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The Funding Experience of Women's Charitable Organisations in Nova Scotia

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A vast body of literature exists on national politics and funding for women's organisations in Canada and a small, but growing, literature exists at the subnational level. Absent from most of this literature are the experiences of women's non-governmental organisations, specifically as they navigate shifts in funding. These experiences are significant because they provide insight into how and why some organisations survive austerity while others do not. For this reason, a survey on funding accessibility was distributed in the spring of 2017 to 72 women's non-governmental organisations in Nova Scotia. Findings from the 25 organisations that completed the survey indicate dissatisfaction with the provincial and federal governments, and concerns over whether funding agencies are sensitive to gendered issues.

Il existe une grande quantité de littérature concernant la politique nationale et le financement des organisations pour femmes au Canada aussi qu'une littérature limitée, mais en forte croissance, concernant la politique sous-nationale. Cependant, l'expérience des organisations non-gouvernementales pour femmes est peu représentée, en particulier en ce qui concerne le financement. Ces expériences sont importantes car elles illustrent comment certaines organisations survivent à l'austérité financière tandis que d'autres ne le peuvent pas. C'est pourquoi un sondage sur l'accessibilité du financement a été distribué au printemps 2017 à 72 organisations non-gouvernementales pour les femmes en Nouvelle-Écosse. Les résultats émanant des 25 organisations qui ont répondu au sondage indiquent un mécontentement général envers les gouvernements provincial et fédéral, ainsi que des inquiétudes quant à la sensibilité des organismes de financement vis-à-vis des questions d'inégalités entre les sexes.

Since the 1960s, Canadian women have become increasingly engaged in formal politics and play important roles in a wide range of social issues, such as access to abortion and the prevention of violence against women. Women's participation in politics was facilitated by a strong commitment by the federal government to fund women's non-governmental organisations (PAL 1993) and the subsequent increase in the number of women's non-governmental organisations (c.f. BÉGIN 1992; DOBROWOLSKY 2000; MITCHELL 2015). Despite these gains, the rise of neoliberal politics in the 1980s led to a series of cutbacks that not only jeopardised the well-being of the NGOs (CUNNINGHAM, BAINES, SHIELDS and LEWCHUK 2016; SHIELDS 2014) but began what some have referred to as an economic assault on the women's movement by the federal government (BRODIE and BAKKER 2007; RODGERS and KNIGHT 2011). Scholars have also observed that these federal cutbacks led to a downloading of responsibility to the provincial level (BRODIE and BAKKER 2007; MAHON and COLLIER 2010; RODGERS and KNIGHT 2011). Even so,

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research has shown that in some provinces, such as Nova Scotia, there is evidence that practices of austerity and neoliberal policies at the federal level correspond with an increase in provincial funding for women's organisations (KAY and RAMOS 2018). Despite such work, there has been little examination of how the relationship with government funding agencies is experienced by organisations themselves.

Most research on funding for women's non-profit organisations focuses on larger population centers in Central and Western Canada; this means that smaller population provinces such as those in Atlantic Canada, which accounts for 4 of the country's 10 provinces, are overlooked. Nova Scotia, like other Atlantic provinces, has depended on federal transfer payments and made use of deficit financing to offer services to its population for years (CLANCY 2015, 80). The province is known as the debt leader of the region, and had the highest percentage of low-income residents nationwide in 2017 (STATISTICS CANADA 2019b) and one of the largest aging populations in the country (STATISTICS CANADA 2019a). Based on these trends, it is conceivable that the services provided by non-profit organizations would be in higher demand in Nova Scotia. Although some research has been conducted on funding of Nova Scotian women's groups, it is limited in its scope. Naomi Black's (2006) research, for example, looks at audits of women's organisations in the province between 1990 and 2004. Her research focuses on changes in the number of women's organisations over time, looking at issues of diversity and feminist identity. Her work offers only a brief overview of the impact of neoliberalism on women's groups in Nova Scotia for a short window and does not address funding rationales. Kay and Ramos (2018) build on this analysis with a historical analysis of trends in funding for women's organisations between 1960 and 2014 in Nova Scotia. They find that the increase in grants issued and the increase in the dollar amount per grant by the province occurred at the same time as the federal government began to adopt neoliberal policies and practices of austerity. It is unclear, however, how provincial support is experienced by organisations themselves. For this reason, I examine women's organisations in the province of Nova Scotia to understand firsthand experience with government funding.

