Improving Consultation Measures at the Municipal Level

by

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Author's Declaration for Electronic Submission of a Thesis

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Consulting with the public on planning issues has become an endeavour formalized throughout Western democracies over the past half-century. However, there remains a dichotomy between the legislative minimums for this part of the planning process and the extraordinary efforts of some municipalities. Inefficiencies emerge as attempts are made by many municipalities to implement the contributions received, exposing the potentially different objectives held by each of the major consultation players.

Academics suggest that the rationale for consultation appears to have advanced to the point where its value is beyond question, but that the means and frequency for its conduct are not. The literature on the subject is further split between that which focuses on the process of consultation and that which centres on its outcomes. Correspondingly, the fairness of consultation exercises can be viewed from the procedural and distributive points of view.

To date, academic study in this field has largely been conducted along qualitative lines. Using a combination of questionnaires, interviews and a focus group to triangulate data received from the major players, an answer was sought to the hypothesis that consultation players possess distinct objectives for this planning exercise.

The results indicated that planners and the public do subscribe to separate views for the purpose of consultation, which bias their paradigms of the other parties. Isolating other factors regarding each of these cohort groups further suggested that time, geography, and education often limit the participation of citizens, while planners feel constrained by time, apathy among participants, the political processes and certain fiscal realities.

Therefore, changes to planning legislation are recommended that would indirectly reduce the burden for each of the major players by conducting anticipatory consultation. Such measures would reverse the onus of participating while requiring a lesser investment of staff and resources from municipalities. Future research would test the validity of this approach and engage political figures as the final cohort in the triangle of planning participation.

Acknowledgements

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Allan and Rebecca Utz. I could not have achieved this without you.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 The Dichotomy of Consultation Efforts and Requirements

On April 23, 2003, the municipal council for the City of Ottawa gave their endorsement to a new Official Plan for the recently amalgamated census metropolitan area. The latest Official Plan represented a document two years in the making, and one of the most important results from a comprehensive consultation process known as Ottawa 20/20.

Ottawa 20/20 characterized one of the most massive public engagement exercises ever conducted in Ontario. Consisting of no less than 135 statutory public meetings, 60 on the Official Plan alone, as well as focus groups, workshops, questionnaires, web chats and stakeholder sessions, the Ottawa 20/20 process produced a set of principles (see Figure 1-1) to guide the creation of an overall plan and applicable sub-plans for each municipal service department (see Figure 1-2).

However, such an extensive consultation exercise entails a correspondingly high degree of expense. If the benchmarks of $115.00 of tangible costs per consultation hour (Kathlene & Martin, 1991) and $60.00 in opportunity costs per consultation hour (Helling, 1998; Kathlene & Martin, 1991) are employed, the price of engaging the public through the Ottawa 20/20 process can be estimated to run in the millions of dollars.

A Caring and Inclusive City

A Creative City, Rich in Heritage, Unique in Identity

A Green and Environmentally Sensitive City

A City of Distinct, Liveable Communities

A Healthy and Active City

An Innovative City Where Prosperity is Shared Among All

A Responsible and Responsive City
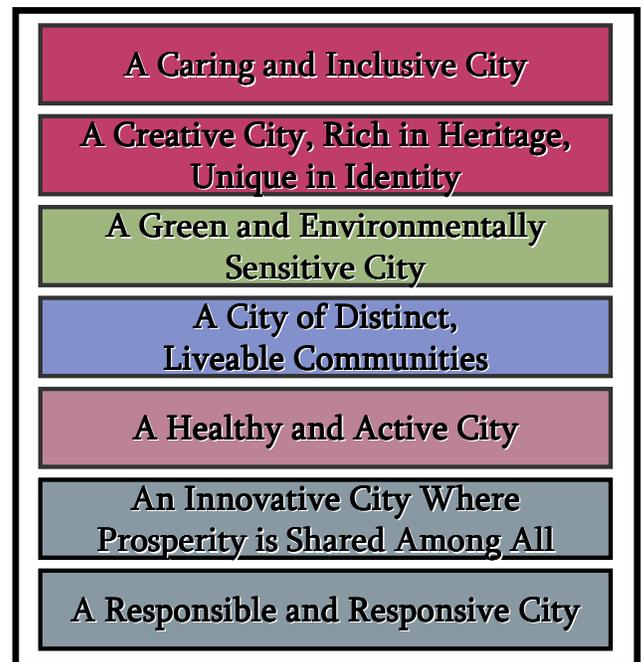
Figure 1-1: Ottawa 20/20 Charting a Course Principles (City of Ottawa, 2003a)

Before the end of 2003, and in light of significant fiscal pressures, municipal staff were ordered

to conduct a universal program review which concluded that at a 20% reduction level of service,

55 of 105 service areas would run contrary to, or eliminate altogether, a strategic direction

developed during the Ottawa 20/20 process (Chernushenko, 2004; City of Ottawa, 2003b). Such

a finding highlighted the fact that the attainment of motherhood statements is difficult to escape,

even when employing such an extraordinarily in-depth process.
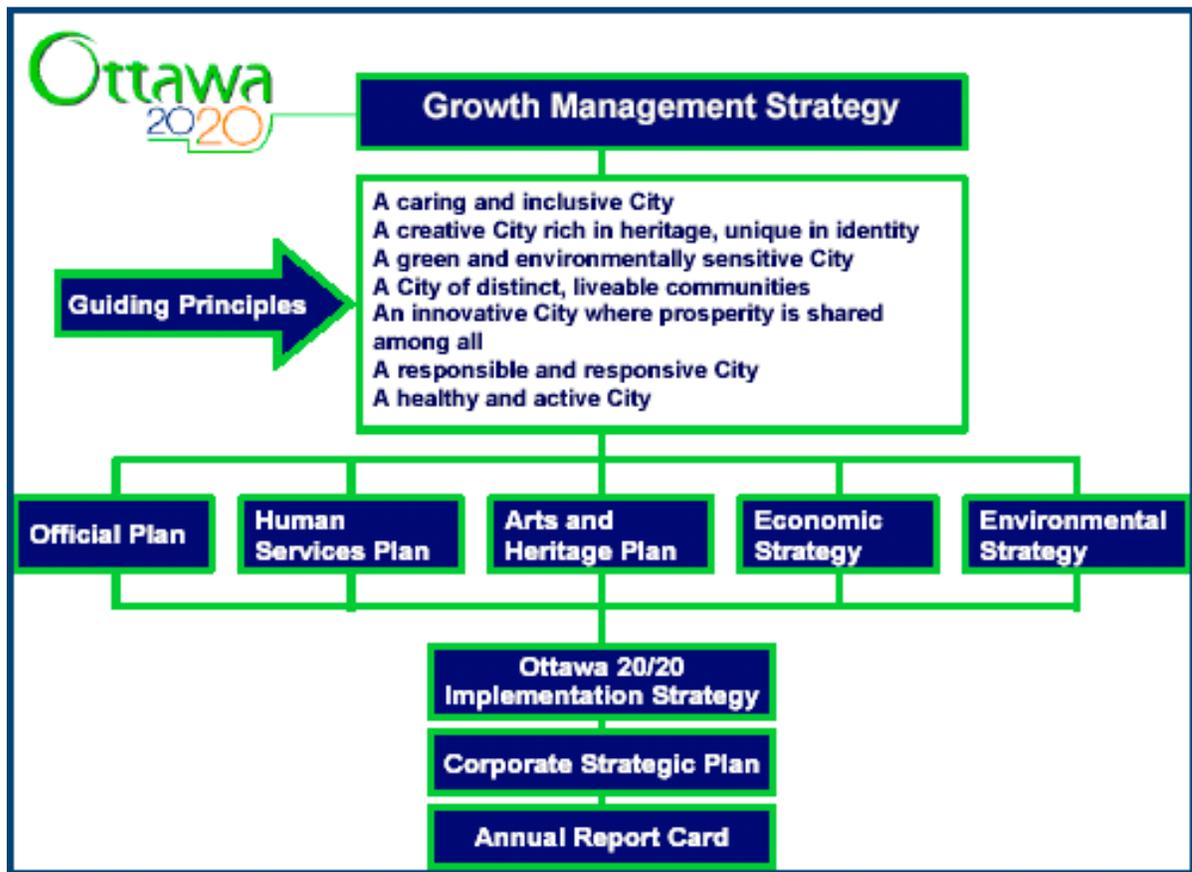
Figure 1-2: Ottawa 20/20 Growth Management Plans
(City of Ottawa, 2003a)

By comparison, the requirements of the *Planning Act of Ontario (2004)* are surprisingly

minimal. As suggested in statute 17(15)(c), a municipality is obliged to hold only one public

meeting in the development of an Official Plan, and may, if they prefer, use alternative methods

as approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for amendments to the plan:

17(15)

In the course of the preparation of a plan, the council shall ensure that,

> (c) at least one public meeting is held, notice of which shall be given in the manner and to the persons and
> public bodies and containing the information prescribed. 1996, c. 4, s. 9.

17(18)

If an official plan sets out alternative measures for informing and obtaining the views of the public in respect of
amendments that may be proposed for the plan, subsections (15), (16) and (17) do not apply to the proposed
amendments if the measures are complied with but the information required under subsection (19) shall be made
available to the public at a public meeting or in the manner set out in the official plan for informing and obtaining
the views of the public in respect of the proposed amendments.

On the surface, this latter section would suggest a degree of flexibility within the legislation.

However, it can also be viewed as a further indication of where the power to alter consultation

proceedings lies. Absent from the legislation, for example, are the roles and privileges inherent

to other potential players such as stakeholder groups or applicable citizen advisory committees.

"We want real community participation in this decision. Plan A is too expensive. Plan C is inefficient. Now, which plan do you prefer?"
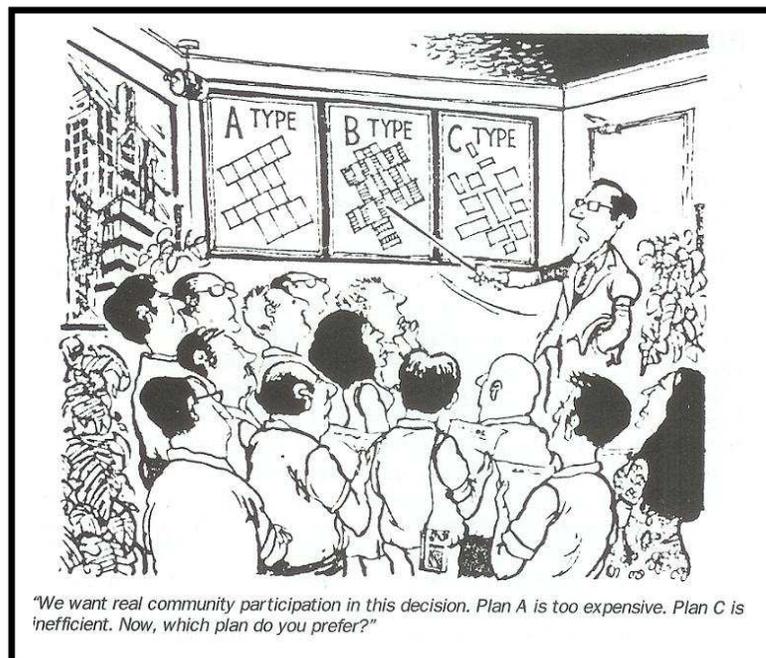
Figure 1-3: The Texture of Participation in Planning
(Hodge, 1998)

In fact, there is a curious lack of direction and assistance from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in general with respect to consultation. Whereas the roles and impacts of such tools as zoning (Government of Ontario, 2006) and adjudicators such as the Ontario Municipal Board (Krushelnicki, 2003) are explained formally and/or informally to planners and the public, there is no equivalent set of guidelines or manual of best practices for consultation (Government of Ontario, 2006). The consultation process appears generally conducted such that the public must provide their input to planners, who subsequently channel it to the municipal politicians (Hodge, 1998). Citizens thus learn that their recommendations will not always be accepted by politicians and planners and are rendered all the more cynical for it (Berman, 1997; Depoe et al., 2004; Hiley, 2006; Hodge, 1998).

Overall, the dichotomous relationship between the minimal standards set forth by the provincial government and the actions taken by more proactive municipalities such as the City of Ottawa lead to some very interesting questions:

1. Irrespective of constraints such as the universal program review, what measures are in place to ensure that consultation exercises are effectively and efficiently receiving educated and feasible input?
2. Why is consultation not viewed as a planning tool in the provincial legislation in the same way as is zoning for example, which requires educating and training those who practice it professionally?
3. What would efficient and/or effective consultation look like to each of planners and the public, who represent the major players in this portion of the planning process?

In any of these three questions, one might find adequate impetus to conduct thesis research and ideally advance the planning profession. But with the third question in particular, there are a number of advantages that serve to make it worthy of further investigation.

First of all, this last question has well-defined research cohort groups. In selecting professional planners and municipal residents, the research would thus focus on those practitioners who create

the plans as well as those of voting age who have the power to make referendum against said documents. This would also allow the research mechanisms to be structured according to the traits of the research groups.

Secondly, it is a question that retains the ability to address the dichotomy between the legislated minimums and the proactive actions of numerous municipalities. Already, a myriad of academics (Berman, 1997; Hiley, 2006; Innes & Booher, 2004) have started to take notice of this divide, while others (Depoe et al., 2004; King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998; Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000) have suggested that administrators frequently avoid additional consultation for fear of the time and expense that it might entail. Thus, posing the question along the lines suggested not only serves to gain the viewpoints of those of vested interest, but also to garner insight into the relationship between the quality and quantity of consultation as they pertain to the efficiency and effectiveness of these same efforts.

Thirdly, by researching this subject through its major players, there stands an excellent chance of arriving at recommendations that are equally appropriate, openly desired, and capable of being implemented.

Finally, investigating consultation in this manner can be feasibly conducted under the parameters of graduate study in the School of Planning at the University of Waterloo. Through a literature review, the conduct and analysis of certain research mechanisms, and the subsequent formulation of recommendations, this thesis can accurately address the following revamped question:

> *What do the views of planners and the public, as major players in consultation,*
> *have to tell us about the most effective techniques at the municipal level?*

1.2 The Organization of this Thesis

As eluded to earlier, the process of answering this question needs to be broken down into a number of steps generally arranged as separate chapters within this thesis.

In Chapter Two, the findings of a comprehensive review of consultation literature are laid out. Reviewed works are selected in accordance with prescribed, methodical snowballing techniques, and subsequently arranged into a map of relevant topic areas, identifying a divide between the process-orientated and outcome-orientated approaches to consultation. A thumbnail sketch of the research and analytical methods employed by the academic world is also crafted to assist with the selection of the appropriate research methods described in Chapter Three.

The advantages inherent to the triangulation of data through use of multiple research methods represent the crux of the third chapter in this thesis. Within it, a research strategy is proposed that comprises of a door-to-door questionnaire and focus group for the public, as well as an online questionnaire and key interviews with planners. Following the formats prescribed in applicable literature, each is method is designed to receive adequate participation to be statistically valid, to repeat and correlate certain questions within and between cohort groups, and to require minimal intrusion for participants. These particular methods also have the benefits of reducing the fiscal and longitudinal burden on the researcher, in addition to providing a geographic focus for the research.

The fourth chapter lays out the results of the research, highlighting the points of congruence and divide between the viewpoints of the major players with respect to consultation. Particularly, the differing concepts of fairness held by each of the major players stand out, as well as the mutual frustration with the limitations that accompany public meetings.

As such, many of the recommendations proposed in the fifth and final chapter bring the thesis full circle by advocating for amendments to the *Planning Act of Ontario*. Chief among these are equalization of the status of alternative consultation methods, requiring the calculation of costs and the attendance from various exercises, as well as improvements for advertising consultation activities. Appropriately consolidated, these changes can produce a manual of best practices that would be able to guide planners and other municipal administrators in future exercises.

Future research would also test the validity of the concept described as *anticipatory consultation*, introduced in the final chapter as a method for reversing the onus of receiving input. It would also confirm a number of the results from this thesis in alternative geographies and scenarios, as well as more accurately determine the role of politicians in the realm of this planning element.

Chapter Two: Comprehensive Literature Review

The experiences gained during the Ottawa 20/20 public consultation exercise were disclosed in Chapter One as being the impetus for examining civic participation in planning for this thesis. Careful observation of this public engagement initiative identified fundamental flaws in process efficiency and implementation. Namely, the opportunity for, and the heightened quantity of, consultation that typified the participation design for the City of Ottawa proved insufficient to gain the political will necessary to implement the consultation outcomes (City of Ottawa, 2003b; Chernushenko, 2004). It also carried with it a cumulative cost estimated to range in the millions of dollars (Helling, 1998; Kathlene & Martin, 1991).

Wherever there is inefficiency there is also opportunity (Levitt & Dubner, 2005), and the type of observation made in Ottawa is the kind that encourages scholars to seek out improvement. In particular, improvements to efficiency can be made, where this term could and should include:

- less waste of time and resources;
- an opportunity to maximize mutual consultation benefits, and;
- appropriate knowledge creation and establishment of viewpoints for framing decisions.

The desire to make these types of enhancements represents the driving force of this thesis and sets out a path that will be forged largely by what is known already and by what can be validly determined through research. This chapter reviews the relevant literature on public consultation as the first stage of data collection.

2.1 The Purpose of a Literature Review

Literature reviews serve several purposes as part of a successful research endeavour. As Creswell (2003) notes, they share the results of studies closely related to the research topic and engage the

reader in the ongoing academic discussion in that field. A good literature review lends credibility to the research by analyzing previous outcomes and constructs (Trochim, 2005), and provides a contextual framework for the importance of the topic as well as a benchmark for comparing potential outcomes (Creswell, 2003). But perhaps most important of all, literature reviews are designed to expose gaps in current knowledge and point out opportunities to fill them (Creswell, 2003; Del Balso & Lewis, 2001; Trochim, 2005).

In order to determine these gaps, a comprehensive survey of the available literature must be made. To achieve this, certain criteria for discriminating the relevant knowledge from the multitude available must be followed (Creswell, 2003; Del Balso & Lewis, 2001). While there are many ways of making these selections, framing the choices along the lines of theoretical approaches, research designs, and topic proximity represents a logical means of achieving this goal (Del Balso & Lewis, 2001; Trochim, 2005).

Priorities are often set to determine and present the most relevant literature in a timely manner for the study at hand. Creswell (2003, p. 38) recommends the following five steps to set priorities when searching for relevant literature:

1. *Begin with a broad synthesis of the literature* – including a search of overviews from encyclopedias and summaries from applicable journals;
2. *Turn to peer-reviewed journal articles with research findings* – beginning with the most recent and following-up with referenced sources;
3. *Investigate books related to the topic* – consider single topic chapters and volumes;
4. *Look for recent conference papers* – highlight those with the latest findings and make efforts to contact the presenters directly;
5. *Finish with a search of abstracts and dissertations* – request copies through library loan.

Many of these five steps fit into the type of systematic process for gaining and assimilating background knowledge that many academics (Creswell, 2003; Del Balso & Lewis, 2001;

Trochim, 2005) recommend. As can be seen in Figure 2-1, Creswell (2003) offers a seven-step

approach to capture, evaluate, and synthesize the literature. Capturing relevant information can

be accomplished through the five stages noted above, but evaluation and synthesis involve

considerably more. Evaluation involves a critical assessment of the methods and findings, while

the "synthesis phase requires extracting the common ideas and presenting their implications on

the proposed research" (Del Balso & Lewis, 2001, p. 68).

Step Number	Objective	Stage Used
1. Key Word Search	Begin by identifying key words useful in locating materials in an academic library at a college or university. These may present a topic or preliminary readings.	1
2. Catalogue and Database Search	Begin searching computerized databases with the key words in mind, focusing initially on journals and books related to the topic. A complementary search of those databases (ERIC, PsycINFO) that are typically reviewed by social science researchers may be valuable.	2
3. Locating Relevant Materials	Initially, try to locate about 50 research reports in articles and books related to the study topic. Emphasis should be put on these two formats because of the general simplicity in obtaining them.	3
4. Primary Selection	Use the abstract and a cursory reading of the article, book or chapter to obtain a sense of whether or not it will make a valuable contribution to the literature comprehension.	4
5. Design Literature Review Map	Craft a map (or visual picture) of the research literature to position the particular study within the larger body.	6
6. Draft Summaries	Simultaneously compose draft summaries of the literary sources that can be combined into a final chapter or proposal. Make appropriate APA references at this time.	5
7. Assemble the Literature Review	Assemble the literature review based on thematic or alternate means used to frame the discriminatory choices made.	7

**Figure 2-1: An Approach to Conducting a Literature Review
(Creswell, 2003)**

In Figure 2-1, adapted from Creswell (2003), an additional column has been used to demonstrate when each of the methods was used to collect, evaluate and synthesize the literature. Particular emphasis was made on following up with cited secondary sources during the stages for locating materials and making primary selections. Use of this modified snowballing technique produced 42 pieces of academic work with 74 references to each other or works examined for this chapter. The thematic arrangement of these pieces (see Figure 2-2) produced a web of interconnections that molded into a comprehensive literature map and highlighted the current trends in academic thinking.

2.2 Preparing the Literature Map

A number of key points can be observed from the breakdown of the literature provided in Figure 2-2. The map highlights the split between those who consider consultation as a process and those who consider its outcomes, with the majority of the thematic areas and literary pieces falling on the process-orientated side of the divide.

There are, however, literary works with research findings that are applicable to both sides of this bipolar assessment, and two key points where they overlap. Most conventional definitions of citizen participation incorporate both elements, while perceptions of consultation fairness bridge this gap as well.

That said, virtually all consultation literature seems to aspire to similar efficiency goals as those described earlier in the chapter, and can be tied one way or another to almost all other studies. A good example of this can be found with respect to the opportunity costs of participation. While the act of reducing the inherent costs of participating is predominantly a process-related item, there are ramifications for and from the results side of the equation as well. Even if Iannacone &
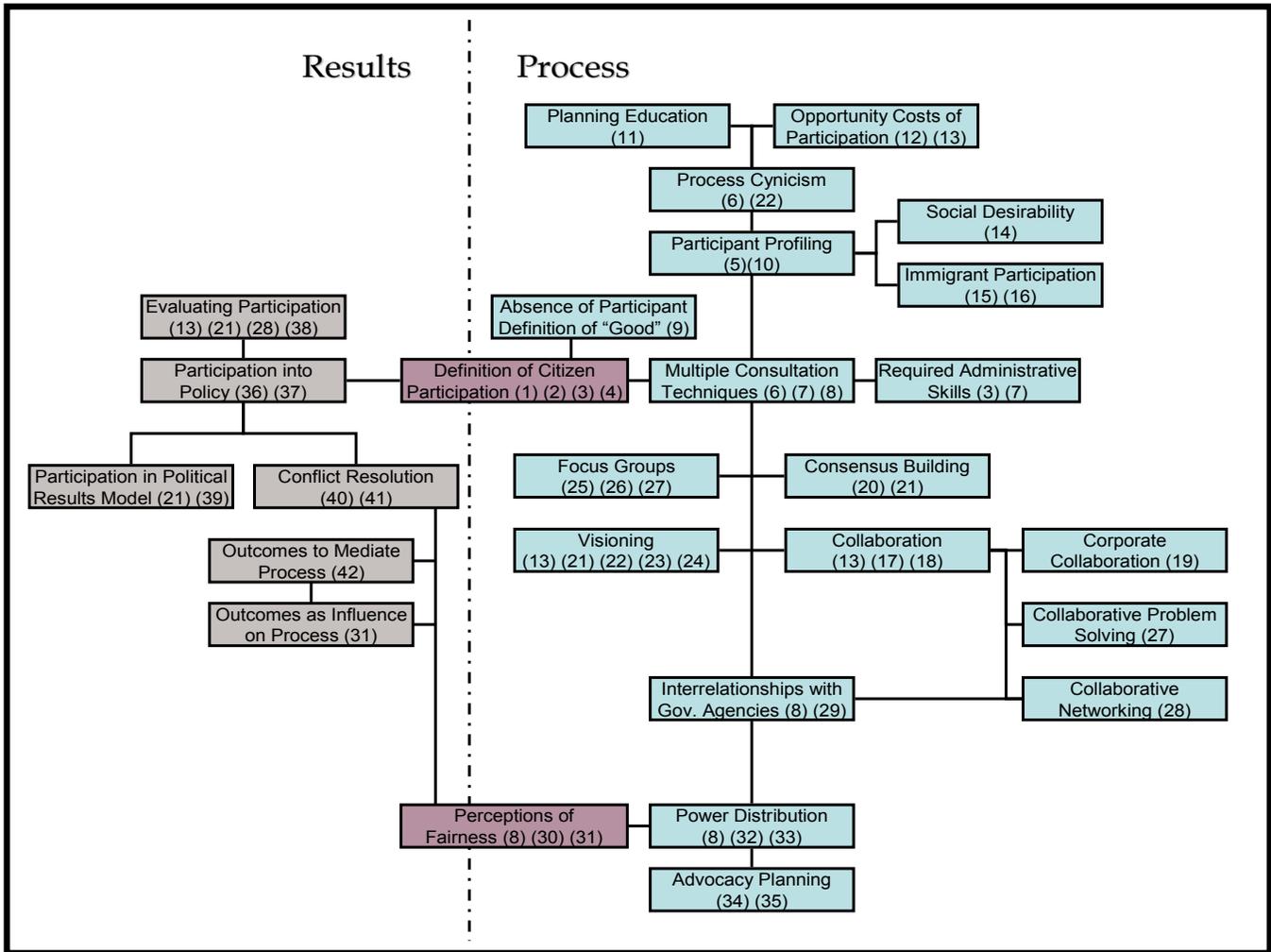
Figure 2-2: Literature Map of Public Consultation Research

Legend:

(1) *Bureau of Municipal Investigation (1974)*
(2) *Frisken & Homenuck (1972)*
(3) *King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel (1998)*
(4) *Lindsay & Smith (2001)*
(5) *MacMillan & Murgatroyd (1994)*
(6) *Berman (1997)*
(7) *Michaels, Mason & Solecki (2001)*
(8) *Walters, Aydelotte & Miller (2000)*
(9) *Tutler & Webler (1999)*
(10) *Baston, Ahmad & Tsang (2002)*
(11) *Chipeniuk (1999)*
(12) *Iannacone & Everton (2004)*
(13) *Helling (1998)*
(14) *Clary & Snyder (2002)*
(15) *Pilliard (1986)*
(16) *Lee Uyesugi & Shipley (2005)*
(17) *Gray (1989)*
(18) *Burroughs (1999)*
(19) *Austin (2000)*
(20) *Innes (1996)*
(21) *Dionyssia et al. (2006)*

(22) *Shipley, Feick, Hall & Earley (2004)*
(23) *Shipley & Newkirk (1999)*
(24) *Nadin (2002)*
(25) *Hollander (2004)*
(26) *Vogt, King & King (2004)*
(27) *Innes & Booher (2004)*
(28) *Connick & Innes (2003)*
(29) *Kathlene & Martin (1998)*
(30) *Halvorsen (2003)*
(31) *Lauber & Knuth (1999)*
(32) *Arnstein (1969)*
(33) *Booth (1996)*
(34) *Davidoff (1965)*
(35) *Forester (1994)*
(36) *Economic Cooperation and Development (1997)*
(37) *Duram & Brown (1999)*
(38) *Bickenstaff & Walker (2005)*
(39) *Gandy Jr. (2003)*
(40) *Sager (1994)*
(41) *McCool & Guthrie (2000)*
(42) *Stukas & Dunlap (2002)*

Everton (2004) prove correct in suggesting that enhancements to civic engagement can improve

attendance, these types of individual choices are often made in concert with how one's actions

will impact overall outcomes (Kathlene & Martin, 1991). Looking at opportunity costs for

participation is also a persuasive means of evaluating and comparing participation schemes

(Helling, 1998; Kathlene & Martin, 1991).

2.3 Arriving at a Definition of Effective Consultation

As mentioned earlier, the objective of defining consultation is one of the two lynchpins that

bridges the many thoughts and ideas on either side of the process/outcome divide. Since 1968,

when some of the earliest formalizing of civic engagement standards in Western democracies

began in the United Kingdom (Booth, 1996; Pillard, 1986), attempts have been made to define

what makes effective consultation (Tuler & Webler, 1999). Achieving a common definition is

crucial, as Tuler and Webler (1999) argue, because the advantages of civic engagement (see

Figure 2-3) cannot be realized in the absence of specific standards.

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1. Access to the process
2. Power to influence process and outcomes
3. Access to information
4. Structural characteristics to promote interactions
5. Facilitation of constructive personal behaviours
6. Improving social conditions for future processes
7. Adequate analysis

Figure 2-3: Normative Objectives of Consultation Participants
(Tuler & Webler, 1999)

The chronology of ideas marking the evolving definition of standards for effective consultation

has been interesting to follow. In response to a sense that neighbourhoods were entering into the

political arena with noisy consequences, Frisken and Homenuck (1972) hosted a conference on

public participation in Toronto that was open to planners, politicians, and the public. There they (1972, p. 1) presented the notion that "much of the current citizen participation thrust revolves around community planning – the process by which the residents develop a sense of community and a measure of control over their local environment."

Several conference speakers noted concern over the impact that direct civic input would have on the expression of majority will (Frisken & Homenuck, 1972, p. 6), and the chief executive of a local ratepayers association similarly reminded attendees that citizen participation was "merely a legal, but non-mandatory action designed to assist, advise or influence governments at all levels to the benefit of the community."

In spite of the great reform victory in Toronto's municipal elections of 1972 (Sewell, 1993), the Bureau of Municipal Research (1974, p. 10) took the same position as Frisken and Homenuck in suggesting that citizen participation was "a component of the democratic system which permits non-elected members of the community to exercise some control over decision-making which goes beyond elections." Indeed, it is not until after the formalization of consultation in planning legislation, as was accomplished in 1983 in Ontario (Dennis Hood, personal communication, December 14, 2005), that a discernable change can be seen in the approach to define the term.

As the 1997 Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Delegamuukw v. British Columbia* evidences, any applicable definition of consultation must indicate a minimum threshold for engagement that is universally consistent, flexible and workable (Lindsay & Smith, 2001). In a way, this is not unique, as the *Planning Act of Ontario* has prescribed an opportunity for consultation for more than 20 years. What is different about this decision is the effect of law on provincial policy. In essence, it gives consultation teeth by making it a factor for the courts to determine if the

government has accorded sufficient priority to the interests at hand (Sharvit et al., 1999 as cited in Lindsay & Smith, 2001). At a minimum, it requires governments to conduct consultation in good faith and to substantially address relevant concerns (Lindsay & Smith, 2001).

However, each of these definitions, or adjuncts to definitions, still places the bulk of power to the political and professional administrators, and effectiveness to the correct application of process.

King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) challenge us to see this planning element in an opposite way. Effective participation is that which is real or authentic: "participation that is deep and offers continuous involvement with the potential for all involved to have an effect on the situation and have a degree of comfort with the arrived decision" (King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998, p. 320).

In their model (see Figure 2-4), citizens are placed next to the issue, while the administrators remain as the bridge between them and the political processes. In their own words (1998, p. 320), "authentic participation [thus] requires that administrators focus on both process and outcome.
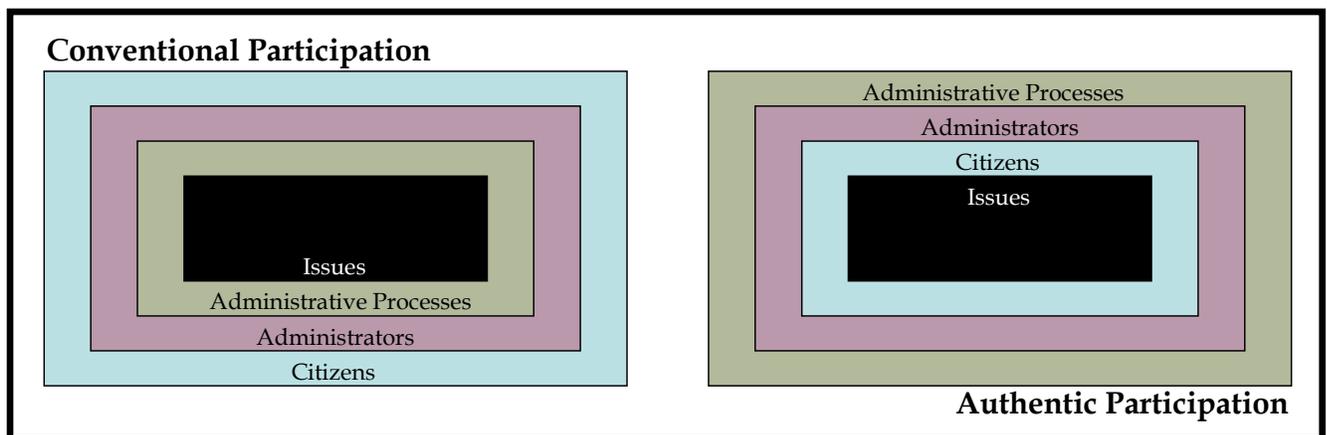
Figure 2-4: Model of Conventional Versus Authentic Participation (King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998)

This sentence is a neat summary of the thirty-year trend in consultation and the first of many important observations in this chapter. In particular, it demonstrates that knowledge building and legislative frameworks can produce sufficient familiarity with consultation among the applicable players so as to actually change the scope of the debate from the merits of consultation in general to the aim of reaching milestones for both process and outcome.

