

“Public Constraints on the Church’s work in the voluntary sector for a sustainable economy”
[Delivered orally, slightly edited version]

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INTRODUCTION:

Many Christians and people of faith are inspired by the idea of a “sustainable economy,” that is, to dream dreams and envision images of:

- an economy that is actually based on care and enough;
- that prioritizes the immediate needs of the most vulnerable,
- closes the growing gap between rich and poor,
- an economy that is based on long-term ecological sustainability,
- is mindful of the needs of future generations,
- and that removes factors that feed cycles of violent conflict.¹

My role this morning is to follow up Sister Priscilla Solomon’s striking and incisive faith-reflections on a sustainable economy by exploring the current political *constraints* and *opportunities* faced by churches and the voluntary sector [faith-based and other NGOs] in working for a sustainable economy. I’ll explore 4 constraints.

1. The constraint of established expectations (and structures)

The recent financial crises (2008-2009) and depression brought into *plain view* the expectation of our governments as to what role the churches ought to play in economic life (a view often shared by other political parties, cultural leaders and even some churches).

The financial crises involved a serious loss of liquidity in the financial sectors, which threatened to halt investment, increase unemployment, thus slashing aggregate demand and consumer spending. The economy was spinning into a depression.

The world suddenly rediscovered John Maynard Keynes; and in Canada, virtually all national political leaders and parties rallied around his approach. The neo-Keynesian approach to the growing recession that was employed, gives *government the role* of increasing spending, by borrowing if necessary. This increases aggregate consumer demand, creates jobs, and sets in motion recovery for the financial sector and the economy as whole.

As you know, the Canadian government borrowed billions of dollars and choose to direct its investment largely into physical infrastructure, along with some sectoral adjustments, housing construction, and support for the financial sector, in other words, government shored up the existing mainstream economy.²

The *role of business*, assumed by this approach, is simply to get on with entrepreneurial activity in order to maximize profits, and thus boost Canada's GDP growth.

And, what *role* was implied for *the churches and faith-based NGOs*? They were expected by many to *charitably rescue* those who fall through the cracks of the government's *Action Plan* and existing government services.

This *service* role is, in fact, a classic role that the church has willingly played over the ages, and it has generally done so effectively. Its central motive has been "the love of God and neighbour," that is, "We give, because much has been given to us." In downtown Edmonton, my hometown, a vast network of church and faith-based-voluntary, non-profit agencies provide outstanding social, health, housing and other services to the poor and most-disadvantaged. Beyond this, faith-based agencies provide a variety of social, health and cultural services to the general public.

The government's expectation that churches, NGOs and business would simply follow their established roles, while the government fixed the *traditional economy* through its established approach of public spending on infrastructure, really constrained the churches and voluntary sector's ability to publicly advocate for other, alternative approaches that transition us to a *sustainable economy*.

2. The constraint of "clashing views of the roles" of government and church

Of course, there is another significant "stream of thought" in Ottawa that suggests government should also play a role in *redistribution*.

During the recent financial crash, no one less than (world-renown economist) Amartya Sen reminded us that, "While Keynes was very involved with the question of how to *increase aggregate income*; he was relatively less engaged in analyzing problems of *unequal distribution of wealth and of social welfare*."³

Many are asking whether government stimulus spending should have aimed to do more than "increase aggregate income." Shouldn't government's role also include concern over the redistributive impact of its stimulus spending? Shouldn't it also help reverse the "growing gap between rich and poor"?

Instead of simply priming the mainstream economy through spending on things like physical infrastructure, which bolster the traditional form of economy, shouldn't government have aimed to create the just social infrastructure—e.g. food, suitable housing, social support, and training—needed to enable and equip people, families and communities to participate in good, long-term, full time jobs? (See very helpful CPJ paper).⁴

In this view, the role of government involves a greater degree of social justice, that is, repairing market flaws in a market economy through redistributive policies. By and large, the *role of business* continues to be entrepreneurial activity to maximize profit, but with added elements of corporate responsibility.

Notably, the *church's role* expands beyond *servicing* those "falling through the cracks," to *advocating for justice, i.e. for structural change in society*. The church takes on a prophetic voice, calling government to see its role involves creating policy that addresses the needs of the marginalized, those whom the Bible identifies as the "widow, the poor, and the orphan."

