

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & POLICY INFLUENCE  
IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

By

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Public Policy & Administration, York University 2004

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## **ABSTRACT**

The public involvement process has attracted a great deal of interest as a means of including the public in important decisions and providing innovative solutions to challenging issues. However, there has not been a sufficient amount of inquiry into the influence public involvement actually has on policy outcomes. This research project addresses this issue by examining four public involvement cases in British Columbia to assess what forms of public involvement are most influential. The evidence in the cases reveal that the design of the process as well as the stage that public involvement occurs in the policy cycle are important variables that result in policy influence. The findings indicate that public involvement is a useful policy instrument that for designing policy. Policymakers should consider using this method when public input is necessary for policy alteration.

**Keywords:** Public policy, public involvement, stakeholder consultation, Canadian politics, British Columbia politics

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Public involvement in the policy process has been a relatively new and interesting development in the study of governments. As a result, the issue has attracted much academic inquiry. However, there are some crucial aspects of this process, which have not received enough attention. Mainly, the influence public involvement actually has on policy. This is the very issue this research project seeks to investigate; with sole focus on how influential, the public consultation process was in four cases in the Canadian province of British Columbia (BC). The thesis of the research project is that public involvement can be influential if the management of the process is flexible and if involvement occurs in the formulation stage of the policy cycle.

The evidence in the four cases supported the arguments made in the thesis. The management of the process proved to be a significant variable in terms of influencing policy. The evidence also demonstrated that public involvement must occur in the formulation stage of the policy cycle before the finalization of the policy in order to gain influence on the outcome. The cases also demonstrated that public involvement has the potential to be an influential and useful policy instrument if used effectively and in the correct circumstances.

### **Why examine the influence of public involvement?**

There are several important reasons for deciding to research the influence public involvement has on the policy process. First, it seems that there is a need for additional

research in studying the influence of public involvement as this subject has lacked detailed examination. To be sure, researchers have paid close attention to many aspects of public involvement such as its history, theoretical framework, and organizational structure (Hecl 1978, Pierre 1998, Sanderson 2002). While these have all been useful contributions to the literature, it seems that significant shortages on how public involvement can actually influence policy remain. This issue deserves more attention due to its important role in the policy process and underscores a primary motivation for studying this topic.

Secondly, understanding the policy influence of public involvement is important to understand in light of its widespread usage in many jurisdictions. Public involvement has been widely used throughout Western Europe, the United States, and Australia (Dion 1979, Whiteman 1985, Boxelaar, Paine, & Beilin 2006). Canada has also been a country that has increasingly integrated public involvement into its policy development process at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. There are many notable examples in BC alone. Land use management for example, has integrated public involvement extensively into the policy process and managed to play a significant role in resolving some of the grievances surrounding the polarizing issue on how to develop land use plans for BC's rainforests (Halseth & Booth 2003, Hamilton 2006). The British Columbia Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform is another notable example since the randomly selected group of citizens was able to deliberate and propose a referendum question on whether to change BC's electoral system to a single transferable vote model (Citizens' Assembly: Final Report 2004).

Beyond these two major exercises, public involvement is widely in use in almost every policy field in areas such as offshore oil (Carman 2005), sales tax reform (Schreck 2005), and rapid transit (Dobbin 2005). If anything, the main critique is that the BC government should engage in more consultation (Deveau 2005). Despite this frequent complaint, the Government of BC alone engaged in approximately 300 consultation cases in 1995-2005.<sup>1</sup> The literature as demonstrated so far, is rather extensive on the public consultation process. However, the problem remains that the influence of public involvement outcomes and conduct of policy processes is going unexamined far too often. This is a particular area of concern in BC.

Finally, the third reason for investigating this topic is the large amount of interest and demand in adapting this policy instrument to current political concerns. Most notably, there have been calls by many academics to increase the usage of public involvement. Some organizations such as Canadian Policy Research Networks have promoted this policy instrument as a means to reduce the democratic deficit and create innovative policies (McIntosh & Torgerson 2005). Such calls for increased public involvement certainly merit consideration. However, understanding the outcomes of actual cases is also important. More examination is certainly needed to assess whether increased public involvement is truly a goal governments should consider pursuing.

Judging from a lack of focus on this particular issue in the literature, the frequent usage of public involvement in policy development, and the extensive support for more public involvement, there is certainly a great deal of justification in examining the

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<sup>1</sup> The Government of BC's news release archives can be accessed here: <http://www.news.gov.bc.ca/archive/>. A simple search with the key words 'public consultation' yielded quite a significant portion of the 300 cases. Though with some of the cases, knowledge of their existence was already determined due to other secondary literature.

influence of this policy instrument. The impact of this policy process needs further examination. This research project is attempting to investigate this topic to try to provide further insight in the qualities of public involvement by examining how much influence such methods actually generate.

## **Methodological framework for the study**

Since this research project examines a small number of cases, the small-n research design is the methodological approach selected to test these cases for influence and understand how it is possible to achieve policy influence. In order to understand what public involvement is, it is appropriate to provide a definition of this subject before further discussing how to investigate this issue. According to the Organization for Economic Co-Ordination and Development, there are three types of public involvement:

In *public communication*, information is disseminated from the government to the public. The flow of information is unidirectional and there is no authentic public involvement since the government does not seek to get feedback or public input in the decision-making process (Gauvin 2006: 10).

In *public consultation*, the government asks for public input on a specific policy issue. Prior to the public consultation, the government usually provides information to the public. However, the flow of information is mainly one-way during the consultation, from the public to the government. Although some may argue that it is a limited two-way relationship since the government provides information beforehand and then seeks feedback, there is no formal dialogue or interaction between the government and the public. Public consultation is mainly used to elicit the "raw" opinions of the public (Gauvin 2006: 10).

In *public participation*, the flow of information and interactions is bi-directional, i.e. information is exchanged between members of the public and the government. There is some degree of dialogue and deliberation in the process that takes place (usually in a group setting), which may involve representatives of both parties in different proportions (depending on the public participation method). The act of dialogue and deliberation

helps to transform the raw opinions of both parties into informed and enlightened judgments (Gauvin 2006: 10).

Despite the lack of detailed focus on this issue in the literature, there has been some research completed in the area of measuring the policy influence of public involvement. In particular, Edelenbos & Klijn have done some insightful work on how certain types of public involvement can lead to policy influence (Edelenbos & Klijn 2006). As a result, their work has helped to guide the methodological framework for this research project along with several others (Montpetit 2003, Scharpf 1997, Boxelaar, Paine, & Beilin 2006).

There are three variables used in this study to measure influence and assess what key elements of the public involvement process generate policy influence. First, the measurement of policy influence as the dependent variable will undergo analysis in each case. A public involvement process is influential if it meets three measures: actors are satisfied in the outcome, the process was enriching as actors directly contributed to the outcome, and ideas discussed during consultations managed to change the original proposal or design the actual policy. If these outcomes occur, it is clear that public involvement in the case under examination is influencing policy. Secondly, the primary causes of policy influence in these cases will undergo analysis through two independent variables: the formalization and flexibility of the public involvement process as well as the policy cycle stage in which the case occurs. The measuring of the dependent and independent variables will serve to assess policy influence and determine if particular 'settings' of these variables correlate to cases in which public involvement lead to policy influence.

Four cases of public involvement in BC will use these variables to gain inferences about policy influence. The four cases are the Commission on Resources and Environment (CORE), the Land and Resources Management Plan (LRMP) for the Great Bear Rainforest, Sea-to-Sky Highway Eagleridge Bluffs highway expansion, and the Jumbo Glacier Ski Resort proposal. Each case uniquely represents a particular relationship between the independent and dependent variables in order to validate whether the hypothesis is valid. Although, the sources of data will come from secondary literature it is important to note that the proper way to identify the outcomes of the variables in this study would be to use surveys and interviews with actors who participated directly in these cases. However, given the time and resource constraints for a project of this undertaking, sources such as newspapers and books would have to suffice in terms of data collecting. The findings of this project are to be indicative and not definitive.

### **Plan of the book**

The remaining chapters in this book will build on the overall introduction provided in the previous pages. Chapter 2 will offer a detailed discussion about the methodology used in the study. Meanwhile, Chapter 3 will then subsequently apply the methodological framework to the four cases in BC and provide a detailed discussion on the evidence collected. Meanwhile, the final chapter will offer a comprehensive conclusion of the research findings and offer some possible future areas of research to explore in this field of study. This structure utilizes a framework that can successfully examine the questions of this research project and provide clear findings that can judge the validity of the thesis at hand.

