



Public Policy and the Social Economy in Atlantic Canada (Phase II): Nova Scotia - briefing paper by Dr. Jan Myers

Introduction

As part of the activities of the Atlantic Node of the pan-Canadian Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network, the public policy working group initiated a project to map and provide an inventory of provincial legislation, policies, programs and initiatives that are directly relevant to community economic and social development, the social economy, and building the capacity and opportunities for engagement in policy formulation and implementation in the Atlantic region. This initial phase consisted of desk based research to identify information publically available through government and other agency websites as well as more traditional academic routes for literature reviews and searches (bibliographic, journal and research databases), up to 2008 and before the 2008 federal elections.

A review of some of the available literature and policy scan reports to-date indicates a concentration on substantive or administrative policy and relations. This includes program focused, funding relationships and accountabilities, and/or issue based concerns (e.g. employment, social exclusion and services for specified groups) often, but not always, in relation to resourcing and service delivery¹. Many of these reports identify issues common across sub-sectors of non-profit organizations (e.g. changes in funding regimes, changing jurisdictions and downloading of public programs) and identify good practice approaches in relation to, for example, single issue concerns (e.g. child care, elder care, learning disabilities, housing, drugs and alcohol services); communities of interest (Native communities, migrant and immigrant workers); and in relation to transaction relationships (often bi-lateral and concerned with service delivery, contracts, funding, accountability). Part of the analysis of a policy environment is to look for opportunities to build on these kinds of relationships and good practice examples.

What we want to explore in the second part of the research are the conditions, contexts and relationships that contribute to and facilitate non-profit and social economy organizational involvement in public policy dialogue and development² and purposeful relationships between and across sectors. These “purposeful relationships” or active alliances are often multi-stakeholder: public, private, non-profit sectors and social economy organizations; different levels of government; and shaped by broader civil society concerns, mixed economy of care, regeneration and stakeholder involvement and a growing emphasis on social economy and social enterprise. This second phase of the research involves discussion with

¹ Caledon Institute (2007) Community Stories: Leading to enable: government engagement in vibrant communities Saint John, Ottawa: Caledon Institute of Social Policy

² Voluntary Sector Initiative (2003) Participating in Federal Public Policy, Ottawa: Voluntary Sector Task Force

key respondents to identify good practice examples, gaps and opportunities for collaboration and inclusive approaches to engagement and involvement linked to improved policy planning and decision-making. Some of the questions that will shape this discussion include:

- How key respondents explain what the ‘social economy’ means in the context of their work and what are the key constituent parts of the social economy in their area (e.g. visibility an predominance of non-profit and voluntary organizations, or co-operatives, or social enterprises for example)
- How key respondents’ understandings and definitions of the social economy are reflected in existing government policies?
- What are the consequences of these differing understandings in terms of governance and policy frameworks?
- What types of relationships exists around policy development and implementation?
- What policy needs are not being met and what changes are required in the regulatory environment to meet these gaps and enhance collaboration between SE sector organizations and governments?
- What conditions, contexts and relationships exist/need to exist which promote and facilitate non-profit sector involvement, for example, in policy deliberation, production and implementation.

In order to try to provide an overview as well as a comparison to earlier data³, the policy review reports produced for each of the four Atlantic Provinces focus on specific aspects of government support for social economy (SE) organizations and activities, for example:

- Identification of department or departments with a mandate to support SE organizations and activities;
- Legislation that commits the federal, provincial and/or municipal governments to support social economy organizations and activities;
- Policies that outline broader government support for the social economy, SE and third sector organizations and activities;
- Specific programs and initiatives that support the social economy through: start up or seed funding for social economy organizations (e.g. co-operatives, non-profit enterprises, etc.) and/or ongoing funding and support (e.g. via infrastructure organizations such as cooperative development agencies or direct to social economy organizations);
- Evidence of support for community and sector engagement in policy formulation;
- Policies geared towards involvement of communities of interest (Aboriginal and First Nations), geographical communities (rural development) and specific sectors (health, housing) in policy development;

³ In 2002, the Canadian Community Economic Development Network carried out a survey of provincial governments’ commitment to and support for community economic development initiatives in their region. This was published in 2003 as *An Inventory of Provincial and Territorial Support to Community Economic Development in Canada* (Infanti) and was used as a baseline framework for the current review.

