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The politics of governance in Canada:
Building new relations between the state
and voluntary sector organizations across scales

by

Rachel Laforest

A thesis submitted to the School of Public Policy and Administration
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Since the 1990s, both policy and service delivery in Canada are increasingly being developed through collaboration and coordination as the federal government has embraced more networked forms of governance. Following the period of neo-liberalism in the 1980s and 1990s, voluntary organizations in Canada attempted to influence this shift in forms of governance and repositioned themselves in the process. This dissertation examines this process at several scales of action. It begins by placing the shift in governance in context, demonstrating that major reforms launched by the federal government in the mid 1990s opened up opportunities for engagement and generated new forms of interaction between the state and voluntary sector organizations. It then explores how voluntary organizations worked collectively to redefine the nature of their relationship with the state and analyze how their struggles gained expression at three scales of action: macro, involving broad state-sector relationships, meso, in a particular policy domain and micro, in organizational dynamics. As voluntary organizations developed an increasingly collaborative relationship with government officials, the research illustrates how they have tended to adopt more professionalized forms of representation favouring “insider” tactics and move away from traditional forms of advocacy. Data from 62 voluntary organizations in the field of children and family services indicate that while the repertoires of political action for many organizations have expanded to include new evidence-based practices relying on research and analysis, it is the larger well established voluntary organizations which have undergone the most profound transformation of their organizational structure. These changes have affected

their hiring, human resource management, and organizational practices, as well as how they allocate resources across tasks. These transformations have reinforced a broader schism within the sector that has manifested itself at the macro and meso scales, with large well resourced voluntary organizations gaining institutionalized access and legitimacy in the governance process, and small voluntary organizations experiencing a greater level of atomization and political alienation.

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List of Acronyms

ACCC	Association of Canadian Community Colleges
ADM	Assistant Deputy Minister
CAFRP	Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs
CAPC	Community Action Program for Children
CCA	Canadian Conference of the Arts
CCCF	Canadian Child Care Federation
CCES	Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport
CCP	Canadian Centre for Philanthropy
CCRC	Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children
CCSD	Canadian Council on Social Development
CEJY	Children, Enfants, Jeunesse, Youth
CEN	Canadian Environmental Network
CFC	Community Foundations of Canada
CHST	Canada Health and Social Transfer
CICH	Canadian Institute of Child Health
CNA	Canadian Nurses' Association
CPRN	Canadian Policy Research Network
CPS	Canadian Paediatric Society
CRA	Canada Revenue Agency
CSBA	Canadian School Boards Association
CTF	Canadian Teachers' Federation
CURA	Community-University Research Alliance
CVI	Canada Volunteerism Initiative
CVSRD	Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development
ECDA	Early Childhood Development Agreement
ECDI	Early Childhood Development Initiative
FSC	Family Service Canada
HCCC	Health Charities Council of Canada
HRDC	Human Resource Development Canada
HRVS	Human Resources for the Voluntary Sector
NAC	National Action Committee on the Status of Women
NCA	National Children's Alliance
NCB	National Child Benefit
NLI	National Learning Initiative
NLSCY	National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth
NPM	New Public Management
NVO	Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations
NSGVP	National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating
NSNVO	National Survey of Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Organizations
NYIC	National Youth In Care Network
OCBC	Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare
PAGVS	Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector
PCO	Privy Council Office
PIAF	Policy Internships and Fellowships

POS	Political Opportunity Structure
PRI	Policy Research Initiative
PSC	Public Service Commission
RGM	Reference Group of Minister
SDC	Social Development Canada
SDPP	Social Development Partnership Program
SIDPD	Sectoral Involvement in Departmental Policy Development
SSHRC	Social Science and Humanities Research Council
SUFA	Social Union Framework Agreement
VC	Volunteer Canada
VSF	Voluntary Sector Forum
VSI	Voluntary Sector Initiative
VSIS	Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat
VSR	Voluntary Sector Roundtable
VSSG	Voluntary Sector Steering Group
VSTF	Voluntary Sector Task Force

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Moving up the policy agenda

In the early 1990s, there was little talk of the voluntary sector in Canadian policy circles. In fact, one could argue that state-sector relationships in Canada were at an all time low. The federal government was cutting back core funding to voluntary organizations and criticizing their involvement in policy making on one hand, while offloading significant responsibility to them in areas of service provision on the other hand (Rekart 1993, 1997, Jenson and Phillips 1996, Phillips 2001b). Not surprisingly, the voluntary sector was going through a major crisis of identity and confidence. Now, over a decade later, the voluntary sector is mentioned in key speeches at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. In 2000, the federal government committed to building an effective relationship with the sector and dedicated 95 Million dollars over five years through the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) for the specific purpose of strengthening the contribution of the voluntary sector to better serving Canadians (Phillips 2001b).¹ Similarly, many provincial governments have identified voluntary and community action as a government priority.² These days the rhetoric of ‘partnership’, ‘cross sector collaboration’, and ‘relationship building’ reverberates across policy discourses reflecting a new era of governance which places collaboration with the voluntary sector at the centre of policy making and service delivery in many fields. There is even talk of creating

¹ The Voluntary Sector Initiative is a unique undertaking launched by the federal government and the voluntary sector to review multiple facets of their relationship in order to better work together and to make improvements in the lives of Canadians. See for example, <http://www.vsi-isbc.com>.

² See, <http://www.gov.on.ca/mczcr/english/citdiv/voluntar/>;
<http://www.messf.gouv.qc.ca/saca/>.

a voluntary sector policy lens for federal decision-making through which all policies would be assessed on the basis of their impact on the voluntary sector.³

This turnaround represents a significant shift in the way we conceive of the role and place of the voluntary sector in public policy. It is not accidental that this development is taking place now. It is occurring amidst a transition in governance practices and it reflects a number of profound social and political developments in the fields of service provision and policy making which are redefining the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector, and the way they relate to each other (Phillips 2001a, Rhodes 1996, 1997). The rise of the voluntary sector on the political agenda and the increased visibility which is drawn to its activities is central to the shift in governance. In this thesis, I examine what has occurred over this period and examine the growing role of voluntary sector organizations in the process of governance. I am interested in how the process of governance has created new opportunities and new constraints for participation in service delivery and in policy making across scales of action, from the macro to the micro. I want to know how voluntary organizations have adapted, resisted, and sought to influence this process and how it has affected their practice, their repertoires of political action, the routes to political representation they embark upon and the overall structure of representation. I also ask what this means for the patterns of interaction that are emerging. I demonstrate that not only has the shift in governance affected the relationship between the state and society, but it has also redefined power relations and created a particular legacy for the voluntary sector that has radically altered its nature. I argue that the process of governance has posed a particular

³ See <http://www.vsi-isbc.ca>.

challenge to the way we need to think about scales of action. While opportunities and spaces for engagement have proliferated in the past decade, issues regarding how to best take advantage of these and work from within are far from resolved. In doing so, I acknowledge the fuzzy boundaries of the very term ‘voluntary sector’ and treat it as socially constructed and as a means of expressing a particular form of social relations.

The voluntary sector in Canada is distinct by its breath and its scope. It encompasses a variety of actors, with distinct interests and identities, such as charities, non-profit organizations, community organizations, advocacy organizations, recreational associations, professional organizations, and research oriented organizations, all vying to be represented and heard. Moreover, the sector by nature is sectarian, organized by field of activities such as arts and culture, sports and leisure, health, social services, family and children services, education, faith based; each with its own internal dynamic. While organizations may cross over numerous policy and program areas, these too often operate as silos (Phillips 2001a). Naturally, divergences exist and voluntary sector organizations are not united. Yet, there have been over the past decade efforts within the voluntary sector to organize debate and to ensure representation before the federal government. As a result, actors with varied influence contribute to the process of governance and to the political discourse, and in the process play a key role in the institutionalization of norms and practices. This very process has an impact on thought and practice across the sector by empowering certain actors over others, by shaping social relations, and it can be examined by treating the political discourse around the voluntary sector as a terrain of struggle.

1.2 The politics of governance

Over the past decade, discourse concerning how to manage the public sector has undergone a profound transformation. In the 1980s, neoliberalism provided the basis for strategies to reduce the size of the state and has purported the virtues of a smaller, leaner, public sector more responsive to citizen customers. New Public Management (NPM) theories, for their part, argued that the public sector should learn to do more with less, which led to a deep criticism of state intervention, the promotion of marketization and the introduction of new managerial methods (Osborne and Gaebler 1992, Savoie 1994, Pollitt 1991, Dunleavy and Hood 1994). These ideas profoundly affected the public sector's capacity to develop and implement policies and were eventually abandoned (Larner 1997). As Larner notes, "Many politicians and policy makers now distance themselves from the 'more market' and individualised approaches of the earlier phases of neoliberalism of the 1980s and 1990s, and advocate local partnerships as initiatives that embrace pluralism and inclusivity" (Larner 2002, p. 5).

Until the 1990s, hierarchical command and control modes of governance guided the relationship; now, more networked structures of governing are redefining the contours of authority, accountability, representation and decision-making. This new paradigm places horizontal relationships at the centre of governing as an integrated way of managing policy and emphasizes the fact that governing is no longer done exclusively or primarily by governments (Newman 2001, Rhodes 2000). The restructuring and rescaling of the state apparatus is accompanied by the growing involvement of non-state actors in the process of governance interacting in complex ways (Stoker 2000). More than ever before, voluntary organizations are implicated in the process of governance and the

voluntary sector has emerged as an important actor and *partner* in both policy making and service delivery, at least in theories of ‘new governance’ (Phillips 2001a, Balloch and Taylor 2001). Although in practice, experiments in partnership have often been less substantiated than theory suggests (Phillips 2001a), relationships with voluntary sector organizations have now become an important part of the public sector strategy and discourse (Rhodes 2000, Stoker 1998, Pierre and Peters 2000).

Increasingly, social scientists across a variety of disciplines are being drawn to the subject of ‘new governance’, to the emergence of new governance arrangements that rely more on horizontal relationships, and on a wider range of instrument choice for service delivery (Paquet 2000, Rhodes 2000, Peters 2001, Salamon 2001). While there is a burgeoning literature that focuses on ‘new governance’, most of this work has focused on the instruments for and implications of governance on the delivery of services. I argue in this dissertation that something more fundamental is at play in these new governance arrangements. I argue that it has also had an impact on representation and encouraged a broad rethinking of the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector. The governance processes entail the coordination and cooperation of diverse actors across sectoral boundaries that rely on new and transformed organizational and institutional practices. The understanding of such practices and their influence upon the capacity of voluntary sector organizations to participate effectively and to make a difference is of critical importance for policy makers, practitioners and researchers.

The process of governance entails a form of “institutionalisation of coordinating mechanisms between state and civil society and the nature of state intervention in civil society to promote its objectives” (Pierre 1998, p. 3). This is manifest in sustained efforts

to formalize this new partnership through the development of mechanisms such as a compact, accord or other agreements between the state and the voluntary sector (Larner 2002, Phillips 2002, White 2001). These processes at play at a macro scale signal a broad purposeful redesign of the relationship and they influence actors' behaviour. They are embedded in social, political and economic processes at different scales (Newman 2001). While on one hand, these processes shape institutional routines, norms, and expectations, structure political struggle by defining who is included/excluded within the political arena and delimit the realm of the possible; on the other, they have opened up opportunities for organizations to affect their relationship with state. The process of governance, therefore, has become the very terrain on which struggle is waged. In this way, governance is both a setting for social action, and the product of social action. Organizations can serve to reproduce existing governance processes and power relations, or they can act as agents who transform the process of governance, creating new opportunities for action and redesigning power relations. This has had important implications for voluntary sector organizations which are not yet well understood.

Although the growing involvement of voluntary organizations in the policy process has fostered great interest in the academic community, empirical perspectives are still few. Researchers have collected a large amount of data on the size and scope of the voluntary sector in Canada, through initiatives such as the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP), the National Survey of Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Organizations (NSNVO), and the Canadian Policy Research Network (CPRN) Research Series on Human Resources in the Non-Profit Sector; yet, we possess

little information on the dynamic nature of transformations occurring within the sector and how its relationship to the state is being redesigned.

The thesis makes a contribution by extending the governance theory to provide an account of the challenges and opportunities for voluntary organizations generated by the politics of governance -- an area of research that has been unexplored. Here, the focus of analysis is the change in the voluntary sector and in voluntary sector organizations, not the changing modes of governance. I also take an innovative approach to understanding governance. Rather than treating governance as an objective variable, I treat governance as a process that is constructed and given meaning by the actors themselves. This approach enhances our understanding of the political dimensions to governance and more broadly, to the politics of representation. This study therefore contributes to the literature on the voluntary sector, which remains under theorized. It also improves our knowledge of voluntary organizations, as they share their experience, practices and tools.

1.3 Bringing in the voluntary sector perspective

The approach that I adopt views the process of governance as contingent and subject to political struggles (Bevir and Rhodes 2000, 2003). It is based on the premise that the process of governance is not confined to state actions; but rather, needs to be understood as the result of ongoing struggle between a variety of actors who endeavour to affect change and shape the process in a way that best suits their needs. It is influenced not only by state policies and the discourse they create, but also by the nature of the sector and the networks of organizations which are involved. Although institutional

changes in the area of service provision, policy making and relationship building may have influenced the direction and orientation of voluntary sector activities to a certain extent, it is important to acknowledge that the presence of voluntary sector organizations on the political scene has also affected the nature of the politics of governance and their overall relationship with the state. In fact, the new found policy focus on the voluntary sector is itself in part a product of sectoral mobilization which has pushed for new spaces for involvement. Therefore, to understand the process of governance, I believe that we need to shift our attention to the role of political agency and strategies (Dobrowolsky and Saint-Martin 2002).

The research questions that I am interested in present an integrated approach and dynamic approach to the study of governance which tries to make the link between action, identities, strategies and the broader institutional context. It acknowledges that political strategies are partially crafted by actors, but are also constrained and shaped in significant ways by institutions, structures and context. The concept of political opportunity structure, drawn from the social movement literature, provides a useful means to redirect theoretical emphasis on the interaction between political agency and institutions in the governance framework. If the on-going process of governance creates new opportunities and constraints for voluntary sector engagement in policy making and service delivery, then the concept of political opportunity structure can provide a powerful analytical tool to examine this process. By capturing the wider socio-institutional context within which action takes place, the concept of political opportunity structure draws attention to transformations in the institutional context such as the reorganisation of institutional space (affecting/defining access, inclusion/exclusion); the

realignment of alliances; the reinterpretation of frames, including what issues are to be considered and what forms of political action are deemed credible; and to the reallocation of resources (both material and symbolic). While the state has a hand in structuring the context of political opportunities, so do the organizations who try to shape this context and create opportunities for themselves. This double dynamic is central to our understanding of the process of governance and can be captured by focusing on interpretive frames (Melucci 1989, 1992, 1995, 1996, Goffman 1974, Snow et al. 1986, Donati 1992).

Political opportunities only become the basis of action when they are recognized as such. In an important sense, they exist only to the extent that they are conceived and interpreted as such by the actors. As Brockett notes, “mobilization and actions are mediated by perception” (Brockett 1991, p. 255). Hence, perception and interpretation play an important role in the interaction between structure and agency. How organizations see themselves, their roles, and contributions within the governance framework, what they perceive to be an opportunity or a challenge/constraint, all have an impact on the overall dynamic between state and society. The advantage of the concept of political opportunity structures is that it captures the multiple dimensions of representation, even though it blurs the lines of causality, by recognizing that collective action is given meaning within an institutional and structural context which can, in turn, influence the outcomes.

I believe that such a focus on the interaction of voluntary organizations and existing institutions in the politics of governance can provide potentially richer and better explanations of the dynamics of governance. One important way it does so is by showing

how voluntary organizations can shape the process of governance and how they can in turn be shaped by it. The interaction between state and the voluntary sector is not unidirectional. That is, organizations are not simply reacting to the dynamics of governance; they are also trying to shape the process and change their relationship with state and society. Voluntary organizations need to be regarded as potential agents of change, capable of making deliberate choices in the face of opportunities and constraints. Whether intentional, aimed at specific goals, or unintentional, their actions can have a real influence in the shape and direction of governance. Hence, *politics matter*.

Moreover, this approach allows us to link actions across scales and to see the relationship between political struggles as they unfold. Spatial insights into the workings of voluntary sector networks have received little attention in established voluntary sector literature so far. Increasingly, our understanding of state and public policy needs to be nuanced by considerations of scale (Brenner 1999, Jessop 1999, Mahon 2003, 2004). The scaling literature brings attention to the fact that local and provincial level dynamics are rooted and embedded within broader national dynamics; and that each constitutes ‘scales of action’ (Mahon 2004). In the framework for my analysis, I recognize that scale matters in the experiences of organizations and ultimately, for how they understand the process of governance. Acknowledging that the governance process occurs across multiple scales is important because actors make strategic decisions not only in light of broad national policy issues and debates, but also in relation to processes at other scales, such as those within their policy field or within their organization. These interwoven dimensions of action need to be coupled into a comprehensive framework.

At the broadest scale, the rescaling of the process of governance has compelled organizations to think as a 'sector' and to think across policy fields, which until the mid 1990s had not been done (Phillips 2001b).⁴ Such a change in the scale and scope of sectoral issues is significant. It provides a new space for the collective definition of problems arising from the process of governance and solutions. It also joins actors across scales in a common discourse. It influences the goal towards which action is oriented and in the process, it can shape the repertoire of political actions, strategies, and skills of organizations. The construction of a voluntary 'sector' identity as part of a new relationship is a very important part of the governance process at the macro scale for it enables voluntary organizations across scales to situate themselves in the relationship. A focus on these dynamics therefore can reveal perspectives which may have been marginalised by approaches assuming a cohesive sectoral identity.

This very process of identity building is influenced by dynamics occurring at other scales. Organizations are rooted within a particular policy field, within a particular policy community, and possess very distinct organizational forms – all of which affect their strategizing because it means that they may have access to very different resources and repertoires of political action, and in turn, they may use these resources and repertoires very differently. Finally, the actions of organizations are also rooted in organizational structures from which they draw different repertoires of political action, strategies and tactics. The ability of organizations to shape their relationship with the state and affect policy is mediated by a variety of complex, interactive and contextually specific organizational and institutional factors. These dynamics have implications for

⁴ By the mid 1990s, a number of voluntary sector leaders in Canada had come together in order to strategize in the face of these changing circumstances.

representation and power differentials that exist within the sector, and for the nature of the overall mobilization that emerges in the 'name of the sector'.

This approach offers a valuable lens from which to explore the evolving relationship between the state and the voluntary sector which is multi-faceted. The tensions and conflicts that the demands of governance place on voluntary organizations are not isolated from one another. They may be taken as discrete events but in fact have a cumulative effect on future capabilities of the voluntary sector. Precisely because the process of governance involves a redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of actors at a variety of scales; it requires that we join macro and micro analysis of the politics involved in order to capture the complex and subtle nature of political struggle.

There are other variables that also come into play in the analysis that need to be acknowledged. Scales of action may vary across policy fields and across space (from one province to the other, from one city to the other). In this way the process of governance is a scalar phenomenon, both domain specific and context specific. In order to deal effectively with all three scales of action, I selected one policy field -- that of children and family services -- as the focal level of analysis. In so doing, I was able to examine how scales of actions were embedded in processes occurring at the macro and at the micro scales. Nevertheless, I recognize that generalizing across fields may be difficult.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The results of my research are presented in eight chapters. The second chapter provides the methodology for the study whereas the third chapter focuses on the theoretical and analytical framework. By bringing in social movement literature, it builds

on existing governance frameworks and articulates some of the challenges and opportunities placed upon voluntary sector organizations by the process of governance. I argue that the ways in which voluntary organizations adapt and respond to these challenges are influenced by their perception of existing political opportunity structures at various scales. In the chapters that follow, I turn to how these dynamics play out in the Canadian context by focusing on a subset of organizations within a specific policy field. The fourth chapter provides contextual information on the restructuring of the welfare state and on the trend leading towards new modes of governance in Canada. It examines the emergence of a discourse of “partnerships” over the last decade and that became a basis for initiatives led by various levels of government to strengthen their relationship with the voluntary sector. I review the specifics of the governance model in Canada by examining the history of the relationship and the capacity of the sector. An appreciation of the power of the voluntary sector, its organizational structure and political environment are essential to understanding its role in the process of governance. The chapter then concludes by outlining some specific hypotheses regarding governance dynamics in the Canadian context that will be explored in the thesis.

Each of the following chapters, I organized around three scales: macro, meso and micro. Chapter Five examines how the role of the voluntary sector and of voluntary organizations is shifting, and as a result, how the terms of access to the state are being redefined. I also examine how voluntary organizations draw from repertoires of political action and alliances across multiple scales in order to affect the process of governance. While the story of the restructuring of the welfare state and the downloading of social services has been told before, no previous account documents the multi-level dynamics

occurring within the voluntary sector. Chapter Five also details the transformations at the macro scale, in terms of broad state-sector relationships. It provides an overview of national initiatives that set a frame for collaboration across policy fields. Chapter Six contains details of how these broad macro dynamics translate at the meso scale, within a particular policy field. It examines how mobilization within this policy field is linked to struggles occurring simultaneously at other scales. Chapter Seven then focuses on organizational dynamics at the micro scale and how these relate back to dynamics at the macro and meso scales. I provide four detailed case studies of some of the transformations occurring at the organizational scale. The chapter also highlights differences between organizational dynamics in the Ontario and Quebec cases based on contrasts in the political opportunity structures, particularly the cultural components.

In the final chapter, I then return to a consideration of the larger implications as voluntary organizations are brought into the process of governance. I also examine the contribution of this research to the study of governance, the voluntary sector, and public policy more generally.

Chapter 2 Methodology

2.1 Focus and Methodology

The overall goal of this project is to capture organizational and sectoral adaptations and resistances to governance processes in order to better understand the strategic behaviour of actors; that is, how these actions are embedded in and help shape the very process of governance. In order to understand the complex interactions between state and the voluntary sector, I examined the governance process at different scales: from the macro (as it related to the broad state-sector relationship), to the meso (within a particular policy community) and the micro (specifically focusing on organizational dynamics). These various scales are pivotal spaces for action. Figure 2.1 provides an overview of this basic conceptualization of the various scales of action.

Figure 2.1 Conceptualizing scales of action

At each level of analysis, I examined the process of governance through a different lens that of the ‘sector’, the policy community⁵, and the organization. These are various identities around which constellations of organizations articulate common interests and make claims. Hence, they represent different scales on which actions can occur. Because of the overlapping nature of these identities, the dynamics occurring at each of these scales interact to shape the claims and practices of different organizations, for organizations are both members of a policy community and of the broad sector. The process of governance is conceived of as an opportunity structure that constrains and enables the engagement of voluntary organizations, policy communities and networks, and the ‘sector’ in policy making and service delivery. At the macro scale, for example, the broad agreements between the federal government and the voluntary sector, generated through the work of the VSI, play an important role not only in directly shaping federal government – voluntary sector relationships, but also in influencing the departmental policies and governance in ways that cascade down to affect policy communities and voluntary organizations in their daily practice. However, these broad norms are mediated differently within particular policy communities and policy fields, with different state-sector traditions, and we need to account for these differences.

To do so requires an actor-oriented approach. Strategic choice is constructed out of the organization’s perception of the opportunities available and of the possible routes of action it identifies. Employing a qualitative approach allowed for an empirical analysis of the way that organizations involved in a relational dynamic with the state experienced

⁵ I use the term policy community loosely to mean the interaction and networking of organizations around a particular agenda or issue. These are neither permanent nor stable, and may include sporadic collaboration between organizations for which the success of an issue is intertwined with another.

that relationship. This design focuses on the responses of voluntary organizations and determines the perspectives of the subjects on their actions and strategies in this new context. Starting from the perspective of the organizations, it sheds light on their perceptions of the politics of governance, their sense of involvement and influence in public policy development, and an examination of the tensions it creates at the organizational scale. The importance of such an approach to understanding the organizations cannot be overstated. The focus and interview methodology for each of the three scales is discussed below.

2.2 Macro Scale

In order to gain a broad overview of state – sector relationships, it was impossible of course to study the entire sector, because of its scope and size. It is composed of over 160 000 organizations that differ in their mission, organizational structure, size and resources (Day and Devlin 1997, NSNVO 2004, Hirshhorn 1997, Reed and Howe 2000). It is estimated that close to 78 000 of these are charities registered under the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)⁶, while the remainder are incorporated nonprofits (Quarter 1992). This count, however, excludes organizations that are not formally incorporated or registered with provincial, territorial or federal governments because they are hard to identify (McMullen and Schellenger 2002). Hall and Banting estimate the total number of voluntary sector organizations, including informal and unincorporated groups, to be at 870 000 (Hall and Banting 2000). The diversity in the sector is further complicated by the fact that size ranges from small community-based organizations to large, national

⁶ Voluntary Sector Task Force, Privy Council Office, <http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/>

umbrella organizations. The National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations notes that the organizations with revenues in excess of ten million dollars – which constitute only 1 percent of the total number of voluntary organizations – receive 59 percent of total revenues and employ 46 percent of the staff (NSNVO 2004). This implies that there are significant differences in organizational structure, staff and resources between large and small organizations.

Given this diversity in the sector, I did not want to treat the “voluntary sector” as a unified actor, but rather my goal was to explain the processes that gave a collective character to the sector. It is important to acknowledge that these collective processes may be perceived differently by the organizations involved because collective identity is constructed through interaction and does not necessarily take the shape of a unified, coherent framework. As Melucci argued, “Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups) and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which action takes place” (Melucci 1995, p. 44). My goal, therefore, was to reveal how claims and identities were produced as an expression of multiple interests, frames, relations and processes across scales. I opted to study a cross section of organizations, composed mainly of national organizations that were centrally involved in building collective identity and public policy for the sector as a whole and in strategizing efforts at a macro scale. To identify these actors, I proceeded in two steps.

The first was to collect background information and write out a history of state-sector relationships at the macro scale from 1990-2004. In order to set out the context, I started out by analyzing official documents, which included speeches, official policy

statements and websites. In addition, nine open-ended interviews were conducted with senior civil servants involved in the federal government's relationship building initiatives; and three with academics involved in this field of research. The objective was first to identify the key policy developments with respect to the voluntary sector, and second to identify the key actors involved in collective action efforts in the name of the sector. I then examined archival material from the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR) (a loose association that came together in 1995 to provide cross-sector leadership) and the Voluntary Sector Steering Group (a body that included the VSR members and was responsible for leading the voluntary sector's participation in the VSI). I was able to analyze the minutes of meetings that took place from 1995 to 2003. I also had access to commissioned reports, newsletters and correspondence between members of these bodies, and I examined the VSR website which contained significant background information and a chronology of events.

Through this material, I was able to examine the internal dynamics of these bodies, identify some of the internal debates around strategies and tactics that took place. My second objective was to identify the key milestones in the relationship between the federal government and the sector leading up to the VSI as identified by the sector representatives. These documents contained assessments on progress, success and on the next steps from the perspective of the sector. I was therefore able to develop a time-line describing key events in the evolution of the state-sector relations, the key actors and the key decisions. This first phase of research served to set the context of the overall project and provide a road map which allowed me to situate the key events in the process of relationship building.

Based on the initial findings from the documentation review, I identified key informants involved in the relationship building initiatives between the federal government and the voluntary sector, such as the Voluntary Sector Roundtable, the Voluntary Sector Steering Group, and the Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF) (the organization that took over from both in providing follow-up to the VSI). I conducted four interviews with staff members involved in providing support to voluntary organizations involved in the VSI process. These four individuals had knowledge of the events leading up to the VSI and had been involved in the voluntary sector in some capacity prior to working for the VSI. This information was also used to identify key actors and issues to understand the macro dynamics. I then conducted 14 in-depth interviews with executive directors of national voluntary organizations. Because provincial organizations were also involved in these macro dynamics, I also conducted 5 in-depth interviews with executive directors of provincial voluntary organizations. The criterion of selection for all of these informants was their involvement in the development of state-sector relationships at a macro scale. Table 2.1 summarizes the characteristics of the organizations I interviewed at this stage of the research.

The goal of these interviews was to gain a qualitative understanding of the collective strategizing efforts of voluntary sector organizations that led to the VSI, focusing on discourses, frames, claims and identities. Hence the interviews were used to reconstruct the interpretative frames of organizations involved in the process of strategizing. The interview protocol was designed using open-ended questions in order to enable the interviewee to reconstruct events and to identify those that were the most

Table 2.1 Characteristics of voluntary organizations engaged at a macro scale

Name of organization	Description
Canadian Centre for Ethics and Sport	National organization working in the field of sports and leisure representing athletes, coaches and sports organizations across Canada.
Canadian Centre for Philanthropy	A membership-based national organization representing approximately 700 charitable organizations, foundations and corporations across Canada.
Canadian Conference of the Arts	National organization working in the field of arts and culture representing more than 250,000 organizations and individuals across Canada.
Canadian Council for International Co-operation	National umbrella organization representing 100 voluntary organizations across Canada in the field of international sustainable human development.
Canadian Council on Social Development	National organization working in the field of social justice representing organizations and individuals across Canada.
Central Interior Native Health Society	Regional organization working in the field of health promotion and public education.
Coalition of National Voluntary organizations	National organization representing over 100 members active in a variety of fields ranging from health and social services to the environment, justice, education and international development.
Family Services Canada	National organization representing the concerns of families and family-serving agencies across Canada.
Fédération des centres d'action bénévole du Québec	Provincial federation of 105 volunteer centres in Quebec.
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada	National federation of 10 independent provincial Heart and Stroke Foundations.
John Howard Society of Canada	National umbrella organization representing 55 provincial and local John Howard Societies in communities across Canada in the field of justice.
Le bureau international des droits des enfants	International non governmental organization based in Montreal which promotes and protects the rights of the Child as laid out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
National Children's Alliance	National coalition of over 35 national organizations with an interest in the well-being of children and youth.
Sainte-Justine Hospital Foundation	Provincial foundation that raises funds to support the work of the Ste-Justine university hospital.
United Way of Canada	National umbrella organization representing 125 member United Ways - Centraides across Canada.
Volunteer Calgary	Local centre for volunteerism representing nonprofit organizations with volunteer programs in Calgary and individuals.
YMCA Canada	National federation of 61 YMCAs and YMCA-YWCAs across Canada.
YWCA of Vancouver	Regional a registered charity providing services in 30 locations across Greater Vancouver.
Youth Council of New Brunswick	Provincial organization representing youth in New Brunswick.

significant from their perspective.⁷ It started by asking the interviewee to trace the personal history of their involvement in collective action efforts at the macro scale and to identify what they perceived to be the key turning points in the relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector. The interviewee was asked to reflect upon and give meaning to their strategizing efforts, to interpret events and experiences, and to identify opportunities and challenges. The questions were intended to capture their organizational perspective and their own understanding of the collective efforts.

2.3 Meso Scale

In order to examine how governance has affected relationships on a variety of scales and to draw attention to the shifting interaction between the state and the voluntary sector in areas of policy making and the provision of services, I chose to examine a diagonal slice of the relationship and how these dynamics translated within a particular policy area. The importance of maintaining a comprehensive view of general dynamics, overall policy developments and shifts that are occurring in the relationship between the government and the voluntary sector for the purpose of this thesis, reinforces the need for a particular focus on sub-sectors. Focusing on dynamics within a specific policy field provides a good opportunity to study the interaction between the state and voluntary sector organizations in the provision of social policy, and to examine the shifting role of scales in the process of governance.

The focus at the policy level is on the field of children and family services for a number of reasons. First, the field of children and family services is one of the policy

⁷ See Appendix A for interview protocol.

fields in Canada that witnessed some of the most significant policy change over the past decade with the implementation of the National Child Benefit (NCB), the development of the National Children's Agenda, and the Early Childhood Development Agreement (ECDA). It constitutes an important terrain of policy debates and discussion as children related issues have taken on a greater significance across policy sectors over the past decade (Dobrowolsky and Jenson 2004, McKeen 2004, Saint-Martin 2000). In addition, Mahon and Jenson suggest that, "issues around services for children have become key drivers in the process of rethinking relationship between the federal and provincial orders of government in Canada, as well as a litmus test for the proposition that 'place matters'." (Mahon and Jenson 2002, p. 13). Finally, voluntary organizations in this field have been actively redefining themselves as political actors and engaging with governments to shape policy. This is not surprising given the major developments in the field of children and family services.

The scaling literature reminds us that place matters – that relationships and outcomes play out differently in different locales. Therefore, in the construction of the research design I opted to compare the dynamics in the field of children and family services in Ottawa and Montreal, two large cities in the two largest provinces. I chose these two cases because they provide interesting points of comparison. For one, both the provincial government in Ontario and in Quebec had launched initiatives to discuss their relationship with the voluntary sector in the mid 1990s. In 1995, the Quebec government made a promise to implement a policy of recognition and support for voluntary organizations; whereas in 1996, the provincial government of Ontario established the Advisory Board on the Voluntary Sector to recommend how the voluntary sector's role in

public policy can be strengthened. Secondly, while comparable, these provinces present a very different density of networking among organizations. Voluntary organizations in Quebec share strong ties within and across policy communities and have a tradition of concerted action. In Ontario, much like its other provincial counterparts with the exception of Quebec, organizations operate in relatively isolated silos of activity, with very few contacts within and across policy communities. Taking into account the differences which exist between the Ontario and Quebec provinces would, I felt, provide a very interesting dimension to the study of agency and the process of governance.

As a first step, I conducted an analysis of official government documents, reports and websites in the field of children and family services in order to examine the key policy developments in the field and to identify moments of involvement of voluntary sector organizations in policy debates and discussion. I conducted a parallel examination of documents, reports, newsletters and websites of national organizations working in the field of children and family services. I started out by examining two broad web portals which had links to organizations in this field and explored all of the links.⁸

Once I had a broad overview of the key events, and some background on the developments in the field of children and family services, I started out by identifying some of the main umbrella organizations and coalitions in the field such as Campaign 2000 and the National Children's Alliance (NCA). Given that part of the interest of the research lied in capturing changes within the policy community and network, such as struggles over who is included or excluded and how networks and alliances are being formed, I let the organizations map out the important relationships within the sub-sector

⁸ <http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.com/> and <http://www.cfc-efc.ca>

and to identify groups. I paid particular attention to identifying organizations that were involved in macro scale processes and that had ties within this policy field. The narratives of these organizations were central for revealing links between processes occurring across scales of action. Overall, I conducted 19 in-depth interviews with the executive directors of national organizations specifically involved in collective action on behalf of a collectivity of organizations in the field of children and family services. Table 2.2 provides a description of the national organizations that I interviewed at this stage of the research.

Because struggles at the meso scale translate across spatial scales, it was necessary to delve into provincial and local networks. In order to capture how these dynamics were embedded across scales, I identified these actors by noting referrals from the executive directors of national and provincial umbrella organizations. On this basis, I conducted interviews with the executive directors of seven provincial organizations in the field of children and family services working in Ontario and ten in Quebec; and 13 interviews with executive directors of local organizations in Ottawa, and 13 in Montreal. Table 2.3 provides a summary of the characteristics of the provincial voluntary organizations interviewed whereas Table 2.4 and Table 2.5 provide a summary of the local voluntary organizations in each city.

Following the methodology I used to examine the dynamics at a macro scale, I used open-ended interviews to understand their experiences in collective action around key themes related to strategizing, repertoires of political action, and framing.⁹ Taken together, a total of 62 voluntary organizations were interviewed in order to gather data on

⁹ See Appendices 3 for interview protocol used at this stage.

dynamics at a meso scale. These same organizations were also the object of the investigation at a micro scale.

Table 2.2 Characteristics of national organizations in the field of children and family services

Name of organization	Description
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada	National umbrella organization representing 170 Big Brother/Big Sisters Agencies across Canada.
Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada	National umbrella organization representing 100 Boys and Girls Clubs across Canada.
Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs	National association of organizations and individuals dedicated to strengthening families through community-based, prevention-oriented programs and services.
Canadian Centre for Philanthropy	A membership-based national organization representing approximately 700 charitable organizations, foundations and corporations across Canada.
Canadian Child Care Federation	National membership-based organization representing over 20 provincial and territorial affiliate organizations and individuals committed to the excellence in early learning and child care.
Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children	National umbrella organization representing more than 45 non-governmental organizations with domestic and international perspectives on children's issues.
Canadian Council on Social Development	National organization working in the field of social justice representing organizations and individuals across Canada.
Canadian Institute of Child Health	National charitable organization with a membership of over 550 individuals and organizations across Canada.
Canadian School Boards Association	National umbrella organization of 10 provincial associations of school boards and trustees.
Canadian Teachers' Federation	National umbrella organization of 14 provincial and territorial Teachers' organizations.
Campaign 2000	National coalition of over 85 national, provincial, regional and local organizations across Canada that work on children and family issues.
Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada	National membership-based organization representing individuals, families, child care programs, and regional organizations across Canada.
Child Welfare League of Canada	National membership-based association of professionals, individuals and organizations devoted to the well-being and protection of children and youth.
Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations	National organization representing over 100 members active in a variety of fields ranging from health and social services to the environment, justice, education and international development.
Family Services Canada	National organization representing the concerns of families and family-serving agencies across Canada.
National Anti Poverty Organization	National advocacy organization representing low income Canadians and others concerned about issues affecting poor people.
National Children's Alliance	National coalition of over 35 national organizations with an interest in the well-being of children and youth.
National youth in care Network	National nonprofit, charitable organization, run by and for youth in care.
SOS Children's Villages	National registered charity and child welfare organization.

* The shaded cells represent the national voluntary organizations who were also involved in dynamics on a macro scale.

Table 2.3 Characteristics of provincial organizations in the field of children and family services

Name of Organization	Description
Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario	Provincial chapter of Boys and Girls Clubs Canada mandated to serve and support member clubs and communities interested in developing new Clubs in Ontario
4-H Ontario	Provincial chapter of Canadian 4-H, it is a membership based organizations focusing on youth development.
Campaign 2000 Ontario	Provincial network of voluntary organizations that work on children and family issues.
Centre québécois de ressources à la petite enfance	Membership based organization of parents, care providers and resources centres interested in early childhood development.
Clubs des petits déjeuners du Québec	Foundation dedicated to offering breakfast to kids in school.
Comité aviseur de l'action communautaire autonome	Coalition of 20 sectoral and multisectoral autonomous community organization networks linking over 4000 autonomous community organizations in Quebec.
Concert-action	Provincial network of organizations working in a variety of fields such as health, education, anti-poverty and children's issues.
Confédération des organismes familiaux du Québec	Federation of organizations working on issues relating to families in Quebec.
Ontario Association of Family Resource programmes	Provincial association of Family Resource Programs in Ontario.
Ontario Association of children's aid society	Provincial association of children's aid society in Ontario.
Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care	Coalition of cross sectoral organizations who serve community based child care programs, local child care coalitions and coordinate the activities of eight Child Care Action Networks (CCANs) across Ontario.
Family Service Ontario	Provincial network of member agencies providing services to families across Ontario.
Fédération des associations de familles monoparentales et recomposées du Québec	Federation of regional associations representing lone and recomposed families.
Fédération des centres d'action bénévole du Québec	Federation of 114 volunteer centres across Québec.
Fédération des centres de la petite enfance du Québec	Federation of associations and coalitions of early childhood centres that offer childcare programs in Quebec.
Fédération des unions de familles	Federation of family community organizations across Quebec.
Regroupement inter-organismes pour une politique familiale au Québec	Coalition of community organisations from a variety of fields of activity interested in family policy in Quebec.

Table 2.4 Characteristics of local organizations in the field of children and family services from the Ottawa region

Name of Organization	Description
Andrew Fleck Child Care Services	A non-profit, charitable multi-service organization serving families in the Ottawa-Carleton Region.
Better Beginnings, Better Futures South-East Ottawa Community Services	A primary prevention longitudinal research project which provides multiple components of service built on existing services and resources for children 0-4 in the neighbourhoods of Albion, Heatherington, Fairlea and Ledbury.
Canadian Mothercraft of Ottawa-Carleton	Early childhood development centre which offers programs for families and providers in the community.
Catholic Family Service of Ottawa-Carleton	A non-profit charitable agency offering a range of social services in English and French to all residents of Ottawa.
Children's Aid Society of Ottawa	A non-profit organization committed to keeping children and youth safe and secure, both within their families and the community in which they live.
Coopérative Carrousel pour parents et enfants francophones Inc.	Community organization offering French services to families and children in the community.
Family Service Association	A membership association committed to improving the lives of families in the community.
Family Services of Ottawa-Carleton	A registered charitable social service agency dedicated to helping individuals and families at risk through counselling, education and advocacy.
Jewish family Services of Ottawa Carleton	A non-profit social service agency dedicated to strengthening family life in the community
La magie des lettres	A non-profit organization dedicated to literacy.
Parent Resource Centre of Ottawa	A non-profit organization providing information, resources and services to parents, caregivers and professionals who work with families.
The Community Toy Library Playgroup	A non-profit co-operative playgroup for infants and toddlers
YM/YWCA of Ottawa-Carleton	A charitable, voluntary, community-based Association dedicated to improving the quality of life for children, youth, adults and families through programs that build Spirit, Mind and Body.

Table 2.5 Characteristics of local organizations in the field of children and family services from the Montreal region

Name of Organization	Description
AMCAL Family Services	A non-profit, community-based program which is dedicated to promoting and restoring healthy family life.
Carrefour des petits soleils	A community organization set up by parents.
Carrefour des Pitchou	A non-profit organization for family with children between 0-5 years old.
Interaction famille Hochelaga-Maisonnette	A community organizations which offers services to member families in the community
Jewish Family Services Montreal	Charitable organization which offers a variety of services designed to educate, supports, and help families in the Jewish community and the community at large.
Joujouthèque Hochelaga-Maisonnette	Organization that lends toys and educative games to families living in the Hochelaga-Maisonnette area.
La Maison A Petits Pas	Community organization that seeks to create a space of solidarity, fraternity for families while provided entertaining activities for children.
Maison de la famille Pierre Bienvenu Noailles	Community organization that offers services to families in order to promote harmonious family life and to prevent the break-up of families.
Maison des familles de Mercier-Est	Community organization created in order to meet the needs of families in the Mercier-Est community.
Maisonnette des Parents inc.	A community organization set up by parents out of the desire to create opportunities for neighbouring and for kids to play.
Le salon familial	Community centre offering games and respite care for families.
Regroupement des organismes communautaires famille de Montréal	Coalition of community organisations working on issues relating to families in the region of Montreal.
YMCA of Greater Montreal	A charitable organization offering a variety of services to individuals and families in the Greater Montreal area.

2.4 Micro Scale

The final step of the analysis was to focus on how these macro and meso dynamics played out at the organizational scale in the field of children and family services, in order to deepen my understanding of the patterns of association and networks and how they are linked to organizational practices. Here, the unit of analysis was the organization. My research focused on organizational structure, the availability of financial and human resources, and how these variables shaped and were shaped by the process of organizational adaptation and resistance to governance occurring at multiple scales simultaneously. By focusing on these internal dynamics, I wanted to capture how forms of collective action, across scales, are embedded in organizational practices and how these dimensions affect each other. At different scales of action, different repertoires of action are available to choose from. Within any given policy fields, certain practices and forms of behaviour are regarded as legitimate, and even expected of organizations; while other are discredited. One of the characteristics of the governance process is that it has fostered a rescaling of voluntary sector activities, allowing organizations to draw from multiple channels and repertoires of political action across scales. I wanted to capture how these dynamics translated at the organizational scale and affected practice.

In order to understand these dynamics, I included a series of questions in the interview protocol that specifically probed into organizational characteristics and how these were being transformed over the period of study. I kept the questions open in order to allow the interviewee to articulate how these organizational factors had affected their choices and experiences. I was able to question all the 62 organizations which had

constituted my sample in the field of children and family services and gather data on their organizational practices. Coupling this qualitative data with a review of the documents on their websites, I explored the extent of organizational change around four axes: sources of funding; program goals, objectives and client base; staffing and volunteers; as well as emerging patterns of inter-organizational relationships.

Once I had compiled all of this data, I selected four case studies of voluntary organizations drawn from the initial sample. Two of these were from Ontario and two were from Quebec. Because of the diversity of organizations and of organizational practices, it was not possible to draw any broad generalizations or trends of transformations that were occurring within organizations. Rather, these case studies were meant to capture how the scales of action are embedded into one another, and to understand how organizations through scales of action come to be exposed to multiple, overlapping repertoires of political action which jointly influence their internal dynamics and organizational practices. In each of these cases, I conducted an in-depth analysis of their archival material, essentially composed of newsletters and minutes from board meetings and the annual general meetings, spanning the decade. The objective of this longitudinal study was to examine the extent of change in organizational practices, and the key turning points in their evolution.

In order to supplement the information obtained through the archival material, I conducted interviews with past leaders and where possible members or staff. This meant that I conducted an additional six interviews, four of which were with past executive directors, and two with staff members. This research contributes to our understanding of

collective action by generating empirical material and case studies, providing narratives of how voluntary organizations engage in the process of governance at a variety of scales.

2.5 The process of interviewing

A total of 92 interviews were conducted with a wide variety of actors for this thesis. In terms of process, I initially contacted 95 individuals via email to introduce myself, present an overview of the research project and ask for their participation.¹⁰ A couple of days later, once they had time to review the material, I generally followed up with a phone call in order to explain in more detail the object of the research, answer any additional questions they might have had and establish whether they agreed to participate in the project. In the majority of cases, I received a quick response to my email and that initial contact was sufficient to ensure participation in the project. The respondents I contacted were keen to participate in the project and as a result, there were very little refusals. Only two executive directors mentioned that they had not been involved in the organization long enough to participate in this study and one cited not having enough time to do so.

The interviews were conducted between 2001 and 2003. They were conducted either by phone or in person and the interviews ran for an average of 1h25 minutes. Before the interviews began, I again provided basic information on the research project and I went through the informed consent form with the respondent. I emphasized that all of the information obtained through the interview would be treated in a confidential

¹⁰ See Appendix B for introductory cover letter.

manner and that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any time during the interview process. The interviews were then transcribed to provide a basis for analysis.

Chapter 3 Governance Theory: A Framework

3.1 Introduction

In recent years, governments of most industrialized countries have faced challenges and pressures associated with restructuring the welfare state. Fiscal constraints have significantly undermined state capacity and authority. The role of government has been reduced while the realm of private action has expanded. As a result, both policy and service delivery are increasingly being developed through collaboration and coordination between the public, private, and voluntary sectors (Rhodes 1997). Not surprisingly, this shift in governance has captured the interest of a wide range of scholars, seeking to understand the implications of the new dynamics for understanding the process of governance, and the relationship between state and civil society.

Literature on governance, however, tends to be state-centred, either preoccupied with explaining the changing role of the state, or focusing on how modes of governance have affected the state. Although few researchers have examined the effect of new governance arrangements on non-state actors, collaborative governance challenges those involved in service delivery, policy making, and relationship building, by increasing the need for accountability, capacity building, and representation.

Governance is more than transformations within the state; it concerns the changing relationship between the state and civil society. As boundaries between the two are being redefined, actors struggle to create change and renegotiate the social contract. The literature neglects the fundamental question of how local, provincial, and national

organizations work upwards to affect the way governance unfolds. Attention must shift to the role of the voluntary organizations, and the processes of civil society in governance.

This chapter therefore introduces another dimension to the study of governance by drawing attention to the role of the voluntary sector and of voluntary sector organizations for understanding the process of governance and the relationship between state and civil society. Very little is known about how the voluntary sector is fairing in this new context. Some empirical analyses demonstrate how its relationship with the state is being transformed; however, they are less successful in linking these transformations to a theoretical framework capable of explaining the overall dynamics at play at the micro scale within individual voluntary organizations, and at the macro scale within the sector. This thesis is guided by the following broad research questions:

- What challenges and opportunities has a shift in governance created for the voluntary sector and for voluntary organizations?
- How have the voluntary sector and voluntary organizations been affected and transformed by these pressures?
- How have they responded, adapted, and tried to shape the process of governance?