## **CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the design and methodology of the research project. In order to measure the policy influence of public involvement and explore the causes of influence, two hypotheses will seek to test the relationship of the independent and dependent variables:

**H1: Flexible public involvement processes result in more policy influence than rigid processes.**

**H2: Public involvement that occurs in the formulation stage of the policy cycle generates more policy influence than public involvement that occurs in the post-formulation stage.**

According to these hypotheses, public involvement that occurs in the formulation stage of the policy cycle with flexible processes is likely to be the most influential outcome in policy development. Meanwhile, involvement that only contains one of the positive hypothesis outcomes will have less policy influence than the first model. Finally, involvement that occurs in the post-formulation stage and has a rigid process will generate the least amount of influence in comparison to the other models. Table 1 visually demonstrates the different potential outcomes.



**Table 1: Levels of influence generated from variable relationships**

Policy cycle stage	Flexible Process	Rigid process
Formulation	Most influential (optimal outcome)	Less influential (sub-optimal outcome)
Post-formulation	Less influential (poor outcome)	Least influential (worst outcome)

This thesis is based on some of the similar work other scholars have done in this field as the subsequent section will demonstrate (Edelenbos & Klijn: 2005, Scharpf 1997). Confirming this thesis is important as it will help to prove that certain designs and timing of public involvement will lead to certain level of influences. The rest of this chapter discusses how the research question and thesis specifically tie into the literature on the subject as well as the variables and research methods used to test the thesis.

### **Integrating the research project with the literature**

Ensuring that the research question and hypotheses fits with the literature is an important first step in setting up the design of the research. By doing this, it is possible to see how others have approached similar inquiries and helps to provide guidance in answering the particular research questions posed. The literature offers plenty of evidence of public involvement that has managed to influence policy as well as some examples that did not. First, there is the case of watershed management in California and Washington where consensus-seeking partnerships at the local level between stakeholders had a significant amount of influence in terms of policy (Leach, et al 2002). In the study, 93% used a consensus-based process for all or most decisions and managed to be successful in addressing both controversial and uncontroversial issues in the policy

area of watershed management (Leach, et al 2002). Another notable example of consultations gaining policy influence is in European countries such as Denmark. There, the corporatist tradition of holding civic assemblies that represent economic, industrial, agrarian, and professional groups has led to a significant amount of policy influence from consultations (Pierre 1998: 153). In particular, a great deal of citizen participation takes place at the local level in pre-policy stages playing a well-established role in developing policy (Pierre 1998: 153). As mentioned previously, the BC Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform proved to be influential by reaching a verdict and presenting a referendum question on electoral reform to the province (BC Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform 2004). Clearly, these cases demonstrate how public involvement is an effective use of public policy in terms of policy design and decision-making.

Meanwhile, there are also a number of cases where public involvement did not contribute a significant amount of policy influence. There was a specific example of this with a consultation that took place from 1982-1992 regarding the spread of contaminants from the Uniroyal Chemical Ltd site in Elmira, Ontario. Two advisory committees made recommendations to the Ministry of Environment that conflicted with the advice of its own officials ensuring that the consultations had virtually no influence on the final policy outcome (Baetz & Tanguay 1998). The Canadian Government's Rural Dialogue initiative was another example as consultations held to try to approach economic renewal issues in rural Canada had very little influence. Although useful projects would start up, the involvement of participants in rural policy was very limited (Patten 2001: 233). One final notable example is the Canadian government assisted reproductive policy consultations held from 1993-2001. Before consultations took place Health Canada

decided that they “were not interested in hearing ideas that would challenge their own” and only sought to gain legitimacy from stakeholders in discussion instead of actually seeking policy advice (Montpetit 2003). This approach ensured that the consultations would have no influence whatsoever before the discussions occurred.

In short, the influence of public involvement on public policy is often quite variable as there are many instances in the literature where involvement has either generated significant influence or none at all. In some cases, public involvement even strengthened policy outcomes, while in other cases it seemed as if it would have been better not to engage in consultations. This then begs the question, what can lead to public involvement actually influencing policy?

The literature suggests that the design of the public involvement process is essential to determining whether influence occurs. Boxelaar, Paine, and Beilin, for example, concluded in a study on Australian agricultural management that a constructivist design with flexibility increases the likelihood of achieving influence more significantly than a positivist approach (Boxelaar etc 2006: 113). In a constructivist approach, the consultation process is much more flexible and allows for more collaboration and deliberation between each actor involved in the process. Whereas the positivist approach ensures that “government remains the owner and driver of the development process” and sets all of the parameters (Boxelaar etc 2006: 121). In other words, the more rigid and controlling the design of the process is, the more likely it is that public involvement participants will engage in less policy collaboration. The process, then, has to yield some flexibility in order for the policy itself to be changed to correct poorly designed processes from reaching unsuccessful outcomes (Halseth &

Booth 2003: 437). Some of the previous examples mentioned help to demonstrate how much process design plays a role in the outcome. The Rural Dialogue Initiative was typical of a rigid process with little room for collaboration while the watershed management consultations were constructivist and flexible approach. This shows that the design of public involvement strongly determines what is accomplished.

Another important observation in terms of public involvement and policy influence is the government's own intended purpose towards such engagements. In a case study on reproductive technology in Canada, Eric Montpetit suggested that governments seek either input-orientated legitimacy or output-orientated legitimacy (Montpetit 2003: 95). This was a concept originally based on the work Fritz Scharpf contributed in a book on actor-centred policy research (Scharpf 1997: 131). If governments are seeking input, then it is possible that consultations can be influential since the government is undecided about a final policy direction and are interested in hearing what stakeholders have to say about the issue. However, if governments are seeking output-orientated legitimacy, this indicates that the government has already made a strong decision of what the final policy will be. In such instances, public consultations only serve to indicate what direction the government is heading and allow for discussion about the implications of the policy. In the end, this leaves little room for influence as the consultations only serve to build legitimacy for previously made decisions.

Determining whether governments seek input or output orientated legitimacy weighs heavily on the probability that public involvement will yield policy influence. Once again, some of the previous six examples nicely provide examples on this instance, with Montpetit's work being one of them. In the examples of influence, it was quite clear that

governments left much of the work up to the actors to develop some of the policy through collaboration while in the other cases it was clear that the government already had a strong intention to follow a particular policy direction.

The timing of public involvement in the policy cycle is also an important component of whether policy influence occurs. The policy cycle is the "life" of how a policy is created and ended and contains five stages: agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation, or policy evaluation stage (Barkenbus 1998: 2). Leach notes that different consultation approaches are most appropriate at certain stages; such as public meetings in the planning stage while negotiated rule takes place in the implementation portion (Leach et al. 2002: 647). The earlier the consultations take place in the policy cycle, the more likely it is that the process will be influential and linked to input legitimacy. This also implies that public involvement that takes place later in the policy cycle, is output orientated and thus has a decreased likelihood of influencing policy. This is a reasonable theory, as governments may be undecided about a policy direction early in the process as different policy options are still under examination. It would be more appropriate to gain advice at this stage in the policy cycle than later when governments have fully examined all of the options and have decided on a direction to take. Determining when public involvement takes place in the policy cycle is then quite important for indicating potential policy influence.

Judging from the literature, it can be determined that public involvement can have the ability to influence policy. If a public involvement process managed to change the original proposal or design the actual policy, it is clear that influence has taken place. Furthermore, the literature suggests that influential consultations also contain key design

characteristics as “process management emerges as the most important condition for good and satisfactory outcomes. There is a high correlation...between good process management and good outcomes” (Edelenbos & Klijn 2005: 19). With this in mind, it can be determined that certain characteristics determine whether public involvement achieves influence. The next section will detail how the variables will assess the validity of this research project’s hypothesis.

### **Variable selection and measurement criteria**

This section will explain the six key measures used to test the theory that process design and the policy cycle play a direct role in the policy influence of public involvement. Put succinctly, these measures are a result of three variables: policy influence, process design, and the policy cycle. The design of the measures will be heavily based on the article “Managing Stakeholder Involvement in Decision Making: A Comparative Analysis of Six Interactive Processes in the Netherlands” (Edelenbos & Klijn 2005: 8). The article assessed the relationship between policy influence and process design in six public consultation cases.

The conclusions viewed process design as the most significant causal agent of a successful and influential consultation, while stakeholder involvement and participation of politicians proved to be less significant (Edelenbos & Klijn 2005: 19-20). Since process design proved to be such an important variable in the study, it would prove highly efficient to examine this relationship instead of replicating less significant aspects of their work. This research project will then be able to assess whether Edelenbos and Klijn's findings in the Netherlands at the municipal level are similar in the Canadian context at the provincial level. This article, along others that identified the possible

causes of influence will be instrumental in constructing the methodology for this research project.

The first variable that is important to conceptualize is the dependent variable, which measures whether the cases under study resulted in policy influence. In Edelenbos and Klijn's piece, the outcomes of cases and the influence of the ideas in the final policy was a key component (Edelenbos & Klijn 2005: 6). Determining whether the consultations managed to influence policy and actually contributed to the policy process is also critical in this case in order to test whether there is a correlation between influence and other variables. Policy influence will undergo measurement by assessing whether the policy underwent creation entirely because of the consultation process, if consultations altered the policy, or if consultations had no influence whatsoever.