2.4 Understanding the Factors that Influence Normative Consultation Theories

Understanding the normative theories pertaining to the process of public consultation in planning is not a straightforward affair, as Figure 2-2 demonstrates, and any serious discussion of process must begin by looking at participants and their motivations for taking part in planning decisions.

According to Clary and Snyder (2002), a majority of citizens have favourable opinions toward attending civic engagement opportunities, but do not always follow their intentions with like behaviour. Further complicating matters, those that do show up often represent multiple, rather than a single public interest, even when living in the same geographic area (Lee Uyesugi & Shipley, 2006). The choice to attend is also often made under burden from the significant time constraints that are inherent to modern society (King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998).

Attendance patterns for similar activities such as religious observance confirm that the choice to participate is made at the margin (Iannacone & Everton, 2004). Civic engagement can thus be viewed as a basic commodity whose trends will be shaped by market economics and for which time is the principal cost of mainstream practice. As alternatives become more numerous and more attractive, the opportunity cost of attendance increases, thus decreasing attendance itself (Iannacone & Everton, 2004). On the other hand, as product enhancements and the associated benefits of attendance are augmented, an increase can similarly be seen in attendance rates.

But participation in decision-making is more than just a simple commodity. In many ways it is seen by both participants and practitioners as a rational investment of time aimed at producing positive and visible outcomes (King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998; McMillan & Murgatroyd, 1994). A failure to include the public or validate their opinions can render them "vexatious and cynical" (Berman, 1997, p. 110) "while depriving decision makers of input and compromising legitimacy," (Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000, p. 357). In spite of such consultation benefits, the inclination against increasing participation opportunities or providing further enhancements often arises from the fear of increased time and expense (Creighton, 1981).

Consultation is not an inexpensive proposition. The most recent peer-reviewed analyses of civic engagement expenditures identify a cost of $175 per hour of tangible consultation (Helling, 1998; Kathlene & Martin, 1991). Approximately 1/3 of this figure comes from the opportunity costs of participating (Helling, 1998); implying that cost and value are inexorably linked to both the decision to participate, as well as the process by which the public input is solicited.

The effects of these escalating costs for both parties have not escaped notice from academia. As early as 1994, McMillan and Murgatroyd noted that though desirable, consultation is not always convenient, as it can be difficult and expensive to contact all people affected by a decision and obtain their committed participation. Clary and Snyder (2002) confirm that a commitment to participate is unlikely to be realized if the experience seems trivial, insignificant and/or fails to impact the community. Further, Shipley et al. (2004) warn that the point may have already been reached where the negative aspects of consultation so augment the opportunity costs of attending as to dissuade community members from engaging in the process. These authors (2004) found that many citizens evaluate the consultation formats with which they are presented as pedantic,

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and almost 40% believe that their contribution would have little or very little impact on the final decision.

Paradoxically, simple encouragement to participate may increase involvement in the short term, but seems to reduce the intrinsic motivation to participate (Clary & Snyder, 2002). Citizens often become fatigued by repeated public input opportunities (McMillan & Murgatroyd, 1994), and frustrated when, under the guise of having already been consulted, they find themselves denied the privilege of more extreme forms of outcry typical in a power imbalance (Sager, 1994).

As such, the objective of profiling which types of citizens will attend a civic engagement process represents an inexact science at best. It is neither reasonable to assume that people who do not come to meetings do not care about the decision nor is it enough to suggest that those who come out must have a vested interest in the outcome (McMillan & Murgatroyd, 1994). It is very much conceivable that some citizens will participate who do not have a level of education for the issue at stake commensurate with their passion for a particular outcome. In these cases the education gap must be made up by the administrators as part of the process (Chipeniuk, 1999).

All told, the factors that directly influence consultation processes are numerous and complex. Those who attend often represent multiple interests and make the choice to attend with the outlay of opportunity costs in mind. Paradoxically, a vested interest in the decision outcome is not seen as a guarantee for participation, while encouraging involvement appears to reduce such desire.

2.5 Consultation Techniques Prescribed in the Literature

There is a corollary observed in consultation literature that the manner of public involvement affects the degree of public satisfaction apart from the outcome of the decision (Burroughs,

1998). State Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000, p. 351) "to be fully effective, decision-makers must appropriately tie the selected strategy to both the purpose for participation and the nature of the issue considered." Accordingly, Thomas (1995) recommends more participation when the acceptance of a decision is important and less public participation when the quality of a decision is the determining factor. Though no mention is made of the effort required, Berman (1997, p. 108) finds that "using a range of strategies is significantly associated with lower rates of cynicism."

The International Association for Public Participation (2005), among others have picked up on this concept and recommend a series of devices based on the desired objective (see Figure 2-5).

IAP$_2$ Public Participation Spectrum				
Developed by the International Association for Public Participation				
Increasing Level of Public Impact				
Inform	**Consult**	**Involve**	**Collaborate**	**Empower**
Public Participation Goal	*Public Participation Goal*	*Public Participation Goal*	*Public Participation Goal*	*Public Participation Goal*
To provide the public with the balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public	*Promise to the Public*	*Promise to the Public*	*Promise to the Public*	*Promise to the Public*
We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Examples of Techniques:	*Examples of Techniques:*	*Examples of Techniques:*	*Examples of Techniques:*	*Examples of Techniques:*
↓ Fact Sheets ↓ Websites ↓ Open Houses	↓ Public Comment ↓ Focus Groups ↓ Surveys ↓ Public Meetings	↓ Workshops ↓ Deliberate Polling	↓ Citizen Advisory Committees ↓ Consensus-Building ↓ Participatory Decision-Making	↓ Citizen Juries ↓ Ballots ↓ Delegated Decisions

Figure 2-5: Relationship Between Consultation Techniques and Levels of Impact (International Association for Public Participation, 2005)

However, the purpose or objective for including citizens is not always static (Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000). Each stage in the policy development process brings about different levels of expectation and involvement, which needs to be communicated (see Figure 2-6). While citizens hold dear the fact that decision-makers serve and represent the people, they will infer their own purposes if these are not chosen and adequately expressed (Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000).

Policy Development Stage	Participation Purposes
1. Define the Problem	**Discover** – aid in the search for definitions
2. Identify Criteria	**Discover** – aid in the search for criteria
3. Generate Alternatives	**Discover** – aid in the search for alternatives; **Educate** – inform the public about issues and alternatives; **Legitimize** – comply with public norms
4. Evaluate Alternatives	**Educate** – educate public about proposed alternatives; **Measure** – assess public opinion regarding options; **Legitimize** – comply with public norms;
5. Recommend an Alternative	**Educate** – educate public about proposed alternatives; **Persuade** – influence public toward an alternative; **Legitimize** – comply with public norms

Figure 2-6: Policy Development Stages and Participation Purposes
(Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000)

The conventional model for participation places the planner as the administrative and technical expert charged with selecting the appropriate consultative process (Kathlene & Martin, 1991; King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998). In other models, the selection onus is switched and/or more equitably distributed (Arnstein, 1969; King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998; Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000). Irrespective of the deciding body, academics agree that certain skills are required of planners and public administrators to produce effective consultation.

Interpersonal skills, including communication, listening, team building, meeting facilitation and self-knowledge are among the requirements, according to King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998). The planner also has an important role in assembling and facilitating information flow as part of

education and outreach programs, and for exchanging ideas between organizations, which tends to be a dramatically underserved component of consultation (Michaels, Mason & Solecki, 2001). Planners who exhibit these skills have substantial legitimacy among consultation participants and are respected for their contributions, even when the participants have criticisms (Innes, 1996).

Eventually, a decision must be made as to which consultation technique or combination will be used. As Figure 2-5 demonstrates, there is no shortage of techniques from which to choose. Of these, much has been written on focus groups, consensus building, visioning and collaboration.

Focus groups are a consultation method designed to illuminate citizen perceptions that may have eluded other survey techniques (Vogt, King & King, 2004; Waterton & Wynne, 1999). At their most effective, focus groups generate qualitative data that complements the current knowledge base on most subjects (Vogt, King & King, 2004).

Typically, a focus group engages four to 12 participants (Greenbaum, 1993; Morgan, 1997; Simon, 1999; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) in a discussion of relevant planning topics at a neutral location. The participants are sometimes recruited on the basis of social and geographic homogeneity to avoid the creation of an informal hierarchy within the group that would exclude participation from certain members (Morgan, 1988; Simon, 1999; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

Topics and questions in a focus group are generally sequenced from the general to the more specific and with a certain degree of flexibility provided to the facilitator (Greenbaum, 1993; Simon, 1999; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Sessions normally transpire over a two-hour period and the format is designed to encourage the flow and debate of ideas (Simon, 1999).

Academics provide contrasting evaluations of focus groups as a consultative device. Innes and Booher (2004) are encouraged by the manner in which these sessions engage partakers directly in conversation with each other and with decision makers. And while Vogt, King and King (2004) concede that focus groups may not always be appropriate for personal topics, they suggest that the group pressures inherent to this format generally inhibit members from providing misleading information. By contrast, Hollander (2004) suggests that the pressures of conformity, groupthink and social desirability combine to alter the viewpoints and statements of many participants.

Consensus building is a consultation method designed to resemble the model of communicative rationality (Innes, 1996). Like focus groups, it is a means of group deliberation that brings people together for interactive discussion. But unlike focus groups, a significant range of individuals are chosen to participate because they represent differing stakes in a problem (Innes, 1996). Diverse viewpoints are essential to this technique as they represent conduits that approximate the overall public interest (Innes, 1996).

The selection of participants characteristically involves a screening process in which appropriate government and non-government agencies suggest and then cross-verify a group of stakeholders (Dionyssia et al., 2006). Practical considerations pertaining to time and funding tend to limit the exercises to a few groups of eight to 10 participants who deliberate the current conditions and the potential solutions (Dionyssia et al., 2006).

The implications of this concept at a practical level are substantial. Methods that combine public participation with decision-making capacities are increasingly in demand, especially as related to regional and other planning scenarios that involve multiple and conflicting users (Dionyssia et

al., 2006). Such messy situations require consensus building (McCool & Guthrie, 2001), as this method represents the most direct means of understanding the cause and effect relationships from the outcome. Theoretically, this also enables the best alternative to be reached. Participants tend to be partial to this format as well because of the opportunity that it provides to learn from others with both similar and dissimilar viewpoints (Halvorsen, 2003; McCool & Guthrie, 2001).

Soliciting stakeholder input is not solely conducted by means of consensus building exercises. While there was virtually no mention of visioning prior to 1990, community visions have since become a common method to engage citizens in the creation of collective plans and policies for the future of a particular geographic area (Shipley et al., 2004). Shipley and Newkirk (1999) find numerous substantive and procedural definitions for the term, including those most commonly accepted by municipal governments (Shipley, 2002, p. 7) and adapted into Figure 2-7.

Substantive Meaning 6:
  Visioning includes a set of values for use as decision criteria in subsequent planning decisions.

Procedural Meaning 5:
  Visioning employs goal directed imagery to bring about desired outcomes.

Figure 2-7: Commonly Accepted Substantive and Procedural Definitions of Visioning (Shipley & Newkirk, 1999)

Visioning often attempts to involve the entire population (Lee Uyesugi & Shipley, 2006) but it is not necessarily limited to a community context, as it has been used in a national and international context in Europe since the late 1990s (Nadin, 2002). Parallels can be found between visioning and collaborative and consensus building formats in the fact that "the vision usually becomes a treaty negotiated among rival coalitions," (Bryson, 1995, 155 as cited in Helling, 1998). Planners and politicians throughout the 1990s perceived visioning as an opportunity to create a stronger

civic will and viewed it as a break from a tradition of decision-making by the elite (Helling, 1998; Shipley, 2002), even though its novelty may in fact have been questionable (Shipley, 2002).

The practice of visioning is generally inclusive and often encouraged by the ideals and energies of municipal planners (Shipley & Michela, 2006). Facilitated discussions by diverse groups of citizens at frequent intervals represent the common bond of many such initiatives, including *VISION 2020* in Atlanta, Georgia (Helling, 1998), *Vision 2020 – The Sustainable Region* in Hamilton, Ontario (Shipley, 2002) and the previously described *Ottawa 20/20* initiative (see Chapter One). In the end, there is some evidence that this technique involves a greater cross-section and quantity of participants (Shipley, 2002).

"Collaboration is a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible," (Gray, 1989, p. 5). There is an implicit assumption in collaboration that only those parties, or representatives of those parties, who have a vested interest in the problem will attend and thereby be termed as stakeholders. This runs contrary to the conclusion reached by McMillan and Murgatroyd (1994), and yet collaboration is rooted in the same town hall meeting concept that is the cornerstone of participatory democracy (Gray, 1989). Key to the usefulness of collaboration are the advantages realized by working together to solve a problem that none alone can accomplish (Burroughs, 1998; Gray, 1989).

Collaboration is designed to resolve multi-party conflicts by transforming adversarial behaviour into a mutual search for information and solutions. This trait is crucial, argues Burroughs (1998, p. 801), because "each stakeholder enters the fray with different assumptions held with varying

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degrees of importance and uncertainty." Increasing awareness of these interdependent positions

paradoxically renews the willingness to search for mutual benefits (Gray, 1989) and sharing

information positively affects the motivation to participate (Austin, 2000; Burroughs, 1998).

The question of who should participate is addressed by the steps of the collaborative process

seen in Figure 2-8. In particular, the inclusive nature of representation needs to transcend both

those who can construct the picture of the problem in Phase 1 as well as those responsible for

implementing the solutions in Phase 3 (Gray, 1989). The participation process itself is defined by

a series of meetings held at agreed times in which the nature of the problem, the development of

solutions, and the plan for implementation can be debated and assented by the stakeholders.

Phase 1: Problem Setting
- Common definition of the problem
- Commitment to collaborate
- Identification of stakeholders
- Legitimacy of stakeholders
- Convener characteristics
- Identification of resources

Phase 2: Direction Setting
- Establishing ground rules
- Agenda setting
- Organizing subgroups
- Joint information search
- Exploring options
- Reaching agreement

Phase 3: Implementation
- Dealing with constituencies
- Building external support
- Structuring actions
- Monitoring the agreement
- Ensuring compliance

Figure 2-8: Primary Stages of Collaboration
(Gray, 1989)

However, for as successful as collaboration may prove, London (1995) warns that there are a number of limitations to its potential, including the fact that:

- collaboration is a notoriously time-consuming process and is not suitable for problems that require quick and decisive action;
- power inequalities among the parties can derail the process;
- the norms of consensus and joint decision-making sometimes require that the common good take precedence over the interests of a few;
- collaboration works best in small groups and often breaks down in groups that are too large, and;
- collaboration is meaningless without the power to implement final decisions.

Despite these potential drawbacks, collaboration has bridged the gap and found application in the business world. Collaborations have been used to manage interregional issues involving multiple non-government agencies (Connick & Innes, 2003) and to align independent, as well as merging, companies (Austin, 2000).

The emphasis of academics on consensus building, focus groups, visioning and collaboration as consultation methods of choice is interesting, not only for its inherent postulation that changes to process can improve overall effectiveness, but also for the common characteristics they present. Each of these methods anticipates that participants will come from different positions and with different expectations and work together toward a common solution or goal. Each represents a much more interactive exercise than the traditional model presented in Figure 2-4, and espouses objectives further along the continuum of Figure 2-5 than many of the other available methods.

Closely related to these objectives, ranging from inform to empower, are the escalating degrees of power sharing found in Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation (see Figure 2-9). This model encourages the redistribution of decision-making power to underprivileged citizens and gives them the opportunity to affect the outcome (Arnstein, 1969). It is this latter element which

appears central to the public's motivation to
participate (Halvorsen, 2003; Helling, 1998;
Kathlene & Martin, 1991). Citizens appear to be
more likely to contribute if they perceive that
their input will have an influence on the
outcome. As will be discussed later, it is the
creation of fair processes and fair outcomes,
which is central to positive citizen perceptions
of fairness.
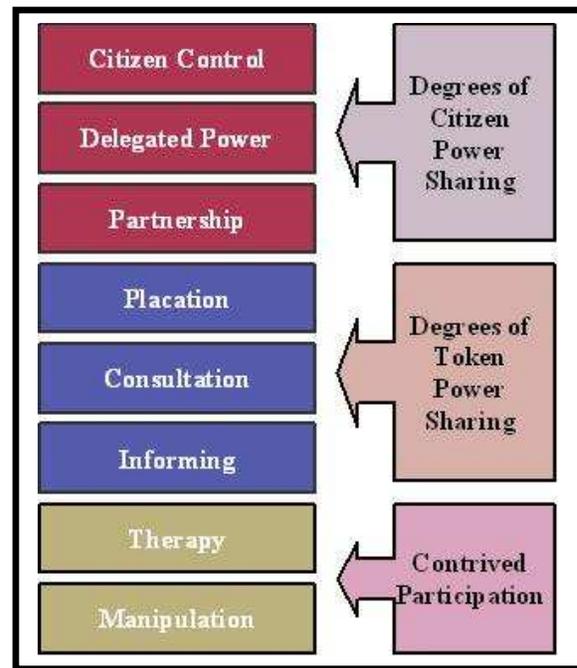
Figure 2-9: The Ladder of Citizen Participation
(Arnstein, 1969)

2.6 Understanding the Impact of Outcomes on Consultation Practice

That the purpose of participation should be described by Duram & Brown (1999, p. 456) "as a

means to enhance the quality of decision-making by providing an opportunity for the public to

contribute pertinent information" comes as no surprise given the previous analysis of definitions

for planning consultation. As the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

(1997) confirms, the central question has changed from whether governments should involve the

public in policy formation, to how much participation is needed and with what implications.

Research shows that public participation is of greater use to administrators and participants who

actively seek such forums, and that such action eventually increases the legitimacy of the plans

in the minds of stakeholders (Duram & Brown, 1999). Unfortunately, policy decisions imply a

distribution of limited resources, creating winners and losers (OECD, 1997). Thus, consultation

must also be evaluated on its ability to position governments to arrive at fair and appropriate decisions while effectively communicating the rationale for their judgments (OECD, 1997).

Methods are required by which participation formats can be evaluated for their ability to achieve the current standards for effective consultation. Despite the importance of evaluating outcomes, most studies have only sought to appraise the processes (Bickenstaff & Walker, 2005). Failing to monitor our collective efforts appears to be a considerable part of the reason why Bickenstaff and Walker (2005) found that participation is not having a substantive affect on policy process and decision outcomes throughout Europe.

Consultation outcomes can be evaluated by a selection of criteria that relate to the earlier search for efficiency improvements (Bickenstaff & Walker, 2005; Connick & Innes, 2003; Helling, 1998; Kathlene & Martin, 1991):

- the extent to which decisions are altered as a result;
- the manner in which the consultations are interpreted by officials;
- the impact on citizens beyond stakeholders and their viewpoints;
- the cost-effectiveness of stakeholder involvement.

The parallels between the means to judge consultation outcomes and efficiency improvements are immediately apparent. Forums for providing input that aid learning beyond the original stakeholders inherently augment knowledge creation and provide new viewpoints for framing decisions. Similarly, it can be anticipated that decisions which are altered as a result of the consultation exercise have provided both planners and the public with the opportunity to maximize mutual consultation benefits. Whereas the cost-effectiveness of consultation is often determined by the length of time, number of participants, format and opportunity costs (Helling, 1998; Iannacone & Everton, 2004; Kathlene & Martin, 1991), it is obviously the case that where

less money is spent to achieve the same result that greater efficiency has been achieved (Parkin & Bade, 2000).

However, these conclusions do not come without certain caveats. Through participatory learning, "those who frequently attend consultation exercises acquire new planning knowledge, as well as how to manipulate it, thus widening the gap within civic society," (Bickenstaff & Walker, 2005, p. 2135). Citizens in this case lose perspective of their initial values, and become conduits for the current political structure as they gain awareness of the harsh realities in making decisions.

This sliding scale toward mass acceptance is dependent on the manner in which the consultations are interpreted by officials. "Politicians respond to expressions of anxiety and fear among their constituents," (Gandy Jr., 2003, p. 293), but fail in like manner as the public to understand the way in which measured opinions and the press are used to shape their decisions. Important policy change most frequently occurs during periods when the attention of the public has been drawn to an issue by a critical event and their input been more actively solicited (Kasperson & Kasperson, 1996; Sharp, 1999 as cited in Gandy Jr., 2003). In essence, the current political model holds decisive action in such high regard as to potentially inflate the value of citizen participation as an influence on policy.

This is an important finding in terms of conflict resolution. Many organizations attempt public consultation as part of their efforts to resolve conflicts (Smith & McDonough, 2001), but fail to take stock of the relative power of each of the groups in the community to make sure that no one party in the process is being exploited or ignored (Piliavin et al., 2002, as cited in Stukas & Dunlap, 2002). Conflict resolution under the collaborative model, for example, relies on equal stature and representation of those stakeholders who are involved in defining and implementing

the solution (Gray, 1989). However, according to Sager (1994), planners gain authority through their mastery of the subject and their appearance of neutrality over the potential political conflicts. This places them as the strong actor coupled with a weaker public in an open information exchange system. In such a case, information from the public can be more easily synthesized by the planner and extrapolate his or her influence (Sager, 1994). It is especially troubling to think that citizen engagement, which is often motivated by the goal of community betterment (Stukas & Dunlap, 2002), may in fact represent a subtle method to exert further dominance over their lay position (Sager, 1994). Worse, as Smith and McDonough (2001) conclude, it is entirely possible for all rules and regulations of public consultation to be followed in a mechanical fashion and still leave citizens feeling as though they were treated unfairly.

Fairness is a relatively vague concept for which evidence about what citizens perceive to be fair is not always immediately apparent (Lauber & Knuth, 1999). While fairness has consistently been found to influence how citizens evaluate consultation procedures, it means different things to different people (Lauber & Knuth, 1999; Smith & McDonough, 2001). "Fairness judgments are made either about the appropriateness of allocation decisions or those of decision processes," (Lauber & Knuth, 1999, p. 20). Those made about the fairness of decisions are described as *distributive fairness*, while *procedural fairness* is the term used to describe the fairness of the procedures used to make those decisions (Lauber & Knuth, 1999).

Citizens relate fairness for consultation to both meanings of the term. While Thibaut and Walker (1978, as cited in Lauber & Knuth, 1999) suggest that perceptions of fairness were related to the degree of influence that a participant had on the arrived outcome, Lind and Tyler (1988, as cited

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in Lauber & Knuth, 1999) found procedural fairness to be of importance to people as a means for signaling their acceptance within society.

Fair procedures have an additional benefit in that they can ameliorate the negative reactions that would normally result from an unfair outcome (Lauber & Knuth, 1999; Smith & McDonough, 2001). Though citizens hold correspondingly broad definitions for what is fair and successful (see Figure 2-10), perceptions of fairness uniformly impact their trust for authorities (Smith & McDonough, 2001) and their outlook for success (McCool & Guthrie, 2001).
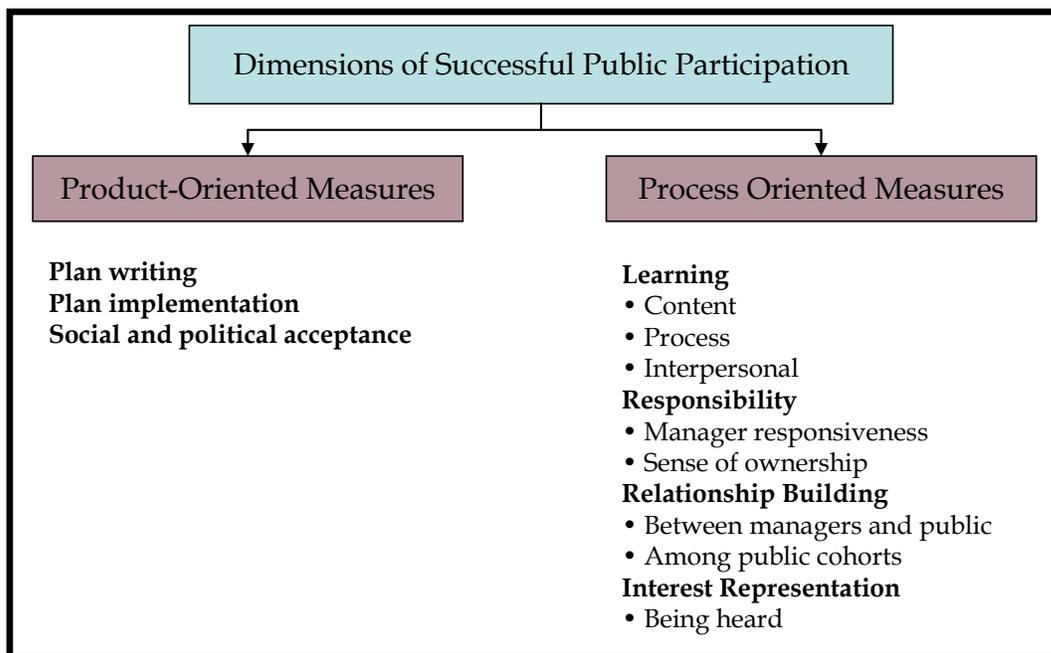
Figure 2-10: Dimensions of Success for Product and Process from Public Participation (McCool & Guthrie, 2001)

In the end, the data suggests that the public holds a unique viewpoint with respect to what they perceive is fair. If citizens "perceive decision-making procedures to be fair, then they are more likely to perceive decisions as fair," (Lauber & Knuth, 1999, p. 20). However, the public just as often reaches the conclusion that "the process must have been fair because it produced a decision that they believed to be fair," (Lauber & Knuth, 1999, p. 34). In other words, as critical players

in consultation activities, the public seems to hold the value of the process and the outcome in equal esteem (see Figure 2-11). This, as Lauber and Knuth (1999, p. 35) ultimately suggest, leaves room for "[a] more concrete conception of fairness that can contribute to the way that decisions are designed and communicated such that citizens will perceive them more fairly."
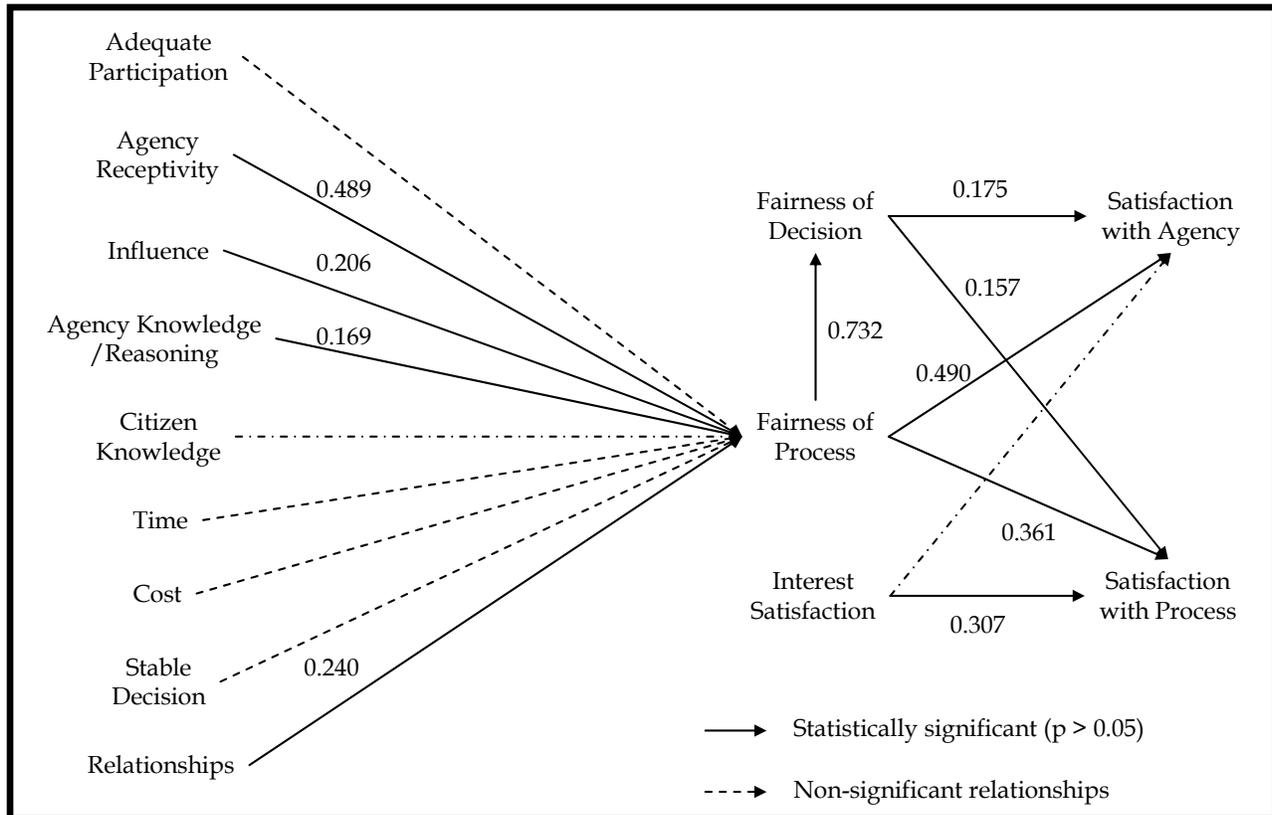
Figure 2-11: Statistical Relationships of Process Perceptions and Decision Evaluations (Lauber & Knuth, 1999)

In the end, though much of the academic focus has been directed toward designing improved consultation processes, there have still been important discussions of consultation results in the literature. While consultation is of greatest value to those that actively seek it, it must still be judged by a selection of relevant criteria. These criteria must resemble the means for assessing efficiency improvements and have bearing on the value of activities such as conflict resolution.

However, citizen perceptions of fairness do not rest solely on the realization of certain outcomes. The public values a fair process on the same level as that of a fair result, and gives it a significant weighting in their decision to trust planners and other authorities.

2.7 Principal Assumptions and Knowledge Gaps from Primary Literature Sources

The investigation of academic writing in the field of planning consultation has uncovered much in terms of the breadth of knowledge, as well as specific, sub-topic emphases. However, though not specifically stated, collectively the selected authors have made certain assumptions that are worth noting here.

For instance, the authors have assumed that, all other things being equal, all citizens are willing to participate in consultation and by extension, decision-making – especially should the format be made more conducive. Secondly, and though again not explicitly stated, an assumption is made that a high degree of participation, or at least representation, is possible – whereas this may not always be so. Alarmingly, some models such as collaboration and consensus building depend on this trait. Finally, most of the literature investigated fails to define a geographic boundary for the concepts that they describe. However, it may not be the case that a particular consultation format will work with equal, or any, success at the community, municipal, and regional levels.

Beyond these key assumptions, not all literature is based on research gathered and analyzed in the same fashion. As Table 2-1 indicates, there has been a significant emphasis on qualitative research methods and means of analysis, especially in the past fifteen years. Very few studies have tried to quantify factors influencing consultation, the relationship between outcomes and consultation formats, or even evaluative scores from current efforts. This lack of quantitative analysis represents one of several key knowledge gaps.

