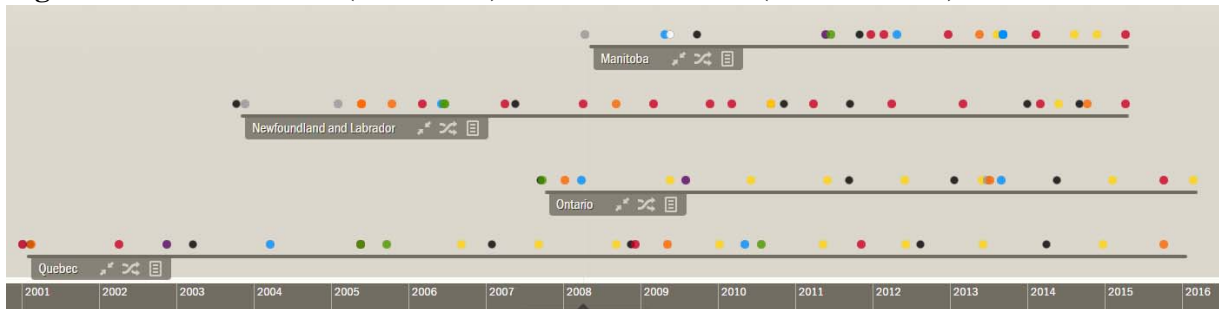
jurisdictions, there is a lack of any systematic attempt to provide information and interpretation on the connection between government spending, actions and performance indicators.

5. Are aspired governance benefits realised?

By engaging in a PRS process, Canada's provincial governments intend to capture governance benefits that cannot be attained in a traditional policy environment. Through the benefits of continued prioritisation, better information, and better coordination poverty is expected to be reduced more efficiently and effectively. After studying and comparing the PRS processes in four provinces this section offers a tentative answer to the question of whether aspired governance benefits are realised.

In terms of continued prioritisation, all four jurisdictions managed to keep poverty reduction on the agenda despite changes in minority / majority governments, incumbent party and/or incumbent party leadership (black dots, Figure 5). Nonetheless, the collapsed timelines of PRS activities in Figure 5 show that some jurisdictions have more continuous activities than others. In Quebec and Ontario, the PRS process evolved very much according to original plans with consistent and continuous activities taking place. In Manitoba it took many years before their PRS process was fully up and running. In Newfoundland and Labrador, a change in leadership at the end of 2010 was followed by a substantive period of very low activity (CBC 2012, NDP Caucus 2013). Since Newfoundland and Labrador did not adopt poverty reduction legislation, it may have been easier for the new leader to let attention wane. However, in three provinces the political party that launched the PRS process has been in power over the entire period. A substantive shift in policy priorities is more likely to occur when an opposition party takes over. Nonetheless, this did not happen in Quebec when the Liberals took over from the Parti Quebecois in 2003. This may be because, just before the switch in leading party, Quebec's poverty reduction legislation was adopted by all parties. Manitoba's PRS process is now put to the test after the recent switch from NDP to Progressive Conservatives. Though not a political shock, the extremely low price of crude oil will undoubtedly affect the government's capacity to reduce poverty over the coming years in Newfoundland and Labrador. Of course a continuous process does not mean substantive engagement leading to tangible results in terms of policy action and wellbeing improvements. We intend to study such aspects further in future research.

Figure 5: Political events (black dots) and PRS activities (coloured dots)



Source: Data collected by authors and visualised using Timeglider software (up to March 2016).

In terms of better information, our research shows that PRS processes include a broader range of stakeholders and, in some cases, a deeper involvement of stakeholders in the policy process. This, in turn, can be expected to lead to the inclusion of more and different knowledges than before. Whether these new knowledges substantively inform policy decisions is not clear though. New stakeholders predominantly have an advisory role and, in the case of Ontario, are funded to build evidence about local innovative projects. The provinces also differ considerably in the degree to which they institutionalise involvement with non-government stakeholders. Civil society stakeholders in Quebec have (among other options) legislatively defined channels and mandates of engagement with the executive level while in Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador institutionalisation is ad hoc and carries a very specific mandate. In Manitoba a few civil society representatives have a seat in the interministerial committee but their mandate is not clear.

