

St. Ignatius High, Economics

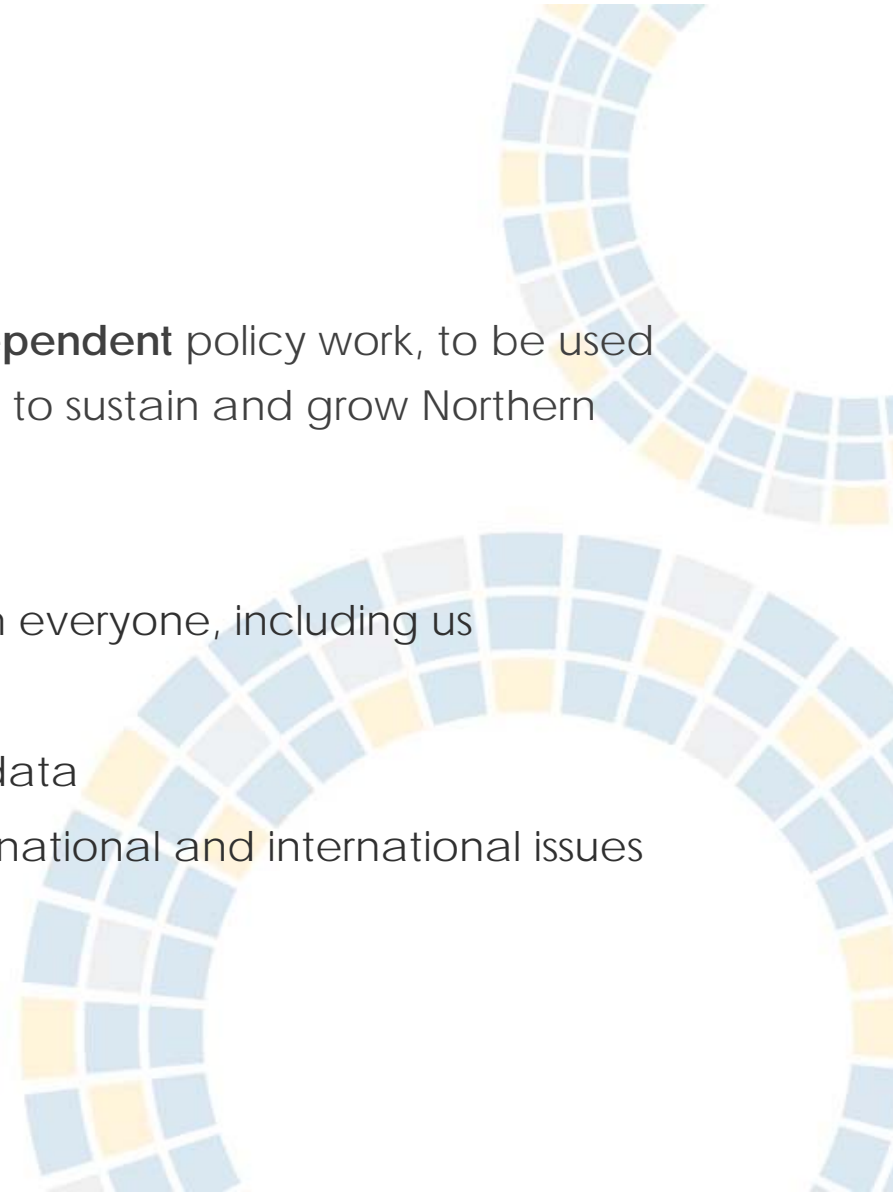
Think Tanks: Making the “Impossible” Possible
Charles Cirtwill, President & CEO
Thunder Bay, 28 March, 2017



What is NPI?

Northern Policy Institute is a **think tank** that conducts **independent** policy work, to be used as **evidence-based** analysis for **effective** decision making to sustain and grow Northern Ontario.

- **Independent** – authors are free from interference from everyone, including us
- **Non-partisan** – we do not take “sides”
- **Evidence based** – we collect, measure and interpret data
- **IN the North** – we deal with local, regional, provincial, national and international issues from a northern perspective
- **Not an advocacy group**



What is a “think tank”?

“Politics is the art of the POSSIBLE”