Table 2-1: Dispersion of Research and Analysis Methods of Primary Authors

	Authors and Academic Contributions	Case Studies	Observations	Interviews	Literature Reviews	Surveys	Qualitative Analysis	Quantitative Analysis
1	**Bureau of Municipal Research (1974)** Citizen Participation in Toronto – Climate for Cooperation?	■				■	■	■
2	**Frisken & Homenuck (1972)** Citizen Participation: Views and Alternatives		■				■	
3	**King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel (1998)** Toward Authentic Participation in Public Administration			■		■	■	
4	**Lindsay & Smith (2001)** Evaluation of British Columbia Consultation Guidelines	■					■	
5	**McMillan & Murgatroyd (1994)** Opening the Door: Improving Decisions With Consultation				■		■	
6	**Evan M. Berman (1997)** Dealing with Cynical Citizens			■		■		■
7	**Michaels, Mason & Solecki (2001)** Participatory Research on Collaborative Management		■					■
8	**Walters, Aydelotte & Miller (2000)** Putting More Public in Policy Analysis	■				■	■	
9	**Tuler & Webler (1999)** What Participants Expect of a Public Participation Process	■		■			■	
10	**Baston, Ahmad & Tsang (2002)** Four Motives for Community Involvement				■		■	
11	**Raymond Chipeniuk (1999)** Public Explanations for Environmental Degradation						■	■
12	**Iannacone & Everton (2004)** Never on Sunny Days: Lessons from Weekly Attendance							■
13	**Amy Helling (1998)** Collaborative Visioning: Proceed with Caution!	■				■		■
14	**Clary & Snyder (2002)** Community Involvement: Opportunities to Socialize Adults			■	■		■	
15	**J.P. Pilliard (1986)** Patterns and Forms of Immigrant Participation						■	
16	**Lee Uyesugi & Shipley (2005)** Visioning Diversity: Planning for Multicultural Societies			■			■	
17	**Barbara Gray (1989)** Collaborating	■	■		■		■	
18	**Richard Burroughs (1998)** Process, Knowledge and Motivation in Quality Decisions	■	■				■	
19	**James E. Austin (2000)** The Collaboration Challenge	■	■		■		■	
20	**Judith E. Innes (1996)** Planning Through Consensus-Building	■	■				■	
21	**Dionyssia et al. (2006)** Scenario Workshops: Useful Method for Resource Planning		■			■	■	

Table 2-1 (cont'd): Dispersion of Research and Analysis Methods of Primary Authors

	Authors and Academic Contributions	Case Studies	Observations	Interviews	Literature Reviews	Surveys	Qualitative Analysis	Quantitative Analysis
22	**Shipley, Feick, Hall & Earley (2004)** Evaluating Municipal Visioning	■	□	■	□	■	■	■
23	**Shipley & Newkirk (1999)** Vision and Visioning: What Do These Terms Really Mean?	□	□	□	□	□	■	□
24	**Vincent Nadin (2002)** Visions and Visioning in European Spatial Planning	■	□	□	□	□	■	□
25	**Jocelyn A. Hollander (2004)** The Social Contexts of Focus Groups	□	■	■	□	□	■	□
26	**Vogt, King & King (2004)** Focus Groups in Psychological Assessment	□	■	□	■	□	■	□
27	**Innes & Booher (2004)** Public Participation: New Strategies for the 21st Century	■	□	□	■	□	■	□
28	**Connick & Innes (2003)** Outcomes of Collaborative Water Policy Making	■	■	■	□	□	■	□
29	**Kathlene & Martin (1991)** Enhancing Citizen Participation: Panel Designs & Policy	□	□	□	■	□	■	■
30	**Kathleen E. Halvorsen (2003)** Assessing the Effects of Public Participation	■	□	□	□	■	□	■
31	**Lauber & Knuth (1999)** Measuring Fairness in Citizen Participation: A Case Study	■	□	■	□	■	■	■
32	**Sherry R. Arnstein (1969)** The Ladder of Citizen Participation	□	■	□	□	□	■	□
33	**Christine Booth (1996)** Gender and Public Consultation: Case Studies	■	□	□	□	□	■	□
34	**Paul Davidoff (1965)** Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning	□	■	□	□	□	■	□
35	**John Forester (1994)** Advocacy Planning and Deliberative Democracy	□	□	□	□	□	■	□
36	**Organization of Economic Cooperation and Dev't (1997)** Integrating Multiple Interests into Policy	□	■	□	■	□	■	□
37	**Duram & Brown (1998)** Assessing Public Participation in U.S. Watershed Planning	□	□	□	□	■	□	■
38	**Bickerstaff & Walker (2005)** Shared Visions, Unholy Alliances	■	□	□	□	□	■	□
39	**Oscar H. Gandy Jr. (2003)** Public Opinion Surveys and the Formation of Public Policy	□	■	□	■	□	□	■
40	**Tore Sager (1994)** Communicative Planning Theory	■	□	□	■	□	■	□
41	**McCool & Guthrie (2001)** Mapping Successful Participation in Messy Situations	□	□	■	□	□	■	□
42	**Stukas & Dunlap (2002)** Community Involvement: Theoretical Approaches	□	■	□	□	□	■	□

Stemming from the assumptions implicit to the literary works investigated, four items remain unknown and warrant researching:

1. the extent to which residents want to be involved in a municipal consultation process;
2. the priorities that the public holds with respect to planning issues;
3. the format and length of time for consultation that residents find comfortable and appropriate, and;
4. the extent to which the planner can accept input from the public and still remain credible to the profession and his/her municipal council.

The desire to further the understanding in these four areas creates a unique research perspective. As each of the knowledge gaps pertain to the goals and objectives of planners and the public in consultation exercises, it makes sense to align the research queries so as to gain their perspective. In order to acknowledge the role of each of these players and to address the previously expressed knowledge gaps, the central research question asks:

> *What do the views of planners and the public, as major players in consultation, have to tell us about the most effective techniques at the municipal level?*

2.8 Conclusions from the Literature

Much has been uncovered in this chapter with respect to the literature on public consultation in planning. In particular, while all the literature interrelates, there is a significant divide between investigations of consultation process and consultation outcomes. On the process side of the line, the debate has shifted since the late 1960s from questioning the value of consultation to one of what type and how much of it is necessary.

However, determining how to create this appropriate level of consultation requires a firmer understanding of a number of factors that influence the prescribed format. From the participant's perspective, the motivation to participate has been suggested to be dependent on a combination of the consultation format, the opportunity cost of attending and the extent to which they believe

that their input will be considered. Some participants need to have a vested interest before they will get involved, while such a trait is far from obligatory for others. Numerous consultation formats are available, but the recent academic focus has been on methods such as focus groups, visioning, collaboration, and consensus building that directly engage participants with each other. Each is rooted in the town hall meeting concept, but works to level the power relationship between the participant and the administrator.

On the outcome side of the literature, consultation is evaluated in terms of its ability to impact decisions, satisfy citizen needs and remain cost-effective. Consultation can have other roles in such processes as conflict resolution, but ultimately, both process- and outcome-oriented authors tend to agree that the primary goal is one of achieving fairness.

Fairness can relate to both the validity of the process and the appropriateness of the decision. However, while perceptions of fairness uniformly impact citizen trust for authorities, the public values both a fair process as well as a fair outcome.

From all of these findings, a set of three principal assumptions were drawn from the literature, producing four knowledge gaps to be addressed by the central research question over the remaining chapters.

Chapter Three: Research Methodologies

The purpose of any good research study is to answer a question aimed squarely at the gaps in academic knowledge. As outlined in Chapter Two, the gaps for this study are found in the quantitative understanding of goals and objectives of each of the major players in consultation. These gaps are identified as:

1. the extent to which residents want to be involved in a municipal consultation process;
2. the priorities that the public holds with respect to planning issues;
3. the format and length of time for consultation that residents find comfortable and appropriate, and;
4. the extent to which the planner can accept input from the public and still remain credible to the profession and his/her municipal council.

These research gaps arise from the general trends in the literature, which suggest that success in consultation is dependent on processes with an increased number of meetings and participants.

In response to these trends, and the other normative theories outlined in Chapter Two, the central research question seeks to address these gaps by asking:

> *What do the views of planners and the public, as major players in consultation, have to tell us about the most effective techniques at the municipal level?*

In order to answer this research question, an appropriate research framework had to be selected. A search of the methods employed by previous studies in this field revealed that other academics have used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods that include:

- pre- and post-land management meeting questionnaires administered in a Likert scale format (Halvorsen, 2003);
- random surveys delivered to residents in cities of more than 50,000 and complemented with questionnaires to their city managers (Berman, 1997);
- interviews with subject matter experts (stakeholders and staff) used to create a list of meeting participants for complementary focus groups (King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998), and;

- unobtrusive observation of participants at public policy meetings (Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000).

3.1 Review of Potential Research Approaches

This search was supplemented with a review of research approaches. Investigating qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection identified the opportunities afforded by mixing these methods.

A mixed-methods approach combines qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study to collect data either simultaneously or sequentially (Creswell, 2003). It has become the research framework of choice within the social sciences because of its capacity for corroborating data (Creswell, 2003). This unique advantage has a positive effect on data validity and is generally referred to as *triangulation* (Creswell, 2003; Flick, von Kardoff & Steinke, 2004).

Triangulation can also be used to bring together observations from more than one viewpoint on a particular research issue (Flick, von Kardoff & Steinke, 2004). While four variants exist, it is most often realized by combining different methodological approaches (Flick, von Kardoff & Steinke 2004). This traditional model of methodological triangulation was deemed appropriate because it is familiar to most researchers and could help validate findings.

Combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies also works well in this case because the research question identified two major players (planners and the public) who should be involved in creating the most effective consultation tools. Since it was necessary to gather data from both cohorts and isolate many factors, the logical choice was to conduct deductive research.

Deductive research is the most common type of research (Seasons, lecture, 2006) and the most closely associated with quantitative investigation (Creswell, 2003). Unlike inductive reasoning, which looks for patterns from simple observations, deductive reasoning begins with a theory and then seeks to confirm or disconfirm a particular hypothesis (Trochim, 2005).
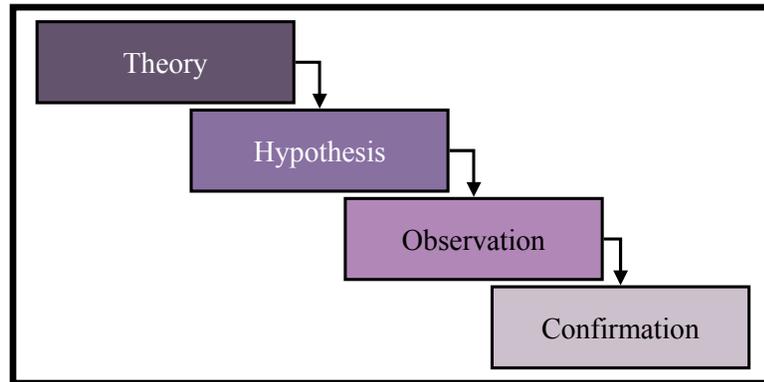
Figure 3-1: The Deductive Approach to Research
(Trochim, 2005)

Following along with the steps of the deductive approach as shown in Figure 3-1, one begins with the notion that an improved process and increased participation will lead to better consultation. One would then contend that the preferred methods of consultation could be identified by either isolating or quantifying certain factors in the observations (see Chapter Four: Research Observations and Analysis) and confirm or refute this notion (see Chapter Five: Recommendations and Areas for Future Research).

The investigation of previous study methods and the advantages of a mixed-method research framework yielded the four elements of the research framework:

1. door-to-door questionnaires administered to a random sample of the public currently residing in the Town of Pelham (see Appendix 1);

2. online questionnaires submitted to a convenience sample of municipal and other professional planners in Ontario (see Appendix 2);

3. interviews with practicing planners and planning consultants across Ontario (see Appendix 3), and;

4. a focus group with citizens from the Town of Pelham to expand on issues that are difficult to address through questionnaires (see Appendix 4).

In order to provide an administrative focus for this research, each of the research methods were designed for the context of renewing an Official Plan, where all issues would be open for debate.

3.2 Selecting the Appropriate Research Geography

Securing the Town of Pelham as the geographic focal point of this research had the effect of making the separate research elements (surveys and focus group) approximate a case study. Case studies have proven to be effective elements of larger frameworks, and Yin (2003) argues that researchers are justified in using multiple methods within a single locale where the viewpoints of the various cohorts are valuable. There were two other important reasons for selecting the Town of Pelham as the research site.

First of all, the Town of Pelham is currently engaging in its first Official Plan review since 1970 (Craig Larmour, personal communication, July 7, 2004). These exercises concern the whole municipality and the latent demand for policy review provides a current and comparable perspective from which to evaluate public comments.

Secondly, the Town of Pelham is one of 39 municipalities to have countryside protected by the recently enacted *Greenbelt Act*. Since the primary objective of the Greenbelt Plan is to direct and intensify growth within the Golden Horseshoe (see Figure 3-2), it was logical to select a municipality that could gauge the broader public sentiment.
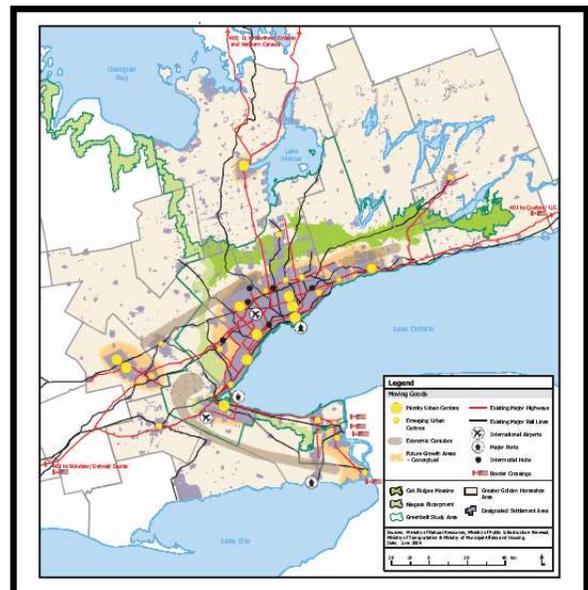
Figure 3-2: Greenbelt Intensification Areas (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2005)

Table 3-1: Population and Rural Area Comparison of Greenbelt Municipalities

Municipality	Population (2001)	Population Rank	>20% Rural Area
City of Hamilton	490,268	2	No
City of Toronto	2,481,494	1	No
County of Dufferin			
Amaranth	3,770	38	Yes
East Garafraxa	2,214	39	Yes
Mono	6,922	36	Yes
Orangeville	25,248	20	No
Regional Municipality of Durham			
Ajax	73,753	13	Yes
Brock	12,110	33	Yes
Clarington	69,834	14	Yes
Oshawa	139,051	8	Yes
Pickering	87,139	12	Yes
Scugog	20,173	26	Yes
Uxbridge	17,377	29	Yes
Whitby	87,413	11	Yes
Regional Municipality of Halton			
Burlington	150,836	6	Yes
Halton Hills	48,184	16	Yes
Milton	31,471	18	Yes
Oakville	144,738	7	No
Regional Municipality of Niagara			
Grimsby	21,297	23	Yes
Lincoln	20,612	24	Yes
Niagara-on-the-Lake	13,839	31	Yes
Pelham	*15,272*	*30*	*Yes*
St. Catharines	129,170	10	No
Thorold	18,048	28	Yes
West Lincoln	12,268	32	Yes
Regional Municipality of Peel			
Brampton	325,428	3	No
Caledon	50,595	15	Yes
County of Simcoe			
Bradford-West Gwillimbury	22,228	21	Yes
Innisfil	28,666	19	Yes
Regional Municipality of Waterloo			
North Dumfries	8,769	35	Yes
County of Wellington			
Erin	11,052	34	Yes
Puslinch	5,885	37	Yes
Regional Municipality of York			
East Gwillimbury	20,555	25	Yes
Georgina	39,263	17	Yes
King	18,533	27	Yes
Markham	208,615	4	Yes
Richmond Hill	132,030	9	Yes
Vaughan	182,022	5	Yes
Whitchurch-Stoufville	22,008	22	Yes

While it ranks thirtieth in terms of population among those municipalities affected by the *Greenbelt Act*, the Town of Pelham is one of 34 with at least 20% of its land area covered by protected countryside and among the largest cohort with a population between 10,000 and 50,000 (see Table 3-1). It is representative of many communities in Southwestern Ontario.

3.3 Rationale for Public Survey Research Element

A social survey "is a research technique that obtains information from a sample of individuals by administering a questionnaire to every member of the sample and then analyzing the responses," (Del Balso & Lewis, 2001, p. 260). Social surveys have become one of the most common forms of research (Bateson, 1984; Dinero, 1996), because of their ability to describe, explain or influence some phenomenon, and/or the relationship between variables (Del Balso & Lewis, 2001; Gray & Guppy, 1999). They are a means of knowledge production that generate their data by drawing on the information already held by scores of ordinary people (Bateson, 1984).

However, as a social survey is but one research element with the questionnaire its principal tool, it is useless in the absence of a clearly defined purpose statement (Creswell, 2003). As such, the purpose statement for the public questionnaire is:

> To define the relationships that influence civic participation for planning issues and to quantify the current geographic range and time commitment of ordinary citizens on these issues.

As the purpose statement makes clear, this public questionnaire represents descriptive research and its ability to meet its goals is predicated on the effectiveness of the questions and the number of completions received. Thus, the sample size necessary to achieve conclusion validity had to be considered.

3.4 Determining the Appropriate Sample Size for the Public Survey

Conclusion validity is the degree to which the conclusions reached about the relationships in the data are reasonable (Trochim, 2005). Though not exclusively a statistical measure, reducing error to the 0.05 level of significance is often the goal for quantitative research. And as Trochim (2005) presents, one of the best ways to ensure a low level of error is to ensure an adequate sample size. Sample sizes are determined by two things: the anticipated response rate, and the amount of data necessary to reach valid conclusions. There are many ways of improving response rates, including the list suggested by Gray and Guppy (1999) and used in this study:

1. sending out an initial letter describing the study;
2. conducting the survey door-to-door with stamped envelopes made available, and;
3. delivering a reminder postcard.

The number of completed responses necessary to achieve validity is dependent on the confidence interval and degree of error deemed acceptable (Triola, Goodman & Law, 1999). In this case, the question with the greatest degree of uncertainty is question three. This uncertainty arises because the responses are dependent on a positive response to question two (see Appendix 1).

Balancing the need for statistical validity with the logistical and time constraints of carrying out a door-to-door survey program thus proved the greatest obstacle. In the end, the 0.05 level of significance suggested by Trochim (2005) served as the benchmark; and when the range of responses to question three (between 1 and 10) and the desired degree of error (0.75) are considered, a minimum of 35 responses proved necessary. The formula for estimating the true mean for a large sample (>30) is dependent on the desired confidence interval, the calculated standard deviation and the acceptable degree of error (as can be seen in Figure 3-3).

The desired confidence level for the data is 95% and so the $z^a/_2$ score becomes 1.96. The standard deviation is unknown, and so the range rule of thumb was used, expressed as $\delta = [range/4]$ (Triola, Goodman & Law, 1999).

$$n = \left[\frac{z^{a}/_{2} \times \delta}{E} \right]^{2}$$

where:
n = sample size
$z^a/_2$ = confidence interval
δ = standard deviation
E = error

Figure 3-3: Formula for Estimating Sample Size (Triola, Goodman & Law, 1999)

The range is equal to the highest value (10) minus the lowest (1) for a difference of nine, and thus a standard deviation of 2.25. Finally, the error value, or the range of which the sample mean could vary from the true mean is 0.75, expressed as **E** (see Figure 3-4).

$$n = \left[\frac{z^{a}/_{2} \times \delta}{E} \right]^{2} = \left[\frac{1.96 \times 2.25}{0.75} \right] = 34.78 = 35$$

Figure 3-4: Estimation of Required Number of Completions to Question Three

Unfortunately, no true data exist regarding the rate of public participation and so one critical assumption had to be made regarding the potential survey responses. It was estimated that for every person who could answer question three, that there would be nearly three who could not (35:100). This meant that approximately 135 survey responses would have to be procured and 450 households approached, given a response rate of 30% (Chiu & Brennan, 1990).

The population of the Town of Pelham according to the 2001 Canadian census is 15,272 (see Table 3-1). The same study calculates Pelham to have 5,714 households, and dividing our minimum sample size into this number suggested a need to approach every twelfth household.

Choosing these households via the simple random sample technique helped avoid biasing the sample toward any single group (Del Balso & Lewis, 2001). This technique was administered by selecting every twelfth name out of the phonebook, beginning randomly with the second entry. Though using a telephone book to create a survey sample can ostracize certain cohorts of society (Trochim, 2005), the tradeoffs of availability and convenience ultimately make it a valuable sampling frame. Using the simple random sampling technique yielded 494 potential households.

3.5 Rationale for Public Survey Questions

Six questions were posed to these households that met the purposes of defining the relationships that influence civic participation and the most effective consultation tools (see Appendix 1). A brief overview of the question rationales can be found here, with more detail in Appendix 5.

The survey began by asking participants to categorize the length of time that they have lived in Pelham. This put them at ease with the survey parameters (Trochim, 2005) and highlighted the relationship between residency tenure and civic participation (Stukas & Dunlap, 2002).

The second question filtered respondents by previous attendance of a public planning meeting. The responses compared the actual rate of civic participation to that held in literature. The third query of the public is dependent on the previous question. It asks the respondents to evaluate their previous consultation experiences. This question quantified public perception on current consultation mechanisms and the room for possible improvement. The Likert scale format of this question made the data easily comparable to the survey of planners (Gray & Guppy, 1999).

The fourth question asked respondents to indicate the location of their residence as well as the areas for which they felt highly competent to discuss planning issues. Asking the respondents to

complete this task pointed out the potential incongruities between current planning legislation

and the mental maps that they hold (Chaskin & Garg, 1997).

The penultimate question was written to determine the average number of hours that citizens

familiar to the respondent would be willing to devote to Official Plan consultation. It was

presented in this indirect fashion for reasons pertaining to hypothesis guessing (Trochim, 2005),

but it remained important because it quantified the capacity of citizens to participate.

The sixth and final question allowed respondents to elaborate on any previous responses or

provide additional comments. Here respondents could discuss their experiences or theories on

public consultation, which could be compared to the scores from question three for correlations –

or looked at as a discussion on how to make consultation exercises more effective.

Overall, these questions were designed to take five minutes or less to complete. Reduced time

burdens and ease of completion have proven effective in augmenting response rates (Trochim,

2005). The pilot test of ten respondents in Waterloo confirmed that the questions were suitable.

3.6 Determining the Appropriate Sample Size for the Online Survey to Planners

The second research element was the online survey to planners. This survey was designed to

determine the effectiveness of current consultation methods and the relationships between

technique and success. This is also primarily descriptive research with exploratory elements, and

as with the public questionnaire, the ability of this element to meet its purpose depends on the

number of completed responses.

Since this questionnaire features a Likert scale question similar to the third question of the public

survey (see Appendices 1 and 2), 35 completed responses were needed for conclusion validity

(see Figure 3-4). To determine the appropriate sample size, the anticipated response rate had to

be considered. Online surveys are noted to have serious problems with coverage, sampling and

non-response sources of non-observation error (Couper, 2000; Fricker et al., 2005). Of these,

non-response error is the most threatening because it arises independent of recruitment and

question framing actions (Couper, 2000).

To address these threats, the 2002 Ontario Professional Planners' Institute (OPPI) membership

directory was used as a source of respondents. The vast majority of OPPI members have a work

e-mail address. Although some organizations keep records of all messages, which could dissuade

participation (Couper, 2000), this method remained the best available to avoid coverage error.

Regarding sampling error, Fricker et al. (2005) have hypothesized that certain cohort groups and

professions can be treated like traditional samples because they have almost complete Internet

use. The OPPI membership directory confirms this scenario for the planning profession and

selecting 799 respondents with limited discrimination managed most sampling error concerns.

However, the non-response rate still posed itself as a formidable concern. Manfreda and Vehovar

(2002) alert researchers that up to 20% of e-mail invitations could return undelivered and most

academics (Crawford, Couper & Lamias, 2001; Couper, 2000; Kaplowitz, Hadlock & Levine,

2004; Lyons et al., 2005) agree that response rates are lower for online surveys. Couper (2000)

suggests that single digit response rates are the norm for online invitational surveys such as that

proposed here. However, Kehoe and Pitkow (1996) have suggested that over-sampling can add

more credibility to a non-random, web-based survey, and thus in a sample of 799 respondents,

we could still expect up to 64 responses and achieve conclusion validity.

3.7 Rationale for Planner Survey Questions

Nine questions were posed to planners using Zoomerang, a known online survey provider with analysis capabilities. The questions were designed to evaluate current consultation methods (see Appendix 2) and the first six were mandatory to ensure conclusion validity. The pages that follow offer the rationale for each question with more detail available in Appendix 6.

As with the public, the survey to planners began by asking them to categorize their length of experience in the profession. This put them at ease for the second question, which asked them to indicate the percentage of staff hours devoted to various consultation techniques. As noted in the literature review, many scholars (Berman, 1997; Gandy Jr., 2003; Innes, 1996; Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000) advocate alternatives to public meetings.

The third question required participants to define effective consultation in their own words. Having respondents do this highlighted the relationship between planning experience and perceptions of successful consultation parameters (Campbell & Fainstein, 1996) and gave them context for later questions. This proved valuable for the fourth query where planners ranked ten consultation methods by their ability to meet their given definition of effective consultation. It was also designed to confirm or disconfirm the findings of questions two, seven and eight.

The fifth and sixth questions worked in tandem to test Altshuler's (1965) hypothesis that the planner's only claim to legitimacy rests in his or her ability to know and measure the pubic interest. This test was conducted by employing a Likert scale as in the public questionnaire, and asking respondents to evaluate how effective their techniques are as well as providing an estimate of how effective the public perceives these techniques to be. The responses permitted a comparison of true public opinion against both the self-evaluation and perception of planners.

The final third contained open-ended questions for respondents to comment on their consultation experiences and any limitations hindering good planning through consultation. These questions were paramount in proving Friedmann's (1987) hypothesis that planners prefer to arrive at decisions through an imperfect science and for isolating any barriers between consultation methods and success.

3.8 Rationale for Interviews with Key Planners

The third research mechanism, and second involving planners, is the detailed interview of key planners and planning consultants (see Appendix 3). Interviews, note Gray and Guppy (1999), allow researchers to receive more personalized information and reduce the possibility of respondent confusion. They are also likely to receive high response rates and to permit the researcher to judge the quality of the responses (Trochim, 2005). Key respondent interviews were used because they permit verbal and non-verbal probing techniques that can greatly expand data collection (Trochim, 2005). Interviews also allow the researcher to repeat certain questions used elsewhere to identify and/or eliminate trends and supplement research mechanisms with low response rates (Fricker et al., 2005).

The interview consisted of 10 unstructured questions, which permitted a comparison of the qualitative description of these experts to the quantitative assessment of their peers. The interview questions were designed to flow from a discussion of previous consultation experiences to an evaluation of current mechanisms onto an analysis of meeting logistics and relevant planning statutes. Some of these, like the first and second questions, paralleled queries in the online survey and could be used to compare data directly. However, the majority were

based on the assertions posed by academics and the responses used to confirm or refute them.

More information regarding the question rationales can be found in Appendix 7.

3.9 Rationale for Public Focus Group Session

The fourth and final research method consisted of a focus group of citizens from the Town of

Pelham. Focus groups allow researchers to ask questions that might otherwise be difficult to

administer (Waterton & Wynne, 1999) and have the ability to generate hypotheses based on the

responses (Morgan, 1988). Knowing these assets led to the focus group purpose statement:

> The purpose of this focus group is to determine the perceptions of local residents
> on various planning issues, consultation formats and motivations (or lack thereof)
> for involvement in municipal consultation.

Most focus group literature (Greenbaum, 1993; Morgan, 1997; Simon, 1999; Stewart &

Shamdasani, 1990) suggests that the ideal size is between four and 12 participants. However,

recruiting participants that are not part of an issue or stakeholder group can be difficult (Simon,

1999) and many authors (Michaels, 1993; Morgan, 1997) recommend over-recruiting by 20%.

Several academics (Morgan, 1988; Simon, 1999; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) have argued that

focus group participants should have at least two common characteristics for the endeavour to be

effective. Recruiting participants from disparate conditions can create an informal hierarchy that

excludes certain members (Morgan, 1988). The decision to contact randomly chosen participants

from similar Fonthill neighbourhoods provided the requisite degree of homogeneity in this case.

Certain authors (Greenbaum, 1993; Simon, 1999; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) have highlighted

the importance of the moderator as part of the focus group discussion. A good moderator is adept

at assuring equal participation, often through probing (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) as well as

time management and communication (Greenbaum, 1993). Fortunately, my previous experiences with the Ottawa 20/20 visioning exercise made me an ideal candidate for this role.

Selecting the Town of Pelham Public Library as the location for the focus group was a choice for a relatively neutral location with ample space for participants and refreshments. Participants see table space and refreshments (Simon, 1999; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) as part of an informal atmosphere. They can retain this feeling for up to two hours (Simon, 1999) and as many as a dozen questions, (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

Psychologically, this feeling is more easily retained if questions are sequenced from the general to the specific (Morgan, 1997; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Thus, the 13 questions were arranged in four categories for a session to last two hours and ten minutes (see Appendix 4):

1. Planning Issues of Relevance
2. Roles and Means of Planning Education
3. Establishing a Contract for Participation
4. Motivations/Opportunity Costs for Participation

The four questions of the first theme area eased the participants into the discussion by asking for their viewpoints on the present and future status of their hometown. Chaskin & Garg (1997) have suggested that citizens have a heightened degree of familiarity for areas within their immediate geographic vicinity and these questions open the flow pattern.

The trio of questions under the second theme pertained to the mailed background package and the value of planning education for consultation. Background information packages are an accepted part of focus group research, though Simon (1999) warns that not all participants will read them. In the same way, not all consultation participants will benefit from education opportunities, but Berman (1997) suggests that a knowledgeable public is more likely to give the

planner the benefit of the doubt. Testing this theory is central to the focus group purpose statement and the research question.

Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000) have opined that good consultation results from mutual trust and a description of the give and take elements in the consultation relationship was sought in the third focus group theme.

The final pair of questions inquired as to the motivations and opportunity costs for participation. King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) and Halvorsen (2003) have suggested that the pressures of daily life make it difficult for many people to find the time to participate. Iannacone and Everton (2004) agree, noting that attendance occurs at the margin and declines where more attractive options are available. Part of the hypothesis made in this research project and identified in the knowledge gaps as well as the research question is that a better understanding of what motivates participants can make consultation more effective.

3.10 Research Methodology Conclusions

This chapter began with a summary of the knowledge gaps uncovered in the literature review and a look at the nature of these gaps. Stemming from the central thesis question, it became apparent that conducting deductive research would provide advantages in isolating opinions on certain consultation factors from particular cohorts. This decision required a comprehensive research framework and the ability of a mixed-methods approach to corroborate findings led to the decision to employ a door-to-door and online survey, as well as focus groups and interviews.

After choosing these four elements, the scope of the participant and geographic selection had to be justified. A thorough investigation revealed that the Town of Pelham fell within the range of

representative Greenbelt municipalities and that an appropriate group of OPPI members could be selected.

Recommended survey techniques were used to increase response rates and the validity of the data. The opportunity to achieve valid data from all techniques strengthened the framework and the possibilities for comparing responses from similar questions found in other elements of the research design.

By grounding each question in the relevant literature, greater assurances could be made that the data would be efficiently collected and pertain to the research question. Thus, the research methodologies maximize the possibility of receiving good data at a minimum of intrusion on the participants. The next chapter highlights the information that the research framework produced, and the degree of its validity and relevancy.

Chapter Four: Research Observations and Analysis

The focus of this research has been documented as that of discovering the views from the major players in consultation on what constitutes the most effective techniques at the municipal level. In the second chapter, the criteria for determining consultation effectiveness as well as the focus on qualitative approaches for analyzing consultation processes were laid out. Using assumptions and knowledge gaps determined there as a base, a mixed methods research design employing a deductive approach was outlined in Chapter Three. The thrust of this fourth chapter is to describe the results from each element of the research design and to subject them to the appropriate level of analysis. In general, this latter function involves linking the research observations to each other and to the theories and/or assumptions derived from the literature.

Particular attention is paid to any data, comments or observations that are incongruent to each other and/or the literature as points for either recommended action, or areas for further research. The analysis begins with the self-administered public survey and moves on to the online planner survey, the interviews with key planners and consultants, and straight through to the public focus group. However, as noted in Chapter Three, certain interrelationships have been intentionally structured between questions from the differing research elements and these are discussed here in the order first approached.

4.1 Determination of Sample Size and Response Rate for the Public Survey

As noted in Chapter Three, 35 responses to the third question in the public survey proved necessary to achieve the acceptable margin of error (see Figure 3-4). Assuming a ratio of 35:100 for completing this question required that 135 questionnaires be solicited. Anticipating a response rate around 30% (Chiu & Brennan, 1990) meant approaching 450 households in the

Town of Pelham. Pelham is a community of 15,272 people dispersed into 5,714 households (Statistics Canada, 2001). Dividing the number of households (5,714) by the minimum number of potential respondents (450) yielded the simple random sampling factor of 12.

Though selecting respondents from a telephone book can ostracize certain cohort groups, it is also a most convenient way of pulling a sample from the population (Trochim, 2005). Choosing respondents in this fashion yielded 494 potential survey respondents. The final sample size was reduced from 494 to 455 respondents in the following ways:

- 17 addresses proved inaccessible
- 11 mailed surveys were marked *return to sender*
- 6 addresses were unknown or repeated
- 3 addresses fell outside of Pelham's boundaries
- 1 mailed survey reached a deceased resident
- 1 survey was truncated for safety reasons

All potential respondents with residences accessible directly from the street were visited between 3:00pm and 7:00pm on weekdays during a time period from March 4 to April 23, 2006. Nearly one-third provided a *yes* or *no* answer for completing the survey during the site visit. The rate of completion versus refusal for this group was a remarkably high 87.7% (or 135 out of 154). The remaining 301 homes were provided with a postage paid envelope containing a blank survey. Sixty-eight completed surveys (22.6%) arrived via post to be calculated with those received on site. The combined response rate was 44.6% (or 203 out of 455).

4.2 Observations and Analysis from Public Survey

Clary and Snyder (2002) suggest that a significant majority of American adults hold favourable attitudes toward community service. Adams (2003) finds that while the proportion of Americans who discuss local issues and problems with their neighbours has been steadily declining since 1992 to approximately one in three, the rate among Canadians is holding around 50%. Though

some citizens "become more involved in their community to see themselves – or to be seen – as caring and responsible people," (Stukas & Dunlap, 2002, p. 413), in general, they value a continual attitude of help and assistance from their municipal government (Berman, 1997).

One can postulate from these statements that a relationship might exist between the length of residency in a particular municipality and attending consultation opportunities or holding larger knowledge areas for planning issues. Therefore, the questionnaire to the public opens with the simple and non-threatening question seen below.

---

1. Please select the box that identifies how many years you have lived in the Town of Pelham:

☐ < 1   ☐ 1-5   ☐ 6-10

☐ 11-20   ☐ 21-30   31+

All 203 respondents answered this question with the median response found in the 11-20 years of residency category (see Figure 4-1). Nearly half (90 of 203, 44.3%) of those surveyed have lived in Pelham for twenty or more years.

Length of Residency Distribution	
< 1 year	11
1 – 5 years	23
6 – 10 years	32
11 – 20 years	47
21 – 30 years	41
> 30 years	49

**Figure 4-1: Length of Residency in Pelham for
Survey Respondents**

King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) have found that the desire to participate is strong and that most citizens recognize its importance. Past exposure to quality meetings has been positively linked by Halvorsen (2003) to a belief in the value of other voices. Research also shows that

those who seek consultation have the most to gain and that these procedures increase decision legitimacy in the minds of the stakeholders (Duram & Brown, 1999). Overall, one of the implicit assumptions noted from the literature suggested that citizens will participate if given the means.