PRS processes also result in more aggregated and more regularly updated public information on government activities to reduce poverty and a suite of wellbeing indicators. It also appears that this information is used by governments and civil society groups to monitor (and critique a lack of) advances on poverty reduction. However, none of the provinces are pushing the limits of what is possible in terms of offering aggregated information on fiscal expenses, effects of policy actions, and wellbeing effects. We find considerable differences in progress reporting among the provinces in terms of frequency and substance. The reporting of especially Manitoba but often also Ontario is opaque in terms of linking policy actions to wellbeing outcomes. Though not perfect, the other two provinces do a bit better, for instance, by systematically examining the effect of specific actions on specific population groups or commissioning independent evaluations. By assembling the best practices from the four provinces, each province could improve its information base.

We know little on whether governments have been able to improve coordination between different levels and layers of government and with non-government partners. It appears so on paper, as all provinces have institutionalised new coordination channels such as interministerial committees or specific projects, and, in some cases, have formulated specific strategic objectives

to that end and report on it. Yet most of these arrangements, and particularly those at the executive and top bureaucratic level, remain a black box.

6. Conclusion

Following an international trend, many Canadian jurisdictions adopted or have announced to adopt an innovative governance process called a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) process. A PRS process is a perfect example of a new governance dynamics at play where collaboration between the public sector and the community sector are leveraged to develop policy solutions to complex problems such as poverty, obesity, homelessness and mental health. It blends features from collaborative governance practices such as broader, more innovative stakeholder engagement with performance management practices such as strategic planning, target setting and performance monitoring. By virtue of these characteristics, such a process is believed to lead to more efficient and effective problem solving than a traditional policy process.

This paper is the first systematic analysis and comparison of PRS processes between jurisdictions of an advanced economy and thereby contributes to a better understanding of a relatively new but widely used practice in government and its potential benefits. We asked whether PRS processes, as implemented by provincial jurisdictions in Canada, have the potential to deliver on expected governance benefits. To answer this question, we constructed a theory of change from the PRS narratives of four early adopting Canadian provinces (Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario and Quebec). We found that provincial governments adopt a PRS process because they believe that a long term process is needed to ensure continued prioritisation, improved information for decision making, and improved coordination between different units of government (horizontally and vertically) and other partners such as those involved in policy delivery. Subsequently we described and compared the provinces' PRS processes focusing on three aspects that could trigger such governance benefits: institutional arrangements, stakeholder engagement, and strategic management and measurement.

Our analysis shows that within one state, provincial jurisdictions make quite different choices in shaping their PRS process with likely different outcomes. The differences are large for jurisdictions that are part of the same federation and receive (roughly) the same resources from the federal government to fund social policies. Quebec's process is highly institutionalised, giving rise to new government responsibilities and new channels of stakeholder involvement, and seems most apt to capture the governance benefits of sustained prioritisation and better information. Newfoundland and Labrador's lack of poverty reduction legislation may be a key factor explaining a period of sustained low PRS activity after a change in political leadership. Once poverty reduction legislation was in place in the other three provinces, the PRS processes proceeded very much according to plan. Regular progress reporting has increased the amount of information in all provinces but the quality of reporting differs between provinces with Quebec and Newfoundland putting most effort into linking policy actions to wellbeing outcomes. The

practice of Manitoba and Newfoundland to offer annual overviews regarding planned poverty reduction expenditures is very useful as is Ontario's initiative to fund local community organisations to gather evidence on innovative practices. However, none of the provinces is pushing the limits of what is possible in terms of offering (dis)aggregated information on fiscal expenses, effects of policy actions, and wellbeing effects. Perhaps not surprisingly given our reliance on public data, we learnt little on whether governments have been able to improve coordination between different levels and layers of government and with non-government partners. From the information that is available, we think it is unlikely that much of coordination benefits are captured.