- Winston Churchill

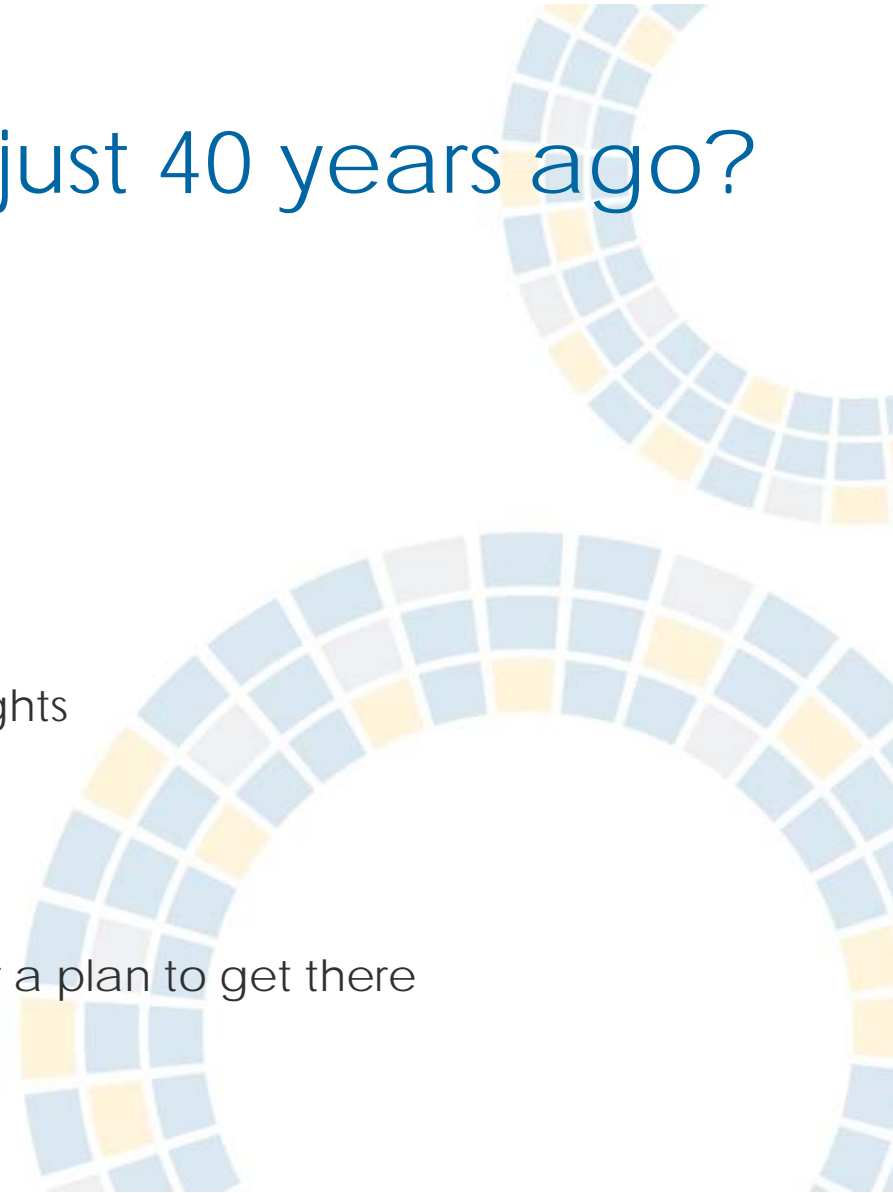
A Think Tank’s job is to RE-DEFINE “possible”

DISCUSSION QUESTION 1

Name something the government just could NOT do.
What is IMPOSSIBLE, right now?

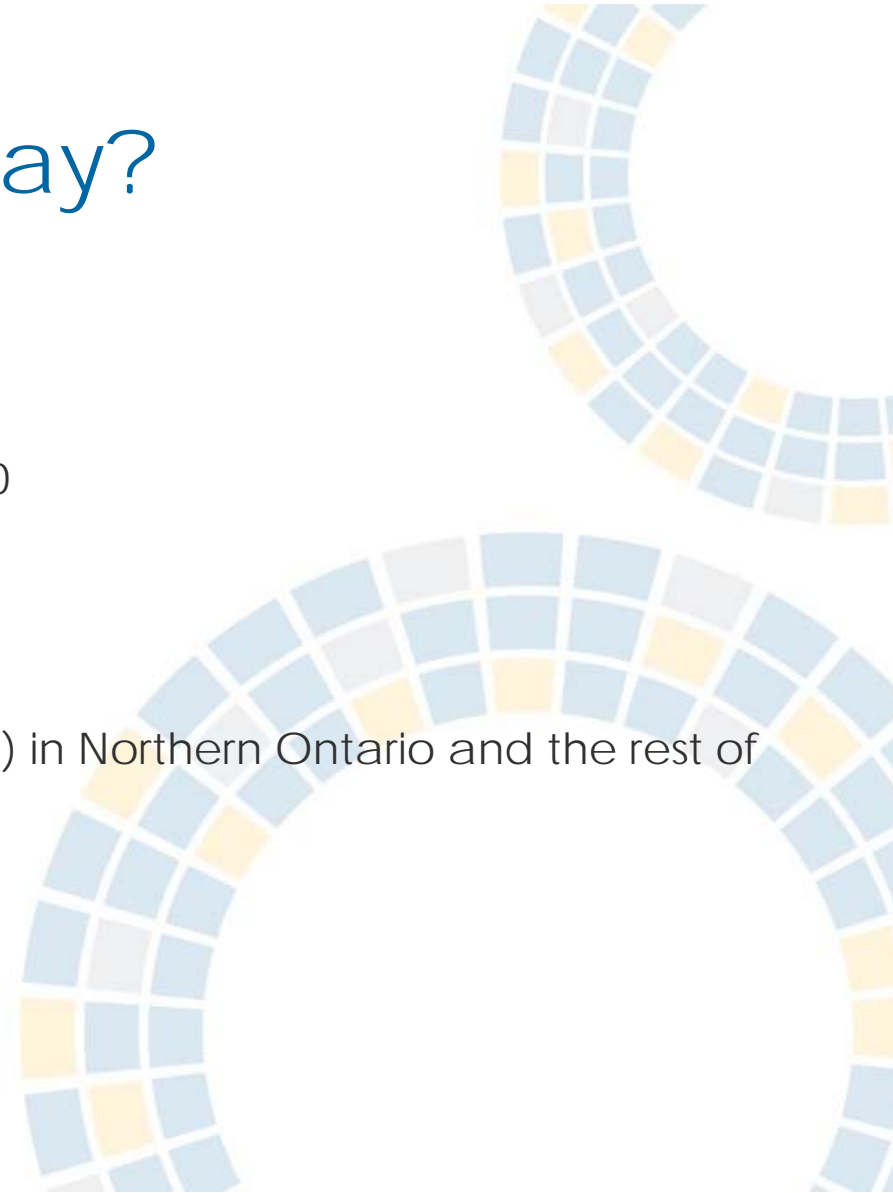
What was “NOT Possible” just 40 years ago?