- Policies/initiatives at a local level linked to social economy organizations and sector development; and
- Other support and infrastructure organizations geared to supporting social economy organizations (SEOs) or promoting joint working between SEOs and government (and private sector).

This briefing provides a summary of the report⁴ produced with regard to Nova Scotia, a full copy of which is available on request.

Supporting the social economy in Nova Scotia

In 2007, Soots *et al*⁵ profiled the Nova Scotia development system as an innovative support for co-operative development. At that time, three-hundred provincially incorporated co-operatives and 35 provincially incorporated credit unions were members of the Nova Scotia Co-operative Council (NSCC)⁶. The largest number of co-ops fall into the finance (23 credit unions) and agricultural sectors (23), followed by housing (22) and total assets for the sector are more than \$2.5 billion with seven thousand people employed in the sector. In addition, over 6,000 people in Nova Scotia live in co-operative housing⁷.

In 2003, a national survey of non-profit and voluntary organisations was undertaken and in 2006 Rowe provided a summary overview of the survey for Atlantic Canada⁸. Significantly, at that time, Nova Scotia had the highest concentration of voluntary and community organisations of the four Atlantic Provinces. In 2004, the region had approximately 8% of the total estimated number of incorporated Canadian non-profit and voluntary organisations. This was equivalent to around 12,882 organisations out of which nearly 6,000 (5829) were based in Nova Scotia. Following the survey, in 2004, Nova Scotia Health Promotion and Protection (HPP) produced a snap shot of volunteering using Statistic Canada's Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating.⁹ The report detailed the volunteering activities of Nova Scotians and estimated that over 48% of the population actively volunteer in their

⁴ The report – *Public Policy and the Social Economy in Atlantic Canada: Nova Scotia – An inventory of jurisdictional policies, programs and activities that support social economy organizations at municipal, provincial and federal levels* – is available in pdf format.

⁵ Soots, L. K., S. Perry, S and Cowan, J. (2007). *Supporting Innovative Co-operative Development: the case of Nova Scotia Co-operative Development System*. Paper Presented Congress 2007, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.

⁶ See http://www.nscop-council.ca/coops_memdirectory.php for current membership

⁷ See Co-ops in Nova Scotia, produced by the Canadian Co-operatives Association, http://www.coopscanada.coop/assets/firefly/files/files/pdfs/ProvAndSectoralProfiles/Nova_Scotia_co-ops.pdf

⁸ Rowe, P. (2006). *The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in Atlantic Canada: regional highlights from the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*. Toronto, Imagine Canada.

⁹ HPP publication available at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/publications/Volunteerism-FactSheet.pdf>

communities with an estimated 50 volunteer hours per capita, equivalent to a total of 47 million volunteer hours. This amounts to an economic value of \$305,500,000.¹⁰ Even so, Nova Scotia lagged behind both Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick in appointing a minister with a portfolio for the voluntary and community sector. Having said that, there has been a history of support for volunteering in the province and a number of consultations, networks and research/publications over the years – these have focused mainly around the work of health education, promotion and protection¹¹ (and the relevant government department) and the federal and pan-Canadian volunteerism initiative (CVI).

Rural development and capacity building has also been a focus for government in developing sustainable communities, attraction and retention of employers/employees and the revitalisation of rural communities. Like other provinces in the region, Nova Scotia has been experiencing a population shift from rural to urban and increased migration in terms of people looking for jobs. Langille *et al* (2008) found that a number of rural communities were excluded from policy dialogue and decision-making although, at the same time, many communities are actively working with universities (through community-university research alliances), to influence government policy agenda.