However, no conclusive data could be found in the literature on the current rates of participation. Thus, the second question in the public survey asked respondents if they had previously attended a public meeting for a planning proposal in the Town of Pelham. Since, as mentioned in Chapter Three, the Town of Pelham has not updated its Official Plan since 1970, these terms were left open to a significant degree of interpretation for the respondents (see below).

2. Have you ever attended a public meeting for a planning proposal in the Town of Pelham? (*Please select the appropriate blank*)

_____ Yes   _____ No (*please proceed directly to question four*)

All but one of the 203 respondents completed this question, with a total of 57 indicating that they had previously attended at least one public meeting (see Figures 4-2 and 4-3), reducing the margin of error to +/- 0.59. Breaking down the results by survey method, one notes that there is a greater chance of prior meeting attendance if the participant sent his or her reply via post (see Figure 4-2). This may mean that involvement with a planning issue in the past was one of the incentives for completing the survey.

Response/Venue	Door to Door	Mailed Returns	Combined Response
Attended	35	22	57
Not Attended	99	46	145
Total Responses	134	68	202
Attendance Rate (%)	26.2	32.4	28.2

Figure 4-2: Percentage of Residents with Previous Experience at Planning Meetings

The data also seem to highlight a correlation between the length of residency and the likelihood of having previously attended a public meeting for planning issues (see Figure 4-3). All residents who have lived in the municipality for less than one year indicated that they have not been to a planning meeting. By contrast, citizens that have lived in the Town of Pelham for 31+ years are by far more likely to have attended a meeting than any other cohort (40.8%).

Residency	Number of Attendees	Total Respondents	Attendance Rate (%)
< 1 year	0	11	0.00
1 – 5 years	3	23	13.0
6 – 10 years	10	32	31.3
11 – 20 years	14	47	29.8
21 – 30 years	10	40	25.0
> 30 years	20	49	40.8
Totals:	56	202	28.2

Figure 4-3: Correlation of Length of Residency and Attendance at Planning Meetings

As Figure 4-3 makes clear, there is a general trend toward increased attendance the longer that one has lived in the Town of Pelham. However, it bears noting that this is not a strict profiling measure. It is entirely possible, if not probable, that the reason for the increasing attendance rate arises simply from the greater number of opportunities that longer residency affords. That said, Stukas and Dunlap (2002) have previously suggested that one of the reasons that people become involved in their communities is to see themselves – or to be seen – as caring and responsible people. In this way, Figure 4-3 can be seen as an indicator of the speed with which residents feel assimilated with their community members and to their perceived public duties.

Much has been written in academia on the value of public consultation mechanisms for both the public and administrators. As Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000, p. 357) note, "failing to include the public in a consultation process deprives decision makers of valuable input and compromises legitimacy." It is also reasonable to expect citizens to achieve intangible personal

gains through attendance according to the research of many academics. Halvorsen (2003)

concludes that just one quality meeting can be enough to ameliorate the views of most citizens

regarding agency responsiveness and provide an opportunity to learn from others. Leaving

consultation sessions with a strong perception of procedural fairness may also lead many

participants to hold a more positive view of the decision – even if it is not their preferred result

(Lauber & Knuth, 1999).

However, the affect of a consultation exercise on public perceptions can be amplified negatively

as well. King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998, p. 323) state categorically that "public hearings

do not work," and fear that "citizens are rendered cynical or apathetic by vacuous or false efforts

to stimulate, then discount, public input," (p. 319). Similarly, Innes and Booher (2004) worry

that current consultation techniques often antagonize the members of the public who actually do

try to work through the established methods. Almost 40% of the citizens involved in the regional

visioning exercises evaluated by Shipley et al. (2004) believed that their involvement would have

very little or no effect on future decision-making. Multiple authors find that participation with no

visible impact on decisions can be worse than having no participation at all (Berman, 1997;

Halvorsen, 2003).

Unfortunately, as Bickenstaff and Walker (2005) conclude, there have been precious few studies

that evaluate the degree of satisfaction with the process or level of impact from consultation. To

this end, the third question of this survey asks citizens to evaluate their previous experiences.

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3. If **yes**, please evaluate your experience on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the *least effective* (*unsatisfactory*) and 10 being the *most effective* (*satisfactory*):

Gray and Guppy (1999) note that response values between different cohorts can be compared if respondents interpret the question and the answer choices in the same way. Thus, the evaluations of citizens on the consultation mechanisms presented to them can be compared to the opinions of the planners who host them. The fifth and the sixth questions of the planner survey (Appendix 2) ask for an evaluation of present methods and an estimation of how the public perceives them.

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5. Please indicate, on a scale from **1** to **10** – with **1** representing "highly ineffective consultation" and **10** representing "highly effective consultation" – the overall rate of effectiveness that you perceive your (combination of) method(s) to have:

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

6. Please indicate, on a scale between **1** and **10** – with **1** representing "highly ineffective consultation" and **10** representing "highly effective consultation" – the overall rate of effectiveness that you perceive the public has of the (combination of) method(s) that your firm or municipality employs:

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Fifty-six of the respondents to the public survey provided a score out of ten for their prior public consultation experiences against 39 planners who answered the tandem of questions seen above, reducing their error to +/- 0.71. Adjusting the responses by the 39:56 ratio evidences just how severely the opinions of planners and the public differ (see Figure 4-4).
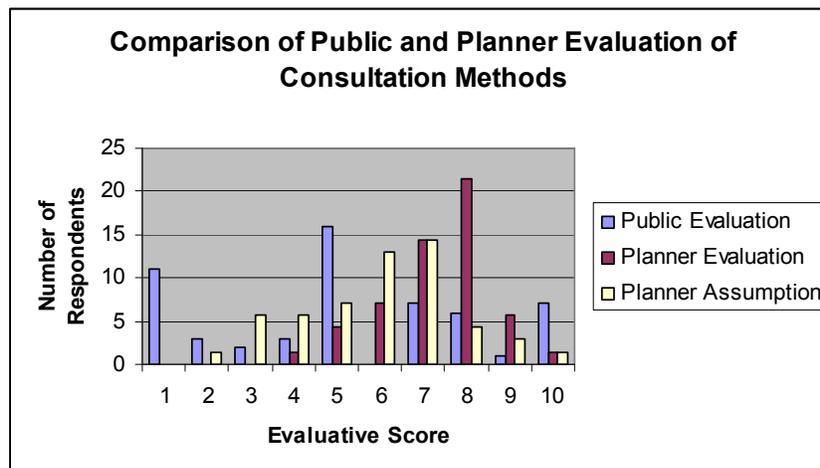
Figure 4-4: Relationship of Consultation Evaluations from Planners and the Public

The mean value of meeting experiences from the public was 5.19 against that of 7.31 from the planners (see Figure 4-5). However, when asked to estimate how the public views their methods, the planners proved much more modest, reducing their scores (see Figure 4-6) to a mean of 5.92.

Estimation of Average	Public Evaluation	Planner Self-Evaluation	Planner Assumption
Mean	5.19	7.31	5.92
Median	5.00	8.00	6.00
Mode	5.00	8.00	7.00

Figure 4-5: Averages from Public and Planner Evaluations of Consultation
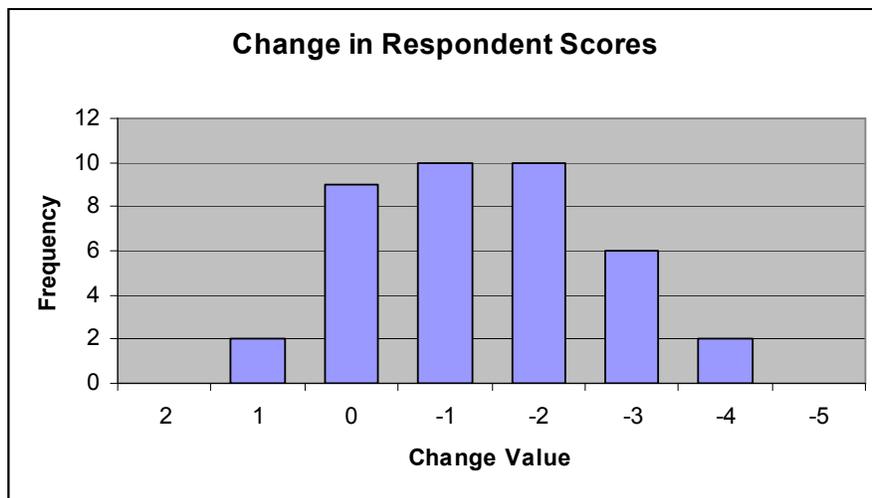
Figure 4-6: Change in Respondent Scores from Self-Evaluation to Public Perception

There are several critical observations that should be noted from this data. Firstly, the citizen evaluations of the consultation methods presented to them in Pelham manifested themselves in a tri-modal split. The most frequently cited score was five out of ten, followed by evaluations of one and ten respectively. Exactly five-eights of the respondents assessed their prior experiences with a score between one and five as opposed to the range of six through ten.

Secondly, though the planner tends to overestimate the value of his or her engagement methods in general, it is also the case that they fail to appreciate the number of participants who express

complete satisfaction and/or distaste with their efforts. No planner gave his or her methods a score of three points or less, and yet only one assigned himself or herself a perfect score.

Thirdly, it is also most curious that most planners believe themselves to be providing generally effective consultation opportunities but perceive that the public will not view these exercises in the same light. Yet though the average scores decline when planners are asked to estimate the opinion of the public, they still cannot bring themselves to assess their efforts with the lowest possible score.

In essence, the data appear to be highlighting a possible divide between the planner and the public. Planners appear to be judging the process of consultation, and therefore conclude that the opportunities that they provide are sufficient. However, they suspect that the public holds either different motivations or viewpoints, and thus reduce their scores when asked how citizens view their consultation methods. The public, as can be seen from the comments of those who offered a score of either one or ten for their previous consultation experiences (see Figure 4-7), approaches the evaluation of a consultation exercise from a generally different paradigm altogether.

The evaluative score offered by the participants generally involves a site-specific issue and the bipolar assessment seems to reflect the degree to which the results from the consultation met their expectations. Participants appear to judge consultation on the basis of distributive fairness.

While it must be noted that the data are derived from different samples taken at the municipal and provincial levels respectively, the gap between the mean score from the public of 5.19 and the planner of 7.31 highlights how far apart the two major players in consultation seem to be in terms of evaluating overall effectiveness.

Experience Score: 1 out of 10

DOOR TO DOOR36
They should be much more efficient and trustful of citizens. Should get much more support from Town reps. We had to fight the change in subdivision plans on our own

DOOR TO DOOR39
My experience was a (packed) town meeting regarding new Sobey's. Every single person was against it. Useless.

DOOR TO DOOR74
It is very poor!

DOOR TO DOOR89
There isn't any. People behind desks, haven't got a clue of what farming is. Minds made up already. Light industry operating as "agriculture" in town. Citizens seem to have to fight more than bureaucrats or politicians. These light industries are not paying regular business tax. Ripping the roads up and it's my taxes that pay. Contaminating the soil with greenhouse chemicals. All convert to coal, industrial wasteland, sooner or later.

DOOR TO DOOR96
Listen to the taxpayer's concerns before making up your mind…Remember who pays your salary….

DOOR TO DOOR104
The experience can be intimidating. An effort might be made to reduce this among participants.

DOOR TO DOOR109
I would like to see more of it. Where the consultation would involve talking to a live person and not just being directed to a web site.

Experience Score: 10 out of 10

DOOR TO DOOR10
Our portion of the meeting was beneficial, but the rest was a waste of time.

DOOR TO DOOR47
Definitely want public input for future.

DOOR TO DOOR102
Need some help with their parks. Need a parks board / free gratis. Advise the works department. It's a disgrace.

MAILED RESPONSE65
Should be done without question.

Figure 4-7: Comments from Citizens with Effective and Ineffective Experiences

Studies such as that conducted by Chaskin and Garg (1997) suggest that citizens view the world

around them in terms of mental maps for which they possess heightened understanding. Under

this argument, an individual is more likely to perceive the immediate vicinities surrounding their

places of home and work as part of their actual realm than other, possibly closer, locations. Rein

(1976), Matthews (1994) and Fischer (1995) have concluded that officials view the public as uninterested in policy decision-making and more often pursuing self-interest than public interest.

In order to test the degree to which the public might possess mental maps or pursue self-interests, the fourth question in the public survey asked respondents to place a dot indicating the location of their residence and highlight the areas in Pelham for which they considered themselves highly competent to discuss planning issues.

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4. Please place a dot on the map of the Town of Pelham provided (see next page) to indicate the location of your residence and shade in the areas for which you feel highly competent to discuss planning issues.

One hundred eighty-five respondents (91.6%) completed the first part of this question, including 129 of 135 (95.6%) at the door and 56 of 68 (82.4%) via mail. The higher rate of completion at the door is almost certainly attributable to the assistance requested from the researcher on site. Six mailed responses indicated difficulty reading the map (see Appendix 8), likely explaining the lower response rate to the latter part of the question and the response range (see Figure 4-8).

Assessment Criteria	Door to Door	Mailed Returns	Combined Response
Number of Responses	118	39	157
Response Percentage	87.4%	57.4%	77.3%
Average Area Highlighted (km^2)	12.4	9.9	11.8
Mode Area Highlighted (km^2)	0.3	4.7	0.3
Median Area Highlighted (km^2)	2.0	2.6	2.1

Figure 4-8: Analysis of Pelham Highlighted by Residents by Response Mechanism

The Town of Pelham comprises of an area of 126.42km^2 (Statistics Canada, 2001), and residents highlighted an average area of 11.8km^2, or approximately 9.3% of the municipal area. However, the median was 2.1km^2 and the mode a paltry 0.3km^2. The survey results further indicated that the areas within Pelham for which the majority of residents (80%) hold a high degree of planning

competence is often less than 10%, or 12km^2, of the municipal land area (see Figure 4-9). More than half (54.1%) of the participants highlighted an area less than 3km^2.
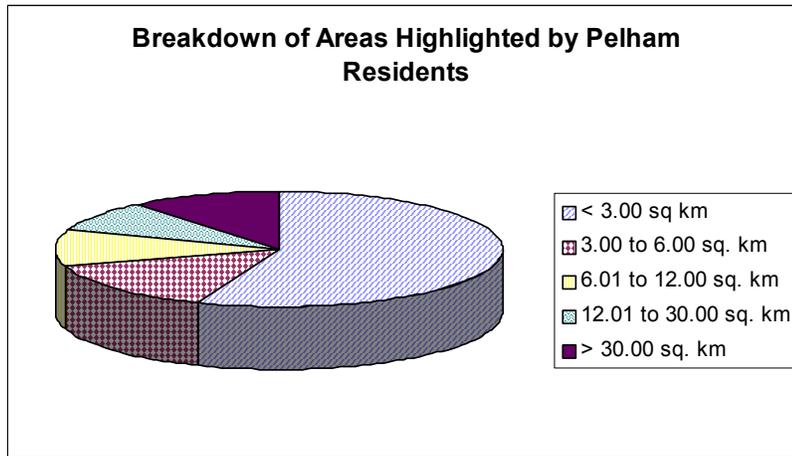
Figure 4-9: Areas of Planning Confidence for Pelham Residents

The vast majority of respondents included their house within the area for which they considered themselves to have a high degree of planning competence (see Figure 4-10). This would seem to indicate that the mental maps which citizens hold, in both urban or rural areas, do include their residences as Chaskin and Garg (1997) presumed, and that their degree of planning competence has some relationship to the principles of NIMBY.

Zone Character	Meeting Attendance	Included House	Percentage (%)
Rural	Yes	11 / 13	84.6
	No	34 / 43	79.1
Rural Total		*45*	*80.4*
Urban	Yes	30 / 35	85.7
	No	77 / 94	81.9
Urban Total		*107*	*82.9*
Previous Public Meeting & Include House		**41**	**85.4**
No Public Meeting & Include House		**111**	**81.0**

Figure 4-10: Probability of Including Residence in Area of Planning Issue Expertise

Combining the data received here to the information gained from the first and second questions is similarly illuminating. Though one might expect that an increased length of residency might positively affect the average areas highlighted by the respondents, it did not. Survey participants who had lived in the Town of Pelham for less than one year indicated a degree of competence for an area as large on average as those who had lived in the municipality for 6-10 and 11-20 years (see Figure 4-11).

Length of Residency	Average Highlighted Area (km^2)
< 1 year	12.2
1 to 5 years	9.1
6 to 10 years	12.6
11 to 20 years	11.6
21 to 30 years	5.8
> 30 years	17.2

Figure 4-11: Influence of Length of Residency on Areas of Planning Competence

However, while the evaluative score from a participant's previous consultation experience failed to produce a notable trend, there was a noticeable difference between the areas highlighted by those who had, and those who had not, been to a public meeting in general (see Figure 4-12).

Previous Meeting Attendance	Average Highlighted Area (km^2)
Yes	7.1
No	13.6
Total	**11.8**

Figure 4-12: Relationship of Previous Attendance and Areas of Planning Competence

Paradoxically, respondents who had previously attended a public meeting highlighted an area of planning competence approximately half the size of those who have never been to a consultation exercise. This would seem to indicate, as supported by participant comments seen in Figure 4-7 and Appendix 8, that those who have previously been to a public meeting tend to think of planning issues in terms of the site-specific circumstances that caused them to participate. It may

also explain the slightly higher rate for including one's place of residence in the area of planning competence seen in Figure 4-10.

After learning the likelihood of previous consultation, the evaluation of the experience and the areas of planning knowledge, the question remains as to the extent to which residents would be prepared to devote future hours considering municipal level policies such as those found in an Official Plan. Previous authors (Berman, 1997; Duram & Brown, 1999; Halvorsen, 2003; King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998) have either furthered, or otherwise worked under the assumption that citizens want to participate actively. However, as Iannacone and Everton (2004) suggest, the logic of market economics tends to shape attendance patterns for events of civic duty. As the number and level of attractiveness of and for other options increases, the likelihood of attendance decreases, thus making attendance more highly correlated to opportunity cost than to variations in beliefs or concerns (Iannacone & Everton, 2004; Parkin & Bade, 2000).

Therefore, the fifth question of the public survey was designed to determine the amount of time that an average citizen would be willing to invest on municipal level consultation. As discussed, since the time spent on one activity implies an opportunity cost relevant to substitute activities, an idea of the maximum amount of time that citizens will spend on consultation is determinable.

5. Please indicate the average number of hours that citizens that you know would be willing to devote to consultation on an Official Plan for the Town of Pelham:

The overall average number of hours pledged to future municipal consultation was 18.4 hours, with a significantly higher average coming from the door-to-door respondents (21.6) versus that

of the mailed returns (11.0). However, one respondent pledged an extraordinary 1050 hours over

the hypothetical six-month period. While the response seemed genuine and worth noting as to

the passion that some residents have regarding planning, it is also equivalent to more than 40

hours a week and has been disregarded in the statistical analyses displayed in the figures below.

Removing this outlier thus reduces the overall average number of hours pledged to 12.2 instead

(see Figure 4-13).

Estimation of Average	Door-to-Door Responses	Mailed Responses	Overall Average
Mean	12.8	11.0	12.2
Median	4.0	3.00	4.00
Mode	2.0	3.00	2.00

Figure 4-13: Averages of Hours Devoted to Future Consultation

The significant gap between the mean value and those of the median and mode suggests that the

majority of respondents pledge a small number of hours with a minority devoting a large number

that skewed the mean in that direction. Twenty-three of the 119 door-to-door responses to this

question suggested that not one hour of time would be devoted to future municipal consultation,

and 28 of 169 overall indicated the same. Beyond this contradiction of the assumption made by

academia that the public generally wants to be involved, no discernable patterns can be found in

comparing either the length of residency or the quality of experience to the number of pledged

hours (see Figures 4-14 and 4-15).

Length of Residency	Average Hours Pledged
< 1 year	7.3
1 to 5 years	8.1
6 to 10 years	18.6
11 to 20 years	5.6
21 to 30 years	20.6
> 30 years	9.6

Figure 4-14: Influence of Length of Residency on Pledged Consultation Hours

Meeting Evaluation Score	Average Hours Pledged
1	20.6
2	5.3
3	2.0
4	6.0
5	14.7
6	N/A
7	13.9
8	18.7
9	2.5
10	8.6
Prior Attendance Average	**13.6**
No Prior Attendance Average	**11.6**
Overall Average	**12.2**

Figure 4-15: Correlation of Previous Meeting Experience to Hours Pledged

Contrary to the pattern established by the second question in which the data showed a general increase in public meeting attendance with ascending length of residency, there is no similar pattern found in Figure 4-14. Residents that have lived in Pelham for 11-20 years and for more than 30 years appear to be largely unenthused by the prospect of devoting their time for planning meetings. Similarly, while it is interesting that respondents who have never previously attended a public meeting should suddenly pledge an average of over ten hours, it is also informative that previous attendance had little impact on the number of hours pledged. Against the postulations of Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000), which suggest that high quality consultation has a positive impact on participants, the data here present the argument that those whom have had the most negative experience are those most willing to devote additional time.

Overall, there appears to be little consistency between the cohorts from question to question. Residency groups that have higher rates of previous meeting attendance may simultaneously have smaller areas of defined planning confidence or number of pledged consultation hours and vice-versa (see Figure 4-16).

Length of Residency	Previous Meeting Attendance	Area of Planning Competence (km^2)	Number of Hours Pledged
< 1 year	6	3	5
1 to 5 years	5	5	4
6 to 10 years	2	2	2
11 to 20 years	3	4	6
21 to 30 years	4	6	1
> 30 years	1	1	3

Figure 4-16: Ranking of Residency Cohorts by Consultation Factors

The sixth and final question of residents in the public survey invited them to elaborate on prior responses or discuss any of their own experiences or theories. Forester (1994) notes that planners have to probe the many meanings of the expressed public interests. In some ways, silence can be as telling as discussion itself (Agar & MacDonald, 1995).

6. Please provide any additional comments that you might have about public consultation:

One hundred eight participants gave a response to this question, with the majority commenting on current consultation processes or suggestions for improved formats (see Figure 4-17). These data appear to be in line with the theories of many academics (Berman, 1997; Halvorsen, 2003), that poor quality consultation opportunities sours participants on the process for the future.

Response Category	Count	Examples of Comments
Ineffective Processes	39	My opinion is that people don't bother with the consultation process because they figure that the elected officials will do what they want anyway.
Suggestions for Improvements	31	Please consider various strategies to notify and educate/inform constituents. Targeting specific age groups.
Ignorance/Apathy/Bias	10	New to area. Not too familiar with the issues or the Town of Fonthill.
Consultation Results/Benefits	9	The only time that I would be concerned about public planning is if it affected me.
Site Specific Issues/Opinions	9	Should have a referendum on the proposed community centre. Can't afford it.
General Municipal Issues	6	The Town should spend monies on projects/items that the residents are prepared to support with municipal taxes.
Questionnaire Improvements	4	Your map is hard to read. I hope that I figured it out OK. Good luck.

Figure 4-17: Categories of Open Comments Received from the Public in Survey

Thirty-nine of the examples found in Figure 4-17 and in Appendix 8 highlight this hypothesized level of cynicism. However, what the comments also show is the creativity of citizens to suggest better processes. Frequently cited suggestions in this category range from "consult more often" to "come to my home and notify me directly" and through to more specific thoughts as "target certain age groups and occupations". It is a finding that would not have been anticipated by the study of the literature alone.

4.3 Determination of Sample Size and Response Rate for the Online Planner Survey

Similar to the third question of the public survey, 35 responses to the fifth and sixth questions in the public survey are necessary to achieve the acceptable margin of error of 0.75. Literature in this field (Couper, 2000; Manfreda & Vehouvar, 2002) alerts researchers to the prospect of garnering single digit response rates with a significant number of bounced replies. Assuming a response rate of less than 10% required that the online survey be sent to at least 400 planners registered with the Ontario Professional Institute of Planners. Fricker et al. (2005) have hypothesized that certain cohort groups, which have near 100% Internet access, can be treated like traditional samples if enough respondents are chosen. Over-sampling has additional benefits of adding more credibility to a non-random, web-based survey (Kehoe & Pitkow, 1996) and in this case producing up to 64 completed responses based on anticipated response rates (Couper, 2000). In the end, 39 completed responses were received and 45 e-mails bounced for a response rate of 5.17% during a four-week period between May 4 and June 1, 2006.

4.4 Observations and Analysis from Planner Survey

Campbell and Fainstein (1996, p. 2) explain planning "as a practical field of endeavour that differs from other activities in its claim to be able to predict the consequences of its actions." As

such, it forces its practicioners to generalize from their previous experiences in order to develop intuition and practice their craft (Campbell & Fainstein, 1996). Planning theory comprises of assimilated knowledge.

In this respect, the length of time that a planner has spent practicing their particular vocation may influence their position on such planning issues as public consultation. While authors like Innes (1996) have suggested that planners are coming to understand their new professional role as facilitators and mediators of the public voice, the only way to test this claim is to determine the length of time that planners have worked in the field and ask a series of questions that may shed light on such trends.

Simple, close-ended questions such as that asked first in this online survey to planners put the respondents at ease while simultaneously offering simpler administration and analysis for the researcher (Del Balso & Lewis, 2001). All respondents were able to answer this question.

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1. Please select the box that indicates the number of years of experience that you have in the planning profession:

   ☐ < 1   ☐ 1-5   ☐ 6-10

   ☐ 11-20   ☐ 21-30   ☐ 31+

The category of 11-20 years of experience proved to be both the most frequently cited (mode) and the mid-range (median) grouping. No respondent possessed less than six years of experience (see Figure 4-18). Overall, a disproportionately high percentage of planning department heads and planning firm owners responded to the online request (see Figure 4-19). In the words of one respondent, this may have been the case because "senior planners such as directors are ultimately

responsible for recommending the desired consultation process and, by virtue of their experience in getting to the position, would have more experience and may feel more confident in replying."

Experience Category	Number of Respondents
< 1 year	0
1 – 5 years	0
6 – 10 years	7
11 – 20 years	9
21 – 30 years	17
31+ years	6

Figure 4-18: Breakdown of Years of Experience for Planner Survey Respondents

Profession	Responses		Percentage
Planner	12	261	4.6%
Senior Planner	2	132	1.5%
Director of Planning	10	118	8.5%
Principal	3	51	5.9%
President	6	39	15.4%
Other Titles	6	144	4.2%
Total	**39**	**754**	**5.2%**

Figure 4-19: Response Rates of Planning Participants According to Job Titles

As Figures 4-18 and 4-19 show, the respondent sample proved an experienced and high profile group. The findings also seem to acknowledge the possibility that public consultation is a topic area of significant expertise or interest to these cohorts of planning professionals.

Large sections of the second chapter were spent discussing emerging alternatives to standard public consultation practices. It was postulated that these alternatives began to arise particularly in the 1990s because the planning community began to believe that public hearings simply did not work (Kathlene & Martin, 1991). Though many authors such as Berman (1997) suggested that a variety of participation strategies would prove more successful and engender less cynicism than a single method, Innes (1996, p. 496) conceded that "municipalities seldom use other methods because public hearings are the accepted form of plan review and because state laws

mandate procedures for [such] involvements with planning commissions." In other words, there

appears to be a formal as well as informal tie to the status quo.

To test this, the second question asked the planning respondents to indicate the extent to which

they devoted staff hours to the methods that were uncovered in the literature review.

2. To a total of 100%, please indicate the approximate breakdown (in terms of staff hours) for
   each of the following consultation techniques that your municipality or firm employs in the
   development or review of Official Plans:

% Used	Technique	% Used	Technique	% Used	Technique
	Public Meetings		Citizens' Panels		Informal Interviews
	Surveys		Focus Groups		Stakeholder Meetings
	Collaborations		Workshops		Opinion Polls
	Task Forces		Other Methods (*describe*): _____		

Thirty-seven of the potential respondents gave valid responses to this question and confirmed the

conclusions of Innes (1996) that planners continued to devote the largest percentage of their staff

hours to public meetings (see Figure 4-20).

Consultation Format	Average (%)	>20% of Hrs	>10% of Hrs	>1% of Hrs
Public Meetings	32.3	28	35	37
Surveys	4.3	2	7	19
Collaborations	4.6	4	7	10
Task Forces	4.4	1	10	13
Citizen Panels	3.1	2	7	10
Focus Groups	7.8	5	18	25
Workshops	14.6	16	28	32
Interviews	6.3	3	15	23
Stakeholder Meetings	17.9	18	32	35
Opinion Polls	2.9	2	3	5
Other	1.4	0	2	7

Figure 4-20: Average and Frequency Count of Hours Devoted to Particular Formats

Unlike for any other method, each of the respondents noted that they spent at least one percent of their staff hours engaging in public meetings, and 28 of the participants spent at least 20% or more staff hours using this method for an overall average of 32.3%. Stakeholder meetings and workshops rounded out the top three most staff-hour intensive methods with 17.9% and 14.6% of the total hours respectively. Interestingly, certain consultation techniques such as interviews, task forces and surveys represented a small overall percentage of staff hours devoted to consultation, but were cited by disproportionately large number of respondents as having at least one percent of staff time devoted to them. This finding, in conjunction with the large number of ineffective experiences with public meetings cited by planners in questions seven and eight (see Figures 4-24 and 4-25), suggested that the current dispersion of staff hours in various consultation methods may be different now than in the past.

Del Balso and Lewis (2001) as well as Trochim (2005) identify longitudinal studies as an ideal method to compare responses over two separate points in time. However, without the benefit of several years to produce this thesis and establish a new longitudinal period, this meant repeating the second question to the selection of respondents who would hold some of the characteristics as the current sample. As noted in Figure 4-18, most of the respondents had more than 20 years of planning experience and none had less than six years. Conducting the longitudinal study over a fifteen year time period would mean that those who have more than 20 years experience now would have a minimum of six years experience at the secondary date of 1991. That year would also be significant as the date in which Kathlene and Martin (1991, p. 48) stated their opinion that "public hearings tend to have low attendance…just when citizen input could have the most impact," and as the unofficial opening of developing alternative citizen engagement methods.

Fifteen of the 23 respondents in the longitudinal study sample replied to the request to identify the percentage of staff hours devoted to the same consultation methods found in question two for 1991. The identities of the respondents have been hidden but the trends indicated in Figure 4-21 tell the story. Since 1991, the percentage of time spent on other consultation formats has been steadily increasing and doing so largely at the expense of public meetings.

Consultation Format	1991 (% of Hours)	2006 (% of Hours)	Change (% of Hours)
Public Meetings	55.9	32.3	-23.6
Stakeholder Meetings	14.4	17.9	3.5
Workshops	8.9	14.6	5.7
Focus Groups	1.5	7.8	6.3
Interviews	5.7	6.3	0.6
Collaborations	1.3	4.6	3.3
Task Forces	3.7	4.4	0.7
Surveys	3.8	4.3	0.5
Citizen Panels	1.2	3.1	1.9
Opinion Polls	0.7	2.9	2.2
Other	3.5	1.4	-2.1

Figure 4-21: Longitudinal Comparison of Staff Hours Spent on Consultation Methods

These observations are crucially important when one considers that "the consultation method chosen communicates to the public the degree to which results will influence policy decisions," (Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000, p. 354) and that "citizens are more likely to perceive a decision to be fair if they perceive the process to have been fair," (Lauber & Knuth, 1999, p. 21).

Thus, one might interpret the data in Figure 4-21 as proof that planners have found public meetings to be a format that does not as effectively communicate fairness and an adequate process as effectively as they would like. In the attempt to find something better they have increasingly moved toward focus groups and workshops as alternatives.

As quoted earlier in this chapter from Campbell and Fainstein (1996), planners tend to generalize from their experiences in order to better practice their craft. In the longitudinal study expressed in Figure 4-21 this meant making changes to the percentage of time spent on various consultation methods. However, such modification rarely happens in the absence of significant evaluation and as Weiss (1998) makes clear, this critical step provides data on what a program accomplishes and fails to accomplish – thereby clarifying trade-offs for decision-makers. In terms of consultation in planning, it is important to understand what planners see as the purpose of public consultation as part of the overall planning process in order to determine what if any changes should be made.

This in mind, the participants in the online survey were asked to provide their own definition of what constitutes effective public consultation. All 39 participants responded to this question.

3. Please provide what it means to have *effective public consultation* in your own words.

A keyword analysis was used to redefine the data into more manageable quantities. Words such as 'opportunity', 'methods' and 'input' fell under the category describing consultation **process**. On the other hand, words like 'average citizen', and 'representative' were lumped together to describe the **participants** of consultation, while words like 'consensus' and 'solutions' came under the array of terms describing the **products** of consultation.

As Figure 4-22 shows, the definitions offered by the participants leaned heavily toward process-orientated words, as opposed to words that were steeped in the terminology of participants and results. These data seem to indicate, in conjunction with Figure 4-21, that planners seem to view public consultation primarily as a process, and that they are more likely to concern themselves

with making changes to the process of consulting than to any of the other elements that are a part of this planning stage.

Word Category	Number of References	Percentage (%)
Process	63	52.1%
Participants	25	20.6%
Products	33	27.3%

Figure 4-22: Division of Words Cited in Definitions of Effective Public Consultation

Just two of the definitions reflected an equal number of references to each consultation element:
_____

All parties understanding the issues, feeling [that] they have been heard and being able to live with the outcome.