- Paid parental leave
- Same-sex marriage
- LGBTQ+ rights
- First Nations self-governance
- Recognition of the Metis as having indigenous rights
- “no new taxes” pledges
- Caps on growth in health spending
- General expectations for balanced budgets – or a plan to get there



What is “not possible” today?

- Basic Income Guarantee
- Twinned highway across Canada
- Settlement in the boreal corridor – Canada 2.0
- Fee simple property ownership on reserve
- Federal responsibility off reserve
- Similar service levels (health, education, social) in Northern Ontario and the rest of Canada



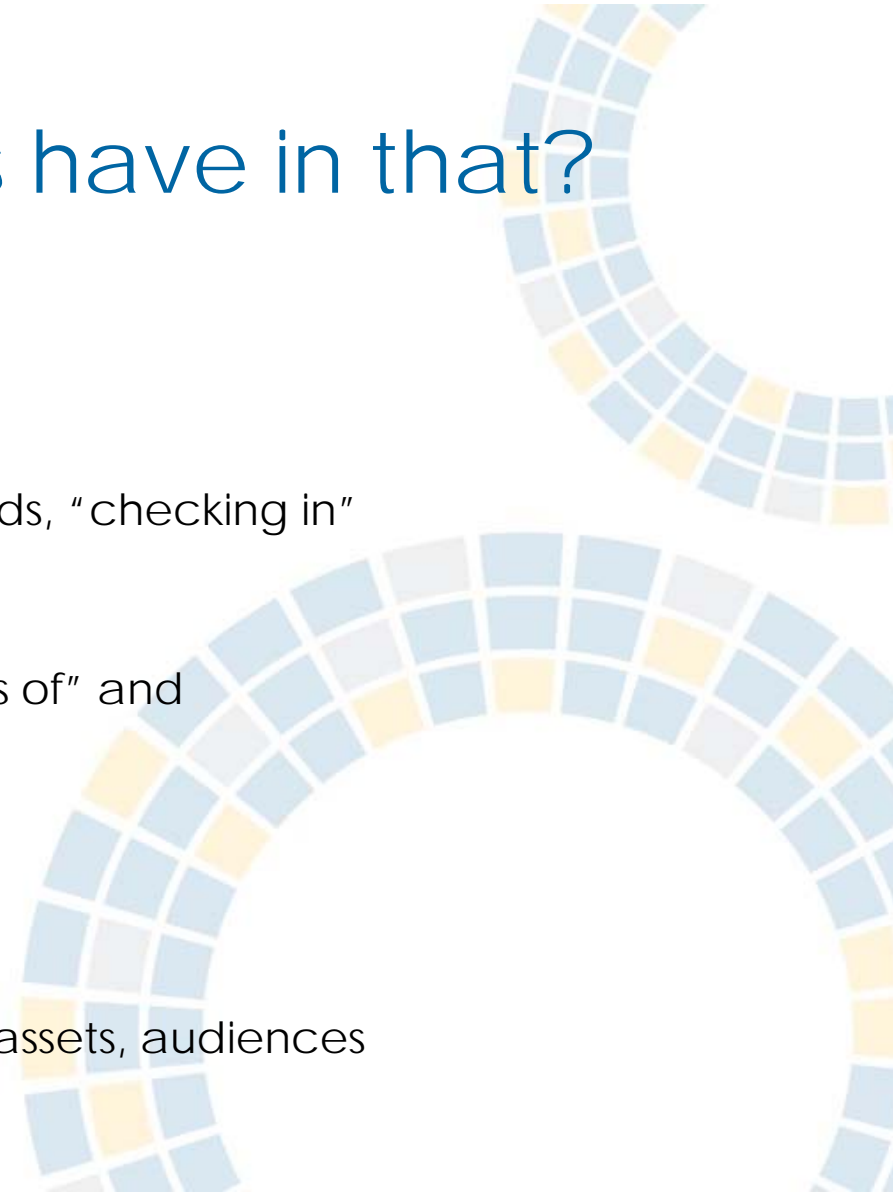
How do you make the “impossible” possible?

- Evidence
- Boldness
- Collaboration
- Timeliness
- Communication
- Inclusiveness
- Oh...and, Success



What role do relationships have in that?