To understand how organisations navigate their relationship with the state, I draw on feminist perspectives of organisation theory. Specifically, I use the idea that women's organisations are not inherently hierarchical and driven by perceived competition with other groups (see IANELLO 1992). While organisation theories have gone through many revisions, from classic to contemporary, they agree that organisations possess hierarchies of authority, whether this hierarchy is centralised and rigid or decentralised and loose (c.f. DOCHERTY, SURLES, and DONOVAN 2008, 35; see also ACKOFF 1981;

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FAYOL 1949; HAMMER 1990; MACSTRAVIC 1986; MAYO 1933; MCGREGOR 1960; NACKEL and KUES 1986; SENGE 1990; TAYLOR 1911; WEBER 1947). There is evidence, however, in literature on women's organisations, that women's groups are unlike others because they are intentionally non-hierarchical and are able to remain that way despite pressures to bureaucratize (CALÁS and SMIRCICH 2014; EISENSTEIN 1991; FERGUSON 1984; GILLIGAN 1982; IANELLO 1992; KANTER 1993). Cunningham, Baines, Shields and Lewchuk (2016, 455-456), whose research on the impact of austerity policies on women's organisations in Canada and Scotland, find that organisation employees support management's decision to adopt a hierarchical structure. Organisation members recognised that efforts to increase control within the organisation were driven by state expectations and not management. I expect similar sentiments to be present among surveyed organisations and for it to be reflected in how they perceive of inter- and intra-organisational competition. Specifically, I expect to find cooperation within and among organisations despite limitations in funding availability and pressures to bureaucratize.

My examination begins with a short literature review on funding for women's organisations in Canada. Next, I present the methods used for data collection and analysis; I detail the survey used and provide a brief justification of the questions being asked of organisations. I then present my analysis and offer conclusions based on what the survey findings say about organisations' relationship to state funding agencies and how these findings can be extended to other organisations to inform best practises for survival during periods of austerity. There are three key findings that came out of this research. First, service organisations are represented more than other types of organisations. Second, there is a discrepancy between reported levels of funding and how organisations perceive government support. Third, survival is not accidental, and organisations are mindful of the strategies they use to procure funding and to survive its absence. Fourth, cooperation with similar organisations is reported more frequently than competition. Lastly, there is a discrepancy between what organisations need and what they are being given.

Literature Review

Canada's federal government has a longstanding tradition of supporting its non-profit sector (LAFOREST 2013, 10) which includes its women's organisations (PAL 1993). Since the early 1980s, however, government policies have been punctuated by funding cutbacks, welfare reform, and austerity measures (CUNNINGHAM, BAINES, SHIELDS, and LEWCHUK 2016, 456;

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LAFORST 2013, 11; PHILIPS, LAFORST, and GRAHAM 2010, 190). The shift to neoliberal policies was troubling for many organisations that used government grants as their primary source of funding (CLÉMENT 2009; PHILIPS, LAFORST, and GRAHAM 2010, 189). In the absence of adequate provincial or other supports, federal cutbacks can not only devastate organisations (CLANCY 2015), but determine their survival.

Provincial and territorial governments are uniquely positioned to step in when funding is cut at the federal level. Some provinces, like Quebec, have had longstanding support for their non-profit sector (MASSON 1999; 2004; 2006; 2012; 2015), while others, like Nova Scotia, have had to pick up the slack over time (KAY and RAMOS 2018). Social services, for example, fall under provincial jurisdiction (BEAUDOIN, PANNETON and MCINTOSH 2020) and how provinces choose to fund social service organisations can affect their population's most vulnerable.

Although some scholars caution that governments can use funding as mechanism to coopt and effectively de-radicalise advocacy groups (CLÉMENT 2009, 174; CORRIGALL-BROWN 2016, 335; PIVEN and CLOWARD 1977: 62), cooptation has not been observed in the Canadian context (RAMOS and RODGERS 2015). A bigger concern for Canadian organisations has been austerity policies that restrict advocacy activity (CAIN and TODD 2008, 281-2) and make it harder to sustain operating costs (LAFORST 2013, 13). The 2006 federal budget was particularly damaging for women's organisations with connections to the women's movement (RODGERS AND KNIGHT 2011, 575-6). The budget removed all financial support formerly available for women's research, advocacy, and lobbying organisations through Status of Women Canada (STRUMM 2015, 108). These changes reduced organisations' capacity to advocate on behalf of their own needs and those of the populations they serve.