There is a wealth of research on performance management practices but very little on the use of such practices by governments to solve complex problems in a complex governance context. This research suggests that understanding and optimising such processes requires adaptation of mainstream performance management practices to their deployment in a collaborative governance context. A jurisdiction's power to affect performance is much more diffuse, and the options for measuring and assessing respective contributions to progress are much weaker in this context. In spite of such challenges, the need for long term and coordinated action is much more pertinent as doing nothing (new) most certainly means that no progress is made at all.

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1: PRS narrative

Province / Sources	Notes and quotes
Manitoba	All three effects are mentioned, coordination appears to be the priority.
Action plan 2009 (p. 2) & echoed in 2012 action plan (p. 3)	The fourth pillar focuses on “accessible, co-ordinated services”.
Action plan 2009 (p. 2) & echoed in 2012 action plan (p. 2)	Selected “Values and guiding principles [3 out of 7] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty is complex and requires long-term solutions that get at root causes. • We must focus on building policies and programs based on evidence and invest in what works. • We need to build partnerships with other governments, businesses, non-profit organizations, communities and individuals.”
Action plan 2009 (p. 6) & echoed in 2012 action plan (p. 1, 2)	“Strong partnerships Our strategy depends on co-ordination and collaboration across provincial government departments. Integrated services and easy access require us to work together to reach the common goal of a prosperous Manitoba.” “The effectiveness of our poverty reduction strategy also hinges on our ability to partner with business, non-profit agencies, First Nations and Métis directly as well as with municipal governments, such as the City of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council. Moving forward to reduce poverty will take a collaborative effort. We’re all in this together.”
Action plan 2009 (p. 7) & echoed in 2012 action plan (p. 7, 10)	“Demonstrating progress To measure our progress on poverty reduction, we will track key indicators from the four pillars of the strategy. When taken together, they will provide a true picture of our province’s progress.”
Action plan 2009 (p. 8)	“Co-ordination and monitoring The Manitoba’s Poverty Reduction Strategy will be monitored by a new interdepartmental working group that will report to a new Ministers’ Poverty Reduction Committee. This working group will help co-ordinate the many activities across government, improving effectiveness while working together strategically to ensure success.”
Action plan 2009 (p. 8)	“Stakeholder input

	Feedback from key stakeholders will play an important role in guiding the work. Over the coming months, a variety of sectors will be consulted to ensure this strategy makes sense. We will invite more partners to participate as we move forward together. Our goal is to continuously reduce poverty and increase social inclusion.”
Action plan 2012 (p. 11)	“Issues contributing to poverty are complicated. They require creative ideas to improve programs and services that enable Manitobans – those currently living in low income and those at risk of falling into poverty – to live independently and with dignity.”
Newfoundland & Labrador	All three effects are mentioned, information and coordination are emphasized.
Speech from the throne 2005 (p. 10-11)	“Building on several measures announced last year, My Government will refine and implement a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy in collaboration with stakeholders both within and outside the government.”
Speech from the throne 2005 (p. 11)	“My Government will integrate women’s voices and perspectives, including those of Aboriginal women, when formulating public policies.”
Action plan 2006 (p. i)	“Newfoundland and Labrador is only the second province in Canada to address poverty reduction with a comprehensive and integrated strategy.”
Action plan 2006 (p. i)	“This plan is the result of working together with many stakeholders and community groups who are engaged in poverty prevention and reduction. As we move forward, we intend to continue to work collaboratively with our community partners. We will take a long-term approach and find a balance of policies that works for all people. We will continue to consult regularly and dialogue with community-based agencies involved in poverty reduction. Together, we can find solutions to address the needs of persons who are living with poverty in our province.”
Action plan 2006 (p. iii)	“The province’s Poverty Reduction Strategy is a Government-wide integrated approach based on the principles of social inclusion and collaboration.”
Action plan 2006 (p. iii)	“Poverty is a multi-dimensional problem. This was reflected during the consultations. Income support clients identified barriers to education and employment. Community stakeholders pointed to the need to better coordinate service delivery.”
Action plan 2006 (p. iii)	“Government is moving forward with a long-term, integrated and strategic approach, but cannot do it alone.”
Action plan 2006 (p. v)	Selected “Guiding principles [5 out of 9] Taking a long-term approach, Building on partnerships, Finding the right policy mix, Demonstrating accountability and measuring progress, Taking an integrated and coordinated approach”
Action plan 2006 (p. vi)	“Best practices for addressing poverty point to a broad, integrated approach that engages community partners as well as all orders of government.”
Action plan 2006 (p. vii)	“In order to be successful, many partners are necessary and Government is also committed to continue to work cooperatively with them. A priority is to work with the federal government, other provincial governments, Aboriginal