In the following chapter, I use the governance framework to explore these issues in more depth, and begin to ask how the voluntary sector and voluntary organizations are

responding to the pressures created by governance. It combines theories of governance that view the effects of governance as contingent, and subject to political struggle; and bridges the empirical analyses focusing on the organizational dynamics, and the strategies within the voluntary sector and voluntary organizations.

This chapter is divided into four parts. First, it sets out a broad definition of governance based on general consensus within the literature regarding what the phenomenon entails. Having established the broad lines of the process of governance, the second part of the chapter examines differing perspectives and foci in the study of governance. In doing so, I seek to situate the debate in terms of a broader discussion of the relationship between structure and agency. The third part of the chapter, then, bridges the social movement literature and the governance approach, in order to propose a theoretical framework through which to examine the challenges and opportunities that governance poses to voluntary organizations. While acknowledging that the process of governance is not predetermined, and needs to be understood in context, the final part of the chapter draws on existing empirical studies in order to explore some initial lines of inquiry for understanding how the process of governance is affecting the voluntary sector and voluntary sector organizations. More specific hypotheses for the Canadian context will be presented in the next chapter.

3.2 Defining governance

Although governance is associated with a wide range of transformations occurring in contemporary societies, there is no commonly accepted definition. Over the past

decade, many theories of governance have emerged within various fields of study such as political economy, comparative politics, public administration, organization theory, and public management; drawing on a range of ideological traditions, and conceptual approaches (Hirst 2000, Rhodes 2000).

There are a number of common themes, however, shared by most approaches to governance. Rhodes and Stoker attempt to draw out the commonalities, with the main characteristics of governance as:

1. Governance identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities between state and non-state actors for tackling social and economic issues (Stoker 1998).
2. Governance does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. Rather, it involves the interaction of networks of actors that collaborate and negotiate (Rhodes 1997, Stoker 1998).
3. The actors are interdependent. They rely on each other to reach their goals, and for some of their resources. Cooperative and horizontal forms of policy development, hence, are based on the principles of interdependence, negotiation and coordination (See also Peters 2001, Stoker 1998).
4. The networks of actors have a significant degree of autonomy from the state. They are not accountable to the state; they are self-organizing. Although the state does not occupy a sovereign position, it indirectly steers networks (Rhodes 1997, p.57).

Most explanations for the emergence of governance are linked to recognition of the changing conditions by which states make policy. For some, globalization, the growing role and influence of international actors, and devolution has transformed the nature of governing (Scharpf 2000, Held 1999). As a result of the decline in authority of nation-states, and their inability to make the desired changes, relationships between state and non-state actors have become less hierarchical, and more interactive. For others, however, the emergence of governance is linked to the rise of neo-liberal ideology and of New Public Management (NPM) which have resulted in a reconfiguration of structures for policy making and delivering public services, and contributes to a shift away from government to governance (Mayntz 1998, Peters and Pierre 2000, Hood 1991).

Although some authors disagree as to *why*, the basic underlying argument in the governance literature is that the role of the state is being transformed. The 'hollowing out of the state' - the privatization and contracting of services - have exacerbated the decline of state coordinating capacity. As state authority declines, we are witnessing a greater interdependence between state and non-state actors in policy making and implementation (Rhodes 1994, 1997). Gerry Stoker describes governance as "a complex set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but also beyond government" (Stoker 1998, p. 19); whereas Pierre and Peters describe it as a displacement of state power, and control "upward, towards international actors and organizations; downward, towards regions, cities and communities; and outward, to institutions operating under considerable discretion from the state" (Pierre and Peters 2000, p. 77).

Traditional modes of governance in which governments make policy and bureaucrats execute it, are misleading. In fact, the term “governance” often highlights a trend away from heavy reliance on the formal agencies of representative government, “from government to governance” (Rhodes 1997, Stoker 1998, Miller, Dickson and Stoker 2000, Cole and John 2001). Increasingly, state and non-state actors are sharing responsibilities, working collaboratively on complex social, political, and economic issues, primarily because no single actor possesses sufficient knowledge or resources to tackle the problems alone. Patterns of horizontal collaboration and interaction are becoming a dominant feature of governance.

Alternative forms of co-ordinating mechanism create networks as opposed to hierarchies and markets (Ansell 2000, Rhodes 1997, Jessop 1999). This is not to say they are mutually exclusive, in fact, hierarchies exist alongside networks. Nevertheless, scholars are recognizing the growing importance of networks (Rhodes 1997, Kickert 1997, Jessop 1997, Peters 2000, Pierre 2000).

According to Rhodes, governance entails managing networks no longer specific to the public sector. He defines governance specifically as “self-organizing, inter-organizational networks characterized by interdependence, resource exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state” (Rhodes 1997, p. 15). Governance is a more co-operative mode of governing, distinct from the hierarchical-control mode, whereby state and non-state actors participate in mixed public/private networks (Mayntz 1998).

The shift from government to governance has many implications for the relationship between state and non-state actors. As Kooiman notes, governance is the

“emerging pattern (or order) of a system that is both the outcome of social processes (interactions) as well as the medium through which actors can act and interpret this pattern” (Kooiman 1993, p. 258). Hence, the act of governing is increasingly “dynamic, complex and varied” with social actors playing an important role in shaping governance (Kooiman 1993, p. 36). An analysis of governance should focus on the dynamic nature of governance, and view it as an active process that engages both the state, and actors from the private and voluntary sectors; thus, the fundamental role of relationships in constructing governance must be examined (White 2004, Phillips 2001a, Pierre and Peters 2000).

3.3 Theories of governance

Although there is a general consensus within the literature, that the way states govern have changed, increasingly relying on third parties in service delivery and policy making; there are major conceptual differences in the approaches to governance. Fundamentally, analyses of governance differ in their interpretation of change; which revolves around a series of assumptions regarding history, agency, and contingency. According to Pierre and Peters, it is possible to distinguish two different meanings attributed to the concept of governance: governance as structure, and governance as process (Pierre and Peters 2000). As a structure, governance refers to political, institutional, and structural developments in governments as they adapt to transformations in their external environment, created by pressures of globalization and internationalization. The analyses tend to be state-centred, focusing on institutions and

structures of governance. Some researchers focus on the common social, historical, and institutional origins of governance practices, asking *why* the shift from government to governance has occurred. They view governance as an end in itself. Others focus on the adaptation of states to governance, asking what role government plays in emerging forms of governance. They seek to identify components of an institutional setting, their relationship, and how they contribute to differing modes of governing.

Another line of analysis views governance as a process of social coordination, focusing on interactions between actors, and on forms of coordination that appear. By interpreting governance as a process, it implies governance is still becoming, and may be a contradictory and contested process. This approach focuses on *how* governance unfolds. I investigate each approach in the following section.

3.3.1. Governance as an end

In the first line of inquiry, researchers have developed theoretical frameworks to explain the move from ‘government’ to ‘governance’. Albeit from different ideological traditions, their goal is to understand why the role of the state in most industrialized countries has been transformed. Although macro-level analyses share the view that recent transitions to governance are not isolated or coincidental, they diverge as to *why*. While governance may be determined by different economic, social, or political conditions, scholars believe that the rise of governance is unavoidable since it follows an inherent logic. In their view, a “hollowing out of the state”, a “minimal state” and “new

public management” are inevitable responses to global pressures and competition among states (Boworwathana 1997).

Proponents of neo-liberalism believe that in order to overcome the inefficiencies of traditional, hierarchical modes of governance, and cope with the globalization pressures, the market is best suited to deliver services (Osborne and Gaebler 1992). They argue that governments should strive for “less government and more governance”, and states should increasingly “steer and not row”; contracting out to the private and voluntary sector is necessary and desirable. They view governance as a sequence of events leading to the emergence of service delivery networks; a product of contracting out public services to non-state actors (Lawless and Moore 1989, Milward, Provan and Else 1993, Rhodes 1994, 1997, Milward and Provan 2003, Agranoff and McGuire 1998, 2003).

Similarly, others argue that the emergence of governance is inexorably linked to structural processes such as the restructuring of the economy, and the traditional, social-democratic model of the state is rendered obsolete (Martin 1994, Moene and Wallerstein 1995, Moses 1998, Notermans 1993, 1996). Regulationists, for instance, believe that the emergence of governance is linked to the development process inherent in capitalist economies (Burrows and Loader 1994, Jessop 1997, Peck and Tickell 1992). They argue that capitalism experiences intermittent crises each of which leads to the consolidation of a new mode of growth and a new mode of governance.

Although these perspectives provide a reasonable explanation for the emergence of governance, a fundamental weakness is their overt determinism. Under these perspectives, governance is the result of structural influences. Because of their focus on

structures and institutions, these analyses have little to say on the actual practices of governance, and how the interaction unfolds between state and non-state actors. They are in fact relatively silent on the role of non-state actors, considering them to have little or no influence in shaping the process of governance.

Although initially the approaches seem appealing, particularly in explaining the factors that have contributed to the rise of governance in large, cross-national studies, they view the emergence of governance as a given, and do not attempt to explain differing forms of governance. This argument does not account for divergence among countries; and hence cannot explain why not all governments involve third parties in governance to the same extent (Kooiman 2003). In fact, while the private and voluntary sector organizations of some countries are included in policy making, and negotiate with government on a broad range of policies; in others, they are consulted with, but excluded from the policy making process. While many industrialized countries have developed horizontal initiatives, these have not been used in the same way, or assigned the same importance in each context (Phillips 2002, Laforest and Phillips 2001, White 2001, 2004, Webb 2003). Despite common pressures associated with governance, countries clearly display variations in the degree of horizontality achieved, and the effectiveness of third parties to secure real input in policy making. A framework is needed that can capture these variations, and consider institutional structures and strategies utilized by the key actors. Accounts failing to acknowledge and analyze such complex relations are unsatisfactory for understanding shifts in the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector; and I argue, may be missing important aspects of the process, and politics of governance.

3.3.2 Governance and modes of governing

In the second line of inquiry, researchers respond to these lacunae, favouring an approach that focuses on understanding how states have responded and dealt with the challenges posed to state authority by globalization, and on the different modes of governing that emerge as a result. Affected by similar international pressures, they argue, the arising patterns of governance are contingent on the way states respond to the changes (Peters 1996). They acknowledge that although governments adopt similar public sector reforms to cope with the pressures, policy varies from country to country depending on historical and institutional patterns; hence, current pathways are subject to structural determination. What is distinctive about this strand of literature is its claim that governments remain the most powerful actors in governance; therefore, analyses should focus on how they adapt to governance, and on the outcomes, in terms of the scope and form of government intervention. Although this literature purports to consider both structure and process of governance, it more successfully examines institutions rather than process and agency.

Two general approaches to governance are taken in this line of inquiry: a focus on institutions, and a focus on instruments. The institutional accounts contend that effects of reforms are different because specific policy responses reflect historically constituted institutions; moreover, they assume institutions have a mediating effect important in shaping political outcomes (Rhodes 1997, Stoker 1999, Hay 2000, Zysman 1996, Pierson 2000). Entrenched institutional patterns will generate different responses to global pressures. In this approach, institutional trajectories, path dependency, and inertia are decisive factors in regard to explaining outcomes (Pierson 2000). The concepts suggest

that prior institutional paths determine future direction, and structural forces dominate the analysis at the expense of agency.

Moreover, this approach tends to highlight continuity and has little to say about change, innovation, and contingency. At the heart of the argument, lies the belief that institutions structure politics by defining who participates in a specific policy area, shaping the actors' political strategy and structure, and influencing what the actors believe to be possible and desirable (Steinmo 2001, Hall 1986, Immergut 1992). While institutions may influence the structure of representation and the articulation of interests; this does not foreclose new actors, ideas, and interests from gaining momentum and creating change. As Mahon notes, "it is important to analyze not only past patterns and the interest configurations associated with these [structural forces] but also look for the emergence of new representations" (Mahon 2002, p. 13).

Influenced by public administration and public policy, the instruments literature specifically examines changes in governing instruments or a set of actions implemented by government (Salamon 2002, Peters and Van Nispen 1998). At a general level, they demonstrate how governing instruments have shifted away from authority-based instruments towards less intrusive forms of action (Salamon 2002, Hood 1986, Howlett 2002). Table 3.1 provides a broad summary of how the tools of government have shifted under the new governance paradigm.

Table 3.1 The new tools of governance

Classical Public Administration: The Government Model	New Governance Model
Program/Agency	Tool
Hierarchy	Network
Public vs Private	Public and Private
Command and Control	Negotiation and Persuasion
Management Skills	Enablement Skills

Taken from: Lester M. Salamon, *The New Tools of Government: A Guide to New Governance*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002.

As Table 3.1 illustrates, these analyses focus on how the role of government has been rethought under the new governance paradigm, how the role of public managers has been transformed and how accountability is being redefined in this context. They are silent on the new tools of governance available to non-state actors and how their management practices are being redefined. Although useful for comparing the policy instruments available to governments, the analyses are largely state-centred, and scarcely deal with the politics behind instrument choice. While they capture patterns and commonalities emerging across nations, they fail to recognize that choices between instruments of governance concern the appropriate mix in roles and responsibilities between public, private, and voluntary sectors which ultimately are political.

The growing complexity of governance and rising influence of non-state actors have highlighted the limits of the traditional state-centered focus that has dominated much of the instruments literature. The governance literature reminds us that policy and political action may be increasingly shaped through informal processes by a multitude of actors at different institutional levels (Rhodes 1997, Stoker 1998). Precisely because

governance involves the interplay of actors, outcomes are not fixed or predictable.

Moreover, the emerging mode of governance is continually shaped by the varied interests and organizational logics. Hence, an understanding of governance must recognize this complex and dynamic process resulting from political and strategic interaction.

As I have discussed previously, neither approach provides an explanatory framework capable of satisfactorily integrating agency. In both these approach, actors have little room to be innovative and creatively shape policy; nevertheless, there are some merits to these analytical approaches. The notion that the structure of political institutions is important and that the patterns of institutions matter is a valuable insight. Institutions affect the realm of the possible; they can constrain or enable political action. A conceptual approach is needed which can seize these institutional factors, as well as the political elements at play. The challenge is to avoid an emphasis on political institutions that ignores the role of actors, or a focus on actors that ignores the importance of political contexts; but rather to undertake an analysis that considers how institutions and actors interact. The following section attempts to reconcile these two aspects of the relationship by adopting a dialectical approach that conceptualizes the process of governance as open and flexible.

3.3.3 Governance as a process

The above discussion demonstrates that neither approach deals satisfactorily with the issue of agency. In order to move beyond this deterministic view of governance, several governance theorists have attempted to focus on the unintended, unforeseen consequences of public sector reforms; how they have affected the role of the state, and

the way society is governed (Rhodes 2000, 1997, Rhodes and Bevir 2003, Stoker 1999). They argue that although governments adopt specific public sector reforms in response to the pressures of globalization, the policies do not always have the intended effects; rather, governance is a complex, dynamic and unfolding process with uncertain outcomes. While most theorists equate governance to the act of governing and managing society, this approach focuses instead on the pattern of interaction and networking between government and nongovernmental organizations. The focal point of the analysis becomes the complex interdependency between the public, private, and voluntary sectors in meeting public demands and interests. By conceptualizing governing structures as variable, policy making is best conceived as an ongoing process of institutionalized dialogue; of coordination and of collaboration between actors of state, and actors of civil society. It provides a means for examining the actors' role in the governance process and the diverse responses of those who are engaged in it.

The main contribution of this approach is to suggest that non-state actors, from the private or the voluntary sector, have the potential to shape their relationship with the state, and create opportunities for action. As opposed to the previous approach, Rhodes views governance as providing greater autonomy to the actors of civil society in their dealings with government (Rhodes 1997, 2000, 2001). Actors are actively involved in the reform process and shaping the outcomes. This framework incorporates agency and contingency, and recognizes that *politics matter*. In fact, Bevir and Rhodes suggest that we think of governance as “the contingent product of political struggles that embody competing sets of beliefs” (Bever and Rhodes 2001, p. 19). Networks are arenas of policy

making for the debate of different issues; where actors, each possessing different discourses and practices, attempt to influence the process to reach their goals.

To understand the dynamic, this approach shifts our attention to the role of political agency and strategies in the development of modes of governance. It recognizes that the process of governance shapes, and is shaped by, the actors' participation and representation of their identities, interests and actions. Moreover, this approach is valuable for it incorporates variables such as the changing nature of power, decision making, and agency interaction in governance analysis. It acknowledges that the capacity of actors involved in the networks to affect change varies across time and space, as do power relations.

Although providing a helpful focus on the process of governance, this approach displays an important limitation. Recent studies are primarily concerned with the "usual suspects": political parties, think-tanks, and mainstream organizations (Dobrowolsky and Saint-Martin 2002). While the governance approach effectively focuses on governance arrangements and collaboration across sectors, few studies explore the perspective of voluntary sector organizations involved in the process. The few governance analyses that purport to do so tend to limit themselves to private sector actors. Although in theory, public-private partnerships are widely defined to include partnerships with both private sector and voluntary sector organizations (Bovaird 2004, Roseneau 2000, Linder 2000), in practice, studies have been primarily concerned with private sector contracting (see for example Roseneau 2000, Bradford 2003, Ruanne 2002, Kernaghan 1993, Wright and

Rodal 1997¹). In this context, the term private sector widely encompasses voluntary and private sector organizations; organizations with very different purposes, structures, and values.

By their very nature, voluntary organizations are confronted with challenges and opportunities not shared by private sector organizations. More than simple service providers, voluntary organizations respond to different logics than private sector actors. They play an important representational role in society, acting upon their community's interests and identities (Phillips 2001a, Warren 2001). Although contributing to different aspects of policy, in the context of governance, voluntary organizations are concerned with promoting and sustaining their members' well-being. Finally, voluntary sector organizations serve as a gateway to policy making for citizens; and as result, have a democratizing and legitimizing effect on policies. As they have such unique roles, I believe we need a better understanding of how governance is affecting and is affected by them.

3.4 Governance and the voluntary sector

Most of the work devoted to the question of governance is implicitly state-centred, however, governance by networks affects voluntary sector organizations as well. Research is necessary for a better consideration of the role and place of voluntary sector organizations in governance. Following on Rhodes' work, I view governance as a process of political contention, and recognize that both state and non-state actors have major roles

¹ In this perspective, partnerships, shared governance, collaborative arrangements all refer to modes of alternative services delivery.

in shaping the process. This account highlights how non-state actors seek to affect change in the process of governance, and how they are affected by the process of governance as it transforms the terrain of political struggle. The process of governance is political and it involves struggle over meaning (Bevir and Rhodes 2002), implying a struggle over practical arrangements and also around more comprehensive issues of representation, access, legitimacy, and inclusion. Waged on the terrain of networks, the struggle over the parameters of governance are debated, negotiated, and defined. Clearly, governance involves agency.

Under this framework, voluntary sector organizations have the potential to create change, gaining more autonomy as their role in political life becomes more important. Although voluntary organizations make deliberate choices, not everything is possible through agency. I add an important analytical dimension by examining the interaction between institutions, ideas, and interests. Voluntary organizations are not merely reacting to changes in structure and process of governance; they also seek to shape them and thereby redefine their relationship with government and their constituency. Strategies shift over time, reflecting the nature of the institutional setting in which organizations operate.

This is the theoretical standpoint from which I propose to approach the study of governance and the voluntary sector. I treat the relationship between institutions and actors as bi-directional, meaning that the causal arrows run both ways. A relational approach captures the idea that collective action does not occur in a vacuum. Institutional and structural context are important variables within which actions are given meaning and influence the outcome. On one hand, the shift in governance creates strategic

opportunities for actors to exploit and challenges to overcome. On the other hand, voluntary sector organizations may create opportunities for themselves, and more broadly, for the sector, shaping the outcomes of governance. This provides a framework for an integrated analysis of the processes as they unfold.

Under the old model of governing, the nature of the relationship between the government and private and voluntary sectors is characterized as being hierarchical and often described as one of command and control (Salamon 2002, Rhodes 1997). The policy agenda is set by government, and the policy design, implementation and evaluation are done internally. While services under this model can be contracted out to private and voluntary sector organizations, it is important to emphasize that the terms of the relationship, the program guidelines, and the nature of practical arrangements are dictated solely by the government. Figure 3.1 provides an illustration of these relationships.

Figure 3.1 The old model of governing

With the shift in governance, the relationship between the public, private and voluntary sectors is increasingly characterized by collaboration and interdependence. Given the range of knowledge that is increasingly required for the development, implementation and evaluation of policy, the nature of the relationship can no longer be dictated from above. Negotiation and compromise is required at all stages of the policy process from policy formulation to implementation and evaluation. Given the relationship is evolving and multi-faceted, a conceptual framework is needed that encompasses both the breadth and scope of the interaction. To date, the governance literature has not been successful at incorporating all dimensions in the analysis. Part of the reason lies in the fact that these transformations in state-society relationships are occurring on a variety of spatial scales, and the governance literature has tended to focus on the rescaling of state activities in a globalising economy and on changes occurring in the realm of service provision, focusing narrowly on the output and outcome of policy processes. This selective concern with service provision and implementation leaves unattended the dynamic processes unfolding in the area of policy formation and development. Moreover, it reduces the role of private and voluntary sector organizations to that of service providers, and fails to acknowledge their role in other areas of policy making. For researchers of voluntary sector organizations, this is problematic because it ignores representation and citizen engagement, which are critical areas where organizations engage in political action (Phillips 2001a, Frumkin 2002, Frumkin and Imber 2004).

Figure 3.2 proposes a model for understanding this multidimensional nature of the new governance process.

Figure 3.2 The new governance model

I propose to extend the governance approach to understand how the representational and organizational dynamics of voluntary organizations connect to the political context in which they operate in a framework that acknowledges the role of ideas, identity, and interests in shaping the range of available options for political action. This implies an analytical approach recognizing the complex interplay of structure and agency.

Governance literature is lacking analytical tools to capture how voluntary organizations interpret and make sense of their role in new governance arrangements, and how they respond, strategize, and make choices in order to achieve their goals. To overcome these limitations, the governance literature needs to be informed by the perspectives of other bodies of work such as the voluntary sector, interest group, and social movement literature.

Certain scholars in the field of voluntary sector research have examined transformations in the processes and structures of governing, and their impact on the voluntary sector, without using the concept of governance per se (Salamon 1995, Smith and Lipsky 1993, Wolch 1992, Ullman 1998). While this strand of literature offers a wealth of empirical studies and evidence in discrete areas of service delivery or policy-making, it has not brought together the evidence into a comprehensive framework that can help us make sense of how the dynamics influence each other.

Moreover, they fail to conceptualize the voluntary sector as a political actor capable of affecting change. Much like the governance literature, they focus their analysis on broad sector explanations that are highly structural in nature. Rooted in theoretical concepts such as market failure, government failure, and third-party government (Hansmann 1987, Salamon 1997, 1995, Salamon and Anheier 1996a), the dominant preoccupation within the literature has been to uncover the rationales for the existence of the voluntary sector and its origins. They have limited their analysis for the most part to locating the voluntary sector in relation to the state and the private sector, making the assumption that the voluntary sector plays a residual role in society, providing services when the market and government fail to. This conveys a false sense that the realms of government, market, and voluntary sector action are separate and distinct, when, in reality, they share strong interconnections and interdependencies. In addition, by depicting the relationship between the government and the voluntary sector as antagonistic and mutually exclusive, it cannot account for the growing trend of collaboration and partnership, and the blurring of the boundaries between these very actors, that emerges from governance.

One strand of voluntary sector research has moved away from this dichotomous view of government-voluntary sector relationships, trying to focus on the common boundaries between the actors (Powell and DiMaggio 1991, Weaver and Rockman 1993). Concerned with classifying the sector, these scholars view the size, scope, and composition of the sector as indicators of state-society relationships (Salamon and Anheier 1996a, 1996b, Gidron, Kramer and Salamon 1992, Coston 1998). Rather than examining the nature of actual relations, they categorize various political systems, legal systems, social, and economic indicators in order to draw inferences regarding these relationships. Although their contribution is important, the cross-national perspectives they generate tell us very little on how actual relationships take place in practice and how this translates in their concrete interactions.

To understand how governance affects the relationship between the public and the voluntary sector, two dimensions need to be captured in the conceptual framework. First, voluntary organizations need to be regarded as potential agents of change, capable of making deliberate choices in the face of opportunities and constraints. For this reason, the framework needs to examine the process of governance from their vantage point. Secondly, the framework needs to consider the multidimensional patterns of interaction between the state and the voluntary sector which encompasses the spheres of policy making, service delivery, and involve relationship building across a variety of scales. Governance spans a whole range of relational structures from the macro to the micro. Implications of the shift in governance extend to all these facets of the relationship between government and the voluntary sector; therefore, I will consider the on-going transformations at each scale.

The social movement and interest group literature provide some insights in this respect. They can inform our analysis by suggesting how governance affects voluntary organizations, their organizational dynamics and strategizing, and how these are affecting their overall relationship with the state. Both approaches develop strong theoretical frameworks for understanding group action, and contribute to a better understanding of governance, and its implications for the voluntary sector. In fact, the relationship between state and society has been a longstanding theme of interest group and social movement literature, but it has been dealt with in a distinct manner.

3.4.1 Linking structure and agency: The concept of political opportunity structure

The social movement literature contributes to a more subtle understanding of the link between structure and agency (Dobrowolsky 1998, 2000, Phillips 1991, Jenson 1989, Staggenborg 1991). Most of the work on new social movements is preoccupied with linking the environment of the social movement to the processes of collective action. Social movement theorists remind us that organizations do not merely respond to openings in the political structure, but also create opportunities for themselves and others. Following Jenson, I believe that agents are “simultaneously *subjects of structures and acting subjects* carrying in their practices and meaning systems the possibilities of both social stability and change” (Jenson 1989, p. 236). Organizations striving for recognition as political actors may challenge the distribution of power within the political space and the dominant frames and discourses. Such an approach is useful to understand the construction of identity, tactics, and resources and provides analytical tools in order to capture the agency dynamics in the process of governance.

The nexus of exchange between the state and organizations has been typified in the social movement literature by the concept of Political Opportunity Structure (POS) (Tarrow 1998). Tarrow defines POS as “consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for collective action” (Tarrow 1998, p. 77). Similarly, Kitschelt defines POS as “comprised of specific configurations of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for social mobilisation which facilitate the development of protest movements in some instances and constrain them in others” (Kitschelt 1986, p. 58). The POS approach suggests that collective action emerges in response to “changes in opportunities that lower the cost of collective action, reveal potential allies and show where elites and authorities are vulnerable” (Tarrow 1998, p. 20, See also Gamson and Meyer 1996, Tarrow 1991, Tilly 1978). The POS shapes and constrains the opportunities for action. These opportunities and constraints, however, do not constitute an ‘objective’ reality; rather, they have to be grasped as opportunities or constraints by the actors on the first hand in order for them to be acted upon. As Diani and Della Porta note, “some changes in the political opportunity structure do not have any effect on a social movement unless they are perceived as being important by the movement itself” (Diani and Della Porta 1999, p. 223).

POS are a product of the specific setting and historical context (Tarrow 1998, McAdam 1982). They include elements such as the relative openness of access to participation by new actors, the stability or state of flux governing political alignments, and the presence or absence of possible allies within governing elites, and a decline in the state’s capacity or will to repress dissent (Tarrow 1998, p. 76). McAdam, McCarthy and

Zald build on Tarrow's framework, identifying three broad sets of factors that explain the emergence and shaping of social movements: the structure of opportunities and constraints, the forms of formal and informal organization available, and framing processes. Their approach is distinctive as it focuses on strategies of *framing* and discursive processes, recognizing POS have both institutional and discursive dimensions (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1998, Tarrow 1998, Kriesi and al. 1995). Framing processes are defined as "the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action" (McAdam, McCarthy, Zald 1996, p. 6). The framing category encompasses ways by which collective identity arises, as well as interpretative and discursive practices that shape their understanding of their condition and possible alternatives (McAdam, McCarthy, Zald 1996, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001, Tarrow 1998).

This discursive dimension of the political opportunity structure is important, particularly when considering the dynamics of identity building occurring at the sectoral scale which is critical to determining possible scales of action. Framing involves the articulation of ideas and interests. For a movement, it also involves giving meaning to one's action and situating oneself in relation to other actors, to the issues at hand, and in light of the opportunities for political action. In order to draw analytical attention to the discursive context in which movements frame their strategies, Jenson introduces the 'universe of political discourse' as a theoretical concept. The universe of political discourse can be defined as "...the universe of socially constructed meaning resulting from political struggle. Within this universe, parameters of political action are established

by the process of limiting the set of actors accorded the status of legitimate participants; the range of issues considered within the realm of political debate; the policy alternatives considered feasible for implementation; and, finally, alliance strategies available for achieving change” (Jenson 1989, p. 26). By integrating this concept, it will enable me to distinguish between institutional opportunities and discursive opportunities. In so doing, I will be able to better capture discursive practices and the politics of representation.

Using the concept of the political opportunity structure to capture the possibilities and constraints of political action fostered by governance can analytically reveal the link between institutional setting, and forms of collective action. Drawing from the POS concept, I focus in my analysis on the following processes occurring under governance : a reorganisation of institutional space (access, roles and responsibilities of the various actors); a reinterpretation of the frames, including who is to be accepted as legitimate participant, what issues are to be considered, and what forms of political action are deemed credible; and a reallocation of resources and changing principles for allocating resources, this includes both material resources and strategic alliances. In addition to institutional pressures identified by the POS literature that shape patterns of organizational development, conditions in the resource environment are also important.

Resource mobilization theory demonstrates that financial resources, leadership, networks, and organizational skills are all resources that groups utilize to influence policy (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977, Mayer and McCarthy 1979). This approach acknowledges the importance of resources on strategizing and on organizational dynamics, linking tactics with goals. These studies may be particularly useful for understanding governance dynamics at the micro scale. By bringing in both these

approaches, my framework will capture external and internal resources, both material and symbolic, as determinants of political action.

The literature on political opportunity structures raises a number of questions about how voluntary organizations may be affected by a shift in governance. First, the process of governance matters because it opens up political space for participation (Rhodes 2000). Such a transformation brings about a shift in the political opportunity structures, encouraging particular forms of action and not others (McAdam 1982). While it may create new opportunities for voluntary organizations to work in partnership and to play a greater role in policy and in service delivery, it can also create barriers to involvement for others. For example, it may create challenges for organizations by reinforcing the unequal structure of representation through the uneven distribution of opportunities and resources (Gualini 2003, Painter and Goodwin 1995, Mayer 1995). In doing so, this shift can enable or constrain possibilities for organizations to mobilise, make claims and successfully influence policy. It can also make political strategies, tactics, ideas, and discourses more attractive and others unattractive. New actors may emerge, forming new alliances and creating innovative ideas and actions.

In this thesis, I propose to examine how the politics of inclusion/exclusion play out with respect to the participation of voluntary sector organizations in the process of governance at a variety of scales and what this then says about the norms and rules of behavior that are expected of organizations in order to gain access. I will ask not only how organizations have adapted to these new pressures and opportunities, but also how they have challenged them.

3.4.2 Strategizing across scales

The process of governance creates new opportunities and challenges for voluntary organizations as they move into a more complex terrain and engage with multiple actors on a variety of fronts. Not surprisingly, given the multi-faceted nature of the relationship, the contested and negotiated character of governance expresses itself in a distinct manner at the sector scale, the field of service or policy field, and the organizational scale; thereby, affecting voluntary sector organizations' powers and capacity in a variety of ways (Salamon and Anheier 1992). To capture this complexity, I adopted a theoretical framework that links the relationship between the actors, and the process of governance in a variety of spatial scales. This should not be regarded as being inconsistent with the governance theory; it is merely a method of capturing different facets of relationship between the government and voluntary sector.

Over the past decade, a growing body of theoretical and empirical studies have emerged, inspired by the work of urban geographers, which try to understand the embedded nature of relations between different places and the importance of space. Earlier studies tended to describe scale in ontological terms – focusing on the local, national and international scale (See for example Taylor 1993, 1999, 2000). Recent studies, however, have begun to contest this narrow vision of scale, circumscribed to geography, suggesting rather for the need to understand scale as socially constructed (Marston 2000, 2004, Herod 1997). By focusing on the 'politics of scale', they acknowledge the importance of actors in the reorganization of social relations (Leitner 1997, Herod 2001). As Howitt suggests, "the social and political construction of scale is precisely social action – the concrete processes of organizing a political response, a

vehicle for participation, recognition and change. This is always... a matter of linking within and across scales to provide opportunities for transformation of existing power relations” (Howitt 2003, p. 150).

The concept of scale can add to our understanding of the political opportunity structures and a few social movement scholars have in fact begun to use the concept of scales of action (Masson 2005, Sewell 2001, Tarrow and McAdam 2004). In their book entitled *Dynamics of Contention*, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) utilize the concept of scale in order to link international and domestic scales of action. They define the process of scale shift as “a change in the number and level of coordinated contentious action leading to broader contention involving a wider range of actors and bridging their claims and identities” (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001, p.331). This enables them to understand the processes by which organizations develop frames, networks and repertoires of action on an international scale. Here, scale is linked with processes unfolding over geographical spaces.

I use the concept of scale in a more metaphorical way to encompass new relations of governance unfolding at different levels of analysis, from the macro to the micro. In the new governance processes, social relations between the state and the voluntary sector are constituted and reconstituted at a variety of scales where social identities, meaning systems, interpretative frameworks are negotiated and contested. These social identities are not bound by geography, they are fluid. They are shaped by and, in turn, shape social relations. According to Jones, this politics of representation involves organizations “actively reshaping the discourses within which their struggles are constituted and discursively re-presenting their political struggles across scales” (Jones 1998, p. 26).

I believe it is the social construction of these identities and relationships which constitute scales of action. As Paasi suggests, we “should pay more attention to such scales of human life as the spatial constitution/manifestation of social groupings based on gender, generation, ‘race’; private social relations within the family, home and voluntary associations, or personal experience and collective expressions of spatial identity and consciousness” (Paasi 2004, p. 6, see also Paasi 1991). In considering this multi-faceted relationship, the shift in governance has implications for the voluntary sector at three scales: the macro scale of the broad government-sector relationship, at the meso scale on a policy field basis or around a particular policy issue, and at the micro scale in organizational terms. When applied to the study of governance then, scales enable me to examine the creation of new frames, networks and forms of collective action around the identity of the voluntary sector which are shaped by and shaping material and discursive practices in a very real way. These dynamic processes and mechanisms engage actors which are also actively engaged in governance processes unfolding at a meso and micro scale.

The embedded nature of these social relations is critical to understanding how governance processes unfold. Research needs to acknowledge this complex interpenetration of governance processes which are occurring simultaneously across scales. Because the state and the voluntary sector are not unitary actors, contradictory tendencies can occur and we need to be aware of this. For this reason, it is important to analyze the process of governance as it plays out across scales: from the macro to the micro. Precisely because the POS is not fixed, but constructed and transformable, it can be used to think about collective action across scales of action. What occurs at one scale

cannot be dissociated from the other. As Masson suggests, “different scales of government and governance offer different opportunity structures at a particular time, and movements make strategic decisions about them based on their own logic and evaluation of the context and possibilities for action” (Masson 2005, p. 7, see also Herod 1997). Just like micro and meso scale dynamics underlie sectoral processes; sectoral dynamics may constrain, or enable action at the micro and meso scale. Voluntary organizations strategize, seize opportunities and try to shape social relations on a variety of scales. Figure 3.3 provides an overview of organizational strategizing and how I conceptualize these possible scales of action.

Figure 3.3 Strategies for action across scales

In theory, the sectoral scale is important because organizations within the voluntary sector may identify themselves as belonging to a *sector*. This identity embeds “social ties that accumulate their own shared understandings” (Tilly 1997). Although not all organizations may feel part of the *sector*, in theory, the notional concept of a sector is important for it implies that organizations are coming together at a macro scale and devising strategies in order to represent themselves to the state. Out of these collective actions emerge a particular representation of the *sector*. Moreover, the discursive production and reproduction of a sectoral identity are embedded in micro scale dynamics. Voluntary sector organizations provide the organizational infrastructure for the sector. They strategize and mobilize to present a particular vision of the sector, to formulate demands, and secure gains in the name of the sector. Nevertheless, they remain separate organizations which represent and act on behalf of their constituents. The value and contribution of the concept of scale when applied to the field of social movement research lies in examining and linking the relations between dynamics occurring at the micro, meso and macro scale.

In this thesis, my analysis of the process of governance is informed by the political opportunity structures’ focus on the structure/agency nexus but I conduct my analysis through a multiscalar lens. I believe political opportunities are a representation of reality and can be utilized by actors across many scales of action. This is perhaps the area where there has been the least amount of research both from the governance literature and from the social movement literature. A small number of researchers have begun to link collective action and strategizing across scales producing really interesting

findings, but more work needs to be done in this area (Jessop 1999b, 2000, Smith 1993, Jonas 1994, Cox 1993, 1996 1998, Swyngedouw 2000, 1997).

3.4.3 Shifting power relations

The process of governance can shape political space in a variety of ways and on a variety of scales. It impacts on how power is exercised and on who is included in the process of decision making (Amin and Hausner 1997, Pierre 2000, Newman 2001, Stoker 2000). Rules of conduct entrenched in each polity legitimate different forms of action. The shift in governance involves a shift from a more traditional pattern of top-down governing to an interactive process of negotiation and coordination (Rhodes 2000, Kooiman 1993). As a result, the condition of ordered rule changes and the actors involved need to develop shared norms, and rules of behavior through negotiation and compromise. The interesting question in this context, then, is to understand how voluntary organizations are being active subjects in shaping and reshaping the political space and the political alignments across scales of action.

Governance creates opportunities for shifting power relations. While all agree that changing the boundaries of the state meant the boundaries between public, private, and voluntary sectors became shifting and opaque (Stoker 1998, Kooiman 2000, 2003, Pierre and Peters 2000), some argue that governments share their power with partners from the private and voluntary sector (Pierre and Peters 2000). Others go further and suggest that the state is no longer the primary site of political activity (Stoker 1998). For example, Stoker states that, “the governance perspective not only recognizes increased complexity in our systems of government, it also draws to our attention a shift in responsibility, a

stepping back of the state and a concern to push responsibilities onto the private and voluntary sectors, and, more broadly, the citizen” (Stoker 1998, p. 18). These new patterns of collaboration profoundly alter the power balance between the actors as the relations between them and the terms of access are being reconfigured (Pierre and Peters 2000, Kooiman 2000).

Inevitably, any attempt to understand modes of governance involves the question of power, and how it is negotiated (Rhodes 1994, 1997, Kooiman 1993). While the state plays a central role in delimiting spaces for political action, determining who has access to these spaces, ultimately privileging certain actors at the expense of others; whether or not these opportunities have been exploited, how and by whom, is nevertheless important (Burstein 1997, McAdam 1982, Staggenborg 1991, Walker 1991). It may be that the process of governance serves as a mechanism through which existing power relations are reproduced, or it can be a very powerful mechanism through which they are challenged. Hence, it is important to see governance as a dynamic process, and to recognize that it can be the focus of struggle.

The social movement literature and the governance literature are concerned with two sides of the same relationship. On one hand, the governance approach is useful for understanding the changing process of governing, as it provides a framework to identify the main characteristics of change, and offers a useful language to describe them (Stoker 1998). By focusing on state, governance theory helps identify transformations occurring in the structure of opportunities and constraints in terms of access to power, shifts in alliances and allies, and access to resources, both material and symbolic. The purpose in identifying these key elements is to provide a frame of reference in which to situate and

interpret the behaviour of organizations. The social movement literature, on the other hand, is useful for analyzing the nexus between organizations and the state, linking transformations in the institutional, and discursive context to strategies and tactics of organizations; and thereby, allowing us to explain forms of collective action. Although the voluntary sector literature is still very empirical and has yet to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding these changes, it nevertheless provides a wealth of empirical studies on the nature and scope of the relationship between state and the voluntary sector from which I will draw (Smith and Lipsky 1993, Salamon 1995 Leduc Browne 1996, Wolch 1990, Shields and Evans 1998, Kramer 1981). By combining these strands of literature I will focus on understanding how voluntary sector practices are shaped and constituted through governance processes operating at different levels of analysis.

In the next section, I will draw initial observations regarding the implications for the voluntary sector of the shift in governance for building relationships, for service provision, and for policy-making; in order to raise potential questions and issues that will guide my analysis.

2.5.1 Relationship building

In order to create better policies and deliver services efficiently, a shift in governance requires the development of active and responsive relationships among the sectors on a macro scale. As the roles and responsibilities of the different actors are being renegotiated, so are the rules and governing structures to support such collaboration. With growing interaction and collaboration, mechanisms are formed to institutionalize

the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector at multiple scales, in terms of broad state-sector relationships, in terms of relationships between departments and voluntary organizations working within a common policy field, in terms of one-on-one interactions between public officials and voluntary organizations (Kooiman 2003). As Phillips suggests, “A governance model is about guiding, not controlling, and about working in partnership with the voluntary and private sectors” (Phillips 2001, p. 653). In response to the demands of governance, a system of representation, communication and democratic decision-making needs to emerge. Kooiman argues that the relationships become “increasingly institutionalised, multi-level, and multi-dimensional and this ongoing process leads to the proliferation of the number of influential actors in society while at the same time increasing the number of interactions among these parties.” (Kooiman 2003, p. 6).

The development of a whole of government-whole of sector relationship requires institutions and processes -- institutions and processes that are developed through collaboration and concertation. Because the relationship is being institutionalized, voluntary organizations are invited to participate in the process and can gain access to power, and even in the process develop new allies. These constitute significant opportunities for organizations to shape the institutional framework to guide the relationship at a macro scale. They can also affect the politics pursued by voluntary organizations. New relationships, requiring new structures, have potentially important consequences for changing power relations. The challenge becomes how to work at the scale of whole of government/whole of sector relations when there are significant power differentials. The government may control, in part, the resources on which the sector

relies. It also plays a significant role in shaping the terms of access, and in conferring legitimacy and credibility to the participants. Not all organizations may gain access to this space; some may be included while others are excluded from the process.

As a result of the growing complementarities and interdependence between sectors, many voluntary sector researchers argue that relationships are being transformed. This raises the concern about the direction of change. According to Salamon, in network governance, “*collaboration* replaces *competition* as the defining feature of sectoral relationships” (Salamon 2002, p. 14). If this is the case, in this thesis, I ask what this means for the autonomy of the sector, and its capacity as an advocate of social change. Will it decrease political challenges? Will voluntary sector organizations align their activities around the common outcomes identified by the government?

Transformations involving government-voluntary sector relationships are relevant to this analysis as they may significantly alter the operation of voluntary organizations in policy and service delivery at other scales. The rescaling of state activities under the process of governance and the reallocation of tasks and responsibilities across scales, modify the opportunity space for voluntary sector organizations in the spheres of service provision and policy making as well. This very process may also close off some opportunities for organizations in some areas, and divert them into other areas.

Moreover, the redesign of state-sector relationships at the macro scale, the norms and expectations regarding the roles and responsibilities of each, resonate at other scales, and get translated into micro scales of action, through one on one interaction in the spheres of service provision and policy making. Although everyday actions in the field of service delivery and policy making may seem inconsequential to the relationship between

the state and the voluntary sector broadly speaking, they are also important in that they can influence these decisions and directive policies. The latter also feeds back into higher scales of action as these practices are mutually constitutive. Therefore, in order to understand this interplay, I need to examine transformations that may be occurring at other scales.

3.5.1 Service provision

Voluntary sector organizations have been long-time providers of services (Salamon 1995, Salamon and Anheier 1996a, 1996b). However, the rise of neoliberalism and the restructuring of welfare states have given increased salience to the idea that social policy can be delivered in a more cost effective way by relying on volunteers and voluntary organizations. Increasingly, governments in Canada, as in most developed countries, download services to voluntary organizations. With the shift in governance, new forms of service delivery emerge between the public sector and voluntary organizations, as relationships develop in the form of a partnership, or a contracting relationship (Stoker 1998). These developments create new processes across boundaries, leading to increased expectations vis-à-vis the institutions, such as new demands for transparency and accountability, as well as the adoption of new practices to efficiently provide the services. In this context, I ask whether the very nature of voluntary organizations being threatened or strengthened by contracting?

The governance literature has mainly emphasised issues of implementation and focused on the output side of service delivery. The shift in governance is driven in part by the need to find more effective means of delivering services. Not surprisingly then, the

move towards collaborative governance accompanies a practical interest in results-based management, and accountability (Considine 2002, Rodal and Mulder 1993). This type of management practice, however, places new demands on voluntary organizations, for whom process may be as important, if not more important, than output. These new demands and expectations can constrain organizations and create organizational challenges as they struggle to meet these rising expectations.

It also signals a very important discursive shift which is framing the norms of practice within the field of activity. As voluntary organizations take on more responsibilities, they become subject to the guidelines and norms possibly quite different from the prevailing values and norms within the voluntary sector. By placing a premium on effectiveness and productivity it may create a dissonance within voluntary organizations, which tend to value quality of services over quantity as well as justice and equity in the form of delivery (Hansmann 1987, Weisbrod 1988). How, then, organizations choose to adapt to this new context and these new demands, or even resist them, can profoundly affect their organizational practice at the micro scale. In this thesis, I pay particular attention to this multiscale process in order to understand how discourses and frames generated at a macro scale of action shape practice at a micro scale.

New pressures for compliance in areas of management and accountability also raise concerns regarding the institutional capacity of organizations for meeting such demands. I ask how this increasing responsibility in the area of service provision might impact the organization on the whole and in its other activities, such as advocacy or representation. Such an effect may be reflected in the allocation of resources within the organization, the repartition of staff, and of tasks among the varied activities. Its impact

on voluntary organizations may also operate through changes in the relationship between organizations, by affecting coalition activities, and even power relations within the sector.

Just as the restructuring of service provision is a prominent theme in the governance literature, it is a major theme in the voluntary sector literature. Smith and Lipsky were the first to describe the relations between the welfare state and voluntary organizations as comprised within a “contracting regime” (Smith and Lipsky 1993).² By alluding to voluntary organizations as the new “street-level bureaucrats”, capturing their growing role in the implementation of policy responses, they denote the government’s influence on the practices of organizations involved in the contracting relationship. Smith and Lipsky argue that by expanding their services, contracting may enhance the capacity of voluntary organizations to respond to community needs. Nevertheless, they raise concerns that contracting may undermine the autonomy of voluntary sector organizations by rendering them dependant on government for funding. They suggest that under this regime, voluntary organizations “have lost control over central aspects of the way they provide services” (Smith and Lipsky 1993, p. 120).

Similarly, Rekart uses the term “shadow civil service” to describe voluntary organizations that provide contracted-out services for the public sector (Rekart 1993). Various terminologies capture this shift in the relationship service provision between government and voluntary sector ranging from “third-party government” (Salamon 1995), “enabling state” (Gilbert and Gilbert 1989), to the “shadow state” (Wolch 1990). The implications of these portrayals are that the new contracting relationship is pushing

² Similar shifts towards the development of a “contracting regime” have been occurring most notably in the UK, Australian and the United States. See for example Power 1997, 1994, Melville 1999, Austin 2003, Salamon 2002.

voluntary organizations to act more like businesses, forcing them to adopt managerial strategies (Smith and Lipsky 1993, Rekart, 1993 see also Shields and Evans 1998, Phillips and Graham 2000). Not only does it involve a shift in funding practices, most often from core funding to contract based funding; it also involves a change in the requirements attached to these funds (Scott 2003).