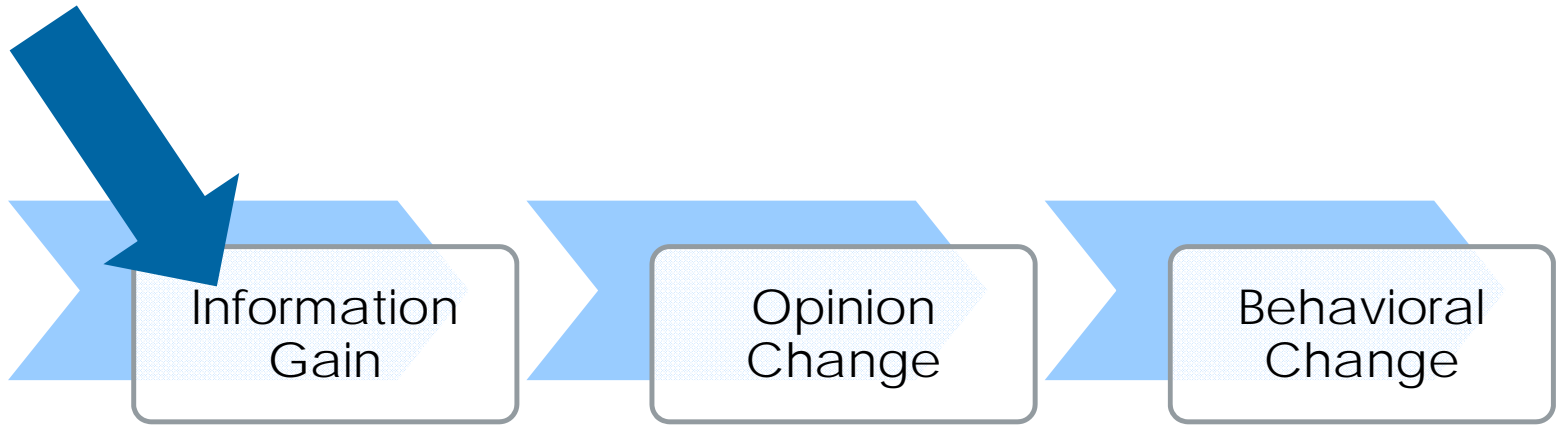
- The best idea in the world – so what?
- Personal relationships
 - Classmates, neighbours, network, business cards, “checking in”
- Relationships between organizations
 - Memberships, mailing lists, new media, “friends of” and facebook/twitter/linkedin/instagram
- Easier to tell a friend “that is/was stupid”
- Partnerships
 - Shared networks, resources, knowledge, skills, assets, audiences



How does NPI Operate?

Northern Policy Institute looks into issues that impact Indigenous peoples, industry groups, and the municipal, provincial, and federal governments. But so do lots of other people. This is why we do solid research, but our primary mission is education.

....in terms of education, NPI believes that requires **conversation.**



Knowledge Outcome

Opinion Outcome

Behavioral Outcome

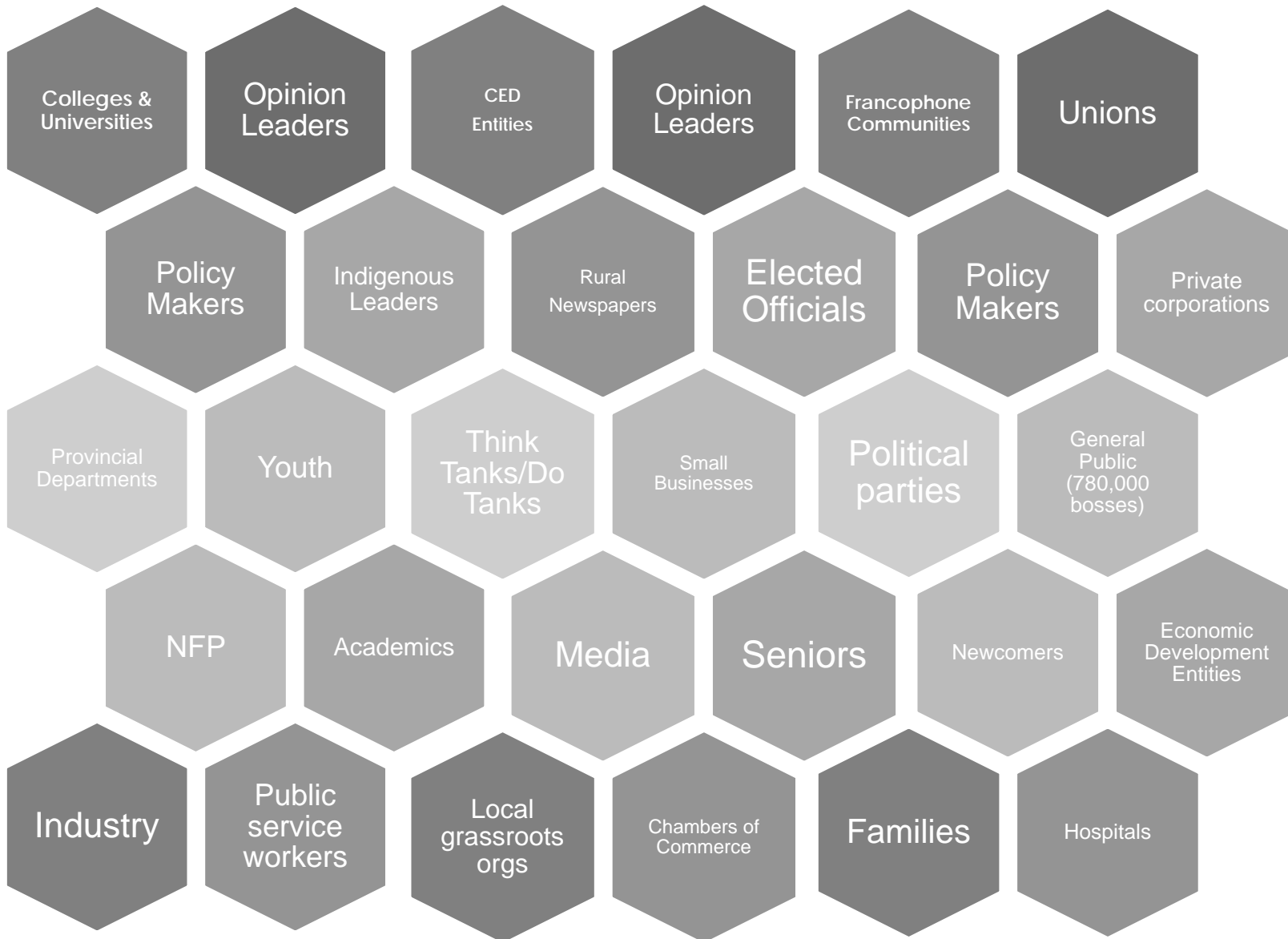
- Policies adopted
- Policies altered
- Policies ended

