“Harvesting Consensus or Mining Conflict?: Public Consultation on a Natural Resource Strategy for Nova Scotia”

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Background to Consultation: Stimuli

• N.S. Cab Minister stated “time to review ban on uranium exploration” (2008)
  – Ban imposed in 1982 –no mining
  – 2007-8 Spike in uranium prices –mining potential?
  – Public concerns about disguised uranium exploration

• Environmental Groups and Woodlot operators issue statement calling for public consultation on a natural resource strategy (2008)
  – Clear-cutting 94% of harvest –environmental impact?
  – Declining wood supply – forest industry future?
N. S. Forest Industry Facts - 2011

• Direct Employment - 6,700
  – Rural Jobs – Important beyond raw numbers
• Annual Exports – $725 million
• GDP % : approx. 2.9% (2009)

• Source: Natural Resources Canada website Statistical Profile/Overview/Nova Scotia, 2012
Chronology of Process : Natural Resource Strategy

• Three Phase Process
• May –June 2008 –Phase One Community Meetings on Values for NR Strategy (Joint VP & DNR project)
  – Report Our Common Ground (March 2009)
• April 2009 – May 2010 Phase TWO Expert Panels meet w/ Stakeholders & Technical Experts
  – April 2010 Steering & Expert Panel Reports released
    • 2 forest reports – minority and minority
• Phase Three Strategy Development (March 2010 to May 2011) – within DNR
• Gov’t Strategy Document The Path We Share (August 2011) released
• My survey of Phases One and Two participants
  – conducted November 2011-March 2012
Research Questions

• How do citizens assess this particular process of citizen engagement?
• Effectiveness? Levels of Satisfaction?
• Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses?
• Is there Enhanced Legitimacy for decisions?
• Is there increased interest in future engagement?
Data Collection: Sources

• Survey of Participants In Natural Resources Task Force
  – 227 responses of the 2000 names on e-mail contact and mailing contact lists—11.4% return
  – 57 respondents participated in both Phases One and Two
  – 46 telephone interviews and 181 web surveys
    • Conducted November 2011 to March 2012
Methods Issues

• Small Respondent Pool – Self-selected, not random
  – Some telephone interviews; some self-administered

• Limited Variation on Variables

• No Tests for Statistical Significance

• My Focus- the Means for Questions and Patterns of Responses to the Process Evaluation
Criteria for Evaluation

• Inclusiveness
• Perceived Influence on Process
• Deliberative Opportunities
• Openness/Transparency
• Citizenship Skill-Building
Chart 1
Language and Gender Distribution: N. R. PH2 Respondents vs. N.S. Population
Chart 2
Age Distribution- NS Pop vs. Respondents

Under 30
30-39
40-49
50-59
60-69
70+

NS POP
Respondents
Chart 3 Educational Attainment
N.R. Sample vs. NS Population

- High School or Less
- College, Trade or Non-University degree
- University Degree
- Post-Grad

Respond vs. N.S. Pop.
Chart 4 Connection to NR Sector

- Own/manage
- Employed
- Board Mem
- Comm Grp
- Comm Live
- Inter Citizen
- Ind. Expert
- Academic
- Public Serv

Column3
percentage
Chart 5 Knowledge of NR Issues in NS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>PER CENTAGE</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starting to Learn</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Knowledgeable</td>
<td>42 %</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well Informed in one area</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well Informed in Several areas</td>
<td>36 %</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondent Features

• Highly Educated
• Predominantly Male
• Predominantly Middle-Aged and Older
• Strongly Linked to Natural Resources Sector
  – Many economic stakeholders
• Knowledgeable about Resource Issues
• An “Attentive Public” and NR Stakeholders
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>PHASE TWO Strongly Agree (SA)/Agree (A) % (N)</th>
<th>NR STRATEGY Strongly Agree (SA)/Agree (A) % (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q20/30  INCLUSIVENESS/CITIZENS SAY</td>
<td>62 % (60)</td>
<td>73 % (114)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21/31  OPENNESS</td>
<td>34 % (58)</td>
<td>69 % (106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24/34  ALTERNATIVE VIEWS</td>
<td>49 % (82)</td>
<td>79 % (121)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22/32  TRANSPARENCY</td>
<td>31 % (52)</td>
<td>40 % (63)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings on Access