To obtain opinions and reach acceptable solutions to planning issues from as broad a spectrum of community as possible.
_____

The tone of the comments overall echoes the key word analysis, suggesting that consultation is primarily about the opportunity to present ideas. Excerpts from select definitions (see Appendix 9) show that planners believe that public consultation "does NOT necessarily mean that the specific concerns of individuals who come out to meetings will be resolved to their satisfaction since the general public good can outweigh these concerns," and that consultation "makes the participant feel like they have been involved and listened to whether or not their input changes decisions." The effectiveness of consultation techniques for planners appears to be linked to the idea of providing good opportunities and good process.

This in mind, the fourth question asks the participating planners to rank consultation methods against each other based on their ability to achieve the definition of effective public consultation listed in question three. Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000) remind planners that the strategy selected for consultation must be appropriately tied to the objectives (i.e. those noted in the third question) in order to be effective. While cities may be able to foster positive citizen attitudes by

employing multiple strategies for participation (Berman, 1997), these should still be conducted in

a manner that will reduce political grandstanding (Homenuck, 1993).

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4. Please rank the following consultation methods against each other based on their ability to help achieve your definition of *effective public consultation*. Write "N/A" for "Not Applicable" where necessary.

Method	Relative Ranking
Public Meetings	
Surveys	
Collaborations	
Task Forces	
Citizens' Panels	
Workshops	
Informal Interviews	
Stakeholder Meetings	
Opinion Polls	
Other: ( )	

The results of this question, as Figure 4-23 shows, confirm that public meetings, stakeholder

meetings and workshops continue to receive the majority of first, second and third place votes.

Consultation Format	Average Rank	Count of Top 3 Ranks	#1 Ranks	#2 Ranks	#3 Ranks
Public Meetings	4.4	16	9	2	5
Surveys	5.5	7	3	2	2
Collaborations	5.0	10	2	5	3
Task Forces	5.9	1	0	0	1
Citizen Panels	6.0	2	2	0	0
Focus Groups	4.2	12	4	5	3
Workshops	4.4	16	4	6	6
Interviews	4.8	9	2	5	2
Stakeholder Meetings	3.9	19	3	9	7
Opinion Polls	6.8	6	4	0	2
Other	7.4	1	1	0	0

Figure 4-23: Average and Count of Planner Ranking Scores for Consultation Formats

However, the inverse relationship between the first and second place rankings of public and stakeholder meetings is interesting to note, as are the overall ranking scores.

Stakeholder meetings, despite coming a distant second in terms of average staff hours devoted, collect more top three rankings (19) than any other format and have the lowest average ranking score (3.9). Similarly, despite only receiving a total of 12 votes in the top three positions, focus groups are perceived to be the second most effective consultation format by average rank score. The ascent of this consultation method throws public meetings and workshops into a tie for third place with an average ranking score of 4.4.

Also noteworthy are the number of first place rankings associated with consultation formats that hold comparatively high average ranking scores. Two prime examples include opinion polls (four first place ranks and an average score of 6.8) and citizen panels (two first place ranks and an average score of 6.0). As per Figure 4-21, very little time is devoted to these methods (2.9% and 3.1% respectively), but a total of six planners out of the thirty-four that responded to this question identified them as the best available for meeting their definition for effective public consultation.

Overall, there is a fairly even spread of first place rankings across the formats presented. Only task forces failed to receive any top rankings, thus leading to the conclusion that in the context-specific recollections of the professionals surveyed, each of the methods has proven successful.

Combined with the data received in the second question and displayed in Figure 4-21, these observations lead us to believe that planners spend more time with public meetings than with other mechanisms, but do not find them to be universally the most effective. Planners seem to

agree that stakeholder meetings are more effective in terms of achieving their definition of effective public consultation and appear apt to use these when it is time to get things done.

The fifth and sixth questions of this survey were designed, as stated earlier in this chapter, to parallel the third question of the door-to-door survey of Pelham residents. As seen in Figures 4-4, 4-5 and 4-6, planners and members of the public have differing perceptions of the objectives and value of consultation. The fact that these findings confirm that most consultation participants find the formats presented to them to be inadequate (Innes & Booher, 2004; King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998), and that such a gap between these two major players exists are troubling ones when Altshuler's (1965) hypothesis that a planner's only claim to legitimacy is that of an expert who knows and measures the public interest. Planners need to be in touch with the citizens that they work with and for, but the conclusions from this survey data seem to indicate that this is not the case.

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5. Please indicate, on a scale from **1** to **10** – with **1** representing "highly ineffective consultation" and **10** representing "highly effective consultation" – the overall rate of effectiveness that you perceive your (combination of) method(s) to have:

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

6. Please indicate, on a scale between **1** and **10** – with **1** representing "highly ineffective consultation" and **10** representing "highly effective consultation" – the overall rate of effectiveness that you perceive the public has of the (combination of) method(s) that your firm or municipality employs:

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Gray (1989) finds that participants directly responsible for reaching an agreement or solution are more likely to perceive joint ownership, engage in the processes more fully and achieve a greater level of satisfaction from their efforts. Similarly, King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) purport

that citizens are more likely to trust experts if participation is sought at the beginning of the decision-making process. In other words, these authors help to define the characteristics of a positive consultation experience, particularly for the public participants. However, little can be found in the literature other than normative theories to create these opportunities, and nothing directly from planners and administrators as to what they have found effective to develop them.

7. Please provide any particular comments that you may have on your most positive consultation experience and the reason(s) you attribute for its success:

Thirty planners responded to this question, making 32 references to various consultation methods in a positive light against five framed in the negative. Again, a simple keyword count was used to analyze the data, picking out references to specific consultation formats. Once again, workshops, stakeholder and public meetings received the greatest number of good experiences, as Figure 4-24 displays. The strong showing of the 'other' category is largely aided by three references to open houses. However, in the absence of specific wording, and because open houses can contain elements of many of the other format options presented, they have not been considered for one of the top three placements (see Appendix 10).

Consultation Format	Positive Mentions	Negative Mentions
Public Meetings	4	4
Surveys	2	0
Collaborations	1	0
Task Forces	2	0
Citizen Panels	1	0
Focus Groups	1	0
Workshops	7	0
Interviews	2	0
Stakeholder Meetings	8	1
Opinion Polls	0	0
Other	4	0

Figure 4-24: Evaluation Allocations for Consultation Formats in Positive Experiences

Especially intriguing from this data is the number of negative references made about public meetings. The equivalent number of positive and negative responses is as telling as the language in which these remarks are couched. Examples include: "…something a public meeting can't generate…" and "(m)ost people do not like to speak in front of large groups at public meetings." In all cases, the respondent indicates using an alternative consultation format as a reaction to a negative experience with a public meeting.

Forester (1994, p. 155) correctly highlights the fact that planners work in a reality of contentious meetings, where "substance competes with exaggeration and careful listening with presumption." Though public debate remains at the heart of democratic processes, it is also messy, ambiguous, emotional and unpredictable (Forester, 1994). While policy analysis does not require a distinct philosophical position, Friedmann (1987, p. 79) argues that, "when challenged, planners are likely to reply that it is better to arrive at decisions through an imperfect (but perfectible) science than through a process of unmediated politics that is subject to personal whims, fickle passions and special interests."

In part, this might help explain the findings pertaining to the definitions of effective consultation displayed in Figure 4-22. Planners view consultation as a process. However, this paradigm alone does not seem enough, based on the other survey results, to ensure an effective and appropriate experience for all participants. Indeed, as Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000) postulate, ill-structured issues are those which require the greatest care by decision-makers seeking public involvement. The prospect of a negative consultation experience is always a valid one.

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8. Please provide any particular comments that you may have on your most negative consultation experience and the reason(s) you attribute for its result:

Thirty of the potential respondents answered this eighth query which asked them to describe their worst consultation experience. Twenty-six members of this respondent sample had also answered the seventh question.

The answers generated 19 references to consultation formats in a negative light, and zero framed in the positive. As Figure 4-25 reveals, the greatest amount of disdain is held for public meetings with workshops and other (open house) formats in a distant tie for second.

Consultation Format	Negative Mentions
Public Meetings	10
Surveys	0
Collaborations	1
Task Forces	0
Citizen Panels	0
Focus Groups	1
Workshops	3
Interviews	0
Stakeholder Meetings	0
Opinion Polls	1
Other	3

Figure 4-25: Evaluation Allocations for Consultation Formats
in Negative Experiences

Given the hypothesized reliance of planners on an imperfect, but perfectible, science for their consultation methods, one might expect that the formats used most frequently (public meetings, stakeholder meetings and workshops) would garner the greatest amounts of praise and scorn.

However, the large gap between the overall number of positive (4) and negative (14) comments regarding public meetings seems entirely out of keeping with the high percentage (32.3%) of staff hours devoted, and high number (9) of most effective rankings that it received. As often as planners may be citing disappointing experiences with public meetings (see Appendix 11), they continue to spend a lot of time with them for reasons that are as yet not precisely defined.

These results stated, it should be noted that while there was not a solitary reference condemning stakeholder meetings, there were four warnings of the effect that narrow interest groups can have on public consultation as a process.

The ninth and final question sought a description from planners as to the factors that might be limiting high quality consultation from translating into good planning. Though optional, thirty-four of the respondents (87.2%) provided their thoughts on this query.

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9. Please provide your comments on any perceived limitations to achieving good planning through consultation:

While King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) contend that engaging citizens in more "authentic participation" would place them next to the issues and thus improve the connection between the consultation exercise and implementing the solution, as mentioned in the opening chapter of this thesis, the City of Ottawa (2003b) found it necessary on numerous occasions to eliminate, or run a municipal plan or program contrary to a strategic direction outlined in its consultation process.

Breaking the responses from this final question into categories assigning the limiting factors to either the planner, public or political processes, Figure 4-26 demonstrates that planners believe that most of the factors that limiting good planning from being achieved through consultation are attributable primarily to failings of the public, followed next by the political processes and lastly their own actions or inactions (see also Appendix 12).

One will also note from Figure 4-26 that certain responses are mentioned more frequently than others within each of the categories. For example, within the category that cites the public as the main hindrance to achieving good planning from consultation, the idea that consultation brings

out only input from narrow points of view was cited five times. The respondents also suggested that the public fails to react until the point of crisis and exhibits a broad lack of understanding a total of five times.

Limiting Factor Category	Total References	Most Frequent Responses (#)
Planner	6	Using inefficient or ineffective consultation techniques (3).
Public	17	Receiving input from narrow and singular points of view that fails to represent the public interest (5).
		Failing to react until the point of crisis (3).
		Broad lack of understanding (2).
Political Processes	10	Lack of time and resources [both staff and money] (4).
		Recognition that consultation is just one part of a larger process and cannot alone produce good planning (3).

Figure 4-26: Mention of Factors Limiting Consultation from Achieving Good Planning

The most frequent response within the political process category suggests that there is simply not enough time or money made available to achieve good planning through consultation. A further three references recognized that consultation is just one part of a larger process and cannot alone produce good planning.

Finally, the survey participants made a total of six statements which indicated that planners need to change their own behaviours in order to create good planning through consultation. Three of these statements implied that good planning is being held back through inefficient or ineffective consultation techniques.

These data appear to show that planners, the front line administrators of the democratic political model for land issues, are somewhat more likely to suggest that the factors which limit good

planning through consultation are outside their control. Such a finding is at odds with the roles and skills that were deemed inherent and valuable in Chapter Two. It is incumbent on the planner to appropriately assemble and facilitate information flow between key consultation participants, as well as exchange ideas between organizations in the opinions of King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998), as well as Michaels, Mason and Solecki (2001).

It is also intriguing, given the high evaluative score that planners gave their own methods shown in Figure 4-5, that the respondents should insinuate that there is a problem – for which someone else is to blame – in translating the benefits of consultation into good planning. One might have expected that more than two planners would defend their current methods since they assigned their efforts an average score of 7.31 out of 10. To this end, the findings from the public focus group and key interviews should prove valuable to triangulate the data as described in Chapter Three.

4.5 Determination of Sample Size and Response Rate for the Public Focus Group

Most focus group literature (Greenbaum, 1993; Morgan, 1997; Simon, 1999; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) suggests that the ideal size for a focus group is between four and 12 participants. Attempts were made to recruit respondents located in similar neighbourhoods in the Village of Fonthill by phone and by mail for a focus group to be held during the morning of July 15, 2006. In spite of implications from Simon (1999) that researchers can anticipate a response rate of approximately 50-66% when participants are not part of an established group, only five of 105 contacted agreed to attend. In the end, only three of these five potential participants actually came out to participate in the session.

In and of itself, the low attendance rate is an interesting observation. While there is an admittedly discernable difference between a focus group on public consultation formats and the entity itself; it is a telling observation that less than five percent of those invited were willing to devote up to three hours in a public focus group when the average citizen suggested that they would spend an average of 12.2 hours on future consultation (see Figure 4-15). This would suggest that there is a disconnect between intention and action for citizens in terms of consultation on planning.

4.6 Observations and Analysis from Public Focus Group

The principal observations from the public focus group come in a series of critical conversation exchanges that respond to questions in four thematic areas:

1. Planning Issues of Relevance
2. Roles and Means of Planning Education
3. Establishing a Contract for Participation
4. Motivations/Opportunity Costs for Participation

The first of these critical conversation exchanges takes place in response to the question of which planning issues the participants believe require extensive consultation. The question is prompted by one of the key assumptions found in the review of the major literary works in this field: that, all other things being equal, all citizens are willing to participation in consultation and decision-making. The objective in this exchange is to determine whether or not this assumption is valid.

Question: What are the items/issues that the Town of Pelham should not engage in without extensive consultation?

P3 – Things like land use, putting in sub-divisions. Make sure that the developer has met all of the proper rules. Don't lose any of the present beauty by doing things like building over and destroying trails. Items affecting town character should be consulted on.

P1 – We already have some forms of public consultation. I believe that they are mandated.

P2 – I have a lot of the same feelings as Participant Three. What concerns me is that people would raise their concerns and objections and these would get overturned by the Ontario Municipal Board.

P3 – That's it. We all seem to know that there is a higher authority than the local council and therefore a lot of us wonder if it is even worth bothering to show up. I can think of similar things happening in Grimsby. The people didn't want it and the council voted it down but then the Board allowed it to happen anyway.

P1 – There is definitely a feeling that participation is fruitless. It's like it is not genuine and that opinions aren't really listened to. You have to do way too much chasing (of councilors, etc) just to get someone to listen to you.

P2 – The sad fact is that most councilors have already made up their minds.

P1 – I guess it's fair to say that there should be consultation for anything that is out of the ordinary.

Figure 4-27: Critical Focus Group Conversation Exchange #1

On the surface, this discussion appears to be addressing the depth and scope of consultation, but what it is really highlighting is the latent concern that the public has in considering a decision to participate. Shipley et al. (2004, 200) found that 40% of citizens involved in consultation believed that their input would have little or very little effect on future decision-making. This contrasted directly against the mere 5% who thought that it would have a considerable effect.

The literature leads one to believe that this may be occurring in part "because officials view the public as either uninterested or pursuing their self-interest, and are therefore unwilling to engage them more frequently for fear of the costs, uncertainty and delays that this might bring" (Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000, pp. 349-350). Whereas citizens may believe that greater participation is needed, "they are rendered cynical or apathetic by efforts to stimulate participation that discount public input," (King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998, p. 319).

The results from the 203 completed surveys in the Town of Pelham support the findings of the literature and this focus group. When asked to evaluate previous public meetings, the second most popular response was the lowest possible score of 1 out of 10 (see Figure 4-4). Thirty-nine references were made in Figure 4-17 to the idea that the process is ineffective or that decision-makers have their minds made up before beginning the consultation exercises.

A second critical conversation exchange took place as a follow-up to the original question posed under the first theme area. Asking the focus group participants in attendance what brought them out to a previous consultation exercise elucidated the importance of a personal attachment to the issue(s) being discussed publicly (see Figure 4-28).

Question: What are the items/issues that the Town of Pelham should not engage in without extensive consultation?

SU – What brought each of you out to your previous consultation exercises?

P1 – For me, what they were proposing would have meant a loss of an education building and student recreation space. It had a direct effect on me personally and that is why I decided to go. I think that's why most people go – because it affects them personally. Also, in this case, there was no consultation from the university. They just wanted to up and do it.

P3 – The well being of the town in general and to prevent certain changes. Things that would lead to poor development or affect town character would bring me out.

P2 – I have been out to two previous meetings and I have to admit that I was at them solely for personal reasons. The first time it was because of a sewer infrastructure proposal and the second time it was on account of a boundary change. People come out to consultation when the issues are important to the person themselves. If another area in town had the same issue, I wouldn't care. I would only get involved if it affects me personally.

Figure 4-28: Critical Focus Group Conversation Exchange #2

Such sentiments are echoed in the literature. Clary and Snyder (2002), as well as King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) suggest that the desire to participate is strong but must be weighed against the responsibilities and alternatives that are a part of everyday life (Iannacone & Everton, 2004). While involvement in local issues may not be falling as fast in Canada as in the United States (Adams, 2003); it is declining nonetheless, and this may not be much of a surprise given the cynicism noted in the literature (Berman, 1997) and echoed in the public survey (see Figures 4-4, 4-5 and 4-17) and focus group (see Figures 4-27 and 4-28). Many citizens do not seem to exhibit much concern about the planning issues beyond a three square kilometre area (see Figure 4-9) and the findings of these two critical conversation exchanges echo the reason: the issue has

to affect them materially before they will become sufficiently motivated to participate. Otherwise, they fear that they may be wasting their time on a process that is not conducive to hearing or implementing their opinions.

The third and final conversation exchange under the theme of *Planning Issues of Relevance* began with the question as to the value of planning education in effective participation. However, it soon materialized that citizens viewed participation opportunities as consisting only of public meetings and therefore expressed their thoughts on this particular format for consultation.

Question: What value do you place on planning education in order to participate?

SU – What is it in the information flow that you think breaks down at a public meeting?

P3 – Emotion gets into it.

P1 – It's a confrontational format and we all know that it's our last attempt to make our opinions heard.

SU – So, you feel backed into a corner because you know that it's your last attempt?

P2 – We're intimidated.

P1 – It's pretty difficult, even if you believe that you've got support on the council. You're standing in front of all of them, and they're usually in some concave table format. I've seen people that wouldn't otherwise get nervous or intimidated in front of people get nervous and intimidated.

P3 – You can lose your words easily. It becomes hard to be persuasive. It's not a personable format.

P2 – We need to have pre-meetings where we would be able to write a presentation and stick to it. Follow process. There are too many people involved on their side for it not to seem intimidating. Even the planner and engineer seem to be seated on their side of the table.

P1 – It really is a people versus the council mentality. It leads to underestimating your own support and overestimating theirs.

P2 – They seem to support each other and chat together.

Figure 4-29: Critical Focus Group Conversation Exchange #3

The participants are remarkably direct in their assessment of this method of consultation. Quite simply, they dislike public meetings because they find them to be intimidating format to work in.

Literature in this field has recognized for 15 or more years that public meetings are fraught with problems (Kathlene & Martin, 1991). Since that time a number of researchers and theorists have proposed a number of alternate formats (see Figure 2-2), but no one has evaluated these formats according to the viewpoints of the major consultation players.

By comparison, the average score of 5.19 for public meetings from citizens noted in Figure 4-4, the 23.6% cumulative reduction in staff hours devoted to this style of consultation seen in Figure 4-21, the combination of 14 negative experiences with them from planners (see Figures 4-24 and 4-25) as well as the comments in the critical conversation exchange of Figure 4-29 suggest that the assessment of the literature is nonetheless accurate. Public meetings meet major disapproval from each of the major consultation players.

Under the theme of *Establishing a Contract for Participation*, citizens were asked what types of traits and actions that they could reasonably expect from planners as the other major player in consultation exercises. This question therefore has the function of testing the finding of Innes (1996, p. 496) that "citizens value the contributions of planners and other experts, even when they have criticisms."

Question: What traits and actions should you reasonably be able to expect from planning staff when it comes to consultation?

P2 – There should be honesty, integrity and openness. It often feels like they have a second agenda.

P3 – I agree. It feels like they have a second agenda which they consider to be more important and a deeper opinion on matters that they are hiding. Encourage openness.

P2 – I guess this is all set down at the province, eh?

SU – In a way. The province definitely provides the municipalities with the tools, like Official Plans and zoning by-laws, but they recognize as much as anyone that things change. What land looked like it would be necessary for industrial one day might be used for residential tomorrow. So, they install a significant amount of flexibility into the tools. Maybe there's too much flexibility, I don't know, but that might be why it feels like there might be a 'second agenda' at times.

P2 – Who makes up the Ontario Municipal Board.

SU – There are usually around 20-25 board members who are appointed to three year terms from a wide range of professions. About half are from the Toronto area because that is where most of the growth occurs and the rest travel throughout the province, holding hearings in the municipalities where the appeal is made.

P3 – How do they make a decision? Do they all get together and put it to a vote?

SU – Usually one member hears the case, but sometimes a larger contingent of two to five members will make up the tribunal. These members make the decision, not the board as a whole. The decision is not subject to appeal.

P2/P3 – This is information that I would have liked to have known before today.

…continued…

P2 – See, I've read the letters that they've sent me when something new is going in, but I would want more clarification like that.

E – Agreed. More clarification would be better.

SU – OK, so when information is needed, would you want information to come with the letter?

P2 – You know, I don't know. I think that it might just end up being too much paper and I wouldn't read it.

SU – What if the planner went out to the doors and helped explain it?

P2 – Well that would be far better, but even if you could have an education or a question and answer session, that would help.

E – It would be great to hear from planners directly.

Figure 4-30: Critical Focus Group Conversation Exchange #4

This exchange begins with the participants considering the prerequisite skills to conduct effective

consultation but quickly slides into different topic areas altogether. The participants in this focus

group, like those in the survey (see Figures 4-17 and Appendix 8), believe that there are hidden

agendas and false pretenses behind engaging citizens in planning issues. Much of the dialogue

thus becomes dominated by the researcher as the session facilitator to explain significant chunks

of the planning process to the participants. Though the literature suggests that planners need to

balance out any deficiencies in public planning education (Chipeniuk, 1999), it is still a telling

finding that the participants were ignorant of such things as the role of the planning department

as well as the composition of the Ontario Municipal Board. These participants, by their own admission and attendance, have both been to meetings for planning issues before and continue to be interested in the subject. Yet their knowledge is disproportionately incomplete as compared to their curiosity.

Secondly, the focus group members express serious misgivings regarding the lack of feedback from consultation exercises and planning decisions. While Lauber and Knuth (1999) have noted that satisfying participation is likely to increase a citizen's sense that an agency is responsive, the participants in this forum have been rendered cynical by false efforts that discount their opinions. Since the method chosen to consult with citizens communicates the degree to which the results will influence decisions (Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000), then the feedback mechanism must similarly be considered for its influence on public sentiment.

Finally, in many ways this conversation exchange is a continuation of the previously expressed desire for workshops and a more personal touch from planners (see Figure 4-29 and Appendix 4-1). Similarly, the idea of breaking up consultations by wards confirms that there is a geographic limit for planning consultation as noted in Figure 4-9.

To these specific comments from citizens of the Town of Pelham need be added the last piece of data triangulation from the interviews with key planning professionals.

4.7 Determination of Sample Size and Response Rate for the Key Planner Interviews
Interviews allow researchers to receive more personalized information from their respondents and reduce the possibility of having data skewed by confusion or inadequate interpretation of their questions (Gray & Guppy, 1999). They are also a method by which the researcher can

repeat certain questions employed in other mechanisms to identify or eliminate trends without a large number of completed responses and inherent expense (Fricker et al., 2005). Both verbal and non-verbal probing can be used with confidence in interviews to expand data collection (Trochim, 2005).

As can be seen in Appendices 3 and 7, the key planner interviews consisted of ten unstructured questions that sometimes paralleled the questions in the online survey. Such an arrangement permitted a comparison between qualitative descriptions and quantitative appraisals for certain queries. In the end, 50% of the eight potential interviewees selected (based on their planning credentials) agreed to participate in the thirty-minute interview.

4.8 Observations and Analysis from Interviews with Key Planning Professionals

As expressed in Figures 4-24 and 4-25, the interviewees echoed the sentiments of their peers and suggested that they have found other methods such as workshops and focus groups to be more successful than public meetings in achieving effective consultation. Indeed, the major finding from the interviews with the four key planning professionals came from the sixth question, in which the respondents were asked whether or not they had solicited the opinions of residents when developing their consultation strategies (see Figure 4-31).

INTERVIEWEE 1
One of the tricks is to use the first meeting to review the work program. Then you stop to ask if everyone is OK with it and can buy into it. Make sure everyone's on board.

Keep them interested. Make sure that the presentation style is interesting. When we do Official Plans, we do a meeting on each specific issue. That way people can pick and choose what they show up for.

There is always the issue of having a budget for doing things. Have to look over at your client and ask if they are willing to pay for it (consultation). Ramifications on the process as well.

INTERVIEWEE 2
No they weren't. In terms of whether to have a workshop or even what kind. Having said that, we started out with three workshops, but during the process, we realized that we needed a fourth. Process was altered to respond to that.

Often, not always, the public knows that they have ideas and what they want and don't, but often don't know how to get this out. People that are involved in consultation a lot might be the best to embark on a design, but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't have the flexibility to respond to the outcomes of the process as you go along.

INTERVIEWEE 3
No; doesn't make any sense to consult them on how to consult them.

INTERVIEWEE 4
Our municipalities and planning boards, typically get a turnout of 100-130 every year. Very successful, they tell us how to change for next year.

Figure 4-31: Interview Comments about Public Involvement in Consultation Strategies

The participants generally indicated that consulting with their constituents was an action that had

not been taken and in some cases it was foreign to their conception of appropriate process.

Interviewing key planning professionals also illuminated the rationale for the continuing use of

public meetings (see Figure 4-32) in spite of the series of well-documented negative experiences

with them found in Figures 4-24 and 4-25.

INTERVIEWEE 1
We have been told by [our] lawyers that every time that you meet the public formally, it must be done under the terms of the *Planning Act*. This can make us hesitant to hold more formal meetings. We hold more informal style meetings instead.

INTERVIEWEE 4
The planning act only sets minimums, nothing to prevent additional consultation, and many build in other minimums into their OP's. We're seeing that most municipalities will have two or three meetings at least. Then they will have their statutory meeting, but they'll have many before that.

What I do find is that, depending on the municipality, some will have the statutory meeting early in the process, have a draft and make changes and don't go back to the process and that is a recipe for disaster.

Figure 4-32: Interview Responses Regarding Use of Public Meetings for Consultation

What these expert informants suggest is that public meetings are viewed by the planning and

legal systems as the minimum statutory requirement for a consultation process. Therefore, no

matter how much practitioners of the profession may wish to employ alternative formats, they

believe themselves bound to use, as Innes (1996) suggested, this particular style of consultation as part of their overall strategy.

4.9 Conclusions from Research Observations and Analysis

As defined by the central thesis question first introduced in Chapter One, the objective of this research has been to gather the views of planners and the public in order to determine the most effective consultation techniques available for municipal planning issues. In order to answer this gap in planning theory, the research methods and questions were based on the assumptions from the planning literature and specifically designed to isolate certain factors influencing consultation for both of these major players.

Among the major findings from the literature, as expressed largely in Chapter Two, academics see a major divide between consultation process and outcome with most of the normative theory pertaining to the former. Through increased presence and discussion since it became legislatively required in certain countries, the scope of the debate has changed from questioning the value of consultation to one of deciphering the appropriate frequency and methods.

The number of alternative consultation methods has increased substantially over the past decades and become increasingly directed toward engagement of the citizen, if not necessarily the issues, through such proposed formats as:

- focus groups
- consensus building

- visioning
- collaboration

Critically, these authors make the assumption that, all other things being equal, citizens would be willing to participate in consultation exercises – especially if the process was improved. They conclude that current processes, daily time constraints and social pressures frustrate participants.

The findings of this chapter refute a number of such findings and assumptions.

Firstly, the door-to-door survey of citizens in the Town of Pelham revealed that a little more than one-quarter of the participant sample had previously attended a public meeting. However, while there appeared to be some correlation between the length of residency and the likelihood of prior public meeting attendance, the desire to attend was not universal. Approximately one-fifth of the survey sample indicated that they would not be willing to attend future consultation meetings and the focus group participants echoed these sentiments, suggesting that the issue(s) would have to affect them personally before they would become involved.

Indeed, the role of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) on the motivation to participate appears to be considerable. More than half of those citizens who participated in the survey believed themselves competent with respect to planning issues for an area less than three square kilometres, and more than 80% suggested that they could competently discuss planning issues for an area of $12km^2$ (or 10% of the municipal area). The vast majority of the respondents included their residence in their area of expertise and those who had previously attended a planning meeting tied themselves even more closely (by a factor of two) to a particular geographic area than those who had failed to get involved. Perhaps surprisingly, the length of residency in the Town of Pelham did not appear to influence the area of planning competence held by the participants. Recently immigrated citizens highlighted areas almost as large, on average, as those who have resided in Pelham for more than 30 years.

To this point in planning literature, an evaluation of effectiveness from the viewpoint of citizen participants has not been conducted. To fill this gap, residents were asked in the survey to score their previous consultation experiences on a scale of one to ten. The data call attention to a tri-

polar evaluation of consultation experiences that may correlate more strongly to perceptions of distributive fairness (outcomes), than to procedural fairness (processes). Overall, the scores from the public participants were two full points lower than the planning professionals or the literature would suggest. Indeed, literature suggesting that high quality consultation has significant future benefits appears to be incorrect to a certain measure. Survey respondents who indicated that they had been a part of a positive consultation experience projected spending less time in forthcoming exercises than did those who had come from disappointing endeavours.

For their part, planners generally believe that they are doing a good job of providing consultation opportunities, though they are less inclined to think that the public would agree with them. This gap appears to arise because planners view consultation chiefly as a process and tend to appraise it by the yardstick of procedural justice rather than distributive.

In this light, the collective actions of planners in Ontario to disperse the number of staff hours spent on public meetings in favour of focus groups and workshops since 1991 make more sense. These professionals value consultation virtually entirely for its part in a larger planning process and have had increasing difficulty communicating with the public through this medium. Though they more often see the problem of translating good consultation into good planning as caused by members of the public and political processes respectively, they have been ready to change their tactics. However, public meetings have remained the most frequently used method, as planners feel obligated to include them as part of their overall consultation strategies by the statutes of the *Planning Act*.

In the final analysis, the search to determine the views of the major consultation players on the techniques available has concluded that citizens and planners are not on the same page for this

portion of the planning process. Citizens are frustrated with the approaches used to solicit their input and are inclined to view the consultation process in terms of its outcomes, while planners assign consultation a value in terms of the quality of its processes, and have underestimated the degree of negative sentiment from the public at large. Each group feels equally victimized by a process that they intuitively know does not work, but neither is quite sure on how to go about fixing it. Fortunately, as has been proven through review of the literature, the scope of the debate has already been changed once and appears primed to do so again.

Chapter Five: Recommendations and Areas for Future Research

From the beginning, this thesis has represented an attempt to shed light on the incongruities and inefficiencies of public consultation in planning at the municipal level. Practical experience has shown that the difficulties do not lie with meeting the legislative requirements as much as they do in providing the knowledge capacities and perceptions of fairness commensurate with the time and expense that they entail.

Perhaps for this reason, the dominant trend within planning literature involves the development of alternative consultation techniques and normative theories for improved processes. However, these works have relied heavily on qualitative assessments and other key assumptions such as a universal desire to participate in the process. This has left significant gaps as to the perspectives of planners and the public on the overall objectives of consultation as well as the current methods for engaging in the process. Therefore, using a mixed-methods approach to better triangulate the data, the central research question asked:

> *What do the views of planners and the public, as major players in consultation, have to tell us about the most effective techniques at the municipal level?*

Part of this work involved isolating certain factors that influence this part of the planning process has on both players, and in the end, the findings refuted a number of key beliefs and assumptions held to this point.

From the perspective of the citizen, the desire to become involved in planning consultation ought to no longer be considered universal. Over three-quarters of those surveyed had never been to a planning meeting before and fully one-fifth indicated that they would fail to do so in the future. In practice, less than five percent of those invited to a focus group to improve the consultation process followed up on the opportunity to participate.

The statistics from the second half of the public survey suggest why this might be the case. More than 80% of those surveyed suggested that they could competently discuss planning issues for 10% or less of the municipal area, and more than half indicated a geographic area of competence for less than three square kilometres. Further still, the minority of residents who have actually attended a public meeting tend to attach themselves even more closely to a particular issue or geographic area. The focus group participants confirmed this finding, stating that the issue would have to affect them personally before they would get involved.

On the other hand, planners view consultation more as a process than an outcome. Though they freely admit that there have been some difficulties in translating the effects of consultation into good planning over the years, they see this deficiency as being caused largely by politicians and the public. Perhaps in response to these difficulties, or aided by the trends in planning literature, planners have diversified the staff hours devoted to consultation into a number of other formats, including focus groups and workshops.

Yet, despite repeated negative experiences with public meetings as a consultation mechanism, planners continue to rely on them the most heavily while paradoxically concluding that they are doing a good job with this part of the planning process.

Therein lies the most serious rub. The residents surveyed evaluated their previous consultation experiences with an average score of 5.19 out of 10, and were most likely to comment on how ineffective the processes were. Conversely, though vaguely aware that the public would not view their efforts as positively (5.92), planners gave themselves a much higher score (7.31), and failed to recognize the dichotomy of positions on the issue.