In considering policies that link government and social economy organizations, it is possible to list all departments and a number of programs that relate to supporting aspects of the social economy – for example funding initiatives for single issue concerns involving bi-lateral relationships between one government department and one or more organizations, such as funding for organizations providing services for drug or alcohol dependency. These bi-lateral relationships, policies and programs are important as they affect policy on a special interest and coalition level and may link to new policy development and government interdepartmental collaboration. However, our concern is also to look for broader integrations and supports across the social economy.

While it is important that there are levels of government, departments and officers within departments facilitating engagement with a range of stakeholders it is also important to have an organised non-governmental sector to put forward ideas and local solutions. This requires both organized social economy infrastructure and the mechanisms supported by government

¹⁰ Calculated using the 2004 minimum wage of \$6.50, <http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20050525002> . In 2008, the Nova Scotia government estimated this as \$2 billion worth of services: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/publications/progress-update.pdf> .

¹¹ See for example, the Health Promotion Clearing House web-resources such as Advocacy, policy development and building community capacity; and volunteer development: <http://www.hpclearinghouse.ca/resources/documents.asp>

for increased meaningful and purposeful exchange. We have examples of this on a sectoral basis (for example certain sections of the voluntary and community sector linking with government to discuss funding issues, evaluation mechanisms and changes in service provision), which are indicative of bi-lateral or transactional relationships between sector / sector organizations and government / government departments. There are also examples of special interest coalitions (task forces and organizations such as the 2007 Justice Minister's Task force on safer street and Communities; Community Business Development Corporation and the Women's Economic Equality Society). There are also examples of inter-connectivity between government departments, and between provincial, municipal and private sector organizations, some of which include social economy representation or strategies and action plans that outline intention to include citizen's organizations and social economy organizations in current and future policy deliberations. The next section details some of the departments, mandates, strategies and policies that:

- mandate or encourage avenues for dialogue with third sector and social economy organizations;
- do / or have the potential for inter-sectoral collaboration and co-operation; and /or provide financial and technical support for specific activities;
- acknowledge interdependence in a mixed economy of care in delivery of a range of services and community development activities; and
- provide a springboard or platform for co-construction, co-production, implementation and evaluation of social and economic policies.

Policies and frameworks that support the development of the social economy

This section is organised around a series of question to categorise some of the policy scan data collected, summarised in the table below and then explained in more detail. The information provided is indicative rather than definitive of the relationships, policies, programs and organisations/departments that exist currently (i.e. as of 2008). Part of the rationale for the second phase of the policy scan is to engage with people ‘on the ground’ to explore the ‘reality’ of the situation to date.

Policies and frameworks that support the development of the social economy and / or provide avenues for policy dialogue and development between social economy organizations and government.	
1. Is there a department with a mandate to support social economy organizations and activities?	N
2. Is there legislation that commits federal, provincial and / or municipal governments to support social economy organizations and activities?	Y
3. Are there policies that define broader government support for social economy and social economy and third sector organizations and activities?	Y
4. Are there programs and/or initiatives that support the social economy through: start up or seed funding for social economy organizations and/or ongoing funding and support?	Y
5. Is there support for community and sector engagement in policy formulation?	Y
6. Are there specific policies geared towards involvement of communities of interest, geographical communities and specific sectors (health, housing) in policy development?	Y
7. Are there policies/initiatives at a local level linked to social economy organizations and sector development?	Y
8. Are there other support and infrastructure organizations geared to supporting social economy organizations (SEOs) or promoting joint working between SEOs and government (and private sector)?	Y

Q: Is there a department with a mandate to support social economy organizations and activities?

A: No, but....

There is no specific department with a mandate for ‘social economy’ or ‘third sector’. However, there are departments that are responsible for specific aspects of the social economy, for example:

- *Department of Health Promotion and Protection:* the department was created in 2006. As mentioned above, as the department in previous guises community based public services have had a long standing relationship with community groups and volunteer organisations, the department is home to the *Minster for Volunteerism*; the *Volunteerism Interdepartmental Co-ordinating Committee* a ‘horizontal committee of government

dedicated to supporting and growing volunteerism and the voluntary sector in Nova Scotia'; and the *Nova Scotia Volunteer Advisory Council*.