Our Region

- 2 Economic Regions
 - 11 Districts
 - 278 Census Sub-Divisions
 - 144 Municipalities
 - 118 First Nation Reserves or Settlements
 - 16 Unorganized CSDs
- ~ 780,000 individuals

DISCUSSION QUESTION 2

Who is NPI's audience? Who are we trying to convince?



Mapping
out our
Stakeholders/
Audiences

Things to keep in mind...

- Language – English, French, Anishinaabemowin...
- Language – complex issues, ideas and research topics accessible to 'every day reader' (eyes glazing over = not good)
- Timing of publications are strategically aligned w/ policy events in Northern Ontario and beyond
- NPI Branding is consistent
- Feedback is invited to encourage evidence-based conversations
- Understand your audience - different audiences respond to different styles



Complete Research Report



Briefing Note



Blog/column



Summary of Findings



Recommendations



Press Release



Infographic or pull quote image

Why doesn't everyone follow the evidence?

Because, sometimes, the evidence gets in the way of what they WANT.

So they ignore the evidence, or use only selected pieces of it, or try to "spin" it for their own benefit – this is how they "seek rents" in economic terms.

*"People are said to seek rents when they try to obtain **benefits for themselves** through the political arena. ... a **subsidy**...a **particular class**...a **special** regulation."*

Evidence based decision making (This is what everyone claims to be doing)

Decision based evidence seeking (This is what is usually done)

DISCUSSION QUESTION 3

Rent Seekers – can you name any?

Rent Seekers: “Interest” “Lobby” & “Advocacy” groups

Business:

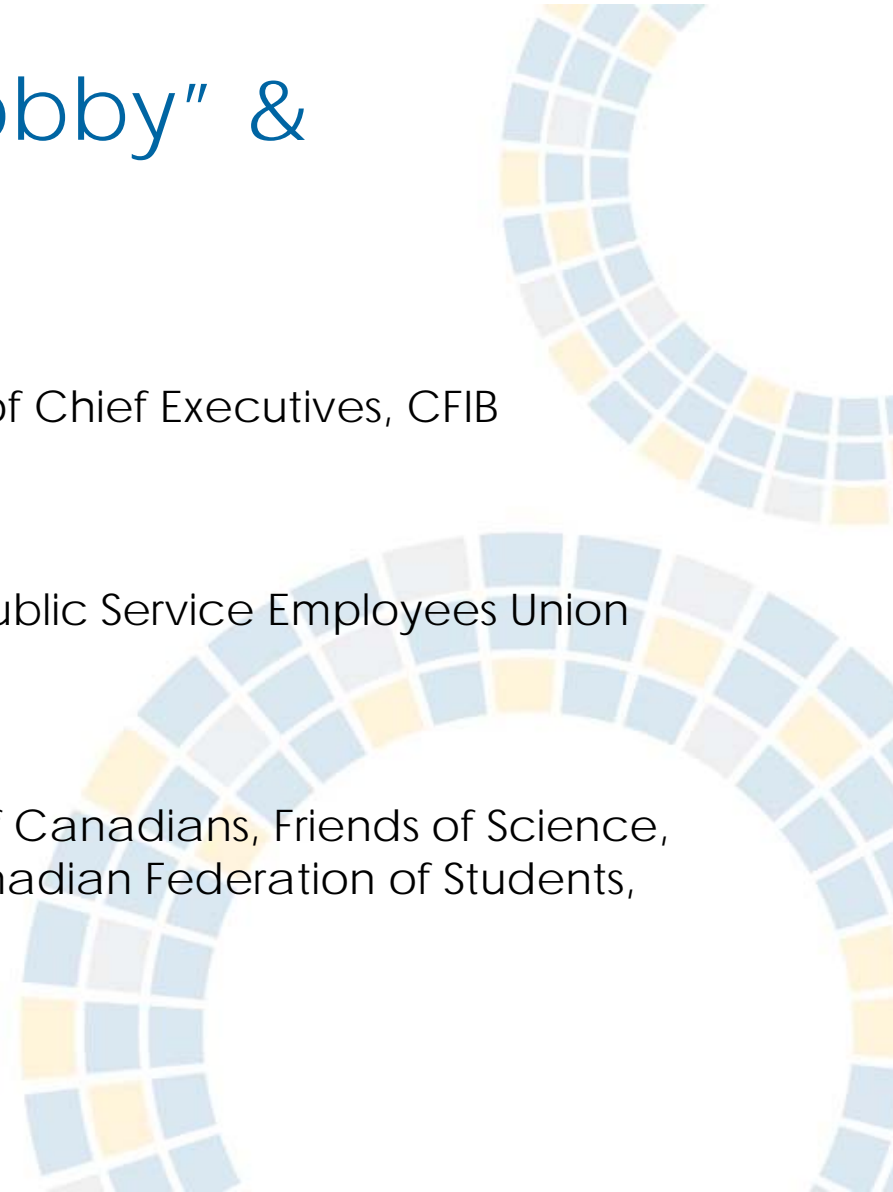
- Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Council of Chief Executives, CFIB