Here, I believe, the churches run into the constraint of a 'polarized and tense debate!' How do churches advocate that government accept a redistributive role, when the debate is already deeply polarized? The government, that would have to adopt this role, is already committed to propping up the traditional economy—as, for example, the "Calgary School of political thought"⁵ encouraged it to do—and is asking churches and the voluntary sector to simply 'stick' to *service*, and stay out of *advocacy*?

This polarized debate puts a chill on 'policy advocacy' and public debate.

3. The constraint of the "normal & self-evident"

The first two constraints are very important.

In fact, some of the most intense conflicts in the West, over the past 200 years, have centred on the distribution of the *burdens of wealth creation* and the *distribution of its fruits*.⁶ Who ought to contribute more—workers, business, government—and who ought to benefit more from growing wealth?

Has our proper concern and attention for this problem, however, led us to overlook a deeper and more profound problem, namely, **the tyranny of the “normal and self-evident”?**

“A view from the outside” [Adapted from Bob Goudzwaard]⁷:

In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault argues that sometimes we are so trapped in the normal and self-evident that we need to attain “a view from the outside”⁸ to regain our bearings.

[Slide: Painting, here:]

Foucault uses the 1656 painting: ‘*The Maids of Honour*,’ (Spanish: *Las Meninas*, by Diego Velázquez.)

While the Spanish crown-princess is in the middle, everyone—including the painter himself [at the left side of the painting]—seems to be looking at you, the observer of this scene. We interpret the scene as though we are the *centre of attention*.

But closer inspection reveals a mirror on the back wall. In it, we notice the Spanish royal couple are entering the room.

Suddenly, we realize we have completely misinterpreted this scene. The looks of the maids of honour and the painter are not meant for us, but for the king and the queen! We are actually irrelevant to the story and scene in the painting.

If the Christian community takes a “view from the outside” at the current traditional economy, if we step outside our current “normal” situation, and beyond the divisive (although important) debate over redistribution, what do we see?

I suggest we would see three things:

First, we would see that our debate is not, first and foremost, about a *sustainable* economy at all!

The redistribution debate is framed by, and within, an economic system premised on the assumption of **continuous rapid growth**, not sustainability. Almost all governments, political parties, businesses, unions and mass media, want more economic growth. Virtually all ideologies believe it makes us wealthier, increases consumerism, and they argue, ultimately guarantees human happiness. Growth also provides the tax basis needed to fund social services, health, education, welfare, employment insurance, and culture. Since most everyone seems to agree on economic growth, our most intense disputes are over distribution—who bears the burdens and gets the benefits of increased wealth?

Second, taking a “view from the outside” helps us see the linkages between constant economic growth and the ***unprecedented, interlocking global challenges we face:***

- ✚ **Resource depletion:** [the world’s growing economies are leading us to run short of many key resources, including oil and water.]
- ✚ **Wasteful consumerist lifestyles**, mostly built on *artificially-induced* needs and desires.
- ✚ **‘Peak oil’ & looming fossil fuel shortages:** We enter the era of *Xtreme energy*, where fossil fuels are harder, more expensive, and much more damaging to secure, e.g. heavy oil, shale oil, gas hydrates, coal, and of course bitumen. We are already starting to use “*Xtreme acts of*

recovery,” e.g. drilling for Arctic oil and gas, deep drilling, **mountain top removal for coal**, and I would add, open pit mining and in situ recovery of bitumen. [Gulf oil spill!]

- ✚ A ‘view from outside,’ helps us see an **industrial food production system** that demands unsustainable high levels of energy inputs, such as petroleum-based fertilizers, pesticides/herbicides, and fuels.
- ✚ A **growing human population** that is aspiring to attain the same destructive and wasteful lifestyle desperately grasped by the rich global North.
- ✚ **Poverty and hunger in the global south:** [demands a more equitable sharing of resources.]
- ✚ **Global human migrations:** [flowing to wealthy zones where they might secure access to the resources needed to live.]
- ✚ **Increasing levels of pollution** of air, water and land.
- ✚ **Declining populations of many animal species, threatening extinctions:** [declining ecological integrity of many regions and oceans on earth.]
- ✚ **GHG and climate change:** [directly linked to fossil fuel consumption, including the oil sands].

Viewing these interlocking challenges “from the outside” makes clear that we are at a crossroads; either we immediately begin refashioning our economy into a sustainable economy or we face the consequences (see the Stern Review).⁹

Third, by developing a larger view, beyond the constraint of the “normal,” we would see that society’s single-minded pursuit of economic growth *is actually based on faith-like assumptions*.