- *Department of Finance*: provides oversight of the Credit Unions Act and also provides statistical information and information on new registrations from the *Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations*, Registry of Joint Stock Companies which includes numbers of co-op associations, credit unions and societies
- *Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations* - The Co-operatives branch of Service Nova Scotia manages the Co-operatives Associations Act of Nova Scotia and provides start-up assistance and advisory services to registered co-ops in the province. Service Nova Scotia has a mission to improve the delivery of government services to the public. The Department oversees the registration of non-profits under the Companies Act (see below) and provides information and guidance on registration and duties under the Act.
- *Department of Community Services* – has most of the transactional relationships with the voluntary and community sector via contracting for services and grants. The departmental report produced in 2008, stated that 70% of providers of residential and programs for youth, adults and seniors are provided by the non-profit sector. The Co-operative Housing and Non-profit housing programs also fall under the department's jurisdiction.
- *Department of Economic and Rural Development*: the department is tasked with the province's strategy for sustainable development and prosperity. On an operational level, the department oversees the small business finance program and well as the community development investment funds and community development trusts (see below). The 2006 policy document (detailed below) includes an emphasis on social and human capital and details partnerships with community-based organisations. There are community and rural development offices across the province (10 in total, with regional head offices in Truro and Halifax).

Q: Is there legislation that commits federal, provincial and/or municipal governments to support social economy organizations and activities?

A: Yes

- *Co-operatives Associations Act* (revised 2001; 2008) – includes housing and other provincially incorporated co-operatives
- *Corporations Act* – allows for the registration of non-profits. The Canada Corporations Act will be replaced by the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act in 2009.

- *Credit Union Act*, 1994
- *Equity Tax Credit Act*, 1993 and regulations – provides tax credits for investment in small business and labour-sponsored venture capital corporations, includes associations as defined in the Co-operative Associations Act
- *Housing Act* – Co-operative Housing, Non-Profit Construction Projects, Self-Help Housing Program
- Regional Community Development Act – set up regional development authorities to co-ordinate and lead economic development at a local level
- *Societies Act*, 1989 – incorporation of non-profit societies
- *Volunteer Protection Act*, 2002 – outlines the protection of volunteers working in organisations, including political parties (see designation of Non-profit Regulations)

Q. Are there policies that define broader government support for social economy and social economy and third sector organizations and activities?

A. Yes

- *A Lasting Social Fabric: our framework for social prosperity* (Dept of Community Services): This framework recognises that every government department has something to do with social prosperity and so sets about co-ordinating related activities to work together effectively. The connecting threads include: health and wellbeing; lifelong learning; access and inclusion; citizenship, democracy and engagement; and safety and security. Under building community capacity, the report states that 'Community development engages the necessary partners at the community and government levels and defines a common vision' and that 'All community members...have the opportunity to become engaged in the community development process and are able to access its social and economic benefits'.
- *Action Plan on Volunteerism* (Department of Health Promotion and Protection): The Volunteerism Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee is developing an implementation plan to address issues such as volunteer capacity, tools and resources, and training needs.
- *Opportunities for Sustainable Prosperity, 2006* (Dept of Economic and Rural Development) – this builds on earlier strategies and reports. For example, in 2004 a report produced from community consultations suggested that traditional community economic development approaches did not consider social issues and advocated a move towards a community development approach. The report also noted that Nova Scotia is one of two

provinces that at that time did not have a volunteer Resource centre. The 2006 strategic response stresses effective partnerships as essential to progress.

