How Are We to Govern Ourselves?

The Engagement of Citizens in the Local Government Policy Process

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ABSTRACT

Municipal governments in Ontario have become the crucible within which a plethora of change is being heated to new intensity. The arena where local policy is made has become incontrovertibly volatile as public cynicism about politicians and citizen insistence that they be involved with government, march into the forum. The engagement of citizens in the local policy process promises to add value to the outcome. However there are instances where involvement gives way to frustration and renewed cynicism.

This study examines the effectiveness of citizen engagement as a complementary process to the representative nature of local democracy. The examination includes a history of participation, a consideration of public opinion, the activity of those who advocate for engagement of citizens and the views of academics. These sources provide the grist to develop a Framework for Authentic Participation. The framework is applied to an examination of two complex policy issues that were addressed using different processes in the same small urban/rural municipality. Council decided one of the policy issues with limited citizen input and then held open meetings to inform residents of the outcome. The other issues was before Council when several citizens took it outside of the established processes. These residents used methods that had many features of a deliberative approach.

The two processes are compared to determine whether a deliberative and interactive form of participation can achieve more satisfactory outcomes than a traditional form where communication is largely one way and preceded by a decision. The findings are in favour of deliberative methods.

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INTRODUCTION

We live in times of change, times of complex and vexing problems, times of fewer municipal representatives relying on leaner public administrations. Into this vacuum between capacity to govern and the enormity of decisions, has entered the two-headed dragon of electoral cynicism and unmitigated citizen involvement in the policy process. Perhaps the dragon was already present. But the new reality of municipalities in Ontario makes it loom closer.

Local government has become the crucible within which forces of globalization, privatization, changing demographics, devolution of services, economic imperatives, amalgamation and representation are being heated to significant intensities of change. Despite a new Municipal Act that modernizes the capacity of Ontario municipalities to govern, there remains a misalignment between the level of responsibility foisted upon councils and their ability to effect policies that meet the varied expectations of those who reside and work within the boundaries. The relationship between the elected and electors is under sufficient strain that it is unlikely to maintain its traditional form.

Public cynicism seems too pronounced and the credibility of politicians at too low an ebb for councils to rely on moral authority and the strict enactment and enforcement of law to slay the dragon. Citizen assertiveness is too far advanced and the capacity of councils too constrained in the face of complex problems to ignore the second thoughts, passionate pleas and knowledgeable deliberations of voters. Some citizens are content to sit in judgement of policies. There is evidence however that many citizens are aspiring to a more cogent relationship with government. It may depend on the issue or the people affected but the policy development topography is more varied than it used to be. Local politicians are witnessing an insistence from voters that manifests in different forms such as reasoned and deliberate argument, passionate belief, well-researched

documentation, cultural values and citizen activism. Diffidence is giving way to assertiveness. Municipal administrations and councils are facing greater levels of citizen involvement but not necessarily with the tools to work effectively with it. The new citizen assertiveness is not always amenable to working within the hierarchical structures of municipal governments. They are seeking an interactive relationship rather than a top-down imposition.

This study examines one aspect of the relationship between council and community members: the engagement of citizens in the local government policy process. Councils in many jurisdictions have been responding to the assertiveness of citizens by arranging public meetings to provide information on Council policy, ensuring Councilors are available by E-mail, allowing citizen delegations to make presentations to Council and publishing newsletters. These are positive steps toward reaching citizens but they seem to fall short. Some civic administrators and politicians express exasperation that all this participation does not necessarily add value to the debate or to the outcomes. Many residents declare that participation is just another opportunity for politicians to ignore what they have to say. Is it participation that is to blame here? It seems more likely that there is a misalignment between the traditions of government to rule and the new citizen aspiration for an interactive relationship.

It is imperative to gain a deeper understanding of what is taking place here. There is too much at stake in the modern Ontario municipality. Local governments and citizens need to know how to make this participatory promise live up to its name. Can participation work as a means of realizing this interactive relationship?

The literature describes different participatory forms and methods. This study will focus on two general forms of participation and compare their application to two similar and complex policy issues. The comparison will serve to answer the question of whether a

deliberative and interactive form of participation, one that offers opportunity for citizens to learn, deliberate and formulate policy with Council, can achieve "more satisfactory outcomes" with a complex policy issue than a traditional form of participation, one that is distinguished by a top-down approach where citizens receive information from Council on what has been decided and why.

STUDY OVERVIEW

In order to provide background for the case study, citizen participation will be examined from three vantage points. A triangulated approach will provide needed perspective on participation: how it has evolved, where it is heading, what it can and cannot do and what are its essential elements. The first compass reading will be a brief history of the evolution of participatory thinking in Canadian political and social policy circles. This serves four important purposes. First, public administration is practiced within a cultural and historical context. An understanding of the Canadian and Ontario context can elucidate our understanding of how citizen engagement can work at our local level.

Second, a historical perspective can tell us how our thinking of citizen participation has evolved and where it is headed. Having a sense of direction for participation can help political scientists predict the future of the phenomenon. On a practical level it can help politicians, public administrators and citizens to work with one another towards fruitful outcomes on vexing problems. Third, a consideration of history can help to distinguish what is central and lasting to participatory thinking from that which is incidental and temporary. This will serve to sharpen the choices for further research. Finally, a history can tell us if citizen participation is a passing fad or has deeper roots in our expression of democracy.

The second compass reading will be an examination of public opinion concerning the citizen's relationship to government and a consideration of work being done by some organizations that are also concerned with that relationship. This offers some interesting perspective on why participation may be very important to the health of democracy and how it can be made to work. The third point of reference will be the academic literature. This will provide perspective on how theory is shaping practice.

These three points of reference: historical context, citizen and organizational views and the literature will provide the substance to develop a framework for participation. The framework will be the lens through which the case material is examined and by which the question can be answered,

The case study will examine two local government policy issues that share much in common and will compare the different participatory processes that manifested around each issue. One policy decision concerned how to provide potable water to the northern part of the newly amalgamated municipality in order to comply with the Ontario Safe Drinking Water Act. The decision reached was to install a water pipeline to link into the existing municipal system. The second policy decision arose from the need to manage the dispersal of nutrient waste from farm operations. The decision reached was a new nutrient management bylaw.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The literature contains several different terms to describe citizen participation. These include participatory democracy, citizen involvement, citizen engagement, citizen deliberation and deliberative democracy. There are differences of meaning among these terms depending on the views of the particular author or the time in which the writing took place. In this study, the terms participation, engagement and involvement

will be used as generic terms that encompass all forms and levels of citizen participation. I will use the term "traditional" to refer to a process of participation between government and citizens, both groups and individuals, that begins with a policy or position that is pre-ordained or decided by those in power. Other features include information-sharing about the decision and why it was reached, possibly some adjustment in implementation, the influence of bureaucratic or technical expertise, citizen reports of not being heard and judgement of both the decision and the decision-makers. The water pipeline issue provides an example of a traditional process.

The term "deliberative" as used in this study, will refer to a process of interaction among citizens and of citizens with Council where the decision has yet to be made or where the decision is open for full review. Other features include the gathering of information and acquisition of knowledge with which to understand and analyse the issue, recurring face to face discussions that allow for the statement of views, that may involve individuals and groups, that allows for the inclusion of people regardless of political beliefs, education or social status and that results in a decision reflective of the outcome of the dialogue process. Citizen reports about this form of participation will acknowledge that their views have been considered and a reasonable solution, given all of the evidence, has been reached. The nutrient management policy issue provides an example of a deliberative approach.

POSITIONING THE STUDY

There are many shades of gray between the definitions being offered here. However it is not the purpose of this study to delineate the features and advantages of an entire continuum of participatory processes. Rather, it is to determine whether it is possible to permit entry into the local policy process to the extent that citizens can bring additional

knowledge and perspectives that are heard, thatsubstantially influence outcomes and that lead to general acceptance of outcomes.

This study is designed to identify whether it is possible for councils to engage the people in shaping the community as a place where the people want to live and as a way out of the malaise typified today by the vice grip of so many forces: vexing problems, the cynicism of citizens about politicians, the public distrust of technical expertise, the challenge of population diversity, the decline of voter diffidence, the propensity for groups to take legal action when political action is ineffective and the imposition of policy upon municipalities by the province. If deliberative processes work with complex and vexing problems then municipal governments may have a potent method to resolve pressing issues rather than push them along a little, stacking them like dust bunnies in the corner until the next breeze blows through.

HISTORY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPATION

Participation is not new to the policy process. It has roots in the late 1920's when Nova Scotia farmers and fishermen became active in the cause of their own economic survival. They complemented their self-education with mobilization to form credit unions and thereby create a source of loans to marketing cooperatives. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation took this form of local participation across the country with their national Farm Radio Forum. This regular program provided a venue where issues were fully explained. People gathered in one another's homes to listen, discuss and then decide how to take action.[1] The roots of this process remained for many years.

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[1] Desmond M. Connor, "Public Participation in Canada: Development, Current Status and Trends," (1995), 5pp. Online, Internet, August 7 2003, pp.1-2.
Available: www.islandnet.com/connor/ppcanada/ppcanada.html

In the 1968 Canadian general election, the term "participatory democracy" became a household word and a focal point of the 1969 Canada Task Force on Government Information. The Task Force discovered that population diversity and the complexity of modern society were contributing to a malaise between government and the governed. Empirical evidence gathered from surveys of people across the country revealed that a majority of Canadians were poorly informed about their governments and wanted more information. This correlated with findings that government officials were actually blocking information flow to the public.[2] The Task Force recommended that Canadians should not only have rights to full, objective and timely information but such rights and obligations should be incorporated into departmental policy, government legislation and a new constitution to guarantee freedom of expression.[3]

While the Canadian government was discovering its need for openness with citizens public participation processes were being used successfully with environmental planning issues in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and British Columbia.[4] The 70's saw an expansion of such activity when the transportation and electricity industries used participatory processes to select routes and power line corridors. Airport planning and landfill site selection also relied on the participative approach followed by the mining, gas and oil industries. By the 1980's the forestry industry had followed suit.[5]

During the 1970's, participation became mandated in Ontario as part of the municipal land use planning process. Legislation standardized the timing and means of citizen access to the planning cycle. The intent was to ensure citizen input at an earlier stage of

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[2] Government of Canada, "Task Force on Government Information Final Report – To Know and Be Known," (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969), p.80.
[3] Ibid. p.54.
[4] Desmond M. Connor, "Public Participation in Canada: Development, Current Status and Trends," p.2.
[5] Ibid. p.2.

the process so their views could help shape plans being developed rather than oppose them at the stage of implementation. Participation was moving upstream.

In 1979 a conference titled, "Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments" was convened to explore the extent to which participatory democracy might be realized. Academics, businesspeople, lawyers, journalists, civil servants, politicians, policy analysts, citizen activists and labour representatives debated participation from their respective frames of reference.