	governments and organizations, community-based groups and individuals living in poverty, and business and labour in order to ensure change happens.”
Action plan 2006 (p. vii)	“Poverty is complex and requires a variety of coordinated and interrelated actions.”
Action plan 2006 (p. viii)	“Input received on how best to reduce poverty from individuals living in poverty, community-based groups, business and labour has been critical to both the development of this strategy and the Budget 2006 process. It is important to the success of the Poverty Reduction Strategy that all of our partners continue to be involved. In order to ensure ongoing dialogue and to build on the knowledge of our community partners...”
Action plan 2006 (p. ix)	“Goals and objectives Goal 1: Improved access and coordination of services for those with low incomes”
Action plan 2006 (p. x)	“Measuring Success In order to track progress and make changes as necessary, it is essential that we can measure success.”
Ontario	All three effects are mentioned, particularly information is emphasized and, within that, an emphasis on evidence.
Action plan 2008 (p. 1) & echoed in 2014 action plan (p. 6, 7)	“And it’s going to take all of us: citizens, governments, the business community, and the non-profit sector working together. But Ontario now has a plan to get there. Working together, we can break the cycle of poverty.”
Action plan 2008 (p. 2) & echoed in 2014 action plan (p. 2, 6)	“The government will also track and publicly report on a series of measures designed to steer policy-making in the right direction over the long-term.”
Action plan 2008 (p. 3)	“Smarter Government The [social assistance] review will seek to better align social assistance and other key programs and initiatives and better communicate program rules to achieve the aims of increasing opportunity for the individual.” “The strategy will also establish a Social Policy Institute that will focus on evidence-based social policy development and the evaluation of social policy interventions.”
Action plan 2008 (p. 3)	“A Long-Term Commitment Tackling poverty is about making the economy stronger over the long term. That’s why the government plans to introduce legislation in spring 2009 that would, if passed, solidify Ontario’s commitment to poverty reduction.”
Action plan 2008 (p. 3) & echoed in	“All Hands on Deck

2014 action plan (p. 11)	Breaking the cycle of poverty requires the collective effort of all levels of government, the private and non-profit sectors and citizens across this province.”
Action plan 2008 (p. 6)	<p>“Core principles</p> <p>Cooperation: We all have a role to play in reducing poverty. We need to work together to build strong, healthy kids, families and communities.</p> <p>Effectiveness: Scarce tax dollars must be spent in the most effective way possible. We need to support the research that will guide our investment decisions, and respond to their findings.”</p>
Action plan 2008 (p. 6) & echoed in 2014 action plan (p. 9)	<p>“Listening to Ontarians</p> <p>... The launch of the strategy marks the next step in our ongoing conversation with Ontarians about poverty reduction. We have set ambitious goals and ongoing conversation is the best way to know what is working and what is not. By continuing to engage Ontarians, we will also continue to invite people living in poverty to participate in our shared effort to reduce poverty in Ontario.”</p>
Action plan 2008 (p. 34) & echoed in 2014 action plan (p. 44)	<p>“Measuring our progress</p> <p>Experience in other areas of government has shown that the first thing to do when you want to improve something is to measure it.”</p>
Action plan 2014 (p. 39)	<p>“Investing in What Works: Using Evidence-Based Social Policy and Measuring Success</p> <p>... Together with our community partners, we will work to put a heightened focus on evidence-building in order to fund programs and interventions that work.”</p>
Action plan 2014 (p. 41)	<p>“Local Innovations: Tapping community-specific knowledge</p> <p>... Under our first Poverty Reduction Strategy, we heard from our municipal and community partners about the value of tapping into local, community-driven solutions and fostering collaborative partnerships across Ontario. In response to this feedback, supporting innovative action at a local level to reach solutions will be central to our efforts under the new strategy.”</p>
Quebec	All three effects are mentioned, coordination is emphasized, especially at a regional level
Don't leave anyone out 2001 (p. 3, 4, 9, 12)	“...we hope to create conditions that will mobilize all social stakeholders to help people in need. These stakeholders are private, public and social-economy businesses, unions, community organizations, regional coordination