- *Poverty Reduction Strategy* (Departments of Labour & Workforce, and Community Service) This sets out a cross-departmental strategy and includes the creation of a new post – Poverty Reduction Co-ordinator. The strategy includes a commitment to a community development model to allow for public involvement and to develop evidence-based policy and programs. The strategy also allows for funding of voluntary sector projects via the Department of Community Services.
- Throne Speech, 2007 – ‘The New Nova Scotia’ announced the ‘Social Prosperity Framework’ (see above)¹²
- *New Democratic Party Electoral Platform 2008* – includes commitments to non-profit and co-operative housing; engagement with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and organisations to ensure equitable participation; support for a ‘respectful, co-operative federalism’; re-investing in women’s programs and organisations.¹³

Q. Are there programs and/or initiatives that support the social economy through: start up or seed funding for social economy organizations (e.g. co-operatives, non-profit enterprises, etc.) and/or ongoing funding and support (e.g. via infrastructure organizations such as cooperative development agencies or direct to social economy organizations)?

A. Yes

- *Community Development Investment Funds* (CEDIFs - Department of Economic and Rural Development). CEDIFs are pools of capital formed through the sale of shares to persons within a defined community to operate or invest in local business. This includes co-operatives and social enterprises and organisations that have benefited include, for example, Port Hood RV Co-operative Ltd, and Just Us! Coffee roasters.
- *Community Development Trusts* (Department of Economic and Rural Development). These are linked specifically to four strategic areas: economic trade and diversification; improved productivity; innovation and training; and developing community transition plans and helping workers face adjustment to changes. Organisations that have benefited

¹² http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/HOUSE_BUSINESS/THroneSpeech_Nov22.pdf

¹³ NDP held Halifax in 2008 and won the Province in 2009. Their manifesto can be found at http://xfer.ndp.ca/campaign2008/Platform_2008_EN.pdf

include the Nova Scotia Boatbuilders Association – a member-based organisation for Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

- *Co-operative Housing and Non-profit housing programs* (Department of Community Services)
- *Small Business Finance Program* (Department of Economic and Rural Development / Canada Business Nova Scotia). This includes the Investing in Nova Scotia Enterprises Co-operative Small Business Program, a joint initiative between NS Co-operative Council, Credit Union Central and the Department. NS Credit unions website states that since its inception in 2003, the Small Business Financing Program has played an important role in the advancement of provincial businesses, maintaining 2,335 jobs and creating an additional 1,347 jobs
- *Community Grants Program* (Halifax Regional Municipality). This initiative provides annual cash grants to registered non-profit organizations and charities located throughout HRM. There are two types of grant (a) a project grant of up to \$5,000 and (b) a capital grant of up to \$25, 000.
- *HRM Community Facility Partnership* (Halifax Regional Municipality): a centralized program that provides funding to community non-profit groups and public institutions in support of major capital initiatives undertaken as part of a formal partnership agreement.
- *Tax exemptions for Non-profits* (Halifax Regional Municipality). Halifax Regional Municipality can help some non-profit organizations reduce their level of property tax through the Tax Exemption for Non-Profit Organizations Program. The program is administered on behalf of Regional Council by the HRM Grants Committee, HRM Grants Program and HRM Taxation Office.

Q. Is there support for community and sector engagement in policy formulation?

A: Yes

- *Collaboration Agreement between the Government of Nova Scotia and the voluntary sector, 2008*: signed agreement for positive collaborative working on issues, policies and programs related to the sector. The Agreement sets out Government’s statement of intent in terms of the value it places on the sector as a ‘vital component of the social, economic, cultural, environmental well-being’ of Nova Scotia. This includes a commitment to develop support for the sector and to work together to improve policy development.