Scholars have documented the impact of funding cutbacks on organisations over the past few decades. They have shown that budgetary reductions can put an organisation's survival in jeopardy (SCOTT 2003, ix). Although budget cuts can reduce opportunities for public participation in policymaking (BONISTEEL and GREEN 2005, 1), some scholars have documented instances where organisations will continue to lobby governments even in the absence of adequate funding (c.f. BASHEVKIN 1989; MASSON 2015; 2006). Yet cutbacks can also prevent organisations from advocating on behalf of their target population to prevent losing any more financial support (ILCAN and BASOK 2004, 136; SCOTT 2003, xv). Constraints can make an organisation's target population vulnerable (BERES, CROW, and GOTELL 2009, 154; MORROW, HANKIVSKY and VARCOE 2004, 365). Organisations

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have also observed instances of “defunding” (STRUMM 2015, 107) where programs are not renewed. A similar problem occurs when budgets remain constant and do not keep up with inflation. Stagnant budgets reduce available resources and put an organisation's ability to fulfil its mission at risk (CAIN and TODD 2008, 268; CUNNINGHAM, BAINES, SHIELDS, and LEWCHUK 2016, 460). This is done to negate the negative publicity associated with budget cuts.

The social and political context of funding, however, does not speak to how women's organisations experience and respond to shifts in funding. Cecilia Thun (2014, 211), for instance, found that in the wake of neoliberal policies in Norway the once collaborative relationship between women and the state became characterised by market rationales and decreased state accountability to women's issues. The same has been observed in the Canadian context (BERES, CROW and GOTELL 2009; CUNNINGHAM, BAINES, SHIELDS, and LEWCHUK 2016, 457; DOBROWOLSKY and JENSON 2004, 166; MCKENNA 2015, 49; STRUMM 2015, 101) where scholars have also observed distrust in the federal government among women's groups in reaction to austerity policies (STONE, HAGER, and GRIFFIN 2001, 271). Such perceptions have largely gone unexplored at the provincial level, and for this reason it is worth examining how women's groups perceive and respond to shifting political contexts and funding.

Methods

To understand how women's organisations perceive their relationship with state funding agencies, I designed and administered a survey. The sampling frame for this study was built using data collected for the State Funding for Social Movements² project, led by Dr. Dominique Clément at the University of Alberta, Dr. Catherine Corrigan-Brown at the University of British Columbia, and Dr. Howard Ramos at Dalhousie University. I used the provincial funding data collected by Janelle Young and Howard Ramos from the Nova Scotia Public Accounts which detail financial statements, agencies, and funds spent from 1960 to 2014.³ Kay and Ramos (2018) used these data in their historical analysis of funding trends for women's non-profit organisations in the province. The organisations coded as women's groups include those that “represent or advocate

² For more information on the State Funding for Social Movements project see www.statefunding.ca

³ “Documents dated prior to 1996 were accessed in the Legislative Library, while those dated from 1996 to 2014 were collected from the province's Finance and Treasury Board (2016) website. The grants and contributions from before 1996 were documented using a digital camera. Digital tables in Excel were created using FileMaker Pro, which was used to process both the online records and those captured by camera.” (KAY and RAMOS 2018, 1662)

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on behalf of women's rights, violence against women, abortion rights, child-rearing needs, Indigenous women's rights, women's political interests, legal issues related to women, children and youth, philanthropic groups run by women in the community, housing for women, and groups addressing women's economic interests." (KAY and RAMOS 2018,1662) In addition to these fields, an organisation must also explicitly mention or target women.

The data collected for this project were used to build the sampling frame of women's non-profit organisations in Nova Scotia. The sampling frame is the women's organisations that received funding between 1960 and 2014, and still exist today. There were 138 women's groups that were funded during this period and, of these groups, 66 were no longer in operation and 72 still existed. The 72 organisations still in operation today were invited to participate in the survey. Organisations that have never received funding from the province, including those with unsuccessful applications, are absent from this list.