The literature on the voluntary sector, as well as that of social movements, demonstrates that funding exerts a powerful influence on voluntary organizations at the organizational scale. Smith and Lipsky argue that growing accountability requirements translate into the development of professionalism in organizations, displacing in some cases volunteer staff by professional managers (Smith and Lipsky 1993). Other research has also shown that it may impact the instruments and repertoires of action as well as the organizational capacity (Basok and Ilcan 2004, Scott 2003, Butler 1985, Smith and Lipsky 1993, Gutch 1992, Kramer and Grossman 1987, Salamon 1987). In fact, some argue that funding arrangements undermine the autonomy of organizations by diverting them from their original mission (Gronbjerg 1993, Smillie 1995). Certainly, pressures for reporting and accountability significantly impact the management practices of organizations. This is a particularly salient issue in the context of governance where organizations have increased responsibility in the sphere of service provision.

Moreover, there is growing evidence that voluntary organizations have to adapt their practice, and that advocacy activities are harder to sustain in this new environment (Pross and Webb 2003, Saugrutter 2003, Laforest 2001, Alexander 1999, 2000, Melville 2001, Lyons 1997). For instance, when resources are scarce, organizations withdraw from certain activities; and when resources become available, organizations reframe their

mission, or take on new activities to tap into these new resources. In a governance process mainly centered on partnership in service delivery and where resources are allocated to support that role, other activities such as advocacy and representation may become harder to maintain. Inevitably, this raises the question of how organizations balance the new demands layered onto their daily operations, with those of their constituents.

3.5.2 Policy making

The new environment of policy making has transformed the way the public, private, and voluntary sectors relate to each other, and the type of relationships that develop from such collaboration. These dynamics are occurring both within policy fields and around particular policy issues. Given the increased complexity of policy issues, governments need to develop coordinating processes to provide comprehensive responses by drawing on the strength of a range of government agencies, as well as private and voluntary sector actors. Through network arrangements, governments may share the risk, pool resources and knowledge, and enhance the policy input and feedback. As a result, new political arenas, mechanisms of participation, and new dependencies are created, thereby redefining the contours of the relationship between state and civil society (Marsh and Rhodes 1992).

Networks become sites for political representation, providing opportunities and openings for voluntary organizations to participate in the policy process. Some theorists believe that, by this, governance enhances democracy (Hirst 1994, Cohen and Rogers 1992). Engaging more actors in policy discussions, they assert, will increase the

influence of civil society on public policy, and foster civic engagement. Others believe that in broadening access to non-governmental actors, governance limits the capacity of elected officials, and undermines the foundation of the democratic system (Van Gunsteren 2001, DeLeon 1998). In this view, only elected representatives are truly accountable to the public, and the very legitimacy of the voluntary sector is called into question. In fact, it is often dichotomized that public agencies act on behalf of the public because they have been elected to do so, whereas voluntary organizations do not possess this legitimacy.

The following issues are implicit in the debates: How is a legitimate and credible participant defined? What confers that legitimacy? What roles are valued as essential to effective democracy and good governance? Should the role of voluntary organizations in policy making be one of voicing member and beneficiary concerns, or should they be accountable to the general public? To make sense of these competing discourses and symbols of political representation, I draw from the insights of social movement literature. As Jenson notes, these issues are debated in the realm of the political discourse which “comprises beliefs about the way politics should be conducted, the boundaries of political discussion, and the kinds of conflicts resolvable through political processes” (Jenson 1987, p. 65).

Rhodes even describes networks as “closed to outsiders and unrepresentative” (Rhodes 2000, p. 81), revolving around a few insiders who carve out policies or programmes with such detail and specialized language that others are closed out. In such networks, “professional discretion and expertise are core values” (Rhodes 2000, p. 81, Baumgartner and Jones 1993). In order to successfully shape policy, voluntary

organizations need to embrace these values and practices, and if required, receive additional training to develop such technical expertise. The demands of policy making, in effect, reinforce certain forms of action, while discouraging others. As organizations acquire and develop practical skills for policy making, they may seize opportunities. However, this process may engender significant structural change at the organizational scale. By redefining the terms of access through which organizations are afforded legitimacy in the policy process, it can ultimately impact on the structure of representation. As the network's exclusivity imposes restrictions on some actors, I investigate the processes by which organizations are included and excluded in governance arrangements. Not only do these practices impact on the policy process, they also have an impact on the forms of representation through which interests are articulated. Ultimately, an organization's position in the policy process may impact its policy capacity; influencing the way it defines its interests, and directs its strategies.

The governance literature also offers insight on another layer of the relationship between state and the voluntary sector. By focusing on practices involved in the day-to-day processes of policy making, governance raises both structural and administrative issues about how greater collaboration will translate into the operational environment. At an administrative level within governments, voluntary sector issues may take on a more central position within units or departments. Not only would this provide the sector with a higher profile in policy development, but it may allow organizations to act from within established institutions in order to influence policy. This nexus between the sector and the state merits some attention, and it has long been a focus of the social movement literature, especially those concerned with the women's movement (Tilly 1978, Gamson

1975, 1980, Rucht and McAdams 1993, Staggenborg 1988, McCarthy and Zald 1987, Dobrowolsky 2002, McKeen 2004).

3.6 Challenges for the voluntary sector

By transforming the patterns of relationship, and the organizational configuration of service delivery, policy making, and representation, the process of governance shapes the range of possibilities, and constraints for voluntary sector organizations. Their participation in such processes is potentially both empowering and crippling, as it creates new roles and responsibilities. On one hand, it confers credibility and legitimacy to the actors involved; they gain access and recognition of their importance and value. Alternatively, it places new demands on organizations requiring resources, skills, and capacities, in an environment where organizations are already heavily taxed. Hence, voluntary organizations face a number of tensions making it increasingly complex and challenging to continue being effective agents of change in each area. This section examines how some of the tensions may play out across scales, at the sectoral scale, within a particular policy field, and at the organizational scale. While each facet of the relationship generates specific challenges for voluntary sector organizations, several consistent issues arise in the literature centering on issues of representation, accountability, and capacity. How the tensions play out may determine an organization's success of exercising agency in governance.

3.6.1 Representation

Representation involves the dual process of representing interests and constituting identities through political action (Jenson 1989, 1995). For voluntary organizations, representation involves the perception and interpretation of the members' expectations, and possibilities for action deemed feasible in the political situation. This requires articulating a vision, and defining goals and the paths to achieve them. As agents of change, organizations try to shape and transform policy. Voluntary organizations not only respond to the pressures created by governance, they also try to create opportunities. Part of this is done through organizational strategizing, but part of it is also done through networks by exchanging information, by building alliances and coalitions, and by giving a voice to the sector's needs.

Voluntary organizations face distinct tensions relating to representation in the process of governance. Firstly, there is the challenge of building a whole of government/whole of sector relationship. To effectively participate in macro-scale processes and lobby on behalf of the sector, organizations need to develop institutions and processes to achieve intra-sectoral coordination and communication (Phillips 2001a, 2001b). As they engage with the state and institutional actors, the question of identity and interests, of *who we are* emerges. The sector, however, is beset by internal contradictions. For instance, while many organizations essentially provide services to their constituents, others are primarily advocates serving as agents of social transformation, whereas still others take on both these roles to various degrees. This may create tension between the diverse, often contradictory claims made by voluntary organizations, and which can at times be conflictual. It necessitates the aggregation of interests at the macro scale in order

to give rise to a collective voice, which inevitably means that certain interests will be included and others excluded.

Given voluntary sector organizations are so very diverse, and generally not unified, the politics around the construction of an identity for the *sector* becomes vital to understanding strategy and voice. Just as for social movements, the identity of the sector is not given or fixed in time. Rather, it is constructed and contested not just at the micro scale, within individual organizations but at the macro scale as well, through the sector as a collective expression of the needs and wants of voluntary organizations.

The particular identity that emerges can significantly impact on the rules of the game. Collectively, the sector may benefit from opportunities to participate in policy. However, in the process, it can create opportunities for certain organizations to the detriment of others. As Jenson illustrates, the act of naming and framing play a big part in determining what actors should be included, and who should be excluded from the policy process. We need to remember that how ideas are framed, and how they are conveyed, packaged, really does matter. For this reason, the choice of a name is often the central part of the political battle shaping the identity of a movement, and similarly, the identity of the voluntary sector. By framing the identity of the sector in a particular way, it will affect the nature of the claims that will be made. It will also legitimate particular routes of political representation by making certain strategies, tactics and forms of mobilization more attractive (Hunt, Benford and Snow 1994). Voluntary organizations will mobilize around this identity and it will shape the range of available repertoires of action and of available strategic alliances.

While voluntary organizations may create new opportunities for themselves, they must also adapt their strategies to the environment in which they find themselves. In each of the areas of service provision, policy making, and relationship building, as I discussed earlier, shifts are taking place that may affect representation by conferring access, resources, legitimacy, and credibility to certain political actors, but not others. By altering the terms of access, the availability of resources and the opportunities for participation, governance may impact the lines of inclusion and exclusion. To understand this process, it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of formal and informal networks, as the means by which power is concentrated and institutionalized.

I believe we need to focus on the bigger picture of how power relations and power structures are constructed and perpetuated. The ‘voluntary sector’ can be conceptualized as a social identity around which is articulated a structure of representation, as well as the processes of representation and legitimization. Embedded in the structure of representation is a particular idea or vision of who are credible and legitimate actors; and of what is an acceptable and legitimate activity for voluntary organizations at a particular point in time. The overall structure of representation affects what issues will be addressed and pressed forward by the sector. It shapes the range of potential options available to organizations by influencing the distribution of resources and opportunities upon which power is based. New actors, new ideas and new interests can emerge, gain momentum and bring about change at which time the forms of access to the state and the articulation of interests are opened up for negotiation.

Although the shift in governance affords greater importance to voluntary organizations in the fields of service delivery and policy making, the need to strengthen

the relationship with the state at a macro scale may also raise concerns regarding the impact of the terms of relationship building on the very nature of the sector. The elaboration of various partnership agreements for the provision of services or programme development may impose additional burdens and responsibilities on organizations, undermining some fundamental characteristics of the voluntary sector. Voluntary organizations, by their very nature, are democratic, and concerned with representing the interests of their constituencies which often requires a bottom-up process. Through their collective voice and representation, they exercise influence in the policy process; however, there is a concern that organizations will become agents of governments, and distance themselves from their base (Salamon 1995, Skocpol 2003).

Many studies have already demonstrated that this dynamic is challenging for voluntary organizations. Skocpol, for example, indicates the pressures are more effective in the areas of service delivery and policy making, creating an organizational dynamic that prompts voluntary organizations to be more professionally management-oriented (Skocpol 2003). She argues that this undermines the democratic vocation of organizations, as they increasingly value resources, staff, and knowledge, over their relationship with their members. Offe and Wiesenhal (1980) also illustrate that as organizations become partners with governments, the relations between leaders and their constituents may turn into an oligarchic structure (Offe and Wiesenhal 1980). Similarly, Barnes argues that by engaging with a larger number of partners, groups discover their energies dissipate (Barnes 1999). Hence, one may question whether voluntary organizations will be able to balance their representational role, while maintaining their distance from the state, with contractual relationships and partnerships being encouraged

or mandated (Phillips 2001, Jenson and Phillips 1996). These practices may encourage organizations to appear “responsible”, act professionally, and steer away from non-conventional forms of political representation, in order to secure gains in governance. Consequently, it may affect not only their organizational practices; it can also affect relationships with their constituencies by turning them away from their own strengths and values.

In terms of representation, our research focuses on these processes, and asks how the voluntary sector has constructed a shared understanding of its identity; how the shift in governance helps shape this identity; and finally, how these processes shape the ensuing strategies, tactics, and forms of representation within the sector across scales of action. Quite possibly, these processes are modifying the demands and claims people make, the organizational forms they gravitate towards, and the scales of action they pursue.

3.6.2 Accountability

Accountability in the voluntary sector is 'multi-layered' and 'multi-dimensional'. As Broadbent et al. argue, it involves “accountability to different audiences, for a variety of activities and outcomes, through many different means” (Panel on Accountability and Governance in the voluntary sector 1999, p. 11). Voluntary organizations face numerous demands of being accountable to their constituents, to their funders, to their donors, to the general public, and to their partners; each in a different way. While multiple sources of accountability already exist, the shift in governance creates additional pressures for voluntary organizations by imposing growing demands for accountability in both the

policy realm, and the service arena. This shift increases the need for financial transparency, and for organizations to be accountable for the management and recording of resources and expenses.

To meet these challenges, voluntary organizations must adapt to the new accountability imperatives. Growing contracting practices add new layers of accountability, forcing voluntary organizations to abide to the contractual terms of the new arrangements (Smith and Lipsky 1993). Eakin defines contracting as “the purchase of defined services with specified outputs and closely controlled funding, usually accompanied by increase accountability requirements with little or no flexibility in program delivery or funding” (Eakin 2001, p. i). For the government, extending financial control and accountability requires linking goals and objectives to outcomes and performance. These arrangements attach tremendous importance to results, at the expense of process.

Organizations are held accountable for the achievement of desired outcomes as defined by the contractor. Light notes that “fundors, be they governments, charitable foundations, or individual givers, have never seemed so insistent about economy and results, while its clients, be they communities or individuals, have never been more demanding about efficiency and responsiveness” (Light 2000, p. v, cited in Richmond and Shields 2003). Voluntary organizations that compete in a tendering process to obtain the contract, have little input. This may prove problematic for those who value quality of services over quantity of services. The demands may also greatly affect methods used to define and achieve the organization’s goals.

Moreover, under these contracts, voluntary organizations are obliged to provide consistent services, in compliance with the norms and overarching values of the public service. The implementation and delivery of a government program, however, is significantly different from the operation of a community program. Due to its public nature, it imposes financial, legal, and political accountability on the program deliverer. Financial accountability often implies accountability for the efficient use of resources managed by the organization. Clearly then, while changes in resources may affect the material conditions out of which organizations operate, it is important to acknowledge that shifts in resources may be linked to broader transformations in institutional arrangements and a discursive context that ultimately affect the direction of change.

Moreover, voluntary organizations that supply public services must provide external transparency for all stakeholders and the general public. In fact, voluntary organizations participating in program development and delivery face new pressures for political and legal accountability for the decisions made. Voluntary organizations involved in collaborative arrangements therefore, have to take into account the interests of their partners both in the delivery of services and the elaboration of policy (Smith and Lipsky 1993, Rekart 1996, Phillips 2001). Because of the mutual stakes and the risk involved in these types of arrangements, it also implies that they must open themselves up to inspection by partners and to new demands for transparency and accountability, as well as the adoption of new practices to efficiently provide the services. It is important to note that these pressures are also felt from private sector funders, foundations and insurance companies who increasingly impose stringent accountability requirements on voluntary organizations.

Benefits of partnering and networking under new modes of governance may require further transformations within the voluntary sector. To meet these demands, organizations may adopt new practices, compromising quality in order to comply with the imperatives of effectiveness and efficiency. Such demands for accountability place a heavy burden on voluntary organizations, particularly in a context of constrained resources. The additional administrative burden and paperwork significantly increases the workload of organizations. By making reporting an ongoing part of organizations' administration, small organizations may be at a disadvantage, as they may not possess the skills or the human resources to fulfill these requirements. The Panel on Accountability in the Voluntary Sector observed that "...there is a danger that accountability could become the end instead of the means. Overly demanding regulations and highly onerous reporting requirements may look good on paper, but their actual effect may be to kill the spirit of volunteerism with administrative paperwork and to drive out small volunteer grassroots organizations which do not have the capacity to meet them. Legitimate reporting requirements must, of course, be met" (Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector 1999, p. 2).

Moreover, these practices may eventually transform the very nature of voluntary organizations. New organizational forms that are adopted tend to reflect a bureaucratization, professionalism, and a formalization of the relationship with the state. As Shields points out, "community involvement in the running of non-profit service provision is being replaced by professional management with accountability to the state" (Shields 2002, p. 18). It raises the challenge from the trade-off between the demands for accountability and the need for flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of the

constituents (Smith and Lipsky 1993, Phillips and Graham 2000). Greater emphasis on accountability and reporting may be done at the expense of the ability to adapt to identify new needs within the community and to experiment with creative approaches to problem solving, key qualities of voluntary organizations.

Challenges arise when there are tensions between different accountability imperatives. In both the field of service delivery and policy making, there is a constant tension to strike the right balance between accountability to one's partner, or contractor, and to one's constituency. Often associated with the delivery of services, contracting creates the challenge of balancing advocacy and service, and may affect an organization's relationship with its membership or constituency. Voluntary organizations derive their democratic legitimacy from the processes of representation. By undermining the ties with their constituents, it raises the concern regarding the democratic legitimacy of these arrangements. Just how these tensions are resolved will affect not only the shape of the voluntary sector but also the nature of the relationships between voluntary organizations, their constituents, the state, and the general public.

3.6.3 Capacity

In order for voluntary organizations to be effective agents in the field of service delivery, policymaking, and relationship building, they need to have the capacity to take on new responsibilities and to meet new challenges. There are costs involved for organizations taking part in partnerships, consultations, and networking. This takes time, energy, skills, and resources. Not only do they need to have the right skills and knowledge to accomplish new tasks; they also have to have sufficient resources to

develop those skills required to meet new demands, and develop new activities.

Voluntary organizations with limited resources cannot accomplish this without tradeoffs (Shields and Evans 1998, Hall and Reed 1998). The choices they need to make are not without consequence for the capacity of organizations to accomplish their work and achieve their goals. Berry argues that an organization's capacity reflects its 'investment strategy', which is the way it allocates scarce resources, collects and disseminates information. He states, "Those decisions as to how best utilize resources determine the capacity of an organization to achieve its goals" (Berry 2003, p. 9). In order to allocate resources strategically, organizations generally need to make trade-offs.

One tension concerns the type of skills organizations value. Voluntary sector involvement in program design and delivery requires a strengthened capacity with respect to human resources, knowledge development, and financial management. Through contracting arrangements, organizations must comply with certain requirements and rules set out for public service delivery. By meeting the accountability imperatives, and following the general standards, organizations redefine the skill sets of their staff. A different skill set requires different type of knowledge; moreover, it calls for different management skills. Organizations may train their staff, or hire additional staff with the necessary skills. This retooling of organizations affects their values and translates into the way they accomplish their work, and define their mission and strategy.

At an organizational scale, greater responsibility in service delivery and policy making requires sufficient funding to ensure they have the organizational capacity and human resources needed to fulfil their role. Despite the increasing occurrence of policies aimed at mobilising the human resources of the voluntary sector, many organizations do

not have the finances to initiate and sustain partnerships. Evidence suggests that the downloading of services to voluntary sector organizations may create unequal quality and quantity of services provided (Hall and Reed 1998). Some researchers question the capacity of voluntary organizations to provide such services in a context of constrained resources (Shields and Evans 1998, Hall and Reed 1998). Therefore, organizations need to choose how to allocate resources among various tasks. To maintain their level of activities while delivering new programs, organizations must find new sources of funding. Either through additional project-based funding, user fees, or fundraising, each of these practices is time-consuming and labour intensive, placing an additional strain on the organization. This lack of stability also creates huge problems in terms of staffing and job quality (McMullen and Schellenberg 2003, Scott 2003, NSNVO 2004).

An analysis of governance process must examine the central issues of capacity: capacity to seize new opportunities and challenges, capacity to effect change, capacity to resist change, and ultimately, capacity to fulfill one's mission.

3.7 Conclusion

As I have discussed, voluntary organizations must overcome many challenges in order to be effective agents in the process of governance. The new exigencies in accountability, on capacity and on representation, exert enormous pressures on voluntary organizations, manifesting themselves at a variety of scales of action. In order to adapt to the new demands placed on them, organizations may have to transform themselves and develop the new forms of representation; yet, these dynamics do not occur in a vacuum. Opportunities may present themselves either in the form of discourses, funding

opportunities, tactical opportunities, or partnerships and alliances. Similarly, constraints may hinder certain forms of representation, by shifting resources away from certain activities. The ability to seize these opportunities and create new ones for themselves will impact the sector's development and success, as well as that of individual voluntary organizations.

I draw on the social movement literature and, in particular, the concept of political opportunity structure in order to redirect theoretical emphasis on the interaction between political agency and institutions in the process of governance. In so combining both perspectives, I arrive at a way to capture organizational dynamics of collective action across scales of action by drawing attention to political opportunity, mobilizing structures and cultural frames (McAdam, McCarty and Zald 1996). Through a brief examination of social movement literature, I have argued that collective action needs to be understood as both a product of the ability of organizations to mobilize resources, often organizational in nature, and of external structures of political opportunity at a variety of scales. The goal of this research is to employ the concept of political opportunity structure to clarify links between the politics of governance unfolding on a variety of scales.

Moreover, I believe that governance processes are embedded in specific context, the product of particular historical circumstances. Therefore, how voluntary organizations respond to the dilemmas in Canada, will depend on the specifics of the Canadian governance model, the history of the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector, and the capacity of the sector. In the next chapter, I will examine governance in the Canadian case and draw more specific hypotheses of how particular dynamics in this

context may be affecting the voluntary sector and voluntary sector organizations. As noted, my thesis will be guided by three broad research questions:

- What opportunities and constraints do voluntary organizations face in the areas of service provision, policy making, and relationship building?
- What specific challenges are created for organizations at the macro, meso and micro scale? How have they affected and transformed organizations?
- How have they, in turn, responded, adapted, and attempted to shape the process of governance?

The research questions present an integrated, dynamic approach to the study of governance, and attempt to make a link between action, identities, strategies, and the broader institutional context. By demonstrating how voluntary organizations shape the process of governance, and in turn, how they are shaped by it; this conceptualization of the voluntary sector's role in the governance process represents an important departure from existing theoretical approaches that focus exclusively on the state; and therefore, has important implications for contemporary research and policy. In the following chapters, I explore how these broad issues have played out at varying scales by examining in a subset of organizations from the voluntary sector.

Chapter 4 The politics of governance: Through the Canadian looking glass

4.1 Introduction

The defining aspect of governance is the move towards networked forms of service delivery and policy making, involving a wider range of actors beyond the public service. Chapter two discussed some of the important challenges that this new practice of governing raises for voluntary organizations involved in the process of governance. This chapter describes the changes in modes of governance that are occurring in Canada and how they are structuring the relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector.

My goal in this chapter is twofold. First, I ground the analysis of changes in governance in a concrete setting by examining how the federal government and the voluntary sector are seeking to rebuild their relationship. I trace the shift in governance and identify the opportunities and constraints it creates for voluntary organizations in order to set the contextual stage and map the space for organizations to act. Identifying the shift in governance provides insight into transformations occurring across scales. It is important to underline that the realignment of the relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector is not steered by the state alone. It is an interactive process, not unidirectional. Voluntary sector organizations have the power to initiate change and, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, they have played a very proactive role in reshaping their relationship with the state from the outset. There are no universal relationships between transformations that are occurring in areas of service delivery, policy making and relationship building and particular trends in voluntary sector

capacity, performance, legitimacy and accountability. Context, circumstances and the quality of relationships between the actors are of crucial importance for understanding the dynamics that are unfolding. The last part of this chapter looks at the possible challenges that the shift in governance in Canada has created for voluntary sector organizations across scales and draws some specific research questions that will guide my inquiry in the chapters that follow.

4.2 History of the relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector

Voluntary sector organizations in Canada have long played an important role in the policy process, both as a source of services and as a vehicle for political participation and citizen engagement (Phillips and Laforest 2003). They have a history of working with the federal government to meet the needs of Canadians and there are longstanding points of intersection between the two of them. While the primary responsibility for social services, health and education has always rested with provincial and municipal governments; the relationship between the federal government and voluntary sector organizations is nonetheless important. In fact, the federal government has served as a pole of attraction for collective action endeavours for the past thirty years because it has been a strong supporter, both financially and institutionally, of voluntary sector organizations.

For one, the federal government has played an important role in developing and maintaining Canada's social programs. Departments such as the former Health and Welfare Canada, Canadian Heritage, Health Canada, Citizenship and Immigration, and the former Human Resources Development Canada, all have responsibilities which

overlap with those of voluntary sector organizations. Early on in Canadian history, voluntary organizations emerged to offer health and welfare services within communities, particularly in remote locations. Their work and effort lead to the establishment of orphanages, hospitals and care facilities (Lautenschlager n.d.). Voluntary organizations, therefore, assisted federal departments by delivering programs and providing services their behalf.

Moreover, the federal government has a long history of providing some direct support for voluntary organizations in the form of grants and contributions.¹ Already in the 1900s, it provided financial assistance voluntary organizations, such as the Canadian Lung Association and the Victorian Order of Nurses (Laforest and Phillips 2003, Government of Canada - Voluntary Sector Joint Initiative 1999). As their financial burden grew, the federal government provided some financial support to voluntary organizations via core funding. Voluntary organizations working in the area of health promotion received federal funding through programs such as New Horizons and the Health Promotion Contribution Program. In 1997-1998, \$4.2 billion was spent annually by the federal government in direct funding to support programs and services delivered by voluntary organizations (Treasury Board Secretariat 2001). In addition to direct funding, the federal government also provides indirectly through tax relief for registered

¹ With respect to their income, 49 percent of voluntary sector resources come from governments, whereas 35 percent comes from individual donations, corporations, user fees and other fundraising activities (NSNVO 2004). While we do not have comprehensive data on the level of governmental funding, it has been estimated by the Treasury Board Secretariat that the federal government provides 10.5 percent of the government's total support to charitable groups, whereas provincial governments provide 84.2 percent and local governments 5.3 percent (Treasury Board Secretariat 2001, Hall and MacPherson 1996, 1997). See also code of good funding practices available at: www.vsi-isbc.ca

charities.² Tax incentives for charitable giving are not new; the federal government institutionalized them in the 1960s. However, they have expanded in the last decade. This system is accompanied by a regulatory framework under the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) -- formerly Revenue Canada -- which serves to determine which organizations qualify for charitable status and to monitor the conduct of those registered. This regulatory framework is currently under negotiations to be revised. Each province also has its own provincial charitable tax credit rate which varies substantially from one province to another.

Finally, the federal government not only recognizes the role of voluntary organizations financially, but politically as well. In response to the national unity crises that began in the 1960s, the federal government thought that by enhancing the mobilization of collective action around diverse facets of Canadian identity, such as official language minority groups, multicultural organizations, and women's groups; actors of civil society could help redefine traditional notions of Canadian identity, and thereby make it more inclusive (Pal 1993). The collective action efforts of voluntary organizations were regarded by the federal government as a means to enable citizens to attain and practice skills of citizenship, and it allowed disadvantaged groups equal access to the polity. From the 1970s to the 1980s, the political climate was favourable for voluntary organizations, particularly those involved in advocacy and public education. Through the Secretary of State programs such as the Citizenship Branch, the federal government specifically provided operational funding to national organizations in support of advocacy (Pal 1993, Jenson and Phillips 1996). The concept of democratic

² It is estimated that in 1997-1998, \$1.5 billion in tax relief was provided indirectly to registered charities (Treasury Board Secretariat 2001).

involvement and citizen participation began to take hold and the role of voluntary organizations was recognized as one of articulating interests and mobilizing energies in order to feed them into the policy process, thereby giving voice to disadvantaged minorities. Not only was core funding made available to support advocacy organizations, but access to the federal government for these organizations was institutionalized through a number of programs, especially through the Secretariat of State programmes (Pal 1993, Jenson and Phillips 1996). However, this was usually done in a fragmented and ad hoc manner.

Voluntary organizations prospered as they gained not only institutional recognition but also wider access to formal and informal channels of policy making (Dobrowolsky 1998, Pal 1993). They developed and matured into strong advocates on many policy fronts. As Pal remarks, Canada is one of the only countries to have created an elaborate funding regime to assist organizations and to institutionalize access to the state (Pal 1993, see also Phillips 1991, Jenson and Phillips 1996). Through these actions, the federal government conferred legitimacy to organizations as mobilizers of collective action. This carried into the universe of political discourse as advocacy groups were recognized as valuable and credible actors; and advocacy was deemed a legitimate activity. These organizations also gained significant political weight as they lobbied the federal government to secure rights for groups of marginalized people and for more extensive social policies (Pal 1993). In particular, the women's movement mobilized extensively during this period and gained recognition as valuable interlocutor in policy making (Dobrowolsky 1998, 2000).

These particularities of the Canadian context and the relationship between the federal government and voluntary sector organizations have significantly shaped the contours of political space and the scales of action. The favourable social and political environment of the 1980s fostered not only the growth of the sector by facilitating the organization of various groups, but it also rendered them increasingly dependent on the federal government for their resources. At least for core funding; contracting for services still occurred mainly at the provincial level. Nevertheless, because core funding, as opposed to contracts, enables organizations to allot resources to advocacy activities and to representation; it means that representational activities and collective identity building initiatives were tied in a significant way to federal government resources. Moreover, interactions with the state were frequently linked to a specific government department, such as Health Canada, Heritage Canada or then Human Resources Development Canada.

In light of the opportunities for action at the federal government, voluntary organizations also have a long tradition of focusing their energies on lobbying the federal government, even though the bulk of social programs are delivered by the provincial and municipal levels of government. As a result, representation of voluntary organizations at the provincial level of government has traditionally been weaker. With subfields organized horizontally through provincial and national umbrella organizations, there has traditionally also been relatively little interaction between organizations across silos of activities which has significantly undermined the capacity of organizations to develop a peak umbrella organization to represent the sector as a whole at a macro scale. Hence, until the mid 1990s, there had been no coordinated action and leadership for the

voluntary sector had not yet developed. There was no clear, common voice advocating on behalf of voluntary organizations at a sectoral scale. In fact, organizations at that time did not even recognize themselves as belonging to a larger community called ‘the voluntary sector’. As I shall illustrate in the next chapter, identification to such a collective entity developed later as organizations increasingly participated in governance.

4.3 Governance: shifting political opportunity structures

By 1990, the terrain shifted. Although the federal government had always worked collaboratively with the voluntary sector as I have just discussed, a number of transformations occurred which shaped the context of collective action across scales and ultimately opened up the question of how interests should best be articulated and represented in the process of governance. Because of the complex and multidimensional nature of the governance process, I cannot point to broad, definitive transformations that have occurred in the Canadian political realm. According to Ward, “A transformation is contested, is uneven, does reveal contradictions, is not linear, and new policies do embed themselves and interact with existing networks of power” (Ward 2000, p. 172). As I shall demonstrate, the shift in governance in the Canadian context, because it is the object of struggle, is fraught with internal contradictions. Rather, in this section, I point to some discrete changes in the institutional environment in the spheres of service delivery and policy making, which taken together, have expression at much broader scales (Pal 1997, Ward 2000).

The context of governing in Canada has changed remarkably in the last decade as the federal government has come under increasing strain. Tensions arise from the

pressures to reduce government expenditure, while simultaneously reforming state bureaucracy (Swimmer 1997). Declining confidence of the population in politicians and political institutions, has also increased pressure for a more transparent and inclusive process of decision-making (Nevitte 1996, Zussman 1997). Demands for greater scrutiny not only in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, but also in terms of openness and transparency, have contributed to making the performance of the federal government in the spheres of service delivery and policy making a priority (Paquet and Shepherd 1996). As a result, Canada, like many other industrialized countries, has been subjected to a wide range of public sector reforms. Modes of governing have shifted away from traditional hierarchical, command and control towards more interactive collaborative forms of governance, which have created new spaces for voluntary sector organizations within the state. While the shift from government to governance is not as pronounced in Canada as in the UK, some of the reforms and practices of governance are manifest in the Canadian context and can be dated from roughly the mid 1990s onward.

4.3.1 Governance in the sphere of service provision

In the early 1990s, the federal government began a process of modernizing the political and administrative system and embarked on a major review of the machinery of government. The *Government Renewal program* had three objectives: reducing federal expenditures; clarifying the core responsibilities of the federal government and rebalancing the division of labour amongst the different levels of government and the private and voluntary sectors in the Canadian governance system; and equipping the federal public service with the tools necessary to improve the efficiency of public sector

management (Paquet and Shepherd 1996). Under this initiative, the federal government specifically examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal departments and agencies to discover methods of streamlining government operations, and thereby improve their efficiency through the reorganization of departments and agencies.

Broadly speaking one of the main outcomes of restructuring has been the development of a leaner public sector. In fact, in 1993 under a government reorganization, the number of cabinet ministers was reduced from 40 to 24; small departments merged into larger departments via the creation of Human Resources Development Canada and Industry Canada; and the folding of the Office of the Comptroller-General into the Treasury Board Secretariat; all significantly reduced the size of the state (Swimmer 1997).

The move to disentangle responsibilities within the social policy sector also led the federal government to divest itself of some program delivery responsibilities in favour of the provinces. One of the first outcomes of this approach was the creation of the Canada Health and Social Transfer program (CHST), which combined health, social service and post secondary education transfers to the provinces into one comprehensive transfer program with fewer conditions attached. While the creation of the CHST was clearly part of a major cost-cutting exercise, it was also designed to reduce the federal role in service delivery. In many ways, the CHST set the pattern for future social policy debates, involving the need for interactive forms of governing among a wider range of participants.

The Program Review, launched in 1994, played a key role in reshaping the relationship between the public, private, and voluntary sectors, and thereby led to a

critical re-examining of the role of government and its relationship to society. In the interest of cost efficiency and effectiveness, a number of functions in the areas of service provision and policy making were devolved onto the voluntary sector. The Program Review assessed the federal government's responsibilities and examined government programs to determine the most effective and cost-efficient way of delivering services. The federal government was also concerned with reducing the scale of the public service. Swimmer describes the Program Review;

The underlying ideology of the exercise is to determine the 'core role of government', which will reduce the size of federal government to the appropriate level... based on a belief in the superiority of private sector management styles, which translates into fostering competition in the public sector, decentralizing responsibilities by a separation between policy making (steering) and implementation (rowing), and providing quality service delivery, often through the use of private sector partners (Swimmer 1997, p. 4).

Under pressure to reduce costs and increase performance, the federal government also began to rethink ways of providing services. While it considered commercializing some federal activities, delegating service delivery to private sector and voluntary sector organizations was seen as an effective way to cut costs while maintaining the same level of services. Either services were offloaded or they were relegated on a contractual basis. The *Getting Government Right* initiative, announced on 7 March 1996, pursued the objectives set out by the Program Review and identified four priorities to improve the delivery of services:

- Redefine the roles and responsibilities of the federal government;

- Ensure that resources are devoted to the highest priorities so that Canada is well positioned to face the economic and social challenges of the 21st century;
- Respond to the public demand for better and more accessible government by involving clients more in decision making; and
- Achieve more affordable government by reducing the deficit and debt pressures, and allow the government to effectively address issues that are important to Canadians (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat 1997).

Under Program Review, the relationship between line departments and voluntary organizations changed in three important ways. First, Program Review brought important changes to the funding regime. It led to both the introduction of new funding arrangements and to major funding cutbacks that began in the mid 1990s. The 1992 mini-budget announced cuts of 20% to voluntary organizations over the next two years; and the 1993 budget further cut funding by 15% (Phillips 2001, Griffin Cohen 1997). When the Liberals came to power under Jean Chrétien in 1993, the debt stood close to \$550 billion, nearly double what it had been in 1984 (Swimmer 1997). Responsible fiscal management became the mantra as the federal government deliberately began to review its role in the funding of organizations and many core funding programs were dissolved (Phillips 2001, Jenson and Phillips 1996, Shields and Evans 1998, Rice and Prince 2000).

By the mid 1990s, the rescaling of federal government activities, the devolution of responsibilities, contracting out and the downsizing of the public service had generated much opposition from social critics and advocacy organizations – who had benefited from funding from the federal government in the 1980s. Voluntary organizations

involved in advocacy came under attack as they were branded “special interest groups” (Phillips 2001, Jenson and Phillips 1996, Dobrowolsky 1998). The language of “special interest groups” depicted organizations as being preoccupied with a single issue or cause, thereby “representing at best a limited spectrum of public opinion” (Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing 1991, p. 228). Carried by the work of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, this language was perpetuated by the media and politicians such as John Bryden (Bryden 1996). The rise of populism in the early 1990s, which first became obvious with the electoral surge of the Reform Party in 1993, also contributed to this discursive shift depicting some voluntary organizations as “special interest groups” (Laycock 1990, 2002, Sawyer 2004). When the federal government conducted a broad public consultation across Canada on the Social Security Review in 1994, the Reform Party of Canada, in the final report, all but accused “special interest groups” of lining up at the trough.³ Moreover, faced with strong opposition from social critics during the Social Security Review, the federal government further sought to constrain these critical voices by significantly reducing available funding for advocacy (McKeen 2004, Phillips 1996).

This shift was further exacerbated by the publication of a number of articles profiling cases of financial abuse and lack of transparency in voluntary organizations. While examples of scandals in well-established American organizations were spreading, such as the United Way of America where criminal charges were filed against the Chief Executive Officer in 1992 for fraud and tax evasion, Canada’s charitable sector also faced similar allegations. Walter Stewart’s book entitled *The Charity Game: Greed, Waste and*

³ Addendum to the Report on the Social Security Review.

Fraud in Canada's \$86 Billion-A-Year Compassion Industry (a book which was withdrawn from publication under threatened law suits from voluntary organizations) and *MacLean's* magazine for example both featured cases of alleged abuse within the sector in the mid 1990s. As a result, scepticism spread to the general public who had become mistrustful of the work of voluntary organizations, fostering a generalized climate of suspicion (Gibelman and Gelman 2000). These shifts in political discourse meant that voluntary organizations were increasingly placed under the scrutiny of public examination and cast in a negative light.

The federal government adopted this discourse and began to argue that it was no longer appropriate to support "special interest groups" because they defended parochial interests and were motivated solely by their particularistic goals (Jenson and Phillips 1996, Dobrowolsky 1998). Along with the questioning of the efficiency of core funding, was a questioning of the legitimacy of activities to be funded, and in 1995, selective funding cutbacks were announced that specifically targeted advocacy organizations (Phillips 2001, Swimmer 1997).

As the political discourse had begun to question the role of intermediary organizations in the representation of interests, voluntary sector organizations saw their institutionalized access to the state closed off and their relationship became antagonistic. As a result, national and provincial voluntary organizations involved in advocacy lost multiple allies within the federal government and virtually retreated from the political scene. What represents a significant shift in terms of the relationship between the federal government and voluntary organizations is that the federal government explicitly sought to discourage advocacy and increasingly funded organizations that provided services. It

opened opportunities for organizations that provide services, and closed off opportunities for advocacy organizations. Whereas the 1980s marked a rise of advocacy organizations funded by the state, in the 1990s, these organizations were pushed to primarily deliver services as funding was being cut back, and partnerships were encouraged or mandated (Jenson and Phillips 1996, Pal 1993).

The federal government also tightened regulation in order to maintain control over organizations by expanding the qualification requirements for charitable status (Government of Canada/Voluntary Sector 1999). In addition, the federal government introduced requirements to file a non-profit information return that was aimed at monitoring non-profit organizations more closely. This 1990 requirement was introduced to regulate non-profits, which had previously not been subject to such governance. Furthermore, in order to be eligible to register under the common law, organizations' purposes need to be charitable and political activity needs to be ancillary to this, usually interpreted to mean that the organization must remain non-partisan and that no more than 10% of its time and resources should be dedicated to advocating for legislative change around issues. This move constrained organizations as it implied redefining the status of organizations and what was an acceptable activity for registered charities.⁴ While these rules and regulations that govern registered charities are tied the notion of charity that Canada inherited from Elizabethan England, it is important to note that they were brought into force more vociferously in the early 1990s at a time when organizations were

⁴ For example, a representative of a women's group voiced some concern about being left out of partnership agreements and contracts with government because the women's organizations have had some difficulty being recognized as non-profit organizations and fulfilling the requirements of the governmental definition.

beginning to increase their fundraising initiatives to compensate for the loss of government funding.

Another outcome of this process has been a shift towards the 'contract culture', and the move from core funding towards short term contract based funding (Smith and Lipsky 1993, Rekart 1993, Scott 2003). It was also marked a move away from grants towards greater recourse to contributions and contracts. With grants, voluntary organizations have more flexibility in deciding how to spend the money internally, whereas contributions and contracts are generally targeted for a specific purpose. Through the contracting regime, there was a rise in the involvement of private and voluntary sector organizations in service delivery. The Canadian House of Commons estimates that the federal public sector contracted \$5.2 billion worth of services in 1992-1993 (Canadian House of Commons, 1994), 7% of this the Treasury Board Secretariat estimated were contracts with voluntary organizations for specified professional services (Treasury Board Secretariat 2001). Not only did the federal government withdraw from services which it deemed could be better delivered by external parties, it is also began working increasingly in partnership with other levels of government, the private and the voluntary sector.

Relatedly, as the federal government increasingly devolved responsibility for service provision onto third parties, it faced equally important pressures to exert control over the functions of delivery. Hence, the federal government began to implement indirect forms of control as opposed to direct forms of control, aiming to reduce the burden and constraints of centralized command and control systems. Delegation of services involved a transformation of the role of the state (Paquet 2000). With the

reduced involvement in direct service provision, the federal government took on a more managerial role, and as a result, the nature of governance in Canada shifted from traditional, hierarchical command and control governing towards greater collaboration and partnerships (Paquet 1999, Aucoin 1995). Administrative responsibilities were redistributed within the state as departments were given significant freedom in choosing service providers (Roberts 1996). Front-line civil servants were responsible for negotiating and coordinating policy implementation with these service providers. This resulted in a shift of emphasis from markets to networks.

In the interest of improving transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency, along with greater reliance on contracting, the federal government slowly moved away from managing on the basis of inputs and activities to managing on the basis of outputs and outcomes. Grants and contributions arrangements, for example, were increasingly distributed in support of specified outcomes. In order to attain this goal of results-based management, the Treasury Board was designated in 1997 to play an enhanced role as the federal government's management board (Lindquist 1998, Treasury Board 1998). In the process, it sought to hold voluntary organizations accountable for improvements in efficiency in the use of financial and human resources, in the effectiveness of their management practices and in meeting targets and standards in the delivery of services. A key aspect of this shift has been to emphasize the need for accountability in the search of a more efficient use of resources. As a result, it established performance indicators and effectiveness measures linked to use of the resources and created pressures for greater transparency. A similar shift in focus in the UK has been termed the "audit explosion" (Hood et al. 1998, Power 1994).

In sum, three major trends in the area of service delivery may affect the nature of the relationship between the Canadian federal government and the voluntary sector. With a transformation of form and functions of governments across scales, voluntary organizations were subjected to large funding cutbacks, more stringent control mechanisms and the accountability imperatives, at the same time as they were being called on to take more responsibility for social services. Consequently, the functions of voluntary organizations in service delivery continued to expand as the federal government and the voluntary sector became increasingly intertwined. This requires voluntary organizations to adapt to the more complex environment of service delivery and to acquire greater capacity to meet new challenges inherent to it. Each of these trends creates opportunities and constraints for voluntary organizations; taken together, they can evoke powerful pressures at an organizational scale by shaping the nature of their work, practices and capacity.

4.3.2 Policy Making

The modernization of the federal government has provided context not only to changes in structures of service delivery, but to policy making as well. The downsizing of the public service and the program cuts significantly affected the federal government's policy functions and weakened its ability to influence and manage public policy outcomes (Peters and Savoie 1994, 1996, Hart 1998, Savoie 1999, Bradford 1999, Anderson 1997). The rise of the contract state – whereby contractual relations form the basis of state employment and public service delivery – also reduced federal government leverage over public policy due to escalating fragmentation and loss of expertise (see for

example, Rhodes 1994, 1997, Foster and Plowden 1996, Weller, Bakvis and Rhodes 1997). In many respect, with the rescaling of its activities, the federal government lost much of its capacity to steer the social policy agenda, and therefore had to develop new institutional arrangements and mechanisms to re-exert its social policy leadership (Boismenu and Graefe 2004). In so doing, it created new spaces for engagement, new scales for action, and new opportunities for voluntary sector organizations.

4.3.2.1 Building policy capacity

Concern for the federal government's loss of capacity was first expressed by the *1995 Report of the Task Force on Strengthening the Policy Capacity of the Federal Government* (Privy Council Office 1995). It stated that the federal government "... should relate closely to the outside policy research community and should seek to promote its relevance and quality. A vibrant external policy research community is a major asset for government and it can make a unique contribution to public debate" (Task Force on Strengthening Policy Capacity 1995, p. 31). Several other reports also noted that the changing nature of governance creates challenges for policy formulation (Cappe 1995, Fellegi 1995, Institute on Governance 1996). The shift from government to governance heightened its need for external advice and policy support, and broad based response that involved all levels of government and all sectors of society. In particular, the federal government increasingly needed hands-on knowledge to innovate and be flexible, knowledge that is understood to lie with third parties, that in many cases, are at the front lines of service delivery.

The *Task Force on Strengthening Policy Capacity* and the *Task Force on Managing Horizontal Policy Issues* both put forward a number of recommendations: that the federal government strengthen its external policy research capacity by commissioning research and soliciting policy analysis or advice. In fact, Anderson, who participated in the work of the *Task Force on Strengthening Policy Capacity* emphasized that “a healthy policy-research community outside government can play a vital role in enriching public understanding and debate of policy issues, and it serves as a natural complement to policy capacity within government” (Anderson 1997, p.486).

To foster knowledge transfer, the federal government recognized the need to create “communities of knowledge” and began to invest in voluntary sector organizations to create communities of research that would generate useable data and information. Not only would this build capacity within the voluntary sector, it was reasoned, it would also help to establish a research community that could participate in policy discussion, as well as ensure leadership in the future. In light of the need for outside expertise, the federal government launched the (now more or less defunct) *Policy Research Initiative* in 1997 with the specific purpose of building links across sectors and encouraging research around innovative policy issues. It was also aimed at linking together silos in government, for example between the Department of Finance Canada and Industry Canada. Voluntary sector organizations were involved in this effort from the beginning. Through this initiative, the federal government began to encourage collaboration across sectors in order to improve the production, dissemination and uptake of policy-relevant research. Driven by funders of social science programs such as the Social Science and Humanities Research Council’s (SSHRC’s) Community-University Research Alliance

(CURA), there is a new thirst for building knowledge through cross-sectoral collaboration so that organizations with similar interests can work together and learn from one another. The payoff would be knowledge, practices and skills that could be dispersed across sectors.

Knowledge brokers were also created by the federal government to facilitate this process (Boismenu and Graefe 2004). The Canadian Learning Institute and the Health Services Research Fund are examples of initiatives that were specifically geared to enable outside actors to participate in policy making. Through these initiatives, the process of governance opens new doors to participation by a wider array of actors. Boismenu and Graefe identified investment in research as a new policy leverage of the federal government. They argue that,

These investments promise to create a form of “social demand” for new policy directions and decisions, a demand that the federal government can partially control through the deployment and mandating of these foundations/institutes. In other words, the federal government is creating a series of expert interlocutors with whom it can debate policy options. This can play a crucial agenda-setting role, particularly since these ideas and directions are legitimized using the scientific reputation and stature of the specialists (Boismenu and Graefe 2004, p. 11).

By determining which organizations are deemed legitimate experts and can participate, the federal government can in effect have a direct impact the policy agenda. Thus, we need to pay attention to the change in the nature of expertise required under the process of governance, and what it means for the politics of inclusion and exclusion of organizations. The very basis on which legitimacy of participation is derived has shifted from relying on the experiential knowledge of voluntary organizations speaking on behalf of marginalized communities, to relying on the expertise of organizations explicitly grounded in research and analysis. These opportunities are not available to all

organizations. The National Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Economic Council, for example, were unable to take advantage of these opportunities and were virtually eliminated in the early 1990s. New sources of expertise and new forms of legitimacy so conveyed play a basic role in driving change at an organizational scale and in shaping repertoires of political action.

4.3.2.2 Building policy legitimacy

Burdened with a more complex political environment, the federal government faced greater demands for accountability and transparency. The generalized lack of confidence in political institutions and political processes coupled with a loss of competence in the aftermath of downsizing had nourished a growing dissatisfaction with respect to the federal government's role in policy making. Stories of boondoggling further exacerbated the demands for greater transparency and openness in the policy making process by calling into question the very legitimacy of the federal government (Juillet and Paquet 2000).