J. Alex Corry, Chair of the Institute for Public Policy, told the conference that not only were citizens incapable of understanding the complexity of public affairs, but public apathy was preferable to increasing citizen expectations of what government should do. Corry's solution to the malaise between government and the people was representative and responsible government by a knowledgeable elite in which the populace could place renewed trust.[6] Professor J. King Gordon proposed an alternative view that the interdependence of people and governments created a situation where governments could no longer act alone but had to engage citizens.[7]

The lawyer Bayless Manning proffered that participation would cause the principle of one man one vote to become one man one veto. He believed participation would lead to chaos in governance.[8] Tom Kent, President of Sydney Steel and a former senior civil servant, saw an urgent need for participatory processes. He based his view on factors

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[6] J. Alex Corry, "Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments," H.V Kroeker (ed.); Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments, (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1981), pp.3-12.
[7] J. King Gordon, "Past is Prologue," Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments, ed. H.V. Kroeker, (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1981), p. 20.
[8] Bayless Manning, "The Limits of Law as a Substitute for Community Responsibility," Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments, ed. H.V. Kroeker, (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1981), pp.23-30.

such as technology, communication, interdependence among people and the growing complexity of government decisions.[9]

Michael Pitfield, Clerk of the Privy Council Office, believed that participation would merely pit citizens against government and dilute government responsibility to decide. He supported his position with the claim that citizens were interested less in participation and more in how they could work the system in order to secure a government grant. Robert Bryce, a Director of the Economic Council of Canada encouraged the growth of participation but felt it could be most constructive if channeled through existing government processes and structures.[10]

Dalton Camp, journalist and former President of the Conservative Party of Canada, stated quite plainly that citizen participation was not necessary. The best form of participation, for those intent on having input, would be to join the civil service.[11] The debate was capped with the views of Kitson Vincent, founding Director of the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee. Ms. Vincent pointed out that the cry for participation was not a precursor to the decline of government credibility but a response to the resulting malaise, an attempt by people to re-establish their connection with their government.[12] The conference highlighted the residing reluctance of government to engage citizens who were asking for the opportunity. It is noteworthy that communications, inter-relatedness, the complexity of policy issues, technology and

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[9] Tom Kent, "Parliamentary Government and Citizen Involvement: A Conference Summation," Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments, ed. H.V. Kroeker, (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1981), pp.32-33.

[10] Robert Bryce, "Citizen Involvement in Policy Formation Through Commissions, Councils and Committees, Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments, ed. H.V. Kroeker, (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1981), pp.60-61.

[11] Dalton Camp, "The Limits of Political Parties in Citizen Involvement and Control of Government," Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments, ed. H.V. Kroeker, (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1981), pp. 150-151.

[12] Kitson Vincent, "Commentary," ," Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments, ed. H.V. Kroeker, (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1981), p. 138

increasing education levels were already on the radar screen as factors pushing the participation agenda.

In 1981, the Privy Council Office issued a communications policy that had been recommended by the Task Force on Information in 1969. The policy affirmed the right of Canadians to full, accurate and timely government information and defined the government's responsibility to not only provide that information but to remain informed about the needs of all Canadians.[13] In 1982, the Canadian Constitution guaranteed Rights of Freedom of Expression. In 1990, Freedom of Information legislation was proclaimed in Ontario. The foundations for participation as part of the democratic process were being codified.

The actualization of involvement processes continued through the 1990's with research, evaluation and testing of participatory methods. The Canadian Centre for Management Development conducted two studies in 1992. One used the experiences of the Royal Commission on National Passenger Transportation, to elucidate the relationship between consultation and making decisions.[14] The second study reviewed the public consultation process used by the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future, to document and evaluate participatory tools.[15]

In 1999 Corrections Canada hosted a workshop in collaboration with the Institute of Governance, during which key actors in the public and voluntary corrections sector

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[13] Government of Canada, "Privy Council Office, Government Communications: Principles and Mandates," (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, July 31 1981), p.1.
[14] Government of Canada. Consultation When the Goal is Good Decisions, Government of Canada Publications, 1 p., Online, Internet, March 19 2003.
    Available: www.publications.gc.ca/control/publicationInformation?searchAction=2&publi
[15] Government of Canada. Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future Report on the Consultative Process, Government of Canada Publications. 1 p. Online, Internet, March 19 2003
    Available: www.publications.gc.ca/control/publicationInformation?searchAction=2&publi

developed a plan for using participatory processes in working with citizens.[16] In March 2000 the Centre for Public Dialogue tabled a training program for the federal government. It was developed through a partnership of eighteen departments and agencies and piloted in several parts of the country.[17] In 2001 and 2002 Transport Canada, Natural Resources Canada and the Petroleum Industry convened citizens' forums in five regional centres to deliberate on the means to lower fuel emissions.[18] In 2002, the Romanow Commission tabled its report on the Future of Health Care in Canada. The Romanow consultation had been informed by earlier studies and pilots. The Commission gathered the views of Canadians through twenty one days of open public hearings, twelve televised policy dialogues and the completion of eighteen thousand consultation workbooks by people in their local communities.

The evolving sophistication and application of participatory processes through time and within different jurisdictions provides the context within which municipalities have begun to adopt participation. Hamilton Wentworth's sustainable development project involved thousands of citizens over more than five years in the development and implementation of strategies. Town hall meetings, focus groups, visioning sessions, community forums, implementation teams, newsletters, media campaigns and exhibits were some of the methods employed by the project from 1990 to 1995.[19] The government of Metropolitan Toronto acknowledged the participative approach through facilitated citizen involvement in the development of a multicultural race relations policy for social housing programs

[16] Rowena Pinto, "Citizen Engagement Workshop," Correctional Service of Canada Sector Reports, 4 pp., Online, Internet, March 19 2003, p.1.
         Available: www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/pblct/letstalk/2000/vol1/20_e.shtml
[17] Centre for Public Dialogue, Public Dialogue: Pilot Program, (Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, March 2000).
[18] Public Policy Forum, The Citizens' Forum on Personal Transportation, Energy Efficiency and Environmental Impacts, 3 pp., Online, Internet, December 30 2002, p.1.
         Available: www.ppforum.com
[19] "Creating a Sustainable Community: Hamilton Wentworth's Vision 2020," 9pp., Online, Internet, August 7, 2003, pp.1-3.
         Available: www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/unesco/most/usa4.html

and community advisory committees supporting policy development in Homes for the Aged.[20]

The City of Ottawa is currently engaging citizens in thirty discrete consultation processes which include street name changes, environmental assessment and housing policy.[21] Kingston has involved more than one thousand citizens in its strategic planning process.[22] The Municipal Information Systems Association (MISA) published a 2002 progress report on municipal e-government in Ontario. Fifteen of twenty municipalities indicated that they had initiated public involvement processes through their web sites.[23]

This abridged history spanning eighty years illustrates the progression of participation as a means of decision-making. It illustrates that participation has grown beyond a debatable idea to a subject of study, refinement and increasingly sophisticated applications. It is interesting that in Ontario, despite regressive provincial policies and legislation such as the omnibus bill that restricts public access, municipalities are forging ahead with comprehensive and sophisticated approaches to gathering and applying public advice. The persistence of participation informs us of several things. It appears to be something that cannot be stopped or circumvented. It is supported in law and is being incorporated into existing government processes. It is impacting how decisions are made and sometimes the shape of those decisions. It is valued inasmuch as it is being assessed, refined and taught. It includes many people but not all people.

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[20] "Metro Toronto's Changing Communities: Innovative Responses Canada," 7pp., Online, Internet, August 7 2003, p.3.
    Available: www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/unesco/most/usa9.html
[21] City of Ottawa. Public Consultation – List of Ongoing Public Consultations 1p., Online, Internet, July31 2003.
    Available: http://ottawa.ca/public_consult/index_en.shtml
[22] City of Kingston, The Focus Community Strategic Plan, 1p., Online, Internet, August 1 2003.
    Available: http://www.city.kingston.on.ca/cityhall/strategic/index.asp
[23] Municipal Information Systems Association. Online: A Progress Report on Municipal e-Government in Ontario, (Toronto: MISA, March 2002), pp. 7,10,31.

PUBLIC OPINION AND CITIZEN ACTIVISM: POSITIONING PARTICIPATION

The history of participation shows that it is becoming a part of how local governments function. This suggests that it must have some benefits and that there are motivating forces that have pushed it over the government blockade of years ago. But what is behind this phenomenon and what implications does it have for how participation will be applied in the future? The answer lies in part back in the past.

A 1950 opinion poll discovered that elected leaders were regarded by eighty percent of respondents as trustworthy. Fifty years later only twenty five percent of the population expressed trust for elected leaders.[24] More recent polls indicate that trust in political leaders continues to decline but support for citizen involvement in government is on the rise. For example, sixty eight percent of the general public have indicated that we could solve most of our big problems if decisions were brought to people at the grassroots.[25] A 1999 poll by EKOS Research Associates corroborates this sentiment. Citizen respondents rate their actual influence over government to be twenty six percent but believe it should stand at a seventy eight percent level. Eighty seven percent of respondents to this poll indicated that government's must place more emphasis on consulting citizens.[26] These views are found in poll after poll.

An EKOS poll conducted in 2002, found that eighty two percent of Canadians feel government will make better decisions if citizens act as partners. Eighty one percent feel that more emphasis on citizen involvement will strengthen democracy in Canada.[27]

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[24] Jack Layton, "Luncheon Address," Crossing Boundaries Conference," Ottawa, May 8 2003.
[25] Carolyn Bennett, "Democracy in the Information Age," York University, Monday January 13 2003, 5 pp., April 7 2003, Online, Internet, p. 2.
          Available www.crossingboundaries.com
[26] Ekos Research Associates Inc., "Citizen Engagement and Globalization: Hearing the Public Voice - September 1 1999," 24 pp., Online, Internet, March 21 2003.
          Available: http://www.cprn.com/ekos_e.htm
[27] "Citizen Engagement," Ottawa Citizen, October 21 2002, 3 pp., Online, Internet, February 1 2003, p. 1.