Organisation directors were contacted via email on May 24, 2017 to inform them of the survey, describe the study and request their participation. There was one follow-up email sent out on June 13, 2017. The survey closed on June 21, 2017. For online questionnaires in the social sciences, Baruch and Holtom's (2008) review of sample sizes from 1607 studies published during the period of 2000 and 2005 finds that the average response rate is 52.7% with a standard deviation of 20.4 percentage points. Twenty-seven of the 72 organisations responded to my survey, a response rate of 37% which is within one standard deviation of the average response rate identified by Baruch and Holtom (2008). Of these 27 organisations, two excluded themselves from the research, 17 completed the survey in its entirety and eight partially completed it. Both complete and incomplete surveys are included in my analysis to maximise sample size for each given question. This means that the data set is unbalanced and, in cases where data is presented graphically, the sample size for that question will be cited.

The survey itself is made up of 27 questions and divided into four sections. First, participants were asked questions about how they identify their organisation and which services and activities their group provides. This self-identification process is important because, in many cases, organisations may otherwise feel pressured to present a certain image to speak to funding priorities. Here, they had the opportunity to indicate exactly what they do, who they help, and what they want to do. The next section includes questions about the organisation's relationship with government funding agencies. Participants were asked about the level of support they receive from both federal and provincial governments, how funding is allocated, and the reasons given for rejected grant

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applications. The third section uses a series of Likert-scale questions to probe how organisations perceive their relationship with funders. In the final section of the survey, organisations were asked if they identified as feminist and were given the opportunity to include additional information that was not covered in the survey. The overall purpose of the survey was to assess how women's groups experience funding—how they cope with shifts in funding, what the process of acquiring grants entails, and general opportunities and barriers they encounter when applying. The collected data were processed and cleaned using Excel and Stata 14. Quotations come from open-ended questions which were coded by theme. Themes were developed from the literature and include cooperation, competition, strategy, government priorities, core funding, and project-based funding. The quantitative data are analysed using tabular and graphical analysis in the section that follows.

Results and Discussion

The survey results reported here are based on the responses of the 25 organisations that completed it entirely or partially. A number of findings that came out of the survey are discussed here. First, not all the organisations invited to participate in the survey felt their organisation's identity or experiences fit the survey's target population. Following the initial email invitation, representatives from two organisations contacted me to exclude themselves from the research. The first organisation was a sexual assault centre and, while women may be overrepresented among their clients, they serve all genders and all Nova Scotians. They also commented that they were the only sexual assault centre in the province that offers support and services for all genders. They were also motivated to exclude themselves from the survey because they felt they received less funding than similar organisations that are women-only. This funding disparity could be explained by society's tendency to silence and dismiss instances of male sexual assault despite the thousands of Canadian men and boys being victimized annually (ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES 2020). This finding reifies concerns voiced by participants later that there is a disconnect between the actual needs of a population and what funding agencies perceive.

The second organisation felt that it would not have any meaningful contributions to make to the survey because it no longer applies for federal or provincial funding. The group was in the sampling frame because it received a provincial grant in the 1960s. In lieu of state support, the group now relies on private donations and individual incomes. The shift to private funding follows literature that suggests that unstable government funding can encourage

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organisations to pursue alternative sources of funding (CORRIGALL-BROWN 2016, 331).

The second finding is that social service groups represent the largest proportion of organisation type among both those that completed the survey and those that were invited to participate (see Figure 1 which reports proportions by organisation type of all groups that completed the survey). The higher representation of social service groups is expected, given literature that points to the importance of service organisations within the women's movement, as well as literature which indicates that government entities more often fund social service organisations (STRUMM 2015; BRODIE and BAKKER 2007; EIKENBERRY and KLUVER 2004). The need for service organisations is also most acute among vulnerable populations and it only increases during periods of austerity (LAFOREST 2013, 12).

A number of organisations identified differently than the initial coding scheme. One group identified as “International” while three groups identified as

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“Other.” It was not possible for the initial coding scheme to be exhaustive, as the way organisations choose to present themselves online and in grant applications is not necessarily indicative of how they conceive of themselves and their services.