	<p>authorities, local governments and citizens. Reducing poverty is not only desirable, it is possible if everyone pulls together. In this collective effort,”</p> <p>“This operation will also help us identify objectives and tools for measuring progress, and enable us to determine the best ways to associate target groups in follow-up and ongoing efforts to fight poverty. More than ever, we have to make this fight a lasting priority for our government, in order to ensure that our economic and social progress is based on the values of justice, equity and solidarity, which are so dear to Quebecers. We will undertake this approach with all the attention and openness necessary to achieve a stronger consensus on the importance of this fight and greater synergy among all parties involved.”</p> <p>“Based on a solid consensus and on a better understanding of each person’s contribution, a medium-to-long-term action plan will be proposed, along with additional resources.”</p> <p>“To fight poverty effectively, we have to create synergy between economic development and social development. This synergy has to favour social cohesion and involve partnerships with the various groups in society, from private businesses to community groups and unions.”</p>
<p>Action plan 2004 (p. 17, 69) & echoed in the 2010 action plan (p. 10)</p>	<p>“Involve society as a whole</p> <p>The fight against poverty and social exclusion is not only the government’s responsibility. It involves all groups in society, including people living in poverty, who must be the first to take steps to improve their situation and that of their families.”</p> <p>“The cooperative efforts and actions already under way in many regions to improve the lives of people and communities living in poverty and put them back in control of their environments can be stepped up.”</p> <p>“As part of a strategy seeking the involvement of all parts of society to reduce poverty and promote the inclusion of all Quebecers, an integrated regional approach is essential. This entails having all stakeholders work together, intervening in various sectors in a way that places the focus on improving the circumstances of community members, and empowering both communities and the individuals that compose them. It is an approach that enhances the synergy between local economic development and social development and better coordinates the various sector-based strategies aimed at improving living conditions in underprivileged areas.”</p>
<p>Action plan 2004 (p. 17, 75) & echoed in 2010 action plan (p. 21) &</p>	<p>“Ensure consistent, coherent action</p>

part of Act (clauses 6, 11, 12)	<p>The Action Plan will be reviewed annually in order to gauge progress and work left to do. This will require ongoing commitment and shared effort based on the belief that social justice is fundamental to our future.”</p> <p>“Specific means will help ensure a consistent, intersectoral approach at the Québec, regional and local levels that reaches all Quebecers, including, of course, members of Native nations. For instance, all government action will be assessed in terms of its direct impact on the incomes of those living in poverty, in keeping with the Act’s impact clause. The need for coherence will also entail certain actions at the intergovernmental level.”</p>
Action plan 2010 (p. 5)	<p>“Today, with this second government Action Plan, we are opting to make our social safety net even stronger and our solidarity more effective through congruity and mobilization. How? By aligning resources with regional and local needs through the creation of new alliances with established joint action groups given greater means and latitude.”</p>
Action plan 2010 (p. 5, 9)	<p>“Giving new momentum to the society-wide movement to combat poverty and social exclusion by pooling and better coordinating action for solidarity and social inclusion—this is the reason for the Québec government’s Action Plan for Solidarity and Social Inclusion 2010 2015.”</p>
Action plan 2010 (p. 12)	<p>“A forward-looking process</p> <p>The process described in the Government Action Plan for Solidarity and Social Inclusion seeks to produce positive short- and long-term economic and social outcomes, one of which is to ensure profitable sustainable development that makes it possible for every individual to shape the society of the future.”</p>
Action plan 2010 (p. 47)	<p>“The main objective of the Act to combat poverty and social exclusion is to progressively make Québec one of the industrialized States having the least number of persons living in poverty, according to recognized methods for making international comparisons. Certain low-income indicators will be used to chart the gains made on the anti-poverty front. Since poverty has many faces and just as many indicators to characterize it, other measuring instruments will provide a clearer understanding of the phenomenon and greater awareness of it.”</p>