Clearly the desire among the population to participate in government decision-making is persistently high and moving higher. An EKOS-Frost Foundation Poll conducted at two year intervals measured public support of the statement, "I would feel better about government decision-making if I knew the government regularly sought informed input from average citizens." In 1998, eighty percent of respondents agreed with the statement. Two years later, the response rate had risen to eighty four percent.[28]

This disenchantment with government is also reflected in voter turnout. Federal turnout has dropped from an average of seventy two percent during the 1970's to sixty one percent in the 2000 election. Ontario provincial turnout declined to fifty eight percent in the most recent election.[29] Ontario municipal turnout hovers in the thirty percent to thirty five percent range, typified by Burlington with a thirty percent rate and Hamilton with thirty five percent. There is a rift between voters and governments evident in both opinion and election polls. While citizens decry the lack of legitimacy in government decisions that seem to ignore them, their reluctance to go to the polls at election time is exacerbating the legitimacy issue. Governments are being elected and effecting policy with very small portions of the popular vote. For example, in the last Calgary municipal election only thirty five percent of eligible voters cast a ballot for mayor. The mayor was elected with only nine percent of the popular vote.[30]

There are efforts to bring electors back to the polls. Canada Post's Vote by Mail Program has resulted in some modest rebounds. But the decline in voting and decline in

Available www.canada.com/ottawa/ottawacitizen/
[28] Julia Abelson, "The Meaning of Meaningful Citizen Engagement: Citizens Contributing to Resource Allocation Decisions," Presentation to the XXIIIeme Colloque Jean Yves Rivard, Montreal, June 11 2003, n. pag., Online, Internet, July 30 2003.
Available: www.mdas.umontreal.ca/jyrivard/ppt/bloc_3/ABELSON.ppt
[29] John Ibbitson, "Walking Away From Government," Toronto Globe and Mail, (October 21 2002), 3pp., Internet, Online, July 29 2003, p. 1.
Available www.globeandmail.com
[30] Participatory Democracy Group, "Get Involved," 4pp. Online, Internet, July 26 2003, p.1.
Available: www.socialaction.ca/why_involved/voter_apathy_analysis.html

deference towards government is not an issue of making voting more convenient. Polls indicate that trust in government is down but interest in engaging with government to ensure appropriate policy development is high. Citizens still seem to be searching for that connection with their governments, which Kitson Vincent spoke of twenty four years ago. A number of Calgarians who sought this connection formed the Participatory Democracy Group to raise public awareness about the issue of accountability and to promote a participatory connection with their local government.[31] The city took up the challenge and created a forum to explore the development of meaningful forms of participation. In 2001, the city initiated a complete review and renewal of how it engages citizens in civic issues. The result is a process that is establishing policies and methodologies of public participation that are consistent with research results of 'best practices' obtained from other cities.[32]

National activist organizations have also taken up the cause of citizen involvement in the interests of developing efficacious participative methods. The Canadian Council on Social Development conducted a study on citizen engagement to build knowledge and capacity for participatory processes. The ensuing report identified meaningful participation as a process that:

1. Involves individual and group participation
2. May be initiated by government, intermediary institutions or citizens
3. Includes expression and exchange of views, deliberation, reflection and learning
4. Obliges all participants to inform themselves and provide adequate information to others
5. Is marked by an open, inclusive, fair and respectful process which may be facilitated

[31] Participatory Democracy Group. Get Involved. 4 pp. Online. Internet. July 26 2003
       Available: www.socialaction.ca/why_involved/voter_apathy_analysis.html
[32] City of Calgary, "What is the Citizen Engagement Project?" n. pag., Online, Internet. July 31 2003.
       Available http://www.calgary.ca/cweb/gateway/gateway.

6. Has a flexible schedule that permits deliberation to continue until an adequate decision or outcome is reached

7. Is accountable to the participants in that it provides feedback on decisions that are reached and on their implementation.[33]

The move to identify a model and to define best practices of participation is not merely the pre-occupation of a few pockets of interest. The Canadian International Development Agency offers an internship on citizen participation in local government.[34] The World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS) holds a world assembly every three years where representatives of civil society from around the world convene to share experiences and deepen capacity for participatory relationships with governments at all levels.[35]

Public opinion, citizen activism and the interests of municipalities seem to be heading toward a point of concordance about participation. There are citizens cynical about politicians and reluctant to vote yet they are seeking a closer relationship with government. Local politicians and civic administrators are acknowledging the practical aspects of participation through strategic planning with broad citizen dialogue and a multitude of projects to engage citizens in shaping policy. Activist organizations are focusing on participation as a means to restore accountability and legitimacy in government. These forces suggest a realignment of the relationship between citizens and governments, one where representative democratic procedure is complemented with deliberative processes.

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[33] "Talking with Canadians: Citizen Engagement and the Social Union- Executive Summary," Canadian Council on Social Development, July 19 2000, 3 pp., Online, Internet, February 19 2003, p.1.
Available: www.ccsd.ca/pubs/archive/twc/es_twc.htm

[34] Canadian International Development Agency. "Citizen Participation in Local Government Intern," (Peru), n. pag., Online, Internet, July 31 2003.
Available: http://www.acdicida.gc.ca/cida

[35] Civicus, "2001 World Assembly," n. pag., Online, Internet, July 30 2003.
Available: http://www.civicusassembly.org/

THE LITERATURE: POTENTIAL OF PARTICIPATION

In its research on citizenship and governance, Canadian Policy Research Networks identifies the need for greater citizen involvement as one of the principal challenges in the relationship of governments with the governed.[36] Neil Bradford grounds this issue at the municipal level with his observation that local governments everywhere are grappling with economic, social and cultural challenges well outside the traditional municipal role. Bradford identifies more inclusive planning processes at the local level as the way out of this morass.[37]

Bradford's view of the onerous municipal agenda reflects the Ontario Government Local Services Realignment that devolved a plethora of important services to municipalities with no new revenue.[38] The purview of councils burgeoned to include additional roads, local airports, transit, social housing, income support programs, child care and public health. Sewers and development charges had to share the local agenda with health and social policy.

The tension of realignment was wound tighter through municipal amalgamations. The expansion of geographic boundaries contributed to greater population diversity, new levels of complexity around issues and a more robust scale of required solutions. The handmaid of amalgamation, reduction in the size of municipal councils, fastened the screws tighter yet. Fewer councilors were required to solve a greater number of

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[36] Canadian Policy Research Networks, "Citizenship and Governance: Some Research Questions," n. pag., Online, Internet, March 5 2003, p. 8.
     Available: http://www.cprn.org

[37] Neil Bradford, "Why Cities Matter: Policy Research Perspective for Canada," Canadian Policy Research Networks Discussion Paper No.F\23 June 2002, 66 pp., Online, Internet, April 2003, p.29.
     Available: www.cprn.org

[38] "Your Local Government - New Municipal Responsibilities," 2pp., Online, Internet, July 26 2003, pp.1-2.
     Available www.yourlocalgovernment.com

complex problems on behalf of more constituents who vote less and make their opinions known more. CPRN and Bradford's views on participation reflect a belief that solutions can be found if people and governments can get together in a deliberative and inclusive fashion. But do they really want to?

Pamela Sopp's case study of participation in three municipalities found that local governments recognize value in citizen involvement. Local administrators reported that citizen input augments the pool of knowledge brought to bear on an issue. They acknowledged that citizens often bring concerns, options, strategies and potential solutions to an issue that may not have been addressed by municipal staff.[39] Another study corroborated this finding. Civic managers of four municipalities reported that citizen involvement is a reality and a help to municipal policy-making. Their comments highlighted the ease of citizen access to politicians due to internet technology, the growing awareness of politicians to seek public input, the impact that input has on focusing staff efforts and the improvements that can be realized in implementation.[40]

The political rationale for citizen input was succinctly summarized by the Honourable Paul Martin, in an address to the Crossing Boundaries Conference. Mr. Martin stressed two advantages. First it is necessary to bring people into the decision-making web of government so government can fulfill its job of making anticipatory decisions. Secondly, participation is required so everyone can be in the room at the same time to determine the trade-offs in slicing the finite economic pie.[41]

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[39] Pamela Sopp, "Structured Decision-making and Public Participation in Local Government," MPA Research Report (August 1994) submitted to Local Government Program, Department of Political Science, University of Western Ontario, p.41.
[40] Ron Coristine, "Participatory Democracy: Illegitimate Child or the People's Choice?" Final Paper for Masters of Public Administration Local Government Program Course PA 904, University of Western Ontario, Local Government Program, (March 27 2003), pp.15-16.
[41] Paul Martin, "E-Government: Extending Public Space," Crossing Boundaries Conference, May 8 2003.

Ursula Stelman's study of Winnipeg's Main Street revealed that decades of inability to create a space where everyone could live, hinged in large part on an avoidance of the multiple views of the many stakeholders in the area. There was no willingness to slice the pie so everyone could have some. Stelman concluded that "Government efforts should be directed at facilitating participative processes to shape a collective urban value system...." and that "Local government is not constitutionally capable of solving the problems...without the real support of....the business community and the stakeholders involved."[42] Subsequently the City of Winnipeg launched a highly participative strategic planning process that culminated in a long range vision for the city.

In a case study of the strategic planning process of a small town / rural municipality, both the mayor and a councilor who were interviewed indicated that more input results in better ideas and a greater likelihood of outcomes that benefit the community generally.[43] In the Greater Vancouver Regional District a highly inclusive participatory process was established to renew its Livable Region Plan. The consultation with citizens spanned fourteen months and incorporated regional seminars, a public survey, community meetings, and televised phone-in programming. This was followed by two more years of synthesis and broad public involvement.[44]

These several examples illustrate that there is a willingness in local government to engage citizens, that citizens are participating, that their views inform the debate and that their involvement is acknowledged as a positive addition. This suggests that it is possible to meet the challenge of more citizen engagement identified by the Canadian Policy Research Networks and Neil Bradford.

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[42] Ursula M. Stelman, "Winnipeg's Main Street: A Search for Meaning," (London: University of Western Ontario), p.73.

[43] Ron W. Coristine, "Strategic Planning at the Local Level: A Framework for Democracy." Final Paper for Masters of Public Administration Local Government Program Course PA 923, University of Western Ontario, Local Government program, (June 28 2002), p.9.

[44] C. Richard Tindal and Susan Nobes Tindal, "Local Government in Canada," (Scarborough: Nelson Thomson, 2000), p.338-339.

While there are politicians and citizens who want to get together through a participatory process, there remain pockets of resistance or perhaps ignorance. An analysis by Andrew Sancton of the annexation process in the City of London and the need to draw a new boundary provides an example of participation that does not work. Sancton identified several impediments in the process. He noted that meetings were poorly attended, the purpose of meetings ill-defined and that citizen comments did not seem to get translated into the decisions being made. There was the appearance of participation but no substance. Sancton's analysis of the problems in this process identified elements of an effective participatory process. It must include terms of reference that are broad enough to support meaningful participation. Decisions must be made with due consideration of input or in partnership with citizens. An educative process that includes the dissemination and use of information is a requirement where the topic is highly specialized or technical.[45] The London case also informs us that not all things may be worth a consultation. If there is only one right way to draw a boundary or only one way that will be permitted under the circumstances then there is no use asking people for input on the best way to do it.

Leslie Pal provides another perspective on the pitfalls of poorly executed participative processes. He observed that citizens became suspicious of the process when they were repeatedly consulted and noticed their views had no impact on outcomes. Consultation became synonymous with undermining rather than underpinning participatory processes since it was essentially a one way communication.[46] The cynicism and withdrawal that has been produced by participation concerned with appearances rather than outcomes, has given rise to a new conceptualization of involvement as a reciprocal and interactive communication process. A 1998 Report of the Association of Professional Executives of

[45] Andrew Sancton, "Negotiating, Arbitrating, Legislating: Where was the Public in London's Boundary Adjustment?" Citizen Engagement, ed. K. A. Graham and S.D.Phillips, (Toronto: The Institute of Public Administration, 1998), pp.163-187.
[46] Leslie A. Pal, "Beyond Policy Analysis," (Scarborough: Thomson Learning, 2001), p.258.

the Public Service of Canada noted, "...the core of the new governance...entails the dawn of a new era of 360-degree accountability.[47]" Opinion polls and the concerns of so many actors indicates there is a need for an infrastructure that supports interactive engagement between citizens and government.