In order to bring legitimacy to policy making, the federal government explicitly began to encourage the democratization of public policy and praise the contribution of the "ordinary citizen" in the policy process (Jenson and Phillips 1996, Brodie 1995). By taking the pulse of community, it hoped to be more in tune with the changing needs of society, and hence respond more effectively and innovatively to its demands. The federal government also hoped to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of policy decision making. As Susan Phillips notes, the federal government believed that an "active citizenship, in which citizens engage in civic life through voluntary association, supports

governance by providing better input and monitoring of policy and, as a by-product of participation, by producing greater trust in other citizens and in government” (Phillips 2001, p. 183-184).

As a result, public consultations on policy issues have increased dramatically in Canada over the past decade. This has further underscored the importance of opening access to public policy to a wide range of stakeholders in order to appear responsive and well-intentioned (Abele et al. 1998). The *Engaging Canadians Initiative*, for example, was seen as a practical way of building relationships with individuals. Quite popular in 1996-1997, it was meant to provide ordinary citizens with opportunities to play a meaningful role in policy making and to provide direct input or feedback on policies. This gave rise to what Scharpf termed “input-based legitimacy” which bestows legitimacy to policies that reflect the views of the general public – including ordinary citizens and voluntary organizations (Scharpf 1999). While the objective of these reforms was to engage individuals, or “ordinary citizens”, in policy making, many believed at the time that the best way to do so was to get those already engaged through voluntary sector organizations.

As a result of these initiatives, the voluntary sector quickly came on the policy agenda. In fact, communication with the public and enhancing participation in the policy process has become a key objective of the federal government, which sees the voluntary sector as a potential partner for involving citizens in the decision-making process. Evidence from government documents and speeches suggest that these discourses on voluntary sector have been pushed forward by a desire to reconnect with individual citizens. For example, Mel Cappe, then Clerk of the Privy Council Office stated that:

“The voluntary sector reaches out and touches parts of society which the government cannot easily or efficiently reach...” (Cappe 1999). The role of voluntary organizations, in this sense, was to serve as an important conduit for communication between the state and its citizens. Policy makers relied on voluntary organizations to act as mediators between the state and community, seizing access to citizens in order to better meet government priorities.

With reference to the sector, the federal government recognized the need to engage Canadians around the common objective of better serving Canadians (Phillips with Orsini 2002). Moreover, through the promotion of voluntary sector participation in the policy process, it hoped to strengthen communities in the process, build public trust and enhance civic capacity. Investing in the voluntary sector was also viewed as a policy leverage that could be used to promote the federal government agenda. As Laforest and Phillips note, “the particular Canadian twist on building stronger connections with citizens and voluntary organizations is that they could be used to support national unity so that when relationships with the provinces are rocky, the federal government could fall back on its direct links with citizens” (Laforest and Phillips 2003). Not surprisingly then, in processes of governance involving collaboration across levels of governments in Canada, voluntary sector organizations are involved for they possess multiple scales of action.

However, recognizing the voluntary sector as a bridge to the “ordinary citizen” represents an important discursive shift and has profound implications for how we understand the role of the sector in the process of policy making. The primary thrust of this discourse has been to redefine the legitimate forms of representation and of who can

make claims onto the state. Firstly, by focusing on the role of the “ordinary citizen”, it in effect undermined the representational role of voluntary organizations by calling into question its value. In the policy discourse, more weight is given to individuals’ voices as opposed to that of intermediary organizations (Graham and Phillips 1997). The presumption is that organizations are best used to involve the citizens in policy debate and deliberation, but not to articulate their interests. This marks a significant paradigm shift from the 1980s, where voluntary organizations were key actors in the articulation of a Canadian identity.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, this rhetoric conveys the idea that representation involves listening to the mainstream – not the noisy minority and marginalized groups. Again, this marks an important paradigm shift from the 1980s. Here the role of voluntary organizations is to reach the “average citizen” or the “ordinary citizen”, whereas before the role of voluntary organizations was to mobilize and give voice to the marginalized. As Trimble so eloquently notes, “So-called ‘special interests’ are seen as opposing the claims of the ‘ordinary citizen’ (that is, the tax-paying, self-reliant, independent individual). The special claim, need, or interest is a drain on limited state resources, an impediment to a global free market, an excuse for avoiding individual responsibility” (Trimble 2000). When coupled with the constraints voluntary organizations face around funding, accountability, monitoring and reporting; there is pressure to cater to the centre and this very process may affect organizational practices in a number of ways.

4.3.2.3 Summary

Participation in policy making presents itself both as an opportunity and a constraint for voluntary organizations and they need to navigate their way through these multiple and often contradictory demands. While it affords them a new route by which to represent themselves, access to these routes does not mean that they will necessarily be successful at influencing the agenda. Skills, knowledge and expertise are requisite to successful participation. In order to gain power and influence in the process, organizations need to legitimate themselves as a valuable source of policy advice. This may require organizations adapting their methods and political strategies to meet a certain number of expectations. Tension within the organization, therefore, may arise as it struggles to manage a balance between the exigencies of these practices and those of its constituents. How these new opportunities can be nurtured and properly operationalized will affect how successful they will be in the process of governance.

4.3.3 Building relationships: governance as process and practice

The transformations occurring around service delivery and policy making have brought about important changes in relationships both within the federal government and across sectors. In both service provision and policy making, the federal government is increasingly interested in working together with voluntary sector organizations, acknowledging that policy making and service delivery requires creativity, innovation, learning, and risk-taking. By shifting governance, the federal government went from sporadic dialogue with voluntary sector organizations, with no ongoing focus in

government on voluntary sector issues, to needing mechanisms and structures in place to ensure dialogue with the sector.

The federal government, therefore, is exploring new ways to include organizations on an on-going basis rather than in an ad hoc fashion, as was the case in the past. In fact, Canadian Heritage declared that:

More than ever before, the Government of Canada is pursuing partnerships with other governments, institutions, businesses, associations and community groups. New combinations of partners generate new ideas. Different organizations working together to address common issues strengthens communities. It is through this collaboration that we bridge differences, bring down barriers created by racism, discrimination and hate, and help more Canadians participate fully in our society (Canadian Heritage 2000).

The move away from formal patterns of policy means that decision-makers need to build new or stronger relationships with a wide array of actors involved in order to solve the central problems of public policy. In order to build effective relations, the federal government needs to provide practical guidance to line departments in order to ensure good relations. This, however, requires a whole-of-government commitment and relies on the development of trust, on sharing information and an acknowledgement that voluntary organizations have skills and experience that should be harnessed and valued. It requires an appreciation of the wider voluntary sector and its dynamics and that has brought the voluntary sector into the centre of policy discourses.

In order to encourage closer working relationships between departments and agencies, and between the voluntary sector and voluntary organizations, the shift in governance creates pressure to address the relationship at a macro scale and lay out the terms of engagement of each actor. To build a sustainable relationship, mechanisms and

structures must be in place to ensure dialogue with the voluntary sector. This requires developing a more systematic, whole-of-government approach to the relationship, and avoiding uneven interactions between different line departments and voluntary sector organizations. It also requires an alignment of the expectations of the voluntary organizations with those of the government.

These types of coordinating mechanisms need largely to be defined by both the federal government and by voluntary sector organizations. They can have a significant impact on the relationship by institutionalizing the form or practice of governance. Who participates in these processes matters for it may have an impact on the nature of the claims that are made, the strategies and tactics that are employed; and ultimately have an affect on the structure of representation and the power relations within the sector. A dynamic of relationship building effort has been set in motion at a macro scale, of which the outcomes are uncertain. The environment is in flux; and the strategies are fluid and flexible. The next chapter examines how this process unfolds, and focuses on how voluntary sector organizations strategize in this new context.

4.4 Meeting the challenge

As I have illustrated, the shift in governance has transformed all four dimensions of the political opportunity structure. It has led to a new configuration of the resource base; it has changed the terms of access to the state and the institutional arrangements to support it; it has created new allies in the public sector who value cross-sectoral collaboration; and it led to a significant discursive shift by putting the voluntary sector on the policy agenda. Yet, we know very little about how voluntary organizations have

responded to the challenges and the tremendous opportunities of governance. While the governance literature focuses mainly on state actors, the recent shifts in the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector in Canada indicate that the process of governance is also impacting the voluntary sector and voluntary sector organizations. This represents an important area of analysis, as it has been both understudied and under theorized. These transformations are equally important: we need to ask not only how they affect the voluntary sector's relationship to the state, but what legacy they may leave for the sector and how they may alter the character of the sector. Since these issues are not well documented in the literature, I first need to frame my questions by looking at broad scale transformations that may be affecting the organizations.

4.4.1 Representation

The act of representation, of voicing one's interest to the state, is a defining characteristic of the nature of voluntary organizations. Unfortunately, it is also an area of research that has been largely neglected. Since very little empirical work has investigated this facet of voluntary sector practices, it is not possible to propose expected relationships, but rather we need to begin by exploring any association that may exist.

From a review of governance practices in Canada, it is possible to identify that voluntary organizations face increasing opportunities for participation in both service delivery and policy making. As they play several roles at the same time, they need to find a balance between core activities such as service delivery and advocacy. Each activity draws on different organizational strengths and capacities. The impact of this move towards greater participation in the field of policy making and representation may be both

positive and negative. On the positive side, as I have discussed, voluntary organizations now have access to decision makers, and are beginning to use this access in much more sophisticated ways. What impact this move has on the sector more broadly in Canada, however, remains to be seen. On the negative side, the way organizations advocate and represent themselves may be altered in order to meet the federal government's imperatives rather than those of their constituents.

This is particularly problematic when organizations must rely on government as their main source of funding. As organizations respond increasingly to external demands and pressures; it may become more difficult to meet internal demands. This may have profound implications for their relationship with their constituents, and their ability to stay true to their original mission and values. Moreover, the fragmentation and scarcity of resources available for advocacy activities may make it more difficult for individual organizations to engage in collective action and rally support for their cause. Some studies have already shown that increasing reliance on government contracts is hindering the involvement of some American voluntary organizations in advocacy activities (Smith 1990, Salamon and Anheier 1993, Smith and Lipsky 1993, Pross and Webb 2003). There is a fear that increasing reliance on government grants will induce a similar compromise in the willingness of British voluntary organizations to speak out (Fowler 1992, Edwards 1993).

In addition, a shift in governance has the potential to profoundly affect how organizations structure themselves, collaborate and network, thus propelling the need for intersectoral action, and horizontal and vertical linking across fields of activity. Certainly at a sectoral scale, one might expect more collaboration across silos of activities in the

face of a more integrated approach to governance within the voluntary sector. If organizations have to learn to collaborate in order to provide services, solve complex policy problems, and enhance their effectiveness and relevance for citizens, then the silo structure and vertically-integrated structure within the sector will have to be re-examined.

Developing policy and delivering services in a networked environment also requires consulting amongst the collaborators. When working in collaboration with the voluntary sector consultation becomes increasingly central for developing a successful relationship between the voluntary organizations and the federal government. The governing structure of the two parties, however, is diametrically opposed. Whereas, the federal government makes decisions in a hierarchical manner, voluntary organizations need to provide feedback to their members and partners in order to factor in their input. Voluntary organizations need the opportunity to confer and build consensus to enable their representatives to make commitments within these networks.

The overarching question that must be asked is whether the politics of governance have contributed to changing the nature of collective identity, political organisation, and social contestation. It is likely that these changes are modifying the demands or claims organizations make, the organizational form and practices they adopt, and the scales of action they pursue. Who takes part in the politics of governance, on what basis and in what capacity, matters. Debates about who is included and who is excluded, which issues should be addressed and pushed forward by the sector, all shed light on the process of constructing identity and interests (Dobrowlosky 2001). In the mid 1990s, the voluntary sector in Canada had yet to develop a centralized leadership and a central decision making process. Therefore, it is important to identify which organizations have become

the leading political actors under governance, exerting a significant degree of ideological leadership, helping to frame the discourse and understand the role of the sector. This question of identity, of who represents whom and on what basis, is important.

Furthermore, it is safe to assume there are some winners and some losers of the governance shift; some may be insiders to the process whereas others may remain outsiders.

This process of delimiting insiders and outsiders is not without significance. The growing recognition and legitimacy conferred onto certain organizations may reconfigure the overall structure of representation reflecting the structure of power relations within the sector (Mahon 1977). Expectations about who should be involved in policy making, and how, also play into this dynamic. Whether skills, knowledge, and experience of organizations are valued or whether they are valued because they represent a wider constituency will affect how organizations choose to represent themselves, and on which basis their claims will be made. In order to address these issues I believe we have to examine the discourses through which competing claims define the actions to be considered and the responsibilities for different players.

4.4.2 Capacity

Some of the greatest challenges facing the voluntary sector organizations in the process of governance relate to their capacity. Capacity refers to an organization's ability to achieve its mission effectively and to sustain itself over the long term (Scott 2003, Berry 2003). Capacity also refers to the skills and capabilities of individuals within organizations. It depends on a number of factors, such as an organization's financial and

human resources, its structure and its knowledge base. Capacity is also closely linked to agency, as an organization's ability to take meaningful action and to make its own decisions and choices. Governance in many ways affects the organizational capacity of voluntary organizations. Growing responsibilities in the spheres of service provision and policy making requires resources and support at the organizational scale. This translates itself into two main issues: funding and skills.

With respect to funding, voluntary organizations' infrastructure has been significantly weakened over the past decade. Funding cuts, often combined with downloading onto the sector of services once provided by governments, has stretched the financial and human resources of many organizations (McMullen and Schellenberg 2002, 2003, NSNVO 2004, Scott 2003). Ultimately, this may affect an organization's ability to be an effective agent in the policy process. The difficulty lies in that organizations need to make trade-offs in the face increased responsibility coupled with decreased funding. These pressures have been exacerbated by the new direction funding practices have taken. The rise of funding for service provision, and the large funding cuts to advocacy organizations, may encourage voluntary organizations to become involved in service provision on a larger scale at the expense of other activities and discourage voluntary organizations from becoming involved in advocacy activities.

Core funding has gradually subsided as the federal government has privileged short-term, project-based funding. The impact of this shift has been well documented. The NSNVO report for example, has shown that this shift in funding practices has affected organizations' capacity. It reports that voluntary organizations increasingly have trouble fulfilling their mission and sustaining their core operations. The shift towards

short-term funding has also meant that voluntary organizations increasingly focus on short-term projects, making it more difficult to develop long-term strategies. Without stable and reliable source of funding, voluntary organizations at an organizational scale risk being unable to plan in the long term, unable to commit to projects and unable to make reserves. Many reports have identified a number of challenges that a change in funding has created:

- service contracts do not cover the actual costs of program delivery
- voluntary sector organizations reported increasing difficulty meeting legal and legislative obligations to staff
- Voluntary sector organizations have been unable to cover growing shortfalls in government funding with other stable sources of funds.
- Voluntary sector organizations cannot support the infrastructure needed for program delivery
- Inflexible service funding is stifling innovation and creativity (Voluntary Sector Initiative 2002, Scott 2003).

These are only some of the capacity challenges currently facing voluntary organizations for they relate mainly to service provision. I believe we need to broaden the analysis to examine how these pressures are affecting voluntary organizations as they engage in the policy process.

Another important transformation in terms of funding has been the shift towards the 'contract culture' (Smith and Lipsky 1993). While delegating services involves a transformation of the role of the state towards a more managerial function, one may

question how such an important move may have affected voluntary organizations as well. According to Reed and Howe, these changes in the funding environment have affected them on three levels: in the services they provide; in their operating principles; and how they organize themselves to carry out their mission. They even go further and suggest that organizations may be losing some of their essential traits as they move towards greater use of business strategies (Reed and Howe 2000). For example, some studies report organizations moving towards greater commercialization and recourse to business practices (Dart and Zimmerman 2000, Juillet et al. 2000). These practices may be ill-adapted for their community roots. Contract culture also creates intense competition for funds, not only within the sector but with private sector organizations as well (Tindale and MacLachlan 2001). In order to be competitive, voluntary organizations adopt behaviours similar to business organizations. On a sectoral scale, this may make it increasingly difficult for organizations to collaborate in competitive atmosphere.

In terms of skills, the downloading of services is also accompanied by pressure to deliver more and more sophisticated services, which may profoundly alter the way organizations approach their work. As information technology becomes an essential tool for effective communication and management in the modern organization, voluntary organizations, facing a need for expanded tool sets, may lag badly behind. A major theme in areas of service provision, policy making and relationship building is that, concurrent with the increased responsibilities and demands, come increased pressures for voluntary organizations to make time commitments, to gain knowledge and provide expertise in a diverse set of areas. Engaging in policy discussions requires a number of abilities such as analytical capacity, data, networking and outreach. Furthermore, the growth in research

needs provides a distinct challenge for voluntary organizations. At an organizational scale, voluntary organizations may be becoming more bureaucratized and professionalized as they acquire new skills, knowledge and capacities. If voluntary organizations are to meet these new challenges, they will have to adapt themselves to this new environment. If organizations are invited to participate much more fully in the policy process and they develop the tools to do so, it is likely that they will discover a new sense of involvement and responsibility for outcomes.

Not only do these issues affect organizations internally, they may transform the face of the voluntary sector. How resources are strategically arranged and distributed creates a predisposition for participation in the service delivery process and has major implications on the voluntary sector. First, it may affect parts of the sector differently, thereby shifting power relationships within the sector. Some organizations such as arts and culture, may find it easier to raise funds for their cause than an advocacy organization or a community-based organization. Moreover, evidence indicates that larger, more conservative organizations that already have the resources tend to fair better. For example, Michael Hall and Paul Reed suggest that the long term impact on the voluntary sector will be that the larger, professional organizations will crowd out the smaller ones, and those organizations that focus on the needs of the poor are particularly vulnerable because they have greater difficulty attracting private donations (Hall and Reed 1998). This has profound implications for power relations within the sector.

Secondly, private sector funding or charitable giving most often occurs on a one-time basis (Scott 2003, Voluntary Sector Initiative 2002). Therefore, organizations find themselves in a constant race to secure funding. In addition, not only are they competing

with themselves, but increasingly with private sector organizations, who are able to cut costs, in order to meet efficiency requirements. As greater reliance on fundraising involves more funders, this further complicates the lines of accountability. To be successful, organizations need to balance the needs and demands of the various funders, with those of their constituents and partner organizations.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a shift in funding arrangements may cause organizations to move out of certain areas of activity that are valued by constituents. To the extent that a voluntary organization is expected to take advantage of available opportunities in order to increase its resources, one would expect a shift in funding practices to alter the nature of their activities. For example, the outward focus on policy making may detract organizations from original their mission. Organizations often have a dual mission of serving their constituents and influencing public policy; this may create tensions with respect to prioritizing action. As Rekart notes, “the relationship between government and non-government funding can be one indicator of the extent to which the agency maintains control and flexibility in determining its own range of services and activities” (Rekart 1993, p. 78).

Therefore, the shift in governance has also created the need for infrastructure and capacity at a sectoral scale to support the organizational developments underway at a micro scale. The literature tends to neglect this level of analysis, conceptualizing sectoral dynamics as some sort of interest aggregation, ignoring important processes such as institutionalization, power, and control. In order for voluntary sector organizations to act as agents in the on-going process of governance, it requires infrastructure at the sectoral scale as well. In fact, the whole of government/whole of sector relationship building

efforts require voluntary organizations to strategize across scales of action, linking micro issues to macro issues. The articulation of struggles and interests at a sectoral scale are bound to question the very identity and autonomy of the sector. These dynamics are not without consequence for the politics of governance. This research therefore seeks to bring in the sectoral scale, stressing its importance as a distinct locale of strategy.

4.3.3 Accountability

Demands for greater accountability on the part of all actors abound. The question of accountability, however, is both complicated and complex. It is complicated because of opposing accountability imperatives: accountability with respect to the use of resources and public authority, accountability with respect to the best possible use of these resources in order to achieve the public purposes. Voluntary organizations often have multiple lines of accountability, downwards to their constituency, staff members, and partners; and upwards to their board, funders, and donors. This complexity is further exacerbated by parallel, competing and often contradictory demands placed on voluntary organizations by the variety of actors.

New directions in funding practices change these accountability relationships by affecting to weight of each relationship. In a study of the funding regime in Canada, Scott found that, between 1997 and 2001, the majority of respondents – 56% – experienced volatile swings in revenues, with 70% reporting a shift away from funding to more contingent forms of funding. As a result, more than 75% of their funding was for one year or less, with 95% reporting that funding reliability was an issue for their

organization (Scott 2003). Similarly, the NSNVO report found that voluntary organizations were experiencing difficulty in planning for the future and in securing stable funding (NSNVO 2004). With the decline of core funding, voluntary organizations lose access to relatively stable permanent funding which provided a secure base for much of their operational costs. Before, when central administrative costs were covered, organizations were free to develop other activities they deemed appropriate in light of their defined mandate. Traditionally, this form of funding provided support for the infrastructure of voluntary organizations. The greater pressure for accountability makes it increasingly difficult for a percentage of the core costs to be covered under the project costs. As the funding climate tightens and demands for transparency become stronger, funders and donors become less willing to see their support spent on administrative costs, thus making it extremely difficult for organizations to build up reserves and develop a level of financial stability.

In fact, an “audit explosion” may expose organizations to demands for greater transparency and accountability (Hood et al. 1998). Their capacity to maintain trust and ensure transparency will affect the level of support that they are able to attract. Even as voluntary organizations develop other sources of funding either through fundraising, private sector donations, foundations or individual contributions, organizations are also subjected to the scrutiny of the general public. This shift was further exacerbated by a number of public cases of financial abuse and lack of transparency in voluntary organizations. Problems may arise, however, regarding the accountability relationship that will dominate an organization’s decision making. As organizations come to rely more on fundraising, it may be increasingly difficult to reconcile the demands of their

members with those of the general public. Their choices may be increasingly dictated by the requirements of survival, and the pressures for transparency and accountability undermining their capacity to exert choice and to display flexibility in their operational structure. This may affect the allocation of human and financial resources within the organization, thereby constraining its expenditures. This may also strain their relationship with their members who may no longer recognize themselves within that organization. In a context where organizations are increasingly reliant on project based funding and fundraising, there is a danger that accountability demands might drive them away from their constituents (Edwards and Hulme 1992, Fisher 1994, Tandon 1994).

In fact, accountability requirements impose a top down logic on organizations. To a certain extent, funders and donors instruct organizations what to measure and what results they hope to achieve – often with a lack of understanding of the nature of the work of an organization. They promote imperatives of effectiveness and efficiency. The logic and imperative of service delivery, however, is quite different in the voluntary sector and in government. By increasing accountability requirement, the federal government is in effect imposing efficiency and effectiveness imperatives on voluntary organizations -- principles which may hinder daily practices within the sector. As Smillie argues the difficulty lies not in the “lack of accountability, but [in] balancing accountabilities and keeping the ultimate impact of their work at the top of the agenda” (Smillie 1999, p. 21). Part of the difficulty in meeting accountability requirement is the nature of the work voluntary organizations are involved in. They are often motivated by outputs which may be intangible and value quality over quantity. Particularly in a funding relationship, accountability requires accounting for outputs, resulting in a quantitative and tangible

manner. The type of reporting, monitoring and evaluation procedures insisted on by donors, especially their heavy reliance on results-based management may further distort the accountability by overemphasizing short-term quantitative targets and outputs.

This move towards greater accountability and reporting also raises other challenges for organizations. For one, they may lack the capacities required to fulfill these reporting requirements. Secondly, the methods that voluntary organizations choose to relate to the public sector under partnership agreement may also affect their very nature. Inharmonious practices between the government and voluntary sector organizations will result in a lot of negotiation and communication around accountability practices. Sufficient attention must be given to the impact of requirements of monitoring, performance review, control and accountability imposed on organizations particularly given that the process of governance involves the development of practical guidelines and a shared framework for partnership at a macro scale.

As contracting increases, inevitably, it creates pressures for organizations to develop new skills and expend more energy running programmes rather than developing policy and advocating. As Susan Phillips notes, “off-loading of social programs by governments, [...], often leads to professionalization of voluntary organizations, resulting in reduced opportunities for citizen participation” (Phillips 1995). Such a shift in human resources and energy may affect the organizational practice of voluntary organizations (Arai 1999, Billis and Harris 1992). Research has already shown that demands by funders for outcome-based performance measurement are associated with greater professionalization of staff and training of volunteers (Smith and Lipsky 1993, p. 44-45, Brooks 2000, p. 197, Panet and Trebilcock 1998, p. 28).

The other side of this dilemma is that donors and funders are more likely to fund large and established voluntary organizations. These large established organizations carry with them a reputation and a standing that confers onto the funder and donor a certain level of trust and confidence. Larger organizations find it easier to carry the administrative burden imposed by accountability requirements. Most have a web site through which individuals can access financial information which conveys a sense of transparency and trust. Therefore, smaller and locally-based organizations have difficulty competing with them which may drive them out of the funding race. Given that the federal government in Canada has cut back core funding, voluntary organizations are ever the more vulnerable to these accountability pressures which can affect organizational practices. As they become more dependent on their external relationships for resources and opportunities in the short term, organizations must increasingly navigate between internal demands and external pressures.

4.5 Hypotheses

The key hypotheses of the thesis are, first that with the shift in governance a number of opportunities and constraints have arisen that provide incentives to voluntary sector organizations to mobilise at a variety of scales of action : micro, meso and macro. In a new context of governance, the political opportunity structure is redefined as the distribution of resources is redesigned. It has created access points to institutions and has put in place formal instruments of participation in service delivery, policy making, and relationship building.

My second hypothesis is that these transformations in the opportunity structure have an impact in favour of particular forms of voluntary sector action. It can bring organizations strategically to change their internal practices by for example, undermining their capacity to undertake long-term strategic planning; encouraging particular forms of activities and discouraging others; pushing them towards greater professionalization and bureaucratization in order to meet the accountability requirement; encouraging the development of particular skills, moving from uneven and often limited capacity in the sector to strengthened capacity in the sector in human resources, knowledge development and financial management; or diverting organizational priorities towards those of the funder rather than its constituency. Not only does the process of governance influence organizations, but organizations, through their work at a sectoral scale, also become structuring agents in this context. As organizations come together, they produce new institutional relations with the state and amongst themselves. These processes may well alter the very nature and characteristics of the voluntary sector.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented some of the distinctive features of the relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector in Canada in order to signal the distinctive features of the process of governance and point to some of the issues that might emerge as the process of governance unfolds. I also pointed to a number of shifts in the political opportunity structure which have the potential to constrain or enable collective action across scales. Drawing from the voluntary literature, I then raised a number of hypotheses of how these transformations may affect the presence of the

voluntary sector in the public space; its organizational forms; its forms of action and the content of its claims in order to guide my research.

While this chapter emphasized institutional transformations, I believe that the process governance is interactive and mutually constitutive process. My goal was to contextualize and set the stage for the analysis in subsequent chapters which examines the dynamics of governance and the struggles between the state and voluntary sector organizations. Only organizations can fashion their strategies, they can incorporate new symbols and redefine their collective identity, creating new opportunities for themselves and others in the process. As political opportunities open and close, the very role of the voluntary sector in the process of governance is being redefined, the rules of engagement are being re-examined, and power relations are being redrawn. These processes are at the very heart of struggles around governance and they are the processes I seek to understand in this chapter. Having laid out some of the contextual dimensions, I now turn the analysis.

Chapter 5 Redefining State-Voluntary Sector Relationships: Perspectives from the voluntary sector

5.1 Introduction

The shift from government to governance and the resulting state policies and discourses have created opportunities and challenges for voluntary organizations. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the federal government has affected the political opportunity structure by altering the points and the terms of access to the state. In the process, it established numerous organizational arrangements and redesigned the patterns of financial and informational resource flows between the state and the voluntary sector, which ultimately had an impact the voluntary sector. The resulting politics of governance are shaped by this context and by the institutional opportunities it creates. Opportunities are never objectively given, however, they require reorganization on the part of voluntary organizations. As Smith notes, “political opportunities do not exist if movements do not define and interpret them as such” (Smith 1999, p. 150, Diani and Della Porta 1999). Understanding the role of the opportunities is but one dimension of the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector. It is also important to capture the way voluntary organizations perceive policy changes and respond or adjust to the initiatives set out by the state. Moreover, while the political opportunity structure provides some opportunities for action, organizations may also affect the nature of existing opportunities and create new ones for themselves and others. In such a way, organizations may act on what they perceive to be an opportunity and in the process open up a structure which was relatively closed to them.

This chapter focuses on how voluntary organizations have seized opportunities and the constraints that have emerged from the shift in governance. However, before seizing the opportunities, voluntary organizations must organize themselves and develop a sense of identity and common purpose to cultivate their strategies. Key to this process is naming and constructing a collective identity. As I will illustrate in this chapter, voluntary organizations in Canada have not always thought of themselves as belonging to a “sector”, or as constituting a broad community with a shared identity and common interests, and many still don’t. Yet, it is this very process of identity-building which occurred in the 1990s that allowed the voluntary sector to present itself as a valuable ally in the process of governance. The first step to understanding the complexities of the voluntary sector lies in examining the ideas and identities circulating within the universe of political discourse, a space in which identities emerge in discursive struggle.

This chapter focuses on the dynamic nature of state-sector relationships manifesting themselves at a macro scale. These relationships have expression at a meso scale as well between line departments and voluntary organizations, and at an organizational scale. Key to the analysis is the concept of “voluntary sector” that articulates the processes of representation and legitimacy of organizations as institutional actors in society. The macro variables of sector identity and the articulation of representation structure affect decisions around strategy at an organizational scale. Ultimately, these dynamics cannot be isolated, as organizational issues also affect dynamics occurring at the macro scale of action. Nevertheless, for my purposes, I will focus first on the macro scale to frame the universe of political discourse, the available parameters of political action, and the organizational strategies shaping the direction of

the relationship between state and the voluntary sector; and between the voluntary sector and its constituencies.

In order to do this, I examine the material and discursive practices at a sectoral scale as articulated around the collective identity of the voluntary sector. I examine the frames, the strategies and the claims that are deployed by voluntary organizations in the name of the sector. The objective is not to draw any causal inferences, but rather to acknowledge the dynamic interaction between political opportunity structure and frames. I start from the premise that organizations do not solely react to changes in their context; they also try to shape the context within which they operate. Therefore, the perception and interpretation of the organizations' context is key to understanding their reaction to the process of governance, and ultimately shapes their definition of interests and seek to affect change. How organizations chose to adapt to this new environment, how they strategize in order to exert influence, how they seize the opportunities presented to them and how they mobilize to create new ones will affect the nature of their relationship to the state.

The first part of this chapter examines the process of framing, naming, and identity building within the sector. I begin by examining the process of identity building and the developing networks around which it is articulated by drawing on a broader net of interviews with leaders national and provincial voluntary organizations that were involved in the process. The second part presents an overview of how this framing process contributed to their strategic decision process, and demonstrates how voluntary organizations in Canada mobilized governmental support despite restrictions to advocacy and funding cutbacks in the early 1990s, strategically framing themselves and their

claims. As a result, they successfully exploited the political opportunity structure produced by the process of governance and created new opportunities for the sector. The final section looks at how actions at a macro scale have translated into the meso scale by focusing on a particular sub-sector of the voluntary sector: children and family services.

5.2 Identity building in the voluntary sector

The identity of the voluntary sector is not static or fixed in time. It may change over time, as organizations' view of "we" and "they" shifts. As Jenson notes, "at certain times consensus may exist around a particular language of politics that encourages movements to express themselves in particular ways that go relatively unchallenged, at other times, in times of greater political competition or crisis, movements must struggle to defend themselves and their worldview assumptions" (Jenson 1992, p. 115). The end of the 1990s was a period of such consensus for the voluntary sector in Canada. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, the emergence of a common identity for the sector became the basis for pursuing a strategy at a macro scale geared towards relationship building with the federal government.

Identity building is a reflection of a collective process and coming together of a broad array of relationships. As a result, it is subject to multiple influences from the state and from within the sector, as organizations gather to identify and define their purpose and their common interests. As identity building is relational and dynamic, it cannot be understood without considering the macro and micro dimensions. Their precise articulation is the result of how organizations comprehend the political environment in

which they find themselves and the negotiation among organizations and sector members. Strong theoretical and empirical evidence suggest that the processes must be dealt with consciously and deliberately for it is a reflection of the sector's own evolution (Jenson 1992, Polletta and Jasper 2001). Ultimately, organizations may fashion their strategies, incorporating new symbols and redefining their collective identity, to create new opportunities for themselves and others in the process.

This is not to say that the process occurred without conflicts and controversies over the strategies that should be pursued. In fact, debates over identity, discourse, and language are important and not without consequence. They propagate ideas and mobilize organizations on issues of identity. The politics of recognition in the Canadian voluntary sector epitomizes the fact that shifting and unequal power relations also exist within the sector given the large diversity of organizations -- diversity in terms of resources, scale, scope and mission. Concerns and grievances of small, locally-based community organizations, for example, differ substantially from those of large well established charitable organizations, creating potential rifts within the sector. It is essential to recognize these dynamics as well.

This chapter attempts to tell the story of identity building from the perspective of the organizations involved. In many respects, speaking of a "sector" is problematic as it assumes a unitary identity of belonging to a sector. What is distinctive about the politics of governance is that it afforded the state and voluntary sector organizations an opportunity to re-examine and redirect their relationship at a macro scale. This has made it necessary for voluntary organizations to come together and jointly develop a common language, to define their interests as a "sector", to make claims in the name of the broader

sector. It has brought them to engage with the state at a new scale of action in an attempt to position themselves as a valuable social and political actor in the governance process. This next section explores how this dynamic process unfolded over the 1990s.

5.2.1 What's in a name?

An important step in the process of identity building is the act of naming oneself. The choice of name bears a strategic importance in the process of identity building as it opens up a range of political strategies for sustaining or changing social relations. Through the name, an actor becomes recognizable to others and social relations become visible. As Jenson underscores, this decision is influential as it affects the strategy a group adapts, the strategic resources it may secure, and the group's potential for alliances (Jenson 1992), and ultimately the degree of solidarity the movement may garner. Therefore, "selecting one name over another sets discursive boundaries such that some claims become meaningful and others are less relevant" (Jenson 1992, p. 116).

Over the past decade, there have been competing, overlapping discourses which seek to define and problematize the role of actors of civil society in specific ways. In the process of rethinking the roles and responsibilities of the actors, these discourses directly challenge the boundaries between the public and the private. It is important to pay attention to these discursive shifts. As Bashevkin argues, "language shifts are crucial to political change" (Bashevkin 1998, p. 242) and they signal important transformations. The frames that actors exploit, as well as the language and symbols they employ affect the structure of opportunities. In the 1970s and 1980s, it was common to use the term interest group to refer to organizations "whose members act together to promote their

common interests” (Pross 1992). In academia, as in policy circles, the focus lay essentially on the involvement of business and labour in the policy process (Pross 1992, Schultz et al. 1979). Other actors of civil society were visibly absent from the political scene. In the mid 1980s and 1990s, the trend in research was to focus on social movements such as the women’s movement, the environmental movement, and the student movement (Phillips 2004, Smith 2004, Fung 2003). Similarly, governmental circles began to draw attention to the contribution of identity-based groups in the policy process. A financial regime was constructed early to support collective action efforts and thus enable citizens to attain and practice skills of citizenship. By mobilizing disadvantaged segments of Canadian society, the federal government strongly believed it could promote the formation and maintenance of a Canadian identity.

In recent years, the term “voluntary sector” has become fashionable as the label for civil society actors. The wide spread use of this terminology by organizations of civil society and by governmental actors creates, however, the illusion that all endorse a particular vision of how to conceptualize and define the voluntary sector. The fact that the term is now in wide use suggests that there is more to it than meets the eye. Recent popularization of the name reflects a move away from approaches that dominated thought and action in the 1970s and 1980s. In essence, the construct of “voluntary sector” as a sector is still contested as actors struggle to be included and to delimit what is a permissible activity for the sector. The pressures arise from the state and within the sector as organizations gather to define their purpose and common interests. While organizations ultimately decide how they portray themselves, states also matter. Their institutional configurations, the opportunities they create, and their overall pattern of

interaction with the sector will also affect the way organizations view themselves.

Through these actions, the state encourages some forms of representation and organizational activity while discouraging others, making certain political issues salient and others not. Hence, in order to understand the discursive struggles, it is important to focus on the discourse of voluntary organizations as well as that of the state.

This section first focuses on the “concept of voluntary sector” as outlined and promoted by the federal government. The next section addresses the perspective of voluntary organizations, focusing on how they tried to resist and reinforce their own vision of the sector.

5.2.2 Setting the stage: The universe of political discourse

As noted in Chapter Four, the use of the term “voluntary sector” began to make its way on the policy agenda in the mid 1990s. This vocabulary bears a new way of conceptualizing the work and purpose of the voluntary sector. While civil society has received renewed attention under the new governance model, it has come with an explicit focus on the service delivery role of voluntary organizations, and on the value of charity and volunteering (Phillips 1995). Given the context of fiscal restraint and the restructuring of the state, the voluntary sector is depicted as the natural partner of government; its role being to complement state provision through its charitable activities and act as a source of innovation in service delivery. As a result, the federal government has nurtured and supported the development of the voluntary sector in this capacity through the spread of new funding priorities – articulated around project-based funding. Along with this focus on the service provision role of the sector follows a greater

emphasis in the political discourse on the importance of regulating organizations who receive public funds and ensuring their accountability through a system of audit and control. For example, in the 1997 election campaign, the Liberals made a promise in the Second Red Book that they would “work in partnership with the voluntary sector to explore new models for overseeing and regulating registered charities and enhancing their accountability to the public” (Liberal Party 1997).

This emphasis on the voluntary sector’s involvement as a partner may be viewed as the federal government’s pragmatic response to the increasing costs of delivering welfare. From this perspective, the voluntary sector is viewed as an untapped resource, and a pool of “volunteer” activity, thus, the confusion over the term “voluntary sector”, taken to mean “volunteer sector”. Implicitly then, the sector is viewed in governmental circles as a pool of free labour that could be utilized to deliver services in a more cost-effective manner. For example, official documents emphasize the sector’s job potential and its economic contribution. The Second Red Book states, “the voluntary sector has a tremendous capacity to rally both people and resources. This capacity has been relatively untapped for the purposes of economic development and job creation, traditionally seen as private-sector and government functions” (Liberal Party 1997). Lucienne Robillard, then President of Treasury Board of Canada noted, “the voluntary sector generates important economic spin-offs and creates hundreds of thousands of paying jobs. We need to do more - as a government and as a society as a whole - to support these individuals and the organizations they serve because they contribute, without hesitation, to maintaining our social, economic and cultural fabric” (Robillard 2000). These quotes illustrate the value placed by the government on the voluntary sector. This depiction of

the sector overly focuses on its contribution to service delivery and downplays other areas of activities in which voluntary organizations engage such as representation and civic engagement.

This shift in discourse towards the adoption of neo-liberal rhetoric marks an important departure from the vision of voluntary organizations which prevailed in the 1980s when they were recognized as important vehicles for social change through funding programs such as those of the Secretary of State, geared specifically for identity-based movements and organizations (Pal 1993). The federal government's conceptualization of collective action has moved decisively away from being the expression of citizenship (Jenson and Phillips 1996). The idea of the voluntary sector being a valuable instrument for engaging individual Canadians is very different from the idea that the sector has an emancipatory role to play. This distinction is important. The voluntary sector has become a new locus for political engagement that values the primacy of the individual in society. This view attaches the right to participate to individuals not to representatives of groups or collectivities. Moreover, it further reveals the prominence of individual interests over collective interests (Taylor 2003, 2000). From this perspective, the value of voluntary sector organizations lays in their ability to reach citizens and relay the needs of community, not in their ability to mobilize collective action. The concept of voluntary sector put forward by the federal government in the mid 1990s views the sector as a vehicle for individual citizen participation as we saw in the previous chapter through initiatives such as *Engaging Canadians* (Jenson and Phillips 1996, Phillips 2004). While the federal government recognizes that citizens need to be

involved in policy making; it is as individuals -- not through organized bodies -- that they are solicited to do so.

Under this model, rights and responsibilities are also reconsidered: the government emphasizes not the right to participate in policy making, but the responsibility to do so. The strong emphasis on volunteering and giving plays into this dynamic. Volunteering becomes the channel for active citizenship and for engagement in policy. This view of the voluntary sector continues to dominate the political agenda today. It reflects a general trend of transferring greater responsibility onto the citizen. As Phillips notes, "This view, often referred to as 'cold' charity, is a discourse centred on the individual as both recipient and giver. Charity relies on the moral obligation and patronage of individuals, and more recently, corporations, to assist the disadvantaged, rather than looking toward collective or structural solutions such as the notions of social justice, redistribution, or the concept of the welfare state" (Phillips, 2004: 22). Hence, by exhorting voluntarism and charitable giving, the government is requesting the citizen fully participate in the Canadian social life. This shift in discourse is also important because it encourages the delivery of welfare through voluntary action, outside of the state. Here, the state no longer has the sole responsibility of looking out for the well-being of Canadians; the voluntary sector and the individual citizen also have a key role to play.

Inspired by the work of Robert Putnam, this ideological move towards emphasizing the role of individuals in civic engagement is reinforced by the discourse around social capital, defined as the "connections among individuals -- social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam 2000, p.

19). In the Canadian context, many government officials share this discourse and have suggested that by building stronger ties with citizens through the voluntary sector, one may restore trust, social cohesion and foster social capital. Hence, volunteerism is valued and recognized for its social, economic and civic benefits. Again, it is important to note that the voluntary sector is conceptualized as the channel through which individuals can exercise their responsibility as citizens for themselves and for others, not as a valuable infrastructure in and of itself.

Given the restructuring of the state and the downloading of social services, the federal government explicitly began in the mid-1990s to improve relations with voluntary organizations. In fact, in the October 1999 Speech from the Throne, a commitment was made to enter into an active partnership with the voluntary sector to build the highest quality of life for Canadians. The federal government's renewed focus on the "voluntary sector", on volunteering and charity however, represents an important shift in discourse about the nature of the sector, its value and its relationship to the state. While on one hand, the federal government seemed to discredit advocacy and the representational role of voluntary organizations; on another, in the wake of restructuring of the state and financial cutbacks, it has become increasingly dependent on them in both areas of service delivery and policy making. More importantly, the federal government couches the role of the sector in neo-liberal rhetoric directly seeking to reshape the terms of political representation by propagating particular ideas, discrediting certain forms of collection action, and encouraging others. This discourse has been reinforced by a number of policies such as the downloading of services to the sector, the elimination of core funding (particularly to advocacy groups), and the move towards project-based funding.

Ultimately, these ideas have an effect on the practices and strategies of actors, and on the claims made to the state on behalf of the voluntary sector. The federal government has created both discursive challenges and opportunities for voluntary organizations. However, it remains up to the voluntary organizations to navigate the universe of political discourse and to frame their identity and interests in light of the context.

5.2.3 Navigating the universe of political discourse

Since the 1980s, neoliberal discourses have challenged the structure of representation, particularly the position of interest groups and voluntary sector organizations. The new model of governance, emphasizing horizontality and partnership, is not compatible with the post-war system of representation (Jenson and Phillips 1996, Bach and Phillips 1998, Mahon and Phillips 2002). Arguably, voluntary organizations were confronted with a political opportunity structure that had closed to them as a result of events discussed in Chapter Four. The credibility of voluntary organizations had come to be questioned by political leaders. The “special interest group” label introduced in the universe of political discourse carried with it a negative connotation of the role of organizations. Moreover, voluntary sector organizations had lost their institutionalized access to the state under the restructuring process and their relationship with the federal government had become strained. As a result, many voluntary organizations were fending for survival under the pressures to restructure their finances. Consequently, their ability to engage in policy debates was profoundly reduced. The discrediting of forms of representation articulated around advocacy effectively sidelined many national advocacy organizations that had come to play significant role in the policy process in the 1980s. Ill-

equipped to lobby on their own behalf, voluntary organizations tended to withdraw from the political scene in order to grapple with their own internal struggles and challenges (McKeen 2003, Bashevkin 1998). This led to the marginalisation of traditional interest groups such as women's groups and unions who had been lobbying the state for over a decade (Bashevkin 1998). This would, however, leave room for a vision of the sector to emerge, around which new practices were to be articulated. As one door closed, another opened.

With the need to improve public perception of voluntary organizations, it was necessary for groups to coordinate their efforts and discuss ways to increase the sector's profile. Before this could be done, however, organizations needed to articulate a collective identity around which such solidarity and collaboration could occur. As I shall detail shortly, this process led to organizations viewing themselves for the first time as part of a sector and opened up a new scale of action.

In 1995, the heads of twelve national organizations and coalitions covering a wide range of sub-sectors met for the first time in response to the funding cuts that had profoundly affected voluntary organizations in all fields of services and to discuss their situation. The agenda was to discuss potential strategies to react to the changes occurring in their environment. With greater responsibilities being placed on organizations in the context of downloading and their declining resources, they were poorly positioned to respond and many felt it had become necessary to coordinate their efforts. This effort was unprecedented. It was the first time that organizations from a variety of subsectors had come together to discuss common concerns. Until the mid 1990s, there had been no attempts to unify their struggles. The shift from government to governance encouraged

the development of intra and inter-sectoral collaboration by creating the need for collaboration within the sector. As one respondent recounts, “it was at the early stages of seeing itself as one sector. I think it was in a fairly rough financial shape having just lived through the Program Review.”¹

At their first meeting they decided to meet regularly as an informal roundtable bringing together representatives from diverse sub-sectors and named themselves the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR).² At the time an executive director recalls, “provincial and local organizations were not profiling in an adequate way the value and values of the voluntary sector. Our main purpose was to cooperate and to change around the relationship between the sector and government.”³ The Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR) represented a cross-cutting community of leaders whose objective it was to create a vision and an action plan for the sector as a whole. Members of the VSR all agreed on the need to develop a substantial vision for the sector as a whole to lobby the state and to re-examine their position. For the first time, voluntary organizations were engaged on broad based issues pertaining to the sector rather than on specific issues.

¹ Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the Voluntary Sector Roundtable.

² The VSR is composed of organizations: the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, the Canadian Conference of the Arts, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, The Canadian Council on Social Development, the Canadian Environmental Network, the Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, Community Foundations of Canada, Health Charities Council of Canada, the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations, United Way of Canada/Centraide Canada, Volunteer Canada and later they were joined by a representative of the faith communities. See <http://www.vsr-trsb.net/main-e.html>. The Center for Philanthropy provides secretariat services to the Roundtable.

³ Based on an interview with the executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

This process of naming themselves the *Voluntary Sector* Roundtable was important for a number of reasons. First, the choice of the name was critical in generating solidarity for common action. Already at the outset, the sector grappled with trying to accommodate the challenges of new identities as some organizations struggled for inclusion. The members of the VSR deliberately chose the name “voluntary sector” as they believed it was the most inclusive designation recouping a variety of organizations. Until the mid 1990s, voluntary sector organizations tended to work in isolation or within their sectoral networks, with very little collaboration across sectors. Building alliances and mounting a common front, therefore, required substantial investment of time and resources in a context where organizations were already strained. Moreover, this lack of collaboration was further complicated by the fact the ‘sector’ is large and there are various types of organizations ranging from voluntary organizations to charities, non-profits, not-for-profit and community based organizations, each with a different set of preoccupations, all of which are affected by the process of governance. Either status however, potentially means a difference in the way organizations operate and manage, as well as in the basis of their revenue structure. In this context, the choice of a name to represent the sector is extremely important in establishing its identity and may be critical for generating a sense of solidarity among organizations.