In short, the major players appear to be on different pages with respect to planning consultation. To some extent, this disparity is logical. Municipal plans, the raison d'être for the profession in Ontario, have always been viewed in terms of the conformance of outcomes or the performance of processes (Laurian et al., 2004). And, as Shannon (1991, 85) notes, "the roles of the public and the roles of the agency in a democratized administrative structure have never been clearly articulated." The absence of such role definition was extrapolated into the central question for this thesis, but an even larger part of this gap appears to arise from their viewpoints on fairness.

In general, citizens evaluate consultative exercises in terms of distributive fairness while planning professionals see it in terms of its procedural aspects. Determining a divide in this regard should be viewed as a troubling finding since planners are entrusted with the professional capacities to understand the public viewpoints (Campbell & Fainstein, 1996; Innes, 1996), while the public is entitled to provide input into decision-making through mandated opportunities (Government of Ontario, 2004).

However, differing viewpoints and a lack of trust is only one the reason that consultation is viewed as ineffective. Overall, the findings from the literature and the research leaves a very complex question to tackle:

> How does one approach a problem in which the threshold to participate is highly variable, the aims of the major parties are both fluid and unique, the paradigms for evaluating success are polarized, and the mandated processes are becoming increasingly ineffective?

5.1 Recommended Changes to Mandated Consultation Processes

Fortunately, a complex question is often paralleled by an equally prodigious number of valid approaches that might lead to its resolution. For instance, with respect to the fact that mandated

processes are becoming increasingly ineffective, opportunities to alter these processes for the benefit of both players are neither excessively difficult, nor unprecedented. Indeed, numerous academics (Berman, 1997; Gray, 1989; Hollander, 2004; Innes, 1996; King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998; Shipley et al., 2004; Vogt, Vogt & King, 2004) have offered alternative consultation mechanisms as the solution to consultation inefficiencies, while this research concluded rather definitively that planners tend to view consultation in terms of its value as a process.

Instructively, the literature review also revealed that both planning practice and planning theories do evolve and that the scope of the debate regarding public consultation has shifted over the last 40 years from the value of consultation, to the means and frequency necessary to effectively carry it out. In this vein, since this thesis began in 2004, the Government of Ontario conferred with municipalities to develop *Bill 51: Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act (2006)*. This legislation took effect on January 1, 2007, repealing subsections 17(15) as well as 17(19), and replacing them with the provisions seen in Appendix 13. Under this new section of the *Planning Act*, municipalities must now consult with the appropriate approval authority in the preparation of their new Official Plan, and hold open houses (i.e. information sessions) for Official Plan amendments. The minimum requirement of one public meeting for Official Plan development has remained intact within this new legislation.

To a certain extent, such legislative requirements represent a step in the right direction, engaging administrators in the task of improving the level of public education as suggested by Chipeniuk (1999). However, certain caveats should be noted. First of all, in keeping the minimum threshold of public meetings at a solitary occasion, the tone of the legislation remains one of indifference

to this part of the planning process. It also continues to disproportionately emphasize the value of a public meeting as compared to other consultation mechanisms.

At their worst, public meetings permit sanctioned isolation of agency actions and minimal policy changes (Cole & Caputo, 1984). At best, a single public meeting allows for very little to actually get accomplished. As Burby (2003, p. 36) suggests, "planners may often ignore the need for widespread participation or comply minimally with legislated participation requirements." Overall, years of the status quo have made "it increasingly obvious that the public hearing process often acts as a trigger for citizen frustration, anger and conflict," (Depoe et al., 2004, p. 29). Corroboration of this claim was not hard to find within the results of this thesis research.

Each of the planning professionals interviewed suggested that their best consultation experiences had involved a series of opportunities for soliciting input and sometimes these involved multiple formats as well. Similarly, the planners who participated in the online survey indicated that no single format possessed a monopoly on the staff hours that they had devoted to consultation in either 1991 or 2006. Prescribing a minimum number of public meetings should therefore be viewed as token gesture rather than a means to an end. Practical experience has shown that municipalities often exceed this minimum, and the literature (Burby, 2003; Innes & Booher, 2004; Kathlene & Martin, 1991), as well as the research displayed in Chapter Four, evidenced that neither planners nor the public continue to hold great faith in this mechanism.

Indeed, numerous government institutions have explored changes to address the five prominent limitations inherent to consultation strategies relying primarily on public meetings (Depoe et al., 2004, pp. 2-3):

1. Such public participation typically operates on technocratic models of rationality in which policymakers, administrative officials and experts see their role as one of educating and persuading the public about the legitimacy of their decisions

2. Such public participation often occurs too late in the decision-making process, sometimes even after the decisions have been made

3. Such public participation often follows an adversarial trajectory, especially when public participation processes are conducted in a "decide-announce-defend" mode on the part of officials

4. Such public participation often lacks adequate mechanisms and forums for informed dialogue among stakeholders

5. Such public participation often lacks adequate provisions to ensure that input gained makes a real impact on decision outcomes

These changes are inspired not only by a search for greater efficiency, but also by a desire to reduce the level of present and future conflicts. As Depoe et al. (2004, p. 14) note, "when conflict escalates at the local level, the anger and the skepticism produced in the heat and the aftermath often persist far beyond any action that may occur during the participation process." In response, agencies have begun looking for means to stay on better terms with their constituents and have found methods other than public meetings the most likely to accomplish such aims.

Secondly, the data to construct a catalog of previous consultation efforts in the development of Official Plans have been available since consultation became a requirement of the *Planning Act* in 1983. Depoe et al. (2004, p. 38) have suggested for some time that "participation exercises ought to be used to collect static pieces of information" that can guide future endeavours. However, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has failed to create such a database that could act as a resource for municipalities and provide information on the average attendance rates, costs and evaluations of certain consultation methods (Government of Ontario, 2006). For this reason, information such as the evaluation scores from citizens and planners, the dispersion of staff hours, and the likelihood and number of future consultation hours revealed in this thesis represents unnecessarily novel information.

Functional changes to this process can be affected through additional statutes and regulations to the *Planning Act* that would require a review and evaluation of consultation exercises (see Figure 5-1 and Appendix 14), as well as the development of a reference manual for municipal planning departments (see Appendix 15). The current statutes for conducting alternative consultation exercises should also be amended (see Figure 5-2) to enhance their status to the point where they can be employed in place of the mandatory public meeting process outlined in the *Planning Act*.

Consultation and public meeting

(15)(d) A formal review of all consultation exercise(s) conducted by the local planning authority in the development of the plan shall be submitted to the Minister within thirty (30) days of the completion of said exercise(s), or alternative procedures employed under paragraph 19.3, for approval under the terms of Regulation 544/07.

Figure 5-1: Proposed Amendment to the Planning Act to Conduct Formal Reviews

Alternative consultation methods permitted

(19.3)(a) Alternative methods approved by the Minister may be employed in lieu of the mandatory public meetings outlined in paragraph 17(15).

Figure 5-2: Proposed Amendment to the Planning Act to Equalize Alternate Methods

Evaluating municipal consultation exercises would provide the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing with a continuously updating database measuring the effectiveness and frequency of particular consultation formats. Such a database would put the consultation data from an entire province at the fingertips of municipal administrators, allowing them to employ sophisticated forms of *data mining*. Data mining, or the process of discovering meaningful, valid correlations by sifting through large amounts of data using pattern recognition and mathematical techniques (Larose, 2005; Mladenic et al., 2003), empowers municipalities by uncovering more effective patterns and trends from data that they already have (Larose, 2005). The capabilities of data

mining include estimation, prediction and clustering of data (Larose, 2005), and if conducted in concert with effective decision support methods, may lead to better performance in problem-solving efforts (Mladenic et al., 2003). More immediately, the study of such minute details as the number of participants, key comments, facility location and consultation timeframe that such a review would produce, could help to prepare a reference manual of best practices for municipal administrators (see Appendix 15) – a variant of industrial benchmarking that already receives strong support among planners (Seasons, 2003).

The application of such monitoring and evaluation procedures to planning processes could also help to align the objectives of a municipal planning department with the increasing concerns for efficiency, effectiveness and accessibility in local government (Seasons, 2003). To be effective administrators, planners need and desire the improved sense of outcomes and impacts from their actions, as well as a clearer definition of success and failure in specific contexts, that collecting and interpreting data on a regular basis can provide (Seasons, 2003). Evaluations thus present a combination of feedback to practitioners, a summary of program histories, and the information necessary to choose the best among several alternatives (Weiss, 1998).

To this point, both governments and academics have implicitly suggested that consultation is an initiative that can be conducted without an exceptional amount of forethought and expertise. Yet the data from this research prove otherwise. Both planners and the public have complex visions of what represents acceptable practice and outcome, as well as motivations for coming together to discuss planning issues. By rights then, government programs and legislation should help to assist their administrators in providing consultation strategies that can discover, and then meet, the objectives of all major parties.

5.2 Changes to the Scope, Location and Timing of Consultation

In addition to collecting information about various aspects and the overall quality of consultation exercises taking place across Ontario, the provincial government could also help their municipal administrators by acknowledging the findings of this research in terms of:

- participant motivations
- participant planning knowledge areas
- participant education levels

As the public focus group participants described in detail, planning issues must affect citizens directly before they will become motivated to attend a consultation exercise. And as the survey showed, residents are concerned primarily with a small area (see Figure 4-9) incorporating their residence, and become even less likely to exhibit concern over other geographic areas once they have invested some of their time providing input on a particular planning issue (see Figure 4-12). The results of the focus group further suggest that even those members of the public most willing to attend consultation exercises do not always have the level of planning education that planners might hope them to have when considering changes to policies on the basis of their comments.

However, the data from the surveys and the focus group do provide some insight on what might constrain the degree of change possible. Of the 170 survey participants who provided an estimate as to the number of hours that they would devote to future consultation exercises, 73 indicated that they would contribute two or fewer hours, and 126 suggested that they could be counted on for ten hours or less (see Figure 5-3). Thus, even in the best of hypothetical circumstances, the public prefers to be involved in processes that are quick and efficient. Further to increased speed and efficiency, the focus group participants suggested that they appreciate it when administrators and decision-makers come to speak to them directly.

Threshold of Devoted Future Consultation Hours
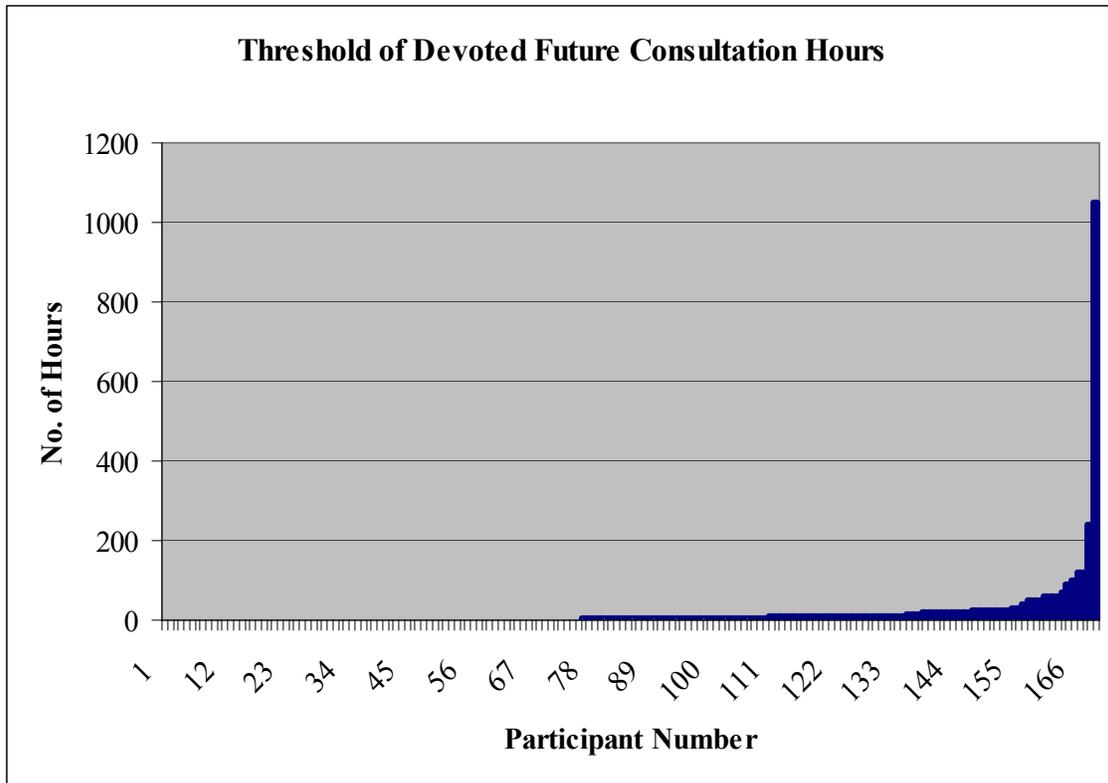
Figure 5-3: Participant Thresholds for Future Public Consultation Hours

All of these factors combine to suggest that another executable, and potentially more effective, approach to the inefficiencies facing consultation as it is currently practiced is to provide citizens with a more personal and anticipatory technique.

Making use of anticipatory techniques to achieve greater efficiency from scarce resources is of course not an entirely new concept. Anticipatory policies and exercises have been used widely in the field of human health throughout the 20th century and evaluated on the basis of cost-benefits, effectiveness and utility (Haddix et al., 1996). More recently, such policies have been applied to planning in the field of neighbourhood revitalization with the promise that it might prove more effective than damage control in blighted areas (Wright, 2001). Several municipalities in the United States have indeed found intervention earlier into the cycle of decline to be significantly more effective than targeting troubled areas (Wright, 2001). Earlier retardment of urban decline

also provides more fertile ground for engaging resident assets and implementing local strategic planning (Wright, 2001).

Anticipatory consultation would reverse the onus of getting involved from the citizen and place it on the municipal administrator to seek out public opinions. This approach would have planners devoting regular working week hours to visit and talk with residents at their own homes. Part of this process would also involve the distribution of questionnaires or surveys on hypothetical and current development proposals to gauge the level of public interest and range of opinions. The opportunity would also be used to distribute education materials and advertisements for formal consultation exercises. Ideally, planners would supplement this consultation and public outreach program with free or subsidized planning education seminars to reduce their concerns regarding the narrow interests and improper foundations of most public outcries (see Figure 4-26).

The scope of consultation exercises could further be reduced to a geographic level more in line with the knowledge areas of most citizens. As more than half of residents are knowledgeable of the planning issues for an area less than 3km^2 and more than 80% believe that they can discuss current developments for an area of up to 10km^2, it becomes logical that opportunities for formal consultation should be conducted at the level of the neighbourhood or electoral ward. However, in contradiction of the informally established planning practice in Ontario (see Figure 4-31), citizen engagement under the terms of *anticipatory consultation* would necessarily involve the public in determining how they would participate, and which educational and other resources would be necessary to augment the value and level of acceptance for their contributions (Depoe et al., 2004). The broader that such public involvement can occur, the greater the potential for planners to expand their understanding of local issues and to develop a stronger set of policies for dealing with them (Burby, 2003; Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000). Engaging citizens in

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this manner and at the most local level would provide additional incentive for political figures to get more involved in the consultation process – an important step for genuinely shared decision-making.

5.3 Changes to Attitudes and Viewpoints on Consultation

If desired, one can break down the complex question introduced earlier in this chapter into topic areas consisting of public participation thresholds, the unique needs of both major players, their evaluation paradigms, and the degree of consultation process efficiency. Making the assumption that *anticipatory consultation* and the establishment of a best practices manual will address the process efficiencies and participation thresholds, then all that remains to be investigated are the unique needs and evaluation paradigms of those involved in consultation. This means having a better appreciation of attitudes and attitude changes as they relate to both facets, but particularly to the latter. According to Burby (2003, p. 42), the four most important decisions with respect to participation that planners can make are:

1. the decision of which stakeholders to target;
2. the amount of information to provide to the stakeholders;
3. the decision to use citizen advisory committees, and;
4. the conscious decision to make determining citizen preferences a consultation priority

The final point on this list is particularly worth highlighting. According to Burby's (2003) work, planners are rewarded when they enter into consultation exercises with the specific expectation of deciphering the viewpoints of the other major players. Conversely, "when issues do not attract the interest of potential stakeholders, or do not otherwise receive adequate input, planners fail to benefit from local knowledge and the policies that they propose may seem irrelevant or harmful to those who are supposed to benefit," (Burby, 2003, p. 34). Often, these low-interest issues later provoke a gut reaction among constituents who find themselves attacking a *fait accompli*.

Tangibly, where stakeholder participation is low, the number of policies concerning the issue(s) will be high, whereas the depth of their implementation can be expected to be low (Laurian et al., 2004). Certainly, the comments from the public surveys and focus group testified to this claim. Numerous participants commented on the poor translation between their consultation input and the results on the ground. A generally negative attitude toward consultation, highlighted by the average evaluation score of 5.19, was thus produced among participants.

Studies have confirmed the importance of perceived control in determining the relationship between attitudes and behaviour (Ajzen, 1991, as cited in Aiken, 2002). Higher degrees of control lead to greater behavioural intentions and higher rates of action (Aiken, 2002). However, to reach such a state requires that the attitudes of each of the major players change perceptibly.

Attitudes may encompass affective, behavioural and cognitive responses to anything that a person discriminates or holds to mind (Aiken, 2002; Bohner & Wanke, 2002). Research has shown that experience based attitudes are among the most powerful determinants of future behaviour (Bohner & Wanke, 2002). Indeed, where there are gaps between attitude and behaviour, these can be best bridged by considering the strength of the attitudes (see Figure 5-4). And a vested interest in the attitude object is perhaps the most important dimension of attitude strength (Armitage & Conner, 2004).
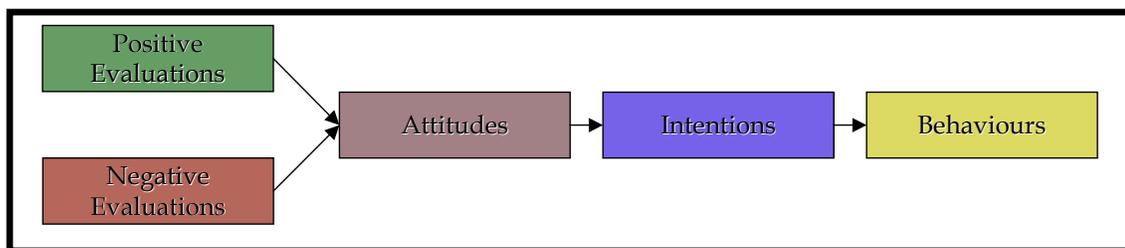
Figure 5-4: Relationship Between Evaluations, Attitudes and Behaviours (Armitage & Conner, 2004)

While personality traits affect attitude strength and consistency of behaviour among individuals, in general, a lack of feedback from experts will reduce the heuristic view that their opinions are the most valid available (Bohner & Wanke, 2002). Once again, the thesis research conducted confirms the point. Citizens who took part in the focus group not only spoke to the possession of a vested planning interest as a reason to participate (see Figure 4-28), but also lamented the lack of consultation feedback received from staff and council (see Figure 4-27). The best solutions to these concerns once again involve changes to the legislative planning requirements (see Figures 5-5 and 5-6).

Results must be provided

(19.5)(a) Within 15 days of completing the public meeting and/or open house as required under paragraphs 17(15) and (19.3), consultation results and affects to the municipal plan must be mailed to participants and presenters

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Figure 5-5: Proposed Amendment to the Planning Act to Provide Feedback

In Figure 5-5, the proposed amendment to the *Planning Act* would require municipal planning staff to mail the results of their consultations and the effect(s) of such efforts to their attendees. Again, as mentioned by the focus group participants, this information should be kept simple in order to improve the likelihood of it being received as factual and valuable (Bohner & Wanke, 2002).

Completing the feedback loop in this manner would also prescribe to one of the basic tenets of attitude formation – that people attempt to maintain consistency of their cognitive structures by seeking out information in line with their prevailing opinions (Bohner & Wanke, 2002). Thus, if citizens are consulted in a proactive, anticipatory manner, provided with good information over the course of the consultation exercises, and given a fair assessment of their input and the affect on policy, then they are more likely to take the opinions of the experts as genuine (Bohner &

Wanke, 2002; Innes, 1996) and initiate more like behaviour (Aiken, 2002; Bohner & Wanke, 2002).

Similarly, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing should encourage municipalities to create consultation advertisements similar to the one shown in Figure 5-6, emphasizing the social desirability and local aspects of the participation exercise.

Figure 5-6: Proposed Consultation Advertisement

Though the appeal may seem a rather obvious one, such verbiage has been statistically proven to work. Where people find behaviours to be socially desirable and are similarly motivated to think about the social impression that they are making, then they are more likely to follow through with said behaviour (Baston, Ahmad & Tsang, 2002; Bohner & Wanke, 2002). The key is to make the behaviour socially desirable in the first place (Iannacone & Everton, 2004).

One might argue that the focus of such measures have been disproportionately focused on the needs and paradigms of the citizen rather than the planner. However, it must be remembered that the better part of planning practice is based on planning theory assimilated through daily process

(Campbell & Fainstein, 1996). In other words, as the concept of *anticipatory consultation* gains a foothold as accepted theory, then it will begin to mold its way into the paradigms of planners as they go about their practice.

Furthermore, the needs of planners and of the public are interlinked in so many ways. A more inclusive process, from preparation to implementation, not only benefits planners by providing them with insights that they might not otherwise have access to (Burby, 2003; King, Fetley & O'Neill-Susel, 1998; Walters Aydelotte & Miller, 2000), but it also provides citizens with a means to shape the future of the world around them (Halvorsen, 2003).

5.4 Summary of Recommendations

The research from this thesis has cemented the fact that planners and the public are not on the same page when it comes to consultation. Planners generally concern themselves with providing an adequate process to solicit input while citizens tend to evaluate consultation in terms of the extent to which their comments will affect outcomes.

Overall, the findings left subtopic areas of participation thresholds, process efficiency, evaluation paradigms and the unique needs of both major players to be addressed. In this chapter, a number of legislative changes have been recommended that would approach the constraints inherent to each of these topic areas in an entirely new fashion.

Chief among these changes is the switch to anticipatory forms of consultation. In recognition of the limited time that most citizens are able/willing to devote, *anticipatory consultation* reverses the onus and engages the public at their own doorsteps in order to determine public sentiment on certain planning issues before they turn messy. Supplemented by legislative changes designed to

produce best practices from current data and complete the feedback loop with participants, such changes have the possibility of entrenching a new attitude toward consultation for each of the major players. Importantly, rather than recommending more consultation, each of the advocated solutions proposes a method in which current efforts can be made more efficient – the greatest need for this planning field identified by practical experience (see Chapter 1).

5.5 Areas for Future Research

Though most, if not all, of the recommendations made in this chapter can be affected at once to the general benefit of the planning system with few consequences, there remain a considerable number of areas to which additional research should be devoted.

First of all, one of the key arguments made in Chapter 1 suggested that the sizable majority of consultation exercises involve an interface between planners and citizens only. General planning practice in Ontario thus makes the assumption that citizens must provide their comments to planners who then funnel them into reports that the applicable politicians may or may not accept.

However, such unwritten practice diminishes the importance of political figures in the process, who should share an equal role in the planning triangle (see Figure 5-7).

Future research in this field should therefore include politicians as one of the key cohorts from which more information is needed to develop effective and efficient consultation techniques.
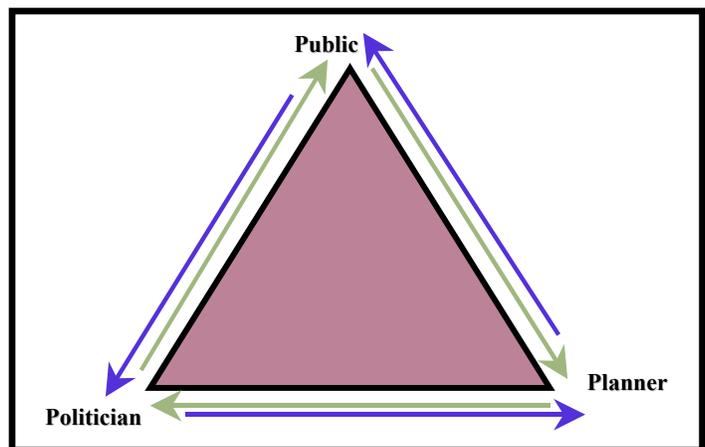
Figure 5-7: The Six-Sided Triangle of Planning Participation (Hodge, 1998)

Comprising a focus group of politicians, planners and citizens may prove the best forum possible for a true debate of the necessary actions and objectives involved in consultation. Many questionnaire respondents, and more noticeably, each of the public focus group participants, cited a need for their elected representatives to meet with them regularly about planning issues and provide proper feedback after making decisions.

Secondly, to balance the need for a high response with appropriate data collection, many of the questions posed to the public failed to probe their reactions to specific techniques in the same manner as was done in the online questionnaire to planners. However, opinion on this subject is still highly valuable and should be deciphered by researchers until the recommended changes to consultation evaluations proposed earlier in the chapter can be implemented. This data could be captured by means of municipal case studies and enhanced by measures designed to educate the public about the planning process.

Finally, certain pieces of data produced in this thesis are of potential value to municipalities and should be confirmed by future research to hasten their acceptance within the professional and academic communities. Central among these are the conclusions made regarding the geographic capacity of residents. The parameters of the map provided in the questionnaire lead one to ask whether or not the same results would arise from a diagram that extended beyond the municipal boundaries. Until such an activity is conducted and analyzed, it is difficult to know if citizens are merely humble and therefore generally highlight less than 10% of any area given, or if they truly are cognizant of planning issues for an average of approximately 12km^2.

5.6 Final Conclusions

This thesis began with an assessment of current planning consultation efforts and determined them to have particular inefficiencies in meeting the expectations of both of the major players in the process. Reviewing the applicable literature served to confirm that astonishingly little effort has been made to decipher and represent the views of planners and the public in this interactive planning element. In place, academics have offered myriad normative theories and concepts, divided by and large in terms of those pertaining to consultation processes or outcomes.

In order to address the uncovered knowledge gaps, a series of questionnaires, focus groups and interviews were designed to isolate the traits collectively possessed by each of the major players as well as the factors influencing consultation design. The deductive, mixed-methods approach made triangulating the data a viable possibility.

In the end, the results showed that planners and the public are not on the same page with respect to consultation exercises. Much in the same way as the literature could be divided along the lines of process and outcome, so too could the major consultation players in terms of their perspective on this mandated planning element. The majority of citizens are apt to concern themselves with consultation outcomes, while planners appear satisfied in preparing an adequate input process.

From such findings, it is the recommendation of this thesis that planning legislation should be altered to enable alternate, and generally more anticipatory, forms of consultation to become the principal means of engaging citizens. Such a change in philosophy would prove more successful if supplemented by efforts to evaluate satisfaction levels with various techniques, and if rounded out by a universal commitment to complete the decision feedback loop.

The ability to make consultation a much more efficient part of the planning process should thus be considered within the mutual grasp of its major players.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Cover Letter and Door-to-Door Questionnaire for Town of Pelham Residents

February 17, 2006

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Stephen Utz and I am a resident of Pelham working on a Master's Degree in Planning at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Dr. Robert Shipley.

Over the next few months, I will be conducting research on municipal planning consultation. The purpose of this research is to understand which issues are most important and which consultation methods are most preferred. Your assistance in completing a five-minute survey for this research would be greatly appreciated.

The survey questions are quite general and will ask you to evaluate previous consultation exercises where applicable and provide the amount of time available for current methods. You will not be asked for your name, income or any other identifying information. All data from this project will grouped with that of other participants and kept indefinitely in a locked cabinet.

I plan to visit your residence sometime between February 20 and March 20, 2006 during the hours of 3pm and 7pm. If you are not home or unable to complete the survey at that time, I will leave all survey materials in your mailbox along with a stamped envelope.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please feel free to call Stephen Utz at (519)-888-4567, ext. 6921 or Dr. Robert Shipley at (519)-888-4567, ext. 5615.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance from the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision to participate is yours. Should you have comments or concerns resulting from your participation, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at (519)-888-4567, ext. 6005.

Thank you in advance for your interest in this project.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Utz
School of Planning
University of Waterloo
(519)-888-4567, ext. 6921
sutz@fes.uwaterloo.ca

March 15, 2006

Dear Sir or Madam,

Please allow me to introduce myself, my name is Stephen Utz and I am a resident of Pelham working on a Master's Degree in Planning at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Dr. Robert Shipley. Over the next few months, I will be conducting research on municipal planning consultation to better understand which issues are most important, and which consultation methods are most preferred.

As you may know, the Town of Pelham is currently reviewing its Official Plan. This document outlines the growth strategy for the municipality for the next twenty years.

The province requires that municipalities consult with residents on their Official Plans. However, the most effective models for consultation have yet to be determined. Your assistance may prove helpful to planners and politicians by identifying which issues (i.e. residential development, recreation) are most important as well as how often and by which means (i.e. meetings, phone surveys) you would like to be consulted.

Please note that this is an independent study which has received approval from the Town of Pelham Planning Department. It is not sponsored by the Town of Pelham.

Participation in this study is voluntary, anonymous and would involve the completion of the enclosed five-minute questionnaire that can be returned in the postage-paid envelope provided. You may choose not to answer any question. All information you provide will be considered confidential, grouped with other responses and retained indefinitely in a secure location. There are no known risks associated with your participation.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to call Stephen Utz at (519)-888-4567, ext. 6921 or Dr. Robert Shipley at (519)-888-4567, ext. 5615. An executive summary of the results can be obtained after June 1, 2006 by e-mailing Stephen Utz at sutz@fes.uwaterloo.ca

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance from the Office of Research Ethics. Should you have comments or concerns resulting from your participation, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes at (519)-888-4567, ext. 6005.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Stephen Utz
School of Planning
University of Waterloo
(519)-888-4567, ext. 6921
sutz@fes.uwaterloo.ca

1. Please select the box that identifies the number of years that you have lived in the Town of Pelham:

    ☐ < 1   ☐ 1-5   ☐ 6-10

    ☐ 11-20   ☐ 21-30   ☐ 31+

2. Have you ever attended a public meeting for a planning proposal in the Town of Pelham? (*Please select the appropriate blank*)

    _____ Yes   _____ No (*please proceed directly to question four*)

3. If **yes**, please evaluate your experience on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the *least effective* (*unsatisfactory*) and 10 being the *most effective* (*satisfactory*):

4. Please place a dot on the map of the Town of Pelham provided to indicate the location of your residence and shade in the areas for which you feel highly competent to discuss planning issues (*see page two*).

5. Please indicate the average number of hours that citizens that you know would be willing to devote to consultation on an Official Plan for the Town of Pelham:

6. Please provide any additional comments that you might have about public consultation:

    _____

    _____

    _____

Appendix 2: Cover Letter and Online Questionnaire for Professional Planners in Ontario

Improving Public Consultation Measures at the Municipal Level

You are invited to complete a web-survey as part of a research study that evaluates the relationship between using various public consultation formats and the development of appropriate public policy. We are asking for your participation in this study to help us reach conclusions on this important planning issue.

To participate in this survey, you should have had experience as a planner or planning consultant and been involved in at least one municipal consultation exercise. The questions of this survey ask for both a qualitative and quantitative description of previous planning exercises in which you have been involved. It is anticipated that the results of these questions will help identify the characteristics that will lead to a more successful model for consultation.

The web-survey takes approximately ten minutes and is designed to be completed online. Should this format cause a problem, please contact the student investigator Stephen Utz at sutz@fes.uwaterloo.ca to make alternative arrangements.

At no time will you be asked for your name or that of your company or municipality. You may decline to answer any question and withdraw at any time. All responses will be grouped with those from other respondents and summarized such that no individual could be identified. All responses will remain confidential.

The data collected from this study will be accessed only by the three researchers named below and will be maintained on a password-protected computer database in a locked office. The electronic data will be removed after August 2006 and a hard copy will remain with the student researcher in a locked cabinet.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Susan Sykes of the Office of Research Ethics at (519)-888-4567, ext. 6005 or via email at ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

Should you have any questions about the study, please contact either Stephen Utz or Dr. Robert Shipley. Contact Stephen Utz (sutz@fes.uwaterloo.ca) after June 1, 2006 for an executive summary of the study results.

Faculty Investigators:	Dr. Robert Shipley	Dr. Mark Seasons
	School of Planning	School of Planning
	(519)-888-4567, ext. 5615	(519)-888-4567, ext. 5922
	rshipley@fes.uwaterloo.ca	mseasons@fes.uwaterloo.ca
Student Investigator:	Stephen Utz	
	School of Planning	
	(519)-888-4567, ext. 6921	
	sutz@fes.uwaterloo.ca	

Public Consultation on Planning Issues
Evaluation of Current Practices for Public Participation

1. Please select the box that indicates the number of years of experience that you have in the planning profession:

   ☐ < 1   ☐ 1-5   ☐ 6-10

   ☐ 11-20   ☐ 21-30   ☐ 31+

2. To a total of 100%, please indicate the approximate breakdown (in terms of staff hours) for each of the following consultation techniques that your municipality or firm employs in the development or review of Official Plans:

% Used	Technique	% Used	Technique	% Used	Technique
	Public Meetings		Citizen Panels		Informal Interviews
	Surveys		Focus Groups		Stakeholder Meetings
	Collaborations		Workshops		Opinion Polls
	Task Forces		Other Methods (*describe*)_____		

3. Please provide what it means to have *effective public consultation* in your own words.

_____

_____

4. Please rank the following consultation methods against each other based on their ability to help achieve your definition of *effective public consultation*. Write "N/A" for "Not Applicable" where necessary.