King, Felty and Susel have also contributed to understanding what goes wrong with participation and how to rectify it. They examined the difference between the "appearance of participation," where citizens speak but are not heard and "authentic participation," where dialogue is decidedly two-way. Their review of nine studies identifies three characteristics of participative processes that result in little impact on substance. A non-authentic process is one which is:

1. Contained within normal institutional channels
2. Reliant on administrative systems requiring or dominated by expertise
3. Poorly planned and / or inadequately executed.

The King study also sought to discover best participatory practices. They conducted several focus groups and found that methods such as public hearings, citizen advisory councils, citizen panels and public surveys were poor conductors of citizen views when the above limiting characteristics were present.[48] Their analysis indicated that the problem was not the tool but how it was used or the process in which it was applied. King's research diagnosed the problem as one of administrators tending to place themselves between the issue and the public whence they defend their views and decisions. This results in positioning to defend but not openness to engage. It contributes to citizen judgement and mistrust of both the process and public administrators.

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[47] Ibid. p. 258
[48] Cheryl King and others, "The Question of Participation: Toward Authentic Public Participation in Public Administration," Public Administration Review, July/August 1998, pp.317-320.

It is not difficult to acknowledge that any process that is poorly planned and executed will likely go awry. It is however important to take special note of the other two characteristics of a non-authentic process:

1. Within normal institutional channels
2. Reliant on administrative systems requiring or dominated by expertise.

If King's findings are true then there is danger that the seeds of participation that were planted around the kitchen tables of Nova Scotia may become root-bound in the municipal pots to which they are being transplanted. This implies a need for reform to channels to be used for participation and perhaps the creation of new ones.

King's research lead her to propose a new model of accountability based on values and a participatory framework that are neither assumed or imposed but developed together by citizens and public administrators. King asserts that this reciprocity and mutual accountability are requirements for legitimacy.[49] Legitimacy is necessary to overcome the cynicism and poor productivity associated with participative processes that do not work.

Mutual accountability places the actors on the same side of the table where citizens can bring solutions to the shared problem rather than impart judgements upon a fait accompli.[50] Those in authority must therefore give up some of their control and ownership of the policy issue and process. It is interesting that this is what Michael Pitfield identified as the reason participation was unrealistic at the Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments Conference in 1979. The brief history considered earlier is serving to illustrate how participation is being re-framed from an imposition on

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[49] Ibid. p. 326.
[50] Ibid. p. 321.

government to an integral part of the policy process and from one-way communication to an interactive dialogue.

The accountability and legitimacy that must be accrued to participation require additional investments. King identifies these as education of citizens, re-education of administrators and enabling structures and processes. This is quite a contrast to the reliance on existing structures and processes being proffered in 1979. Moreover King's study suggests that existing structures are part of the problem. The new criteria for success proposed by King are that all participants are heard, have an effect on the situation and are part of the deliberation process from issue framing to decision. Finally, in King's view, authentic participation requires that the public administrator sees it not as an additional duty but an integral part of performing civic business. The administrator is challenged to give up power over the control of the issue, deal with it outside of established hierarchical structures and ensure their job specifications encompass a facilitative role relative to citizen involvement. Further research in this area would be helpful to identify how the civic employee must adapt as participation becomes more prominent.

While the administrator is being encouraged to integrate participation as part of her job, Graham and Phillips report that citizens see participation, not as an add-on but as an integral piece of local government. In 1979, J. Alex Corry proposed that the only guarantee of a sovereign people would be the renewal of trust in representative and responsible government.[51] Professor J. King Gordon noted that interdependence was the driving force that would require participation to be adopted since governments would not be able to function alone. It is interesting to see the apparent resolution of that piece of the debate. Citizens and governments seem to be recognizing their interdependence.

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[51] J. Alex Corry, Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments, ed. H.V. Kroeker, "Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments," (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1981) p.11.

Distrust of politicians is at an all-time high. Renewal is being framed in terms of mutual accountability. Participation is being considered as an integral component of the democratic process.

The work of Graham and Phillips intersects some of the ideas of King. Graham and Phillips point out that the top-down tendency of the civic bureaucracy does not lend itself to authentic participation that results in framing the issues and changing the outcomes. In their view real participation must involve some form of contract between citizens and government.[52] Graham indicates that authenticity of participation requires civic education, citizen responsibility to become informed, citizen acknowledgement of the interests of others, a philosophical change on the part of local governments and methods that allow face to face dialogue.[53] The recipe is not only very close to the one proposed by King but has elements in common with that of the Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN). CPRN's menu of key ingredients for authentic engagement includes a process that is representative, offers assured listening, occurs in a neutral and safe space, is transparent and informative, and has no pre-determined outcomes.[54]

It is worth taking note of Graham's assertion that face to face communication is a requirement. In a world of expanding technology it will be necessary to take an inclusive approach to methods of communication. Face to face may be essential but it cannot exclude other forms.

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[52] K. A. Graham and S.D. Phillips, "Making Public Participation More Effective: Issues for Local Government," Citizen Engagement: Lessons in Participation for Local Government, eds. Graham and Phillips, (Toronto: Institute of Public Administration of Canada, 1998), pp.7-8.
[53] Ibid. pp.13-16.
[54] Karen Jckson, "Public Dialogue: When, Why and How," Canadian Policy Research Networks, (February 1 2002), n pag., Online, Internet, January 15 2003.
  Available: http://www.cprn.org

Phillips and Orsini have also assessed the problems with participation. They affirm the need for significant reform to achieve effective citizen involvement since reliance on the top-down model is not achieving the required results.[55] Phillips and Orsini propose that the theory of participation has evolved to a new level that is better described by the term "engagement." Graham uses the same term and for the same reasons, to describe the two-way dialogue of an interactive and iterative process of deliberation that contributes in meaningful ways to policy decisions in a transparent and accountable manner.[56] There are decided themes of an authentic participation running through the literature.

Phillips and Orsini delve more deeply into the authenticity question through analysis of two broad trends that have significantly altered the governance landscape. One is the move from top-down to horizontal governance. This recognizes that governments acting alone may not have the legitimacy, knowledge or capacity to solve complex social problems. However public policy networks can help governments with this task. Several examples of public policy processes cited earlier provide examples of this trend toward partnership between governments and policy networks.

The second trend is the emergence of the New Public Management that encourages government steering rather than rowing, a smaller bureaucracy and greater reliance on alternative methods of planning and service delivery.[57] The loss of policy capacity and institutional memory of government bureaucracy has left a void into which citizen participation is inserting itself. Citizen engagement is supported in this role by several factors: its roots in the social and political life of communities, evident interest in participation by governments, rising education levels that equip people for deliberative

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[55] Susan D. Phillips and Michael Orsini, "Mapping the Links: Citizen Involvement in Policy Processes," Canadian Policy Research Networks - CPRN Discussion Paper No. F/21 (April 2002), 41 pp., Online, Internet, January 15 2003, p.3.
        Available: http://www.cprn.org
[56] Ibid. p.3
[57] Ibid. p.4-5

processes, ethno-cultural diversity that demands less ethno-centric thought and more inclusion of differences, communication technologies that permit rapid exchange of ideas and finally, the increasing organization of civil society in the form of associations and advocacy groups. All of these factors were identified thirty five years ago during the Conference on Sovereign People or Sovereign Governments. Their potency has sharpened.

The Phillips and Orsini study goes on to define participation as a multi-dimensional process comprised of parallel aspects, which include dimensions of citizen engagement, stages in the policy process and government structures and processes. The detail of their investigation is unnecessary to the current discussion. However what is important for the present purposes is their corroboration of the need to ensure participation takes place within enabling structures.[58] Secondly, their work is indicative of the deepening understanding of the participatory process that has been taking place over several decades.

DEMOCRATIC THEORY: LIMITS ON PARTICIPATION

The disenchantment of voters with politicians and the powerful place that participation seems to be taking within the government process raises a fundamental question. Are we at risk of throwing representational legitimacy out with the move to reciprocal accountability? How do we weave participation into the fabric of democratic practice? Meehan provides some perspective on the aggregation versus participation question. Her review of the literature identifies several arguments against reliance on simple aggregation in today's democracy. While democratic theory upholds the protection of minority rights, Meehan points out that many people in Ireland do not share this confidence. It is worthwhile to take Meehan's point here since Ontario municipalities are

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[58] Ibid. p.26

experiencing the strain of protecting minority rights in diverse communities of many cultures, religious beliefs and interests. Simple aggregation and the protection of minority rights are not necessarily congruent in today's world. The relevance of Meehan's perspective to the Canadian context relative to protecting rights is affirmed with Peter Puxley's words: "What is critical to maintaining commitment to the whole by all groups is a political space within which the search for balance between competing perspectives can take place in a context of equality and respect."[59]

Meehan notes that the success of democracy by voting depends on deference (which is in decline) and satisfaction with a process that limits participative opportunities (which citizens are seeking). She suggests that a better road is one where all those who want to participate can do so, where there is freedom to enter into debate that is inclusive, rational and fair, and where deliberative outcomes may differ from those predicted on the basis of assumptions about equal treatment or majority vote.[60] The Irish perspective on authentic participation is remarkably similar to the one proffered by CPRN and suggests participation as an addition to democratic practices, not a replacement.

The place of deliberation in the democratic framework is tackled directly by Joshua Cohen. He incorporates the idea of deliberation into democratic theory with his views that the "fundamental idea of democratic political legitimacy is that authority to exercise power must arise from the collective decisions of the equal members of society who are governed by that power." Cohen stresses that deliberation is not a procedural ideal but a substantive one that includes egalitarian and liberal political values and thereby these

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[59] Peter Puxley, "A Model of Engagement: Reflections on the 25th Anniversary of the Berger Report," Canadian Policy Research Networks, (August 2002), 14 pp., Online, Internet, September 20 2002, p.3.
    Available: http://www.cprn.org
[60] Elizabeth Meehan, "Reconstituting Politics: Democracy Unbound," Democratic Dialogue Report No. 3 15 pp., Online, Internet, December 30 2002, p.5.
    Available: www.co-intelligence.org/CIPol_ParticDelibDemoc.html

values merge as elements of democracy rather than limitations on it.[61] The literature sounds similar to the views of citizens who insist that participation become an integral part of the democratic process of government.

There are two important points that must enter into a complete consideration of citizen engagement with their governments. First, there is the representative nature of democracy as it has been developed and practiced at the local level. Elected representatives are required to uphold specific responsibilities under the new Ontario Municipal Act and their Council Procedural Bylaw. They face a three-pronged constraint on their decisions: voters at election time, legislation and bylaws during their term and the views of citizens on issues that concern them. Citizen engagement with government must find a place of balance with the competing representative and legislative requirements. Citizen involvement is described as a means to uphold accountability and thereby anchor legitimacy. But it too is in a relationship with other processes. Engagement in whatever form must be considered an element of the democratic process not a replacement for it. In the words of Frederick M. Barnard:

> "A certain trade-off between participating by being internally with
> authority and participating by exercising external control over
> authority – between allowing a discretionary space within which
> governments can effectively function and maintaining a vigilant
> citizenry able to ensure government probity – would therefore
> seem essential. How precisely this balancing act is to be carried
> off is unquestionably a persistent challenge to procedural
> democracy. Its need, however, is borne out by the realization that
> participation at the cost of accountability is a very doubtful gain."[62]

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[61] Joshua Cohen, "Democracy and Liberty," Deliberative Democracy, ed. Jon Elster, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998), pp.186-187.
[62] Frederick M. Barnard, "Democratic Legitimacy: Plural Values and Political Power," (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), p.144.