Secondly, the use of the term “voluntary sector”, encompassing charities and non-profit organizations, was significant in generating strategic resources from foundations and philanthropic organizations who considered the initiative as an important sector alliance. Hence, the VSR received core funding by J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, with some additional support from the Vancouver and the Muttart Foundations. Finally,

organizations were well aware that the choice of a name should remain politically neutral given the strong wave of criticism that targeted advocacy groups. In order to gain any credibility and legitimacy in the current context, organizations believed they should present themselves as responsible partners in the governance process. Accountability, sound and effective management, became the operative words of the day. Opting for the term “voluntary sector” was politically salient.

4.3 Strategizing: Making claims

The Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR) represented a new solidarity among organizations and a venue through which to develop a platform for the sector with the hopes to enhance the relationship with the federal government. While it received Foundation funding, the VSR has remained an informal coalition, allowing it to proceed at a pace and in a manner that avoided the more time-consuming and bureaucratic approach traditionally associated with formal organizational structures (Phillips 2002). Its open structure allowed organizations to participate without unduly imposing additional burden and responsibility on the representatives. Given the context of strained resources facing voluntary organizations, many were cautious about making additional commitments which could potentially burden their organization. Also it did not want to compete with other national umbrella organizations for funds for infrastructure.

The initial intent was to establish a coalition for a short period of time (three years) and then dissolve the group (VSR newsletter, November 1997). While the VSR had a general vision of their goals, the structure of the roundtable was such that individual members were left to their own device to pursue different files and issues. As

a result of this organizational structure, the discourse they adopted and the claims they made closely reflected the composition and contribution of individual members of the Roundtable.

The VSR first defined its mandate as follows:

The Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR) is an unincorporated group of national organizations and coalitions that came together in 1995 to strengthen the voice of Canada's charitable, voluntary sector. Its primary goals are to enhance the relationship between the charitable sector and the federal government and to encourage a supportive legislative and regulatory framework for organizations in the community. The VSR will operate in a structured way for three years, but the work that is done and the relationships that develop will have long-term benefits for the sector as a whole.⁴

In this mandate description, the VSR employs the term “charitable sector” and “voluntary sector”. This reflects the fact that the work of the VSR was originally top-down and tended to be dominated by large well established mainstream national voluntary and charitable organizations. The Canadian Centre for Philanthropy (CCP) -- now Imagine Canada -- for example, tended to use the term charitable sector. While these newly visible forces expanded the universe of political discourse to include issues such as charitable status, accountability and management in the voluntary sector, other issues were left unaddressed. The mandate directly affected the claims to be made in the name of the “voluntary sector”, by making claims for the definition of charitable status under the tax laws and the examination of the regulatory framework meaningful; while concerning advocacy was considered less relevant.

The choice of claims to be made also reflected the state's willingness to engage in these issues and the existing political opportunity structure. A strategic decision was made from the start by members of the VSR not to go up in arms, but to portray the

⁴ <http://www.vsr-trsb.net>

sector as a responsible partner capable of engaging Canadians. A member of the VSR recalls their initial decision regarding strategies and notes, “we didn’t lobby to get funding reinstated. We felt that was too obvious. It was exactly what they expected of us. It wasn’t time to talk about this because public opinion at the time was such that every one felt we had to reduce the debt. There was no political appetite for that. So we decided to emphasize what our contribution is and can be and we wanted to rebuild a relationship with government.”⁵ Another describes those times as follows, “it was a low point in our relationship and in general I think we were misunderstood, we were not understood. We were not organized to influence public mood, and across the political spectrum, we were starting to be targeted as national groups far removed from the local agenda.”⁶

Interestingly, the VSR was relatively unknown at the time. Many national umbrella organizations of the VSR, known solely within their field of activity, were relatively inexperienced at lobbying the federal government on a broad scale. However, they did have some allies within individual government departments. Drawing on their contacts, VSR members lobbied and participated in numerous meetings with senior government officials (VSR newsletter, November 1997). They were conscious that the relative openness of existing political institutions was driven in part by the presence of allies within government flowing from informal personal networks. Through these ties, they had brought increased attention and interest to voluntary sector issues. One senior government official commented, “they were big large organizations with long standing

⁵ Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

⁶ Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

relations with government, so we knew each other.”⁷ Another maintained that the main reason the VSR was so successful was due to the more personal relationships of certain members with people in government.⁸ Having insider connections that opened doors, voluntary sector leaders were quite optimistic of future initiatives.

The VSR initially focused on four areas: enhancing voluntary sector accountability, deepening mechanisms for dialogue with the federal government; defining and regulating charitable activity; and increasing charitable tax incentives (VSR newsletter, November 1997). Individual members, taking the lead around these issues and lobbying on behalf of the VSR, experienced some success in obtaining some responses from federal government officials. For example, Al Hatton, the executive director of the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations (NVO), was particularly interested and influential in shaping the demands related to increasing tax credits, considering this to be a way of strengthening the autonomy of the sector by reinforcing its reliance on alternative funding sources. His lobbying led to significant enhancement of tax incentives for charitable donations in the 1996 and 1997 budgets.

Over the next couple of years, the VSR developed mechanisms for engaging in dialogue with the federal government. In 1996, the VSR submitted a *Pre-Budget Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance*, primarily requesting increased tax incentives for charitable donations. As it initiated discussions with Revenue Canada, Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC), and the Public Service Commission (PSC), sector leaders gradually felt empowered by their greater influence and believed they could influence the policy process and restore the credibility of national

⁷ Based on an interview with a senior government official.

⁸ Based on an interview with a senior government official.

organizations. Roundtable members, motivated to redefine the voluntary and charitable sector, its roles and responsibilities, attempted to raise awareness of issues facing the voluntary sector amongst federal policy makers and the general public.

During this period, VSR members found it relatively easy to gain standing and access to a variety of forums. Revenue Canada (now Canada Revenue Agency) officials held frequent meetings with representatives from the VSR; some members were invited to speak before the Standing Committee on Finance; and they also had the opportunity to meet formally with a number of Ministers such as Herb Dhaliwal, Minister of National Revenue, and Marcel Massé, President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure. By 1999, voluntary sector leaders were invited to a number of informal dinners hosted by Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC). Meeting with a wide range of Ministers and senior public officials, VSR members had the opportunity to exchange on policy issues (VSR Newsletters 1998, 1999). However, their participation in these formal and informal channels created changes in their representational strategies.

This strategy opened up new routes for political representation and new spaces where voluntary sector issues could be addressed. One respondent recalls,

“We were in a number of key positions. We were talking with members of parliament, collectively and individually. We met with senior bureaucrats in Finance, in Revenue Canada, in the Prime Minister’s office, in the Privy Council Office, in Treasury Board, in Industry Canada... We weren’t relating with those departments much in the past. We dealt with HRDC, Employment and Immigration, Health Canada, Environment, but we weren’t dealing with central agencies and that’s where the power was. That’s where the core decisions were made. By going to meet with these individuals for 2-3 years, then we started influencing the speech from the throne, the budgets. It started to sink in.”⁹

⁹ Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

Despite the insistence of some members of the VSR that advocacy and financing should be key areas of concern from the outset, in this new environment it was clear that little progress could be made as the federal government systematically refused to discuss this issue. Rather, the claims they made to the state were constructed around an image of a responsible and accountable partner who contributes effectively to service delivery and policy making. Analysis of the discourses and newsletters that the VSR diffused reveal a strong emphasis on issues of accountability, governance, management and responsibility, all of which tie into the universe of political discourse of the federal government. In fact, the dominant political discourse at the time, as I illustrated earlier, was one of political and fiscal accountability. Hence, the imperative of the VSR was to demonstrate that the sector could act responsibly and carry a part of the restructuring burden in good faith. This discourse was well received by federal civil servants.

5.4 Pulling strings

As a first step, the VSR assembled an independent panel of experts, chaired by former federal NDP leader Ed Broadbent, to lead an inquiry into governance and accountability within the sector. The *Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector* (PAGVS) came to be known as the “Broadbent Panel”. The original goal behind the Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector was to help rebuild trust in the sector and present voluntary organizations as responsible actors by setting out a set of accountability and governance standards to guide its future. In light of the scandals and competition for fundraising, the VSR knew that public trust was fragile. Questions of trust, confidence and accountability dominated the political agenda

at the time and thus, the Panel's work was deemed politically salient. The Panel's mandate was threefold: to review current governance and accountability practices within the voluntary sector; to develop proposed guidelines and practices to promote effective governance and accountability within the sector; and to lead a broad consultation on these proposals.¹⁰ It explored issues ranging from the role and responsibilities of the volunteer to fundraising practices and fiscal management within the sector.

During the course of the Panel's work, the notion of a voluntary sector as a "sector" was increasingly employed. As the initial work of the VSR was top down, it took some time before the idea of a sector trickled down and for organizations to view themselves as belonging to a "sector". In fact, one of the Panel's contributions is that it began to give coherence and direction to the discourse and the claims around which the sector organized itself; this was a significant turning point. First, the Panel members explicitly drew attention to the importance of naming for the sector. Their final report contains a section entitled "What's in a Name: NonProfit, Charitable or Voluntary?" which states that:

We have chosen to refer to our focus as the "voluntary sector," recognizing that some organizations rely on paid staff to carry out their work, although all rely on volunteers on their board of directors for their governance. We selected the term to reflect the sector's essential spirit, not the nature of its labour force. We acknowledge that the boundaries of the voluntary sector are fuzzy; it is its core rather than its edges that matter for our purposes (Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector 1999).

The members of the Panel recognized that the designated name for the sector would play an important role in generating solidarity and a sense of belonging within the sector.

¹⁰ For the final report <http://www.vsr-trsb.net/pagvs/index.htm>

The second important contribution of the Panel was that it held broad consultations across Canada on accountability practices within the sector. Many organizations interviewed commented on how it was the first time that many of them had the chance to sit across from each other and discuss issues, and realized even though in quite different fields, they shared the cross-cutting issues. The consultation process helped crystallize the sector's identity. For a majority of organizations interviewed in this study, the Panel of Governance and Accountability in the Voluntary Sector was a major turning point for the sector. One respondent describes this event as, "People were seeing things from the sector side and for the first time the sector was talking together. There was a place for that to occur. Broadbent cut across the stove pipes to help people. In the end of Broadbent, there was a sense of the sector. That momentum of joint dialogue continued and reinforced the sense of the sector."¹¹ Another notes, "It was important because it's at this point that we started to have information sessions and to get engaged.... They were building the ability of the sector as they moved along. The sector had matured into a more cohesive force once they seized opportunities. We were more positive about their future with government. It was certainly a period of hope for many voluntary sector organizations."¹² Finally, one aptly remarks that "it gave us political presence."¹³

From a policy and political perspective, Chaviva Hosek, former president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) and Senior Advisor in the

¹¹ Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

¹² Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

¹³ Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

Prime Minister's Office, was a key ally in bringing attention to the role voluntary sector. As a result, a commitment to renew the relationship with the voluntary sector was made in the Red Book's 1997. In fact, the liberal government began to take notice of the sector as evident its Red Book II commitments. In *Securing our Future Together* it stated, "Enhancing the capacity of the voluntary sector is a key objective of this government" (Liberal Party 1997).

Parallel to the work of the Broadbent Panel, the federal government discussed internally ways to address the Red Book commitments. Revenue Canada was asked to lead an interdepartmental committee of Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADM) to discuss how this could be done and to ensure horizontality. Originally, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) was to chair an interdepartmental committee to discuss how to translate the Red Book promises into action. By involving senior managers in the process and sharing information with departments and agencies, the federal government sought to improve the engagement of the civil service with the voluntary sector. However, this proved problematic for two reasons. First, the CCRA had no authority to bring on board other departments. Secondly, it had no resources. In order for this process to be efficient, the federal government needed internal support. In June 1998, a Voluntary Sector Task Force (VSTF), housed in the Privy Council Office (PCO), was created to support the ADM steering committee. Not only did this give greater credibility to the process, but it also institutionalized access to the state for voluntary organizations. As the process evaluation of the VSI indicates, "The legacy of this early action within government was to provide political backing through the Red Book commitments to the voluntary sector file and a home base in a central agency" (Social Development Canada 2004).

The Task Force consulted widely with voluntary organizations to prepare an Aide-Memoire for Cabinet to advise how to provide substance to these commitments. According to Good, “this was an important step to permit public servants to test what process of engagement might be acceptable to voluntary sector leaders while ensuring that it would also be acceptable to ministers who traditionally wish to reserve their own judgment about the undertaking of new consultative processes” (Good 2003, p. 123). What is interesting about this process is that the channels for voluntary sector leaders to engage with senior officials were opened up. One member of VSR recalls, “We started to notice that the government reps were interested and that the ADMs were also involved.”¹⁴ Aware of the opportunity that this represented, the Broadbent Panel shared their recommendations with the Task Force as they were preparing their final report. They felt they had the opportunity to use their work as a sounding board for further discussion with the federal government.

The final report issued by the Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector entitled *Building on Strength: Improving Governance and Accountability in Canada's Voluntary Sector* contained forty-one recommendations directed to both the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada. At the time, the recommendations were meant to be a starting point to open up discussions between the two. The timing of the deposit of the final report was telling. As the federal government had just committed to working with the voluntary sector in the Red Book, the Panel felt they could use this opportunity to make suggestions regarding the future direction of change; therefore, some of the report’s recommendations went beyond the initial

¹⁴ Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

mandate. The report articulated and transformed the political standing of the voluntary sector and asserted its autonomy and leadership capacity.¹⁵

Obviously, the Panel had no way of knowing the impact of its report; it marked the beginning of a new recognition of the importance of strengthening the relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector. Only five years earlier, the relationship between the two was antagonistic as the federal government was drastically cutting back funding of voluntary organizations and the opposition mounted by organizations was ferocious. Arguably, they had come a long way. As a participant aptly remarks, “From where the voluntary sector was coming from in 1995, it was a phenomenal change. The voluntary sector was more cohesive, and had a better sense of self; it was better able to take advantage of the offer.”¹⁶ Through the work of the VSR and of the Panel, voluntary organizations successfully recast themselves as credible and legitimate partners in governance; this process of identity building set the stage for future action.

5.5 Building momentum

Over the next couple of years, the federal government and the voluntary sector embarked on discussions with the goal of strengthening the relationship between the two. These dynamics were occurring on a macro scale as well as at a meso scale, within particular policy fields. For example, line departments such as Health Canada and Human Resources Development Canada were engaged in discussions with voluntary

¹⁵ See the final report <http://www.vsr-trsb.net/pagvs/index.htm>

¹⁶ Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

organizations within their field of activities to discuss the impact of Program Review and to develop guidelines to facilitate the interaction between the two actors. Their experiences within policy fields would provide practical guidance for discussions occurring at a macro scale and were key to pushing this agenda forward.¹⁷ The rise of voluntary sector issues on the political agenda created a series of opportunities for voluntary organizations to engage with the federal government. Voluntary sector representatives were very enthusiastic about the possibilities for change. While the lobbying efforts of individual VSR members and the work of Panel certainly had a huge role in placing the voluntary sector on the government agenda, the heavy handed approach of the federal government influenced not only the priorities but the distribution of resources as well.

The Voluntary Sector Task Force decided that joint collaboration with the voluntary sector was necessary to pursue ways to strengthen the relationship. This opportunity to re-examine and redirect the relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector, however, is not a coincidence; rather it is the fruit of voluntary sector organizations' extensive lobbying efforts. In fact, there has been an extensive expansion of politically active voluntary organizations, partly resulting from the governance dynamic. Voluntary sector organizations are now organising themselves to enter into dialogue with their government, to help shape policies and to explore the scope for joint action between public and private actors. In this context, the voluntary sector has raised claims for, and the federal government has identified the need to assess the relationship from a whole-of government, whole-of-sector perspective.

¹⁷ Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

An innovative process of Joint Tables – bringing together an equal number of senior federal officials and voluntary sector leaders – was agreed upon. Their mandate was broad: to develop new and more strategic ways of achieving their mutual goal of improving the quality of life for Canadians; and clearly bore the stamp of the Red Book. Three Joint Tables were organized around the themes of building a new relationship, strengthening capacity, and improving the regulatory framework. Each Joint Table was co-chaired by a federal official and a voluntary sector representative. Facing growing opportunities to engage with the federal government, the VSR agreed to move forward quickly on the Joint Table process despite the fact that many issues flagged by the Broadbent Panel such as advocacy and financing had been set aside. As the mandate of the tables was broad, and the issues to be examined were not narrowly defined, voluntary organizations felt they would be able to shape the agenda in the process. Moreover, they viewed the chance to be sitting jointly with an equal footing alongside government officials as a great opportunity.

The Joint Tables were set up quickly in March 1999 and unfolded over several months. As it was set up quickly, the Voluntary Sector Roundtable lacked time and resources to develop a selection process and find a wide range of participants. As a result, the Joint Table were mainly composed of the main core of VSR members, who then picked others to fill out the spots. Hence, the question of the sector representation always loomed.

With the launch of the Joint Table process, the discussions with government officials took on another dimension. Rather than simply exchanging views on the nature of their relationship, they began to address concrete ways to strengthen it. In August

1999, merely a couple of months after the process had begun, the federal government and the voluntary sector jointly released their final report, *Working Together* which contained twenty-six recommendations for action of how government-sector relationships could be enhanced.¹⁸ The exercise, deemed widely as a success by both parties involved, was described by Jane Stewart, then Minister of HRDC, as:

“a tremendously important document, signifying a major shift in how government operates. Since 1993 we have wanted to open up the budget, and pre-budget consultations, a radical new concept at the time, have now become commonplace. Both government and the voluntary sector realize that this is a great opportunity for open, improved communication. This recent consultation process has led to the conclusions that government has not been focusing very effectively on the sector, that the relationship needs to be broadened and strengthened, and that there is a need for government to develop a clearer understanding of the sector and how it operates.”¹⁹

Building on the momentum created by the Joint Table process, the federal government in the Speech from the Throne made the commitment to form an active partnership with the sector through the development of an accord and a volunteerism initiative. In effect, the Speech from the Throne signalled the two priorities of the federal government. The signing of an accord between the federal government and the voluntary sector was considered a politically expedient way to showcase a tangible result from discussions around relationship building (Laforest and Phillips, 2001). The volunteerism initiative tied in with the federal government’s discourse emphasizing the contribution of volunteers to service delivery. While sectoral leaders applauded the mention of the voluntary sector in the Speech from the Throne, the narrow focus on these two priority areas caused some disappointment as they did not reflect the consensus emerging from

¹⁸ Report available at: www.vsr-trsb.net/publications/pco-e.html

¹⁹ Quoted in “Where to go from here with the Working Together document?”, Canadian FundRaiser, November 22, 1999, available at : www.charityvillage.com/cv/archive/acov/acov99/acov9944.html.

Working Together. In effect, the federal government essentially dictated the actions that followed.

In order to provide political stewardship for these initiatives, the federal government created a Reference Group of Ministers (RGM). Functioning as a subcommittee of the Cabinet Committee for the Social Union, this group was chaired by Lucienne Robillard, then President of the Treasury Board; other members included the Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers of Health, Heritage, Canada Revenue Agency, Industry, CIDA, and HRDC, and the Secretary of State (Status of Women)²⁰. The mandate of the Reference Group of Ministers (RGM) was defined as “to provide strategic policy direction and co-ordination for the government. It will also play a guiding role in the development of a national accord with the voluntary sector. The Speech from the Throne envisioned the accord as a new foundation for an active partnership with voluntary organizations in the service of Canadians”.²¹

The RGM’s first task was to write a Memorandum to Cabinet (MC) requesting Ministers’ approval to move forward on options in *Working Together* and continue the partnership model. While the work surrounding the elaboration of the MC was subject to cabinet secrecy, officials writing the document consulted some members of the VSR. In fact, Patrick Johnston, of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy and member of the VSR, was involved intimately in the drafting and was asked to make a presentation before the cabinet. This was reportedly the first time in history that an outsider was present during cabinet discussion while an MC was on the table, indicative of the legitimacy and

²⁰ The members are Herb Gray, Hedy Fry, Sheila Copps, Jane Stewart, Allan Rock, Maria Minna and Martin Cauchon.

²¹ http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pres_speech2000/0413_e.asp

credibility that some members of the voluntary sector had garnered. However, it posed some difficulties for the sector representatives who, sworn to secrecy, were unable to report their progress to their constituents. This illustrates the extent to which the channels within government were open to some voluntary sector leaders, an unprecedented access. As I will discuss shortly, however, such opportunities do not always have the intended effect. Although the opportunities allow representatives to act for the sector within the state, there are some constraints and problems associated with doing so.

For the majority of voluntary sector representatives not involved in the MC discussions, the Joint Table process was followed by a long period of silence. Disappointment grew after the 2000 Budget failed to mention monies to support the federal government's verbal commitments to the voluntary sector. In June 2000, nearly a year later, the federal government invited leaders of the voluntary sector to a press conference to launch the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) with the specific purpose of strengthening the contribution of the voluntary sector to better serving Canadians by investing in its capacity and committing to building an effective relationship with the federal government. Furthermore, it announced that \$100 million would be allocated for the VSI over five years in key priority areas: the development of an Accord, Information Technology and Information Management, Public Awareness, Capacity, and Regulatory Issues.

While one might expect the representatives of the voluntary sector to rejoice, for many it was a slap in the face. Not only had they not been consulted regarding the allocation of resources, but the priorities set out did not reflect those agreed upon by the

Joint Tables, which had been a joint process. Moreover, nearly a third of the monies, \$30 million, would be distributed directly to federal departments under an initiative called Sectoral Involvement in Departmental Policy Development (SIDPD) which had never been discussed during *Working Together*. Many voluntary organizations were critical of this initiative because the money was distributed to departments, seemingly to secure their buy-in, not to the sector. Others felt that departments did not have the money to do what was being asked, and the sector representatives realized they also needed to get some resources. In a bold move, voluntary sector leaders left the room but countered back with new recommendations for the allocation of resources. Overall, their recommendations were well received and many were implemented. As one participant notes, “It served as a turning point in our relationship. We put our foot down and it was a historic moment.”²²

Despite some opposition, the federal government set the agenda for the Voluntary Sector Initiative by setting it out in a Memorandum to Cabinet and attaching money to it. As one voluntary sector representative notes, “At the beginning, the Voluntary Sector Initiative and Accord was not on top of the priorities list of the voluntary sector, but it clearly was for the government... We had to explain to the voluntary sector why we need to do it. There was little time between *Working Together* and VSI and we were the people moving the ball of VSI in the voluntary sector.”²³ While the mandate pursued by both the Joint Tables and the VSI was limited in their scope compared to that originally promoted by the Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary sector, organizations

²² Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

²³ Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

nevertheless saw these initiatives as opportunities. During the course of our interviews, they described the Joint Tables and the VSI as “opportunities that had to be seized”, “opportunities to reassert their power relations”, and they viewed it as “a chance to be sitting at the table”.

The Voluntary Sector Initiative that followed was a joint initiative, reflecting a commitment to improved communication and collaboration between the federal government and the voluntary sector, and the recognition of the expertise of voluntary organizations contributing to Canadian society. The VSI was intended to unfold in two distinct phases. The first phase, unfolding over two to three years, would launch specific activities and establish mechanisms for continuous dialogue and reporting; with the intention of having the tables wind down. The bulk of the work and the monies were allocated to the first phase with \$11.5 million allotted to building a more positive relationship between the federal government and the sector through the development of an Accord and codes of conduct; \$35 million to strengthening the capacity of the sector and the knowledge of it through the institutionalization of the National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP); \$8.6 million to improving the regulatory framework; \$1 million to modernizing the federal funding strategies; \$10 million to encouraging volunteering; and \$28.5 million to involving the sector in policy development (VSI evaluation, 2004). This phase was intended to contribute to building the foundation for long-term change by advancing the dialogue between the two sectors. Table 5.1 provides an overview of the way monies were allocated under the Voluntary Sector Initiative. The second phase would then focus on pushing forward the agenda and

overseeing the implementation programs and recommendations developed during the first phase of the VSI such as the Accord and the development of Codes of Conduct.

Table 5.1 Allocation of resources under the Voluntary Sector Initiative

	Amount Allocated
Development of Accord and Codes of Good Conduct	\$ 11.5 Million
Strengthening capacity and awareness	\$ 35 Million
Dealing with regulatory issues	\$ 8.6 Million
International Year of Volunteers and the National Volunteerism Initiative	\$ 10 Million
Sectoral Involvement in Policy Development	\$ 28.5 Million
Dealing with federal funding issues	\$1 Million

A number of projects were completed during the first phase of the Voluntary Sector Initiative, and some are still on-going. The main product was the development of an *Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*, and related *Codes of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue and Funding*. The Accord is an informal agreement between the federal government and the voluntary sector which details their mutual commitments towards the strengthening of their relationship. The Codes of Good Practice are more specific measures to put the guiding principles of the Accord in practice in the areas of Policy Dialogue and Funding.

The National Volunteerism Initiative Joint Table launched a national awareness campaign called the Canada Volunteerism Initiative (CVI) designed to enhance and promote volunteerism in Canada. Through the CVI, Volunteer Canada and the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, two large well established national umbrella organizations, were selected and received funding in order to establish Local Networks in each province and territory.

The Information Management/Information Technology Joint Table developed a web portal for the Voluntary Sector through a pan-Canadian consortium of Provincial/Regional/Municipal Voluntary Sector Organizations, led by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC).

The Capacity Joint Table started the National Learning Initiative (NLI) for the voluntary sector “to foster dynamic leadership in the voluntary sector – effective, responsive, and accountable – for a vibrant democracy and caring, inclusive communities, by enhancing human resource development, through accessible, relevant education and training opportunities” (VSI 2002). The Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges received funding to lead this program. The Capacity Joint Table also developed Human Resources for the Voluntary Sector (HRVS) in order to help voluntary organizations to attract, support and keep skilled employees by facilitating knowledge transfer and dissemination of human resource practices. In order to oversee the project a knowledge transfer working group was created whose membership includes representatives from the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, Community Foundations of Canada, the Canadian Council on Social Development, the Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development, the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations, VGH and UBC Hospital Foundation, as well as a public official from Human Resources Development Canada and the Voluntary Sector Forum Liaison. The initiative produced a series of documents and research reports that promote good practices in accountability and financial management, human resources management, skills, training, even guides for voluntary sector involvement in policy making. The goal of these studies was to provide a database of practices deemed

successful and effective in order to encourage their up-take and dissemination. To facilitate cross sectoral collaboration between the public service and the voluntary sector, the Capacity Joint Table also initiated the Policy Internships and Fellowships program (PIAF) which either placed voluntary sector representatives within a federal government or a public servant in the voluntary sector. The program was run by the Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development (CVSRD). Last but not least, the capacity joint table set up a nation-wide series of consultations with non-profit and voluntary organizations in order to gather information on the size and scope of the voluntary sector in Canada. The National Survey on Non-profit Voluntary Organizations (NSNVO) was significant by given its size and magnitude, involving approximately 13,000 non-profit and voluntary organizations. It was carried out by a consortium of voluntary organizations and the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy took the lead. Interestingly, under all these projects of the VSI, it is generally large well established national organizations that have received the contracts. The one exception is the Sectoral Involvement in Policy Development (SIDPD) program because the associated funds were distributed through departments.

The work of VSI closely mirrored the Joint Table process and drew membership equally from the federal government and the voluntary sector. The main difference however between the VSI and the Joint Tables was the breadth and scope of the initiative. Six Joint Tables and three working groups were established to implement specific VSI elements. The Joint Tables, assisted by two Secretariats: the Voluntary Sector Task Force (VSTF) and the Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat (VSIS). In addition, a Joint Coordinating Committee was established to provide leadership and oversight for the VSI.

Figure 5.1 provides an overview of the Voluntary Sector Initiative and of the principle areas in which the government and voluntary sector collaborated.

In all, 170 individuals from the voluntary sector and the federal government were involved. Part of the concern of the federal government in embarking on the VSI, was that the participation of voluntary sector representatives reach more deeply into the sector. Up until then, the discussions had taken place between federal government officials and national voluntary organizations located in Ottawa. Consequently, an extensive selection process was launched to ensure representation from across Canada, from across sub-sectors, and from both large and small organizations. An independent selection committee was set up by the VSR and just over 1000 nominations were received (Social Development Canada 2004). Yet, despite efforts to broaden participation, the structure of opportunity created by the VSI favoured elite accommodation. It reinforced patterns of relationship which had become entrenched over the years, thereby privileging informal contacts and discussions behind closed doors.

Figure 5.1 Voluntary Sector Initiative

Acronyms: CVI (Canada Volunteerism Initiative), HRVS (Human Resources for the Voluntary Sector), IM/IT (Information Management/ Information Technology), JCC (Joint Coordinating Committee), NLI (National Learning Initiative), NSNVO (National Survey on Non-profit Voluntary Organizations), PCO (Privy Council Office), PIAF (Policy Internships and Fellowships), VS (Voluntary Sector), VSSG (Voluntary Sector Steering Group).

Source: Voluntary Sector Forum 2004

5.6 The route of the VSI: Some implications of working from within

Opting to engage with the federal government in a relationship building exercise, the voluntary sector chose a strategy of routing its claims through state institutions. As a result, throughout the mid 1990s, voluntary sector organizations struggled with more mainstream positions and practices. From the outset, the VSR explored a number of strategies to reach its goals. Either it could adopt a confrontational strategy, mounting a front of opposition to mobilize against the funding cutbacks; or it could adopt a more collaborative route and attempt to rebuild its relationship with the state. In the context of strained resources, the VSR adopted the second option with the goal of enhancing and strengthening the relationship between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada. For the VSR, it was nevertheless important to remain autonomous from the federal government, in order to maintain the balance of power. Organizations were careful to guard their capacity to exercise external pressure in the event that negotiations didn't unfold as anticipated. Hence, maintaining their capacity to advocate was an essential part of the strategy.

As one respondent noted,

From the beginning, we were very aware of the need to continue to strengthen our advocacy work. Over time, it became increasingly difficult to maintain our eggs in two baskets, and we decided to put our energy towards building a more positive relationship with the federal government. It took up too much time, and there was a sense that we were really making progress.²⁴

Taking advantage of the opportunities created through the work of the VSR and the Panel, voluntary organizations could adapt their representational activities. As one

²⁴ Based on an interview with an executive director of an organization member of the VSR.

respondent underscores, “Working in partnership means that you need to give a little time and leave a bit of your power aside.”²⁵

It is important to view this decision as a strategic one. After all, voluntary organizations are masters of their own choices. The decision to work from within to shape the relationship between the voluntary sector and the federal government was a strategic one, made in light of the opportunities presented to them. The issue of who was making the decision on behalf of the sector is key, however. As one respondent notes, “Some people thought this was a mistake but you can’t say no to \$ 95 million. They were overly optimistic. Again, who’s they? It’s a critical part of this. It’s clear that it was an old guard. The problem was that there did not seem to be a new guard. Some of the more sceptical voices weren’t there yet.”²⁶ It was the voluntary sector leaders who had been involved in the Joint Tables process and the PAGVS that truly believed they could increase their presence and their strength in the political arena by engaging with the federal government in the VSI process. From the start, these were mainly large, established, national umbrella organizations. The more advocacy oriented organizations were virtually absent from the discussions. Hence, the form of collective action and the routes to political representation that were chosen reflected their more bureaucratic and professional organizational practices.

The collaborative initiatives that developed over the next three years also significantly influenced group practices and forms of representation, and reinforced them. Given that the goal was to structure and reinforce the collaboration between the federal

²⁵ Based on an interview with a voluntary sector representative who participated in the VSI process.

²⁶ Based on an interview with a staff member of the VSI Secretariat.

government and the voluntary sector, it goes without saying that the process has also played a role in orienting and cementing their daily exchanges. For one, it realigned the discussions by focusing on long-term whole of government-whole of sector relationships rather than on ad hoc relationships between line departments and individual organizations. Furthermore, by multiplying the formal and informal exchanges between voluntary sector leaders and senior government officials, the initiatives contributed to the increased visibility of the voluntary sector in policy discourse.

The tightening of the links between senior federal officials and voluntary sector leaders drew them inwards. Organizations traditionally viewed as a sphere outside of the state, now found themselves engaged from the inside. One observer noted that a few insiders controlled the sector agenda. Secondly, it created an uneven playing field within the voluntary sector, and thus had an impact on future initiatives. One voluntary sector representative notes, "It also created some tensions between the innies and the outies. The architects of the VSI, Sol Kasimer [then president of the YMCA], David Armour [then president of the United Way of Canada] at times there were great gaps between their understanding and ours of the process... It had a severe steering effect."²⁷ Finally, it created some tensions within the sector as many were seen to be co-opted by the federal government. One respondent felt "they did a good job in changing policy and connecting with government but all of this was done from the inside which excluded lobbying from the outside... At times, they shied away from issues of the voluntary sector because

²⁷ Based on an interview with a voluntary sector representative who participated in the VSI process.

members were co-opted.”²⁸ This is indicative of a tension within the sector that grew as organizations became increasingly involved in the VSI process.

Interestingly, rather than encouraging a variety of interaction between the federal government and the voluntary sector, the Joint Tables and the VSI process in effect centralized exchanges within these structures. In fact, many organizations criticized the fact that it polarized all of their contacts and attention on one single process: the VSI. Five organizations mentioned that their line departments, with whom they usually engage with on a daily basis, refused categorically to discuss sector-related issues under the pretence that the VSI was now the space where these issues should be raised. As one respondent recounts, “the cynics said that government would use the fact that they contributed to the VSI as a way of getting out of anything substantial for the sector, and it was a diversion and there is a certain truth in that. Government reps have said they don’t want to deal with certain issues because VSI is doing it.”²⁹ Another was more cynical regarding the impact of the VSI on the sector stating, “It muffled the voice of the sector for a while on issues others than those in the VSI. When the voluntary sector came to talk to cabinet ministers about an issue, they deferred to the VSI. It was a betrayal, I assume it was unintended. Even on other issues, for example the sector totally let the government off the hook on SUFA [Social Union Framework Agreement], it fell off the radar. They never called them on that.”³⁰

²⁸ Based on an interview with a voluntary sector representative who participated in the VSI process.

²⁹ Based on an interview with a voluntary sector representative who participated in the VSI process.

³⁰ Based on an interview with a staff member of the VSI Secretariat.

Cooperation has also worked to suppress important differences within the sector. A couple of organizations interviewed raised the point that they felt pressured by others, who had invested a lot of time and energy in the process, not to adopt a confrontational stance during the VSI. To a certain extent, the strong emphasis on working from within undermined the voluntary sector's capacity to pressure the government from outside. In fact, some organizations hold the VSI process responsible for reducing the voice of the sector, suggesting it focused their attention on building a long-term relationship. One respondent even suggested, "We have lost a collective capacity to impact across government. The visibility of the VSI has gone and the capacity to talk to government from the sector perspective. Now we got to figure out how do we go back and regain that."³¹ This view was shared by a substantial number of organizations who felt that instead of creating new opportunities, the VSI contributed to the closing of some doors. Another respondent explains, "Before the VSI, we had a lot of access to Ministers. During the VSI we did not do anything with it because we thought that we have RGM. Lucienne Robillard was a fine leader. But it was unexpected and unintended that the ability to have access to the broad government has significantly reduced."³²

In fact, the reality is far more complex. Such initiatives permitted the voluntary sector to attain greater access to decision makers, yet the access remained limited to a small circle of voluntary sector leaders. One organization involved notes, "the whole

³¹ Based on an interview with a voluntary sector representative who participated in the VSI process.

³² Based on an interview with a voluntary sector representative who participated in the VSI process.

VSI process created an uneven playing field.”³³ The process of institutional selectivity has favoured large bureaucratic organisations that possess a certain expertise and knowledge at the expense of small local organizations (Wisler and Guigni 1996). Moreover, favouring more conservative forms of representation led to an “elitization” of the sector. As a participant aptly remarks, “the individuals that came forward were people who were able to collaborate more effectively... That changes the tone at the table... Local level organizations did not understand what this was about. They were not use to conversations like this.”³⁴

As a result, small organizations found themselves almost at a disadvantage when engaging with government at the discussion table because for the most part, being involved late in the process, they were unaware of the protocol and culture of interaction that developed in the first phases, and they had a different view on the issues facing the voluntary sector. Moreover, precisely because the intent was to have a broad representativity of the voluntary sector, individuals were selected on the basis on their expertise and experience rather than based on their organizational affiliation. This was problematic for two reasons.

First, as the contribution of participants rested on their experience and expertise, the executive directors of smaller organizations with less resources and capacity were at a disadvantage because they did not necessarily possess as much experience in large meeting settings, and were probably not as savvy in getting their point across. As a result, they frequently ended up being mere spectators, as leaders of national organizations took

³³ Based on an interview with a voluntary sector representative who participated in the VSI process.

³⁴ Based on an interview with a senior government official.

the centre stage in the discussion. Nearly half of the participants interviewed who were involved in the VSI process raised the point that a couple of large organizations successfully influenced the collaborative process behind closed doors by having privileged access. Criticisms concerning the small cluster of organizations that directly benefited, financially and organizationally, from the process abounded. One participant relates his experience: “Certain issues were dealt with behind closed doors... Some organizations who were not sitting on our joint table were even able to influence our agenda.”³⁵ Hence, many small organizations felt marginalized despite their presence at the table.

Secondly, individuals who participated in the process were not accountable to their organization because they did not represent them. Although these individuals were asked to give advice on the basis of their qualifications, in effect they did not represent the sector because they do not have to report back and provide feedback information to their members and, in the context of the VSI, they were not accountable to their constituents for their actions. In addition, most policy discussions in the design phase are confidential making the feedback process ever more difficult. In some cases this created some internal tensions between the participants and their organization. It was evident in interviews with many officials who, as forum members, were caught between their accountability to the organization that employed them and their growing commitment to the lay members with whom they were interacting. Moreover, this meant that feedback mechanisms to the wider sector were weakened. This had profound implications for the process of identity-building within the sector. As one participant noted, “It’s a big

³⁵ Based on an interview with a voluntary sector representative who participated in the VSI process.

challenge. First it's a communication problem, how do you call on a wide participation in order to have a process that is inclusive when people don't see themselves as part of it."³⁶

Up until the VSI process, there was a lot of optimism amongst national voluntary sector leaders regarding the growing sense of solidarity within the sector. In particular, the consultations led by the Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector conveyed the impression that a growing number of organizations within the sector were sharing common interests. Yet, the VSI process, in expanding the voluntary sector involvement to a wider range and variety of organizations, had the reverse effect. As the relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector was being redesigned, fault lines within the sector were being exposed, in particular between large, well-established national organizations and smaller organizations.

On one hand, the whole experience helped to consolidate leadership within the sector, through the work of the Voluntary Sector Roundtable, the Voluntary Sector Steering Group (VSSG) and later the Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF).³⁷ Figure 5.2 shows the evolution of leadership within the voluntary sector over time. On another, through their experiences, these leaders became close to political power, reinforcing important disjunctions between the everyday reality of grass roots organizations and that of national organizations.

³⁶ Based on an interview with a member of the Voluntary Sector Roundtable.

³⁷ The Voluntary Sector Steering Group was composed of the members of the Voluntary Sector Roundtable together with the voluntary sector co-chairs of Joint Tables, the voluntary sector members of the Joint Coordinating Committee, the chairs of sector Working Groups, and one representative from visible minority and Aboriginal reference groups whereas the Voluntary Sector Forum is composed 9 VSSG members together with 12 new members.

Figure 5.2 Evolution of leadership within the voluntary sector

An analysis of the responses of the voluntary organizations involved in the VSI process reveals there are clear demarcations between the perception of the small organizations and that of the large, well-established ones. These tensions manifest themselves around two issues: the name of the sector and the claims made on its behalf. First, small organizations are beginning to question the very name used to describe the sector. One respondent states, "I do not know why we use the term voluntary sector. We would prefer the term 'voluntary and community sector'. In fact, if it were up to us, we would drop completely the term voluntary and we would call ourselves community sector. Nevertheless, we were stuck with this name a little by default because we had acquired such visibility with the name way before any one asked us what we thought of

it.”³⁸ These struggles over the name of the sector also take place at the other end of the spectrum as well with large organizations trying to expand the name to include non-profit organizations which are not volunteer based. It is telling, for example, that the National Survey of Voluntary Organizations (NSVO) was renamed the National Survey of Voluntary and Non-profit Organizations (NSNVO). Both sides are contesting the image of the voluntary sector that has dominated the discussions with federal government officials. Although these tensions existed within the sector prior to the VSI, they were masked by the effective mobilization of national voluntary sector leaders. The VSI process served to reaffirm the antagonisms between large national resources, which can access resources and the political process easily, and smaller organizations less inclined to follow the rules of the game in order to gain access as dictated by the federal government.

Secondly, organizations began to question the claims that were made on behalf of the sector. As one representative notes, “as a local organization we need to rely increasingly on these large scale organizations such as the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, Volunteer Canada, that do not have any links to the grassroots which can be problematic because they are far distanced from our every day reality. While they are off jetting to Vancouver or Tokyo, we are living a different reality.”³⁹ They felt that these large organizations had monopolized the agenda. For many small local organizations, issues of volunteering, charitable giving and tax status, occupying much of the discursive space during the VSI process, trumped the key issues of their daily preoccupations

³⁸ Based on an interview with a voluntary sector representative who participated in the VSI process.

³⁹ Based on an interview with a voluntary sector representative who participated in the VSI process.

particularly as they were strained for resources and increasingly pushed towards service delivery. They felt voluntary sector leaders had not insisted enough on the importance of advocacy and financing for the sector. In fact, out of all the organizations interviewed, 22 consider today that the VSI was a missed opportunity precisely because these issues were left unaddressed. Rather, they saw the VSI as a money bank for large established organizations, with very little implications for their daily activities. This left many small organizations cynical of the entire process and of the direction the relationship was taking.

5.7 Setting the policy context: Institutionalizing practice at a macro scale

Despite the tensions and divisions that began to appear within the voluntary sector, the VSI process did contribute in a significant way to setting the policy context for relations between the federal government and the voluntary sector at all scales of action. Precisely because it addressed concerns that voluntary organizations share such as how to develop effective engagement mechanisms for voluntary sector participation in the policy-making process, building capacity, and funding issues; its work has an impact on the dynamics that play out at the meso and the micro scales. The VSI process in effect has shaped the broad institutional and discursive conditions within which these actors interact on a day-to-day basis. Not only has it affected the attitude of the federal government and the general public with respect to voluntary sector organizations, it has redefined the terms of engagement with the state and ultimately affects how organizations conduct themselves and the repertoires of action available at all scales of action.

The VSI served as a critical turning point in government-sector relationships and its impact is manifest at a variety of scales. For one, the process itself played an important role in helping to foster new understandings and mutual respect across the sectors. It provided the opportunity for representatives of the federal government and the voluntary sector to examine multiple facets of their relationship. For the voluntary sector, the discussions and the broad consultations that were held across Canada with organizations generated a better understanding of the policy making process and organizations across scales became more aware of the constraints facing the federal government as a result. For the federal government, the process dispelled many myths regarding the sector, and led to the recognition that voluntary organizations should be key informants in policy and program development across scales given their knowledge of issues and experience. As a result, it not only repositioned the voluntary sector higher on the political agenda; it also brought unprecedented financial support and political leverage to the struggles of the voluntary sector around capacity issues. It conveyed a new openness towards partnering with voluntary organizations in policy making and service delivery which translate at a meso scale, within policy fields.

The VSI also signalled to voluntary organizations that advocacy was no longer an appropriate strategy for making one's claims to the state. The federal government had in fact systematically refused to discuss issues concerning advocacy jointly with the voluntary sector. Nevertheless, the federal government did invest close to \$30 million through the VSI towards strengthening the policy capacity of voluntary organizations through the program Sectoral Involvement in Departmental Policy Development (SIDPD). Other programs such as the social development partnerships program were later

set up to pursue similar goals of strengthening research and development that contributes to policy making. The VSI also produced documents such as *Participating in Federal Public Policy: A Guide for the Voluntary Sector*, a policy guide that essentially tells organizations how to behave and act.⁴⁰ For example, in a section of the document titled “Saying Thank You”, the author explains that “recognizing efforts made in support of your issues is one of the most important steps in policy dialogue. Recognizing efforts will add to your organization's credibility and will help build strong relationships” (Capacity Joint Table 2002, p. 51). The document also contains a series of “tips” to voluntary sector organizations that may not be aware of the proper etiquette or informal rules of conduct when dealing with governmental actors:

- Be prompt. Make note of when there has been an important event (for example, a vote in the legislature, the issuance of a grant, an activity supported by the grant) and say thank you right away. The more quickly you acknowledge a person for their support, the better.
- If you are pursuing press coverage, publicly acknowledge support at an event with good photo opportunities.
- Be aware of your timing - choose times where your efforts will have an increased legislative impact.
- Be sure to thank officials even when they don't agree with you or things don't go your way. Don't forget that effective public policy influence

⁴⁰ Some federal government departments have also developed their own policies policy guides in order to facilitate voluntary sector involvement in policy making. See for example Health Canada's *Policy Toolkit for Public Involvement in Decision Making*, available at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/voluntarysector/building_partners.html and Environment Canada's *Commitment to Effective Consultations*, available at: http://www.ec.gc.ca/consult/policy_e.html.

requires sustained input over a period of time. Significant changes in public policy take a long time to initiate and longer to implement.

Building relationships along the way will make it a more pleasant process.

- Use thank you letters as simple and formal responses to officials. Provide a specific example of how the official's actions on a policy issue affected your organization and its clients.
- Say "thank you" personally in a public forum. For example, get up at an appropriate time in the House, such as a question and answer period, and say that you appreciate the MP's action, vote or whatever they have done to support your organization. (Voluntary Sector Initiative 2003, p. 51)

This recent publication on voluntary sector involvement in policy development signals clearly just how government expects organizations to behave and act. It prescribes and provides a guide for appropriate conduct in the policy realm directed at specific behaviours.

What is clear from these initiatives is that the institutional basis for involvement in the policy process has shifted. This paradigm marks a break with the legacy of the 1980s which viewed civil society actors as important checks and balances on the state. Under such a paradigm oppositional and confrontational tactics were par for the course and the federal government recognized and supported financially the advocacy role of voluntary organizations (Jenson and Phillips 1996, Pal 1993). Now we have moved into an era where professional dominance and collaborative practices determine who gains legitimacy and access. The lines of inclusion and exclusion are being redrawn, and those organizations which have acquired any meaningful level of participation in the process of

governance and who are strongly represented are those who behave appropriately. As a result, strategies employed by organizations may shift in fundamental ways, and this may trickle down across scales.

The VSI also profoundly marked the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector because of the outputs it produced. One of the goals of the VSI process was to lay out a set of guiding principles and practices to foster a more positive relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector. These guiding principles were detailed in key documents: the Accord and the Codes of Good Practice on Funding and Policy Dialogue. In addition, as I discussed previously, a series of documents and research reports were produced by the VSI which promote good practices in a number of areas such as accountability and financial management, human resources management, skills, training, even guides for voluntary sector involvement in policy making. The VSI process thereby was key in providing ‘master frames’ embodying rules, norms and accepted patterns of behaviour which have resulted in far reaching changes in the structure of the voluntary sector, its identity, and in its patterns of relationship across scales. It produced nationally sanctioned professional guidelines and guides for best practice, which may be taken for granted on a day-to-day basis, but nevertheless serve as institutional parameters which guide political behaviour and factor into the strategizing at macro, meso and micro scales of action.

Moreover, these outputs have affected the political opportunity structures at all scales by creating pressures for voluntary organizations to conform to these norms and adapt their practices. As I shall show in subsequent chapters, organizations that behave accordingly are rewarded with privileged access to the state and senior federal officials.