Organisations were also given the opportunity to detail the specific activities of their group. Of the participants that responded to this question, six offered services of support for women and children fleeing abuse and violence, eight groups provided housing or shelter of some kind, and 12 organisations offered social support through counselling, networking and referrals, as well as accompaniment to appointments. Six organisations' cited activities related to physical health and safety while two organisations engaged in professional development activities, and three groups offered general community programming for women and girls. Interestingly, these activities are all linked to the delivery of social services.

The third finding from the survey data is that the province provides more financial support than the federal government. Figure 2 reports the proportion of organisations by the primary source of funding they receive. Approximately two-thirds of participants report that the provincial government is their primary source of funding. Given the focus in state funding literature on the federal level (BASHEVKIN 1989; MACDONALD 1995; MITCHELL 2015), this finding reinforces the need for more research to be done at the subnational level. Of those citing the provincial government as their primary funder, ten organisations indicated that the provincial government covers 75% or more of their operating costs. When federal funding is considered, only five groups report receiving federal funding and, of these groups, just two report having 75% or more of their operating costs covered by the federal government. The absence of substantial federal support is in line with literature that observes the downloading of responsibilities from the federal to provincial governments (BRODIE and BAKKER 2007; RODGERS and KNIGHT 2011) and consistent with expectations and responsibilities attached to provincial jurisdiction (BEAUDOIN, PANNETON and MCINTOSH 2020). All but three organisations said that a portion of their operating costs are covered by private donations, an area not considered in the state funding literature, and one group indicated that all its operating costs were covered by private donations. This follows literature on state funding that suggests non-profit organisations are increasingly seeking other sources of funding in the absence of adequate government support, whether support is sought from different levels of government or from private donors (CORRIGALL-BROWN 2016, 331; CUNNINGHAM, BAINES, SHIELDS and LEWCHUK 2016, 462).

Organisations were asked about how they perceive their relationship with funding agencies. First, participants were asked to answer an open-ended question on strategies used in funding applications. Of the 11 participants that responded, four organisations commented on the need to respond to perceived government funding priorities by shaping their application(s) accordingly. This is consistent with literature that indicates non-profit organisations carefully craft their grant application(s), mindfully selecting their words and aligning their objectives with funder priorities (KNIGHT and RODGERS 2012, 277). Interestingly, two organisations commented on how they collaborate with other organisations to acquire funding from government bodies. Existing literature on non-profit organisations seeking government funding generally focuses on competition amongst organisations (EIKENBERRY and KLUVER 2004, 138; CULLEN 2015, 417; MERRETT 2001, 409). Instead, this finding is consistent with literature that takes a feminist approach to organisation theory and proposes feminist organisations are inherently non-hierarchical and thus more open to cooperation within and without (CALÁS and SMIRCICH 2014; CUNNINGHAM, BAINES, SHIELDS and LEWCHUK 2016; EISENSTEIN 1991; FERGUSON 1984; GILLIGAN 1982; IANELLO 1992; KANTER 1993).

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Another organisation responded that the province no longer funds specialised employment services for women and that they must access funding through another organisation that submits grant applications on their behalf. This is another approach to funding not examined much by state funding literature.

The relationship between organisations and funding was explored further with questions about barriers and accessibility. Participants were given the opportunity to outline why, if at all, grant applications were rejected at the provincial level through an open-ended question. Eight of 19 organisations indicated that they have had a grant application rejected. In terms of reasons why their applications were rejected, all organisations reported at least one of the following sentiments: the government did not have enough money available to fund them at the time of the application, or their application did not fit government funding priorities. Interestingly, one organisation indicated that because it receives funding from the Department of Health it is prohibited from applying for funding from other government departments. This can be problematic if the funding they receive is not meeting the needs of the organisation.

Organisations were also asked through another open-ended question if they face any obstacles generally when it comes to funding. When asked about general barriers to funding, the consensus among the organisations was that budgetary restrictions pose significant barriers in the funding process. One organisation commented that "because another agency [like ours] is funded under that particular program, it eliminates us from being able to access funds, no matter how poorly the proponent is providing services under that funding stream." This is troubling because it indicates that the government operates under the assumption that one organisation can meet the needs of an entire population, an assumption that is negated by the existence of a second organisation that provides similar services. Similarly, some literature notes that smaller organisations are less likely to receive government support than larger ones (e.g. STONE, HAGER and GRIFFIN 2001, 277), a sentiment echoed by two other organisations in the sample.