Appendix 2. Institutional Arrangements

Legislation

Manitoba (2009)	Newfoundland & Labrador (2005)	Ontario (2007)	Quebec (2001)
Yes. Poverty Reduction Strategy Act. Adopted June 2011, 2 years after launching first Action Plan. The legislation details government's responsibilities.	No.	Yes. Bill 152. Adopted May 2009, 1 year after launching the first Action Plan. The legislation details government's responsibilities.	Yes. Law 112. Adopted December 2002, nearly 2 years after the government announced its intent and more than 1 year before launching the first Action Plan. The legislation details not only the government's responsibilities, the substantive goals of the strategy, and the envisaged avenues for government action.

Sources: MA: Poverty Reduction Strategy Act, ON: Bill 152, QC: Law 112.

Arrangements at the executive level

Manitoba (2009)	Newfoundland & Labrador (2005)	Ontario (2007)	Quebec (2001)
2011-now: Ministerial Committee, Co-chaired by Ministers of Family Services, and Housing and Community Development	2006-now: Ministerial Committee, chaired by the Minister of Human Resources, Labour and Employment (until 2010), and the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills (since 2010).	2008-2014: Cabinet committee, chaired by Minister of Children and Youth Services 2014-now: Minister's Table, chaired by the Deputy Premier who heads the Treasury Board Secretariat	2002-now: Minister of Work and Social Solidarity The 2004 Action Plan mentions the creation of an interdepartmental committee (p. 75).

	The Ministerial Committee is supported by a Deputy Ministers Committee.		
11 Ministers (2015): Family Services, Housing and Community Development, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Infrastructure and Transportation, Children and Youth Opportunities, Education and Advanced Learning, Finance, Healthy Living and Seniors, Jobs and the Economy, Labour and Immigration, Multiculturalism and Literacy. Met 5 times in 2012- 13.	13 Ministers and Agencies (2016): Advanced Education and Skills, Health and Community Services, Finance, Education and Early Childhood Development, Child Youth, and Family Services, Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, Justice and Public Safety, Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs Office, Rural Secretariat, Women's Policy Office, Labour Relations Agency, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, Voluntary and Non- Profit Secretariat	14 Ministers (2016): Tourism, Culture and Sport, Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, Labour, Health and Long-Term Care, Community and Social Services, Children and Youth Services (& Women's Issues), Municipal Affairs and Housing, Francophone Affairs, Training, Colleges and Universities (& Research and Innovation), Community Safety and Correctional Services, Education, Aboriginal Affairs, Government and Consumer Services	Potentially any Minister. According to Law 112 (art. 19 & 20) the Minister shall advise other ministers when they undertake actions are that directly and significantly affect persons and families living in poverty and social exclusion. The other ministers have a responsibility to inform the Minister. .

Sources: MA: PRS Action Plan (2009), Newsletter (Winter 2015); NL: PRS Action Plan (2006), Progress Report (2014), Website (May 2016): <http://www.swsd.gov.nl.ca/poverty/>. Not clear whether Ministerial Committee still exists, not mentioned on PRS website (May 2016) but still mentioned in Progress Report (2014); ON: PRS Action Plan (2008, 2013), Website (May 2016): <https://news.ontario.ca/ministers-tables/en/poverty-reduction-and-social-inclusion>. QC: Law 112, PRS Action Plan (2004).

