



Intergovernmental Mechanisms in Canada

André Juneau
Director, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations
Queen's University
Canada

Intergovernmental Mechanisms in Canada

- **Key Features Requiring Collaboration**
- **Mechanisms Between Governments**
- **Mechanisms Inside Governments**
- **Federal-Municipal Relations**
- **Observations**

Key Features of the Canadian Federation Requiring Collaboration

- **Constitutional division of powers is fairly clear**
 - Dates from 1867
 - Difficult amendment history
 - A lot of intersections
- **Competing views of the federal “deal”**
 - Between provinces
 - Between English and French
- **A lot of geography**
 - Regional disparities
 - Natural resources disparities
- **Financial transfers**
 - Relatively small and largely unconditional
 - Raise very sensitive issues including federal spending power

Mechanisms & Purposes

Mechanism	Purpose				
	Information Sharing	Policy Coordination	Joint Projects	Financial Allocations	Dispute Resolution
Agreements	X	X	X	X	X
Meetings & Committees	X	X		X	
Institutions	X	X			
Regional Offices	X		X		X
Regional Ministers	X	X			
Networks	X	X			
Courts					X

Intergovernmental Agreements (1)

- Hundreds of agreements
(and committees)
- Govern major financial transfers
 - e.g., 10-year health funding
- Often with opting-out clauses
 - Usually Quebec opts out
- Substitutes for constitutional change
 - e.g., labour market «devolution»

Intergovernmental Agreements (2)

- Many bilateral agreements
 - e.g., immigration
- Some success with harmonization
 - e.g., sales tax, environmental assessment
- Some very technical agreements
 - e.g., portability of health insurance
- Letters of understanding
 - e.g., role of provinces in trade talks

Meetings

	Ad Hoc	Regular
First Ministers	X	
Premiers	X	X
Sectoral Ministers	X	X
Senior Officials	X	X
Administrative Officials	X	X

Note: Two Secretariats:

- for Premiers – Council of the Federation
- for most senior-level meetings, Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat

A Sectoral Example -- Health

13 Ministers of Health

**Deputy Ministers
Of Health**

**Heads of
Public Health**

Advisory Committee
On Health Delivery
And Human Resources

PLUS

- Specialized bodies with mixed governance
(governments and other interests)

- Health Information
- Health IT
- Technology Assessment

- Mental Health
- Cancer Partnership

Intergovernmental Relations and Municipalities

- Municipalities are «creatures» of provinces and heavily regulated
- But federal presence is significant e.g.,
 - Infrastructure funding
 - Land ownership
 - Ports and airports
- Two short-lived attempts: (74-79 and 04-06)
 - Federal-municipal relations
 - Federal urban agenda
- A «gas tax transfer» of \$2Billion to municipalities (still in place)

Inside Governments (1)

Who makes decisions about intergovernmental relations?

- Major policy, financial, political decisions
 - Prime Minister/ Cabinet
 - Finance Minister
 - IGA Minister
 - Sectoral Ministers
- Most day-to-day management of relations are made by officials
- About the same process in federal and provincial governments

Inside Governments (2)

- Support for Prime Minister / Cabinet
 - Cabinet Office
 - IGA Unit of Cabinet Office
 - Department of Finance
 - Department of Justice (constitutional advice)
 - Memoranda to Cabinet – section on federal-provincial issues
- Support for Sectoral Ministers
 - Senior officials
 - Policy or Operational Units
 - IGA Units

Observations (1)

1. Personalities matter more in informal context
2. Stakes change when issues are managed “at the centre”
3. Currently, a federal conservative and decentralist government is less active in this area
4. Good sectoral management of IGR requires strong policy-oriented IGA units
5. Most challenging fundamental issues are Quebec – rest of Canada issues and sharing of resource rents

Observations (2)

6. Despite frustrations, there are many successes based on cooperation
7. Despite hundreds of agreements, meetings, etc, much goes on without IGR
8. Broadly, municipalities are not in the picture

Annex 1
Intergovernmental Transfers as Percentage of
Provincial/State Revenues
(2000-2004)

• Mexico	.....	88
• India	.....	46
• Australia	.....	46
• Germany	.....	44
• Brazil	.....	30
• United States	.....	26
• Canada	.....	13