Method	Relative Ranking
Public Meetings	
Surveys	
Collaborations	
Task Forces	
Citizens' Panels	
Workshops	
Informal Interviews	
Stakeholder Meetings	
Opinion Polls	
Other: ( )	

5. Please indicate, on a scale from **1** to **10** – with **1** representing "highly ineffective consultation" and **10** representing "highly effective consultation" – the overall rate of effectiveness that you perceive your (combination of) method(s) to have:

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

6. Please indicate, on a scale between **1** and **10** – with **1** representing "highly ineffective consultation" and **10** representing "highly effective consultation" – the overall rate of effectiveness that you perceive the public has of the (combination of) method(s) that your firm or municipality employs:

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

7. Please provide any particular comments that you may have on your most positive consultation experience and the reason(s) you attribute for its success:

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

8. Please provide any particular comments that you may have on your most negative consultation experience and the reason(s) you attribute for its result:

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

9. Please provide your comments on any perceived limitations to achieving good planning through consultation:

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

Appendix 3: Cover Letter and Proposed Questions for Key Planner Interviews

June 13, 2006

Dear Mr. Local Planning Consultant,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Stephen Utz and I am a graduate student in the School of Planning at the University of Waterloo.

I have contacted you today to ask you to consider participating in an interview regarding public consultation mechanisms employed by your firm or municipality.

Over the past three months I have conducted surveys of citizens and planners to gain a clearer understanding of the aims and expectations held by each group for consultation. I believe that your experience as a planner will help me to explain trends and observations noted to date.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of up to thirty minutes to take place at a location convenient for you. I will send you the questions in advance and you may decline to answer any question. You may decide to withdraw at any time.

With your permission, I will take notes during the interview and send you a copy of the transcript to provide you with an opportunity to confirm your remarks.

All information that you provide will be considered completely confidential and neither your name nor that of your firm or municipality will appear in the thesis. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be kept confidential. It will be retained indefinitely in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researchers. There are no known or anticipated risks for participation.

If you would like to participate in this study or have any questions regarding its purpose, please reply to this e-mail or contact Stephen Utz at (519)-888-4567, ext. 6921.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of the Office of Research Ethics at (519)-888-4567, ext. 6005.

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you for considering participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Stephen Utz, M.E.S. Candidate
School of Planning
University of Waterloo
(519)-888-4567, ext. 6921
sutz@fes.uwaterloo.ca

Public Consultation on Planning Issues
Evaluation of Current Practices for Public Participation

---

1. What has been your best public consultation experience to date and to what do you attribute its success?

Consider:
- For what type of planning exercise was the consultation conducted?
- How many people were involved?
- Why was it positive?
- What factors appear to have altered the experience?

---

2. What has been your worst public consultation experience to date and what do you perceive as the reasons for it?

Consider:
- For what type of planning exercise was the consultation conducted?
- How many people were involved?
- Why was it more negative than other experiences?
- What factors appear to have altered the experience?

---

3. What do you see as the skills that a planner needs in order to bring together various groups for meaningful consultation under current municipal political frameworks?

Consider:
- Are there skills that can only be learned through experience over many consultations?
- Are certain attributes necessary to successfully engaging in consultation innate?
- What are these attributes?

---

4. How would you rate the effectiveness of your most recent public consultation framework or meeting?

Also:
- How would you define effectiveness for a consultation exercise?
- How might you rate this effectiveness as compared to other parts of the planning profession (i.e. versus completing a subdivision approval or a brownfield project)?

5. What do you believe are the indicators that demonstrate if a consultation exercise has been effective or not?

Consider:
- What might you use as evidence that these indicators are correct?

6. Was the public involved in deciding the mechanism for consultation? Why or why not?

Also:
- If so, how were they involved?
- If not, was there any kickback as part of the subsequent consultation steps?

7. Is there a particular number, or a range of people that you believe need to be involved in a particular meeting or consultation framework for it to be successful?

Consider:
- What does a successful consultation look like?

8. Is there a type of consultation method that you believe works best for particular consultation scenarios (i.e. zoning change versus Official Plan review)?

Consider:
- Why might there be a difference, if any?

9a. What do you see as the maximum benefits of consultation?

9b. What do you see as the maximum detriments of consultation?

*10. Presently, the **Planning Act** requires at least one meeting for consultation with the public before adoption of an Official Plan. Please provide your thoughts on the value of this requirement to the work that planners try to accomplish.*

Consider:
- Is this requirement reasonable and/or valuable?
- Is it either too loose or too stringent?
- How does this requirement relate to your firm or municipality's practices?
- How does this requirement relate to best practices of which you are aware?

Appendix 4: Cover Letter to Focus Group Participants and Proposed Questions

June 15, 2006

Dear Sir or Madam,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Stephen Utz and I am a Fonthill resident and University of Waterloo planning student in need of your help.

In March and April of this year, I conducted a survey of 471 Pelham households to determine how often, and for which areas, citizens would like to be involved in planning issues. Now, I am trying to better understand how and when this consultation should occur.

It is here that I could use your help. On July 15, 2006, I will be conducting a focus group on this aspect of planning consultation from 9:00am to 12:00pm at the Fonthill library. It is my privilege to invite you to share your thoughts on this topic and participate in the discussion.

Should you decide to join us on July 15th, you will be compensated for your role in this important research with a $30.00 gift package from a local business or the UW Shop.

To participate, simply fill in the form on the next page and return it in the postage paid envelope provided no later than July 8, 2006. I will call to confirm your place in the group upon receipt of your RSVP.

This study has received ethical clearance from the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Should you have any questions regarding the ethical implications or content of this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes at (519)-888-4567, ext. 6005.

For further information on this study, please visit the following website or contact Stephen Utz in one of the manners provided:

www.geocities.com/steve_utz/urbanplanning.html

Thank you for considering the request to be part of this important research.

Sincerely,

Stephen Utz
M.E.S. Candidate
School of Planning
University of Waterloo
(519)-888-4567, ext. 6921
sutz@fes.uwaterloo.ca

Focus Group on Planning Consultation

Date: Saturday, July 15, 2006

Time: 9:00am – 12:00pm

Location: Pelham Library, Fonthill Branch
43 Pelham Town Square
(Festival Room)

Please check the appropriate box and return this form in the envelope provided:

☐   **Yes,** please add _____ to your list of participants
                        (insert participant name)

☐   **No thank you,** I am unavailable to participate at this time

Comments/Questions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for considering the request to participate in this important research.

Theme #1: Planning Issues of Relevance (40 minutes)

Q.1 – How do you describe the Town of Pelham to visitors or friends from out of town?

Q.2 – What would you like to see the Town of Pelham look like in twenty years time?

Q.3 – What types of items or issues do you believe the Town of Pelham should not engage in without extensive consultation?

Q.4 – What do you see as the single greatest issue facing the Town of Pelham today?

Theme #2: Roles and Means of Planning Education (30 minutes)

Q.1 – How much of the information provided in the background packages represented new information to you? What, if anything, did you learn from the package?

Q.2 – What value do you place on planning education in order to participate?

Q.3 – What medium do you believe best to provide information that would educate you on planning issues (*note: Town of Pelham has weekly education article in newspaper*)?

Theme #3: Establishing a Contract for Participation (40 minutes)

Q.1 – What traits and/or actions do you believe that you should reasonably expect to receive from planning staff when it comes to consultation?

Q.2 – What do you believe that planning staff should be reasonably expect from the public when it comes to consultation?

Q.3 – How would you describe the ideal consultation mechanism? (*Alternate:* If you had to describe the ideal consultation mechanism as an object, what would it be and why?)

Q.4 – What would be one element that you would make sure was involved in any consultation mechanism used in future (*what is the lynchpin to consultation success*)?

Theme #4: Motivations/Opportunity Costs for Participation (20 minutes)

Q.1 – What do you believe might motivate you to participate in planning decisions?

Q.2 – How do the demands of your daily life affect your ability to participate?

Appendix 5: Academic and Technique Rationales for Questionnaire to the Public

1. Please select the box that identifies how many years you have lived in the Town of Pelham:

☐ < 1   ☐ 1-5   ☐ 6-10

☐ 11-20   ☐ 21-30   ☐ 31+

Academic Rationale
Evan Berman (1997) has suggested that citizens value an on-going attitude of help and assistance from city hall. The feelings of cynicism and trust are equally rooted in the management of government-citizen relations.
Clary and Snyder (2002) suggest that a significant majority of American adults have favourable attitudes toward community service. However, these same attitudes do not necessarily translate into action.
Stukas and Dunlap (2002) suggest that people sometimes become more involved in their community to see themselves – or to be seen – as caring and responsible people.
Technique Rationale
Trochim (2005) suggests that surveys should be designed to place easy and non-threatening questions near the beginning.
Del Balso and Lewis (2001) as well as Gray and Guppy (1999) suggest that close-ended questions are generally preferable because they place less demand on the respondent. However, for this to be true, the answer ranges provided must be exhaustive (Del Balso and Lewis, 2001).

2. Have you ever attended a public meeting for a planning proposal in the Town of Pelham? (*Please select the appropriate blank*)

_____ Yes   _____ No (*please proceed directly to question four*)

Academic Rationale
King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) find that the desire for participation is strong and that participants recognize its importance.
Halvorsen (2003) concludes that past exposure to quality meetings are positively associated with believing in the value of other voices. Multiple exposures can make significant changes to participants' beliefs (2003).
Thomas (1995) suggests that the number of participants and their level of organization should help determine the consultation mechanism.
Technique Rationale
Sudman and Burnham (1982) note that a clear convention must be established for participants to handle questions that do not apply (i.e. shading and arrow). If a filter question is used, it should come as close as possible to the branching question that depends on it.

3. If **yes**, please evaluate your experience on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the *least effective* (*unsatisfactory*) and 10 being the *most effective* (*satisfactory*):

Academic Rationale
Innes and Booher (2004) worry that current consultation techniques often antagonize the members of the public who try to work through the established methods.
Halvorsen (2003) notes that satisfying participation which meets the goals of participants is also likely to increase their sense of responsiveness from the public agency. However, a history of participation with no visible impact on decisions can be worse than no participation at all.
King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) are concerned that citizens are rendered apathetic by vacuous efforts to stimulate participation.
Shipley, Feick, Hall and Earley (2004) found that almost 40% of citizens involved in regional visioning exercises believed that their involvement would have little or very little effect on future decision-making.
Technique Rationale
Gray and Guppy (1999) note that response values can be compared if respondents understand the questions and answer choices in the same way.

4. Please place a dot on the map of the Town of Pelham provided to indicate the location of your residence and shade in the areas for which you feel highly competent to discuss planning issues.

(*Map provided on a separate page in the questionnaire*)

Academic Rationale
Chaskin and Garg (1997) suggest that citizens view the geographic world around them in terms of mental maps of heightened understanding. An individual is more likely to perceive the immediate neighbourhoods surround their place of residence and/or work as part of their actual realm than other – possibly closer – locations.
Matthews (1994) suggests that public officials view the public as uninterested in policy decision-making. Fischer (1995) and Rein (1976) note concern that the public is more often pursuing self-interest rather than public interest.
Technique Rationale
Del Balso and Lewis (2001) conclude that the respondent must be competent to answer the question presented in order for it to have relevance.

5. In light of some of the issues and methods, please indicate the average number of hours that citizens that you know would be willing to devote to consultation on an Official Plan for the Town of Pelham:

```


```

Academic Rationale
Iannacone and Everton (2004) forward the notion that the logic of market economics shapes patterns of attendance for events of civic duty. Since the choice to attend works *at the margin*, attendance is actually more closely linked to opportunity cost than to variation in beliefs, concerns or commitments.
King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) found that many people express a desire to participate more fully in their communities but are unable to do so because of their daily commitments. It is a constant challenge to get younger citizens to participate.
Technique Rationale
Trochim (2005) warns researchers that most people do not passively participate in a research project, but guess at its real purpose. Since they are also anxious about being judged adversely, they may alter their performance or responses. He (2005) also suggests that a researcher can work around certain sensitive or difficult questions by phrasing them in terms of a *hypothetical projective respondent*.

6. Please provide any additional comments that you might have about public consultation:

_____

_____

_____

Academic Rationale
Asch (1956) suggests that conformity pressures may lead participants to adjust their contributions to match those of others.
Agar and MacDonald (1995) conclude that silence can be as telling as discussion itself.
Forester (1994) elucidates that in public meetings, planners have to probe, rather than take literally, the many meanings of initially expressed *interests* and claims regarding *community welfare*.
Technique Rationale
Del Balso and Lewis (2001) outline the need to provide participants the opportunity to provide complex answers in their own words. Since these types of responses often take time to complete, they are generally placed near the end.

Appendix 6: Academic and Technique Rationales for Questionnaire to Planners

1. Please select the box that indicates the number of years of experience that you have in the planning profession:

☐ < 1 ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10

☐ 11-20 ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31+

Academic Rationale
Altshuler (1965) suggested that comprehensive plans require more knowledge than any individual (i.e. planner) can grasp.
Innes (1996) believes that planners may come to understand their role in a new way – to see themselves as active facilitators and mediators of public voice. Planners have substantial legitimacy among consultation participants, who respected them for their contributions, even when they had criticisms.
King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) found that some administrators believe that greater citizen participation increases inefficiency because it creates delays and red tape. Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000) agree, observing that many policy analysts and decision-makers shun broader participation due to additional cost, uncertainty and delay.

Technique Rationale
Del Balso and Lewis (2001) note that close-ended questions are generally preferable because they are easier to administer and analyze. Gray and Guppy (1999) agree, suggesting that respondent must also be easily capable of answering the question, which places less demand on them.

2. To a total of 100%, please indicate the approximate breakdown (in terms of staff hours) for each of the following consultation techniques that your municipality or firm employs in the development or review of Official Plans:

% Used	Technique	% Used	Technique	% Used	Technique
	Public Meetings		Citizen Panels		Informal Interviews
	Surveys		Focus Groups		Stakeholder Meetings
	Collaborations		Workshops		Opinion Polls
	Task Forces		Other Methods (*describe*)_____		

Academic Rationale
Kathlene and Martin (1991) proclaim that public hearings do not work. They further suggest that low attendance at these meetings is often interpreted as public apathy or silent approval of the status quo.
Berman (1997) argues that cities which foster positive citizen attitudes through a variety of participation strategies experience less cynicism than those which do not.
Innes (1996) concludes that municipalities seldom use other methods because public hearings are the accepted form of plan review and because state laws mandate procedures for involvement with planning commissions.
Technique Rationale
Fowler Jr. (1993) notes that ratio data is a type of measurement that allows responses to be compared against each other.

3. Please provide what it means to have *effective public consultation* in your own words.

_____

_____

Academic Rationale
Campbell and Fainstein (1996) recognize that planners need to generalize from experience to practice their craft. Generally this means that planners rely on intuition more than explicit theory – yet this intuition may in fact be assimilated theory. However, the authors (1996) also recognize that no single paradigm defines the foundation of planning. Planners continue to debate whether there is a single public interest to serve.
Weiss (1998) informs us that evaluation provides data on what a program accomplishes and fails to accomplish, thereby clarifying trade-offs for decision-makers.
Technique Rationale
Bateson (1984) states that questions which ask respondents to state their opinions do not provide the opportunity for comparison to other opinion responses.
Gray and Guppy (1999) and Trochim (2005) note that biased questions can lead to systematic measurement error and compromise the validity of the survey instrument.

4. Please rank the following consultation methods against each other based on their ability to help achieve your definition of *effective public consultation*. Write "N/A" for "Not Applicable" where necessary.

Method	Relative Ranking
Public Meetings	
Surveys	
Collaborations	
Task Forces	
Citizens' Panels	
Workshops	
Informal Interviews	
Stakeholder Meetings	
Opinion Polls	
Other: ( )	

Academic Rationale

Berman (1997) finds that cities can foster positive citizen attitudes by employing multiple strategies for participation.

Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000) suggest that decision-makers must appropriately tie the consultation strategy to the objectives in order to be effective.

Homenuck (1993) warns of the prospect of stakeholder or political groups using the consultation format in order to grandstand for the media.

Technique Rationale

Del Balso and Lewis (2001) conclude that the ordinal level of measurement permits the researcher to count how many responses are in each category and to rank them.

5. Please indicate, on a scale from 1 to 10 – with 1 representing "highly ineffective consultation" and 10 representing "highly effective consultation" – the overall rate of effectiveness that you perceive the (combination of) method(s) to have:

  1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Academic Rationale

Forester (1994) asserts that advocacy planning is virtually mandated whenever planners wish to promote anything more than deceptive or manipulative participation. However, Sager (1994) contends that this type of influence on behalf of marginalized groups can divert them from more efficient forms of action.

Altshuler (1965) suggests that the planner's only claim to legitimacy is that they are experts who know and measure the public interest. Paradoxically, it is difficult to get genuine debate on a comprehensive plan – yet equally essential for it to be held in universal esteem.

Technique Rationale

Gray and Guppy (1999) indicate that the opportunity for systematic comparison is available provided that respondents understand questions and answer choices in the same way. They (1999) also suggest that fewer, positive scale numbers are preferable.

6. Please indicate, on a scale between **1** and **10** – with **1** representing "highly ineffective consultation" and **10** representing "highly effective consultation" – the overall rate of effectiveness that you perceive the public has of the (combination of) method(s) that your firm or municipality employs:

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Academic Rationale
King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) found through focus groups that most consultation participants find consultation techniques to be generally inadequate.
Halvorsen (2003) discovered that good quality participation is satisfying to participants and contributes positively to effective decision-making.
Innes and Booher (2004) assert that the traditional methods of public participation do not work because they fail to provide adequate information to public officials, because they do not make a difference on their actions and because they fail to satisfy the public.
Technique Rationale
The opportunity for the systematic comparison of responses outlined by Gray and Guppy (1999) is once again available. However, as Del Balso and Lewis (2001) highlight, the repetitive wording of these questions may influence the respondent toward providing identical answers.

7. Please provide any particular comments that you may have on your most positive consultation experience and the reason(s) you attribute for its success:

Academic Rationale
King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) purport that citizens are more likely to trust experts if participation is sought at the first level of the decision-making process.
Gray (1989) finds that participants directly responsible for reaching agreement on a solution are more likely to perceive *joint ownership*, engage more fully and achieve a greater level of satisfaction.
Technique Rationale
Del Balso and Lewis (2001) note that open-ended questions allow respondents to provide answers in their own words and state whatever they consider to be important. Gray and Guppy (1999) confirm that these types of questions allow people to develop their answers and provide full expression.

8. Please provide any particular comments that you may have on your most negative consultation experience and the reason(s) you attribute for its result:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Academic Rationale
Forester (1994) acknowledges that planners work in the reality of contentious meetings, where substance competes with exaggeration and careful listening with presumption. He (1994) allows that public debate is at the very heart of democratic politics but that it is also messy, emotional, ambiguous and unpredictable.
Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000) note that ill-structured issues are those which require the most care by decision-makers seeking public involvement.
Friedmann (1987) believes that policy analysis has no distinctive philosophical position. Therefore, when challenged, planners are likely to reply that it is better to arrive at decisions through an imperfect (but perfectible) science than through a process of unmediated politics that is subject to personal whim, fickle passion and special interest.
Technique Rationale
The open-ended question format remains because the purpose of this question parallels that of question seven.

9. Please provide your comments on any perceived limitations to achieving good planning through consultation:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Academic Rationale
King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) contend that the context of authentic participation is very different from that of conventional participation. In their opinion, authentic participation places the citizen next to the issue and the administrative structures furthest away. However, the administrator/planner is still the bridge between the two.
The City of Ottawa (2003b) conceded that it found it necessary to eliminate or run contrary to a strategic direction outlined by its consultation processes for 55 of 105 identified municipal services.
Technique Rationale
Full expression from the respondents is again necessary in this case in order to fully benefit from his/her professional experience.

Appendix 7: Academic Rationales for Interview Questions of Key Planners

Q.1 - What has been your best public consultation experience to date and to what do you attribute its success?

Q.2 - What has been your worst public consultation experience to date and what do you perceive as the reasons for it?

The first two questions ask the interview participant to share their experiences from both ends of the continuum of success as well as attempt to explain them. It has been well documented by academia that it is not always easy to consult with the public on planning issues.

Nonetheless, Berman (1997) has suggested that a variety of consultation techniques are necessary for citizen engagement to be effective while authors such as Gray (1989) and Innes (1996) have advocated collaboration and consensus building respectively as near ideal solutions. Meanwhile, Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000) and the International Association for Public Participation (2005) have suggested that the style of the technique to be used should vary based on the purpose for citizen involvement.

Regrettably, none of these authors have cited interviews with planners or other frontline bureaucrats in the formulation of their normative theories or opinions. Therefore, these two questions as posed to experienced planners can help to bridge this gap.

Q.3 - What do you see as the skills that a planner has to have in order to bring together various groups for meaningful consultation under current municipal political frameworks?

King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) found that the desire of citizens to participate in consultation mechanisms is strong but hampered by heavily controlled formats and the demands of their everyday lifestyles. Therefore they (1998) proposed a model for participation that moves the administrator away from reliance on technical expertise and toward *meaningful participatory processes*. In order to accomplish this, they (1998) suggest that public administrators need to be trained in the skills of communication, listening, team building, meeting facilitation and self-knowledge.

Interestingly, Innes (1996) has found that planners have substantial legitimacy among consultation participants. Members of the public generally respect them – even when they have criticisms. The question as proposed identifies which skills necessary for planners to gain this.

Q.4 - How would you rate the effectiveness of your most recent public consultation framework or meeting?

Q.5 - What do you believe are the indicators that demonstrate if a consultation exercise has been effective or not?

Presently, the *Planning Act of Ontario* does not require that the results or comments from a public meeting for an Official Plan be made public. It similarly does not require that planners take universal or other identified steps to evaluate their means for engaging citizens. This is

perhaps unfortunate, because as Weiss (1998) argues, evaluation can contribute to organizational learning. This type of learning is exciting because it can puncture old myths and set about the process for a reordering of priorities.

It is therefore held that these questions – in conjunction with numbers five and six from the online questionnaire to planners – have the potential to start the process of reordering priorities.

Q. 6 - Was the public involved in deciding the mechanism for consultation? Why or why not?

Both King, Fetley and O'Neill-Susel (1998) as well as Shipley, Feick, Hall and Earley (2004) found that consultation participants generally believe that consultation exercises are either confining or will have very little impact on future decision-making.

One possible means to address those issues would be to involve the public in the process of choosing the consultation format. Therefore, it would be interesting to determine from the interview participants if this is already part of established practice, as the law does not require it.

Q.7 - Is there a particular number, or a range of people that you believe need to be involved in a particular meeting or consultation framework for it to be successful?

The seventh question essentially asks the respondents to consider what a successful consultation exercise would look like. Again, because many authors such as Berman (1997), Gray (1989) and Innes (1996) have described their ideal consultation state, it may prove interesting to discover what actual practitioners consider appropriate.

Q.8 - Is there a type of consultation method that you believe works best for particular consultation scenarios (i.e. zoning change versus Official Plan review)?

This question asks the interview respondents to register their opinion on whether or not it is appropriate to alter the consultation mechanism in relation to the decided purpose for citizen engagement as originally proposed by Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000).

Q.9a - What do you see as the maximum benefits of consultation?
Q.9b - What do you see as the maximum detriments of consultation?

In this split question, the interview respondents are asked to assess the maximum benefits from consultation because the provincial planning legislation requires it. Similarly, they are asked to consider the detriments of consultation because certain authors such as Mathews (1994) and Fischer (1995) view the public as either uninterested or as pursuing self-interest.

*Q.10 - Presently, the **Planning Act** requires at least one meeting for consultation with the public before adoption of an Official Plan. Please provide your thoughts on the value of this requirement to the work that planners try to accomplish.*

The tenth and final question simply asks for a straightforward assessment of Section 17(15) of the *Planning Act* with which the interview participants must interpret and work every day.

Appendix 8: Comments from Residents of Pelham to Open-Ended Question

DOOR TO DOOR3
New to area. Not too familiar with the issues or the Town of Fonthill.

DOOR TO DOOR4
My attitude is "why bother" wasting time at a meeting when "THEY" already have "their" minds made up.

DOOR TO DOOR6
Coming to the homes of residents and discussing the issues would be the best way of encouraging involvement in planning.

DOOR TO DOOR9
Timely and accurate information should be distributed, or at least available to the public about surrounding development. Would like the opportunity to review that in order to make an informed opinion.

DOOR TO DOOR10
Our portion of the meeting was beneficial, but the rest was a waste of time.

DOOR TO DOOR12
The Town should spend monies on projects/items that the residents are prepared to support with municipal taxes.

DOOR TO DOOR13
Sidewalks on Merritt Road. Great town, not many complaints.

DOOR TO DOOR14
More consultation needed.

DOOR TO DOOR18
Results of this particular survey may be biased as I am employed in the planning field.

DOOR TO DOOR19
Being flexible.

DOOR TO DOOR22
Volunteers are available for town improvements, etc., but they must be approached.

DOOR TO DOOR23
People have a lot more comments than they are willing to take the time to get into a formal process.

DOOR TO DOOR26
Feel that a decision is made whether there is input or not.

DOOR TO DOOR27
Town reps don't really listen - usually have their own agenda and will pursue it. Venues and times not always conducive to participation - often evenings, daytime works better for some.

DOOR TO DOOR29
More public input in recreation and development.

DOOR TO DOOR30
Full disclosure.

DOOR TO DOOR31
Would like to see information circulated ahead of time (e.g. agenda, whether lawyers involved, fees paid). Ability to ask questions at a forum - balanced opportunity to speak.

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DOOR TO DOOR34
Don't think that there's very much of it. Well, in Pelham anyway.

DOOR TO DOOR36
They should be much more efficient and trustful of citizens. Should get much more support from Town reps. We had to fight the change in subdivision plans on our own.

DOOR TO DOOR37
My opinion is that many people don't bother with the consultation process because they figure the elected officials (local and regional) will do what they want anyway.

DOOR TO DOOR38
Make participation easy. Seek opinions through canvassing.

DOOR TO DOOR39
My experience was a (packed) town meeting regarding new Sobey's. Every single person was against it. Useless.

DOOR TO DOOR41
Building a new arena or community center needs more public consultation.

DOOR TO DOOR44
When they decide to expand, [it's] already a done deal, your opinion really doesn't matter.

DOOR TO DOOR45
Any plans to clean up the Welland River or to repave O'Reilly's Bridge?

DOOR TO DOOR47
Definitely want public input for future.

DOOR TO DOOR48
Residents of all ages (from young adults to senior citizens) should be consulted - also all socio-economic ranges.

DOOR TO DOOR50
Would go to a meeting if relevant to me. Feel that their vote doesn't count, that decisions are already made - can never say: prove it!

DOOR TO DOOR51
[*Personal e-mail address provided. Not listed to keep information confidential.*]

DOOR TO DOOR52
Keeps from doing idiotic things to please the small crowd.

DOOR TO DOOR53
Personal invitation, then I'll go. Make proposal for my property.

DOOR TO DOOR54
Public consultation - negative: people cannot agree on simple suggestions.

DOOR TO DOOR56
Public must have confidence that input will be seriously considered.

DOOR TO DOOR57
Don't know enough about it to comment.

DOOR TO DOOR58
Pelham should not be industrialized; it is residential and people find it highly desirable to live here. Discourage taking over any more agricultural land. Promotion of reforestation in suitable areas (done myself).

DOOR TO DOOR60
Consultations are at the surface or understanding of the main plan. Example: builders build homes on lots that are not serviced with water, sewers, underground utilities. Roads are dug up too many times.

DOOR TO DOOR61
No prior notification of creation of two subdivisions: Timmsdale and Dufferin. Concerned regarding increased traffic from construction of homes, etc. at Dufferin. I don't want a community centre - not needed - a waste of taxpayers' money.

DOOR TO DOOR64
Flag pole must stay! No round about!

DOOR TO DOOR65
Seems like they never listen too much. Can't seem to sway them much. Got their minds made up. Told residents to build their own fence around storm water management pond.

DOOR TO DOOR69
Needed to get input from citizens.

DOOR TO DOOR72
If people felt their input was being considered, they would be more likely to take the time.

DOOR TO DOOR74
It is very poor!

DOOR TO DOOR77
The only elected official or counsel is Uwe Brand that seems to have any concerns about what's going on.

DOOR TO DOOR80
Important to be consulted with enough lead time for input to be considered. Clarity of presentation is also important.

DOOR TO DOOR81
The purchase of the community centre property seems like a good initiative.

DOOR TO DOOR82
We want a playground on Sandra Drive and we are waiting for it!

DOOR TO DOOR83
Doesn't know much about it.

DOOR TO DOOR84
Important if changes proposed were to influence value or use of our residential property.

DOOR TO DOOR85
*One would need a number of people from different areas (say farmers or orchardists) who really know the area in order to have a good **overall** picture.*

DOOR TO DOOR89
There isn't any. People behind desks, haven't got a clue of what farming is. Minds made up already. Light industry operating as "agriculture" in town. Citizens seem to have to fight more than bureaucrats or politicians. These light industries are not paying regular business tax. Ripping the roads up and it's my taxes that pay. Contaminating the soil with greenhouse chemicals. All convert to coal, industrial wasteland, sooner or later.

DOOR TO DOOR92
Not enough. Information is out after the fact. Developers give no such info.

DOOR TO DOOR96
Listen to the taxpayer's concerns before making up your mind…Remember who pays your salary….

DOOR TO DOOR97
Definitely! Public knows community best. Town planning needs to include quality of life to improve. Interaction among people - European style cities - opposite to Robert Moses. Robert Moses plans suitable for his era - conservation of fruitland and all land has to be included because we are running out of space. Shouldn't something be left for the future. Town and city buildings need to be re-built continuously.

DOOR TO DOOR99
I would like more information about public meetings.

DOOR TO DOOR100
Citizens should be called directly by town officials to ask if they would volunteer.

DOOR TO DOOR101
Please consider various strategies to notify and educate/inform constituents. Targeting specific age groups.

DOOR TO DOOR102
Need some help with their parks. Need a parks board / free gratis. Advise the works department. It's a disgrace.

DOOR TO DOOR104
The experience can be intimidating. An effort might be made to reduce this among participants.

DOOR TO DOOR106
It's an important issue, but my interests lie elsewhere. I hope there are some good brains dedicated to it.

DOOR TO DOOR109
I would like to see more of it. Where the consultation would involve talking to a live person and not just being directed to a web site.

DOOR TO DOOR114
Gives mix of opinions/interests. Gives commercial and residential a voice to discuss direction of growth in a town.

DOOR TO DOOR115
If they'd listen and heed, it would be good. Everyone's in it for the buck.

DOOR TO DOOR117
The only time I would be concerned about public planning is if it affected me.

DOOR TO DOOR118
People in a neighbourhood are happy to be consulted, but I don't believe that it has a lot of impact on council.

DOOR TO DOOR123
When they've got a meeting, I would like to go. Don't feel that I can get up and say something that they don't like. All over is like that, just educational (only if the meeting is special for you). Lawyers and officials dominate.

DOOR TO DOOR124
I moved to Fenwick from St. Catharines to stay away from city life. I only hope you can understand how much I love Fenwick the way it is.

DOOR TO DOOR125
Everything looks fine.

DOOR TO DOOR128
Should have a referendum on the proposed town community centre. Can't afford it.

DOOR TO DOOR130
Most of time, discussions are decided by few or even people from Toronto that don't know the community.

DOOR TO DOOR132
No problem with it. Tough to give opinion because don't live in Fonthill, but do shop there, etc. Change us to Pelham, fine by me.

PHONE INTERVIEW1
Should be advertised in an outstanding fashion. Question and answer, not cut and dry. Locate in fire hall (fits 100). Use large visual aids. Avoid tension and stress. Educate and keep well informed. There is an insect problem in Peace Park affecting the Farmer's Market. Focal point in the downtown, gathering space. Concerns about expropriation.

MAILED RESPONSE2
At 83, I'm not active in any public affairs. Can't read your map. My area is on Station Street, near the mall.

MAILED RESPONSE3
Not only should the public be consulted but they should be listened to. Too often our members have their own agenda without realizing Pelham's basic tax base are the residents. We do not have any industries of major importance.

MAILED RESPONSE5
Public consultation should be a meaningful part of the planning process and not just window dressing so council can say they did it. This means the public should be given full information regarding council's proposals, the costs of implementation and ample time to assess them. The public can then formulate their own opinions and ideas and make an informed proposal if they wish.

MAILED RESPONSE9
Map too small to read.

MAILED RESPONSE14
Lived in residence for a short time and unable to provide any valid comments.

MAILED RESPONSE16
I think the way it is constructed is wrong. The meetings are late at night on weeknights normally and people are unable to attend. With technology today, it should be able to be on the web and comments could be e-mailed.

MAILED RESPONSE17
If it were a volunteer situation, all participants need to have all the information necessary to make informed decisions and discussions.

MAILED RESPONSE20
Your map is hard to read. I hope that I figured it out OK. Good luck.

MAILED RESPONSE22
*Public consultation is obviously extremely important - however, there is a big difference between receiving information, giving input that **really** is wanted and/or feeling that you have been patted on the head, dismissed so that what was always going to happen can now proceed with a clear conscience on the part of leaders.*

MAILED RESPONSE23
Direct notification.

MAILED RESPONSE24
Posting data on the Town's website would allow for interested residents to keep informed even though some are unable to attend meetings.

MAILED RESPONSE27
Seems like public planning proposal meetings are a "done deal" by the developers, well ahead of time.