- *The Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education* is a provincial advisory committee linked to the Department of Labour and Workforce Development. The Committee has included co-operative and non-profit organisations such as Credit Union Central Nova Scotia, Just Us! Coffee roasters.
- *Our Kids are worth it* (Department of Community Services) – focus on crime prevention, points to collaborative approaches to problem solving including the initiation of a social policy research group.
- *Poverty Reduction Working Group* (Nova Scotia Legislature) – a private members bill helped to set up this working group in 2007. It operates under the auspices of the *ministers for community service and environment and labour*. Members include: Community Action on Homelessness; Feed Nova Scotia: Face of Poverty; and Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy.
- *Voluntary Planning Board* – is a quango, an arms-length policy forum. In their accountability report 2008, the Board outlined their work on guidance in promoting and increasing involvement of Nova Scotians in developing policy advice to government – the premier, Cabinet and departments. In 2008, they worked with the Department of Natural Resources.
- *Volunteer Advisory Council* – 21 person council (under the auspices of the minister for volunteering)

Q. Are there specific policies geared towards involvement of communities of interest (Aboriginal and First Nations), geographical communities (rural development) and specific sectors (health, housing) in policy development?

A. Yes

- *Cabinet – Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the status of women*. The advisory council takes on board a policy and advocacy on any public policy affecting women in the province.
- *Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture* – encourage volunteer initiatives through their ‘*Adopt-a-Stream*’ and *River Watch* programs. Linked to the 2005 Green Plan of the then Department of Energy and Labour (now Department of Environment)
- *Department of Health* – encourage public consultation via their *Continuing Care strategy*
- *Early Learning and Child Care Plan* – to promote a fair, equitable day care and child care system

- *Healthy Eating Nova Scotia Strategic Plan* – mainly health focused but also looks at food security
- *Office of Aboriginal Affairs* – co-ordinates consultation with Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, including the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada tripartite forum
- *Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs – African Nova Scotian Community Action Plan, 2006*: outlines the role of special interest advisory groups. Also has the power to give discretionary grants.
- *Seniors Secretariat* – overview of all issues related to seniors. The Secretariat work with the *Group of IX* – a group of seniors' organisations who consult with other organisations and special interest groups to input into government departments.
- *Strategy for Positive Ageing* – long-term strategy encouraging cross-sector responses to an aging population and to create senior friendly communities

Q. Are there policies/initiatives at a local level linked to social economy organizations and sector development?

A. Yes

- *Halifax Regional Municipal Charter* (Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations): this charter relates to HRM's duties and responsibilities and, in the main, relates to planning and infrastructure. However, there is mention of non-profits and charitable organisations in terms of access to buildings, grants and possible tax exemptions.
- *Community Transport Assistance Program* (CTAP – Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations). Funding available to municipalities and non-profit community-based organisations to help to provide transport services in low-population density areas of the province.
- *Strategies for Success 2005-2010* (Halifax Regional Municipality) – advocates partnerships across government, community, non-profits, post-secondary education and business for economic development.
- *Government Relations and Strategic Partnership Development Policy, 2006* – HRM: designed to increase the municipality's relations with other levels of government and community partners (through memoranda of understanding). Priorities for 2008/2009 include: increasing voluntarism and participation.¹⁴

¹⁴ <http://www.halifax.ca/IntergovernmentalAffairs/documents/CouncilReport2008-09GovernmentRelationsPriorityAreas.pdf>

Q. Are there other support and infrastructure organizations geared to supporting social economy organizations (SEOs) or promoting joint working between SEOs and government (and private sector)?