Though understanding the outcomes of the consultations is important, Edelenbos and Klijn also thought it was essential to recognize the multi-actor nature of consultations by assessing actor contentment and enrichment (Edelenbos and Klijn 2005: 8):

**Actor contentment:** This criterion concerns whether the parties involved were content with the results of the processes. The advantage is that it involves a weighing of outcomes among different actors and takes the dynamics into account. After all, actors judge whether the outcomes meet the objectives developed during the process. The degree to which the outcome of interactive processes is regarded as positive, then depends on how satisfied the actors are.

**Enrichment:** This criterion explicitly concerns the substance of the process. When we accept the starting point of network theory, that is, that information for achieving good policy proposals and policy products is dispersed across many actors and that good policy products are characterized by helping to solve the perceived problems of various actors, the enrichment of variety is an important criterion for the substantive enrichment of the solution. In addition to this variety criterion, we also examine whether the variety of ideas actually emerges in the outcomes (decisions, plans, intentions, etc.). We call this the "impact criterion.

According to this perspective, a characteristic influential consultation has high amounts of actor satisfaction and enrichment, since this demonstrates extensive participation by the actors involved (Edelenbos & Klijn 2005: 8). This reveals that the actors widely participated in the consultations since satisfaction indicates that the process was interactive and enrichment shows that input came from a diverse amount of sources. If consultations had low levels of actor satisfaction and enrichment, this would indicate a consultation without stakeholder contributions resulting in limited policy influence. In sum, this variable will test public involvement for policy influence by assessing if the procedure creates or changes policy, if actors are satisfied with their participation, and if the process is enriching. Determining policy influence in terms of outcome, actor satisfaction, and enrichment is the first step in understanding how useful public involvement is for the policy process and for the actors involved.

Besides understanding if public involvement influenced policy, the next important test is determining the causes of policy influence. The literature strongly suggests that process design is crucial in determining policy influence (Boxelaar etc 2006: 113). Assessing the validity of process design directly relating to the policy influence of public involvement is one of the key theories this research project is trying to assess. Edelenbos and Klijn tested this theory by examining two main elements, formalization and process management (Edelenbos & Klijn 2004: 10-11):

**Formalization of the interactive process:** Is the interactive process fixed in a formal document? What is regulated in it, including time phases, determination of budget, role allocation, manner of conflict resolution, accountability, substantive frameworks, auxiliary conditions, and so on. When the process is fixed in a formal document and many different aspects are regulated, we speak of high formalization.



**Process management:** Did the process manager follow the interactive process strictly according to the agreements and rules of the game in the process design, or did he or she adapt these when necessary to secure a smooth unfolding of the process? How active was the process manager?

The study found that cases with low formalization and flexible process management performed the best in terms of achieving good consultation outcomes (Edelenbos & Klihn 2004: 18). Testing whether these two measures correlate to influential outcomes will be a key component of validating the thesis. Based on the findings of this article, it appears that one of the most important measures leading to policy influence is flexibility. Due to this finding, the hypothesis tests the assumption that cases with flexibility would achieve policy influence while cases with rigid processes would not. Subsequently, this test will also examine whether process management is a more significant measure than the formalization of the interactive process.

The one additional variable not studied in Edelenbos and Kiljn's piece is whether the policy cycle also plays a role in policy influence. Despite Edelenbos and Klihn's rigorous research design, this seemed to be an area that was missed which may be important to examine. Leach observed that certain forms of consultations could only take place in specific stages in the policy cycle (Leach et al. 2002: 647). If only specific types of consultations can occur at key moments in the development of the policy, it is then worthy to investigate if consultations can have different levels of policy influence in certain stages. In this instance, the thesis argues that public involvement that takes place prior or during the formulation stage has a more likely chance of influencing policy than public involvement, which starts in the post-formulation stage. Howlett & Ramesh's definition of the formulation stage referring "to how policy options are formulated within government" will help to assess which stage of the policy cycle that cases belong to

(Howlett & Ramesh 2003: 13). Montpetit’s discussion of input and output orientated legitimacy as well as some of the previously discussed literature also provides some context for studying this area (Montpetit 2003: 97). If the government is seeking input legitimacy, it will engage affected actors early in the policy cycle, and if it is not, then consultations will take place later ensuring that the level of policy influence is limited, as the government may have already made a decision. The examination of this independent variable will help to test the validity of the second hypothesis, which argues that public involvement that occurs in the formulation stage of the policy cycle generates policy influence.

Using these variables should be able to determine whether cases have yielded policy influence and will assess if there is a causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables as outlined in table one. In terms of the causal relationship under study, the goal is to determine if process design and the policy cycle assist public involvement processes in achieving policy influence. Table two, represents an example of anticipated influential and non-influential outcomes between the independent and dependent variables.

**Table 2: Anticipated relationship between independent and dependent variables**

Independent variables that generate policy influence	Dependent policy influence measures
Process management is flexible.	Outcome influential, high actor satisfaction, while the process is enriching.
Public involvement occurs in the formulation stage of the policy cycle.	Outcome influential, high actor satisfaction, while the process is enriching.
Process management is rigid.	Outcome not influential, low actor satisfaction, while the process is not enriching.
Public involvement occurs after the formulation stage in the policy cycle.	Outcome not influential, low actor satisfaction, while the process is not enriching.

If there is a correlation between process design, policy cycle, and policy influence in these cases, it will be clear that the independent variables do indeed play a significant role in generating policy influence. Understanding the relationship between process design and the policy cycle will also be a focal point, as selected cases will represent different variations of these variables. The process design variable will undergo comparison by studying two cases with flexible processes and two cases with rigid processes. Meanwhile, two cases that occur in the formulation stage and two that occur after the formulation stage will contrast the policy cycle variable. Each case will consist of a different combination of the two independent variables in order to test the level of policy influence each relationship generates.

### **Applying the small-n research design**

The research design selected for this project is the versatile small-n research design. This method consists of an investigation into a small number of observations from a strong qualitative perspective (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 52). There is less formal analysis involved than a large-N research design, which often applies quantitative theory with many observations to statistical testing. A small-n research design usually entails fewer cases, less variables, with a thick and detailed description of the data. For a research question that requires intensive study into a small number of cases and variables, the small-n research method is definitely the appropriate method to utilize.

Observing a small number of cases with variables designed to measure relationships closely, follows the analytical structure that Edelenbos and Klijn applied to their work. The major difference though, will mostly involve the research materials used as well as the collection of evidence. In their examination, they had tremendous access

with semi-structured interviews at the beginning of the consultations, with subsequent interviews throughout the process (Edelenbos & Klijn 2005: 6). Unfortunately, with the selected material for BC this will not be the situation since all of the cases under study are already complete. However, this does provide an advantage as secondary literature is available for these topics ensuring that there is ample evidence to test the hypotheses. The issue of time constraints is also important, since choosing a case, which has just started the consultation process, could possibly take years to research. It is thus practical to select completed cases that have been widely studied by other scholars. The small-n research design combined with secondary literature did manage to provide enough data to test the variables that will measure the policy influence of the cases under study.

### **Case selection**

Much like other portions of the methodology, the selection of cases follows a similar structure to Edelenbos and Klijn's research. In their study, six cases yielded enough contrasting results for detailed analysis. In this study however, four cases are sufficient, since the research project seeks to determine if the cases outlined in the introduction (table one) can lead to four distinct outcomes. In the interest of testing this thesis, four cases, which test each one of these situations, will be adequate. As stated previously, case selection will rely on consultations in BC that have available literature to ensure that there will be enough evidence to test the variables.

To determine what kinds of public involvement the Government of BC has undertaken, the government's news release archives was analyzed between the years 1995-2005 to identify how many cases took place. The volume was substantial as there were approximately 300 cases identified. Although it is fascinating to see how much

public involvement has actually taken place in the province, that amount is too large for a research project of this scope. Four widely studied cases that are representative of public involvement in the province should prove sufficient.

The public involvement cases under study are the Great Bear Rain Forest Agreement, CORE, Eagleridge Bluffs highway expansion, and the Jumbo Glacier Resort. Based on a preliminary analysis of the literature, each case represents a specific type of consultation that can test the thesis. Table two represents the perceived four different variable outcomes of the consultations in terms of the framework set out in Table one. The anticipated variable relationship of each case is in bold font.

**Table 3: Anticipated levels of influence in BC cases**

Policy cycle	Flexible process	Rigid process
Formulation	Great Bear Rain Forest Agreement <b>(Optimal outcome)</b>	CORE <b>(Sub-optimal outcome)</b>
Post-formulation	Eagleridge Bluffs highway expansion <b>(Poor outcome)</b>	Jumbo Glacier Resort <b>(Worse outcome)</b>

According to the hypothesis, The Great Bear Rain Forest Agreement should be the most influential framework since the consultation began in the formulation stage and had a flexible process (Krauss 2006). The process finalized land use planning for approximately 8.5 million hectares along the central and northern BC coastline region (Ramsay 2005). This case is representative of a flexible formulation stage consultation since the government left negotiations and decision making to actors involved in the process (Hamilton 2006).