MAILED RESPONSE28
Town of Pelham would benefit with more amenities (shopping, restaurants, Chapters…) and less congested traffic (406, Hwy 20…)

MAILED RESPONSE29
It needs to be user-friendly and those who conduct the consultation must show clearly how the process affects the decision. Too often, it feels like the consultation has little impact on policy as practice.

MAILED RESPONSE30
We need a recreation centre. Adding another ice surface to the existing one would be the most practical solution.

MAILED RESPONSE34
It's effective when done properly. Allows for a voice - informs the public with more specifics - permits individuals to choose how they will contribute.

MAILED RESPONSE35
The purchase of the Sport Complex lands without a referendum clearly shows the council's interest in public consultation - None!

MAILED RESPONSE36
Currently very weak - general lack of interest in participating as feeling it doesn't make a difference. Lack of trust of process to the point of unwillingness to participate - me included!! Expected a more detailed questionnaire.

MAILED RESPONSE37
Citizens who will be personally affected by a "decision" - should also be personally consulted and their opinions noted.

MAILED RESPONSE38
Most people believe that these matters will have no input from the public.

MAILED RESPONSE40
Due to age and a handicap, I am not able to participate further.

MAILED RESPONSE44
Developer pays for traffic, land-use etc., studies which give biased reports. Average citizens and environmental groups cannot pay for reports or lawyers.

MAILED RESPONSE45
Strikingly, it is not the town or regional governments that give direction. OMB has strict stipulation where planning should happen.

MAILED RESPONSE47
Process tends to be pre-determined.

MAILED RESPONSE50
It is important for the Town to consult its citizens for the process. It is a complicated issue from my standpoint, I would need it to be explained further.

MAILED RESPONSE51
Did anyone not notice the quality of the copy of the map provided?

MAILED RESPONSE53
*Recently sold my home of 41 years in Welland and now enjoy a senior apartment in Fonthill. Your map is **very** tiny. I have done many surveys for Statistics Canada, so I realize these studies are necessary.*

MAILED RESPONSE55
Not impressed with the actions of public officials. None of the suggestions from the public meeting were incorporated into the plan. Outsiders like hired consultation teams are listened to more than residents, and these consultations cost money and come up with some ridiculous, impractical advice / recommendations.

MAILED RESPONSE56
1. Make sure that there is plenty of opportunity for questions and answers. 2. Identify how residents' comments will influence the Official Plan. 3. Show the whole process of how the Town/Province intends to aDoor to Doorress the growth targets for Pelham and what it means with regard to development types and strategies to reach these targets.

MAILED RESPONSE57
Public consultation meetings held in open, non-confrontational ways, should answer questions and provide feedback to politicians and officials. Negative reactions usually result from lack of information/facts.

MAILED RESPONSE60
Make it well known in advance.

MAILED RESPONSE61
Depends upon the degree of interest, self-interest and concern for public good…Tough to call (I attended about 3 meetings over time regarding Centennial Park development because I was interested as a matter of public good and also to represent the interests of the Pelham Tennis Association. Don't know if this counts as a planning proposal as in #2, but the matter was well organized, well handled and meaningful. 8+ out of 10.

MAILED RESPONSE63
Very important, provided individual agendas don't take precedence over the need of the majority.

MAILED RESPONSE64
Too many opinions by too many individuals unwilling to listen to the other side for any effective discussions. This might sound awfully negative, but that is the case more often than not.

MAILED RESPONSE65
Should be done without question.

MAILED RESPONSE66
I believe that it is extremely important to have public representation on what happens in our town.

Appendix 9: Definitions of Effective Public Consultation Provided by Planners

RESPONDENT 1
One that acknowledges and equitably manages and balances the interests of all legitimate stakeholders... and manages those of lesser legitimacy.

RESPONDENT 2
Planning is about representing the public interest. Hence effective consultation is necessary to determine the public interest.

RESPONDENT 3
Everyone who should be aware of the consultation process IS aware of it. A variety of methods to provide input is critical.

RESPONDENT 4
Having goals of project/policies clearly set out so that the public knows exactly what is expected. Involving as large of a cross section of citizens and other representatives as possible.

RESPONDENT 5
At the end of the process, people either support the results or have refined their opposition to it. No one says, I wasn't consulted.

RESPONDENT 6
Having access to the opinions and desires of the average citizen, not just the ones that are already engaged with the public process.

RESPONDENT 7
This means: - achieving consensus (and if not consensus, acceptance and understanding by those not in agreement); - learning, for everyone; - better policy; - develops relationships and continuing contact with the community after the planning exercise is completed; - instilling an appreciation of the forces of change acting on a community, and understanding those ones that can be influenced by the level at which the plan is prepared; - replaces the stakeholder philosophy, whereby everyone is involved to advance their own interests, with one in which participants consider the good of the community.

RESPONDENT 8
Opportunities for meaningful input - public ownership in policy development - broad consensus where possible.

RESPONDENT 9
All participants understanding and respecting the views, positions and objectives of all other participants and that legitimate actions are taken to legitimate concerns/issues

RESPONDENT 10
Effective consultation provides: a clear understanding of community issues; and, a test for alternative solutions to those issues.

RESPONDENT 11
Includes ALL of following: consultation program designed by citizens; outreach conducted using citizen's networks and traditional outreach; feedback received, evaluated and recommendations made in a collaborative working environment; citizen's visible support of planning outcome/recommendation during formal approval processes; citizen's direct involvement in implementation / monitoring.

RESPONDENT 12
Where possible, it is more effective to have consultation prior to the development of a plan or policy, as opposed to having the public react to something placed in front of them, because at that point the developer/applicant has already spent significant resources into the development of the plan and may be less likely to want to move away from the proposed design. If the public and staff can have input into the plan/policy even if just in terms of outlining the main concerns/issues), I believe the consultation is more effective.

RESPONDENT 13
Each consultation process is unique so it is essential that the research goals and objectives are clearly established in terms of outcomes and specifically the nature of any information - quantitative or qualitative - which is required.

RESPONDENT 14
That the public have been given an opportunity to be involved in an issue that affects them (positively or negatively) and any concerns have been given consideration, and where possible, changes made to accommodate the concerns; public consultation does NOT necessarily mean that the specific concerns of individuals who come out to meetings will be resolved to their satisfaction since the general public good can outweigh these concerns.

RESPONDENT 15
Two way information sharing.

RESPONDENT 16
Effective public consultation; - allows an opportunity for those with an interest or concern to express it - allows Staff and decision making to tap into the knowledge and findings the input provides - identifies unknown or unforeseen issues as well as trends which might only be determined through public participation - makes the participant feel like they have been involved and listened to whether or not their input changes decisions - provides the decision makers the with constituency support or confirmation of the decision making process.

RESPONDENT 17
Means engaging the viewpoint of members of the public such that those viewpoints are used in decision-making.

RESPONDENT 18
To determine what the majority of citizens affected by the proposal think of it. To help the planner redefine/confirm what is the public good.

RESPONDENT 19
Ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to participate in formulation of the policy. Get the proper input to ensure that you have an understanding of the issues and develop solutions that have the support of the stakeholders.

RESPONDENT 20
Obtain a broad range of input representative of a full scope of community interests. Obtain constructive input.

RESPONDENT 21
Effective public consultation means having people constructively involved in trying to find a solution to problem. In order for the consultation to be effective, the people involved in the consultation must have a shared understanding of the problem or goal, and they should be in a position to express their ideas, suggestions, or concerns regarding the issue at hand. It is also important for the participants to feel that they are being listened to and not view them as a hindrance to the process.

RESPONDENT 22
All parties understanding the issues, feeling they have been heard and being able to understand and live with the outcome.

RESPONDENT 23
To engage the community in a dialogue that informs the decision of Council and builds consensus or understanding of the basis for those decisions.

RESPONDENT 24
Effective public consultation means to ensure that sufficient opportunity is given to all stakeholders to understand an issue so that various points of view are expressed and a number of different options are reviewed and that ultimately the good decision is made after weighing the various options.

RESPONDENT 25
Consultation that truly wishes to hear the public comments and have those comments integrated into the plan.

RESPONDENT 26
My mantra is contained in Public Participation in Municipal Planning Policy Development. June 1991. In summary the public participation facilitator must have a profound ability to listen.

RESPONDENT 27
Notice given well in advance of the meeting. Attendance by all stakeholders (applicant, developer, planner, councillor, neighbours, ratepayers, affected agencies, etc.

RESPONDENT 28
To both educate the public on the matter at hand, and to effectively hear the concerns of the public on that same matter.

RESPONDENT 29
1. Identify issues 2. Develop focus 3. Develop and negotiate resolution.

RESPONDENT 30
Intelligent discussion about the issues.

RESPONDENT 31
Obtaining responses that directly relate to the subject of the public notice, via personal attendance at the meeting &/or receipt of written submissions, which leads to a better-informed decision-maker.

RESPONDENT 32
Free and open opportunity to provide input with extensive notice before and after a planning decision is made.

RESPONDENT 33
To have consultation that is not dominated by special interest groups, be they community associations (who often do not represent their full community), homebuilders, environmental groups, etc.

RESPONDENT 34
A meaningful interaction between planners and the public resulting in mutual learning and improved outcomes.

RESPONDENT 35
To obtain opinions and reach acceptable solutions to planning issues from as broad of a spectrum of community as possible.

RESPONDENT 36
A process whereby all interests have an opportunity to be effectively and clearly heard in a balanced manner.

RESPONDENT 37
Members of the public have a diverse array of ongoing participation opportunities to participate in the process. There is a clear sense that the consultation is a collaborative exercise. The purpose, process (including timing) and products are well understood.

RESPONDENT 38
Significant public input and an understanding of what is to be accomplished.

RESPONDENT 39
It is effective if the new Official Plan is seen as a community product not a consultant produced document.

Appendix 10: Descriptions from Planners of Positive Consultation Experiences

RESPONDENT 1
Consultation without active listening is just window dressing. Our best consultations have always included active listening.

RESPONDENT 2
Stakeholder meetings tend to be effective as they help achieve a negotiated result, and could be a win-win.

RESPONDENT 5
Beechwood CDP - First, design workshop by invitation, second, public survey of the results of the design workshop, third public meeting to discuss results.

RESPONDENT 6
Intensive working group that met over the course of a year to review a subwatershed study.

RESPONDENT 7
One in which we sat down with community representatives to resolve a contentious proposal. The process was civil - even friendly - something that a public meeting can't generate because a mob mentality can develop. Mutual respect was developed, and everyone focussed on the quality of the idea, not agencies or personalities. The idea was eventually abandoned, but even the agency came out ahead because of the good community relationship that resulted from the process.

RESPONDENT 8
While developing a new County OP, we conducted topic specific workshops to write the plan in public using the public's words. People later noted their own ideas in the plan.

RESPONDENT 9
On-site/kitchen table discussions/open houses...focus on the real issues with those most likely to be affected.

RESPONDENT 10
Process needs to be transparent, with a direct connection between the issues and the solutions. This is always best achieved in small group discussions through a workshop format.

RESPONDENT 11
Comments from stakeholder: You listened to me; you may not have given me exactly what I asked for, but you addressed my need/concern fairly and I see how my input shaped the final result.

RESPONDENT 13
The use of a statistically valid and representative survey method which establishes a quantitative base of public opinion.

RESPONDENT 14
We have found that workshops where the public on opposite sides of the issue are able to sit down and present their views have been quite effective in understanding the other views on the issue.

RESPONDENT 15
Citizens realizing that they could learn from the process.

RESPONDENT 16
Small working group of neighbours dealing with a neighbour hood planning issue where there was considerably divergence of positions. An effective resolution was achieved within the working group most notably due to a) all most affected interests being at the table and b) Staff worked as facilitators with the group.

RESPONDENT 17
My most positive consultation experience involved people who had direct stake in the planning issue. The issue was specific and therefore people could easily relate to it.

RESPONDENT 18
Informal meeting with small group of citizens (i.e. 20) to discuss a proposal that was in their own interest. Free give and take between property owners and planners was rewarding.

RESPONDENT 19
For community design plans collaborative community building has been a success where the public are actively engaged in helping to develop the plans for their community.

RESPONDENT 20
Where we have constructive input that can be utilized to make positive changes to a proposal.

RESPONDENT 24
Use of a facilitator for a small focus group to ensure that all sides of an issue were discussed and consensus was reached.

RESPONDENT 26
Working with representatives from a particular community in an ongoing discussion. the success comes from education and eventually breaking through.

RESPONDENT 27
Public consultation prior to submission of a development application makes an applicant aware of concerns that exist in a neighbourhood and enables him/her to incorporate suggestions in the development proposal.

RESPONDENT 28
My best success has been with a combination of public meeting with formal presentation followed up by informal open house sessions where people can ask questions they did not want to ask in public, or share information they did not want to articulate in public.

RESPONDENT 29
The array of techniques must be chosen on a case by case bases in the way one would design a program.

RESPONDENT 30
Workshops which allow people to talk to each other rather than you talking at them.

RESPONDENT 31
Stakeholder meetings are not rushed & allow for an exchange of opinions, which does not always result during the statutory public meetings.

RESPONDENT 32
Our public meeting process that entails expanded notification areas beyond statutory limits.

RESPONDENT 33
Break out sessions with small number of participants where facilitator is able to ensure that all opinions of participants are heard and recorded.

RESPONDENT 36
We invited a statistically-significant (about 100) number of residents, chosen at random by a facilitator, to come out to a day-long workshop/charette. We found out that staff's planning approach was generally favoured by the group, unlike the strong representation delivered by ratepayer groups at public meetings. For example, the workshop group was not opposed to higher densities provided that they were planned to fit in with the surrounding community. Ratepayers groups were categorically opposed to any density much above semis or some towns. Very revealing to the (few) politicians that were there for the workshop. In the end, ratepayers 'hijacked' the process, fried our consultant and staff, and densities were severely reduced in the final plan. Surprisingly (possibly) 4 years later our Council is now favouring some high density and many feel they made a mistake by lowering the densities in the above plan!

RESPONDENT 38
I find one on one conversations and stakeholder meetings to be most effective, coupled with open houses.

RESPONDENT 39
KTC's drive the process of actually writing a plan down to the lowest and most detailed level. It is also a completely open process that makes sure the policy is understood by all. We hold a public meeting that is open and the invitation states that we are looking for people to comment on the draft OP as it is developed. All those that show up are divided into committees of about 20-25 people who meet at their own call as we send them chunks of the Plan. They sometimes are oriented around specific topic areas sometimes not. They often group their comments, that is comment individually on issues and other times find a consensus.

Appendix 11: Descriptions from Planners of Negative Consultation Experiences

RESPONDENT 1
In a few instances, the process has been hijacked by illegitimate interests (aided and abetted by councillors with agendas outside the issue or topic at hand).

RESPONDENT 2
Sometimes, negative emotions are generated at public meetings

RESPONDENT 6
Public meetings that have poor notice and poor attendance.

RESPONDENT 7
A bad idea being presented to a large public meeting. The idea was not well-thought out, was controversial, and the format for presenting the idea allowed for hostility to grow within the large audience. The idea too was abandoned, but the process was very damaging for the reputation of the agency.

RESPONDENT 8
Public meetings without prior consultation are subject to hijacking from interest groups or individuals with an axe to grind.

RESPONDENT 9
Public meetings...the squeaky wheel trying to get greased...often legitimate concerns and the other sides to an issue are not presented...it's a one-way communication process for the most part.

RESPONDENT 10
Public meetings that include a formal presentation, followed by question period. This results in the complete dominance of the process by grandstanders. Their is no real opportunity for dissenting opinions, and typically you hear only one side of the story. In fact, most of the time the grandstanders do not reflect the broader public view.

RESPONDENT 11
Lack of flexibility by the facilitator to adjust the approach of the consultation event to address the needs of the stakeholders, even after stakeholders' continuous requests at the outset of the event.

RESPONDENT 13
Public meetings are for the most part useless for meaningful participation - they are biased and often create false impressions - they are at best for sharing information about the process.

RESPONDENT 14
Public meetings where those with strong views dominate and try to turn things into a yea/nea vote i.e. if most oppose the idea, it should be turned down; when in reality the views of others have not really been able to be heard; another factor in that case was the politician representing the area saying one thing to staff supporting them and then turning around and criticizing their work.

RESPONDENT 15
Citizens convinced that they knew more than the professionals and not wanting to learn anything.

RESPONDENT 16
Certain public meetings on -planning matters are simply ineffective where there may be dozens of persons speaking against say a subdivision where the principle of development has been established and is as of right. This issue seems to arise due to; a) poor understanding of process, b) poor management, introduction and objective setting by the meeting chair (usually a politician).

RESPONDENT 17
My experience of a negative consultation experience involved a planning at the abstract scale. It was difficult to attract much interest.

RESPONDENT 18
Having open houses/workshops where only staff attend. Useless - other than fulfilling mandatory requirements for consultation.

RESPONDENT 19
The difficulty with any consultation process to ensure that special interests (they are the ones who come out to participate the most) do not dominate or skew the results of the collaboration.

RESPONDENT 20
Unfortunately a lot of public input is negative without constructive input. Also have considerable misinterpretation by public of intentions. Often hidden agendas incorporated into comments. Often the public is highly emotional in commenting and at times makes personal comments against the proponent, council or staff as part of their input, rather than concentrating and focusing on the facts and issues.

RESPONDENT 26
Open houses are not successful. People do not have the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion.

RESPONDENT 27
Unwillingness to compromise and to be flexible with proposals leads to frustration of all stakeholders.

RESPONDENT 28
Opinion polls and focus groups were the least helpful in getting productive information which was meaningful to the process.

RESPONDENT 29
Loss of control of the agenda to a hostile municipal council. The client, a public agency, lost its nerve. The results were generally to the detriment of all including the municipal council.

RESPONDENT 30
Statutory public meetings on controversial issues which result in an us versus them situation.

RESPONDENT 31
Committee members who visibly demonstrate that they have little interest in either the application or the concerns being expressed. The participants may perceive that the decision has already been made - for or against - and their input is not being considered or valued.

RESPONDENT 33
Public open house discussion session attempted to be hijacked by special interest groups (knew might happen and facilitator did best to try to entertain other points of view).

RESPONDENT 35
The general public often comes to talk about City operational issues rather than land use planning.

RESPONDENT 36
Most of the negative experiences have been where special interest groups, especially those lead by loud ratepayer leaders that appear to represent the community's opinions, but often do not, pressure Council into making decisions that can be clearly demonstrated to NOT be in the long-term interests of the municipality. (See comments, above).

RESPONDENT 38
Public meetings tend to be dominated by special interest groups and many people are intimidated to speak. It can also tend to skew opinion in Council's eyes.

RESPONDENT 39

Workshops are almost always misleading and exclusionary. They gloss over the real technical issues in an attempt to involve all who come to the process with very different backgrounds and expectations. They are not appropriate for an OPR process but rather work better for small scale design exercises with limits on the choices and variables.

Appendix 12: Descriptions of Limiting Factors for Public Consultation from Planners

RESPONDENT 1
Limiting factors: lack of listening skills, systemic lack of trust.

RESPONDENT 2
The need for public to be involved from a broader public interest point of view than from a selfish point of view.

RESPONDENT 4
Typically most interested citizens have one-dimensional comments/inputs based on their mandate.

RESPONDENT 5
Consultation is an important part but only a part. It is a process and process without content fails as does content without process.

RESPONDENT 6
Time and money.

RESPONDENT 7
Time constraints for one - effective consultation takes much time, building relationships, discussing with communities, and the like. The process takes both time, resources (staff and $), both of which are in short supply. Decision-makers often want a quick turnaround on a project, but you can't rush the process (in fact, rushing it can have the opposite effect by antagonizing publics that demand even more time to complete it). Consultation models used by planners tend to involve (and attract) those inclined to actively participate, whereas the vast majority of citizens are either unaware or uninterested. How to tap into the larger population is a challenge (notwithstanding the use of opinion polls, etc.). I also believe that planners themselves have encouraged the public to advocate their own narrow interests - the word stakeholder is a case in point. The term assumes (encourages?) participants to press their own interests, without seeking to recognize or balance their interests with others, or with the larger public interests at play.

RESPONDENT 8
You can never reach all of the interested public. Some won't become involved until they perceive an effect on them or their property, which is often too late.

RESPONDENT 9
The planning act and the mandatory public meeting requirements...elected officials.

RESPONDENT 10
The primary limitation is that the public is not always correct, and good planning is not always popular. The public does not establish a professional opinion.

RESPONDENT 11
Lack of stakeholder input in the initial design of the consultation program for a planning exercise; lack of visible POSITIVE support from stakeholders when planning decisions are being made.

RESPONDENT 13
The over-emphasis on biased consultation techniques and the subsequent interpretation of them as representative of public opinion.

RESPONDENT 14
Those that get involved tend to start from a negative standpoint - i.e. those who most oppose a project or activity will tend to come out more often and more vocally, often intimidating those who actually see positive in the issue.

RESPONDENT 15

I disagree that good planning is achieved through consultation. consultation is a tool, like map-making or background data checks.

RESPONDENT 17

The problem of having the same people or interest group time and time again. It curtails new ideas.

RESPONDENT 18

Often citizens only come out when they perceive a proposal will negatively effect them personally i.e. Not in My Neighbourhood. Often the wishes of the majority of citizens is not heard.

RESPONDENT 19

Many times the public does not understand the framework for the consultation and that we are not starting with the blank page - there are other policies in place e.g. OP, PPS etc. that frame the decision that is being made and being consulted on.

RESPONDENT 20

The broad lack of public understanding of the planning and development process is a huge barrier and results in in-effective public consultation. The lack of public understanding of process leads to criticisms of public meetings. If we go to a public meeting too early people are critical of a lack of answers. If we go to the public later in the process people are critical believing that everything has been worked out and their input is no longer valued. Many of the public believe the municipality supports a proposal when it goes to a public meeting, when in fact, the municipality is obligated to hold the meeting and has no position...we are seeking input to help in determining a position. A high mistrust of government at all levels by the public also results in the public not believing that their comments are valued and will receive consideration. The biggest limitation is the lack of public understanding...you don't have time to educate the public on the entire planning process and yet this is necessary to achieve meaningful and constructive input rather than simply reactionary input.

RESPONDENT 21

Today, many people live very busy lives and do not tend to get involved in planning issues unless the issues directly affect them. As our communities grow and become more diverse, I think the notion of residents getting together to discuss planning issues and search for meaningful solutions may sometimes be a little idealistic. Another limitation relates to the amount of information that we now have at our finger tips. Tools such as the internet means that we can provide much more information on planning problems than we did in the past. The huge volume of information may be too much for the average person to sift through and understand. Similarly, the internet also means that people opposed to a development proposal or planning initiative can also disseminate misinformation and try to mislead people to think a certain way.

RESPONDENT 22

Effective public consultation is very time consuming. Most municipal offices are not appropriately staff to undertake highly effective consultation.

RESPONDENT 23

Experience has shown that building trust with the community being consulted is essential to success - must have effective 2 way discussions and feedback through out process.

RESPONDENT 24

A lack of understanding of all parties in a dispute that some give and take is necessary to achieve a solution that everyone can live with.

RESPONDENT 25

Perceived limitations being the perception that public input is in name only, that the input is not welcomed nor taken into consideration or actually results in a change from the plan submitted for comment.

RESPONDENT 26

The political process biases the consultation process.

RESPONDENT 27
Back door deals lead to mistrust by the public, frustration on the part of municipal employees and send a message that money talks - keeping planning open to the public can lead to innovative ideas that you may not find in a text book...the public thinks practically, this may not always represent good planning.

RESPONDENT 28
Biggest problem is getting people motivated to come out and voice thier thoughts and concerns on a planning issue. People need to be made to feel their input is both needed and desired by the planners.

RESPONDENT 29
The quality of the product must be high at the conclusion. Consultation can become an end in itself, resulting in a degraded plan, delivered out of time.

RESPONDENT 30
Good planning is not a popularity contest or something you put to a vote. So while consultation provides a valuable input it isn't the only basis for a recommendation.

RESPONDENT 32
Too much unstructured consultation can confuse the decision making process.

RESPONDENT 33
Public fatigue with consultation on all municipal matters (not just planning) means people are less interest than one might hope for.

RESPONDENT 35
People tend not to get engaged until there is a perceived crisis in their community such as an application for high-density development.

RESPONDENT 37
The usual problems emerge - neighbourhood vs local vs regional perspectives, long-term outlook vs short-term interest, peoples' visions and principles do not match real life actions and expectations, vast majority of the population is not, nor wants to be involved and won't be unless there's a crisis.

RESPONDENT 38
Money, money, money and time.

RESPONDENT 39
The process needs to be tailored to the product and the community. The most significant problem that I have encountered is still the classic interest vs position contrast which focuses on the basic assumptions inherent in the planning process. Why do we need to growth versus why widen the road beside my house.

Appendix 13: Selected Provisions of Government of Ontario Bill 51 (*2006*)

Consultation and public meeting

(15) In the course of the preparation of a plan, the council shall ensure that,

(a) the appropriate approval authority is consulted on the preparation of the plan and given an opportunity to review all supporting information and material and any other prescribed information and material, even if the plan is exempt from approval;

(b) the prescribed public bodies are consulted on the preparation of the plan and given an opportunity to review all supporting information and material and any other prescribed information and material;

(c) adequate information and material, including a copy of the current proposed plan, is made available to the public, in the prescribed manner, if any; and

(d) at least one public meeting is held for the purpose of giving the public an opportunity to make representations in respect of the current proposed plan.

Open house

(16) If the plan is being revised under section 26 or amended in relation to a development permit system, the council shall ensure that at least one open house is held for the purpose of giving the public an opportunity to review and ask questions about the information and material made available under clause (15) (c).

Notice

(17) Notice of the public meeting required under clause (15) (d) and of the open house, if any, required under subsection (16) shall,

(a) be given to the prescribed persons and public bodies, in the prescribed manner; and

(b) be accompanied by the prescribed information.

Timing of open house

(18) If an open house is required under subsection (16), it shall be held no later than seven days before the public meeting required under clause (15) (d) is held.

Timing of public meeting

(19) The public meeting required under clause (15) (d) shall be held no earlier than 20 days after the requirements for giving notice have been complied with.

Information and material

(19.1) The information and material referred to in clause (15) (c), including a copy of the current proposed plan, shall be made available to the public at least 20 days before the public meeting required under clause (15) (d) is held.

Participation in public meeting

(19.2) Every person who attends a public meeting required under clause (15) (d) shall be given an opportunity to make representations in respect of the current proposed plan.

Alternative procedure

(19.3) If an official plan sets out alternative measures for informing and obtaining the views of the public in respect of amendments that may be proposed for the plan and if the measures are complied with, subsections (15) to (19.2) do not apply to the proposed amendments, but subsections (19.4) and (19.6) do apply.

Open house

(19.4) If subsection (19.3) applies and the plan is being revised under section 26 or amended in relation to a development permit system,

(a) the council shall ensure that at least one open house is held for the purpose of giving the public an opportunity to review and ask questions about the proposed amendments; and

(b) if a public meeting is also held, the open house shall be held no later than seven days before the public meeting.

Information

(19.5) At a public meeting under clause (15) (d), the council shall ensure that information is made available to the public regarding who is entitled to appeal under subsections (24) and (36).

Where alternative procedures followed

(19.6) If subsection (19.3) applies, the information required under subsection (19.5) shall be made available to the public at a public meeting or in the manner set out in the official plan for informing and obtaining the views of the public in respect of the proposed amendments.

Appendix 14: Proposed Form for Consultation Review [Regulation 544/07]

Ⓣ Ontario

Summary Review of Municipal Planning Consultation Exercise(s)

Name of Municipality:		Consultation Format:	Participants:
Consultation Facility:	Municipal: Yes: ☐ No: ☐	Start Time:	Duration:

Principal Comments and Official Plan Sections Discussed:	Number of Staff Involved:
	Total Staff Hours Devoted:
	Approximate Exercise Cost:
	Methods of Notice Given: ☐ Newspaper ☐ Radio ☐ Television ☐ Internet ☐ Written Notice ☐ Other _____

		Staff Score:	Citizen Score:

Changes Considered for Planning Document(s):	Motivations for Attendance: 1. 2. 3.
	Objectives of Planning Dep't: 1. 2. 3.

Number of Other Exercise Forms Attached:	Planning Director Signature:	Date:

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Ontario

Questionnaires for Review of Municipal Planning Consultation Exercise(s)

Municipal Residents	
Name (*optional*):	Stakeholder Group/Neighbourhood Association (*optional*):

1. For what reason(s) did you attend this consultation exercise?

2. How did you find out about this consultation opportunity (*check all that apply*)?

☐ Newspaper   ☐ Internet

☐ Radio   ☐ Written Notice

☐ Television   ☐ Other _____

3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how effective did you find this exercise to be in terms of its ability to generate ideas from you for the Official Plan in a convenient and efficient manner?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Highly ineffective   *Highly effective*

4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you that your comments will be incorporated into the policies of this Official Plan?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Not at all confident   *Highly confident*

5. Do you have any other comments?

Municipal Planners	
Name:	Title:

1. What were the principal objectives of this consultation exercise?

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how effective do you believe that this exercise was in terms of generating ideas from the public that could be incorporated into the new [or revised] Official Plan?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Highly ineffective   *Highly effective*

Appendix 15: Proposed Municipal Reference Guide for Consultation Formats

Ontario   **Consensus Building**

Method Synopsis

Consensus building brings a range of individuals and representatives together for a set of facilitated discussions. Diverse viewpoints are essential to this format and participants should be recommended or selected on the basis of their differing stakes in municipal policies.

Consensus building is an advanced state of consultation and is most often employed when planners are looking for solutions to conflict-driven or polarizing issues. Educating participants with respect to the preliminary options and solutions is a suggested course of action before proceeding.

These exercises are facilitated by municipal staff and are most efficient when limited to groups of eight to ten participants.

Participants tend to offer a higher rate of satisfaction for this format because of the opportunities that it provides to learn from others with both similar and dissimilar viewpoints.

Leading Citizen Objectives for Consensus Building Exercises

1. Arrive at a solution to [particular] municipal planning issues (26.1%).
2. Try to better understand the viewpoints of other stakeholders (19.4%).
3. Convince the local planning authority to engage in an alternate course of action (12.9%).

Leading Planner Objectives for Consensus Building Exercises

1. Sound out local stakeholders for issues with proposed solutions (36.3%).
2. Arrive at a solution to [particular] municipal planning issues (15.8%).
3. Work to gather support for recommended solution (9.8%).

Average Number of Sessions Employed in Consensus Building

Most municipalities that use consensus building as part of their consultation strategies engage an average of 24 stakeholders or representatives in an average of 4.2 sessions.

Consultation Formats Used Most Frequently in Conjunction with Consensus Building

1. Public meetings (57.6%).
2. Workshops (28.5%).
3. Surveys (16.8%).

Leading Methods of Public Notice

1. Other [invitation] (27.4%).
2. Written notice (23.2%).

Average Fiscal and Staff Requirements for Consensus Building

|	
Average Cost	$9.363.67
Average Cost per Participant Hour	$222.94
Average Number of Staff Devoted	9.5
Average Number of Staff Hours Devoted	39.9
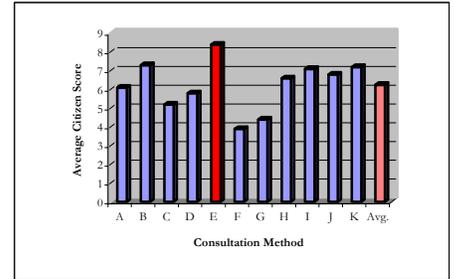
Evaluative Scores of Citizens and Planners

Planners give consensus building the highest score among methods with an average of 9.1 out of 10. Similarly, citizens rank this method the highest with an average score of 8.4 out of 10.
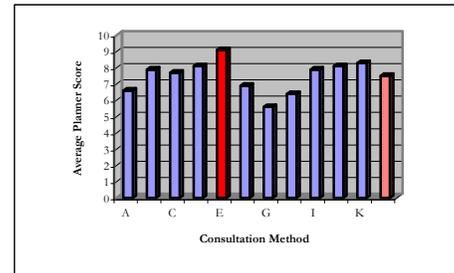
Placement on the Consultation Spectrum

Consensus building sits on the third highest rung on the *Ladder of Participation* and represents one of the degrees of power sharing.

The International Association for Public Participation places this technique under the fourth category of its *Spectrum of the Increasing Level of Public Impact*.
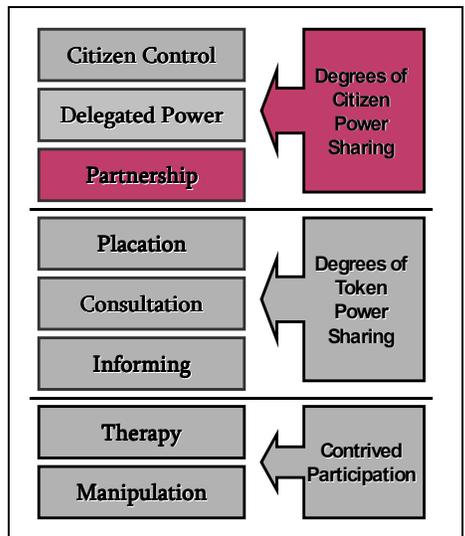
Policies Developed Through Consensus Building

Markham Downtown Development Plan
Stakeholders from the local business development agency, adjacent neighbourhood associations and the cycling advisory committee met to produce options to improve the downtown area of Markham.

Owen Sound Waterfront Development
Community leaders came together to unanimously reject a proposal to build waterfront condominiums along the shoreline. Later created and supported a new park proposal.

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