A: Yes

- Atlantic Community Economic Development Institute: a co-operative based in Nova Scotia and carries out research, capacity building and asset mapping activities especially in relation to sustainable communities, First Nations, African Canadians and marginalised communities in the Atlantic region and internationally (Bolivia)
- Atlantic Institute for Market Studies - a federally incorporated, non-profit think tank based in Nova Scotia and provides input and commentary on public policy regionally, nationally and internationally. Not specifically non-profit/social economy but has produced documents on public policy areas such as education.
- Community Business Development Corporations, Nova Scotia: 13 local CBDCs across Nova Scotia working to support entrepreneurs and social enterprises through seed capital programs (particularly those that have difficulty accessing financial resources through mainstream sources), training and counselling. CBDCs are mainly geared towards individuals.
- New Dawn Enterprises – a community development corporation in Cape Breton, established in 1976. It has a number of companies under its umbrella such as New Dawn Renewable Energy project, New Dawn Sydney senior Care Home Living, and New Dawn Volunteer Resource centre. The latter offers a meals on wheels service.
- Nova Scotia Co-operative Council – provides a range of supports to existing co-operatives and those thinking about setting up a co-operative, for example: business planning, research, mentoring, incorporation, training, information on financing and loan support, and networking opportunities. It describes itself as the economic development arm of the co-operative and credit union system and has over 400 members.
- Credit Union Central – represents and supports credit unions in Nova Scotia and also in Newfoundland and Labrador. Central acts as a trade association and also provides central services and financial services.
- Nova Scotia Credit Unions Charitable Foundation - supports community programs and projects in health care, education, the environment and the arts. Since 2000, the foundation has invested \$500,000 in programs and services across Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

- Nova Scotia Volunteer Forum – a web-based resource supported by Community Links, Recreation Nova Scotia, Cape Breton Chamber of Voluntary Organisations and the Fédération Acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse
- Cape Breton Chamber of Voluntary Organisations – is a membership, umbrella organisation that provides opportunities for networking, support and collaboration between voluntary organisations in Cape Breton
- Community Links – is a province wide organisation to promote quality of life for seniors.
- Cumberland African Nova Scotian Association (CANSAs): provides training and development opportunities for African Nova Scotians and promotes partnership development.
- Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE) - is an membership umbrella organisation with 26 Acadian and French-speaking community member organisations. Main activities include: offering support to its member associations and the broader Acadian community, representing and lobbying on behalf of its members, facilitating community dialogue and consultation, communications, research and development
- Federation of Community Organisations (FOCO) – a membership umbrella organisation providing services and development opportunities for voluntary sector organisations in the Halifax Regional Municipality. FOCO partnered with Phoenix Youth programs to undertake research on labour needs of the non-profit sector in Nova Scotia (research funded by Human resources and Skills development, Canada)¹⁵
- Native Council of Nova Scotia: the Council describes itself as a ‘Aboriginal Peoples representative Organisation’ and one of the aims is to influence all levels of government.
- United Way – largest funder of the voluntary sector and social services in Canada after governments and aims to strengthen communities. In Nova Scotia, there are 6 United Way offices Cape Breton, Colchester County, Cumberland County, Halifax Region, Lunenburg County and Pictou County.

In Nova Scotia and Halifax Regional Municipality there has been deliberate working arrangements between departments (mainly health and health promotion – and through Community Services for grant aid and contracting) and social economy organisations. In policy terms, this has been linked with social care and welfare and predominantly emphasises

¹⁵ For details, see http://www.nfpresearch.ns.ca/resrc_relatedresearch.php

volunteers¹⁶; and in terms of business development in regard to the co-operative and credit union movements. There has also been a considerable foothold for social economy academic and practitioner research in the region since 2005, with the SSHRC funded Atlantic node of the Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network based at Mount Saint Vincent University and working across all four provinces in a range of areas.

Issues arising from the first phase of the policy scan

We can begin to look at different ways to analyse and describe policy development and engagement with stakeholders – this can be looked at in terms of structural relationships: transaction (single issue and finding relationships which tend to be bi-lateral) and evolution and transformation (multi-stakeholder dialogue and partnership opportunities); place-based and geographical (level of government; geographical – rural /urban); and in terms of levels of participation and engagement of key stakeholders (co-construction and co-production of policies and services).

In Nova Scotia, the policy emphasis and language of communitarianism and voluntarism is reflected in the recent appointment for a minister with the portfolio for volunteering (although in real terms, this does include the organised or formal voluntary sector organisations and paid workers.). In this instance, the ‘Talking with Volunteers’ report produced as a series of round table discussion as part of Nova Scotia-Canada Volunteerism Initiative is a key underpinning document for the set up of the minister’s portfolio.