Labour:

- Unifor, Canadian Labour Congress, Ontario Public Service Employees Union

Special Interest:

- Citizens for Canadian Health Care, Council of Canadians, Friends of Science, Canadian Association of Retired Persons, Canadian Federation of Students, Political Parties, Politicians

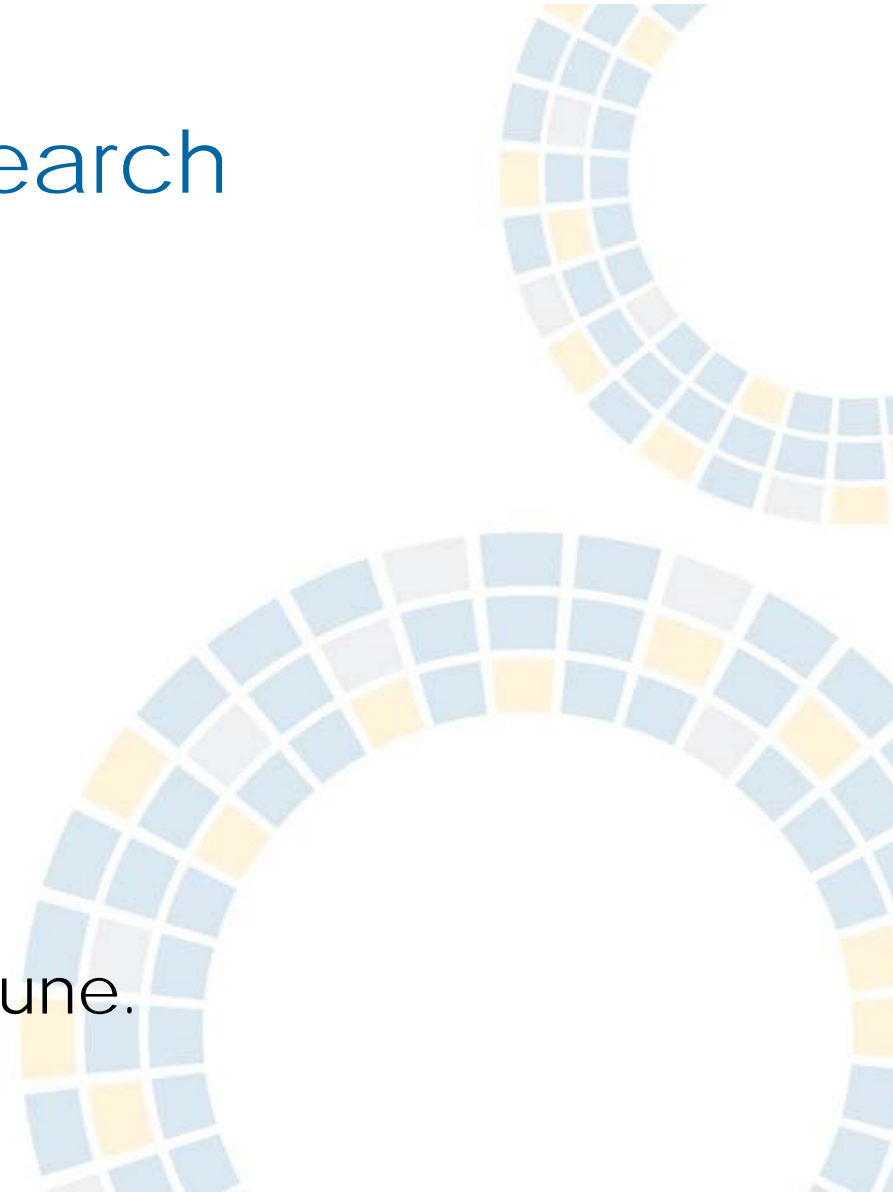


Fee for Service Policy Research

Consultants

- Environmental
- Economic
- Communications
- Public engagement
- Program analysis
- Political

He who pays the piper...calls the tune.



Government Sponsored/Supported Policy Research



Local

- CCPA (BC), Common Voice Northwest

Regional:

- Mowat Centre, Atlantic Provinces Economic Council

National:

- Conference Board, Institute for Research on Public Policy, Dominion Institute, Public Policy Forum

Special:

- Court Challenge Program, Political Parties, CIFAR

Do these groups have a role in making public policy?