SILENT MAJORITIES: THE CHALLENGE FOR PARTICIPATION

An important point that must be acknowledged when considering citizen involvement is the silence that emanates from a majority of people who neither vote nor participate. In the words of one Councilor interviewed for the case study under examination here, "Silence is counterproductive." Nevertheless, it is a long established reality that most people do not speak out on issues.

The problem with a small voter turnout cannot be fixed with convenient voting methods and participatory processes alone. There is the nagging question of whether those who are participating are representative of the community of concern. This seems to be a problem with no obvious solution other than to keep plugging away at it. However it would inform the debate and the research on participation if we were to discern the characteristics and preferences of members of that silent majority so they can be compared with those who are active in the democratic process. This would be far more constructive than suggesting everyone have a hand unit into which they can punch their yay or nay on the policy of the day.

There are three other points on the silence of citizens that may help to define some eventual research. First, some people do not want to have anything to do with politics. They may be active members of the community and make their contributions to policy decision in indirect ways. For example, a group of volunteers has been renovating a local landmark for several years. In another example, individuals tend perennial gardens along the local boardwalk because they want to beautify the area. These have become local attractions and contribute to the realization of policies on tourism. Yet their realization didn't require lobbying city hall. It was done by people who wanted to create beauty in their community.

A second point on silent majorities is highlighted by the responses of citizens in the case study to be examined shortly. Respondents indicated that they are involved only in those issues that concern them. This suggests that the silent majority may be a shifting target depending on the issue. It also would indicate that there are more citizens active in all of the issues combined than may appear to be the case when we look at the numbers involved in any one issue.

The third point is that governments were not inducing two-way deliberative dialogue with citizens in the 1980's. They were consulting and deciding. Citizens were speaking and being ignored. It has only been in the last decade that we have made serious strides in studying participation, understanding what makes it work and opening the democratic process to encompass citizen involvement in more meaningful ways. While the new knowledge seems to be trickling down, it may be some time yet before the trickles impact the consciousness of a greater mass of citizens. This is not mere hyperbole. The case study shows that deliberative processes have an effect on learning and on the involvement of individuals in other policy issues. For example, one individual reported that she had never been active in a political issue in her life. Her subsequent involvement in the nutrient management bylaw has lead to interest and participation in another policy issue. However she brings knowledge to the new arena, along with a set of skills in research, public speaking, environmentalism and participatory processes. A second person, also without any previous political interest became involved in the nutrient management issue. He has been sought as a resource person by other groups and has become a highly trained and skilled actor within the municipality. The investment in participation brings returns in social capital. The returns facilitate more citizens involved in more issues, one person and one issue at a time. The silent majority may not be as large as the pessimists believe. Participation may be one ingredient in shrinking it down to a more defined size.

MANIPULATION: THE ACHILLES HEEL OF PARTICIPATION

The "New Engagement" is deliberative and inclusive. It seems new and improved. But are there risks inherent in this post modern model of citizen involvement? It relies on the integrity of the participants to seek the common truth of a matter. Is this reasonable in a world of powerful lobbies and economic imperatives?

There is interesting consideration in the literature, of questions pertaining to how citizen participation may be manipulated. There is the danger of "group think" which blocks out possibilities while the group reinforces its own beliefs. There are famous examples such as the Bay of Pigs Invasion and the explosive demise of one of the Space Shuttles on take-off, that illustrate the power of the group to block information from consideration. There is also the pressure for conformity within a group that may promote conformity of thought. Diego Gambetta reminds us that deliberation improves the allocation of information across the group and offers a potential counterpoint to conformity. Moreover, if we consider the dynamic of the relationship between politicians and voters, we can be assured that citizens are not suddenly going to give up their views.

Another danger arises when an individual brings an eloquence and level of persuasion to the debate that could be used to dupe others. This suggests that there is a shortage of skepticism in any group, which seems unlikely. However, Gambetta argues that even the self-interested and eloquent speaker will not risk losing their long-term credibility in a group for the sake of manipulating the outcome in the short run. Moreover, the group process of dialogue and agreement-seeking contributes to a willing dilution of self-interest in order to make one's position palatable to the group.

Important issues may bring powerful lobbies to the table. They may have the capacity to flood the group with information that favours their position or limit material that detracts

from their views. However, it is exceedingly difficult to do that today. The Internet is only one example of how access to information is being democratized. Moreover the deliberative forms of participation that are being proposed cannot be authentic if they are not open to a variety of sources of information and opinion. The process is after all to reach consensus, agreement or a satisfactory accord among diverse interests and views. However diverse views have the potential to generate an excess of information, producing too many options and resulting in paralysis rather than resolution. Gambetta notes that the generation of options is a pre-requisite to arriving at new solutions.[63] We can probably trust the group to know when they have exhausted all the possibilities.

Gerry Mackie also explores some of the risks in the deliberative forum. He is concerned with the potential for manipulation to control the agenda, shape the scope of the issue, de-rail the process or skew outcomes.[64] This calls to mind the London annexation hearings, so it can happen. Mackie notes that a person who becomes conspicuously inconsistent in their message will be perceived as uninformed or unreliable and thereby weakens their power to manipulate. Mackie reminds us that there are two ways to look at the many threats to the deliberative process: "We do not suffer from deception as the consequence of democracy. Rather, we aspire to democracy as the best way to subdue deception.[65]

An examination of the dark side of participation makes it more three dimensional. It reminds us that any tool may be only as good as the skill with which it is wielded and that skepticism is companion to keeping the integrity in the process.

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[63] Diego Gambetti, "Claro! An essay on discursive Machismi," Deliberative Democracy, ed. Jon Elster, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998), pp.21-23.
[64] Gerry Mackie, "All Men Are Liars," Deliberative Democracy, ed. Jon Elster, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998), p.74.
[65] Ibid. pp.90-92.

A FRAMEWORK FOR AUTHENTIC PARTICIPATION

The phony consultation that was prevalent in some of the popularizing of participation in the 1980's exacerbated the mistrust of people toward authority, raised questions about the legitimacy and accountability of those in power and renewed public insistence on authentic participative opportunity as an integral element of the democratic process. Subsequent evaluation and testing of participatory methods has resulted in a growing body of knowledge about fundamental principles and best practices.

If we are to apply this participation process to effect solid policy outcomes then we must be aware of what can make it work. All participation is not equal. This brings us to the case study of two policy issues and two different participatory processes. In order to examine the evidence in the case and thereby answer the question of whether a deliberative process results in better outcomes than a traditional one, a framework is needed. The several vantage points from which participation has been viewed provide the ingredients for this. The elements of an authentic participatory process are:

1. Enabling

The design of the structures and processes allow the full features of an authentic participation to take place. There are no impediments that cannot be rectified or ameliorated by the group.

2. Inclusive

The process is inclusive relative to participants and information and means of communication. Those affected by and/or with knowledge of the issue, whether citizens, politicians or civic employees, individuals, groups or networks, are part of the process. The process is open to ideas and sources of information that may assist with the deliberative process and resolution of the issue. Face to face communication is essential and complemented with written and electronic means.

3. Horizontal

Control of the process is shared among participants. The process is free of unilateral or hierarchical controls.

4. Iterative

The process is flexible to changes required in gathering information, deliberating, formulating options and making a decision.

5. Educational

Those involved are responsible to acquire new information through self study, training, research, education and dialogue with others involved in the process.

6. Accountable

All participants are kept informed about the process, changes in the process, decisions reached and outcomes achieved. There is recognition that these must correspond to agreements reached during the process and at the conclusion of the process.

7. Comprehensive and Complementary

Participants are involved throughout the process from issue framing up to decision-making. Decision-making is left ultimately in the hands of elected representatives.

8. Deliberative

The process is marked by communication that is respectful of listeners and speakers, relies on the use of objective fact, allows for the expression of values and philosophical preferences and facilitates the sharing and consideration of alternate views.

9. Appropriate

The process is applied to issues where there is opportunity or necessity for participation to take place. The process is not applied to issues where choice is absent due to legislation or objective constraints. The process is not used for trivial matters or to create an appearance of deliberation.

10. Constructive

The process results in decisions and outcomes that are seen by participants and the community as at least reasonable, if not fair and just, given the information, resources

and constraints present. Decisions result in positive outcomes for the well-being of the community. The process contributes to individual and community knowledge about the issue and the participative process. This knowledge can be applied to future issues and shared with other jurisdictions.

A CASE IN TIME: THE MUNICIPALITY OF KINCARDINE

Kincardine is a small urban/rural newly amalgamated municipality on the shores of Lake Huron, one hundred and sixty eight kilometres north of London. Its farming roots have been curtailed for decades with the construction of the Bruce Nuclear Power Plant in the 1970's and the subsequent development of the tourism industry. The power plant employees more than three thousand workers. Restaurants, attractions, campgrounds, hotels and other tourist-related activity employs several thousand more. The population base is twelve thousand. It is estimated to swell to thirty thousand in the summer months.

The two policy issues to be examined are important to many people who are directly affected by them and of concern to many others who live here. The issues are the construction of a water pipeline and the development of a nutrient management bylaw. These policy issues have a great deal in common since they both:
1. Took place within the same small urban/rural municipality
2. Dealt with complex and current issues that require technical knowledge
3. Have significant potential impact on households that are directly affected
4. Are on the agenda of many other municipalities
5. Required several months of study, debate and development during the current term of council
6. Resulted in citizens taking various positions on the issue

7. Involved a broad cross section of citizens from different backgrounds and geographic areas within the municipality

8. Were complicated by amalgamation which brought rural and small urban residents and their respective views and political preferences together into one larger municipality

9. Received extensive and continual coverage in local newspapers

10. Were heavily influenced by the provincial policy agenda that followed from the Walkerton Drinking Water Tragedy; the Report of the Walkerton Inquiry placed the issues of nutrient management and safe drinking water squarely on the public agenda

11. Gained additional profile because they were focal points for controlling growth within the municipality.

While the specifics of the issues themselves are not central to this study, it is helpful to understand them. Briefly, nutrient management is a means to ensure balance between the amount of nutrient (animal waste) being spread on farmland and the amount of nutrient required by the crops that are being grown. A nutrient management bylaw provides the means to ensure a balance among land-based application of nutrients, farm management techniques and crop requirements. This balance extends to maximizing the efficiency of on-site nutrient use and minimizing adverse environmental impact. The profile of the issue, which has always been a concern in rural Ontario, became pronounced in the new awareness following the Walkerton Inquiry. It came to a head when applications were made to the municipality to build large automated barns holding thousands of animals.