CORE, which operated from 1994-1996, perhaps represents the most analyzed consultation process in the BC environmental sector, due to its sheer size and ambitious

mandate (Burda 1998). The purpose of CORE was to bring stakeholders together to design land use planning to ensure that the province's resources were sustainably managed (Halseth & Booth 2003). Though many also criticized it as "it was not viewed as a decision-maker nor a government ministry but an independent advisory body which report directly to Cabinet" (McAllister 1998). CORE definitely had a much more restrictive design than the Great Bear Rainforest negotiations due to government oversight and cumbersome guidelines. However, since the agreements managed to start in the formulation stage of the policy cycle, the analysis should find that the process generated some policy influence.

The third case under study examines the Eagleridge Bluffs Sea-to-Sky Highway expansion. With the 2010 Winter Olympics preparations underway, the Provincial government believed that the largely travelled highway route between the ski hills of Whistler and Vancouver needed to increase capacity for the Olympics and future use afterwards (Burrows 2006). The consultations held were characteristic of a flexible model occurring in the post-formulation stage since the government had a firm policy position even though many consulted groups favoured other alternatives (Grabowski 2006). With characteristics of a flexible but post-formulation based consultation, this case should rank third in terms of policy influence out of the four cases.

The final case under examination is the consultation process for the Jumbo Glacier Resort. This case took place in the Kootenany region of eastern BC regarding a proposal to develop Jumbo Glacier into a ski resort facility (Metcalf 2004). The consultations consisted of a very rigid design that only allowed for comments from the public on a discussion paper with very little space for extensive dialogue. The process

also appears to occur largely in the post-formation stage as the project gained approval despite a good deal of opposition from local actors (Willcocks 2004). These characteristics suggest that this form of consultation will be the least influential in terms of the models outlined throughout the chapter.

## **Concluding remarks**

This chapter provided the type of research design and structure required to answer whether public involvement can influence public policy in BC. In order to answer that question, the diverse field of literature underwent examination to note what others have said about public involvement's influence and the potential causes for policy influence. In particular, Edelenbos and Klijn provide some excellent research and offer a useful framework to investigate this research question and compare research findings.

The variables, research design, and selected cases provide the tools to determine if process design and the policy cycle are the main causes of influential public involvement. The four cases selected represent a variety of different policy fields, consultation styles, and purposes, and should be able to generate comparative findings. Furthermore, by using Edelenbos and Klijn's approach as a guideline, this will provide a unique opportunity to assess whether Canadian cases also generate policy influence in similar ways. After examining the literature, this appears to be the best method to determine how a public involvement process can become dynamic and influential. The next chapter provides the findings of the research.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the consultation processes of CORE, Great Bear Rainforest Agreement, Jumbo Glacier Ski Resort proposal, as well as the Sea-to-Sky Highway consultation process. Each case contains the history of the consultation process, as well as the level of policy influence, type of process management, and stage of policy cycle that consultations took place in. Provided is also an analysis of the findings for each case as well as an overall analysis of all four cases.

Each case proved the potential that interactive decision systems can contribute to public policy while also providing reliable evidence to assess the theories set out in the last chapter. It is certain that the management of the process and stage of policy cycle are variables that play a strong role in determining the level of policy influence consultations obtain. While the flexibility of the process is important, this measure was not crucial since policy influence can occur without these measures. Instead, the evidence showed that the creation of a formulation based enrichment process that allows actors to contribute to the policy is the most influential aspect of the process.

### **Analysis of CORE consultation process**

CORE was largely a response to the ‘war in the woods’ between forestry and environmentalists regarding how the forests in BC should be managed (Burda et al 1998: 45). The issue is one of the most important and divisive in the province’s history since



forestry is a key component to the provincial economy while the rainforests are environmentally significant in a global context. The divisive nature of this key policy area led the New Democratic Party (NDP) government into passing the Commission on Resources and Environment Act in 1992 “to assist the transition to sustainability through development of an overall provincial strategy, regional strategic land use plans, increased public participation, improved government coordination and dispute resolution processes” (Owen 1998). Stakeholders would meet together and try to achieve consensus and decide how to develop the land in the four most disputed regions of the province: Vancouver Island, Cariboo-Chilcotin, West Kootenay-Boundary, and the East Kootenay Regions (Gunton et al 1998). By bringing all of the actors with different views on the issue together, there was a hope to reach compromise and conciliation in a truly democratic exercise (McAllister 1998).

### **Outcome of the CORE interactive decision-making process**

The consultations did reach an outcome as each of the four commissions created final reports with land use planning recommendations for the provincial government. The recommendations were broad without consensus since the forestry and environmental sectors formed two opposing coalitions over some important policy areas (Day 2003). However, it is important to note the achievement of consensus in several areas that resulted in many sub-agreements. Despite this development in the process, the final reports provided the government with adequate recommendations to create land use policy for these regions, which remained true to the spirit of the CORE process.

**Table 4: Outcome of CORE**

<i>Actor satisfaction</i>	<i>Enrichment</i>	<i>Influence of ideas</i>	<i>Overall judgment</i>
Contentment and discontent among participants; public not content	Diversity in ideas, though ideas became polarized between two coalitions	Broad recommendations were finalized into policy by government	Limited variety of ideas though strongly influential

As table four outlines, there was a mixed level of satisfaction from actors involved with CORE by the end of the process. According to a study by Day, Gunton, and Frame: 64% of actors involved were satisfied, 69% felt that collaborative planning was the best method to address this problem, 76% believed that the process led to improved relationships among the actors, 86% thought they gained valuable skills, while 93% supported public involvement in policy development (Day et al 2003). However, many actors were also not satisfied as well; specifically many in the public who felt like they did not have a proper role in the process and were suspicious about the outcome CORE would reach. For example, Vancouver Island forestry workers afraid of losing their jobs held a significantly large protest in front of the provincial legislature (Wilson et al 1996). The tourist sector also seemed to be dissatisfied as they lacked the detailed information other sectors had (Hawkes et al 1998). Most notably, aboriginals were not involved in CORE. Overall, the process contained a great deal of divisiveness (The Province 1994).

The wide inclusion of the CORE consultations sessions however did ensure that there was a diverse range of perspectives regarding the problems of land use planning. For example, in the Vancouver Island sessions, often 70 people would participate with a wide variety of actors represented along with the public (Hawkes et al 1998). With the

development of alliances from polarizing perspectives, the solutions presented by the end of the process were quite limited as concerns heavily emphasized either supporters of forestry or sustainability practices involving mostly lawyers or expert negotiators (Wilson et al 1996). Despite the often-conflicting nature of the recommendations in the final reports, they were instrumental in helping to design policy. Although the processes did not design the exact final policy, it is clear that the reports were influential in leading the government to designate land for either forestry or conservation (McInnes 1994).

### **Process design and management in CORE**

The process design for the CORE was experimental for its time, as the provincial government had rarely engaged in such detailed public consultation previously. There were some missteps in the process as a result. Actors often felt that the design of the process was not widely available and that many in the public did not know that the consultations were taking place (Halseth & Booth 2003). Many actors such as those from the tourist industry felt that they did not have the detailed information that the forestry industry had in terms of detailed geographical data (Hawkes et al 1998). Despite its experimental nature, the design was highly organized and often managed to accommodate the actor's needs throughout the process. The process proved to be highly organized, legalistic, and accountable with rigorous and objective criteria for consultations. This proved to be problematic as well since the high amount of organization often made the proceedings highly formalized and procedure based which often consumed time and squandered opportunities to spend more time substantially discussing the issues in depth (Roseland 1998). There was also no formal structure to

receive feedback or adapt the process, the timeline for the consultation was not realistic, policy guidelines were absent, and participants felt that their roles were often not clear.

**Table 5: Overview of process design and management**

<i>Formalization</i>	<i>Process management</i>	<i>Policy cycle stage</i>	<i>Characterization of policy influence outcome</i>
Very high	Rigid and active	Input-based formulation	Sub-optimal outcome

Despite some of the organizational critiques of the CORE process, it was also notable that the government managed to have a minor amount of flexibility in their proceedings. For example, the process became adaptive when informal mediation took place and when more actors were welcome to join mediations (Day 2003). The government mediators also appeared to maintain a neutral position throughout the proceedings and did not dominate discussions. Some did argue that they did not provide an adequate structure and felt that the process needed more direction or that actors should have had more powers during the proceedings (Wilson et al 1996). Towards the end, many felt ‘strong-armed’ by lawyers in negotiations and the process became very close-shopped and internalized with the experts coming to the final terms of the agreement (Roseland 1998).