- Standing committees and public hearings are pretty boring without them
- Stakeholders – Event centre, pipelines, Bombardier contract with Toronto, school closure, road widening, tax increases and others
- Test voter engagement – do they care or not
- Unintended consequences – if you do that, this will happen
- BALANCE – a diverse group of “experts” help remind you of things you forgot, have not thought of, or don’t really want to talk about

Think Tanks and Academics

The “right”:

CD Howe, Fraser, AIMS, FCPP, MEI, MLI, Energy Probe, Dr. Livio Di Matteo

The “left”:

CCPA, Suzuki Foundation, Greenpeace, Canada West, Pembina, Dr. David Robinson

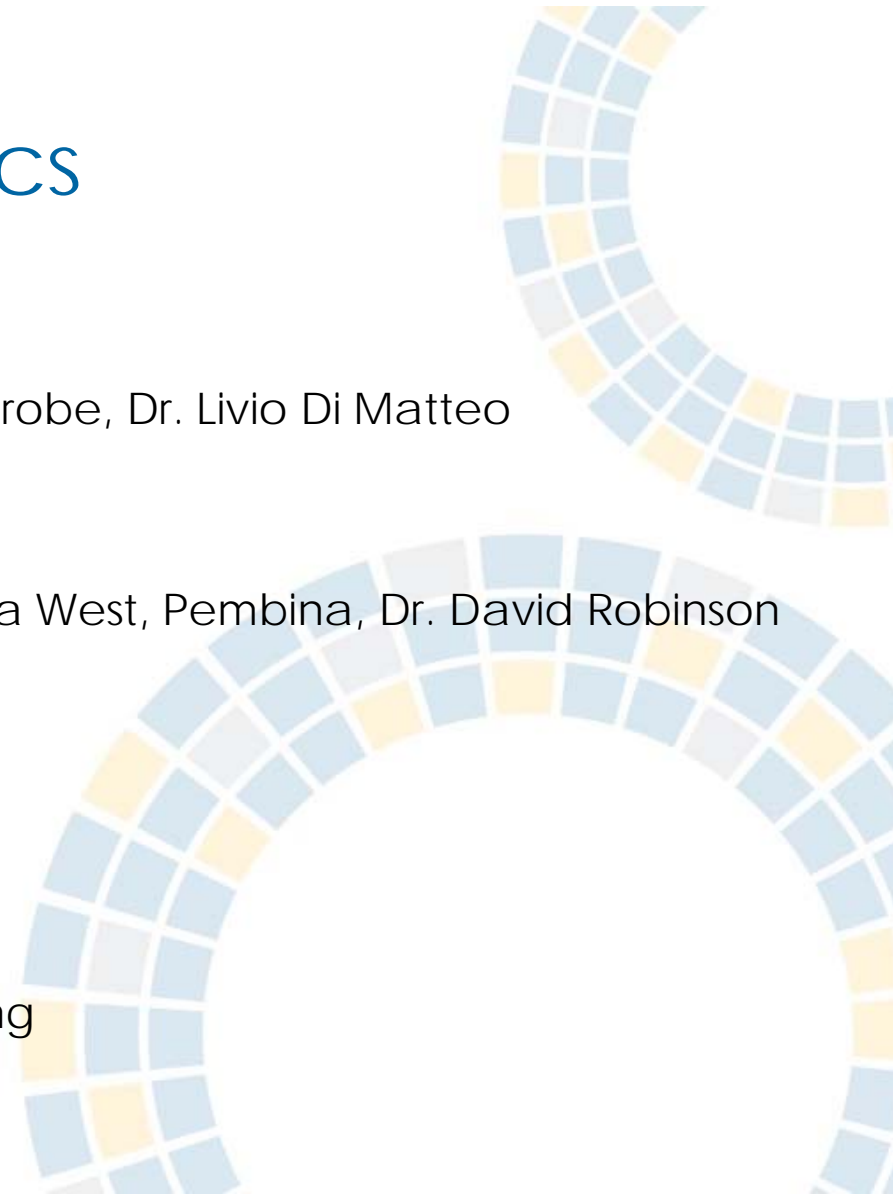
The “centre” –

...a lonely place

Political:

Alan J Mceachern, Trudeau, Broadbent, Manning

And the list goes on...



Fun with Numbers – Free Tuition

Sounds like a high minded and good idea:

It's time to move beyond piecemeal reforms that reduce public funding and burden students with huge debt. It's time to defend universal access to public PSE, **education justice for all learners and the value of public education for the public good.**

– CFS



But who Goes to College and University?

Table 1: Distribution of University Registrants by Neighbourhood Average Income: Overall and by Grade Category			
	Low In- come*	Middle In- come*	High In- come*
All Persons Age 15-24 in 2001 Census	40%	25%	35%
All University Entrants			
Year			
1995	23%	34%	42%
2000	22%	34%	44%
2005	20%	33%	47%
Entrants with High School Grade Point Average of 90+			
Year			
1995	20%	34%	46%
2000	19%	33%	48%
2005	20%	32%	48%
Entrants with High School Grade Point Average of 80 to 90			
Year			
1995	22%	34%	44%
2000	20%	34%	46%
2005	20%	33%	47%
*High, middle and low income refer to the terciles of the distribution of census neighbourhoods by average household income.			

Corak et al. (2003) and Drolet (2005) find large differences in enrolment rates across the socio-economic spectrum. However, they find that this relationship was unaltered over a period of rising tuition fees.

Why universal free tuition is a BAD idea

The easy case to be made against free tuition is that it **benefits students from richer** backgrounds. That's because they are more numerous in higher education than students from poorer backgrounds and so, *on aggregate*, would receive more aid.