These norms and practices are then reflected in organizational structures that are adopted. Not surprisingly then, one would expect to see greater bureaucratization and professionalization at an organizational scale associated a formalization of the relationship with the state. How these broad dynamics translate at a meso and micro scale is the object of the next two chapters.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the shift in governance has raised new challenges for voluntary organizations in Canada and has created a need for organizations of civil society to come together and build alliances in new and important ways. I demonstrated how this very process has empowered new actors and fostered new models for thinking about the link between the voluntary sector and government, how in the name of the sector, key national organizations led lobbying efforts, requesting to receive funding grants and tried to take advantage of the political climate to rebuild the political profile of the sector. It has done so under the leadership of the Voluntary Sector Roundtable who successfully positioned itself within the universe of political discourse, sought out allies in high ranked government position, and worked from within the state through formal and informal contacts to bring to reassert its position in the process of governance. Thanks to its efforts, new political spaces were created such as the VSI where issues affecting the broader sector could be addressed.

In the process, I argued that VSI process launched interesting new dynamics within the sector and affected the patterns of relationship across sub-sectors. The prospects brought on by a shift in governance and the increasing reality of partnership

and collaborative mechanisms have joined actors at different scales in a common discourse. These opportunities, however, offered unevenly distributed possibilities for different political actors and strategies at different scales and in different policy fields. The VSI process constituted a determining moment in the relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector because it set in place broad frameworks that will guide behaviour and shape practice across scales of action.

In the next chapter, I examine how the work of the VSI translated into the dynamics of governance at a meso scale by informing the types of issues around which organizations in the field of children and family services also would organize, their strategies, and the ways in which they intersect and link with the state on policy and service delivery issues across scales.

Chapter 6 A diagonal slice of the sector: The field of children and family services

6.1 Introduction

To this point I have examined how the governance process has shaped the relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector at a macro scale. I have detailed how the federal government has been a strong proponent of engaging the voluntary sector in the elaboration of policies and in the delivery of services by emphasizing the need to develop partnerships and to work in collaboration (Saint-Martin 2004, Webb 2003b). In addition, I have examined how the voluntary sector has tried to take advantage of these opportunities, and has successfully repositioned itself as an effective and responsible partner in the governance process. Finally, I discussed how the processes unfolding at a macro scale may gain institutional embodiment at other scales in the form of norms, regulations and cognitive structures, thereby affecting the actors' political choices, their strategizing, and the routes to political representation they embark upon.

The dynamics of governance are now observable in a number of policy areas in Canada through a proliferation of multilateral initiatives between federal, provincial, and territorial governments and a desire for greater involvement of voluntary organizations and citizens in these initiatives (Saint-Martin 2004, Phillips 2001c). It has meant not only increasing collaboration between state and voluntary organizations in a variety of settings and across a variety of scales, but also a redefinition of roles and responsibilities of each. For these reasons, agency is articulated across different scales from the macro to the micro. After all, these processes involve voluntary sector organizations engaged in various scales of action through the lens of the sector, the policy community and the

individual organization. Voluntary organizations that view themselves as belonging to the ‘voluntary sector’ are also members of a policy community¹ and have a direct stake in the outcomes within that policy arena. A growing number of researchers have recently drawn attention to the importance of policy networks, and the formal organizations that compose them, as critical features of the governance process (Klijn and Koppejan 2000, Marin and Mayntz 1991). They argue that the process of governance is mediated differently through these policy networks and that the capacity and practices of actors matter. Moreover, at a micro scale, organizations may still pursue their own objectives and interests which may be separate from that of the policy community or the ‘sector’ as a whole. As such, they may have quite varied interests and because macro, meso and micro scales are connected, organizations may take advantage of opportunities on one scale to overcome constraints on another. Hence the dynamics at one scale may transform the forms of political struggle at another.

In order to give substance to the issues raised in the previous chapter, in this chapter I focus on a particular diagonal slice of the process of governance as it is experienced within a policy field, it enables me to focus on to understand the layered scales of action in an integrated framework. I examine specifically how voluntary organizations are responding to transformations brought about by shifts in governance at the meso scale, within the field of children and family services. Analyzing the politics of governance within a particular policy field provides a promising venue to examine the how meso scales of action are embedded into processes occurring at other scales. It

¹ A policy community is composed of all the direct and indirect stakeholders active in a particular policy area.

allows us to understand the processes that shape and constitute practices at different levels of analysis and how they relate to one another.

The first part of this chapter explains the broad transformations in governance processes that have occurred in the field of children and family services and how they relate to the macro dynamics examined in the previous chapter. Secondly, I focus on how organizations at a sectoral scale have mobilized to seize potential opportunities. In the process, I examine how macro and meso dynamics created through governance translate into, and interact with organizations' motivations and strategies at a meso scale. In the final section of the chapter, I detail some impacts the processes have had on the policy community within the field of children and family services. This chapter deals with meso scale adaptations and responses of voluntary organizations. The next chapter will deal with how these trends translate at an organizational scale.

6.2 Setting the stage: The field of children and family services

In the 1990s, the process of governance in the social policy arena witnessed a gradual change in form and relative importance. With the creation of the Canada Health and Social Transfer program (CHST) in the mid 1990s, the federal government began to transfer funding towards health, social services and post-secondary education in block to the provinces. Moreover, under the CHST, transfer payments to the provinces were subjected to massive cuts. Until then, funding had been tied to particular social policy areas but it was still fungible given that provinces had certain flexibility in the allocation of resources. Along with this shift in funding scheme, the federal government devolved some of its responsibilities for service delivery to the provinces and block funding

inevitably made it difficult for the federal government to monitor the allocation of resources. Thus, it was necessary to create mechanisms for facilitating dialogue, coordination and integration. Since the CHST involves federal spending in areas of provincial jurisdiction such as health, education, childcare, and social services; the federal government is no longer in a position to guarantee that monies are being spent in the designated areas and to ensure that standards in social programs are being met. Therefore, another major transformation in forms of governing was that the federal government had to move towards indirect forms of control of spending in the area of social policy. In order to overcome these challenges, a strategy of policy intervention began to take hold involving the interaction of federal, provincial and territorial governments as well as Canadians and voluntary organizations that have a stake in the issues.

In 1996, a Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministerial Council on Social Policy Renewal was created in order to provide a venue to discuss social policy reform outside of the Annual Premiers' Conference.² Children's issues quickly became a focal point of social policy debates and the field of experimentation for collaborative modes of governing. For one, the figure of the child was sufficiently neutral to facilitate consensus building and coordination in this policy area (Jenson and Dobrowolsky 2004, Saint-Martin 2000). Moreover, the idea of "investing in children" had gained prominence in policy circles thanks to the research conducted on population health, and the data that

² The Ministerial Council was co-chaired by Stockwell Day, Alberta's Minister of Family and Social Services, and Pierre Pettigrew, Minister of Human Resources Development Canada. The Council is composed of Ministers representing nine provinces and the two territories. While the Province of Quebec has chosen not to join the Council, they participate in the meetings as observers.

was beginning to emerge from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) (Beauvais and Jenson 2001, Saint-Martin 2000). For many, the new focus on the child has signalled a shift towards a social investment state, in which a social investment strategy geared towards the children would be an emblem for investment in human and social capital (Jenson 2004). It was also a response to real policy problems in the field of children and family services. Young families were facing unprecedented levels of poverty caused by labour market problems, which meant that levels of child poverty were increasing. The old system of social assistance was not well suited for addressing these problems and so governments had to find new mechanisms. The development of a National Children's Agenda, rallying multiple actors across scales, became the testing ground for new multilateral arrangements exemplified in the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA). As Noël notes, "The Social Union Framework Agreement acknowledged the legitimacy of the federal spending power areas of provincial jurisdiction and codified, more or less precisely, the rules that would govern intergovernmental relations in social policy for the years to come. As such, the agreement marked a turning point" (Noël 2001).

In this chapter, I examine how voluntary organizations in the field of children and family services strategize and take advantage of these new multi-scalar processes in order to affect change within their policy field. My analysis is based on 19 national organizations involved in the field of children and family services, which had been involved in collective action initiatives from the beginning. However, because the field of children and family services served as an experimental terrain for collaborative arrangements and partnerships, it generated interest from voluntary organizations who

were not directly engaged in this field of activity, but who saw the opportunity to leverage the outcomes of these struggles in order to secure gains at other scales of action. Therefore, five of these interviews were conducted with such organizations who were key players in the struggles at a meso scale. These 19 interviews, coupled with secondary data obtained through official documents, web sites, and some key interviews with government officials, provide the basis for the analysis in this chapter.

6.3 Organizing interests

As we saw in the previous chapter, during the early 1990s, voluntary organizations had just endured a very difficult period of significant funding cutbacks. This was even more acute in the field of children and family services due to the dismantling of the Ministry of National Health and Welfare and the creation of the Ministry of Health Canada and the Ministry of Human Resources Development. Organizations lost their main line department and thus became more vulnerable to cuts. Virtually all of the organizations interviewed described this period as a low point for the policy community. Many prominent organizations such as the Canadian Child Welfare Association, and Children, Enfants, Jeunesse, Youth (CEJY)³ had to fold their operations because of lack of funding. Moreover, many other national organizations were in a precarious situation because they relied on short term funding which was uncertain. These include organizations such as the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF) and the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations (NVO). Due to their unreliable financial situation, and with the federal government questioning their value, six voluntary

³ The Canadian Child Welfare Association was a volunteer-based charitable organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of children.

organizations felt the need to meet and discuss strategies to turn the tide.⁴ As the executive director from one organization noted, “We needed a new way for the sector to express itself collectively, we needed to be more strategic.”⁵ Another recalls their first meeting, “was forced by hard times, we were literally living day to day, we did not know if we were going to make it, we were laying off staff and I remember another organization calling me and saying I don’t think we are going to make it, and then some funding came in.”⁶

Interestingly, five leaders from the initial organizations who came together mentioned that at the time they considered their strategy until then “was not working” and “cuts were rolling in”. In fact, one executive director stated, “all of our efforts over the past 2-3 years had failed. Yes we were in the streets, but we needed to be at the table, to influence what they were doing and thinking. We realized that we had to go at this a totally different way.”⁷ Another noted, “we were just competing with each other for a pie, when there was not much of it to go around in the first place. And we felt that recognizing a broader interest in kids would be a better route to follow than a very

⁴ The organizations include the Canadian Child Care Federation, Family Service Canada, the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, the Canadian Institute of Child Health, Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children and the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations.

⁵ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

⁶ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

⁷ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

specific focused on children with disabilities for example. In the long run, it would be beneficial to all by increasing the size of the pie.’’⁸

The six national voluntary organizations agreed to meet monthly to share information regarding their programs and their interactions with government. Their intention was to create a venue for gathering and sharing information quickly, without incurring great costs to the participants, which in the long-run would allow them to be more effective in their work. The forum remained informal to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and not create another organization which would compete with the existing ones.

This initial group of six established the foundations for much of the coalition work that would develop during the coming years in the field of children and family services. Gradually, the meetings gathered more participants. The initial group began to send out invitations to other national organizations in the field. In addition, they were very strategic in addressing various broad issues and sharing the workload amongst themselves. By 1996, the loose coalition had grown to 25 national voluntary organizations, from a variety of sub-sectors, such as education, health, literacy, child care, and family and children services sharing a common concern for children’s well-being. They named themselves the National Children’s Alliance (NCA) but moved not to formalize the coalition into an organizational structure. Organizations recognized tremendous opportunities for participating and influencing policy – a clear reversal from the early 1990s when doors were being closed. Already in the field of children and family services, the federal government had expressed a willingness to collaborate with

⁸ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

the voluntary sector as partnerships between public and voluntary organizations, as well as amongst voluntary sector organizations, were encouraged through programs such as the Child Development Initiative, Community Action Program for Children (CAPC), and Aboriginal Head Start.⁹ Through these initiatives, new institutional forms for program delivery were instituted signalling a change in the way governments relate to voluntary organizations.

The creation of the NCA constituted an important turning point in the field of children and family services as it was the first time voluntary organizations aligned themselves behind a broad policy objective. For the majority of organizations interviewed, coalition work took on new meaning after the funding cutbacks. With few resources to support their mission – and in particular their advocacy work – there were clear advantages to pooling resources. One executive director stated “About coalition advocacy, I can tell you this much, part of why it is important to have an organization like ours is that our chapter partners are more overstretched, trying to stay on top with little staff and resources. They are almost relying on you to do the advocacy and just attach the name without having to stretch... They wouldn’t be able to do it themselves.”¹⁰

⁹ The Child Development Initiative was introduced in 1992 as part of Canada’s Action Plan for Children, entitled *Brighter Futures*. It encompasses a group of long-term programs designed to address the health and development of children (0-6 years) who are living in conditions of risk. The programs operate on four guiding principles: prevention, promotion, protection and partnership. The Community Action Program for Children is the largest program within this initiative and it provides long term funding to support partnership initiatives involving coalitions of voluntary organizations who deliver these programs. Aboriginal Head Start provides long term funding to support initiatives in early child development designed and controlled by Aboriginal people.

¹⁰ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

When the National Children's Agenda arrived on the political agenda in 1997, they were ready to take action. As one of the initial leaders involved in the Alliance recalled, "At first we were just 5-6 and then it grew and we started inviting the bureaucrats and then the National Children's Agenda happened and we felt that was right up our alley and we've got to be there."¹¹ Another detailed, "It was also the beginning of talk around the National Children's Agenda and that was a real mobilizing force for us to think about potential to influence the agenda. We focused on where we could find areas of consensus, sharing intelligence and information."¹² National organizations coordinated their activities through networks, allowing them to go beyond their particular claims to defend common substantive goals. They exchanged information and resources, and formed bonds and solidarities. To ensure progress on the National Children's Agenda, organizations unified their positions on specific issues, in order to express their views more coherently, and used their individual expertise to make a meaningful collective contribution to the social dialogue and policy formulation.

6.3.1 Discursive shifts

Voluntary organizations in the field of children and family services felt the political discourse shift during the 1990s. As Dobrowolsky and Jenson note, "...the universe of political discourse had incorporated a huge dose of population health analysis, displacing other concepts of social relations, including the equality discourse of citizenship rights" (Dobrowlosky and Jenson 2004, p. 15). A focus on the social

¹¹ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

¹² Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

determinants of health and its impact on early childhood development reinforced the idea that a long-term, comprehensive and coordinated approach was necessary to improve children's well-being. In addition, research generated by the NLSCY and the seminal work of Dr. Fraser Mustard signalled the importance of investing in the early years in order to affect subsequent learning, behaviour and health. The McCain-Mustard Early Years Study, for example, states: "It is clear that the early years from conception to age six have the most important influence of any time in the life cycle on brain development and subsequent learning, behaviour and health" (McCain and Mustard 1999, p. 13).

As a result of considerable increases in political knowledge and information from data gathering and research, the use of new tools and information have had a significant impact on the way issues are framed within the field of children and family services and ultimately on the nature of the claims that are made. For example, many of the organizations' demands in the field of children and family services over the past decade were tied to a broader discourse on population health. As a result, the discourse shifted away from focusing on issues of childcare and child poverty, towards a broader focus on early childhood development and a broad spectrum of groups, on a variety of scales, redefined their political agenda to include a concern for developing a National Children's Agenda, viewing it as a fertile ground for policy innovation (Mahon and Phillips 2002). This was possible since voluntary organizations in the field of children and family services had begun to coalesce and were better positioned to seize existing opportunities created by the discourse shift.

This discursive shift profoundly affected the networks and alliances within the field of children and family services. For one, it closed off potential alliances. While the

child care movement and the child poverty movement had been important advocates for children in the 1980s and 1990s, lobbying for public investment in critical areas such as child poverty and child care programs, there were important divisions within the field (Mahon 2003, Bach and Phillips 1997, Prentice 2001). Indeed, many organizations were unwilling to make concessions and to lose a strong policy focus on either child care or child poverty. Others such as the women's movement believed that focusing on the 'child', obscured the link with women's issues. As Dobrowolsky and Jenson note, "the sidelining of NAC and the de-legitimation of feminism helps to account for why many activists dropped their middle name and redefined the child care issue as being overwhelmingly *about* children. By the mid-1990s, child care was no longer a women's issue" (Dobrowolsky and Jenson 2002, p. 14). McKeen, as well, observes that "Women were effectively written out of the poverty problem and women's movement lost credibility as valuable or legitimate actors in social policy politics, although as outsiders they continue, along with their allies on the left to struggle to broaden the focus to a wider set of issues with regard to social justice and equality" (McKeen 2003). The needs of individual children were addressed in isolation from the broad socio-economic environment in which they lived (McKeen 2003). Although the roots of many of the organizations, particularly in the child care community, are feminist-based, the women's movement and the anti-poverty movement were unwilling to engage on this front and, as a result, have been virtually absent from the policy community around early childhood development. With these long standing activists fading into the background, it left the space wide open to be seized by a new cadre of shakers and movers.

The shift in political discourse created potential alliances, encouraging the development of intra and inter sectoral exchanges. Prior to this initiative, organizations from different sub-fields worked in relative isolation without much cross-sectoral collaboration. Now, health and childcare organizations were working together and exchanging on a regular basis. The NCA was committed to the broad objective of improving children's lives. With such a broad focus on children's well-being, new allies began to present themselves such as the Canadian Teachers' Federation, Canadian Nurses' Association, Canadian School Boards Association, and Canadian Paediatric Society, believing that in the long term, a comprehensive policy focus on children's issues would serve their members' interests. These organizations have now formed bonds with organizations in the field of early childhood development with whom they had not worked prior to this initiative. One leader involved in the NCA recalled that networking over this period "was good for relations, there was less competition, more working together."¹³

Early on, the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations (NVO), a leading umbrella organization that lobbied in the name of the *sector* at a macro scale, became very involved in the work of the National Children's Alliance, believing that NCA's collaboration with government departments around the National Children's Agenda, would serve as a testing ground for building stronger state-sector relationships. Being very involved in the workings of Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR) as we witnessed in the previous chapter, NVO had a direct stake in the outcomes of the dynamics at a meso scale within the field of children and family services as it felt it could leverage this

¹³ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

experience to further demonstrate the enormous potential and value of voluntary sector organizations' contribution to policy making and service delivery. In fact, the executive director of the organization explained their involvement in children's issues as follows. "It's just a question of having a long-term plan and sticking with it, not being diverted and taking up every opportunity, we're there... homeless issues, child poverty, children's agenda, we're there... we're bringing people to come together and to work on those issues collectively and we facilitated that."¹⁴ The success of the collaboration at a meso scale would further bring credence to their lobby work at the macro scale. For NVO, the outcomes at a meso scale were embedded in larger struggles that were taking place at the macro scale.

6.3.2 Seizing political opportunities: Linking the macro and the meso

The rise of children's issues on the policy agenda and the development of the National Children's Agenda indicated that the political opportunity structure was ripe for the NCA's activism. However, seizing these opportunities would require organizations and individuals to share an interpretation of events and political opportunities to be seized (McCarty and Zald 1977, McAdam 1982). The NCA, being a nascent coalition, looked to what others were doing to find appropriate strategies and courses of action. At the time, voluntary organizations across policy spectrums were coming together at a macro scale, as I discussed in the previous chapter, through the Voluntary Sector Roundtable which influenced their thinking about the importance of working collectively. In fact, there was some overlap in the members of these two organizations which facilitated the

¹⁴ Based on an interview with the executive director of NVO.

transmission of practices across scales. For example, the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) and NVO played a leadership role in both coalitions, whereas Family Service Canada (FSC) was involved in one of the Joint Tables of the VSI.¹⁵ Individuals such as Al Hatton, executive director of the NVO, Margaret Fietz, executive director of FSC, Marcel Lauzière, executive director of the CCSD, Michael Hall, vice-president of research at the CCP and Diane Bascombe, executive director of the CCCF, who had extensive knowledge of the developments in terms of state-sector relationship unfolding on both scales, would become key players in the institutionalized landscape across both scales. They all played a leading role in carrying ideas across scales of action and in the generation of institutionalized forms of practice.

Strong from their experience at a macro scale, they shared knowledge of the VSR's effective strategies for engaging with government officials and campaigning on the behalf of the sector. Al Hatton in particular played an important leadership role in the coalition work of the NCA by providing advice and strategic insight into working with the federal government.¹⁶ Consequently, patterns of thought and practices of organizations in the field of children and family services shifted as the signals of behaviour were translated down to the meso level by a small group of individuals. Following the strategy that proved successful for national voluntary organizations such as NVO, CCP and the VSR, the NCA developed links with government through formal and informal meetings. Its members met frequently with Ministers on the Ministerial Council

¹⁵ The Voluntary Sector Initiative, funded by the federal government, includes six joint working groups that are composed of an equal number of representatives from both the voluntary sector and the federal government. In chapter 4, I discuss in more detail the work of the VSI.

¹⁶ 10 of the 19 organizations interviewed mentioned Al Hatton's key role in the National Children's Alliance as an energizer and catalyser of the process.

on Social Policy Renewal and with senior federal officials working in the area of children and family services (NCA Newsletter 1998, 1999).

The political opportunity structure had expanded. At that time, the federal government was also keen to develop stronger relationships with voluntary organizations in this policy field. Many senior federal officials were concerned that the National Children's Agenda would not make it on the table and that discussions around health care would monopolize the political agenda. Consequently, as a federal official noted, "they needed the voluntary sector to continue to provide support to networks at a provincial and local level to engage in policy development and ensure that pressure is felt from the outside to push the agenda forward."¹⁷ Given the context created by the CHST, obtaining an intergovernmental agreement in any policy area had become difficult. By relying on the lobby work of voluntary organizations, however, the federal government could use these linkages to exert pressure onto the provinces and provide support for its political agenda from the outside, thus, the federal government was open to the work and willing to nurture their efforts.

In light of these opportunities, the NCA decided to take on a collaborative strategy working with governments. The goal of the NCA was to foster dialogue between the voluntary sector and governments and to promote the development and implementation of a broad-based framework to address children's issues. An executive director involved at the time noted, "Our approach is based on developing a positive working relationship with government, not sending confrontational messages. We work together despite the fact that we have had the cuts...since the early 1990s, we are more involved with policy

¹⁷ Based on an interview with a senior federal official.

formulation. Prior to this the government priority was different... now it is more amenable to partner for policy formulation.”¹⁸

The work of the NCA paid off and by January 1997, at a meeting of the Ministerial Council on Social Policy Renewal, federal, provincial and territorial government officials first agreed to work together to develop a national children's agenda billed as “a comprehensive strategy to improve the well-being of Canada's children”. This commitment was confirmed as a priority for the federal government in the September 1997 Speech from the Throne which stated that “Federal, provincial and territorial governments will work together to develop this broader agenda for children, including clear outcome measures by which to gauge success....” (Government of Canada 1997). Four areas of intervention were identified: the development of the National Child Benefit system; of Learning Readiness Indicators; Aboriginal Head Start for on-reserve First Nations children; and the establishment of five Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being. Governments at all levels – federal, provincial and territorial – and began to develop a more coordinated and multi-scalar response to children's policy issues. In their discourses, they emphasized the importance of working in partnership with the voluntary sector, particularly in the field of family and children services. This policy arena would become a testing ground for horizontal collaboration and interaction – a dominant feature of governance. Developments quickly followed with the announcement of the National Child Benefit Program in 1998 and the development of a National Children's Agenda in 1999. Voluntary organizations considered their lobbying had been successful because they felt an opening on the side of the federal government towards working together.

¹⁸ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

6.4 Redesigning the political landscape: The Social Union Framework Agreement

In February 1999, the Social Union Framework Agreement was signed, framing the National Children's Agenda. This was an important turning point. Essentially a mechanism to manage intergovernmental relations in the field of social policy, SUFA altered the political landscape in the social policy field. The Agreement contains guiding principles for social policy; commitments to ensure social programs support the mobility of Canadians; commitments to strengthen government accountability to citizens; collaborative practices between governments on social programs; federal commitments on the use of its spending power; and a process for solving disputes between governments. It involves a new pattern of interaction among the federal government, provinces and territories by transforming both policy development and program evaluation.

One of the major innovations of the SUFA in terms of governance was the promise of citizen engagement (Phillips 2001c, Jenson and Saint-Martin 2003). The agreement rests on the founding principle that the federal government will, “work in partnership with individuals, families, communities, voluntary organizations, business and labour, and ensure appropriate opportunities for Canadians to have meaningful input into social policies and programs” (Section 1: Principles). Such a commitment, in theory, could increase opportunities for engagement in on-going policy discussions, a key feature of governance (Phillips 2001). Moreover, the SUFA provides a new institutional setting and new channels of influence for developing a National Children’s Agenda.

Another major innovation of the SUFA entails a transformation of the accountability regime and a move towards results-based management which relies on evaluation, monitoring and reporting (Jenson 2002, Phillips 2001, Saint-Martin 2004). With provinces agreeing to report to their constituencies, it encourages the sharing of “information and best practices to support the development of outcome measures, and to work with other governments to develop, over time, comparable indicators to measure progress on agreed objectives.”¹⁹ Under this model, public accountability encourages the involvement of voluntary sector organizations and citizens by demanding a higher level of accountability amongst provinces, comparing outcomes across provinces and keeping their progress in the public eye. This entails a significant shift in the roles and responsibilities conferred onto societal actors (Phillips 2001). According to Phillips, under the SUFA, “Citizens are to be the third force in federalism – not so much as a means of creating a social union that truly addresses the democratic deficit that has been so widely deplored, but as a third-party barrier to the actions of one government against another” (Phillips 2001, p. 9). Saint-Martin also notes, “intergovernmental agreements now place a new emphasis on a third kind of accountability directly to citizens through the measurement and reporting of results to the ‘public’. The goal is that this will, over time, make it possible for citizens to become ‘bench-markers’” (Saint-Martin 2004, p. 43).

Once the National Children’s Agenda was placed under the auspices of the SUFA, its success became a test for a new style of governance. In fact, one could say that at the macro scale, all eyes were turned towards the field of family and children services to

¹⁹ <http://www.uni.ca/socialunion.html>

draw lessons on how partnerships are experienced on the front lines and unfold in practice. It is true that SUFA never crystallized into significant engagement opportunities for voluntary organizations or citizens (Phillips 2001). Nevertheless, at a discursive level, the values it embodied represented a significant turning point for voluntary sector leaders active in the field of children and family services and were interpreted as a sign of the positive headway they had made over the years. The SUFA, taken together with the significant progress that had been made at a macro scale through the VSI, conveyed a new openness towards partnering with voluntary organizations in policy making and service delivery. Furthermore, it fostered a more favourable context for the demands of organizations through expanded political opportunity structures.

With the national interest in the dynamics of this policy terrain, children's issues and how they are addressed collaboratively, all became linked to broader macro issues concerning the role of the voluntary sector working in partnership with governments. Dynamics unfolding in the field of children and family services had effects at a macro scale, through the VSI. The work of the VSI also could be used as leverage in order to hold the federal government to its broad commitments of collaboration. National organizations involved in the VSR and the VSI also saw HRDC Minister Jane Stewart as an important ally, for she had worked closely with voluntary organizations in the field of children and family services.

In the spirit of the SUFA, federal, provincial and territorial governments recognized the role of voluntary organizations and of Canadians in the developing a National Children's Agenda that solicited public input. In May 1999, public consultations were launched to discuss common values and goals for children within the

context of a document entitled *A National Children's Agenda - Developing a Shared Vision*. Voluntary organizations submitted briefs and the NCA received funding to conduct forums across Canada to influence the deliberations of the Council of Ministers on Social Policy Renewal, with the objective of coordinating and building consensus within the children and family services sector and making recommendations to the federal government on possible changes in policy.

In 2000, with the announcement of the Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI), along with 2.2 billion dollars over five years to improve services for children, voluntary organizations believed they had secured an important stepping stone.²⁰ Furthermore, with the announcement on the Initiative made by the Minister of Human Resources Development Canada, Jane Stewart at the time, directly in the basement of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, a member of the National Children's Alliance, they felt their lobbying work had been recognized. The ECDI represented a unique opportunity to attend to the needs of children and to work collaboratively with the federal government and the provinces. An executive director involved in the NCA recalled, "I told them, this is your window of opportunity and you are not going to have one ever again to get in there, be a big player and to get your portion of what you deserve, money recognition or whatever and that helped to energize us."²¹

²⁰ Under the EDCI, provincial and territorial governments agreed to expand services and programs in the areas of: healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy; parenting and family supports; early childhood development, learning and care; and community supports.

²¹ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

6.5 Working from within

Members of the National Children's Alliance continued to nurture their relationship with federal officials. They were very successful in getting the federal government's attention (McKeen 2003, Mahon and Phillips 2003). Not only were they frequently invited to dinners and informal meetings with Ministers, they became a valuable source of information for senior level bureaucrats who increasingly called on them for advice and information. One executive director involved in the NCA recalled that it "has got a great deal of credibility with the federal government to the extent that Minister Stewart has come to our meetings 2-3 times in the basement of the Teacher's federation. We have had very good access to the highest levels of bureaucrats in the civil service any time we need and if we want a meeting with cabinet Ministers."²² This dynamic forced voluntary sector organizations to connect far more closely with the federal government bureaucracy than ever before.

NCA's work was recognized and in 2000, it received \$ 400 000 in funding from HRDC and Health Canada under the early childhood development initiative to "help build the capacity of national non-governmental organizations and their regional networks to participate in policy dialogues with governments on early childhood development."²³ Specifically, the NCA was to help build and support pan-Canadian alliances within the voluntary sector, to host national roundtables on important emerging issues, promoting broad participation, and begin the process of monitoring the status of children's health and well-being by developing indicators and a consensus framework. Given its broad membership, NCA was well positioned to be a consensus builder within

²² Based on an interview with a member of the National Children's Alliance.

²³ www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rma/account/sufa-ecus/02/disp-mont_e.asp?id=ecd-dpe

the field of children and family services. Again, the federal government recognized the importance of nurturing the work of the Alliance so it could serve as a lever to pressure provincial governments to implement the ECDI.

What is striking is that the NCA rather than Campaign 2000 received funding for networking. Campaign 2000 is a well established coalition of over 85 national and community organizations, a prominent advocate for children's issues for nearly a decade (Jenson, Mahon and Phillips 2003). Although there is considerable overlap in membership within these two coalitions, the main difference lies in their discourse and in the practices they adopted. Campaign 2000 was created to monitor government progress in alleviating children's poverty, with the goal of holding government accountable to the House of Commons 1989 resolution adopted by all parties, to end child poverty by the year 2000. Well known for its mobilization tactics, Campaign 2000 generated media and public campaigns around the issue of child poverty. In contrast, the NCA adopted a more conservative approach privileging broad based issues and institutionalized routes to political representation. The NCA gained respect because it engaged in consensus building (Mahon and Phillips 2002). These two organizations had to negotiate their political space; as a staff member of one of them remarked, "our relationship is evolving and evolved. It's not problematic or conflictual, it's like a dance, we just need to make sure that we are consistent and complementary and that we don't step on each other's toes."²⁴

This sent a signal throughout the sector. Similar to the broader dynamics occurring at a macro scale, the children and family policy field considered the federal

²⁴ Based on an interview with a member of the National Children's Alliance.

government's closure to advocating and to confrontational approaches. Some organizations which had continued to pursue their advocacy activities began feeling marginalized, as opportunities to participate in the policy process were closed to them. One executive director of a voluntary organization involved at the time recalled that, "it hurt our reputation. We had to become more vocal, critical and that scared off people who wanted to be involved but not be political."²⁵ Another noted, "We quickly came to find out that no matter how hard we protested, it didn't make a difference."²⁶

Over the same period, advocacy organizations also began losing support from private funders who began to shy away from funding such activities. An executive director of an organization member of the NCA remarked that "the kind of work we were doing became not where the majority of people placed importance. It was not directly geared towards services, so we became very reliant on one funding basis because we were doing too much advocacy. At the time, there was only one foundation supporting advocacy – somebody had to."²⁷ Another noted that, "there was also recognition of the inability of the traditional advocacy methods we were using to stop the swing to the right. Consequently, traditional advocacy groups, such as the women's groups, lost access to the methods they were using. We had to change how we played the game in order to do what it is we are trying to do, which is influence government."²⁸

²⁵ Based on an interview with the executive director of a provincial organization involved in the field of children and family services.

²⁶ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

²⁷ Based on an interview with the executive director of a local organization involved in the field of children and family services.

²⁸ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

The new-found consideration of the National Children's Alliance and the greater access they gained were perceived as signs of success, reinforcing many national and provincial organizations' take on the value of adopting a collaborative approach and working with government. Organizations were increasingly aware of the necessity of building legitimacy for their participation in the policy making process. The new mode of governance had created an uneven playing field, whereby those organizations that behaved according to the norms set out by the federal government receive rewards -- credibility, legitimacy, privileged access to policy makers through formal and informal, and even funding. The authority conferred to participating organizations serves as acts of legitimation in the face of one's members and the general public.

6.6 Success: A matter of perception

Thus, major policy developments have occurred in the field of children and family services over the past decade. For the most part, voluntary organizations view their involvement in policy discussions as a success in terms of both process and outcomes. Of course, this was reinforced by the general sense across the sector that their lobby work was being effective and that the strategies they adopted were yielding results. In fact, in addition to the policy reforms I have examined, the federal government's commitment to increase the National Child Benefit for poor families and to increase access to early learning opportunities and quality child care in the 2002 Speech from the throne²⁹; the 2003 budget commitment of \$935 million over five years for quality child care spaces and improved child care and pre-school services as well as an increase to the

²⁹ Government of Canada 2002 Speech from the Throne and 2002 Budget.

maximum annual benefit for a first child to \$3,243 under the National Child Benefit; were all seen as major outcomes of the lobby work of the National Children's Alliance.

Perhaps more importantly, however, voluntary organizations all noted that their interaction with governments had changed significantly. Greater access to the system and the range of political allies they had secured, were all signs they had gained recognition as valuable interlocutors in the field. In fact 15 of the 19 national organizations involved in the field of children and family services mentioned their greater access to federal public servants as a sign of success. Moreover, organizations reported they are frequently contacted by public servants to provide policy advice and expertise.

One executive director who was involved in the National Children's Alliance from the beginning noted "doors are opening much quicker to us in terms of higher up access to civil servants because of the National Children's Agenda... this past year I don't know how many calls I received from the Minister's office to get all kinds of information, statistical information, information about programs, about evaluation of programs."³⁰ Another recalled, "There is change at the senior level of government. For example, I get more calls from Ministers regarding cabinet documents all the way down to departmental policy documents. Now we have informal dinners and lunches where the senior bureaucrats feel comfortable meeting with senior sector people. Now upper channels have gotten better... I feel very free to call up a deputy minister if I really feel our issue is urgent and this wasn't the case before."³¹ Still another expanded in the same direction, noting that "they have definitely been calling us more at the front end of policy

³⁰ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

³¹ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

design. They call us up for information a lot, for input or ideas for projects, how it should look and that has been very positive. It's been more collaborative.”³²

As a result, the lines of communication between upper level management and voluntary organizations have been opened. This new found interaction with government comes at a cost, however. One executive director argued that, “...it takes a lot of energy. It extends the work day substantially because these things often take place in the evening.”³³ In fact, being contacted by government officials seems to have become a common occurrence to the point where some organizations have begun to set boundaries. One executive director even mentioned that he now charges government officials for each consultation. “We're too often solicited and because it has become so overwhelming, I've decided to send a letter stating to all that ask, that I am prepared to provide the information at a rate of 100\$/hour. So nobody's accepted.”³⁴ For smaller organizations with fewer resources, this system of informal contacts places them at a disadvantage. Already overloaded by their own work, they find it difficult to navigate this new playing field. Either they take time away from their core activities to cater to government officials' demands, and in the long run gain privileged access; or they focus on their first mission and cater to their members' demands, but loose some political ground. I will return to this point in the next chapter when I examine in a more in-depth manner how these dynamics have affected organizations on an organizational scale.

³² Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

³³ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

³⁴ Based on an interview with the executive director of a local organization involved in the field of children and family services.

Moreover, in the day-to-day practice, these new linkages with upper level management have created some tensions and antagonisms with middle-level bureaucrats. An executive director described these tensions as follows, “we are seen as going over their heads [middle-level managers]. Now upper channels have gotten better and middle has become more difficult. I often have to brief middle level management regarding our meeting with the senior level ... We act as facilitators often between government departments as well.”³⁵ While some organizations find this new responsibility burdensome, others see it as an acknowledgement of their expertise, feeling empowered by their greater sense of influence.

6.6.1 Looking to the horizon

In light of their perceived successes, voluntary organizations clearly showed an increased confidence in their political knowledge, judgment, and influence as they believed they were being listened to. With this sense of accomplishment, our analysis found many significant changes in the attitudes of organizations that framed the way they approached politics. Voluntary organizations in the field of children and family services were more willing to make short term concessions to secure long term gains. In this context, one executive director asserts that, “Having a big vision, but taking small steps that build momentum is a useful strategy.”³⁶ Organizations now strongly believed that short-term, issue-specific and more focused coalitions no longer yield better results. This

³⁵ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

³⁶ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

practice of organizing to cut across sectoral lines and to address generic issues, however, created tensions within the family and children services sector between large national organizations and smaller locally based organizations. In fact, local members of national umbrella groups reported a growing dissonance between their short-term needs, and the long-term strategic policy focus that seem to dominate at a macro scale of action. One executive director noted the tensions within his organization as follows, “for my members who are particularly interested in primary and secondary schools, it was a hard sell. They would say ‘why should we care about prenatal care and early childhood development?’ Human and financial resources are too few and priorities too many.”³⁷ Another reports, “As a pan-Canadian advocacy organization, we’ve had to find ways of developing a common message that can be tailored to meet different provincial/territorial realities” (Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada 2002, p. 3). In effect, they had to convince their provincial/territorial members of the importance of the issues at stake at the national level.

Moreover, it has stream-lined all energies towards engaging in a relationship building process with the federal government, neglecting other levels of government. These choices did not go uncontested but rather created further rifts particularly between national umbrella organizations and their rank and file members whose political horizon tended to be shorter, focused on issue specific struggles. Because many were barely meeting their own internal needs, local organizations began to question the energy that was being directed towards the relationship building exercise, especially as they are mainly dependent on local relationships and their interests remain essentially locally-

³⁷ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

based. Although national efforts needed to be represented in a manner that was locally relevant, many felt this was not accomplished. For them, the broad macro issues that quickly took precedence were not seen as a priority – especially given the context of strained resources in which they lived. They were much more concerned with their every day operations.

This dissatisfaction at the local level was clearly present in the interviews. Thus for instance, one stated “there isn’t a good connection between what happens and the national level and what happens at the local level, between the philosophical level and reality.”³⁸ As a result, the provincial members of three national organizations studied have questioned the involvement of their representatives in the National Children's Alliance, questioning the relevance of investing their time and energy on securing long-term gains at a macro scale, particularly in a period of constrained resources, when they face so many pressing issues in their daily practice. While their national umbrella hopes to secure long-term gains by participating in this coalition, their local counterparts do not see the direct relatedness of the early childhood development agenda.

Local and provincial chapters noted that they would prefer to see their national umbrella groups concentrate their advocacy work around specific issues of interest to them. This problem is becoming even more acute as local chapters are increasingly relying on their national representatives to advocate on their behalf as they no longer have the resources to manage both advocacy and services. One executive director acknowledged that small organizations “are more overstretched, trying to stay on top with little staff and resources. They are almost relying on you to do the advocacy and just

³⁸ Based on an interview with the executive director of a local organization involved in the field of children and family services.

attach the name of the organization without having to stretch. They wouldn't be able to do it themselves or would only do very sectorally based advocacy for funds, not policy.”³⁹ In addition, the time and energy required to keep abreast of the happenings at the provincial and federal scene places a large burden on them.⁴⁰ The result is that many local organizations felt disconnected from these provincial and national issues and tended to participate in name only to the coalition work.

Even the national organizations that we studied acknowledged the challenges that they faced in making the issues resonate at other scales. One executive director, member of the NCA noted that, “It’s a big picture policy process. It’s always a big job to show that this really matters and how we engage in the process is very different at all levels.”⁴¹ Another stated, referring to its local members, that, “It’s hard for them, their job and all the money they receive is to provide services to families locally. They are not funded for advocacy; no one gives them money to do that so it’s very hard for them to keep connected because it takes time away from direct services. We can provide something where they slap in the name and send it off, but it’s going to need more than that to keep this on the agenda.”⁴² Another noted, “It’s a struggle for us because one of our mandates is to strengthen the field and I can’t do that if they [local organizations] are not working

³⁹ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

⁴⁰ Based on an interview with the executive director of a local organization involved in the field of children and family services.

⁴¹ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

⁴² Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

in their field.”⁴³ For many national organizations, this challenge is not likely to go away as they will increasingly need the active involvement of the provincial and local organizations in order to push Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI) forward. A member of the NCA notes, “I don’t think they have realized yet what the ECDI is going to require of them in order for it to move it forward.”⁴⁴

By privileging institutionalized routes to representation, and more collaborative patterns of interaction, national voluntary organizations in the field of children and family services reproduced some similar rifts at a meso scale as had occurred at a macro scale. These practices and forms of representation affected the way organizations framed issues. For national organizations who were involved in on-going interactions with federal public servants around the National Children’s Agenda and who were invited to participate in formal and informal meetings with Ministers, there was a sense of accomplishment and of progress. They clearly saw many potential opportunities for the sector as a whole to bring about significant policy change in the field of children and family services in the future. Hence they were willing to compromise, to make concessions and focus on the broader picture. But for smaller, locally based organizations, with less staff capacity and resources, these practices were inaccessible. They could not afford to participate in ongoing and emerging federal policy initiatives, to develop policy positions and submissions for standing and special committees of the House of Commons and the Senate, commissions or task forces. And because they were not at these tables, they could not perceive the progress that was being made. Their

⁴³ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

⁴⁴ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

preoccupations, their priorities, and their focus were different. Moreover, because provincial organizations have traditionally been weaker in Canada, as I discussed in the previous chapter, it further compounded the rift because information on progress was not effectively transmitted down to local organizations. Part of the explanation also lies in organizational dynamics which I will examine further in the next chapter.

6.7 New roles, new responsibilities

In light of their greater sense of empowerment and recognition, the voluntary organizations I studied were also more amenable to taking on new tasks and increasing responsibility to assist the government agenda despite the incurring of additional costs for their organization. As one executive director puts it, “in a partnership, you need to give something up in order to get something in return.”⁴⁵ This was particularly evident in the area of consultation.

In fact, I found that consultations led by voluntary organizations, on behalf of governments, have increased as a result of the shift in governance. Four organizations in my study reported having been asked at one time or another to lead a roundtable, a focus group, or a public consultation to test a policy idea on the ground. What is interesting in this new dynamic is that organizations generally accepted the new responsibilities as they wanted to show their good faith, in light of the headway they were making on other fronts. The case of National Youth In Care is an interesting example of this tension. The executive director noted, “when we first got here, we were asked to hold a focus group on

⁴⁵ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

behalf of government to test the policy idea. We said okay, okay, they are our funders, we'll do whatever we can.”⁴⁶

Once the exercise was over, however, all of the organizations reported they had taken on a large part of the burden of carrying out the exercise. For one, they all allude to the fact that this growing responsibility was not accompanied with sufficient resources to undertake the consultation exercise and they ended up bearing some of the costs. While organizations did receive funding in order to lead the process, the amounts generally did not cover the full organizational cost. As the executive director of National Youth in Care detailed, “without realizing it we planned two months of practically full time of our work to prepare these focus groups. We travelled out there and absorbed the cost of holding these focus groups and did it with a quick turnaround because they wanted it. When they came around and asked us again, we said no. If you want us to redo it, you have to pay us or at least pay for the costs. They didn't like that, so in a way we kind of lost out.”⁴⁷

Moreover, by conducting consultations on behalf of government, these organizations felt they had become a buffer for government. They had to ensure the representativeness of the exercise. They were encouraged to attend to geographic or sectoral gaps, to avoid religious or ethnic bias, to avoid activities that contradict state programs or make unrealistic promises. At the end of the day, however, one organization remembers government officials stating “well you know the process was carried out by

⁴⁶ Based on an interview with the executive director of Youth In Care Network.

⁴⁷ Based on an interview with the executive director of Youth In Care Network.

the sector, talk to the sector. We didn't leave you out.... The host organization ends up having everybody mad at them at the end of the day.”⁴⁸

This poses an interesting dilemma. Ultimately, the federal government could discount the consultation, and by the same token the recommendations that flowed from it, by opposing the form and the structure of the process. It did not have to be accountable for the process, the host organization did. As the NCA noted, they were the ones who had to answer to the sector and then work to ensure that the consultation recommendations would be implemented. Not only did they bear some of the costs of leading the consultation, they felt accountable to the participants for seeing it through.

The trend towards offloading consultation onto the voluntary sector is one that can be identified in other policy areas as well. Health Canada for example has launched Voice in Health Policy; the VSI's Sectoral Involvement in Policy Development (SIDPD) also includes some measures to encourage consultation lead by the sector.⁴⁹ It will be interesting to see how the sector responds and adapts to these new found responsibilities. If what has occurred in the field of children and family services is any indication, leading consultations may make it increasingly difficult for organizations to use this political space in order to put forward their claims. By transferring responsibility onto the sector, organizations lose an important and direct linkage to government policy making.

⁴⁸ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

⁴⁹ For more information, see: <http://www.projectvoice.ca>

6.8 Anticipating change: Reading the political opportunity structures

While the ECDI represented a significant opportunity for voluntary organizations, one obstacle remained. There were no mechanisms established to facilitate engagement by the voluntary sector in the planning and evaluation of the ECDI (Phillips, 2001). It is up to the provinces and territories to measure and report the outcomes. Therefore, many organizations still questioned how much influence they ultimately could have on the process despite these opportunities. The SUFA, in principle, has encouraged the emergence of multiple decision sites opening up new political spaces for action and voluntary organizations in the field of children and family services tried to leverage this in order to gain access to the decision-making process. However, when doors closed, the National Children's Alliance tried to take advantage of the additional channel at a macro scale by also leveraging the federal government's commitment to working more closely with the sector, as promised in the Accord and the SUFA.

With no change in site, however, the National Children's Alliance felt it was important to propose some ways to involve voluntary organizations in the process. It did not conceive of the political opportunity structures as given, but rather by strategizing, organizations attempted to anticipate and react to potential opportunities for action and then proceeded to develop a niche for themselves. During their December 2000 National Workshop in which they developed strategic priorities, the NCA identified third-party monitoring as a route to effective involvement in the ECDI (National Children's Alliance Newsletter, 2001). Due to the intergovernmental nature of the Early Childhood Development Agreement (ECDA) and the SUFA, these processes open a relatively wide array of possibilities for voluntary organizations across scales to exploit the discrepancies

between and within provincial governments in order to reach their objectives. In this context, it was felt that they could play a very effective monitoring role by placing information in the public domain.

The NCA recognizes great opportunities for engagement on this front. Phillips notes that:

over the next few years the Alliance intends to direct its energies towards having a voice in the government's choice of indicators, holding the government to account on measurement and reporting outcomes and ensuring that individuals and voluntary organizations are engaged in implementing the ECDI. This fits nicely with Ottawa's goal of using citizens as watchdogs – that is, of equipping civil society to do indirectly what, due to the sensitivity of intergovernmental relations, it could not do directly" (Phillips 2001, p. 27).

Third party monitoring may potentially transform the interaction between the federal government and the voluntary sector by involving new forms of communication and information exchange between the two. In addition, it calls for a new role for voluntary organizations to guide the formulation and monitoring of social policy. As the NCA outlines in a newsletter, "the direction taken has the potential to 'fit' the agendas of government" (NCA Newsletter 2002, p.2).

Monitoring the progress of the National Children's Agenda had already been identified by the federal government as an area of major concern and a public dialogue is underway to discuss ways to measure children's progress and to share information and best practices in order to meet the goal of improving children's well-being. Voluntary organizations believed this strategy would yield results given the broader move towards results-based management that occurred under the new modes of governance. As Dobrowolsky and Saint-Martin explain,

What is notable and novel, in both Canada and Britain, is that this pragmatic orientation is given credence by wedding popular policy proposals to deliverable policy targets, quantified through various indicators [...] Pragmatic promises (old and new) become measured, and are more closely monitored. First, policies are developed in ways that project future outcomes in light of their productive potential: the choices being made now bank on the benefits to be reaped later on. Second, not only are pledges made with future targets in mind, but also advancement on these goals is scrutinized (Dobrowolsky and Saint-Martin 2002, p. 7).

