

Breakout Session 2C: Collaborative Fiscal Policy: Opportunities and Issues

February 25, 2025

3:15 PM - 4:45 PM

Moderator: Anne-Marie Miller, Implementation Officer, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council

Speakers:

- Colin Salter— Partner, Pape Salter Teillet LLP
- Michael Welters— Partner, Aldridge + Rosling LLP
- Wilfred Cootes— Chief, Uchucklesaht Tribe Government

Michael Welters:

- Provided an overview of the Collaborative Fiscal Policy process, emphasizing the history and challenges faced before the policy was developed.
- Explained the initial dissatisfaction with the federal funding process and the need for a more transparent and collaborative approach.
- Described the slow and challenging process of building trust and understanding between Indigenous governments and the federal team.
- The collaborative process involved multiple attempts and failures, but eventually led to successes such as stopping own-source revenue deductions and closing socioeconomic gaps.
- The new governance funding model, developed in 2019, is highlighted as a significant achievement, based on third-party data and transparent calculations.
- Mentioned the impact of COVID-19 on the process and the shift to virtual meetings, which eventually led to discussions on stimulus funding and housing needs.
- Discussed the success of the housing needs report, which led to specific funding for modern treaty governments in the 2021 budget.
- The collaborative process has also led to improvements in infrastructure funding, allowing Indigenous governments to upgrade and maintain assets.
- Acknowledged the challenges faced, such as the failure of the language model, but emphasized the importance of trust and collaboration in overcoming these obstacles.
- The process has also involved renewed efforts on language and lands and resources funding, with ongoing work in these areas.

Colin Salter:

- Shared his experience, focusing on the mandate problem faced by Indigenous governments and the lack of funding for infrastructure.
- Described the frustration of having no mandate to address basic needs like infrastructure and the eventual growth of the collaborative process.
- The process involved a shift from a top-down approach to a collaborative one, where Indigenous governments and the federal team worked together to address needs.
- Highlighted the importance of building relationships and trust, which led to a more balanced conversation about expenditure needs.

Chief Wilfred Cootes:

- Provided his perspective as the elected Chief of the Uchucklesaht Tribe Government, emphasizing the importance of unity and collaboration.
- Describes the historical context of his nation and the challenges faced in the past, including the threat of disbandment.
- The collaborative process has allowed his Nation to build a full-time executive branch and improve government functions.
- Emphasized the importance of maintaining the collaborative process and the relationships built through it, despite potential changes in government.

Discussion:

- Discussion on the resilience and future of the collaborative fiscal process.
- Michael and Colin discussed the resilience of the collaborative fiscal process and the importance of long-term agreements to ensure stability.
- The panelists expressed optimism about the process's ability to withstand changes in government, emphasizing the robust relationships and models developed.
- The discussion included the importance of aligning Indigenous government priorities with federal priorities to ensure continued success.
- The panelists also addressed the potential impact of changes in government and the need to communicate the value of the collaborative process to new leaders.

Q&A:

- The panelists responded to questions from the audience, addressing topics such as the own-source revenue moratorium and the importance of language revitalization.
- Michael and Colin provided detailed explanations of the governance funding model and the stages of infrastructure funding.
- The discussion includes the potential impact of changes in government and the importance of maintaining the collaborative approach.
- The panelists emphasized the need for continued collaboration and the importance of addressing the needs of Indigenous governments to ensure long-term success.