Arrangements at the administration level

Manitoba (2009)	Newfoundland & Labrador (2005)	Ontario (2007)	Quebec (2001)
Agency Accountability and Community Initiatives Branch, Manitoba Family Services (staff n~10, not just PRS file)	PRS Division (n=1), Seniors, Wellness and Social Development	PRS Office (n=13), Treasury Board Secretary	Politiques de Lutte contre la Pauvreté et Action Communautaire (Directorate, staff n=?), Ministry of Work and Social Solidarity
Interdepartmental working group, reports to Ministerial Committee	Interdepartmental working group, senior representatives from 13 Ministries and Agencies		Research centre on poverty and social exclusion (CEPE), Ministry of Work and Social Solidarity, responsible for measuring progress

Sources: MA: Website Government (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/allaboard/contacts.html>, <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/contact/>), PRS Action Plan (2009); NL: Website Government (<http://telephonedirectory.gov.nl.ca/Default.aspx>), PRS Action Plan (2006), Progress Report (2014); ON, Website Government (<http://www.infogo.gov.on.ca/infogo/office.do>); QC: Website CEPE (<http://www.mess.gouv.qc.ca/cepe/index.asp>), Law 112, Website Ministry (MESS, http://www.mess.gouv.qc.ca/publications/pdf/ADMIN_organigramme.pdf).

Other institutional arrangements

Manitoba (2009)	Newfoundland & Labrador (2005)	Ontario (2007)	Quebec (2001)
The Ministerial Committee includes 4 non-government stakeholders, including 1 member from the Advisory Council			Advisory Committee (n=17), includes representatives of organized civil society, social groups and non-voting civil servants, its mandate is to advise the Minister
Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship			Stakeholder Group for Solidarity (GPS), advises Minister on local and regional issues

Sources: MA: Website Government (<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=8665>); NL: Progress Report (2014); QC: Website Advisory Committee (<http://www.cclp.gouv.qc.ca/>), Law 112, Website (GPS, <http://www.mess.gouv.qc.ca/grands-dossiers/solidarite.asp>).

Appendix 3. Performance Indicators

Manitoba, as of 2012 Action Plan
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Total units of social and affordable housing supported by Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC)2. New households served through MHRC programs and services3. Households in Core Housing Need4. Sense of community belonging5. Graduation rates6. Participation in adult learning programs7. Employment rates8. Average weekly earnings9. Minimum wage rates10. Low-income rates (MBM)11. Income inequality12. Post-secondary education participation13. Early Development Instrument scores14. Availability of childcare15. Children in care16. Teen birth rates17. Potential Years of Life Lost (PYLL) by income quintile18. Prevalence of chronic disease by income quintile19. Average monthly number of people receiving co-ordinated home care services20. Continuity of physician care21. Number of people using Access Centres
Newfoundland and Labrador, as of 2006 Action Plan
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO) – After Tax2. Market Based Measure (MBM)3. Newfoundland and Labrador Market Based Measure (NLMBM)4. Low-Income Measure (LIM)5. NLMBM of Housing Affordability6. Median After Tax Family Income7. Personal After Tax Disposable Income

8. Average Earnings
9. Jobless Family Rate
10. Number of Income Support Clients
11. Healthy Birth Weights
12. Early Development Instrument
13. Educational Scores
14. High School Dropout Rates
15. Post-Secondary Educational Attainment

Ontario, as of 2014 Action Plan

1. Birth Weights
2. School Readiness (Early Development Instrument)
3. Educational Progress (Combined Grade 3 and 6)
4. High School Graduation Rates
5. Low Income Measure (LIM, 50% of median)
6. Depth of Poverty (LIM, 40% of median)
7. Ontario Housing Measure
8. Not in Education, Employment, or Training
9. Long-Term Unemployment
10. Poverty Rates of Vulnerable Populations

Quebec, as of 2011 Progress Report

1. Market Based Measure
2. Low-Income Measure (50 and 50% of median)
3. Disposable income and after-tax low income thresholds for various transfer scenarios and various household types
4. Gini coefficient
5. Interquintile ratios
6. Polarization coefficient

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