This is especially important for churches to see; we who specialize in the role of faith in everyday life!

In contrast to the Biblical narrative—of God’s good creation, the spoiling effects of sin, and the liberating and renewing of creation through Christ—the narrative inspiring our blind pursuit of economic growth is based on the Enlightenment “faith in progress.” It goes something like this...

- ✚ Humans are capable of creating a utopia of ultimate freedom and complete happiness on earth.
- ✚ As rational animals, we can develop complete comprehensive scientific understanding of nature.
- ✚ This knowledge can be used through new technologies to fully exploit, master and reshape nature.
- ✚ The unbridled free market—although some ideological variations want it corrected or planned by the state—can produce an endless stream of material wealth.
- ✚ This will guarantee our ultimate goal of human happiness on earth.

What’s the message here?

Perhaps the most important *constraint* on achieving a sustainable economy has been our failure to see the bigger picture of what is happening in our culture, and thus, *our complicity* in society’s obsession with economic growth and faith in progress. While properly concerned about ‘service’ and ‘advocacy for redistribution,’ churches and voluntary sector need to discern the deeper structural and faith depth-levels of our current economy and society.

If I am correct in this observation, the church’s work for a sustainable economy should be rooted in *confession and repentance* and *commitment to a new way of life*. This must begin in our faith communities, because we too are complicit, to various degrees, in society’s faith in progress and obsessive commitment to economic growth.

Recognizing and responding to the ‘faith character’ of our current economy can be liberating in at least two ways.

First, we will recognize that we do not trespass on an otherwise secular or neutral public square and market when we advocate a sustainable economy! The traditional economy is already religiously charged (we might say)! Churches are not imposing the Gospel onto foreign territory; rather *we simply follow it into a public conversation and debate that involves many faiths*.¹⁰ We need to ask: is it really true, as the Enlightenment faith in progress claims, that it can produce the utopian dream of happiness on this earth? Let’s talk!

Second, recognizing the ‘faith character’ of our current economy allows us to shift the public conversation to the deeper issues of life; in this case the key question: *What is the economy for, anyways?!*

I want to argue, that the economy exists, not to secure profits or produce more and more things, but to *care* for all the genuine *needs* of the human household, so all people *great and small* can fulfill their multiple callings in life, and do so in harmony with the gifts and requirements of God’s good creation itself.

4. Fourth, and finally, the church’s work for a sustainable economy can also be *constrained* by the *contested justifications for ‘constitutional democracy’* that co-exist in our culture.

Recently, Marci McDonald published *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada*, in which she is reported to claim that the Harper government is “dismantling key democratic institutions.”

I think this conclusion is simply wrong. I have no doubt the current government & MPs support the liberal democratic state.

I do think, however, that *how* we justify, and *what* we believe about, liberal democracy [I prefer the term *constitutional democracy*] does make very important practical differences in how we practice and steward democracy. Just as I argued above, that our deepest convictions shape our preferred ‘economy,’ so too the different ways Canadians understand and justify democracy can result in the divergent operation of, and outcomes within, our political system!

Let’s quickly examine only two of many justifications/visions for constitutional democracy in our society. [There is practically, of course, overlap between, and wide variance within, each position.]

On the one hand, the Enlightenment ‘faith in progress’—we identified above—assumes *autonomous* [auto-nomos = a law to one self] *free individuals* who may *will* what they wish. *Democracy* is seen simply as a *mechanism*, that serves to translate the “will of the people” into policy outcomes. The ‘liberal’ side, of the ‘liberal democratic’ form of government, is designed to protect the free exercise of individual will from government oppression, by guaranteeing liberties, rights, and the rule of law. This liberal democratic mechanism is believed to be part and parcel, once again, of enabling limitless progress in society.

In the end, democracy in this viewpoint becomes a realm in which ‘majorities’ impose their will, or at least ‘elected majority governments’ claim the legitimate-moral right to impose their will; at least until they loose the next election.

On the other hand, some Christians put forward a different justification of constitutional democracy.¹¹ There can be, and clearly is, overlap in these positions. But differences also emerge.

I would argue, for example, that: We are *all created in the image of God* and thus have the capacity to assume responsibility for doing justice in the public realm. No one is *by nature a ruler*, and thus no one holds a natural *right* to rule. Thus, rulers should rule only with the consent of their fellow citizens, as exercised through an equal voice in elections. But, we are *all limited and fallen*, so we can abuse power. Thus *accountability* must be built into the core of any political system; that is, citizens can and must demand governments rule in accord with justice.