Even though there were certainly problems and conflicts between actors engaged in the process, the CORE proved to be a relatively successful series of consultations (Owen 1998). There was a significant amount of policy influence as actors collaborated together to finalize reports on how the government should design land use planning policy for the conflicted regions. Further to that point, the CORE took place in the formulation stage of the policy cycle as the actors engaged directly in designing the

policy instead of merely asking for input after the government drafted up a policy proposal. By bringing actors together in collaboration, this process achieved policy influence though actor satisfaction remained low with the outcome.

### **Analysis of ‘Great Bear Rainforest’ consultation process**

The public consultation process for the ‘Great Bear Rainforest’<sup>2</sup> was largely a continuation of the events and policy process for the CORE. Besides serving as a means of solving land use planning disputes in the most controversial regions of the province, CORE also helped to serve as a land use-planning model for the entire province with the introduction of Land and Resource Management Planning (LRMP) (Hoberg, Morishita, and Paulsen 2004). This process also involved a sub-regional multi-stakeholder land-use planning process to solve disputes for 23 regions in the province (Coast Forest Conservation Initiative 2005). Despite the best attempts to use the consultation process to bring the conflicting sides together to solve disagreements, the polarization continued between industry and environmentalists. Especially since the approximate 6.4 million hectare area that constitutes the central and northern regions of the rainforest along the coastal and interior regions of BC contained tremendous stakes for both sides (Ramsay 2005). For environmentalists this region represented one of the last rainforests in the world that was not clear-cut, while the abundance of potential of lumber proved to be equally enticing for industry to take advantage of this untapped resource.

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<sup>2</sup> Environmental groups to help raise awareness of the issue since other terms for the region were not memorable a relatively new term applied the term Great Bear Rainforest to the region. In particular, environmentalists from Forest Ethics claimed to have invented the term (Berman 2006).

### **Outcome of the ‘Great Bear Rainforest’ interactive decision making process**

It took nearly 10 years for the final land use agreement to reach completion in 2006. The agreement was announced with much fanfare by the provincial government and all actors involved as Premier Campbell noted that “there’s a new era dawning in British Columbia” while Merran Smith of Forest Ethics noted that “it’s like a revolution” and a potential model for other jurisdictions to develop plans for forestry (Krauss 2006). Through multi-stakeholder negotiations between the BC Government, First Nations, industry, environmentalists, local communities, and other groups reached a consensus agreement through collaboration on how the land would be used (Hume 2006). 1.8 million hectares would gain protection through parks and conservation while environmentally sensitive areas would use ecosystem based management (CBC 2006). Provisions also ensured that First Nations communities played a more direct role in deciding the land uses of their land. The agreement also specified how to utilize eco-tourism and small-scale environmentally sustainable economic activity for the region.

**Table 6: Outcome of the ‘Great Bear Rainforest’ consultation**

<i>Actor satisfaction</i>	<i>Enrichment</i>	<i>Influence of ideas</i>	<i>Overall judgment</i>
Actors involved with process were satisfied with the final agreement and negotiation process	Variety of problems and solutions put forward and integrated into recommendations	Policy was created in collaboration with actors and implemented by the government	Process was influential in developing ideas and the final land use policy

As some of the positive comments demonstrate, actors involved with the Great Bear Rainforest consultations were satisfied with the agreement (Herbert 2006). The process managed to reach consensus with a very detailed and specific final agreement

while also avoiding the polarization that existed during the CORE. It is important to note, however, that there was tremendous strife when the NDP government first tried to begin an LRMP process in 1996 as they faced consultation boycotts by environmental groups protesting the decision by forestry companies to continue logging operations in the region during negotiations (Aberni Valley Times 2006). There were attempts to bring environmental groups back into the process though they ultimately walked away and shifted tactics towards protests in the logging areas and began marketing campaigns to boycott old-growth paper manufactured by the companies (Ramsay 2005).<sup>3</sup> Both sides eventually returned to the consultation process in 1999 and the boycott ended in exchange for companies' pledge to stop logging operations in the region.<sup>4</sup> Once consultations fully commenced both sides collaborated, discussed issues, and were satisfied with the level of dialogue and happy to move past earlier confrontations.

When the consultation process moved forward, it was evident that an extensive variety of ideas in terms of the problems and possible solutions was a significant part of the process. Workshops were hosted by the Joint Solutions Project, a collaborative organization between industry and environmental groups, and invited representatives from First Nations, industry, labour, academia, local communities, and government, which was considered a key moment in leading to consensus (Hoberg et al 2004).

Meanwhile, the David Suzuki Foundation with a group of eight coastal First Nations lead an initiative called Turning Point to develop a set of principles for

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<sup>3</sup> The boycott campaign was a high publicity international effort by Greenpeace, Forest Ethics, and other environmental groups to put pressure on the companies. Protests took place in many major North American and European cities and even Bono of U2 became involved in raising awareness of the issue. The boycott campaign was ultimately successful as many companies stopped purchasing paper from old-growth forests including Home Depot (Hamilton 2006).

<sup>4</sup> However, a report by the David Suzuki Foundation reported that clear-cutting was still occurring in the region during discussions. This led to some criticism of the consultation process by environmentalists not involved in negotiations (David Suzuki Foundation 2005).

ecosystem-based management (EBM) which was developed in the workshops to guide land use planning policy (Herbert 2006). This resulted in a land management principles agreement by 2001 and led to the inclusion of First Nations in the process. The provincial government would engage in government-to-government talks with First Nations to determine what role they would play in developing resources in their territories. After receiving scientific advice from an appointed body of scientists on how EBM principles could become utilized as policy, the North and Central coast LRMP reached consensus on the specific policies for how the land would be developed by 2003 (Ramsay 2005).<sup>5</sup> Later, the announcement of the final agreement came in 2006, which included aboriginals, with final implementation of the agreement to occur by 2009.

The process that occurred does indicate that there was a tremendous variety of ideas at play. Every perspective was heard in the workshops on the problems of various courses of action, which led to EBM being the principle on which this project would move forward. The region would develop economically while considering the environment when implementing projects. The solution reached does then represent the views of industry, while also acknowledging environmental concerns, and finally recognizes the long overdue principle that First Nations should have a say in how their land becomes developed (Times – Colonist 2006).

It is certain that this consultation process had influence on the policy outcome. The government in no way engaged in a predetermined policy other than to begin the

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<sup>5</sup> The scientific report by the Coast Information Team is often the evidence cited by environmentalists for the weakness of this plan in promoting sustainability. The panel reported that 44% of the Great Bear Rainforest “was the minimum amount necessary to create a high risk solution for maintaining biodiversity. The agreement as it stands falls short and will threaten wolf, salmon, and bear habitat” (Ramsay 2005). Environmentalists involved in the negotiation process often counter that concessions have to be made in collaboration and no actor will be truly satisfied as the rainforest will neither be 100% protected or harvested and that the final agreement reached does provide adequate protection.



LRMP. Actors in the LRMP developed policy and reached an agreement on regional land use development. The government acted as a facilitator and negotiator but never demanded a rigid framework on how they wanted this policy to conclude. Public involvement in this case was deterministic in deciding on the final policy.

**Process design and management of ‘Great Bear Rainforest’ consultation**

The process for the consultations consisted of a reasonably high level of formalization. The entire consultation exercise did follow the guidelines of the LRMP process, which does prescribe specific policy guidelines. What followed out of these guidelines was a relatively detailed organizational arrangement, which prescribed that the consultations “consider all resource values, require public participation and interagency co-ordination, and build towards consensus agreements” while providing a framework on how to lead to the final policy agreement (Integrated Land Management Bureau 2006). The consultation process used public forums, workshops, plenary sessions, committees, and sub-committees in a highly organized structure. The process design was also available to all participants on the government website. Actors involved in the process seemed familiar with the design, organizational arrangements, and information required for participation in the collaborative efforts.

**Table 7: Overview of process design and management**

<i>Formalization</i>	<i>Process management</i>	<i>Policy cycle stage</i>	<i>Characterization of policy influence outcome</i>
Reasonably high	Flexible and active	Input-based formulation	Optimal outcome

Despite the rigorous organizational arrangements surrounding the consultations, it was also apparent that tremendous flexibility existed in the proceedings. Strict timelines and dominance by government officials were not in place throughout discussions. The government also did not appear to favour a specific policy outcome. Tremendous flexibility existed in the process, almost too flexible at times, since the government was many years behind schedule in reaching an agreement with First Nations (Campbell 2005). The Turning Point initiative for example, especially demonstrated flexibility with the creative engagement used to find a way to allow for First Nations involvement in the proceedings. The process proved to be flexible to the needs of the consultation.

The Great Bear Rainforest consultation process was a successful initiative that was influential and created policy. The process was adaptive as it was highly organized though also flexible when circumstances needed it to be. In terms of its place in the policy cycle, it is certain that the consultation process began in the formulation stage, as the government did not have its decision made on what the land use plan for the region should specifically entail. The key stakeholders instead created the land use policy entirely within the consultation process.