- Both Phase Two and especially the NR Strategy Process as a whole (i.e. including Phase One) were viewed as inclusive and incorporating alternative views
- Phase Two was not viewed as either open or transparent
- NR Process was seen as open, but not as transparent
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>PHASE TWO SA/A % (N)</th>
<th>NR STRATEGY SA/A % (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q23/33 UNBIASED</td>
<td>17 % (29)</td>
<td>23 % (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25 REFLECT PHASE 2 INPUT</td>
<td>38 % (62)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q26 REFLECT STAKEHOLDER INPUT</td>
<td>31 % (50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35 REFLECT CITIZEN VALUES</td>
<td></td>
<td>35 % (53)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings on Responsiveness

• Problem with Perceived Bias in Process.
  – 52% disagreed that Phase 2 was unbiased, and 57% disagreed for the NR process

• Neither the Phase Two process nor the whole NR Strategy process is perceived as reflecting the input received from stakeholders and/or citizens

• Conclusion: Significant problems on responsiveness characterized by these results
### Chart 8 Satisfaction w/ Reports

[1= Not at All Satisfied; 10= Very Satisfied]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REPORT</th>
<th>MEAN SATISFACTION</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PARKS PANEL</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIODIVERSITY PANEL</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORESTS PANEL</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINERALS PANEL</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEERING COMM.</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATH WE SHARE Document</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Our Common Ground          | 5.2               | 207 | (Phase One Study)
## Chart 9 Satisfaction w/ NR Strategy Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q36 Good Approach For Policy Input</td>
<td>46% (SA/AGREE)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29 Satisfied w/ Stakeholder Engagement</td>
<td>Mean 4.3 on 10 point scale</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q41 Participate in similar process again?</td>
<td>84 % Yes</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpreting Results

• Orientation of Opinion is Toward Discontent YET 84% would participate again
• What is the reason for such a strong willingness?
• Respondents Asked to Give Reasons for Answer
## Chart 10 Reasons to Participate Again

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides Opportunity for Citizen Input</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance to Present Your Ideas to Decision-Makers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing to Improved Policy Formulation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to Engage in Public Dialogue</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing Special Interests from Dominating</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Engagement is Important</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Quotes

• “Although frustrating, I have to step in because if not a small vocal group will rule the day.”

• “It gives a chance for ordinary taxpayers to be engaged and speak”

• “I remain hopeful that through participation in engagement processes, however flawed, that better strategies, policies, regulations and practices can come forward.”
## Chart 11 Citizenship Skill-Building

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>% SA/A</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learned a lot about NR Issues</td>
<td>56 %</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned a lot about how to participate in community affairs</td>
<td>43 %</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 12 STRENGTHS OF PROCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEATURE</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gave Public Opportunity for Input/Say</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open &amp; Inclusive</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating Public About NR Issues</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Engagement/Dialogue Opportunity</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Input</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary Planning Role</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL RESPONSES</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Chart 13 Weaknesses of Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>&amp;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Interests Dominated Process</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Input Ignored/Not Listened to</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Two Problematic – Disconnect, Bias</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNR/Bureaucracy Influence on Process</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Line Too Long</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninformed Public Opinion Too Much Influence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL RESPONSES</td>
<td>111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 14 Changes to Make to Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Change</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More Effective Public Input</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Continuous Communication</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Impact of Rural /Resource Voice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Public Consultation After Panel Reports</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL N</strong></td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Reactions

• A Substantial Public Appetite for Citizen Input
• Strong Orientation to inclusiveness and openness to alternative views that worked well in Phase One
• The Phase Two process was narrow, and generated suspicions about the real process at work, notably about the corporate and DNR influence on process, at the expense of public input
Quotes on Influences

• “So I learned that science will not necessarily alter how key decisions are made. That the industrial influence cannot be underestimated. The big business influence, the influence of money, will trump the science.” – panel member

• “…as part of this openness and transparency and independence, the department was going through this great kind of pantomime of being hands off.” – another panel member
A Path Forward

• More Policy Focus in Phase One
  – Background “Green Paper” as Starting Point
  – Public Input directed to options and policy directions rather than values
  – Challenges of Breadth vs. Depth

• Greater Linkage w/ Public Input Across Stages
  – Public Feedback Process Throughout to Phase Two end

• Linkage between Expert Panels and Steering Committee
  – No Post-report involvement
Greater Transparency

• Considerable Feedback that Phase Two was largely invisible to public and stakeholders – both from stakeholders and panel respondents
• More posting of information during process
• More pro-active information distribution to those involved at key points.
  – A few commented they didn’t know reports had been released until they learned it from my survey questions – one of whom was self-described as “attentive”
Model for Future Consultations?