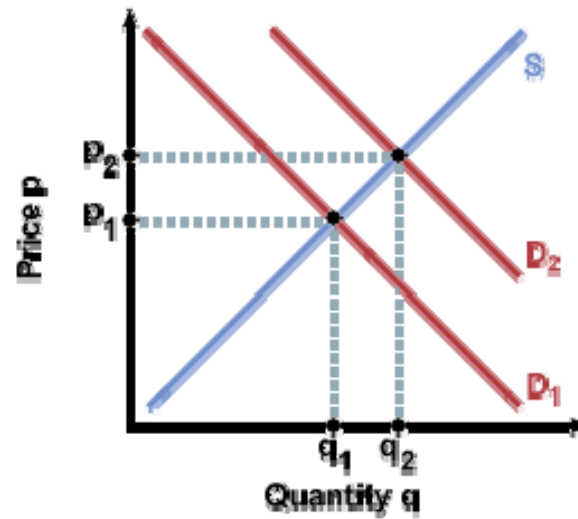
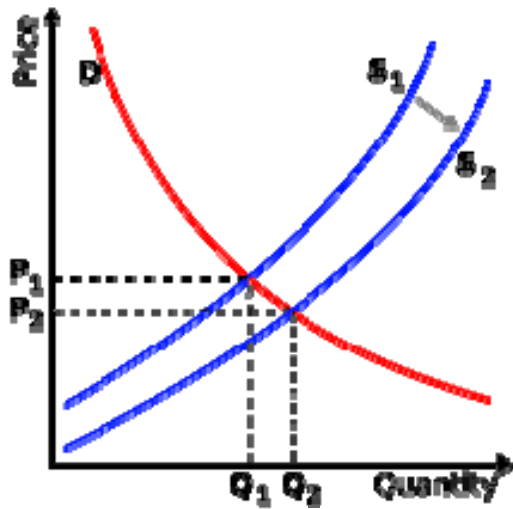
But that misses a more important point: **because of the interaction between student aid and tuition, students from wealthier backgrounds would also receive a bigger benefit on an individual level.**

– Alex Usher, Higher Education Strategy Associates

Just a LITTLE evidence

- At another level, of course, it would be even easier for us to “do a Germany”. All we need to do is stop spending so much *public* money on higher education. **Their expenditure on higher education is about half of what ours is:** per-student funding to institutions in Germany is about \$10,000 (€7,000); in Canada, it’s about \$15,000. And that has impacts as well: **professors in Germany, on average, only get paid about 60% of what ours do.** When education costs are so low, it’s not difficult to keep tuition down.
- German **participation rates in higher education are also lower than ours**, in part because they have no money to accommodate more students. They could have kept tuition fees and directed institutions to use that money to expand access, but they preferred not to do that. And so, as a result, **the German student body is much more socio-economically selective than ours is – indeed, it is one of the most selective anywhere in Europe**, and was so before fees were introduced.

Theory – Price Change versus Demand Shift



DISCUSSION QUESTION 4

HOW do we get a DEMAND shift and not just a price change?

How do we get a DEMAND shift in PSE?

#1 indicator – proximity

#2 indicator – family income

#3 indicator – parental postsecondary

- #1 cost – FOREGONE income

Other barriers:

- Child care
- Awareness
- Family commitments
- Access/transportation

Examples of non-tuition based success:

Seven Generations (Kenora)

- Transportation, child care, mentoring

Indigenous Black and Mi'kmaq (Dal Law)

- Transition supports, mentoring, cultural inclusion, aggressive recruitment

Confederation College (8 campuses)

- Program proximity, remote delivery

Edmonton Public Schools

- Free bus pass
(many PSEs also include “free” passes)

In closing, Three ways **YOUR** issue gets on **OUR** to-do list

1. Top Ten Northern Issues:

Northern Policy Institute is the **ONLY** Think Tank in Canada that sets its research agenda based on feedback we receive from our stakeholders, all 780,000 of them. If your issue is shared by your friends and neighbours, it will likely get onto our to-do list.

2. Single Window on Northern Issues:

YOU do the work, commission the study, and you send it to us for re-publication or dissemination. Big parts of our job involve avoiding wasteful duplication of effort and getting the word out about what has already been done.

3. Willing to Partner – but no guarantees:

NOT a consulting service, but will partner – in cash, or in kind – to expedite needed work. We just can't promise you will like the answer.



Last Question – What Issues are on your mind?

- Jobs?
- Taxes?
- Environment?
- Health care?
- Pensions?
- Voting?

- Speaking of jobs and the future:



Stay informed. Join the Conversation.



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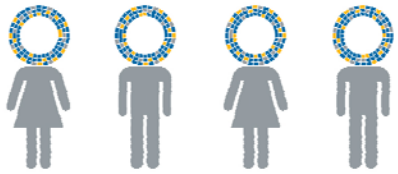
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Paid

Author/Reader/Researcher

Intern/Summer Placement

experience



NORTH

NPI summer placement program

4 months May to August

Targeted at college and university students (right now)

Summer 2016 – 10 interns

- 2 in Timmins
- 2 in Kenora
- 2 in SSM
- 2 in Thunder Bay
- 2 in Sudbury

Summer 2017 – 7 interns

- 2 in Kenora
- 2 in SSM
- 3 in Thunder Bay

Research, communications & public relations.

- NFP management
- Policy research
- Community engagement
- Student blogs

Thank you. Merci. Miigwetch.

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