### **Jumbo Glacier Resort consultation process**

The proposed Jumbo Glacier Resort has been going through various stages of consultation and study since 1991. The adaptation of the proposal would create a ski resort near the BC/Alberta border that would allow for year-round skiing at Jumbo Glacier due to its high altitude (Hamstead 2005). Supporters promoted it as place for athletes to train for the Winter Olympics and provide a year round ski-hill in BC (Ski Canada 2005). The concept has some strong merit. Its location is within a five-hour

drive of Calgary, Alberta, international tourism may also develop, and there would be local economic benefits to a region that has fully harvested its natural resources.

However, extensive opposition to the project did develop from concerns about the local grizzly bear population and overwhelmed infrastructure. The local First Nations was also opposed to the project. This has resulted in a lengthy 15-year consultation process that still has not reached the final approval stage (Jumbowild 2006).

### **Outcome of the Jumbo Glacier Resort interactive decision making process**

From the initial proposal of the project in 1991 to 2006, the Jumbo Glacier Resort proposal has gone through a number of consultation process rounds as legislation and consultation policy surrounding environmental assessments and alpine ski policy changed significantly. The proposal received public input in 1991 and throughout the CORE process with an outcome that was favourable for review under the Environmental Assessment Act (Jumbo Glacier Resort 2006). The environmental assessment process involved a series of studies into the impacts of the proposal as well as a series of consultations through open houses, public comment periods, and a public advisory committee. The environment assessment process was reformed and streamlined in 2002, which resulted in another round in 2004, by the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO). Soon after, the EAO submitted its report and recommendations for an Environmental Certificate to the government that was approved (Ministry of Environment 2004). The provincial government then received the Master Development Plan for the resort and pending approval, the final decision will rest with the Regional District of East Kootenay Board of Directors to rezone the land in order to allow the

project construction to proceed (Jumbo Creek Conservation Society 2005). The final phase of the process will take place in the near future.

**Table 8: Outcome of the Jumbo Glacier Resort consultations**

<i>Actor satisfaction</i>	<i>Enrichment</i>	<i>Influence of ideas</i>	<i>Overall judgment</i>
Local actors were mostly not satisfied. Actors promoting the project were satisfied it is nearly approved.	Variety of problems discussed. No significant variety of solutions.	Process sought commentary and not collaborative policy creation.	Consultation process yielded very little policy influence.

The process left supporters and opponents to the project deeply unsatisfied. Supporters felt that they went through unnecessary rounds of public input, received unfair treatment, and believed that the NDP government was trying to stall the process from being completed (Calgary Herald 2004). Opponents also were not satisfied as they felt that their perspectives were routinely ignored, citing the nearly 6,000 comments from the Jumbo Glacier Project Assessment Report in which 90% of the respondents were opposed to the project (Environmental Assessment Office 2004: 8). Government officials disputed the scientific rigor of the comments and argued that only those opposed to projects bother to express their opinion (Jumbo Glacier Resort 2006). However, it was clear that many actors were opposed to the project and felt ignored as a result. Both sides seemed deeply unsatisfied with the structure and were only happy when one side could claim victory in either the developers moving forward with their proposal or opponents managing to keep the final decision in the hands of the municipality.

While nearly every actor involved was somewhat disappointed, it certainly allowed for extensive discussions concerning the problems of this issue.

Environmentalists, local actors, aboriginals, heli-ski operators and other small businesses all gained many opportunities to express their concerns (Matthews 2002). Supporters also had chance to discuss the stagnation of the local economy due to the exhausting of forestry and mining resources and promote the economic benefits such a project would bring to the community (Cobb 2006).

Despite this extensive process and the final 3,772-page project report, the amount of solutions and influence the consultation provided seems sparse (Ski Canada 2005). The process clearly did not contain any of the collaborative mechanisms that existed under the CORE or the LRMP process as opinion and commentary was sought and in most cases consultations occurred in open houses where interested members of the public were merely updated on progress. Without any requirement of consensus or acceptance, the process went along with scientific reports and government process leading its direction instead of dialogue and collaboration. However, it is important to note that the original proposal received a 60% reduction through 15 amendments and 195 required changes, many changes going beyond technical corrections and reflecting local concerns as well (Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management 2004). In the end though, most stakeholders did not contribute to the development of the plans and had very little influence in the final proposal East Kootenay Regional District will examine.

### **Process design and management of Jumbo Glacier Resort consultation**

The Jumbo Glacier Resort Project consisted of a highly organized, rigid, and output based process design. The consultation process was complex as it operated under several different statutes and regulations such as the Commercial Alpine Ski Policy, the CORE, and the EAO (Jumbo Glacier Resort 2006). Under each series of consultations,

the public would gain notification of any comment period or town hall meeting that was taking place. Many reports, such as the environmental assessment, also came about because of these processes. The Jumbo Glacier consultations also contained a comprehensive approach for discussing the issues in many different rounds over a number of years.

**Table 9: Overview of process design and management**

<i>Formalization</i>	<i>Process management</i>	<i>Policy cycle stage</i>	<i>Characterization of policy influence outcome</i>
Very high	Very rigid and active	Output-based post-formulation	Worse outcome

Despite the high level of organizational complexity, a chief problem was the perceived or actual bias of the government throughout the process. Both sides at varying times felt that the government was not neutral. Proponents of the project felt that the NDP government was against the project and purposely added more consultations and studies in order to delay the project. A freedom of information request in 1996 indicated that Ministry officials had conceived this strategy (Calgary Herald 2004). Similarly, there were accusations that the Liberal government elected in 2001 showed bias in favour of the project. The Liberals came to power on a pro-business platform emphasizing conservative policies to create economic growth and opportunities for investment, they proclaimed that BC was “open for business” and the Minister of State for Resort Development stated that “my job is to be an advocate for resort development” (Metcalf 2004). The Liberals also streamlined the environmental assessment process to ensure that assessments can pass more speedily. While the government never did directly say

they were in favour of the project, it is clear that they were not neutral. Such perceptions of both the Liberals and NDP was somewhat damaging to the process.

With a few exceptions, the process was also indicative of a certain level of rigidity. There was a certain amount of flexibility in the process while the NDP was the political party in power, as they often added additional rounds of public input and frequently extended deadlines much to the dismay of project supporters. Despite that exception, consultations administered under both regimes were indicative of some rigidity and a process that did not deviate largely from the original policy. Routine consultations outlined by the EAO continued despite severe levels of polarization when innovative attempts may have brought both sides together.

Ultimately, the consultation process for the Jumbo Glacier Ski Resort can be judged as a “blueprint process management structure” (Edelenbas & Klijn 2005: 12). Consultations largely occurred in standard methods of seeking public advice and informing members of affected communities without any large deviation from the policy despite indications that actors were deeply unsatisfied with the process. More significantly, the consultation process also appeared to be indicative of an output-based post-formulation policy cycle process. Stakeholders had little ability to influence the outcome and contribute to policy development. Instead, they were merely asked to provide their opinions and comment on the proceedings without being a significant part of finalizing or affecting the final plan. Although the East Kootenay Regional District will have the final decision to rezone the land to allow development to begin, it is certain that stakeholders did not have any influence in advancing the policy process prior to this point. It is also highly plausible that both the NDP and the Liberals had already decided

upon their positions on the resort prior to the completion of the process, ensuring that this process is in the post-formulation stage of the policy cycle.

### **Eagleridge Bluffs consultation process**

In 1997-1998, the Ministry of Transportation conducted a multi-modal Corridor Transportation Study at the request of the Sea-to-Sky corridor municipalities<sup>6</sup> (Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project 2004). Using population forecasts and known development plans of the day as primary indicators conclusions found that transportation upgrades to the region would be required. Non-auto modes of transportation such as rail, marine, or air travel services were first examined in consultation with local government, tourism, and transportation industries, though studies ultimately determined that there were severe challenges in developing these services and making these alternatives modes attractive enough to meet future mass transportation needs. It became certain that the highways in the region would need expansion to meet future demand.

In 2002, the BC government initiated a consultation process for the Sea-to-Sky corridor to begin discussions on how to design this expansion. When Vancouver and Whistler won their bid to host the 2010 Winter Olympics, the need to finish construction before the Olympics took place caused a greater sense of urgency to finalize how the project would take shape (CBC 2003). While there was consultation processes for other sections of the project, the consultation process involving the 2.4 kilometre portion through the Eagleridge Bluffs in West Vancouver proved to be the most comprehensive and controversial (Grabowski 2006).

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<sup>6</sup> Municipalities in the Sea-to-Sky region consist of communities along Highway 99 which is called the Sea-to-Sky Highway. The region consists of communities between the transportation route from Vancouver to Whistler.