Many organizations had already been experimenting with methods to monitor progress around child poverty for example through the use of report cards and fact reports. Campaign 2000 published the *Annual Report Card on Child Poverty in Canada*, drawing on the Statistics Canada Survey of Consumer Finances. Other publications include: *How Does Canada Measure Up*, by the Canadian Coalition on the Rights of Children, the annual *Progress of Canada's Children*, by the Canadian Council on Social Development, drawing on a wide range of Statistics Canada surveys and other sources; *Health of Canada's Children: A CICH Profile* by the Canadian Institute of Child Health every four to five years; and *Profiling Canada's Families* by the Vanier Institute of the Family every six years drawing on Statistics Canada census and survey data. The goal of the NCA is to facilitate the use and dissemination of this data across the sector by making it more accessible and begin the process of monitoring the status of children's health and well-being by developing indicators based on that data.

Although many of these organizations have been compiling data for nearly a decade, what is distinct in today's environment is that they are now recognized by the federal government as 'experts' in the field of child poverty (McKeen 2003). Some, however, have been more successful than others at reorienting themselves and using the data in a way that is in sync with the needs of the federal government. The CCSD is a

good example. Whereas previously it would mobilize its members on the basis of these reports and pressure governments from outside formal structures, it now has secured credibility and access to the policy table due to its knowledge in this area. Now it is directly engaged in the planning and implementation of programs which means that rather than advocating from outside channels, it may be directly involved in the evaluative stages. This redirection has not been easy and has necessitated a number of organizational adjustments which I will focus on in the next chapter. What is clear is that data and research is increasingly used to support advocacy. As one organization notes, “This kind of advocacy work ultimately creates a better climate and will allow us to make more headway.”⁵⁰ A representative of Campaign 2000 describes this as a shift in methods of advocacy, stating that “Before advocacy was centred on public education and media relations. We put out a report card, policy development proposal and policy releases.... Now we are tracking decision making in a more focused manner. We are getting at the real action stage.”⁵¹ However, Campaign 2000 has been much less successful in gaining access to the table because it continues to value the importance of mobilization efforts to pressure the state from the outside.

Dynamics at a meso scale have also influenced broader political developments at a macro scale. Here, national organizations in the field of children and family services were central to making third party monitoring an important strategy for the sector to invest in as a whole. In response to their success and lobbying work, more monies are being distributed by the federal government through the VSI to develop comprehensive

⁵⁰ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

⁵¹ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

indicators and develop data systems across fields of activity. The federal government now focuses on the role of voluntary sector organizations as they take on the role of ‘watchdog’ on its behalf. There are no signs that this move towards greater monitoring will abate and already we are seeing signs of the impact that these new dynamics are having at sectoral and organizational scales. We turn to these now.

5.6 The power of research

The explosion of access to information, both qualitative and quantitative, and the privileged role of social science research, forced actors in the field of children and family services to rethink how they engage in policy discussion, and how their goals may be achieved. This move was reinforced by the federal government’s clear desire to shape practices within the sector by supporting knowledge development and dissemination activities. As one senior federal official stated, “advocate, but advocate based on evidence.”⁵² Another senior policy analyst noted, “Advocacy is distinct from analysis. It does not declare its biases and so its credibility is questionable. Advocacy groups have less of a role in policy making than those groups that do analysis.”⁵³ Hence, research and analysis may confer legitimacy and credibility to certain actors affording them access for representation.

In fact, the guiding principles of many of the national funding programs that were put in place over this period such as SIDPD and the Social Development Partnership

⁵² Based on an interview with a senior civil servant.

⁵³ Quoted in Betsy A. Harvie, “Regulation of Advocacy in the Voluntary Sector: Current Challenges and Some Responses”, January 2002. Available at http://vsi-ibsc.ca/eng/working_groups/advocacy.

Program,⁵⁴ did indeed reflect a desire to increase voluntary sector involvement in the departmental policy process by enabling them to acquire the necessary tools to enrich their knowledge of relevant issues, i.e. through research and the development of their policy capabilities. Change occurring at the macro scale was transmitted through individual department interaction with organizations and through programs signalling these priorities. Opportunities for involvement increased, but only for organizations willing to play by the rules.

Groups utilizing these research tools in order to substantiate their position began to gain credibility as valuable policy actors and were increasingly called to participate in policy discussions. In a report on third party monitoring, a voluntary organization is quoted as follows:

Data-based or evidence-based advocacy is viewed as more credible, compelling and influential than other forms of advocacy. It parallels a move in government, at least on paper, towards data-based decision-making. When the stories that organizations communicate are based in evidence, in data, the audience (including governments, professionals and the general public) has more confidence in the interpretation of the problem and the solutions proposed (Kidder 2003, p. 29).

Research opened doors. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, new governance mechanisms opened up opportunities for voluntary organizations to participate more closely in the process of policy making and service delivery in the field of children and family services. They have done so, however, mainly for organizations whose practices 'fit' the needs of governments, thereby conferring credibility and legitimacy to particular

⁵⁴ The Social Development Partnership Program is a federal government program which provides funding to voluntary organizations, educational institutions, research institutes, and professional associations to support research in areas that meet the social development needs of persons with disabilities, children and families and other vulnerable populations.

actors and not others. The federal government clearly supports activities that are relevant to the priorities and mandate of its departments.⁵⁵ It facilitated the involvement of organizations that tended to adopt conservative practices and a collaborative approach. In the process, it signalled what is deemed an appropriate form of political representation and what is not. In fact, voluntary organizations that adopted practices grounded in analysis gradually came to be seen as the ‘experts’ in the field of early childhood development and began to receive funding support to invest in additional research around these issues.

5.6.1 Shifting Patterns of Advocacy

The need for advocacy has long been accepted in the field of children and family services with important mobilizations historically taking place around the need for a national child care program and to reduce child poverty. Very few voluntary organizations actually took on the dual role of advocacy and service provision until the mid-1990s however. In fact, a clear delineation exists between organizations whose main mission was advocacy and those providing services. Given the centrality of the partnership rhetoric under the new governance agenda, there has been a wave of political organizing among the voluntary organizations in the field of children and family services and the lines between these two core functions have become blurred.

⁵⁵ This was the object of tensions between national voluntary organizations and the federal government around the selection process when the federal government first launched the Sectoral Involvement in Departmental Policy Development a funding initiative designed to “enhance policy development in departments by strengthening opportunities for input by voluntary organizations. See for example the list of funding projects at http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/policy_projects_annexd.cfm.

In fact, the national organizations I studied are finding it increasingly necessary to become advocates. One executive director recalled that “before we did no advocacy. We were not political, only focusing on delivery of services, but nowadays in today’s world, you have to be very political, you have to advocate for your movement, you have to get over things like not wanting to call yourself professional. It was a big struggle for us.”⁵⁶ Another noted that advocacy, “used to be a dirty word, There were contentious workshops on advocacy. Organizations were self-identified as advocates and there was a clear delineation between advocates and those organizations that provided service delivery. They didn’t mess with the other or mix. I’d say now that most organizations do advocacy in terms of being involved in policy development. Also there began to be more dialogue about advocacy having a much broader definition and that there were different ways to do advocacy.”⁵⁷

This infusion of service organizations into the sphere of advocacy had a ‘mainstreaming’ effect on the type of strategies that were adopted in the field of children and family services because practices are tied to experiences within the policy community. Many of these organizations were not comfortable with a critical approach, and their new partners were conscious of this. Moreover, they tended to be more professionalized organizations who favoured institutionalized routes to representation. Similar shifts were also occurring on a macro scale as large well-established organizations gained ground on the political scene which further reinforced the trend at the meso scale.

⁵⁶ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

⁵⁷ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

After all, organizations transmit information and signal to their members the routes to effective political engagement, and this occurs across all scales.

As voluntary organizations increasingly play an operational role in the policy process, political participation, representation and advocacy are being rethought and reshaped. The very nature of advocacy has been redefined to encompass the greater extent of their role in the public policy process. Advocacy is no longer limited to the act of supporting an issue or speaking in favour of a particular constituency. Voluntary sector organizations are now called upon to provide policy advice, research, to consult and to mediate policy to the general public. When questioned on their advocacy role, national organizations in the field of children and family services maintained that while they continued to exercise that role, the way they advocate has evolved in response to the changing nature of their dealings with the state.

A major effect has been that organizations' advocacy activities have steered towards a greater focus on public policy making and governmental priorities. Public policy and state-oriented work has become central to national voluntary organization's agenda. As the state becomes a focal point of much of the collective action; research has already showed that it shapes the movement's direction (Bashevkin 1994, Dobrowolsky 1998). Whereas before advocacy was reactive and responsive, aimed at acting upon the government, ultimate agent of policy; it is now less political and rooted in policy analysis where the ultimate means to influence policy is by tracking government progress. One executive director described the advocacy strategy of his organization as follows, "After 1995 things became more reactive. You no longer had the mechanisms to advocate for programs. You had to find doors... A lot of organizations do the tango, meet with

government and are energized at being at the table... The advocacy effort is really dynamic. We haven't given up the idea; at the table we can continue to challenge them.”⁵⁸ Another claimed that advocacy, “...changes when one gets to the policy engagement stage, making it a policy issue rather than a political issue. We're getting to the real action stage. Our relationship with government is fairly open...”⁵⁹

In addition, the majority of organizations have reported a greater emphasis on research-oriented projects. This is further driven by the federal government's shift towards funding projects that support research, information development and dissemination. An executive director stated “We don't have any ongoing money to meet our full objectives... we received a Health Canada grant were we did policy work and project funded child care visions by Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC) and that allowed us to reassert ourselves. You have to reframe the language, the programme in order to compete for a finite amount of money and this process is reinforced by government's promise to work together and to build stronger communities... You have no choice to do that... Only certain things will go through that's the filtering process.”⁶⁰ Another describes their advocacy strategy as follows, “we've started to focus more on our research because most of our money comes from project to project funding. The federal government would not give us funding to do solely advocacy work. They'll give us money to do peer advocacy support through research but not pure advocacy really focussing on research and life course changes can help... having

⁵⁸ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

⁵⁹ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

⁶⁰ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

research behind the voices, to back up the voices... It's a lot easier for us to get money for research."⁶¹ Most organizations perceived access to project funding for building policy capacity as a route to redistributing power. In fact, the majority of groups have viewed their increased involvement in policy as a positive shift.

Moreover, research increasingly supports advocacy activities. Broad monitoring efforts, such as *The Progress of Canada's Children* and *How Does Canada Measure Up?*, serve as important resources to organizations to support research, proposal writing, policy, program development and advocacy. Because of the overt focus on the value of evidence and data to the policy making process, voluntary organizations have found it necessary to rely on this type of information in order to substantiate their position when engaging in policy debates. Advocates began to frame the issues using data and research such as the longitudinal study and the work of Dr. Fraser Mustard (Dobrowolsky and Jenson 2002).

As a result, participation in the policy process is increasingly backed by research and analysis and not informed by the experiences of those affected from policy. This shift has particular implications for voluntary sector organizations whose basis for intervention has historically laid within the interests that they represent. Engaging in the policy process is no longer a way to express one's views, collective identity, or to establish new frames of meaning that can alter the policy discourse. Rather, the sector's involvement in policy is depoliticized, and tailored to fit into pre-existing bureaucratic modes of decision making. These two trends have contributed to a growing professionalism of policy making and advocacy, which has the potential to undermine the community-

⁶¹ Based on an interview with the executive director of a national organization involved in the field of children and family services.

oriented nature of voluntary sector organizations. This becomes even more important when we factor in the idea that leverages from below can an important determinant of the ability of an organization to influence state decisions. The authority of the organization no longer relies on a mobilised membership who can voice their concern to the state if their demands are not addressed. In the process, national voluntary organizations that are increasingly turned towards the state and partners of the state may have undermined their relationship to their members, who are concerned with this shift. In the long run, because of the rifts that are emerging between large established organizations and small locally based organizations, it may undermine the sector's capacity to mobilize from below.

6.9 Conclusion

The call for new forms of engagement between voluntary sector organizations and the federal government involves a fundamental rethinking of the ways in which claims are made and represented in the political process, and a re-conceptualization of the meanings of advocacy in relationship to governance. New collaborative forms of policy design and development, supported by funding practices aimed specifically at strengthening the voluntary sector's capacity to contribute to policy, have enabled voluntary sector organizations in the field of children and family services to reposition themselves with respect to the state. As a result, the very nature of advocacy has been redefined to encompass the greater extent of their role in the public policy process. The funding of policy-oriented services has created opportunities for voluntary sector organizations to build policy capacity, to acquire power and to enhance their role in the policy process.

The changes that have occurred on a macro scale in terms of government-voluntary sector relationships constitute emerging political opportunity structures for participation and influence at the meso level that can be expected to lead to the evolution of new forms and strategies of political engagement. As a result, many have opted to play a less adversarial role and to incorporate themselves into the mainstream of politics. This shift from adversarial tactics towards a more collaborative and conciliating approach to policy making is especially significant for it impacts not just on the repertoire of political action, but it can also have longer term impact on the organizations and their organizational structure, as we will see in the next chapter.

The themes here replicate some of the themes identified at the end of the last chapter. They illustrate the multiple ways in which the field of children and family services is being opened up to new forms of interaction between state and the voluntary sector. In particular, they suggest that how government and state representatives interact together in a particular policy field together with the effects of a broad redesign of state-sector relationships produced through the VSI, are having important organizational effects at a micro scale. In the next chapter, I examine on an organizational scale how these transformations are experienced.

Chapter 7 Governance and organizational change

7.1 Introduction

So we have seen, in the past decade there have been substantial changes in the political and economic environment in which the voluntary sector operates in Canada. The rise of neo-liberalism, the dismantling and restructuring of state, and the devolution of responsibility for social programs onto other levels of government, are driving a change in the process of governance and as a result, redefining the relationship between governments, the private and the voluntary sector. It requires that voluntary organizations respond internally and externally to the challenges posed by the restructuring of these political relations. The dynamics of governance are now observable in a number of policy areas. By examining a diagonal slice of the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector, Chapter Six illustrates how this dynamic has had an impact on a particular policy community – children and family services – as other levels of government increasingly rely on cross-sectoral collaboration of a wider range of actors to deliver services and make policy. As a result, new, complex patterns of interdependence are emerging, redefining the very terrain on which struggle is being waged.

While opportunities and spaces for engagement have proliferated over the past decade, both at macro and meso scales of action, the new tasks and varying expectations assigned to the voluntary sector have changed the terms of access to the state, ultimately privileging some actors and strategies over others. As I have detailed, governance structures have prompted voluntary organizations to collaborate and develop partnerships across sectors; to develop abilities in areas of research and consultation to secure access

to these arenas; and to develop accountability measures and focus on the production of measurable outcomes. Consequently, they have produced differential opportunities and constraints for the involvement of voluntary organizations and in the process, fostered growing tensions and challenges at an organizational scale around goals, internal processes, and strategies that are far from resolved. How organizations interpret, respond to and adapt to these dynamics, therefore, is critically important to understanding the changing nature of the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector.

Hence, this final analytic chapter focuses on the dynamics of governance at an organizational scale. Building on the analysis developed in the previous chapters, I examine how the dynamics at macro and meso scales are inscribed in and are the outcome of day-to-day interactions between government officials and voluntary organizations. My goal is twofold. First, I examine how voluntary organizations in the field of children and family services have adapted to and resisted the complex set of demands being placed on them. I argue that these dynamics have important organizational effects as they stretch capacity by directly impacting their mission, programs and activities, altering what organizations have to attend to, and questioning how organizations structure themselves and their performance. Second, I analyze how these changes at an organizational scale alter the nature of the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector at other scales. While scholars of the voluntary sector have generated many discrete case studies that focus on organizational change, we know very little about how micro dynamics are linked to actions occurring on at macro and meso scales. This chapter intends to fill that void.

My analysis is primarily based on the findings obtained through 62 in-depth interviews that were conducted with voluntary organizations in the field of children and family services. In addition, four case studies, two from Ontario and two from Quebec, were conducted with voluntary organizations from the initial sample of 62 in order to probe into the organizational transformations that were occurring. I selected these four cases because they were typical examples of broader trends that are emerging in the sector. Owing to the great diversity within the sector and the complex nature of the strategic decisions being made, the analysis is not exhaustive. Rather, I have attempted to convey what organizations have identified as the main transformations that have occurred within their policy field at an organizational scale.

7.2 Organizational change and agency

Over the past decade, there has been an extensive sharing of responsibilities between governments and voluntary sector organizations in service delivery and policy making. The new interdependencies generated by collaborative governance have challenged many of our established ideas regarding state-society relations including the fundamental role of voluntary sector organizations in social and political spheres and how they operate. In a context of greater interdependence between the state and the voluntary sector, many researchers have questioned the ability of voluntary organizations to maintain their autonomy, particularly when these same organizations rely on the state for resources (Salamon 1987, Til 1988, Hodgkinson and Lyman 1989, O'Neil 1989, Hodgkinson, Weitzman et al. 1992, Gronbjerg 1993, Crittenden 2000). The question of how best to organize, fund and support voluntary sector activities, has therefore emerged

as a critical topic in voluntary sector research. As Minkoff states, the key challenge for organizations is “to be responsive to environmental shifts – in the availability of funding from private and public sources, support from political elites, resistance from opposing movements and issue salience – while remaining consistent with the original organizational identity and accountable to their internal base of support” (Minkoff 2002, p. 34).

There is a long standing debate in social movement theory on the effects of collaboration with the state (Tilly 1978, Gamson 1975, 1980, Rucht and McAdams 1993, Staggenborg 1988, McCarthy and Zald 1987). Some have strongly argued that greater collaboration and working from ‘within’ institutionalized channels lead to cooptation and de-radicalization of the movement (Michels 1959, Piven and Cloward 1977). Numerous researchers have noted the adverse effects of professionalization on the internal dynamics of organizations (Skocpol 1999, 2003, Putnam 1995, 2000, Kissane and Gingerich 2004). For example, Skocpol has argued that American advocacy groups are increasingly staff-heavy – focused on lobbying, research, and public relations – and are managed from the top with few opportunities for member leverage from below. Saurugger (2002, 2004) has also witnessed a similar shift in Europe as organizations increasingly partner with the state. In addition, institutionalization, bureaucratization and professionalization of organizations, a by-product of collaboration, tend to be associated with growing conservatism and conventionalism in their practice (Piven and Cloward 1977, Zald and Ash 1966, McCarthy and McPhail 1998, McCarthy, Britt and Wolfson 1991, Kleidman 1994, Oliver 1983, Staggenborg 1988, McCarthy and Zald 1987, Tarrow 1998). Thus, numerous studies have shown that organizational forms affect the strategic decisions of

organizations in the political arena and ultimately have an impact on their goals and practices (Buechler 1997, Koopmans 1993, Oliver 1989, Staggenborg 1988).

Social movement theorists have begun to re-visit the implicit dichotomy between inside and outside strategies (Kramer 2000, Katzenstein 1998a, 1998b, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001, Meyer and Tarrow 1998, Dobrowolsky 1998, 2002), arguing that organizations are pragmatic actors shifting their strategies, working both simultaneously from the inside and the outside of the institutional structures. For example, Kramer argues that in order “to maintain their autonomy in an inter-sectoral environment, organizations engage in a variety of political strategies – shifting from competition to co-optation and collaboration – to cope with the forces that influence their resource acquisition and service delivery systems” (Kramer 2000, p. 8). The impact of working from within, according to this perspective, is less marked because organizations are quite adept at adapting their core strategy and mandate and are able to “bend with the wind” in order to meet the new demands (Minkoff 1999).

Both approaches recognize the importance of the complex interplay and strategic interaction of organizations and their institutional environment. In many respects, organizations are being affected by symptoms arising from the tensions of professionalization and autonomy. How these concerns are addressed ultimately affects agency at macro and meso scales of action. In fact, at these scales of action, the processes by which individuals and organizations make decisions, develop strategies and mobilize resources is highly influenced by the micro context within which they operate. Organizational structure, leadership and hiring practices, for example, all condition the realm of the possible. Not only do they set limits on the possible strategies, but they also

shape the actions that organizations adopt. In turn, this has an impact on an organization's capacity to adapt and resist changes occurring in governance at macro and meso scales. After all, policy communities and the voluntary sector are constructs composed of loosely articulated organizations. Formal organizations are the carriers of the sectoral dynamics (Zald and McCarthy 1987)¹ and the organizational infrastructure supporting sectoral activity at macro and meso scales of action is highly dependent on micro dynamics. In this chapter I attempt to disentangle the various transformations occurring at an organizational scale and discuss some of the implications of these transformations on broader state-sector relationships. First, I focus on external factors that have been affected by a shift in governance: the funding environment and the discursive universe. Then I turn to internal dynamics and how these have affected practice.

7.3 The funding environment

The funding regime is an important institutional factor shaping the allocation of resources. The shift in governance creates opportunities for funding such activities as service delivery and policy making, relatively salient activities for the state. By taking full advantage of policy and funding developments, organizations may secure resources needed to play a more effective role in partnerships. By the same token, funding arrangements may shift resources away from other activities deemed important by the

¹ Moreover, one can argue that they have become an even more important factor in the macro and meso scales of action I analyzed in the previous chapters because networking and collaboration amongst voluntary organizations -- in a context of constrained resources -- has remained loose, informal and unstructured to allow organizations to participate and invest energies to varying degree over time depending on their internal dynamics (f.e. VSR, NCA).

organizations and its stakeholder, but for which there is little political support. Hence, it may be increasingly difficult for organizations to fulfill their mission as they have defined it. Funding may affect the way organizations structure themselves, their relative power in the policy process, and how they access policy making. It can also confer legitimacy and credibility to certain activities at the expense of others. Numerous studies demonstrate that the funding of voluntary organizations may affect their organizational structure leading to: greater professionalization and bureaucratization of voluntary organizations (Leat 1995, pp. 157-189, Kramer 1985, Hartogs and Weber 1978, Saidel, 1994, Stone 1996); greater demands for accountability and performance measures (Stone, Hagger and Griffin 2001, Knapp, Robertson and Thomason 1990); and a displacement of power away from constituencies and the board of directors towards the funder (Harlan and Saidel 1994, Mizrahi and Rosenthal 2001, Smith and Lipsky 1993, Sosin 1990). Although resources alone cannot fully explain the strategies chosen by the organization, or the routes of representation for which it opted, it is an important reality with which they must contend.

While some constraints facing organizations are strictly financial, it is hard to disentangle organizational responses because they also take place within a specific institutional context also affecting their choices. These two elements are intrinsically linked for the patterns of resource flow are themselves shaped by institutional forces. This institutional context provides a broad framework of material and symbolic elements through which patterns of representation are legitimated, discourses are constructed, and organizational actions and practices are understood. In fact, responsiveness and adaptation may also be driven by the opportunities and constraints within the institutional

context. Hence, while a displacement of funding sources may be a catalyst for organizational change or resistance to change, the organizational strategies adopted cannot be examined in isolation from the larger transformations associated with the process of governance. These changes are reflected by a changing discourse which has swept all levels of Canadian government and that emphasizes partnership and collaboration in the provision of services and in policy making; and, driving an identification of new priorities and funding strategies through a renewed interest in investing in voluntary organizations and in organizational capacity. The allocation of resources to voluntary organizations has also mirrored this shift in priorities as project-based funding has been increasingly oriented towards strengthening the role of the sector in service delivery and policy making.²

By reconfiguring and redesigning the roles and responsibilities, and the funding mechanisms to support these roles, governance is altering the environment in which voluntary organizations make choices. These trends have implications at a micro scale, in organizational terms, and at the abstract level, as each of the organizations studied has grappled with how to respond to the changing financial and institutional environment.

7.4 Fighting for survival

Since the mid 1990s, certain developments have occurred with respect to the funding regime that have redesigned the pattern of resource flows between the state and the voluntary sector at the national, provincial and local levels (Rekart 1993, Reed and Howe 1999, City of Toronto 2003). Three major trends have been identified in the

² With the launch of funding initiatives such as Sectoral Involvement in Departmental Policy Development (SIDPD) and the Social Development Partnerships Program (SDPP).

literature: the withdrawal of government involvement in core operational funding, replacing it with short-term project based funding which means more targeted funding (Scott 2003, Shields 2003, Rekart 1993, Reed and Howe 1999, Eakin 2001); pressures for greater accountability and results-based management (Brown and Troutt 2004, Phillips and Graham 2000); and growing expectation placed on organizations to diversify their funding sources so not solely relying on governmental funds (Day and Devlin 1997, Hall and MacPherson 1997, Sharpe 1994, 2001, Hall 1995).

The impact of the new funding regime on voluntary organizations is significant and well documented (Scott 2003, Eakin 2001, Leduc Browne 1996, Hall and Reed 1998). Many studies have reported on the financial instability and the pressures facing voluntary organizations which have lead to mission drift, volatility, loss of infrastructure, a tightening of administrative costs, and reporting overload projects (Reed and Howe 2000, Juillet et al. 2001, Scott 2003, Eakin 2001, Hall and Reed 1998). These funding pressures expose, in a very dramatic way, how capacity issues and the very survival of organizations are dealt with, moving organizations into a new form of politics. Organizations faced with this new funding environment must learn to do more with less and ultimately make choices that affect the way they operate. While there continues to exist a wide variety of funding arrangements across sectors, and across scales, because funding has become increasingly short term and oriented towards projects, voluntary organizations have found themselves in an increasingly vulnerable position (Gutch 1992, Kramer and Grossman 1987, Phaure 1994, Salamon 1987, 1995, Smith and Lipsky 1993, Sharpe 1994, 2001, Hall 1995, Day and Devlin 1997, Hall and MacPherson 1997).

The organizations I interviewed were preoccupied with their survival. Organizations, both large and small, have entered into what they termed ‘a state of survival’. Six respondents stressed the precariousness of organizations after the funding cuts in the mid 1990s, citing examples of organizations in their policy field shutting down their operations due to the lack of funding. They also expressed concern that they might be next. It is important to signal this generalized state of mind within the sector as a point of departure for the analysis to understand the choices they made and the strategies they selected. In fact, being unable to ensure that the level of services provided could be maintained from year to year meant that organizations narrowed their political horizon to focus on meeting their momentary needs, and thus, were generally unable to adopt long-term organizational strategies that would ensure the long-term sustainability of their operations. As I will detail later, the clear majority of organizations tended to adopt a patchwork of short-term strategies to cover their operational costs. In effect, this meant that short-term issues trumped long-term issues in their strategic calculations. One executive director noted how his organization adapted to the funding cuts as follows, “We did a lot of it by the seat of our pants. A lot of the cuts you could not do strategically. It was like being in a hurricane and you never knew which direction the next wave was going to come from.”³

With very little support available for infrastructure in the new funding environment, organizations, of all sizes and scope, found that their first challenge was to discover cost-cutting restructuring strategies to do more with less. Responses were varied. I observed that over the past five years, four organizations in the field of children

³ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the Ottawa region.

and family services underwent a merger to reduce their operation costs. Three of these were small local organizations and one was a large national organization. Four organizations moved offices to reduce their rent fees, one local, one provincial and two national organizations. Two national organizations sold their building for revenue. Moreover, 12 organizations (19%) repositioned themselves and reduced their range of services due to the lack of funding to support these activities (three national, three provincial, and six local organizations). In many cases, organizations reported having to absorb part of the administrative costs associated with project requirements, making it more difficult to reroute resources to other activities.

Advocacy organizations were particularly vulnerable to these shifts. As I noted in the previous chapters, the overall the funding environment was less receptive to funding advocacy activities as governments and a number of foundations, such as the Trillium Foundation, were increasingly reluctant to fund this aspect of their work as well. This had an important organizational effect. Many organizations proceeded to downsize their advocacy activities. One executive director noted, “We use to have a full time advocacy position, now we’ve lost about half our capacity.”⁴ It forced advocacy organizations to move into more service provision, and service oriented organizations to move out of the advocacy sphere. I will return to this issue later in the chapter for it is significant in terms of broad state-sector relationships.

Another major difficulty expressed by organizations was the tensions associated with high staff turnover and human resource fatigue. Given the rising demands placed on organizations in a more unstable funding environment, staffing issues and job security

⁴ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the Ottawa region.

were always a prominent concern. Over this period, my study revealed that six organizations were forced to lay off staff. The *Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare*, for example, witnessed its staff resources shrink from ten to three staff members.

Even those organizations that have seen their staffing capacity increase in the past five years were confronted with issues relating to job security. In fact, 18 organizations reported being unable to guarantee sustainability of growth, and increasingly hiring contracted staff. In addition, one executive director noted having changed his hiring practices because of the imperatives of efficiency and cost cutting. For one, he/she noted that the organization now hires individuals with different qualifications. Unable to offer a competitive salary for highly educated personnel, they opted to hire individuals who did not necessarily have a degree. He/she stated, "Using a MA of social work was probably more expensive so we turned over our management and administrative staff."⁵ Moreover, in order to compensate for their staff cuts, they relied increasingly on volunteers in order to fulfill their mandate. He/she added, "We reshaped the services so they would be less costly using our volunteer base."⁶

The implications of these transformations in staffing practices on the organizational culture are enormous. I will return to this a little further in the chapter for it ties into other transformations that are occurring. It is interesting to note that despite restructuring efforts, many organizations interviewed have found that reducing the costs of operations, or cutting the staff size, was seldom sufficient. Organizations had to find

⁵ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the Ottawa region.

⁶ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the Ottawa region.

new means to generate revenue to keep up with the growing demands and to seize new opportunities.

7.4.1 The quest for gold: Diversification of funding

Much like organizational restructuring, diversification of revenue is also a strategy of repositioning. As funding cuts unfolded, the vast majority of organizations needed to reorient themselves and diversify their funding sources to assure meeting their basic mission. In fact, 55 of the 62 organizations (88%) in the sample I examined have transformed their financial structure over the past five years and have experimented with pursuing new funding sources, often drawing from multiple funding streams.⁷ Among these, 36 organizations reported (65%) having to pursue project based funding⁸; 26 organizations (47%) sought out partnerships with other organizations and with private sector organizations in order to access more resources; 26 organizations (47%) mentioned having dabbled – successfully or unsuccessfully – in fundraising activities, including soliciting both the corporate sector and individuals for donations; and 10 (18%) have solicited foundations. Finally, 12 respondents (22%) remarked that they have tried various methods to generate resources internally either by charging user fees for their services or through the sale of publications and other items. Three of these organizations also created an endowment fund; one has moved into voluntary planned giving; one has opted to manage a benefit plan for its members; and one has launched an employment assistance program in order to ensure the financial stability of the organization in the long

⁷ Seven organizations reported no significant change in their financial structure.

⁸ This number is quite high because the remainder of the groups who did not report growing reliance on project based funding were organizations from Quebec, where despite some funding cuts, core funding was maintained.

term. The executive director of a provincial voluntary organization explained, “We concluded that we needed to develop a core of funds that reliably was there that we could use fully to our discretion.”⁹

Given the widespread practice of pursuing new funding sources, the majority of organizations did not witness an overall reduction of their revenue. In fact, only 3 small sized organizations, with a budget under \$200 000, reported a decline in their resource base in the past five years. These organizations made the conscious decision not to pursue new sources of funding because they considered the cost to the organization in terms of time and manpower was too high. For example, one executive director recalled,

“We preferred to reduce our services rather than take on new ones which would imply additional costs. We felt it would have been too demanding for the parents who are involved in our organizations on a voluntary basis. With the size of our staff, they inevitably would have had to take on more responsibility. It was also very demanding for us in terms of capacity to go through the process of applying for funding, and filling all the forms. It requires more work, more investment, more management than we could dedicate.”¹⁰

The general finding that the level of resources in voluntary organizations tended not to decline over this period confirms the results of the study by Hall and Howe which noted that, “While public discourse and debate about the voluntary sector has of late been framed largely in terms of the consequences of funding cutbacks that are presumed to be deep and wide, we found that resource reductions occurred in modest measure and could not be attributed across the board to large-scale reduction in government spending on

⁹ Based on an interview with a provincial voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from Ontario.

¹⁰ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the Montreal region. Translated from “On a préféré réduire nos services plutôt qu’ajouter des choses et ajouter des coûts car c’est trop exigeants pour les parents qui sont bénévoles. Ça devient leur responsabilité avec le niveau de personnel qu’on a.... S’était exigeant de se taper la demande de subvention. Ça demandait plus de travail, plus d’investissement, plus de gestion qu’on pouvait fournir.”

social services or financial support to the voluntary sector” (Reed and Howe 1999, p. 22). Simply focusing on funding cuts masks the more complex nature of the transformations that are occurring. Before exploring some of the implications of diversification on the mandate of organizations, we need to recognize that the very process of pursuing new sources of funding raises some challenges for organizations in terms of capacity and may impact organizational practice. To this I now turn.

7.4.2 The chase: Implications of pursuing new funding routes

Embarking on a diversification of funding streams is not without consequences. First and foremost, the voluntary organizations surveyed noted that pursuing new funding support requires additional investments in developing relationships with new funders. In fact, new funding opportunities first need to be created before they can be seized. In addition, these opportunities must be nurtured over time to sustain the relationships and maintain the funding obtained through these means. One executive director remarked that, “In fundraising, you have got to maintain the contacts. You can’t just sit back and expect to receive the money every year. People change, people move on. You need to put an effort into building relationships. We have to have our ear to the ground.”¹¹

For these organizations, this means that additional human resources have to be dedicated to raising funds and managing these initiatives, man power which used to be dedicated to the core mission of the organization. In a context where resources are strained, finding the staff resources to develop these networks becomes a growing concern. For example, one respondent noted, “We’ve tried to develop getting money

¹¹ Based on an interview with a provincial voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from Ontario.

from membership fees; but it takes all of the time of the staff.”¹² This additional burden is particularly acute given that organizations are increasingly compelled to develop partnerships as many funding programs now make collaboration or matching resources a condition of receiving funding.

Among the organizations I studied, 25 reported how the quest for resources monopolizes the time of a full-time staff member, and the executive director was generally the resource person affected to this task. Invariably, 19 of the small-sized organizations reported that this posed a significant challenge. In small organizations with very little staff capacity, the executive director already takes on a number of varied roles. Pursuing new funding opportunities involves time and resources spent meeting with potential new partners and developing relationships. A number of executive directors emphasized that this was time spent away from the organizational setting. One noted,

“My background is in social work but my time over the last few years has been spent on fundraising, public speaking and special events. It’s not what I got into this business to do but when you get yourself in this situation as executive director, you are committed to the project so you have to shift gears dramatically.... People in this field are either childcare workers or social workers and they moved into management; they know nothing in public administration, management, budgeting.”¹³

Illustrative of the struggle executive directors of small organizations face in terms of resources, skills and capacity, this tension also points to an important organizational distinction between small and larger organizations. In our sample, the executive directors of smaller organizations tended to be practitioners, whereas those of larger organizations distinguished themselves by their administrative background. As professionals they may

¹² Based on an interview with a provincial voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from Ontario.

¹³ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the region of Montreal.

have different interests and skills that allow them to perform some tasks, such as fundraising, with greater expertise. If the capacity and skill of an executive director is an important determinant of the successful pursuit of new sources of funding, then clearly small organizations are at a disadvantage.

Besides the obvious time constraints and capacity issues raised, four organizations also mentioned the profound cultural shift required in the process of pursuing outside sources of funding. An additional five organizations specifically mentioned that partnering with the private sector involves a shift in thinking. To successfully solicit these new ‘partners’, voluntary organizations needed to adapt their discourse and reframe their language to package themselves and their cause. One executive director described this new process as follows:

Asking for the private sector to invest was a whole new game. I use to joke that I would arrive with my business suit to sell my idea. It required a whole new vision, a different approach, which takes time and that is I find is less evident. To go and speak to large corporations so that they support us and fund a service is not part of our culture and it takes a lot of time which we do not have.¹⁴

In addition to being good at public relations, as this quote illustrates, to be successful in ‘pitching’ a new project for funding, organizations have to possess grant writing skills, analytical skills, and reporting skills. To overcome these capacity issues, seven organizations reported they had to hire professional fundraisers to lead their

¹⁴ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the region of Ottawa. Translation from: “Demander l’investissement du privé, c’est une autre paire de manches. Et moi je faisais des blagues comme j’arrivais avec mon habit de femme d’affaire qui venait vendre mon idée. Cela a demandé toute une autre vision, tout une autre démarche, ça prend du temps aussi et puis ça je trouve que c’est moins évident. Aller parler à des grosses corporations pour qu’elles nous appuient et contribuent pour un service, c’est pas quelque chose qu’on a dans notre culture..... Puis ça prend du temps.”

fundraising campaigns. One executive director explained this necessity as follows, “We will be competing with hospitals and schools. We are on a day to day survival.”¹⁵ While the hiring of a professional fundraiser may generate greater revenue, it also entails greater costs and thereby makes it a less accessible practice. In fact, this practice has been mainly adopted by large, well established organizations with a public profile and a budget of over one million dollars. Evidence reveals that the larger more conservative and well established voluntary organizations, those with a substantial budget to start off with to hire trained fundraising professionals, tend to be more successful in terms of fundraising. Moreover, I found that these same organizations developed increased levels of sophistication in fundraising practice.

Due to capacity issues, I observed that small organizations have a limited fundraising ability. As one executive director argued, “launching fundraising initiatives requires expertise. We are not experts able to do that. It requires energy and time that we then are not able to dedicate to our mission. It also requires someone to manage the initiative. We’re not equipped to do that, it’s relatively new.”¹⁶

In fact, large organizations fared far better in the pursuit of new funding streams than small-sized organizations with limited staff capacity. There were two notable exceptions in our sample of smaller sized organizations who successfully moved into fundraising were *AMCAL Family Services* and the *Maison des familles de Mercier-Est*. I

¹⁵ Based on an interview with a national voluntary organization in the field of children and family services.

¹⁶ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the region of Montreal. Translated from, “faire des levées de fonds ça requiert des experts. On est pas des experts nous dans le milieu communautaires pour faire ça. Ça prend de l’Energie qu’on ne met pas sur notre mission de base. Ça prend qqn pour le gérer. On est pas équipé c’est nouveaux. ”

found that for both large and small sized organizations, successful fundraising was generally only possible after making a number of organizational changes. The shift, however, was more pronounced in the smaller sized organization. To illustrate how these fundraising strategies may have a significant impact on the organizational culture, I did a case study of the process of organizational change that *AMCAL Family Services* embarked upon.

7.4.2.1 Case Study: AMCAL Family Services

In the case of *AMCAL Family Services*, organizational change that resulted from their desire to move into fundraising was most noticeable at the board level. After trying initially to raise funds themselves throughout the community, they quickly realized that as a small organization they did not have the organizational capacity to be successful. As the executive director recalled,

“I find at the foundation level, for an organization our size, getting corporate funding is unrealistic unless you are really well connected. Just you think. An executive director has to have a high level of fundraising skills. How many people have that? They don’t want to have anything to do with fundraising usually, unless they hire a professional fundraiser to navigate this turf but which organization has money to do that? They are going to give to a national organization first, they are going to give to something that is very high profile, they are not going to give to any cause where there might be any controversy and they would be put in bad light.”¹⁷

Their first strategy was to hire a professional fundraiser. The executive director described initiative as ‘an educational process.’ He/she noted, “We put out an ad. They said we had to have all of the contacts already in place. So we had to do all of the work.”¹⁸ Even with the help of a professional fundraiser, they realized that they needed to

¹⁷ Based on an interview with AMCAL Family Services.

¹⁸ Based on an interview with AMCAL Family Services.

be connected with the private sector in some way. They then began to develop their own links with the corporate sector, and renounced the professional fundraiser. Because the staff had limited time, the board members increasingly carried the responsibility for building relations within the community, yet many of them did not have the capacity or the skills to take on this task. Until then, the board was essentially composed of parents who had been users of the services. These board members also expressed their concern that the tasks being asked of them was beyond their scope. Gradually a number of board members stepped down. The executive director recalled, "Our board was deadwood. The board had no knowledge of fundraising. They were all very engaged but it's not what we needed. People were feeling threatened and overwhelmed by what we were asking them to do so gradually they had good excuses to leave. That was very important in making the turnover."¹⁹ Attempting to build ties with the private sector, they decided to replenish their board of directors with individuals from the corporate sector.

This required a number of structural changes in order to adapt the by laws and permit them to seek board members who were not users of services. To meet some of their capacity issues, they specifically sought out board members with a background in public relations, marketing, and finance. As the executive director stated, "You have different needs. The organization is evolving. They need to be able to relate to the corporate works. Maybe we weren't in the business of making money, but you snooze, you loose, that's the bottom line..."²⁰ This shift was significant. In order to attract members of the corporate community, and successfully affect the composition of the board, the organization had to change some of its practices, ultimately affecting the

¹⁹ Based on an interview with AMCAL Family Services.

²⁰ Based on an interview with AMCAL Family Services.

organization's culture. Recruited leaders from the business community had substantial experience on boards and hence had a variety of expectations with respect to governance, accounting and management. In many respects, it led to a formalization of governance practices.

The case of *AMCAL Family Services* is illustrative of a broader trend in the sector. In fact, six other small local organizations noted they have new board members from the corporate sector. Because turning to a professional fundraiser was not an option for these small organizations, they opted to increase their links with the corporate sector through their board members in order to tap into the corporate sector.

7.4.3 The accountability aftermath

While the very process of pursuing these new funding opportunities required additional resources and skills, once organizations successfully obtained funding, they also had to submit themselves to a number of requirements. The growing contracting practices of governments add new layers of accountability forcing voluntary organizations to abide by the contractual terms of the new arrangements (Smith and Lipsky 1993). This is further complicated by the additional regulations imposed for compliance with governmental standards. Voluntary organizations that supply public services must provide external transparency for all stakeholders and the general public. Under these contracts, voluntary organizations are obliged to provide consistent services, in compliance with the norms and overarching values of the public service.

This also implies that they must open themselves up to inspection by partners and to new demands for transparency and accountability. They need to adopt new practices to efficiently provide the services. The implementation and delivery of a government program, however, is significantly different from the operation of a community program. The allocation of resources are driven by values of efficiency and oriented towards obtaining specific results. Voluntary organizations involved in collaborative arrangements, therefore, have to take into account the interests of their partners both in the delivery of services and the elaboration of policy which creates some tensions with their members (Smith and Lipsky 1993, Rekart 1996, Phillips 2001).

While there exists a wide variety of funding arrangements across sectors, and across scales, the process of governance has led to common rhetoric and practices as a growing number of non-governmental funders also embrace the values of accountability, efficiency and results-based management (Brown and Troutt 2004, Phillips and Graham 2000). Hence, regardless of their funding source, all voluntary organizations reported the need to abide by new accountability requirements. In a context of strained resources, it raises the issues of the administrative capacity of voluntary organizations to deliver on the multiple requirements imposed by the diverse funders (Hall and Reed 1998).

Organizations can gain economically from submitting themselves to the rules and norms that are purported by government and by a growing number of private funders. However, the new exigencies in accountability obviously exert enormous pressures on voluntary organizations for they necessitate human resources and reporting skills which many organizations do not necessarily possess. Seven organizations reported that they now have to measure and quantify their work in order to report on their outcomes.

Phillips aptly remarks that, “Outcome measurement is a complex task and public debate about it requires access to relevant data and technical information, the ability to assess the quality of measurement as well as institutional venues for debate on the adequacy and policy implications of the data” (Phillips 2003, p. 107). In fact, organizations surveyed often emphasized that they did not possess the current skills required to fulfill the expectations in these areas. As one executive director noted, “The expectations for accountability far outweigh the capacity. The vast majority of organizations are small 3-4 people organizations.”²¹

Hence, as greater accountability requirements and administrative procedures are prescribed by government departments and donor agencies, it affects how voluntary organizations operate. For organizations to successfully develop performance indicators, quantify their work and their production, keep detailed reports and financial records to ensure that the funds are managed in a transparent manner, requires not only a shift in thinking, but also additional staff resources that smaller organizations do not necessarily possess. Eight organizations have mentioned that meeting these obligations requires the fulltime attention of a staff member. One executive director reported, “in the day to day, the level of accountability required is a bit of a headache, it takes up a lot of time in my workday. I spend almost as much time filling in the report as I do doing the activity.”²²

Research in fact has shown that complex management tasks associated with accountability measures impede efficiency within organizations (Gronbjerg 1991).

Another executive director noted that, “The government has put us in an untenable

²¹ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the region of Ottawa.

²² Based on an interview with a national voluntary organization in the field of children and family services.

position. It puts us in a role where we are volunteers for government... There is a disconnect within government in terms of understanding how the sector works. There's still a paternalistic approach.”²³

In order to explore how these tensions have played out at an organizational scale, I closely examined one example of a local organization that has been subjected to numerous accountability pressures: *La Maison des Parents d'Hochelaga-Maisonneuve*. How this particular organization dealt with the pressures was typical of that of other organizations in the sample.

7.4.3.1 Case study: La Maison des Parents d'Hochelaga-Maisonneuve

La Maison des Parents d'Hochelaga- Maisonneuve is an interesting case study as it developed numerous partnerships with both public and private organizations in the mid 1990s. As the executive director recalled, “They would come to us with projects. Money was rolling in. Of course we jumped on it but we quickly saw the constraints.”²⁴ For a small organization with three permanent staff, the accountability requirements were hard to meet. For one, the time line of the projects was often too short. Private funders, much like public agencies, were interested in short-term results to demonstrate value for

²³ Based on an interview with a national voluntary organization in the field of children and family services.

²⁴ Based on an interview with *La Maison des Parents d'Hochelaga-Maisonneuve*. Translated from, “Ils arriavaient avec des projets, ça rentrait l'argent. C'est sur qu'on sautait dessus mais on a vu les contraintes.”

money. Secondly, the organization was asked to develop performance indicators in areas which, as the executive director noted, were hard to quantify. Finally, they were asked to do more with less staff resources; having to fill out analytical templates, develop statistical indicators of their progress, and constantly report back to the funders. As the majority of the staff time was devoted to meeting the reporting requirements, the organization lost their capacity to define a global vision. Consequently, the staff members recalled not having time to examine how the projects were linked to the broader issues and dynamics. One noted, “People were overwhelmed by the reports, the papers. They were less conscious of the dangers.”²⁵

In effect, it changed what the organization had to attend to since the driving mindset of their operations was now focused on meeting the performance targets and catering to the funder, rather than catering to the needs of the community. The executive director described this slippery slope as follows, “We are so concerned with following a precise model of action, with an analytical grid to guide us, that we started to think we were incompetent because if we didn’t meet their targets, we would be viewed as a failure.”²⁶ He/she further noted, “It led us to focus on the easy cases in order to fit into the mould. It’s awful. It single handedly led to the massive exclusion of the harder cases.”²⁷

²⁵ Based on an interview with La Maison des Parents d’Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. Translated from, “Les gens sont débordés par les rapports, par les papiers et ils sont moins conscients aux dangers.”

²⁶ Based on an interview with La Maison des Parents d’Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. Translated from “On est tellement mindé avec un modèle précis à suivre et une grille à remplir qu’on commence à penser qu’on est incompétent. Ils verraient ça comme un échec.”

²⁷ Based on an interview with La Maison des Parents d’Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. Translated from, “Ça nous a emmené à nous concentrer sur les beaux cas pour rentrer dans les moules. C’est affreux, cela a développé massivement l’exclusion des cas plus

In addition, he/she noted that because the funded programmes were more and more targeted, there was no more organizational flexibility in terms of adapting to the needs of the clientele as they arose.