The safety of drinking water that had been assumed for generations came under question following the Walkerton Water tragedy. An area of public health that had become secondary through cutbacks and deregulation suddenly regained a prominent

position in the public mind. The consequent Ontario Safe Drinking Water Act legislated new standards for the delivery of water within municipalities. In the municipality in which the case study is situated, the local government conducted a study of its drinking water supply to determine its compliance relative to the new legislation and regulations. The study identified that the eight independent municipally owned water systems were deficient relative to the anticipated Ontario Drinking Water Protection Regulation 459/00 (DPWR). In addition some ratepayers on private wells had requested extension of municipal water services because of problems with their water supply. The study proposed an extension of the municipality's existing water pipeline to serve the Lake Huron shoreline of the northern half of the newly amalgamated municipality. The water pipeline gained in profile not only as a response to the Walkerton Water Inquiry and provincial legislation but also because it would open the Lake Huron shoreline in the northern portion of the municipality to development.

While the two issues had much in common, they were subject to two different processes of citizen participation. These differences were evident to most citizens through newspaper coverage and are corroborated by the primary research findings. The nutrient management bylaw had been initiated by council but the debate overflowed the council chambers when people living in the shadows of proposed factory farms organized themselves to oppose the issuance of building permits. Their concerns included the potential for degradation to groundwater, the unique smell of pig manure greeting tourists and the possibilities for lasting damage to waterways. These concerns emanated from the concomitant and significant nutrient spreading requirements of such large operations. Farmers who had an interest in surviving the shrinking margins on the sale of their products looked to large scale operations as the means to maintain the financial viability of farming. The ensuing debate became public and polarized.

As the debate continued and as the various factions began to speak to one another, polarization gave way to a deliberative process. The process was not neatly planned but it has many characteristics of authentic participation. It included the formation of groups outside the established Council process, the inclusion of people from different backgrounds, different interests and sources of information, intense participant learning, education of council and of the public, long and intense discussions, the generation of options, involvement of citizen participants in framing a new bylaw and recommendations to Council. Citizen participants became highly knowledgeable. Some of the participants continue to be active in the review and approval of nutrient management plans. Others continue to offer their expertise to new issues or to other jurisdictions where nutrient management is a concern.

The water pipeline offered a different profile on citizen engagement. Council hired an engineering firm to conduct a study. The study received guidance from a Technical Steering Committee (composed of civic employees and engineers) and input from a Public Advisory Committee (composed of civic employees, engineers and citizens). Council engaged the Advisory Committee in a process of learning about the pipeline, considering options and talking with their neighbours. Subsequently, Council approved the engineer's proposal for a water pipeline and held open meetings to unveil the plan. The two meetings attracted one hundred twenty one and one hundred sixty persons. While some people attended both meetings, the individual turnout of an estimated two hundred different people is significant considering that there are nine hundred and sixty four persons in the area directly affected by the pipeline.[66] Those who attended were given information and allowed to question councilors, civic administrators and the consulting engineers who prepared the pipeline study.

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[66] Municipality of Kincardine, "Shoreline/Tiverton Water Supply Study Class Environmental Assessment Phase 1 & 2 Study Report and Master Plan," prepared by Pryde, Schropp, McComb, Inc., Kitchener, August 2002, Appendix E Historic Water Consumption.

There were a total of seven written submissions made to council by those in attendance and a letter signed by thirty eight individuals who opposed one of the proposed pipeline routes.[67] The process was marked by people's adherence to processes that were defined by council and council's reaction to submissions, questions and complaints by citizens. Six citizens who had been appointed to the Public Advisory Committee became knowledgeable about the rationale for the decisions made.

A case study of two policy issues in one municipality cannot answer the question about engagement for all municipalities and all issues. However, two policy processes, examined through the lens of a theoretical framework provides perspective from which to answer the question in this one instance and to make reasonable observations about how municipalities might work more effectively with the engine of citizen involvement.

Controls for Threats to Validity

The two issues were selected for this study because they shared several aspects in common but differed in terms of the predominant participatory process that occurred. The two issues therefore provide a reasonable basis on which to make observations pertaining to citizen participation. While the real world does not provide a pure experimental environment, it can provide close approximations of suitable conditions. The issues selected allow for some control on various threats to internal and external validity. First, history as an alternative explanation for differences is minimized since they occur together in time. Second, the testing threat is eliminated since the study involved only one interview with each of thirty two subjects. Instrumentation is controlled since the same interview questions were posed to all subjects by the same interviewer. Selection bias has been minimized through techniques that disallowed the researcher from making any choices of subject. Maturation was controlled by arranging for all

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[67] Municipality of Kincardine, "Shoreline/Tiverton Water Supply Study Class Environmental Assessment Phase 1 & 2 Study Report and Master Plan," Appendix A-3 Agency and Public Correspondence and Appendix B Public Open House Material.

interviews to take place within 30 days. Mortality was not an issue since subjects were interviewed only once.

The interactive effect of any of the above factors could contribute to external threats to validity. However the control effected on each of them individually mitigates against their interactive effects and thereby assures minimal external threats to validity.

Information Sources

The study involved the collection and review of public documents pertaining to the two policy issues. Documents reviewed include minutes of council and committees, newsletters of the pipeline project, newspaper articles, letters to the editor, electronic postings of speeches and discussion papers. Observations were gathered through attendance at an open meeting pertaining to the water pipeline. Finally individual interviews were conducted with eight municipal Councilors, eleven nutrient management citizen participants and thirteen pipeline issue citizen participants.

Interview Design

The interview questions were designed to obtain similar information from each of the three groups. Councilor respondents were asked to answer several of their ten questions separately for each of the nutrient management and water pipeline issues so their experiences and views of the two could be compared. Councilor responses indicated awareness of differences between the two issues and the process that lead to Council decisions. Council interviews served as a control on the responses gathered from each of the two citizen participant policy groups. The complete interview questionnaires appear in the appendices to this study. The type of information being sought through the interview and the relationship of the questions to gathering this data are summarized below.

Interviewee Selection

The sign-in sheets of the two open meetings hosted by Council were used to assemble a list of interviewees for the pipeline issue. It was assumed that attendees would have arrived and signed in to the meeting in a random order. A systematic sampling method was used to select names from the sampling frame. Some of the names were subsequently dropped because addresses or telephone numbers could not be corroborated from local telephone directories. Telephone calls were made on a recurring basis to those remaining on the list. A total of thirteen interviews were completed.

Participants in the nutrient management policy were collected from one of the participants who had been involved with the issue for five years. His extensive knowledge of actors and citizen groups provided a cross section of representatives on both sides of the issue as well as representatives from different citizen groups and farmer groups that had formed to make their case heard. This provided fourteen names. A second nutrient management participant suggested two additional names, one on either side of the issue. Two of the potential respondents could not be reached. One refused to answer any questions. Two respondents could not participate due to pressing matters related to their business. Eleven persons were interviewed.

All councilors were contacted and interviews requested. The mayor and seven of eight councilors were interviewed. The mayor is referred to as a councilor in this report to ensure confidentiality of all respondents.

All potential respondents were advised of the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality requirements pertaining to their responses. Each interviewee was given the choice of an interview by telephone or in person. This resulted in about half of

the interviews for each category of respondent being done in person and half by telephone. One was done via E-mail at the respondent's request.

FINDINGS: CITIZEN RESPONDENTS

General Knowledge of Participation

The first interview item, "Describe your understanding of the term citizen involvement," serves to ensure the two groups are reasonably well matched in terms of their knowledge of participation and that all respondents are operating with sufficient awareness of citizen participation to provide informed responses to the remaining questions.

Responses indicated that citizens were aware of citizen participation as a concept. Nine of the thirteen pipeline respondents and eight of the eleven nutrient management respondents described participation in terms of influencing or changing policy. One of the pipeline participants responded, "do not know." The remaining responses described involvement in less influential terms as asking questions or being informed. Several respondents described participation as a continuum of possibilities from passive to active alternatives. The findings confirm that the two groups are reasonably matched on this variable.

Policy Group

The second question, "Which of the two policy issues have you become involved with?" was used to confirm the respondent's membership in either the water pipeline or nutrient management policy process. None of the citizen interviewees identified involvement with both issues. Consequently, it was deemed that differences in responses could be reasonably attributed to the different experience of each citizen group relative to the policy issue of their involvement.

Reason for Involvement

This third question, "What caused you to become involved?" served to identify any difference between the two groups relative to why they became involved. Eleven of the thirteen pipeline respondents and ten of the eleven nutrient management respondents identified self-interest as their reason for being involved. The groups are reasonably matched on this variable.

Level of Involvement

The fourth question, "How did you become involved?" identified the extent of participation by respondents from each group. All responses were analysed and grouped by type of activity. The activities were then divided into two groups on the basis of higher order (traditional) and lower order (deliberative) of participation. Traditional activities are those that involve use of existing structures and processes such as writing letters and attending meetings. Deliberative activities are those that involve processes outside the established political process or that might be considered reflective of deliberative methods, such as taking courses and developing policy proposals.

The distinction between the two groups is open to some debate. Attendance at meetings includes meetings within the municipal process and meetings of groups that were established outside the municipal structure. Despite these limitations the data serves to illustrate differences between the two groups. If it had been possible to delineate meetings into different categories the data would provide a less conservative comparison than it does. The data appear in Table One.

Table 1: Participative Method by Policy Group (Citizen Interviews Question Four)

PARTICIPATIVE METHOD		Pipeline Group (N=13)		Nutrient Group (N=11)		Both Groups	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
TRADITIONAL	Spoke to Neighbours / Others	7		4		11	
	Read Distributed Material	3		0		3	
	Wrote Letters	3		4		7	
	Signed Petition	2		1		3	
	Attended Meetings	10		9		19	
	Spoke at Meetings	3		6		9	
	Traditional Total	28	80%	24	51%	52	63%
DELIBERATIVE	Personal Research	2		5		7	
	Took Courses	0		3		3	
	Member of a Group/Committee	3		7		8	
	Developed Policy Proposals	0		3		3	
	Participated in Demonstrations	2		2		4	
	Organized a Group	0		3		2	
	Deliberative Total	7	20%	23	49%	30	37%
Grand Total		35	100%	47	100%	82	100%

It is worth noting that this was an open-ended question. There was no list or prompt to assist respondents with making a full declaration of their activity. Citizens involved in the nutrient management issue often cited being members of more than one group or committee. Nevertheless, respondents were only counted once within each method of participation. The data provide an interesting comparison between people involved in a top down controlled process (Pipeline Group) and those in a more deliberative process that took place both within and outside existing political processes and structures (Nutrient Management Group).

Eighty percent of the pipeline respondent activity fell into the "traditional" processes for participation, leaving twenty percent of their activity to fall within the "deliberative" processes. The nutrient management respondents were more evenly split at fifty one percent "traditional" and forty nine percent "deliberative." These results support the literature's description of the two processes, perhaps not with absolute precision, but convincingly enough. One of the most telling comparisons between the two groups is the difference in "deliberative" activity. "Deliberative" process participants were three times more likely to engage in a deliberative method than "traditional" process participants.

It is important to note that deliberative participants were four times more likely to engage in personal research or take courses as part of their involvement in the policy process. The literature indicates that deliberation contributes to social capital in the form of citizens with knowledge and skills gained through the deliberative process. These "educated" actors can bring their skills to new issues and community development activities. Interviews with deliberative participants revealed that some of them had joined established processes to assist with the review and monitoring of nutrient management plans. Others had become involved in newly emerging community issues. At least one had been asked by peers to run for municipal council. This is a significant finding in favour of the community-building capacity of deliberative methods.