Another concern voiced by organisations that responded to the survey was related to how funds are regulated. One representative noted that a "lack of available funding for operating costs as opposed to program costs" was a barrier. This was echoed by another representative who commented that "funding from provincial [government] is designated for staff salaries [...and there is a] minimal amount [of funding] allotted for operational budget." Similarly, one organisation reported that: "Our funding now comes to us through another community organisation that is not interested in viewing policies and programs through a

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gender lens, so they are making funding decisions that diminish the ability of the organisation to provide effective services for women in our community.” This suggests that funding agencies, whether they are federal or provincial, have strings attached to funding given.

There is a feeling among some participants that their client-base also affects funding availability. One representative of an organisation commented that “the provincial government funds us approximately 40% less than the male facilities. We have to negotiate every year to receive parity funding.” Another respondent commented: “we are not a ‘sexy’ organisation to support. We don’t raise money for children with cancer – our clients are women that society wants to punish and throw away.” For both groups, their client-base is an obstacle for successful funding applications. Research by Meinhard and Foster (2002, 25) establishes this as an issue not limited to women’s organisations in Nova Scotia but as one that is felt across the country.

Organisations were asked about how funding has changed, if at all, since the last 2015 federal and 2013 provincial elections. While the governing party in the provincial government did not change in the 2013 election, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Conservative government were replaced with Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government in the 2015 federal election. The newly elected government set expectations among women’s groups that they would see an increase in funding under their tenure (Smith 2016) when Prime Minister Trudeau explained that he chose to make half his cabinet women by boldly declaring “because it’s 2015” (Chartrand 2015). Ten organisations commented on a change in funding at the federal level and of these, seven felt the change was for the better while two felt it was for the worse. Three organisations observed an increase in federal funding while one group noted a decline. Interestingly, one participant commented that Pan-Atlantic projects have become more of a focus of federal funding agencies, which is an obstacle for groups with an in-province client-base. When asked about how they anticipate federal funding to change in the next five years, organisations expressed views that were both optimistic and pessimistic. One commented that the “current government likes national policies/program [which] may exclude the Atlantic provinces for regional opportunities.” Another expects funding opportunities to increase, but not in terms of covering operating costs. Others noted that given the present focus of the federal government on the laws around sexual assaults, and service availability for mental health and addictions, there is likely to be an increase in funding for organisations operating in those areas.

At the provincial level, opinions on how funding has changed since the 2013 election are mixed. Eight organisations noted that funding has changed since

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the last election, with four feeling the change was for the better, and four for the worse. The four representatives who saw a change for the better mentioned the introduction of funding opportunities under the province's new Sexual Violence Strategy (SVS). Interestingly, one organisation voiced concern that the SVS funding is short-term and that "there is no long-term commitment from government to sustain the work." This concern follows literature that finds that funding for organisations has become increasingly short-term and precarious (RODGERS and KNIGHT 2011). The same participant also noted that these grants are for work in a highly specific area. It is unsurprising that organisations that do not engage in this work are less optimistic. Two representatives whose organisations are geared toward professional development note that the province's support is now non-existent:

Specialized employment services that have successfully provided career development services for women, African Nova Scotians, and Persons with Disabilities in Nova Scotia for more than 30 years can no longer apply for provincial funding through Labour and Advanced Education to continue to provide services specifically for those disadvantaged groups. Those services are now included as part of the Nova Scotia Works Employment Service Centres.

In terms of the future of funding at the provincial level, the views expressed were generally pessimistic. Organisations expressed concerns that more government responsibilities will be downloaded to non-profit organisations without funding being increased accordingly. In addition to this concern, some respondents fear that misplaced government priorities, a decline in funding opportunities and the absence of core funding will also worsen in the coming years. One group felt that funding will only change if a new government is elected. Another expressed fear that "funding for women's programs will be included in larger agreements and the decisions regarding programming will no longer be made by organisations with women's best interests in mind." Although previous literature demonstrates that the clientele of women's organisations have interests and concerns that are unique to them (MEINHARD and FOSTER 2003), there is concern that funding will not be gender-sensitive.