### **Outcome of the Eagleridge Bluffs interactive decision making process**

The consultation and decision-making process proceeded through five stages for the project. In 2002, Project Definition Consultations took place to establish the goals and objectives that the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement project would entail (Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project 2004). After this round, public reviews for the Environmental Assessment Application to the federal government (concurrently with pre-design consultations) discussed the different options for the proposed highway expansion. Discussion took place for four proposal options: two northbound lanes upslope, four new lanes upslope, a northbound tunnel, and a two-way two-lane tunnel (Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project 2004).

**Table 10: Outcome of Eagleridge Bluffs consultation process**

<i>Actor satisfaction</i>	<i>Enrichment</i>	<i>Influence of ideas</i>	<i>Overall judgment</i>
Most local actors not satisfied. Some public sector stakeholders satisfied.	Variety of problems discussed. Four different policy solutions discussed.	Consultations sought advice and communicated new developments in plans to stakeholders.	Process was not influential in policy outcome.

Shortly after the second and fourth option received Environmental Assessment certificates, the provincial government announced that they would select the four new lanes upslope as their policy and allocate the current section of the highway for local use once the project was complete (Ministry of Transportation 2004). After this policy decision, consultations discussed the preliminary design in 2005, while the final round of consultations would discuss the detailed aspects of the project that would take place during the construction, which commenced in June 2006.

The final decision pleased some stakeholders such as BC Ferries, Police and other emergency services, as well as stakeholders in the trucking industry who felt that the overland route through the Eagleridge Bluffs was the best option (Sea-to-Sky Improvement Project 2004). In many small meetings with key stakeholders, this proved to be an option that held widespread support. However, many actors were also not pleased with the decision (Michaud 2006). In particular, both the Municipality of West Vancouver and 58% of its residents were opposed to the option selected and instead preferred that a four-lane tunnel be considered, an option not even proposed during consultations despite widespread support for it (West Vancouver 2004). This subsequently led to failed appeals to the provincial and federal courts to overturn the Environmental Assessment certificate (West Vancouver v. British Columbia 2005).

Environmentalists were particularly concerned that the overland route would be more destructive for the Larson Creek Wetlands conservation area, which is home to endangered species and would have damaging environmental impacts throughout the area (Walter 2006).<sup>7</sup> When construction started in April 2006, protestors from the Coalition to Save Eagleridge Bluffs illegally blockaded the construction site to delay the beginning of the project (Vancouver Sun 2006). The province and contractors had to receive a court injunction to remove the protestors so that construction could begin (Seyd 2006). They were unconvinced by opponent's arguments citing that the project was environmentally safe, affordable, and provided more safety than the tunnel option (McPhee 2006).

While consultations provided lots of opportunity to discuss environmental, community, transportation, and safety concerns and possible solutions, the consultations

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<sup>7</sup> This construction project did draw a significant amount of attention throughout Canada and abroad. It is interesting to note that activist Jane Jacobs last public act before passing away was writing a letter opposing the overland route.

were not influential in developing the final policy. The overland four-lane route proved to be a specific favourite of the government from the beginning (Lautens 2006).

Originally, there were only two options presented, the two lane northbound tunnel and the final option presented. According to West Vancouver's Environmental Coordinator, the overland route was the government's preferred option from the beginning (Jenkins 2004). Briefing materials would mention the option favourably underestimating costs for this project while overestimating expenditure for the tunnel. This occurred despite many studies concluding that the tunnel was safe and as environmentally sustainable or more so than the overland route (Jacobs 2006).

Despite the government's insistence and testimony<sup>8</sup> that they did not have a final decision before the pre-design consultation and environmental assessment process was complete, there is strong evidence that this was the preferred option all along (West Vancouver v. British Columbia 2005). This is not to say that the decision was wrong or was a deliberate plan to provide road access to additional luxury homes in the prestigious suburb of West Vancouver (Spencer 2006)<sup>9</sup>. The government's environmental certificate gained approval, the costs were substantially lower, and organizations representing emergency personnel did prefer this option as a safer alternative.

Consultations did not design this proposal through collaborative efforts, nor did they make the final decision to approve this policy. Instead, the provincial government designed it and the consultation process merely sought opinion and commentary from actors and the public. Despite the strong preference for a four-lane tunnel by West

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<sup>8</sup> Officials said in testimony that they did not have a final decision "at that time" during the federal court case regarding West Vancouver's attempt to overturn the environmental assessment certificate.

<sup>9</sup> The media widely reported a confidential letter leaked to the press that indicated that the road would provide access that would allow for 1,800 homes developed by British Properties.

Vancouver and many of its citizens, this option was not even discussed in the consultation process.

However, in small stakeholder meetings the final policy was the preferred option of choice, West Vancouver and its citizens were mostly opposed to the selected option (Wood 2004). Therefore, it can be determined that these consultations were not influential and took place in the post-formulation stage of the policy cycle as government already had a strong inclination towards one particular option before the consultation process was concluded. Furthermore, it was the environmental certificate, government objectives, and scientific study that guided the final government decision, not the consultation process.

### **Process design and management of Eagleridge Bluffs consultation**

Overall, the consultation process for the Eagleridge Bluffs section of the Sea-to-Sky Highway proved to be a highly formalized and extensively detailed process but still managed to have a great deal of flexibility. There was a high amount of formalization through five rounds of consultation from the very beginning of the process to engaging in consultation during the actual construction itself. Many of the standard forms of public involvement processes would be in use such as comment periods, open houses, roundtables, ensuring that the consultation process was comprehensive and that stakeholders would receive information about the needs of the project as well as the possible policy outcomes. The process also proved to be somewhat flexible when it was required, as additional meetings and further policy options were included in the consultation process. However, it is important to mention that the four-lane tunnel

proposal was not included and the consultation timetable government set out would follow without any significant delays.

**Table 11: Overview of process design and management**

<i>Formalization</i>	<i>Process management</i>	<i>Policy cycle stage</i>	<i>Characterization of policy influence outcome</i>
High	Flexible and active	Output based post-formulation	Poor outcome

It must be noted that the government did dominate and manage the process as well. The exercise was not collaborative with stakeholders in major policy areas and was limited to influencing specific topics such as landscapes and bus routes along the new proposed route (Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project 2004). The major policy decisions were largely left out of the process and consultations only allowed for feedback without any significant form of decision making capabilities in that regard. Government set the agenda, designed the policy options, and made the final decision. This outcome ensured that it was largely an output-based post-formulation consultation as the government was indicative that it was favourable of a certain policy outcome. Due to the routine approach of fulfilling the mandate to engage in consultations and the formal process it entailed, the process could best be considered a “blueprint process management approach” (Edelenbas & Klijn 2005: 12).

### **Analysis of case studies**

The findings in the BC case studies largely confirmed many of the theories in the consultation literature while also providing evidence of notable differences as well. The cases proved that the interactive process is often not satisfying for the actors involved

(Edelenbos & Klijn 2005). Every case involved significant levels of protest and criticism of how the government handled the policy at some point. In the Great Bear Rainforest process, satisfaction amongst the various actors occurred only after an initial agreement.

**Table 12: Summary of evidence**

<i>Policy Cycle</i>	<i>Flexible process</i>	<i>Rigid process</i>
Formulation	Great Bear Rain Forest Agreement <b>(Optimal input based outcome)</b> -All actors satisfied -High level of enrichment - Reasonably high formalization	CORE <b>(Sub-optimal input based outcome)</b> -Most actors dissatisfied -Medium level of enrichment -Very high formalization
Post-formulation	Eagleridge Bluffs <b>(Poor output based outcome)</b> -Most actors dissatisfied -Medium enrichment level -High formalization	Jumbo Glacier Resort <b>(Worse output based outcome)</b> -All actor dissatisfied -Low enrichment level -Very high formalization

These cases also demonstrated that public involvement could only achieve influence if there is a substantial level of enrichment in the process for stakeholders to contribute their concerns into the policy. It is telling that LRMP and CORE processes would only achieve policy influence where direct collaboration occurred between actors in order to reach solutions and recommendations. Meanwhile, the other two cases did not result in policy influence, as there was no mechanism for actors to play a role in directly creating the policy, as their role was restricted to only providing commentary and feedback on proposed policies. Public involvement can certainly be informative and provide many opportunities for stakeholders to voice their concerns. However, if there is no collaborative method present in designing the policy, then public involvement cannot be influential. However, it is also important to note that the cases that were influential

also allowed for a mixed-policy that could combine many of the actors' proposals and concerns by allowing for both conservation and logging in the rainforests. The other policy areas concerned the decision whether to build or not build highways or ski resorts, making it difficult to combine the concerns of the stakeholders involved.