This finding supports the views of Carole Patemen and others who have affirmed that democratic behaviour must be learned and if learned can be applied constructively to maintain the democratic functioning of society.[68] Pateman felt that such learning could best take place in the workplace. There is doubt and debate about the potential of the workplace as a cradle of democratic learning despite the attention paid to employee

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[68] Carole Pateman, "Participation and Democratic Theory," (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

empowerment. However the phenomenon of citizens pressing for greater participative opportunities and the evidence of deliberation in the local government policy process suggests that this may be the place and the means to educate citizens about democracy and ensure a vibrant manifestation of democratic practice in society.

Impact on Outcome

The fifth interview question, "Did your participation affect the outcome?" provided a measure of participant influence on the outcome. The literature informs us that deliberative processes, with their opportunities for reasoned discussion, exchange of ideas, learning and consensus-seeking result in greater citizen influence on outcomes.

The responses indicate that thirty one percent of the pipeline group felt their participation had an impact on the outcome, compared to sixty three percent of the deliberative nutrient group. This substantial difference supports the literature. It also has interesting implications for the future of democracy at the local level. If deliberative processes are increasing and if they have a greater perceived impact on outcomes then there should be evidence over time, of higher satisfaction levels with outcomes and with different outcomes than would be realized from a purely representative system. It will be interesting to see, if this trend takes place, whether it is also reflected in a reversal of the distrust of politicians.

Table 2: Impact on Outcome (Citizen Interviews Question Five)

	YES		NO	
	#	%	#	%
Pipeline Group (N=13)	4	31%	9	69%
Nutrient Group (N=11)	7	63%	4	36%
TOTAL (N=24)	11	46%	13	54%

The reported difference in impact on outcome for the deliberative group provides strong evidence that deliberative methods assure the views of citizens are acknowledged.

Future Involvement

This question identifies the willingness of citizens to become involved in another policy issue. The literature speaks of the disenchantment citizens feel when involved in a "non-authentic" or traditional process compared to the relative satisfaction when involved in an "authentic" or deliberative process. There is an implication not only that deliberative methods result in less frustration and therefore greater satisfaction but that citizens will be more willing to engage in a deliberative process than one that is traditional. The numbers of citizens involved in the nutrient management issue is unknown. However, based on the number of neighbourhood and municipal-wide groups that formed it would be reasonable to estimate the number at seventy five people.

Table 3: Willingness to Participate Again (Citizen Interviews Question 6)

	YES		NO	
	#	%	#	%
Pipeline Group (N=13)	12	92%	1	8%
Nutrient Group (N=11)	10	90%	1	10%

Citizens of both groups reflect a strong willingness to participate in local policy processes in the future. This appears despite differences noted between the two groups for other variables such as level of involvement and impact on outcome. These findings may be an echo of results from public opinion polls where citizens rated the need for their involvement in the eighty four to eighty seven percent range. It also suggests that citizen insistence for participation will not be curtailed regardless of which method they experience.

Changes in Participation in the Previous Five Years

Question eight, "...have you noticed any changes in how citizens become involved...?" was included to test for perceived changes in involvement processes over time and to determine if the evolution reported in the literature is perceptible to the average citizen. It was believed that the responses to this question might reveal a difference in perception between the two groups, with deliberative participants noting greater change reflective of their more active involvement. There was no difference in responses between the two groups. It is interesting to note that opinion seems fairly evenly split on whether the level of citizen participation at the local level has changed over the past five years.

Table 4: Changes Noticed in Citizen Participation (Citizen Interviews Question Eight)

	YES		NO	
	#	%	#	%
Pipeline Group (N=13)	6	46%	7	54%
Nutrient Group (N=11)	5	45%	6	55%
TOTAL	11	46%	13	54%

Participation as a Help or Hindrance

Question nine, "Do you find that citizen involvement is a help or hindrance to effective policy development?" served to measure the relative effectiveness of traditional and deliberative processes. A decided majority of all respondents, eighty three percent, saw participation as a help. This result is right in line with national opinion polls cited earlier. One hundred percent of the nutrient / deliberative group rated participation as a help. Sixty nine percent of the pipeline / traditional group rated it as a help. These are strong marks in favour of the deliberative approach. It is interesting that such a large proportion

of the pipeline participants rated participation as a help despite their general disappointment with the experience of the process.

Table 5: Participation as a Help or Hindrance (Citizen Interviews Question Nine)

	HELP		HINDRANCE	
	#	%	#	%
Pipeline Group (N=13)	9	69%	4	31%
Nutrient Group (N=11)	11	100%	0	0%
TOTAL (N=24)	20	83%	4	17%

FINDINGS: THE VIEWS OF COUNCILORS

The governed and their governments are locked into a relationship. Consequently, in determining the answer of whether deliberative participation works better than traditional involvement, it is necessary to gather views from both parties. The responses of councilors do not run contrary to those of citizens. Both parties note that participation has changed during the past five years. Councilors report a higher level of agreement on this question, perhaps because they are on the receiving end of all participation occurring. However the comments of both councilors and citizens who perceive changes in citizen involvement indicate that it is in the direction of greater participation.

Councilors and citizens are in agreement that participation is a help to effective policy development. Nutrient policy participants are aligned with Council on this at one hundred percent. It is interesting that the water pipeline participants, who were subject to a top-down process within existing structures/processes, are less enthusiastic about the capacity of participation as a help.

Table 6: Changes in Citizen Participation (Councilor Interviews Question Seven)

QUESTION	RESPONSES	
	YES	NO
Have you noticed changes in citizen involvement?	7	1

Illustrative Comments from Councilors Concerning Changes Noticed in Participation:

• Citizens are involved more quickly than ten to twelve to years ago.

• Yes, increased levels of education result in more participation; younger people are more involved; older are involved if it affects them directly.

• Amalgamation has resulted in a huge increase in awareness among council of the importance of participation.

• There has been greater involvement in the last three years.

Table 7: Participation as a Help (Councilor Interviews Question Eight)

QUESTION	RESPONSES	
	HELP	HINDRANCE
Is citizen involvement a help or hindrance to effective policy development?	8	0

Illustrative Comments from Councilors Concerning Participation as a Help or Hindrance:

• Have to involve citizens or we could go down the wrong road; listening is important so we don't become reactive.

• We need to know both sides to make a rational decision and know what people really want; local government impacts citizens to a greater degree than other levels of government.

• Depends on the approach; rhetoric can be a hindrance; I have time for astute arguments.

• Silence is counterproductive because Council cannot discern the weight of community values.

- Citizens and Council have a duty to weigh the evidence. Citizens have a duty to make their views known.

FINDINGS: THE VIEWS OF CITIZENS AND COUNCILORS

There is strong congruence of views about participation on the part of citizens and councilors. But what changes would each of the parties make to participative processes for the future? The data in Table Nine indicate that one hundred percent of councilors and nutrient participants would make changes to the participative process. It is interesting that pipeline respondents are almost equally split on the question. The difference between pipeline respondents on the one hand and councilors and nutrient respondents on the other, may be a reflection of the pipeline group's less positive perception of participation as a help to effective policy development. It may also be influenced by their view that participation has less impact on policy outcomes. Perhaps the most telling piece in the responses to this question is the high level of concurrence on strengthening the capacity for dialogue between electors and councilors.

It is intriguing that the nutrient management citizen group and Councilors are more closely aligned on several variables than are the two groups of citizens to one another. This may be a reflection of the relative disempowerment that the pipeline citizens experienced through a policy process that informed them of the decision and provided them with the justification for it. There was little room for speaking to councilors and civic employees from the same side of the table. The open meetings were marked with judgement on the part of citizens and defense on the part of the municipality. The representative of the engineering firm who attended one of the open meetings was seen by some participants as condescending. Many pipeline respondents had a lot to say about what was wrong with the pipeline policy. Many nutrient participants observed that the nutrient management bylaw was not perfect but there was far less criticism of the

process and the outcome and a much greater sense of influence over the shape of one's community.

These findings indicate that the traditional method of top down consultation to inform and allow questions may not only be inferior to deliberative approaches but may have several disadvantages. It may not only be frustrating to citizens and constraining to the well-being of the democratic process but it may also be limiting the potential of citizens to contribute to the well-being of the community. These findings are suggestive. It will require further research to determine if it is so. However it is apparent that there is a rift between Council and those affected by the pipeline policy which requires mending.

Table 8: Make Changes to Local Participation Process
(Councilor Interviews Question 9 and Citizen Interviews Question 10)

	YES		NO	
	#	%	#	%
Pipeline Group (N = 13)	7	54%	6	46%
Nutrient Group (N = 11)	11	100%	0	0%
Citizen Total (N = 24)	18	75%	6	25%
Councilors (N = 8)	8	100%	0	0%

Illustrative Comments Concerning Proposed Changes To Participation:

Pipeline Citizens:

- Local politicians should be more involved with people between elections.

- More honest answers; there should be greater weight given to the number of people for and against an issue and respect that instead of ignoring it.

- Design a way for people to be heard more...some process rather than an angry exchange.

- Use the web site more for information and feedback.

Nutrient Citizens:

- Improve the process; we need options for input.

- Greater influence over political outcomes.

- More opportunity to speak to Council.

- Council should set up committees on issues as a proactive rather than reactive strategy.

- Create Citizen Advisory Councils and open the process to new people.

Councilors:

- Allow more citizens more time to ask questions directly of Council.

- Add an open session of Council for people to speak.

- Would increase involvement of citizens because it pays huge dividends.

- Yes, an open forum at the end of Council meetings; arrange a debate on cable twice a week.

- Greater involvement is necessary because all decisions hinge on citizen input.

FINAL WORDS FROM COUNCILORS AND CITIZENS

Members of Council and citizens were asked to offer any additional observation about citizen involvement. They did not shy away from engaging one another with challenges, observations and advice – all speaking to the theme of a closer relationship between the government and the governed. A sample of illustrative comments appears below.

<u>Last Words From Councilors:</u>

- Council cannot function properly without citizen involvement. If I don't understand what ratepayers want, I can't vote properly.

- Groups with self-interest need to look at the big picture. How would that change their views?

- My role is to get people involved...it's the most important part of my job.

- Just be there; don't pay attention to government only at election time.

Last Words From Citizens:

- Politicians should be more diplomatic and forthcoming with good information rather than dictatorial because then the hackles come up and people go against them.
- Citizen involvement is the only way to become part of the community.
- We must use it (participation) or lose it because otherwise a government becomes less democratic.
- With downloading they (councilors) don't have the resources and knowledge to know what to do.

THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

"Does deliberative participation result in a more satisfactory outcome than a traditional method of participation?" The evidence with which to consider this question has been gathered from a history of participation, public opinion, the activity of participatory advocacy groups and the literature. History illustrated how participation has been part of the social and political landscape for several decades, how it has been misapplied or misunderstood through its consultation phase of one way communication and how it is maturing into an interactive tool that complements the need of politicians to know. Public opinion informed the consideration by showing the public mistrust of politicians and the insistence of citizens for greater say in their government. Public policy groups and social activist organizations have supported the transition to a deliberative relationship between citizens and governments with their evaluative studies, research and facilitative role in managing participative processes to inform government and train citizens. The literature has complemented the historical and public opinion perspectives on participation and has also contributed elements of an authentic participatory process.