Table 1 explores levels of agreement with a series of questions regarding federal and provincial funding. Respondents generally expressed dissatisfaction with current levels of provincial and federal support. There appears to be a consensus that the federal government provides more financial support for women's groups than the province. This is inconsistent with the proportion of

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operating costs covered by the federal and provincial government reported earlier in the survey, which suggests that perceptions differ from actual levels of support.

Participants were in disagreement over whether they feel they can engage in advocacy activities without repercussions from funders. Eight groups agree that they can advocate sufficiently on behalf of their target population while seven expressed concern about losing government support over their advocacy activity.

Table 1
Perceptions of State Funding, Likert-Scale Questions

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	D/K
The provincial government provides adequate support for women's organizations, in general.	6	7	1	1	0	2
The provincial government provides adequate support for women's organizations like mine.	7	5	3	1	0	1
The federal government provides adequate support for women's organizations, in general.	4	6	4	0	1	2
The provincial government provides more support for women's organizations than the federal government.	3	3	3	6	0	2
My organization can provide more services today than it could when it was initially founded.	1	1	1	10	3	1
My organization engages in sufficient advocacy efforts on behalf of our target population.	1	3	4	4	4	1
My organization is able to engage in sufficient advocacy without fear of losing government support.	3	4	3	4	2	1

n=17

The final question of the survey offered respondents an opportunity to add additional comments on anything not covered in the survey. A theme among responses to not only this question, but to others throughout the survey, is the importance of inter-organisation collaboration. Once again, this departs from traditional organisational theory which focuses on competition between organisations for funding.

Partnership with other organisations, however, is not without its problems. For example, one group commented that the government is encouraging women's groups to partner with for-profit organisations to access funding. This is not surprising given that some scholars have observed similar partnerships being established in other areas of the non-profit sector (EIKENBERRY and KLUVER 2004, 138). The issue, however, is that there needs to be consensus among partners in order to apply for funding, with one participant noting that "unless the partner organisation supports the need for funding for women's services, the ability to access [money] from those organisations that control funding agreements can become incredibly difficult. Our partner has voted down our every request for [funding] for women's

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programming.” This echoes earlier concerns that funding entities or those involved in the funding process are not concerned with gender-specific needs. The concern that both the federal and provincial government harbour misplaced priorities surfaces in more places than one.

Another participant followed up on the questions regarding advocacy, commenting that many women's organisations' activities extend beyond what their funding covers. This is accomplished through seeking other grants and fundraising. The process of applying for grants is labour and time intensive, however, and is often fruitless. They also noted that grants are often “whatever the flavour of the time is and [are] not necessarily what the people [women's groups] serve need.” A similar sentiment was expressed by another organisation:

Recent changes to department oversight in our province has [sic] caused significant issues with funding advocacy, accountability and oversight. The Status of Women oversee our funding and [are] not skilled at this, as they have never done it in the past, so they are making some crucial mistakes, which result in them damaging well established relationships from the past.

Discontent with the provincial government is rife throughout the responses. One organisation expressed concern that the provincial government is downloading more and more responsibilities to women's non-profit organisations without increasing funding accordingly. This is a process that is well-established in the Canadian context (BROWN and TROUTT 2004, 5; ABU LABAN 2008, 175) and linked to the shift to arm's length regulation under neoliberalism (CERNY 2010, 148). Another suggested that the provincial government does not adequately address the economic and social inequalities endured by women who need social service groups. Others are concerned that their constituency's needs are not being addressed, one group comments:

The Province's ONE Report⁴ excludes women entirely, especially SMEs [small-to-medium enterprises]. No target was set to build a strong economy based on women owned businesses who are the fastest growing sector in Canada. With over 23,000 self-employed women, the NS government should recognize the potential by investing in organisations

⁴ The Nova Scotia ONE Report, also referred to as the Ivany Report, is an economic development plan presented by the Commission on Building Our New Economy. The report contains 19 goals intended to address the economic, demographic, and social challenges facing the province. (THE NOVA SCOTIA COMMISSION ON BUILDING OUR NEW ECONOMY 2014)

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that can assist them. Federally, the funding is supportive and continues to make an investment not only here in NS but across Canada.