Faced with the increased mainstreaming of its clientele base, *La Maison des Parents d'Hochelaga-Maisonneuve* began to revise its relationship with funders. The executive director detailed their reflections as follows, "We came to understand that there were limits, and that we couldn't be everywhere. We also recognized that we had given significant power to the funders because they saw we didn't have coherence."²⁸ As a result, they refocused their activities by turning inwards towards their members, becoming more selective in the projects that they pursued. Maintaining their autonomy and a strong link to their base became one of their priorities. They now strongly believe that responsiveness to local needs keeps them vibrant and connected to the interests of their members. Therefore, rather than turning outwards towards the state and relying on them for project funding, they turned inwards and looked towards their membership for greater financial support and direction.

As this case illustrates, new accountability requirements can shift the internal balance of power towards the funders who have a greater say in the way that the organization manages its projects. In fact, research has demonstrated that the influence of the members on the organizational dynamic may decline as a result (Andrews and Edwards 2004). Perhaps more importantly, however, the case of *La Maison des Parents*

difficiles. En plus les programmes sont de plus en plus spécifiques. Tout le monde doit suivre le même cheminement. Il n'y a plus de flexibilité."

²⁸ Based on an interview with La Maison des Parents d'Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. Translated from, "On a compris qu'il y avait des limites. Qu'on ne pouvait être partout. On leur a donné de la force parce qu'ils ont vu qu'on avait pas de cohérence."

d'Hochelaga-Maisonneuve illustrates the danger of organizations adapting their services to cater to the cases that neatly fit the cookie-cutter mould in order to meet the stringent reporting requirements. Other organizations in the sample raised similar concerns. With respect to their service delivery function, three organizations reported similarly restricting their criteria. For example, one executive director stated he/she had to “refocus towards a more outcome based program needed to show concrete results.”²⁹ Whereas another recalled, “the growing expectations regarding reporting has meant that the scope of people you cater to tends to shrink and you tend to gravitate towards those that you know you can help in order to meet the targeted outcomes.”³⁰ While this shift in itself is significant, it is compounded by the fact this trend is specific to organizations dealing with marginalized populations to begin with (See also Hall and Reed 1998).

7.5 Organizational dilemmas: adapting or resisting?

Resorting to new sources of funding may impact an organization’s mission, goals and programs (Salamon 1989, Drucker 1990, Hodgkinson et al. 1993, 1996, Boris and Steuerle 1999, Froelich 1999). Of course, there are some positive aspects to the ability of organizations to diversify their funding sources. Many organizations interviewed view the diversification of their funding stream as a way to assert their independence from government, as well as forcing them to be innovative and develop new programs. They may be compelled, however, to expand in new areas outside their core mission in order to appeal to new partners who have interests different than their members. Catering to new

²⁹ Based on an interview with a national voluntary organization in the field of children and family services.

³⁰ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the region of Montreal.

actors such as these – with new interests and new goals – can have a distorting effect on organizations. Research has shown that organizations are often faced with meeting the requirements imposed by their funders, something that comes at the cost of adapting their original mission (Salamon 1989, Drucker 1990, Hodgkinson et al. 1993, 1996, Boris and Steuerle 1999, Froelich 1999, Phillips and Graham 2000). Phillips and Graham, for example, have demonstrated in the Canadian context that “competitive contracting has forced voluntary organizations both to specialize in order to compete better, and to diversify in order to enhance their chances of winning at least some contracts on which they bid” (Phillips and Graham 2000). This is what Smith and Lipsky have called the “dance of contract management” (Smith and Lipsky 1993, p. 127-146).

One of the most common responses mentioned by voluntary organizations in our study has been to expand the range of organizational activities offered to include new services. In fact, 18 of the 62 organizations (19%) expanded the services they offered and branched out in new areas in order to obtain funding. Among these, three expanded their clientele base and four mentioned specifically modifying their activities and programs in order to tailor them to the corporate demands. As one executive director said, “We also started to become creative and look for other funding sources shaping what we were doing to meet the needs of new funders.”³¹ Another noted that, “We had to have a program that really fit the culture of this community.”³²

Although for the majority of these organizations, adapting their programs to capture additional resources was viewed as a means to an end, to ensure they continue to

³¹ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the region of Ottawa.

³² Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the region of Montreal.

receive sufficient funds to sustain their core activities, many were still very critical of the effect it was having at an organizational scale. For example, one argued that “it is terribly problematic. You chase the issue of the day. It’s ineffective, stressful. It’s not the best use of money and I can go on and on.”³³ Another executive director emphasized some of the dangers of the chase for new sources of funding. He/she stated, “it can have an enormous distorting effect. We are turning into a donut where we have less money for our core and we need to broaden our activities to support our core activity....funders are pretty powerful... there are a lot of unpopular things that fall by the way side. It creates a division between the worthy and unworthy, the deserving and the undeserving...”³⁴

Obviously, autonomy was also a looming concern for many of these organizations. Maintaining their original mission while expanding in new areas to secure new sources of funding required a delicate balancing act between meeting their needs and those of their funders. As one executive director noted, “With so many pressures to adapt to a new environment, we end up not recognizing who we are anymore. We are at the mercy of departmental programs. We have a mission and it’s important that the government remains aware of that.”³⁵

In most cases, when it came to developing and executing programmes, funder preferences were the deciding factor. It meant that funders, both public and private, had significant weight in determining priorities for action. As Broadbent et al. have underscored, “The lack of stable funding often makes it hard for an organization to avoid

³³ Based on an interview with a national voluntary organization in the field of children and family services.

³⁴ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the region of Ottawa.

³⁵ Based on an interview with a national voluntary organization in the field of children and family services.

being diverted by chasing project money, attached to priorities determined by the funder rather than by the organization or its constituency, and to stay true to its mission with the ability to undertake long term and strategic planning” (Broadbent et al., 1999: 23).

Similar to the government, private funders may also shape the direction of change within voluntary organizations by identifying priority areas for funding and by funding particular types of projects over others. One executive director stated, that “funders are pretty powerful because of the ability to follow their whims... It creates the worthy recipient syndrome where I, the donor, determine whether you are a worthy recipient. It can be based on misperceptions and bias and there are a lot of unpopular things in society that need help but that may fall by the wayside i.e. family planning, planned parenthood is unpopular; warm and fuzzy sick kids is a good cause, it pulls at the heart strings, kids are blameless; yet juvenile delinquents aren’t popular.”³⁶

This shift towards the development of new projects has affected organizations at a structural scale as well. Out of these 18 organizations, 8 saw their staff increase substantially in order to meet the new demands. For example, the Canadian 4-H Council saw their staff members increase from 3 to 13 owing to the numerous partnerships they developed with local industry, horticulture societies and government departments. As a result of this increase in size, they had to develop a new governance model. But this has not occurred without some tremendous transformations in their mandate. As the executive director noted, they “developed new governance and delivery model. We constantly keep our eyes open for partnership, and schmooze more so than we had to in the past. We may have to change our core mandate and move towards more life skills

³⁶ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the region of Ottawa.

development, change the way we deliver program – on line.”³⁷ Another example, the Jewish Family Services of Ottawa saw its permanent staff increase by threefold over this period with permanent staff passing from 17 to 53. Such growth has not occurred without important organizational transformations.

For some of these organizations, this growth is a sign of prosperity and recognition. One executive director mentioned, “We’ve gotten a lot more funding in recognition for our work.”³⁸ For the smaller organizations, however, increasing the staff capacity was more difficult given the short term nature of the funding. As a result, three reported professional development needs and staff problems associated with a high turnover rate related directly to the increase in workload. Only one executive director reported being successful meeting the additional workload demands by contracting out themselves some of their services.

7.5.1 Changing Practices: Towards Professionalism?

As expected, the transformations to the funding regime precipitated organizational changes by imposing new demands and stretching capacity. With the recent funding cutbacks, organizations across the board were more vulnerable to funder demands from year to year. The financial environment facing voluntary organizations is complex and its impact cannot be appropriately captured by focusing solely on funding levels. In the case of government funding, the more targeted nature of project-based funding has meant that departments have been able to exert more influence in determining the ‘priorities’ for

³⁷ Based on an interview with a national voluntary organization in the field of children and family services.

³⁸ Based on an interview with a local voluntary organization in the field of children and family services from the region of Montreal.

action. In fact, the subtle shift involves both funding cuts in certain areas such as support for infrastructure and advocacy, but also new investments in other areas of research, data handling and human resource development.

With the extent of funding cutbacks subjected to voluntary organizations, partnership and collaborative initiatives may quickly run into operational difficulties. Early on, the Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector identified capacity as a crucial dimension of the relationship. The final report stated, “The major change the sector is now going through has created expanded demands for capacity. The extensive and sustained voluntary action that will be required to meet the new demands will not happen spontaneously. Those involved must be motivated, trained and rewarded. The maintenance and development of the infrastructure and capacity of the sector - in the form of financial resources, staff, knowledge, information, and understanding - is essential to promotion of voluntary action” (PAGVS 1999). The federal government was forced to recognize that many voluntary organizations being asked to take on more responsibility in service delivery and in the policy arena were facing organizational issues such as inadequate staffing and skills that hindered their capacity to meet the growing requirements associated with these programs.

As a result, the idea of “capacity building” is currently in vogue in government and voluntary sector circles. This discursive shift has opened the door to re-examining how voluntary organizations *ought* to operate in order to *better* contribute to policy making and to service delivery. Asking what it takes for a voluntary organization to develop *better practices* reveals a lot regarding effective routes for political and social action. Capacity building initiatives come with a particular vision of perceived needs,

desired outcomes, and preferred methods. They have led to the identification of new priorities for funding and a reorientation of existing resources towards specific projects which would involve the development of capacity and expertise by supporting training, transfer of skills, technology development, the development of management systems, and leadership skills to support voluntary organizations involvement in policy development and in service delivery. As a result, they confer legitimacy to certain practices over others.

With a rising insistence on shifting the emphasis on delivering outcomes and towards developing sound practices in areas of service delivery and policy making, these normative pressures shape in a very real way what organizations must attend to and how they do this.

These new trends affect the political, social, and organizational behaviour of voluntary organizations at a micro scale. One cannot underestimate the 'structuring' effects that this is having on political life and patterns of political representation (March and Olsen 1996). In fact, institutional theory has demonstrated the powerful effect of normative pressures on organizational structure (Meyer and Rowan 1977, DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Zucker 1987). This is reinforced by the growing legitimacy afforded to these practices. As I detailed in previous chapters, organizations who have transformed their organizational practices tend to be awarded greater public sector responsibilities and the funding to do so. As Jenkins notes, legitimacy and authority can also be considered non-material resources which affect how groups organize and strategize (Jenkins 1981, p. 117).

Both the dynamics at a macro and meso scale of action have played a role in shaping the content and form of ideas about what is a legitimate activity. They have redefined the nature of the relationship, the roles and responsibilities of each around service delivery and policy making, and continue to signal informal norms of practice across the sector. The consequences of these new approaches are significant and there are two key areas where we can identify how they are driving organizational change around human resources development and evidence based practices.

7.5.1.1 Human Resource Development

As services are increasingly delivered by voluntary organizations, governments have an interest in promoting practices and a governance model that best suits their bureaucratic model. With all the new imperatives created under governance, as I have discussed previously, the original skills expected of voluntary sector staff have been replaced by new managerial skills, comprising of trained and credentialed managers, researchers and policy analysts. Governments have identified the need for leadership, financial management, marketing management, organizational and human resource development, management information systems, and accountability systems.³⁹ The specialized knowledge of managers and researchers, and their importance in the process of governance, has meant that organizations that meet these skills are increasingly taking a pre-eminent place amongst the traditional actors in the policy making process. The model of behaviour on which it rests is one that emphasizes the importance of professional development.

³⁹ See Human Resources for the Voluntary Sector (HRVS) website. http://www.hrvs-rhsbc.ca/awareness/pg001_e.cfm

In fact, this trend towards professionalization has been reinforced by the growing attention paid to human resources management at a macro scale. Under the guise of the VSI, the federal government launched a number of other initiatives to identify and disseminate good practices, including a series of training sessions across the country and in federal departments in the area of human resources management using training material and implementation guides. The benchmarking and best practices promoted through the VSI web site encourage the development of particular organizational skills and leadership experience. Benchmarking, highlighting best practices within the sector compels organizations to model themselves on other ‘leading’ or ‘legitimate’ organizations, are perceived as successful. The rationale for these programs is to promote the dissemination of technical, managerial, administrative and professional skills that are deemed relevant across the sector. A web portal has been established through which organizations can share lessons and best practices.

These broad macro and meso trends have brought organizations to focus on organizational management and internal structures. They have placed enormous strain on organizational capacity by redefining the skills necessary to meet the new demands. Not only are organizations building new relationships, and developing new skills, the very rules of the game are being transformed in the process. They stretch capacity for they require organizations to adopt new practices, to develop new skills, to allocate their time and resources differently among existing tasks; they redefine what an ‘appropriate practice’ is. Organizational change involves profound internal reorganization of resources, of skills, of personnel, all of which shape the practice and optic of organizations. Among the interviews that we did, 18 of the 62 voluntary organizations

reported that they had capacity issues and that their professional development needs have increased. One executive director noted, “With all that is expected of me, I find the skills I have need to be upgraded.”⁴⁰ This poses a new set of challenges while reinforcing the informal and normative pressures that promote changes in practice. Already many local and provincial organizations have reported that they feel pressures from within the sector to follow, chapter and verse, the terms of engagement outlined in the Accord and the Codes of good conduct. What is not yet clear is how much resistance will emerge within the voluntary sector to attempts to internalize such a code of discipline.

7.5.1.2 Building capacity for policy

The capacity building rhetoric aims to strengthen the organizational capacity of organizations to carry out particular functions and in some cases new functions associated with new governance processes. While policy advice was traditionally the safeguard of public servants, as I discussed in Chapter Five, the federal government now needs the input of the voluntary sector in developing, designing, and implementing policy. Through analysis, consultation, networking, information sharing and strategic planning, it is widely held that voluntary organizations may better inform and influence policy.

The federal government’s rhetoric on capacity building translated into a range of capacity building programs with funding attached to voluntary sector involvement in policy initiatives. Through the creation of the Sectoral Involvement in Departmental Policy Development Program (SIDPD) and the Social Development Partnerships

⁴⁰ Based on an interview with a national voluntary organization in the field of children and family services.

Program, funding is available for projects in the voluntary sector that support departmental program objectives through research activities and evidence based practices (Laforest and Orsini 2004, Shields et al. 2003).⁴¹ The direction of the program is strictly determined by the needs of departments involved. As the evaluation of the SIDPD program revealed, “There is no indication from background documents for SIDPD or interviews of any consideration being given to understanding what the voluntary sector’s strategic needs might be, nor any indication of what the “policy gaps” might be for government” (Social Development Canada 2004b, p. 21). These programs nevertheless play a prominent role in driving organizational change across scales. They help to legitimate particular institutional forms and practices articulated around the importance of research and evidence based practices for policy making.

Embedded in these funding mechanisms are implicit assessments of what constitutes a legitimate activity, which organizations may undertake advocacy and which may not, who takes part, on what basis and in which capacity; encouraging some kinds of group formation and collective action, but not others. It is through these signifying practices that rules and norms of behaviour are challenged and possibly transformed. These struggles, although less visible and often latent, are primary concerns underlying and shaping the other more visible and manifest topics and issues under discussion. Therefore, by funding ‘evidence based advocacy’ rather than more direct and confrontational forms of advocacy, it directly affects the terms of access to policy making, the routes of political representation, the forms of political expression through

⁴¹ This shift is not unique to Canada, as a number of industrialized countries such as the UK, New Zealand and Australia have also recently embarked on initiatives to encourage evidence-based policy making in the voluntary sector (Solesbury 2001, Davies and MacDonald 1998, Oakley 1998)

which advocacy is done, and even more importantly, affects the legitimacy and credibility of the actors involved in the policy process.

Moreover, policy guidelines produced to help guide the behaviour of voluntary organizations involved in policy making also reinforce these norms. *Participating in Federal Public Policy: A Guide for the Voluntary Sector*, *Policy Toolkit for Public Involvement in Decision Making*, and *Commitment to Effective Consultations* are all documents illustrative of the broader institutional discourse framing common rules and practices, and mutual understandings of the parameters of collective action. In a way, this very process of codification occurring at a macro scale designates the knowledge most valuable in the field of policy making – research and analysis.

Organizational change also gets transmitted through individual departments, through a greater number of programs signalling these priorities, and through organizations that adopt these new practices. In fact, a number of the projects funded under SIDPD are identified as examples of ‘best practice’ in voluntary sector-government partnerships and are to be reported and shared with the voluntary sector and government departments in order to encourage similar action (Laforest and Orsini 2004). It creates new organizational and societal expectations regarding what is a legitimate practice in the policy field.

At a micro scale, patterns and practices of organizations involved in policy shift as they adapt to this new environment. By emphasizing the development of policy capacity, the federal government is in effect encouraging the development of particular forms of knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed for the construction of policy (Phillips 2001c). The new-found emphasis on evidence and knowledge dissemination has brought about a

number of significant changes in the sector by redefining the requisite skills set, changing the repertoires of political action and the basis on which stakes and claims are made. For example, Chapter Six illustrated how the new-found importance placed on research and evidence-based practices shifted the repertoires of political action away from traditional advocacy strategies. Driven by a boom in research contracts, request for proposals, and demands for consultant work, voluntary organizations have seen their research budgets expand. In fact, 15 of the 19 national organizations I surveyed reported a greater use of research activities in the past five years. As I illustrated in the previous chapter, voluntary sector organizations in the field of children and family services have been particularly adept at using longitudinal data and studies to gain credibility in policy making.

This move towards more evidence-based practices is generating some important long term organizational changes. For one, this has been accompanied by pressures to professionalize and internalize organizational practices. As participation in the policy process requires the ability to access, interpret, analyze and use information for making decisions, the skills and competencies needed for voluntary organizations to successfully influence the policy process are changing as well. To meet these demands, organizations must develop new analytical skills either through training or new hiring practices. They require a greater sophistication with understanding and applying information to ensure the quality of the inputs feeding into the policy process. The rationale is that organizations must be competent in the area in which policy advice is proffered. Our study observed a general professionalization of national and provincial organizations. Secondly, our study reveals an important shift in the type of individuals employed by national voluntary organizations. While traditionally the practice in five

voluntary organizations under study had been to hire social workers and activists with careers in grassroots organizations, increasingly they are hiring professional researchers who may not have those necessary links to community. Thirdly, the move towards evidence based practices has required organizations to develop stronger links with outside actors such as government departments and research institutes. These connections have become particularly strong, amplifying the general tendency towards bureaucratization and professionalization in the sector at large.

This has not come without a cost. Through the reconfiguration of the structure of representation, new relationships within and among voluntary organizations have surfaced. As national organizations become largely centralized and professionalized, a rift widens between them and local organizations that tend to be smaller and less resourced. To illustrate the profound transformation that has begun to occur in many organizations, we have opted to push further the analysis by undertaking a case study of the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) which has been a long standing advocate in the field of child welfare.

7.5.1.3 Case study: Canadian Council on Social Development

The CCSD has been a leading actor in social development and social services since 1920. Its mandate is to “develop and promote progressive social policies inspired by social justice, equality and the empowerment of individuals and communities through research, consultation, public education and advocacy.”⁴² The CCSD is an established organization, well reputed in the field of social policy. In the 1970s and early 1980s,

⁴² See <http://www.ccsd.ca>

CCSD received core funding from the federal government to sustain their operations. With no obligations attached to the funds, the organization believed its independence would not be undermined vis-à-vis government. Moreover, the security of core funding gave the organization great liberty to determine the issues it wished to tackle and the direction it wanted to pursue.

This funding allowed the CCSD to successfully affirm its position as an important advocate in the field of social policy through various interventions in policy debates. For example, it took some high profile stances related to the federal government and its budgets that allowed the organization to establish its independence. While it created tensions with the federal government, it also established the CCSD as a social critic and reinforced its advocacy role. Members of the board of governors shared the view that the organization needed to manage the two aspects of its work in relationship with government the sometimes came into conflict with each other.

In the late 1980s, CCSD came under increasing financial pressure arising from significant cuts in funding of national organizations and the federal government's relative closure to advocacy organizations. At the time, inflation was high and therefore a decrease in funding was very difficult for the organization to absorb, especially as the CCSD was saddled with significant debt. Partially owing to a number of annual deficits, it was in financial turmoil. As the federal government began to privilege project-based funding, the CCSD had to make significant choices regarding the future strategy of the organization. A member recalls that they had a board meeting specifically to discuss which direction the organization would pursue.⁴³ The options were twofold. The CCSD

⁴³ Based on an interview with a member of the Canadian Council on Social Development.

could opt for greater reliance on project funding, but it would be dependent on governmental priorities for direction; or it could maintain a clear commitment to its advocacy mission, knowing that this could undermine its chances at receiving project funding.

At the time, there were two schools of thought within the organization. Some members believed the organization should cut back on its operations and refocus its work on antipoverty and income-related issues, given the limited funding available. Others felt the organization should expand its operations by tackling social development issues in their broadest sense, and by getting involved in issues of human rights, self-help, and family violence. After a number of discussions, the board of directors agreed to define the organization as a space where different interests in social policy come together. It was a deliberate attempt to move away from negative connotations associated with “special interest groups” and emphasize the broad scope of the organizational activities. Shortly thereafter, they hired a consulting firm to assist in reformulating their mandate and establishing a strategic plan for the organization. This process led the organization to diversify its projects and work on many policy fronts.

While being careful to respect the original mandate of its members, CCSD became project driven. By opting for project-based funding, a greater proportion of which was now dedicated to developing research, CCSD gradually moved towards a stronger policy and research orientated strategy. As well, its publication branch expanded. This was viewed as an effective route that would enable CCSD to secure its

position as major social policy critic.⁴⁴ This did not occur without resistance, however. In 1994, the Quebec chapter, which had been opposed to following this route, decided to leave the organization in order to create a separate organization, the Conseil Québécois de Développement Social (CQDS). While part of this move was motivated by linguistic and cultural tensions, the reorientation of CCSD activities towards research was also an important variable in their decision. Quebec members wanted their strategy to be rooted in social action and felt the CCSD was no longer a vehicle through which this was possible.

Gradually this shift towards more research-based advocacy had a profound impact on the forms of political representation that the organization adopted. For one, it led to more 'professionalized' practices. Along with the release of their research reports, CCSD was increasingly called upon to make formal presentations before governmental officials and at conferences. Their growing recognition as valued knowledgeable producers opened up informal and formal channels to policy making. Not only did this decision to move towards more research-oriented activities have an impact on the routes through which they accessed the state, but it had long lasting organizational impacts as well. This meant the CCSD hired researchers and analysts instead of social workers, as was the traditional practice.

The experience of the Canadian Council of Social Development is indicative of a broader trend developing within the sector in the field of family and social services as organizations are moving away from more action-oriented advocacy towards research-based advocacy.

⁴⁴ Over this period, the percentage of revenues generated by research based funding passed from 46% in 1993 to 70% in 1998 (Juillet et al. 2001).

7.6 Levelling the policy making playing field

Greater access to information and research by a variety of actors has transformed the policy making playing field. The politics of policy making are different, and the skills required to influence policy are different. It is no longer a politics of power, where actors leverage their strength through numbers. It is a politics of numbers, where knowledge represents power. Governments are now encouraging the involvement of voluntary organizations based on their knowledge, skills and expertise, instead of on their experiential knowledge derived from the experience of their members on the ground. The former is achieved by requiring proficiency of personnel in certain policy subjects and by hiring staff with particular research interests who, in turn, further reinforces the move towards evidence based practice.

For those organizations with sufficient resources, conducting such research may not be a daunting challenge; for others, however, budgets do not permit the hiring of a researcher, nor do they allow for the contracting out of research. What is interesting is that these very changes at the organizational scale reinforce the ideological transformations occurring at the macro and meso scales of action. In effect, it is the large well established organizations that have undergone organizational change, which have subsequently become the identifiable actors, speaking in the 'name' of the sector. In my analysis, organizations with higher levels of organizational capacity had higher levels of adaptation to this new environment, unlike smaller organizations that found it difficult to participate and advocate in this new environment. As a result, these differential opportunities drive a wedge within the sector between 'elites' who enjoy privileged

access to policy makers and/or bureaucrats and rank and file members of these same organizations who may not. In fact, under this new model, it is those organizations which behave appropriately that receive rewards: credibility, legitimacy, privileged access to policy makers through formal and informal channels, and even funding. This need to turn attention upward has undermined horizontal loyalty and led to tensions across the sector.

What the government is encouraging, then, is openings or “windows of opportunity” for some organizations and their members while closing off opportunities to organizations who may not have the requisite expertise or access. While it has afforded privileged access to some, as I detailed in chapters Five and Six, it has provoked resentment among those who feel that these new elites are dominating the sector and receiving the lion’s share of funding and opportunities. This problem is becoming even more acute as local chapters are increasingly relying on their national representatives to advocate on their behalf because they no longer have the resources to manage both advocacy and services. In fact, 20 small and medium sized organizations reported that although they had more opportunities to participate in policy making, they had very little capacity to do so.

The policy making process is dynamic and it involves many social actors who participate in the definition and the very construction of policy problems. Policy is, in that sense, the product of contentious action and it draws from particular knowledge bases. When claims are increasingly articulated through research and evidence based practice, it ultimately has an impact on how policy problems are constructed and interests mediated.

Organizations involved in evidence-based practices have tended to become less political and rely increasingly on expertise and knowledge, rather than experiential knowledge on the ground. As a result, they are managed in a top-down fashion with few opportunities for member leverage from below, and the nature of their advocacy activities have moved increasingly away from more traditional forms of advocacy grounded in power struggles towards more evidence-based politics. Rather than simply supporting an issue or speaking in favour of a particular constituency, organizations are now called upon to provide policy advice, research, and to consult and mediate policy to the general public on behalf of governments. As a result, the repertoires of political action change as the advocacy strategies are being transformed.

I did not observe a diversification of practices and avenues for political action among voluntary organizations engaged in evidence-based practices. Rather, they are actually using fewer policy tools and fewer strategies to influence the policy process, investing most of their energy on research and evidence based advocacy. The example of the National Children's Alliance, in Chapter Six, illustrates that the sector's energies were channelled towards building a relationship with the federal government and working in collaboration. While the move towards evidence based policy making and monitoring has added new policy tools to the repertoire of action within the sector; other modes of action have been left aside such as advocacy and civic engagement. There is in fact no reason to expect that these be easily substitutable strategies. I found that as organizations moved towards evidence based practices, they underwent an organizational overhaul which led them to abandon former strategies grounded in mobilization and protest.

Many voluntary organizations in the study have opted to become involved in the mainstream of politics. This shift has been most pronounced at a macro scale as national organizations now choose to use cooperative rather than adversarial policy strategies and instruments to influence government. As we have seen in previous chapters, these organizations have often opted for the informal and formal institutionalized channels of political representation. They want to convey the sense that they are truly engaged and vested in the policy process. Whereas previously advocacy was reactive and responsive, aimed at acting upon the government, the ultimate agent of policy; it is now less political and rooted in policy analysis. National voluntary organizations suggested that to be at the table with government and involved in public policy development, they need to be 'objective' and advocate on the basis of 'evidence'. One executive director recalled that their advocacy strategy is now "based on developing positive working relationship with government, not sending confrontational messages. We work together despite the fact that we have had the cuts...since the early 1990s, we are more involved with policy formulation prior to this government priority was different... now it is more amenable to partner for policy formulation."⁴⁵ A major consequence has been that as organizations play an increased role in public policy and governance, it steers their activities towards a greater focus on public policy making and governmental priorities, away from traditional forms of advocacy.

Smaller organizations have, for their part, opted for a very different route to political representation. As a result, the organizational impact on small and medium sized organizations is less marked reflecting their particular coping mechanisms and

⁴⁵ Based on an interview with a national voluntary organization in the field of children and family services.

strategies adopted in the face of transformations in their political and economic environment. This resistance manifests itself through the inward turn that many small organizations have taken. In these organizations, there was a significant change at an organizational scale as they had withdrawn themselves from their network involvement, and consequently, were not subject to the informal discursive pressures.

For the most part, organizations at the local level, in both Ontario and Quebec seem to be insulated from the pressures and dynamics occurring at the meso and macro scales. For one, the shift in funding regime also created barriers for local actors who do not possess sufficient resources and capacity to invest in these practices; thereby excluding them from the process. Organizations seem less connected and aware of the broad shifts occurring at the meso and macro scales around the norms and expectations of practice. The discourse is one of survival, with organizations focusing on the day-to-day activities. Responsiveness to local needs keeps them vibrant and connected to the interests of their members and political opportunities created at the macro and meso scales, was not viewed as being important compared to the urgency of everyday issues. As a result, the dynamics of change did not permeate quite as easily at an organizational scale. This goes to the heart of the arguments put forward by social movement theorists that political opportunities first must be recognized as such before being seized. They need to be deemed important by those concerned in order to have a real effect (see for Della Porta and Diani 1999, Smith 1999). This created a rift between policy scales as local organizations began to distance themselves from their national and provincial umbrella organizations. This may have undermined the umbrella organizations'

relationship to their members, thereby undercutting their long-term capacity for involvement in policy.

As a result, this shift has caused small sized organizations to experience a greater level of atomization and political alienation, creating important long-term implications. Not only has it created a level of disconnection within organizations, it has made it more difficult for organizations to mobilize for social change. This has important implications for constituent involvement.

7.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined how voluntary organizations in the field of children and family services have responded, adapted and resisted on an organizational scale to the new imperatives of the process of governance. By steering organizations towards particular activities rather than others, funding programs and their requirements change what organizations have to attend to, which has a direct impact on their mission, programs and activities. Common threads emerge through different organizations' stories about how these tensions are dealt with. As I illustrated through organizational snapshots, they affect the nature and organizational structure which have long term impact on the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector.

The implications of these findings on our understanding of the role of voluntary organizations in governance are significant. New collaborative forms of policy design and development, supported by funding practices aimed specifically at strengthening the voluntary sector's capacity to contribute to policy, have enabled voluntary sector organizations to reposition themselves with respect to the state. As a result, the very

nature of advocacy has been redefined to encompass the greater extent of their role in the public policy process. The funding of policy-oriented services has created opportunities for voluntary sector organizations to build policy capacity, to acquire power and to enhance their role in the policy process.

This chapter demonstrated that just as the terrain of struggle has changed; so have the politics. The growing professionalization of politics, the relative decline in the power and legitimacy of advocacy groups, and the mainstreaming of large well-established organizations have all contributed to changing the locus of power. By emphasizing the specialized knowledge of the voluntary sector, and its importance to the process of governance; it has meant that the organizations more established and bureaucratized organizations have occupied the pre-eminent place in the policy process and have advocated for the sector as a whole. I have argued that not only does evidence based policy making privilege certain sector actors who have the requisite skills and knowledge to take part in policy dialogue; it has the potential to mainstream the sector and divest it of its potential to empower citizens and communities. This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that organizations are increasingly relying on data and evidence as a platform for their advocacy, rather than turning to their members in order to represent their interests. This shift has profound implications for democratic participation and citizen engagement. While it is true that actors occupy differing positions of relative power in the process of governance, local organizations have tended to remain alienated and isolated from these debates because of capacity issues. The growing dissonance between the reality of small locally based organizations and large national organizations in the process of governance is exposing the fault lines within the voluntary sector.

Chapter 8 Conclusions

My thesis began by reflecting on the rise the voluntary sector on the policy agenda in Canada and the significant ground gained by voluntary organizations that were in a state of crisis after major funding cutbacks of the early 1990s. In a short period, voluntary sector organizations worked collectively to redefine their relationship with the state and to reposition themselves in the governance relationship. As a result they have contributed to and shaped in a very real way the process of governance in Canada across a variety of scales. The goal of my thesis has been to examine the strategic efforts and struggles of voluntary organizations and analyze how they gained expression at different scales of action from the macro, in terms of broad state-sector relationships, down to the micro, in organizational dynamics. Governance theory has provided a comprehensive and contextual framework for analyzing these dynamics. Yet, by focusing on the significance of voluntary sector organizations as actors in the process of governance, this thesis has contributed to existing research on governance which to date has remained state-centred. In so doing, it provides an important case study for understanding how voluntary sector organizations have contributed to the broad purposeful redesign of their relationship with the state.

The data presented in this thesis illustrates the multiple ways in which policy is being opened up to voluntary sector organizations and the new forms of interaction that are emerging across scales. By drawing on the work of social movement theorists and urban geography to examine the embedded nature of political action across scales, this thesis has also contributed to our understanding of the new governance relations between

the state and the voluntary sector and the complexities of strategic action. This literature has enabled me to conceptualize and analyze the multiple sites of interaction between the state and voluntary sector organizations and their connectedness. The analysis has illustrated how the relationship building initiatives between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector that took place in the early 2000s have had an expression at a micro scale in the day to day relationships and in the organizational structures of voluntary organizations. It has provided a deeper understanding of some of the organizational transformations that have taken place within the sector and how these organizational dynamics can be articulated in a larger context. The analysis further attests that the new organizational structures and practices on the ground are reinforcing some of the trends and norms that are appearing at a macro scale.

8.1 Summary of the research

While the political opportunity structure had closed off to voluntary organizations in the early 1990s, major reforms enacted in the mid 1990s led to a critical rethinking of the role of government and of its relationship to society creating some new opportunities for action. Chapter Four detailed how, with the restructuring of the welfare state and the downsizing of state capacity in areas of policy and service delivery, collaboration across sectors became a reality and a necessity. The transformations that occurred in service delivery and policy making brought about important changes in relationships both within the federal government and across sectors. As a result, the federal government found

itself more amenable to the demands of the voluntary sector, particularly when these were couched in the language of collaboration, partnership and responsibility.

The prospects brought on by a shift in governance and the increasing reality of partnership and collaborative mechanisms launched interesting new dynamics within the voluntary sector which were discussed in Chapter Five. As organizations joined together to transform a political climate that was largely unfavourable to them in the early 1990s, and to redress power imbalances brought about by large cuts in funding and the delegitimization of the role played by interest groups in the policy process, the patterns of representation within the sector as a whole began to change.

Along with the struggles over identity, new actors, new ideas, and new interests emerged, gaining momentum and creating change at a time when the forms of access to the state and the articulation of interests were open for negotiation. New actors were empowered fostering new models for thinking about the link between the voluntary sector and government. Through the lobby work of the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR) in particular, voluntary sector organizations successfully were able to position themselves as relevant actors in the process of governance. By drawing on sympathetic contacts in high level positions, they were able to open lines of communication with the federal government and take advantage of the growing interest in partnership and collaborative governance. Voluntary sector organizations then made significant inroads which translated in a commitment from the federal government to working closely with the voluntary sector and culminated in 2001 with the launch of the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI), thereby institutionalizing dialogue between the state and the voluntary sector for a number of years.

The rhetoric of governance, emphasizing the importance of partnerships and collaborative governance, has been at its most powerful at a macro scale through the numerous documents produced by the VSI and the establishment of a framework agreement embodied in the Accord which set out principles to guide the relationship in the day-to-day. These initiatives contributed in a significant way to setting the policy context conditioning the relations between the federal government and the voluntary sector at all scales for it signalled new norms and practices that were then adopted throughout the sector. As Chapter Five revealed, through this collective process of lobbying on behalf of the 'sector', voluntary organizations ultimately affected the structure of representation exposing the fault lines between large well established organizations and small community based organizations. These lobbying efforts also created political opportunities which favoured a model of bureaucratized interaction between voluntary organisations and government characterized by a common language of negotiation and elite accommodation, further altering the repertoires of political action in favour of insider tactics.

This model of engagement further compounded existing divisions in new and profound ways. Chapter Six demonstrated how it has influenced the forms of interaction, and more specifically the patterns of political representation, in the field of children and family services. The analysis detailed how voluntary organizations in this policy field, inspired by the success that the VSR had obtained, revised their strategies and began adopting similar tactics and privileging institutionalized routes to political representation. In order to gain access and legitimacy, voluntary organizations favoured new discourses and practices grounded in research and analysis and shied away from more

confrontational tactics. Just like at the macro scale, these tactics proved successful as voluntary organizations met more often with political officials and came to exert a certain level of influence in policy discussions around the National Children's Agenda.

The transformations in practices and patterns of representation discussed in Chapter Five and Six were not without consequence, however. The analysis in Chapter Seven focused on the organizational impact of the strategies that were pursued at a macro and meso scale. Moreover, it suggested that, while organizations may be familiar with multiple repertoires of political action, these are not easily interchangeable as they draw on different alliances, skills, resources and organizational infrastructure. The data illustrated that by investing more energy in the development of repertoires of political action grounded in research and analysis and by privileging insider tactics, voluntary organizations had to develop new skills, reorganize the way they allocated resources to various tasks, and rethink their advocacy practices. The profound transformations in organizational structure manifested themselves in the professionalization of organizations, in human resource management, in the hiring practices and in some cases were reflected in changes to the overall mandate of the organization.

More importantly, however, Chapter Seven, revealed how organizational change tended to be circumscribed to large well established voluntary organizations that possessed significant resources to begin with. In fact, the data suggested that organizations with higher levels of organizational capacity had higher levels of adaptation to the new governance environment and where those that were able to transform their organizational structure in order to take seize political opportunities. This meant that organizations, both large and small, faced very differential political

opportunity structures. In this sense, small sized organizations were much more successful in resisting the pressures for change at a macro and meso scale

These dynamics at a micro scale further reinforced the shift in structure of representation at a macro and meso scale. By changing the instruments and skills of organizations at a micro scale, it has provided new avenues for engagement in policy, but has also impacted on organizations' ability to use avenues grounded in advocacy. Furthermore, the privileging certain patterns of representation over others, the growing professionalization of organizations, the relative decline in the power and legitimacy of advocacy groups, and the mainstreaming of large well-established organizations have all contributed to changing the locus of power within the voluntary sector. The resulting paradox was that as national organizations became successful in making inroads for the sector, they also further breached a level of disconnect between the preoccupations of large organizations and small organizations.

8.2 Contributions of the research

The contributions of this thesis are both theoretical and empirical. On a theoretical level, this thesis attempted to bridge two largely separate bodies of literature which are quite relevant to voluntary sector research: governance and social movements. My research illustrates how combining both bodies of literature provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding the strategizing and mobilization of voluntary sector organizations in Canada since the 1990s. Surprisingly, few attempts have been made to incorporate research on the voluntary sector and social movements into a governance framework. Nevertheless, this criticism is being addressed by some

voluntary sector scholars (Taylor 2003, White 2004, Phillips 2001), and governance theory can profit from renewed focus on the political struggles which drive the process of governance. In this sense, it contributes to a growing body of work by offering a comprehensive analysis of the interaction between the state and the voluntary sector in Canada as well as providing a way to theorize this relationship.

By bringing insights from the scaling literature, this thesis has also illustrated how governance has created new relations between the state and voluntary sector organizations on a variety of spatial scales. As the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector in Canada is one of complex interdependencies and dynamics, it is important to acknowledge that voluntary organizations may be simultaneously involved in politics through multiple routes operating at various scales. Recognizing the embedded nature of these processes is critical to understanding the various elements factoring into organizational strategizing. This thesis demonstrates the richness of combining macro and meso scale dynamics into a broad multi-scalar framework.

This research also contributes to our understanding of these processes by providing empirical material and case studies which provide narratives of how voluntary organizations engage in the process of governance at a variety of scales. The results of the study presents a wealth of qualitative data that adds to the growing body of research on the voluntary sector in Canada and gives substance to some of the quantitative data that has emerged on the sector that has emerged over the past couple of years (NSNVO 2004, Scott 2003, McMullen and Schellenberg 2002, 2003, Day and Devlin 1997, Sharpe 1994).

Finally, because this thesis focuses on the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector under governance, it has direct implications for the study of public policy which are relevant to both practitioners and researchers. For practitioners, it sheds light on some of the complex tradeoffs involved in partnerships and collaborative governance. While we have significant theoretical and anecdotal research the tensions associated with these forms of collaborative arrangements, still more work needs to be done so that we understand their real impact on organizational practices.

With growing interest on the part of policy makers, researchers and practitioners, towards these types of partnerships, this research draws attention to the pressures, challenges and benefits of these new forms of governance on the practice of voluntary organizations in Canada. Given that governments in many industrialized countries have also increasingly moved towards develop polity and deliver services through collaboration and coordination between the public, private and voluntary sectors (Taylor 2003, Larner and Craig 2002, White 2004, Phillips 2002), the trends identified in this thesis may be of relevance for policy makers, researchers and practitioners from these countries who are also trying to grapple with the transformations in state-society relationships underway. These new forms of governance could make an enormous difference on the way policies are developed and implemented, as well as to the way programs are delivered. The implications for public policy are only just beginning to be examined more systematically. The size and scope of the voluntary sector, and the enormous diversity within it, make it important to pay attention to the differential way governance processes are affecting both policy and practice. Many small sized organizations are unable to meet the demands imposed by new forms of governance,

while maintaining their focus on their mandate, simply because their resources limit their capacity to do so. If governments are to successfully develop collaborative partnerships, they need to be cognizant of the implications that these arrangements have on the ground, within communities.

8.3 Limitations of the research

That being said, it is also important to acknowledge some of the limitations of this research. For one, the data gathered in the study reflects dynamics within one particular policy field, that of children and family services, and from a small number of organizations. For this reason, results cannot be generalized across policy fields. It is important to remember that context matters and that within policy fields, historical ties between governmental agencies and voluntary organizations, as well as repertoires of political action, vary.

Moreover, because I relied on voluntary organizations to map out the relationships within the voluntary sector at various scales, the final picture presented in this thesis is one of insiders. While it has enabled me to identify the lines of inclusion/exclusion and gain insight on the shifting structure of representation, I have learned very little on the voluntary organizations that remain at the margins of governance. In future research, it would be interesting to focus the lens on these organizations, especially because many of the organizations that have been marginalized in the period I have studied, such as women's groups or anti-poverty groups, are organizations that played a significant role on the policy stage in the 1980s (Pal 1993, Ng 1986, Phillips and Jenson 1996, McKeen 2003). This would provide an interesting complementary analysis.

8.4 What challenges and opportunities lie ahead?

Since the mid 1990s, voluntary sector organizations have gained increasing prominence in the policy discourse as effective and legitimate partners in an increasingly complex, fragmented and multi-layered policy environment. There are no signs that this trend is abating. Quite the opposite, with growing recognition in policy circles that place matters in shaping the outcomes of policy, the vital role of voluntary sector organizations in social and economic development will become more important as governments seek to further the development and use of local knowledge in policymaking and community building. Looking to the future, then, both practitioners and policy makers need to keep in mind some of the questions put forward in this analysis: What challenges and opportunities lie ahead? To what extent can these new connections across sectors change the nature of power, politics and governance from a micro to a macro scale? What are the opportunities for new thinking and action, and how can we take advantage of them without altering the very nature of the voluntary sector? As we move towards more collaborative governance, we cannot afford to lose sight of these questions.

Appendix A: Interview protocol

Questionnaire

Name:

Organization:

Date:

1. How long has the organization existed?
 - a) If it is recent, how did the organization come about?
 - b) Did other organizations collaborate to help consolidate the organization? If so, which organizations?
 - c) How did they contribute (financially, logistically)? What relationship does the organization now have with them? Has that relationship evolved?
 - d) Did the government contribute financially or otherwise to help the organization?

2. When did you first become involved with this organization? What are your tasks within the organization?

3. What kind of organization was it when you were first involved? How has the organization evolved?

4. What is the mandate of the organization?
 - a) How many members does your organization have?
 - b) How many people does the organization employ?
 - c) What is your annual budget (approximately)?
 - d) What percentage of your revenue comes from:

core funding	_____
project-based funding	_____
other	_____

Has that percentage changed over the last few years? If so, how?

 - e) What proportion of your resources comes from:

Governmental funding : federal, provincial, municipal, regional	_____
User fees	_____

United Way	_____
Foundations	_____
Donations	_____
Private sector	_____
Individuals	_____
Members	_____
Commercial revenue (sales, products)	_____
Fund raising	_____
Others specify	_____

Has that proportion changed over the last few years? If so, how?

5. Does your organization provide services? What services does the organization offer?

a) How are your services paid for? For example, do you charge user fees? Do the federal or provincial governments subsidize your services?

b) By offering such services, do you work in collaboration with other voluntary organizations, private sector organizations or the government? If so, how would you describe that relationship?

c) Has the nature of the services you offer or the way you deliver services changed over the last few years? If so how? To what factors would you attribute those changes?

6. Does the organization play an advocacy role? How would you describe that advocacy role?

a) Given that some of your funding is provided by the government, do you sometimes find it difficult to play that advocacy role? If so, how? OR Why/why not?

b) Has the nature of your advocacy role changed over the last few years? How would you describe these changes?

7. In your daily activities, do you have any contact with other organizations? If so, which? What is the frequency of your contacts?

a) Is your organization a member of another umbrella organization or coalition? If so, which? What is the nature of your relationship with that organization?

8. Has the environment (socio-economic, and/or political) in which you operate changed over the last few years? If so, to what would you attribute those changes?

- a) How would you describe your relationship with the government or governmental departments? Has that relationship changed over time?
- b) How has your organization adapted to these changes within the conditions of your practice? For example, do you work more or less with other voluntary organizations, with government, or private sector organizations?
- c) Has the structure or administration of the organization changed over the last few years? If so, how?

9. Over the last few years, the federal government has been emphasizing greater collaboration with the voluntary sector, and it has launched a number of consultations and roundtables with the voluntary sector on this subject. Did you participate in any of these consultations? How would you describe your participation? What impact have these consultations had on your organization, on your work?

10. The voluntary sector has also organized a number of consultations within the sector in order to discuss its relationship with the government over the past few years. Did you participate in any of these consultations? How would you describe your participation? What impact have these consultations had on your organization, on your work?

11. We've heard over the last few years that the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector has evolved in a significant way. Have you observed this? If so, according to you, how has this relationship changed?

- a) The federal government has mentioned the importance of having the voluntary sector play a greater role in partnership with the state. Have you seen a new relationship between the two emerging? If so, how would you describe that relationship? What impact do you think this could have on your organization?

- b) There has also been a lot of talk regarding accountability of organizations. Have discussions on accountability led to any changes within your organization? What impact do you think this could have on your organization?

12. How would you describe the links among voluntary organizations in the family social services sector? Do you collaborate with other voluntary organizations? If so, how does this translate into your current activities?

13. Are there any last comments you would like to add that could help us better understand the relationship between the government and the voluntary sector?

14. Do you have any suggestions of other people that I could interview for this research project?

Appendix B: Cover Letter

Dear ...,

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am a doctoral candidate in Public Policy in the School of Public Administration at Carleton University. The reason that I am contacting you is that I am currently preparing my Ph.D. thesis on the impact of funding cutbacks on voluntary sector organizations under the supervision of Dr. Susan Phillips. The goal of my research is to examine the impact of the changes in funding policy of the federal and provincial governments on the structure of representation of the voluntary sector organizations, on their choice of strategies, their organizational structure as well as their relationship with other actors and to provide a detailed history of the voluntary organizations, which focuses on how they have managed their advocacy role, service provision role as well as other roles they may play.

To this end, I am interested in getting a sense of how your organization has responded to the changes within the environment (socio-economic, and/or political) in which you operate. I am interested in questions such as: How have voluntary sector organizations adapted to the changes within the conditions of their practice? Has the structure or administration of the organization changed over the last few years? Have discussions on accountability led to any changes within your organization? In short, I think that this is a good opportunity to share the experience of voluntary sector organizations with others.

In this context, I would like to conduct an interview with you of about 45 minutes in length at a time that is convenient for you. Any information that you give me would be treated in a confidential and anonymous manner. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me or call me. Could you please get back to me indicating whether you would be willing to be interviewed for this study and, if so, indicate some times that would be convenient for you. Sincerely,

Rachel Laforest

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