This grounding provided a lens through which to view citizen involvement in two municipal policy processes.

In anticipation of offering an answer to the question it is necessary to take one more step. It will be helpful to compare the two policy processes in a more detailed way against the elements of the framework for authentic participation. During this comparison it will be appropriate to remember that real world processes are not pristine in their adherence to one model or another. The findings may be compelling but they are subject to the inconsistencies and complexities of the world in which governments and citizens must function.

A Comparison of Two Policy Processes Within the Framework for Authentic Participation

1. Enabling

The pipeline policy relied on the structures and processes determined by Council. Some citizens took it upon themselves to go beyond these processes by writing letters to the editor and to Council and through the signing of a petition. However there was no additional structures that enabled a deliberative dialogue between Council and citizens. The nutrient management policy was initiated by Council but citizens concerned for their properties and the environment established a process beyond the purview of Council. This allowed them to delve into the issue through face to face dialogue. They arrived at a position from which to engage Council in re-framing the issue through a new bylaw. The nutrient group process had more enabling features than the pipeline process.

2. Inclusive

The pipeline group was subject to a process that informed them, but excluded them from deliberation. There was detailed and expert engineering information available on the rationale and planning of the pipeline but no opportunity for citizens to shape it with their views. A representative sample of six citizens was invited into the advisory process

where they reviewed the evidence of the engineers and reached concurrence. The nutrient management group was marked by citizens organizing their own processes within which they could fully examine the issue with new information which they gathered from one another, from the web and from personal study. The nutrient group process was distinguished by an inclusive process. The process of the pipeline group allowed for some inclusion of actors and ideas but only within the constraints of the engineer's perspective and Council's prior decision.

3. Horizontal

The pipeline process was controlled from the top by Council and the expertise of the engineers. The nutrient management process was driven by citizens who worked in several groups separated by geography but self-managed and willing to share information and intelligence. Citizens and farmers initially kept to their separate groups. A proposal from a Councilor initiated a Nutrient Management Steering Committee that included representatives of all positions. The silos were broken in favour of a process that crossed boundaries. This does not adhere to the model but it adds to the possibilities that Council can drive the deliberative process along with citizens.

4. Iterative

The pipeline process followed a timetable of meetings set by Council. Open meetings and citizen delegations to Council resulted in some re-consideration of implementation details. A citizens group formed to challenge the pipeline extension into one newly amalgamated area of the municipality. This resulted in some direct negotiations between the group and Council and a deal was reached on the side. While this process was more confrontational than deliberative, it was effective. The nutrient process was marked by the emergence of groups in neighbourhood kitchens as new barn permit applications were received by the municipality. These groups exchanged information and developed new strategies as required. A Nutrient Management Study Team was

established to allow all interests to be present at the table and for differing positions to be made known and considered. The process extended over several years.

5. Educational

Pipeline citizens were informed at open meetings, through the media and via material available on the municipal web site. Citizen members of the advisory committee acquired extensive knowledge of the pipeline and engineering considerations. Nutrient management participants took courses to learn more about nutrient management, conducted personal research on the issue and exchanged information via the web. Nutrient Group members met with Council to inform and educate them about the issues related to nutrient management and large barn operations.

6. Accountable

Pipeline citizens were informed of the decision reached through the press and at open meetings. Nutrient participants were in constant communication with one another and among their various groups to remain apprised of progress. Council's response to the proposed bylaw was known to the participants.

7. Comprehensive and Complementary

Pipeline citizens participated in open meetings to receive information and ask questions. Nutrient issue citizens participated from re-framing the issue to developing more than one bylaw proposal. The proposed bylaw was submitted to Council for approval.

8. Deliberative

The pipeline open meetings were marked by questions and answers and angry words from citizens. Some citizens noted that Council seemed unable or unwilling to hear their views. A citizen's group organized a demonstration and used it as leverage to change council's mind about the pipeline extension into their area. Nutrient policy participants

engaged in fact-finding, extensive dialogue and re-visiting of internal positions and agreements.

9. Appropriate

The complexity of the pipeline issue made it appropriate for a deliberative process. However the prior decision by Council mitigated against deliberative dialogue. It is important to note that Council felt it had no choice in the matter due to provincial legislation and the costs of alternatives. The municipality had the authority to develop its own nutrient management bylaw and the complexity of the issue did lend itself to a deliberative process. Citizens felt strongly that the development of large barns had to be controlled and initiated involvement in the issue. It should be noted that the province has recently promised provincial legislation governing nutrient management. This has resulted in a local moratorium on further permits until the legislation is known.

10. Constructive

The pipeline process contributed to citizen cynicism and distrust of politicians. It is also interesting that Council decided against mandatory hook-ups for certain classes of household. This resulted in large scale opting out, an increase in the financial burden on the municipality and higher costs for those required or who opt to hook-up. The nutrient group participants were not satisfied with all aspects of the outcome. Nevertheless they expressed understanding of the complexity of the issue and accepted the perspectives of those who held other positions. The nutrient process resulted in a split between small and large farmers. The bylaw allowed barn permits only for farms below the threshold of one hundred fifty animal units. Many of the permits for large barns were never approved much to the satisfaction of neighbouring property owners. However some barns did get built while citizens were organizing themselves. Several participants, who have become experts on nutrient management and environmental concerns are now involved with other issues or active on municipal committees.

The review of each policy process against the framework provides additional evidence to support deliberative methods as a means to more effective outcomes. The measurement of effectiveness includes evidence pertaining to participant activity, impact on outcomes, participation as a help or hindrance, comments made during the interviews and reported "social capital" gains. The pipeline process proves to be top down, somewhat exclusive, pre-determined, influenced by expertise, marked by a lack of deliberative dialogue and judged by citizens as lacking in authenticity since Council had already made up its mind. The nutrient management process is not a perfect model of deliberation but it does reflect the elements of the Authentic Participation Framework: enabling, inclusive, horizontal, iterative, educational, accountable, comprehensive, deliberative, appropriate and constructive. Deliberative methods do have advantages over traditional ones. Deliberative processes lead to more satisfactory outcomes in terms of how participation affects the outcome, the perception of participants about the helpfulness of citizen involvement, the learning and personal development that takes place and the advantage this can offer to a community in the form of social capital.

There is a suggestion in the data and in the comparative analysis with the framework, that traditional methods of participation may be less than inferior to deliberative ones. They may have harmful effects on how people view their capacity to participate in the political process. This is not merely unfortunate; it may hinder the development of some citizens to enter more fully into the broader and more deliberative process that councilors and most citizens say they want for the future. More importantly and urgently, it mitigates against the level of engagement between citizens and their local government that the vexing problems of today require. Finally, the continued reliance on methods that are used to inform when people are insisting on dialogue and influence is simply an ill-informed strategy. It may appear to be more efficient but it will continue to exacerbate the cynicism and distrust of some people toward their local government.

There is a substantial amount of evidence that points to the need for a renewed relationship between government and citizens at the local level. However, wishing does not make it so. Some municipalities have taken steps to move to a deliberative model in their dialogue with residents. Others have not. The history and literature of participation indicate that the realization of dialogue containing the elements of The Framework for Authentic Participation, must be learned. The learning is underway with evaluation studies, roundtables, focus groups and local projects. This is not learning only for the sake of knowledge. It is learning that creates an infrastructure of willingness, skills and civic capacity in which to support the relationship between Council and residents.

Thirty two people were interviewed for this case study. There were two themes that occurred in their comments. The first of these was the importance of listening to others. The second was the detrimental effect that emotionally charged confrontation has on discussion. These comments were offered without prompting and without any question that addressed them specifically. They provide additional indication that a deliberative model is not only effective but would be welcomed by Councilors and citizens alike. The findings appear in Table Nine.

Table 9: Frequency of Respondent Comments on Listening and Emotions

(N = 32)	Communication Requires Listening		Emotional / Angry Communication as Detrimental to Dialogue	
	#	%	#	%
Frequency of Comment	26	81%	15	47%

The problems are upon local government. The people are willing to engage. The model for an authentic form of relationship is available. Deliberation, even in a hybrid form has advantages over top-down control. Politicians and citizens can begin the dialogue. There is no less at stake than how we live - where we live.

Appendix 'A'

Interview Questions for Research on Citizen Involvement
The Engagement of Citizens in the Local Government Policy Process

Interview for Citizens

If you are agreeable to providing input I will ask you to respond to the questions which appear below. It should take about 20 minutes of your time. Your participation is strictly voluntary. All responses will remain confidential and will be available only to myself. No information that might identify an individual respondent will appear in the research paper. If you have questions at any time I can be reached at 396-5458 or at ronc@tnt21.com

Ron Coristine

1. Please describe your understanding of the term, "citizen involvement."

2. Which of the two local policy issues have you become involved with?

   Water pipeline ☐   Nutrient management bylaw ☐

3. What caused you to become involved?

4. How did you participate? What things did you do? (for example: attend meetings, write letters, sign petitions, speak to politicians, meet with other citizens, etc.)

5. Did your participation affect the outcome? How?

6. Would you become involved again in another issue in the future? Why?

7. Do you have any advice you would give to our local politicians about citizen involvement?

8. During the last five years, have you noticed any differences or changes in how citizens become involved in the local government policy process or the types of issues that attract people to become involved?

9. Do you find that citizen involvement is a help or a hindrance to effective policy development? Why and how?

10. Would you make any changes to the way in which citizen involvement occurs in our municipality? What would these be?

11. Please add any additional observations or thoughts you have about the place of citizens in the local government policy process.

Thank-you for your time. If you would like to receive a summary of my paper, please provide your full name and address.

<u>Appendix 'A'</u>

Interview Questions for Research on Citizen Involvement
The Engagement of Citizens in the Local Government Policy Process

<u>Interview for Councilors</u>

If you are agreeable to providing input I will ask you to respond to the questions which appear below. It should take about 20 minutes of your time. Your participation is strictly voluntary. All responses will remain confidential and will be available only to myself. No information that might identify an individual respondent will appear in the research paper. If you have questions at any time I can be reached at 396-5458 or at ronc@tnt21.com

Ron Coristine

1. Please describe your understanding of the term, "citizen involvement."

2. Which of the two local policy issues have you become involved with?

3. Water pipeline ☐   Nutrient management bylaw ☐

4. What caused you to become involved?

5. How did you participate? What things did you do? (for example: attend meetings, read material related to the issue, speak with citizens, meet with citizen groups, etc.)

6. Did your participation affect the outcome? How?

7. Do you have any advice you would give to people living in the municipality about citizen involvement?

8. During the last five years, have you noticed any differences or changes in how citizens become involved in the local government policy process or the types of issues that attract people to become involved?

9. Do you find that citizen involvement is a help or a hindrance to effective policy development? Why and how?

10. Would you make any changes to the way in which citizen involvement occurs in our municipality? What would these be?

11. Please add any additional observations or thoughts you have about the place of citizens in the local government policy process.

Thank-you for your time. If you would like to receive a summary of my paper, please let me know.

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