The perceived lack of provincial support stands in stark contrast to the level of support observed by Kay and Ramos (2018) in their historical analysis of provincial funding for women's organisations in the province. The perceived need for more funding documented by organisations surveyed demonstrates a discrepancy between what funding data tells us and how funding is experienced. Although participants were particularly critical of the provincial government, they did convey that funding at both levels of government is insufficient in some capacity.

Conclusions

Nova Scotia, like other provinces in Canada's Atlantic Region, is a 'have-not' province; it has relied on deficit financing (CLANCY 2015), has one of the largest aging populations (STATISTICS CANADA 2019a), and boasts the highest percentage of low-income residents (STATISTICS CANADA 2019b). All these trends suggest that the province's population is more likely to need the social services provided by non-profit organisations, which means that the closure of these groups would likely be devastating. It is for this reason that I examined how organisations perceive federal and provincial funding and, more importantly, how they navigate it.

Following the findings of Kay and Ramos (2018), the results from the survey data presented here demonstrate that, of the women's organisations surveyed, groups that provide social services consistently received the bulk of funding in Nova Scotia. This is consistent with literature that suggests government funding agencies fund social service organisations more than other groups (c.f. KNIGHT and RODGERS 2012). Organisations that emphasize their position as service providers are likely less susceptible to cutbacks associated with austerity at the federal level if they seek funding for services provincially. The type of services being offered is likewise important, organisations whose services reflect government priorities are more likely to be funded.

The survey results presented here indicate that organisations that participated perceive government support as inadequate at both federal and provincial levels. While participants received the bulk of their funding from the provincial government (KAY and RAMOS 2018), federal support was viewed more favourably. This finding indicates an inconsistency between how respondents perceive federal and provincial funding, and how funding is actually distributed, which suggests that, while funding may objectively increase, the

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subjective experience of the group being funded provides insight into the adequacy of what is being provided. Given the timing of my survey, this positive view of the federal government may be attributed to the change in power from Conservative to Liberal in 2015, which gave women's groups hope that funding would improve (SMITH 2016). The downloading of federal responsibilities to provincial governments without a corresponding increase in financial support (BRODIE and BAKKER 2007; RODGERS and KNIGHT 2011) may account for negative attitudes toward the province. This process might allow the federal government to avoid culpability in the eyes of its fundees given that it is provincial actors at the other end of defunding and rejected grant applications. It is therefore conceivable that the Nova Scotia government would receive more criticisms from these organisations.

A number of respondents reported difficulties acquiring both federal and provincial funding. Many groups indicated that they strategically wrote grant applications to speak to government priorities. The problem with this funding model, based on the responses reported here, is that there is a discrepancy between government priorities and organisations' needs. Some respondents indicate that funding agencies are insensitive to gender-specific issues; others were concerned that while their responsibilities to their target population grow, funding is not being increased accordingly.

A notable finding in the survey was that some participants indicated that they cooperate with other women's organisations to help ensure survival. This deviates from the focus on competition in literature on inter-organisational relationships and contract competition (CULLEN 2015; EIKENBERRY and KLUVER 2004; MERRETT 2001). The success of inter-organisational cooperation, however, has been observed in other areas of the non-profit sector (EIKENBERRY and KLUVER 2004, 138). This suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the relationships between organisations.

This research makes three important contributions. First, my findings make a modest contribution to feminist perspectives on organisations. The women's groups surveyed here indicate that they work with and/or support other organisations, which confirms the view that women's groups are not motivated by hierarchy and competition and that the tensions they experience are between themselves and funding agencies. The second contribution is more substantive than it is theoretical. The survey data show how grant applications are strategically written by many of the women's organisations surveyed. The strategies used ranged from adapting to funding priorities to working with other organisations in their field to developing a support network with similar

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organisations. Given that these strategies have been successful thus far in keeping these organisations afloat, this knowledge can be used to improve other groups' odds of survival. Finally, there is a discrepancy between what organisations and their constituencies need and what funding agencies are providing. For one group, this meant receiving less funding because their target population did not look the way the government thought it should; for another, it meant not being able to meet the needs of its constituents because the government already funded an organisation like theirs; and, for almost all participants, it meant increased difficulties covering operating costs because of the rise of project-based funding. The needs of organisations and those whom they serve are not being met by the current funding system; this is therefore an area where consultation between the non-profit sector and funding agencies is paramount to move forward.

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