



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (University of Manitoba, 2003)

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**“Learning to Address Climate Change: Collaboration, Policy Transfer, and
Choosing Policy Instruments in Canadian Provinces”**

School of Public Administration

Thursday, October 8, 2015

9:00AM

David Turpin Building

Room A137

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Evert Lindquist, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. David Good, School of Public Administration, UVic (Member)

Dr. Colin Bennett, Department of Political Science, UVic (Outside Member)

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Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Dean Karlen, Department of Physics and Astronomy, UVic

Abstract

As the Canadian federal government backed away from addressing climate change after 2006, provinces looked to cooperate with other subnational jurisdictions in North America to take action on the file and fill the void left at the federal level. Subnational collaboration led provinces to draw lessons and learn from each other and US states while pursuing several climate change policies that had emerged from California and the Western Climate Initiative (WCI) and were poised to spread across the continent.

Provinces' efforts to work together and adopt similar policy solutions deviated from their traditional pattern of protecting regional interests on climate change, which had come to a head in the early 2000s during the acrimonious debate over the Kyoto Accord. Initially, optimism abounded that subnational climate change policies would sweep across the country leading to widespread convergence on policy instruments and forcing the federal government to respond. However, only limited convergence emerged as most policies took root in some jurisdictions but not others, highlighting the prominent role that regional interests continued to play. This research study examines the climate change policy response of five provinces (BC, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and Alberta) and asks: What explains the selection and adoption of policy instruments in each province?

Several studies seek to understand the selection of provincial policy instruments by focusing on the role of local factors. However, given that policy development occurred in a period of significant collaboration among subnational governments in North America, this study makes a unique and essential contribution to the literature by considering the role of collaboration and cross-jurisdictional learning in addition to domestic variables. The project also informs debates at the academic and political level about whether provincial responses represent an inefficient patchwork of policies or a new form of decentralized governance characterized by regional collaboration. Finally, the study provides practical lessons for policy makers that emerge from the provincial experience, given that provinces have not been studied widely compared to the federal level in Canada.

The study finds that a feeling of subnational momentum and "strength in numbers" led the provinces participating in WCI to initially pursue policy instruments from abroad. Quebec and BC were able to put a price on carbon and adopt other policies because of strong domestic support and political leadership, while Ontario and Manitoba decided not to move forward with their commitments once it became clear that a national response would not emerge. Alberta did not participate in WCI and pursued its own approach to protect its oil and gas industry. Collaboration did lead to limited convergence in areas such as GHG reporting and vehicle emission standards, which provides a foundation for future cooperation. The study concludes that taking a long-term view of collaboration, which allows time for policy makers in different jurisdictions to build relationships of trust and industry groups to come on board, is necessary when addressing a complex and controversial issue like climate change through a multi-jurisdictional approach.