This policy scan and review gives a useful platform and foundation which can support further research in Nova Scotia to further develop dialogue with key stakeholders - policy movers, shakers and consumers - around the scope and contribution of social economy organizations and policies and frameworks that can support the support social economy organizations at municipal, provincial and federal levels. There are key actors – on the ground - from government departments and social economy organisations who can support the development of this information and help to give voice and shape to what’s happening on the ground with regard to policy in action. Their experiences and interpretations are important.

Some of the issues and observations arising from the first phase of the policy review include:

¹⁶ See for example Katherine Side and Janice Keefe’s 2005 article ‘ The Role of Unpaid Work and Volunteerism in Maintaining Individual and Community Health in Atlantic Canada: a case study approach, in *Canadian Women Studies*, 24(1), pp 129-137

- There appears to be no clear understanding, acceptance or usage of the term ‘social economy’ to describe activities that involve social enterprises, non-profit organizations, co-operatives and mutuals in Nova Scotia. This is not unusual and in many ways reflects how both government and social economy organizations or sub-sectors are organised: theme and issues based activities (e.g. health, education, business); the services provided to particular sections of the communities (e.g. youth, seniors, people with physical disabilities, mental health issues and other specific needs); categorised by organisational legal and governance structures (e.g. charity, volunteer organisation, self-help group, co-operative, credit union).
- There are departments with specific mandates for specific parts of the social economy. In development and policy areas, this tends to be mainly non-profits, with perhaps the exception of housing co-operatives.
- The term ‘social and economic development’, as Infanti discovered in 2003, is often used to promote economic development (growth, attraction and retention of work age individuals including immigrants, new business) which may have social benefits (revitalisation of urban or rural communities).
- Co-operatives and social enterprise tend to be grouped with economic development and ‘business’ and government policies and support tend to be more focused on registration and compliance, technical support and start-up finance. In this respect, charities and non-profit voluntary and community organizations appear to be more ‘visible’ in terms of contributing and responding to (social) policy developments and initiatives.
- Engagement in policy determination and design seems to be of a consultative nature than full participation. There are some cross-cutting issues – such as anti-poverty initiatives – that involve multi-sector organisations and actors although often with an emphasis on public-private sector partnership. Often involvement of ‘community’ partners is geared to elected members (municipal representatives) and / or individual citizens.
- Activity at a provincial level is most visible although there are hubs of activity at municipal level in Nova Scotia and this is matched by development initiatives in the third sector, for example: the Federation of Community Organisations and the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse . There are also opportunities for cross-departmental and cross-cutting issues to involve non-governmental stakeholders in areas of provision of human service organisations and services.

- It is still early days to evaluate the impact of the ministerial remit for volunteering and the NS Volunteer Advisory Council. On the non-profit and voluntary and community sector, Nova Scotia has now become much more linked into regional and national discussions and dialogue (viz attendance at the Gathering of Counterparts meeting in 2008, and hosting the 2009 Gathering)¹⁷.

We also need to a need to examine consistencies between espoused actions through policy statements and documents and actual developments and practice. This can help to identify points of fracture between policy and practice with regard to supporting social economy organisations and enterprises and opportunities to identify good practice on the ground and to develop relationships and dialogue between sectors. There are key actors from government departments and social economy organisations who can support the development of this information and help to give voice and shape to what's happening on the ground with regard to policy in action. Their experiences and interpretations are important. The policy scan and review gives a useful platform and foundation which can support further research in each province to further develop dialogue with key stakeholders - policy movers, shakers and consumers - around the scope and contribution of social economy organizations and policies and frameworks that can support the support social economy organizations at municipal, provincial and federal levels.

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¹⁷ These meetings are aimed at strengthening the relationships between non-profit/voluntary sector and governments. The 2009 event was jointly sponsored by the Governments of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, in collaboration with the Federation of Community Organizations of Halifax and region and the Volunteer Centre of Southeastern New Brunswick. More information is available at: http://www.cvsrd.org/eng/connections-communities/cc_counterparts.html#cp2009