Each case also contained a high level of formalization, which is understandable given the often-rigorous scientific examination of environmental and transportation based policy each involved. One possible deviation from Edelenbos and Klijn's work is the important variable of flexibility in process management. Flexibility certainly proved to be an important contribution to the Great Bear Rainforest consultation process. The inability to change the process in order to address issues in other consultations was also significant. However, there were occurrences in which the process was rigid and resulted in influence such as the CORE. In the cases of the Eagleridge Bluffs and even somewhat for the Jumbo Ski Glacier consultation period, there were even examples of flexibility in the process despite no significant levels of influence. Within this context, it appears that flexibility is not a crucial variable to guarantee that the consultation process is influential. Instead, ensuring that the process is enriching and allows actors to contribute to the final policy is a more significant measure that leads to policy influence. Further flexibility in the cases without significant influence might have changed the outcome. However, a more enriched process with direct collaboration would have resulted in the most increased amount of policy influence.

The stage in the policy cycle that consultations took place along with government's intention towards the process, also proved crucial in determining policy influence. When government was perceived as neutral and had made no indication on

which outcome was preferred, consultations were input based and occurred in the formulation stage of the policy cycle. Meanwhile, in cases where government was not neutral or perceived not to be, consultations occurred in an output-based format in the post-formulation stage and were not influential in the outcome of policy.

If policies are to obtain influence, these cases demonstrate that there are several key measures. Ensuring that actors collaborate and play an enriched role in designing the final policy is a valid variable. Flexibility and formalization process design are important measures but not essential if the process provides an enriched role for actors. Finally, the stage of the policy cycle, if consultations are input or output based, and whether or not government has a preferred outcome are important aspects that also contribute to policy influence.



## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

The evidence from the four cases has generated strong inferences regarding public involvement in BC. It is certain that public involvement is not a hindrance to developing policies; rather the evidence shows that public involvement can often be as successful as conventional forms of policy development. The LRMP process for the Great Bear Rain Forest as well as the CORE demonstrates that public involvement can influence policy.

This research project also helped to test key theories concerning how consultation processes become influential as well as examine areas that have not received attention. The findings demonstrated that the design and substance of consultations are important for achieving policy influence. If consultation designs only seek commentary as in the Eagleridge Bluffs case, there will be no policy influence. However, if consultations allow actors to participate in an enriched policy process that engage stakeholders in policy design, then consultations can be influential. Just as Edelenbos and Klijn address in their work, adaptive policy processes result in the most policy influence as the Great Bear Rain Forest process demonstrated (Edelenbos & Klijn 2005: 18).

Though many of the findings were consistent with the literature, these cases also contained subtle differences. Formalization, actor satisfaction, and process flexibility are all important measures that contribute to policy influence. However, they are not vital conditions. All of the cases contained some level of formalization, and there were very few moments in which there was none. In all cases, there was some actor dissatisfaction, proving that creating policy is difficult and that contentment may not necessarily create

influence. Actors were only satisfied at the end of the Great Bear Rain Forest consultations, though not during. Most importantly, flexibility did not lead to better outcomes. The CORE process was rigid and still resulted in influence, while the Jumbo Glacier consultations were least influential despite being flexible, demonstrating a slightly different conclusion than others found (Edelenbos & Klijn 2006).

The finding that the policy cycle was also significant is an important point, which most scholars have not examined. If public involvement takes place in the formulation stage of the policy cycle, then it is likely to achieve policy influence. This was demonstrative in the cases where government was neutral and had no preferred outcome such as the CORE. Meanwhile, when government had an actual or perceived bias as in the Jumbo Glacier case, there was no policy influence. Though this point has not been widely stated in the literature, some agree that consultations must occur early in the policy process to make a meaningful contribution (Gauvin et al 2006: 3).

While the findings are significant, it is also important to reflect on some alternative dimensions to the issue of public involvement and policy influence. First, it is essential to note that public involvement is not a policy instrument for every instance. In order to operate processes, extensive government resources are often used. There are also certainly times when it is unnecessary. With this in mind, policymakers must carefully decide whether it is vital to engage in public involvement in order to avoid wasting resources and unnecessary consultations.

It is also important to remember that using public involvement for the sake of altering policies or for actors to contribute to the development of the policy is not the only use. As the different methods of public involvement illustrates on page 6, this

policy instrument can be used not only for altering policy, but also for government to inform the public and for the public to provide a mechanism to communicate their opinions about important issues (Gauvin 2006: 10). These are also effective uses of public involvement often more appropriate in certain instances where it may only be important for government to inform or to listen to what citizens think about issues.

### **Research findings within the context of the literature**

These findings also echo the views of many in the research community that public involvement is a useful policy instrument to be in use more frequently for the purposes of democratic renewal in a time when the public is cynical and feels disengaged from the policy process. The perception that there is a ‘democratic deficit’ has been a major concern of many who study political systems (MacKinnon 2004: 5). Voting rates have declined significantly in Canada as many feel that their vote does not count and that they cannot make a difference. This has led to widespread cynicism about institutions as a general distrust of government’s ability to listen and meet the public needs has grown in recent times. Governments seem out of touch, corrupt, or uncaring about what the public thinks. Many scholars acknowledge this problem, and have proposed solutions from changing our electoral system to increasing public involvement.

Increased public involvement is widely advocated as an approach that will bring the public back into our democratic process by providing a direct way for the public to have a say (Abelson & Gauvin 2006: 36). By ensuring that communities and key actors play a larger role in the policy outcome, this will also restore people’s trust in governing institutions and demonstrate that public policy can be truly democratic and reflect the people’s needs. There appears to be a tremendous amount of enthusiasm from the public:

A public opinion poll conducted by EKOS (in 2002) showed that a vast majority of Canadians (78%) believe that it is very important for citizens to be involved in major decisions affecting the health care system in Canada. A more recent poll showed that 85% of Canadians would feel better about government decision-making if they knew that government regularly sought informed input from average citizens (Gauvin, et al 2006: 24).

Judging from the results and the literature it is clear that the public can play a meaningful role in developing policy. Participants view public involvement positively when outcomes are successful. Further involvement can lead to better policy and allow citizens and key stakeholders to have a direct input into important decisions that affect them. To improve public policy in Canada and create a process that is more inclusive and accommodating to the public, further public involvement is an excellent direction. It is also certain, that process managers must carry out the process in certain ways to achieve success. Gauvin provides a clear list of conditions that lead to successful outcomes that closely match some of the findings in this research project:

There are seven conditions that are key to successful public consultation and participation processes: i) representativeness; ii) independence; iii) early involvement; iv) influencing the policy decisions; v) providing information; vi) resource accessibility; and vii) structured decision-making (Gauvin 2006: 3).

## **Future research directions**

The results of this research project suggest that there are other areas to study within the area of public involvement. First, recreating this study in other policy areas, institutions, provinces, or other countries, is an important direction to explore that may validate evidence and provide for a comparative assessment. It is also certain that there were important limits on the methods and findings of this research project in not using

surveys or interviews with actors who participated in the process. Utilizing more sophisticated research methods in the future will provide reliable data for analysis.

Investigating the possibilities and limits of public involvement is another direction to build on the theory and previous case studies. How much can the public actually become involved in creating policy? Are there realistic limits in participation? Are there particular legitimate reasons to restrict public involvement in certain cases? There are certainly arguments made for wider public inclusion when it comes to policy development. Testing the limits and extent of public involvement is certainly an area scholars must pay close attention to as this policy instrument gains usage that is more frequent.

Testing alternative explanations regarding this particular issue is another possible avenue to explore. This was a very specific examination of four cases in BC with limited findings as a result. It is possible that other factors not examined in this small-scale research project were also important. The issue of size is one possible issue that merits further investigation. The CORE and the LRMP were framework agreements while the Jumbo Glacier Ski Resort and Eagleridge Bluffs were consultation processes. It is possible that the type of public engagement process used will lead to very different outcomes. Definitely, this aspect needs examination in future research. Another potential area of interest is the government's own attitude and perception. This was a major point often looked at throughout this project, though it was not a key variable under study. Examining these alternative explanations may be another important feature to investigate.

## **Final remarks**

The purpose of this research project was to assess the merit public involvement brings to the policy process in BC. The results have indicated that the public can play a useful role in policy development when design allows for influence and implementation in an effective delivery.

In the past, democratic challenges mainly consisted of trying to increase democratic enfranchisement at the ballot. Providing suffrage to women, expanding voting rights beyond property holders, and ensuring that everyone in society could participate in the democratic process were some of the main accomplishments in democratic reform. Despite this progress in building democratic societies, there are still significant obstacles to overcome.

One of the main challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be to guarantee that the people have democratic participation not just every time there is an election, but also between elections. Increasing the public's involvement in designing the policies is the next step governments can take towards strengthening our democratic institutions and provide the people more opportunities to shape policies that have a direct input in their polity. Democracy is not a static entity but one that is evolutionary. Increasing public involvement in policy development is the current ongoing project to enhance democratic development. Public involvement's contribution to policy is significant and is bound to bring further benefits to government in the coming years. Ensuring that public involvement occurs in the right context and delivered by the best method possible is the main challenge for those who advocate greater public involvement in the policies that shape our society.

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