• DNR website states this process may be a model for the future
• What has this run-through suggested about future versions?
• Three Issues
  – the design of the stages
  – Public /stakeholder distinction
  – Locus of Consultation
Consultation or Advice?

• Consultation – focuses on the operational and programmatic level and involves the agencies responsible for program design and the direct clients and stakeholders;

• Advice - addresses broad values or directions for policy. (Pal, 2010, 281)

• Phase One was Advice seeking; Phase Two was Consultation of a more limited traditional sort
“Meaningful” Public Consultation

• Discussion is linked to policy decision-making; action oriented
• Participant roster reflects diversity of population
• Provides opportunities for balanced information about issues
• Process reflects principles of equality and fairness
• Results of the deliberative process must be communicated effectively to public at large
• (Turnbull & Aucoin, 2006, 6)
Phase Two & Stakeholders

• Stakeholders – variable meaning in practice
• Economic Interests and Technical Experts in some cases
• Public at large in others
  – Public increasingly viewed as stakeholders in resource policy areas
• Technical Expertise was present but minor role in panels (as % of presentations)
• Attentive Publics, Industry and NGOs mostly
• Emphasis on all voices with “something to add”
### TABLE 1: Groups & Expert Panels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>BIODIV</th>
<th>FOREST</th>
<th>MINERALS</th>
<th>PARKS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDUSTRY</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOV’T</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVID</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMICS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Path Forward

• More Policy Action Focus in Phase One
  – Background “Green Paper” as Starting Point
  – Public Input directed to options and policy directions rather than values
    – Challenges of Breadth (Circles) vs. Depth (Presentations)
• Greater Linkage w/ Public Input Across Stages
  – Public Feedback Process Throughout to Phase Two end
• Linkage between Expert Panels and Steering Committee
  – No Post-panel report involvement a concern for several panel members
Greater Transparency

• Considerable Feedback that Phase Two was largely invisible to public and stakeholders
  – both from stakeholders and panel respondents
• Suggestion - More posting of information during process
• More pro-active information distribution to those involved at key points.
  – A few commented they didn’t know reports had been released until they learned it from my survey questions – one of whom was self-described as “attentive”
Locus of Consultation Process?

• Arm’s Length vs. In-house?
• Respondents Comments – Dubious about ability of a department to critically review its own long-standing policies and practices
• Quote: “Some of the people in DNR have been there since I started in the 70s.... Thinking a certain way, and we were trying to think outside the box, and some of the resistance we ran into within the government was because of that as well.” (Panel member)
Alternatives: Arm’s Length

• A real Strength of the Voluntary Planning model – trusted by participants
• Other Option – attaching policy reviews to legislative committees
• The more controversial the policy area, the more the “arm’s length” element may be an issue
  – No complaints on Parks panel process
  – A number of complaints on Forest panel process
Quote on DNR Conflict of Interest

• “I have a concern that that department is in a total position of conflict in that they wear at least three hats. [forests, parks and minerals] And all of these things are basically uses of land which are not compatible....So I fail to see how one department can wear three hats and represent the interests of three different areas.” - Phase One participant
Conclusion 1

- IF the goal was to produce a final policy strategy that enjoyed positive public support, the results were decidedly modest, if not disappointing. However,
- The respondents welcomed the opportunity to participate and
- Saw this process as an important positive change in the way DNR makes decisions.
Conclusion 2

• Looked at as a model, the NR Strategy process needs tweaking for future use.
• A two stage process is seen as suitable for complex matters such as this, but
• the second stage needs to be more transparent and inclusive in its operation, including the operation of the Steering Committee
• The role of the Steering Committee and its linkages to the Expert Panels needs enhancement for policy integration purposes
Resources

• Nova Scotia, Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resource Strategy, webpage at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/strategy/>


• Pal, Leslie (2010), Beyond Policy Analysis. 4th ed.