In this viewpoint, democracy is the realm in which we *seek out the common good*, and citizens and governments together *discern what the government's public justice role in achieving this common good* ought to be. The space, process and institutions of constitutional democracy are, therefore, defined not by the imposition of a majority's or a government's *will*, but by a communal discussion and debate over achieving the common good and doing governmental public justice.

I'm not close enough to action on the Hill to know for sure, but from the 'safe' distance of Edmonton, I see signs that different, sometimes conflicting, visions and justifications for constitutional democracy are at play in shaping several issues and constraints:

a) Private interest over public interest

These different justifications for constitutional democracy show up in the attitude that it's acceptable to hold a government's [or political party's] *private interest* in re-election, above the pursuit of the *public interest*.

We have seen this attitude from time-to-time in almost all recent governments, and the current one is no exception. This may be one source of the oft-reported problem in which MPs are reported to say: "If you criticize us, don't expect us to publicly fund you (or your advocacy)." This attitude threatens to undermine the very thrust of constitutional democracy, namely, the discernment and implementation of publicly just measures to further the common good.

b) Public funding for interest groups representing "the most vulnerable"

The original idea behind this measure was that *democracy is a contest in which interest groups pressure government to respond to their demands*—those with the least resources to do so, in the name of fairness, should receive public support for their interest groups.¹² In the past, groups representing women, first nations, and the poor and marginalized, have had interest groups funded by government, e.g. Assembly of First Nations, NAConSW, NAPO, etc.

Governments have held different positions on this practice over the years. The current government is withdrawing this funding from these interest groups, reportedly as part of its official deficit-cutting policy.

If constitutional democracy is understood as free individuals exerting pressure to achieve what they will, removing public subsidies from groups to level the playing field to individual wills, seems from some angles to make sense. But, some churches have strongly argued that this public funding should be maintained in the name of justice. The playing field is heavily skewed by powerful organizations, especially corporations. I agree with this latter position, with the caveat that we need also to recognize that no interest group is neutral; i.e. the needs and interests of marginalized groups may also be contested. Perhaps one strategy for maintaining this public funding, is to have it go hand in hand with the suggestion that marginalized groups be free to form two, or possibly a plurality of, interest groups to represent their interests to government. Instead on one select organization, all legitimate organizations rooted in a fundable marginalized group, could be eligible for equitable public funding, in proportion to the organization's membership-strength within that group. Furthermore, public funding should also be made available to civil society groups and NGOs who develop, and advocate for, *public interest approaches to public policy* that not only advance the interests of

marginalized groups, but also show how they can be harmonized together with the many other valid and competing interests.

c) Aversion to judicializing politics & policy-making

The different visions and justifications for constitutional democracy also come to the surface in different view of the role of courts.

We have heard media reports that the government is “dismantling human rights policies and mechanisms,” weakening adherence to international rights agreements, and so on.

These are serious matters. Students at The King’s University College, where I teach, have participated in public campaigns to demand Canada treat Omar Kahdr with the justice and procedural fairness owed to all people because they are created in the image of God. These have been internationally recognized and affirmed by the UN. The Supreme Court agrees this is a problem and has requested the Government of Canada urgently address this case.

There are complex pros and cons to the judicialization of politics, however. Deep-seated disagreements exist in Canadian society on the proper role of the courts, and these deserve to be openly debated. Indeed, scholars in virtually all ideological corners have both supported and criticized the judicialization of politics. The Quebec case relating to the privatizing of medicare¹³ shows that the judicial knife can cut in both directions.

So what?

Each of the above issues, as well as others, have proven to be constraints on the church’s and voluntary sector’s public policy advocacy. And this will also be the case when we advocate for the development of a sustainable economy.

It is critically important that the churches recognize that there is NOT simply *one* set of justifications for, and vision of, constitutional democracy within Canadian society. ***Since there are a plurality of justifications for constitutional democracy***, and at some points they *clash* and at other points they *overlap*, it is imperative that Christian and other faith communities actively engage in public dialogue over constitutional democracy, and how we believe it could best operate! The communities of faith urgently need not only to engage these justifications in order to shape and improve the operation of our political system, but to do so, we need to clearly and effectively formulate our own understandings of and justifications for constitutional democracy!

Maintaining a healthy democracy is a critical foundation on which the church can promote a sustainable economy, along with so many other public justice issues.

Suggestions for framing policy advocacy by Churches and faith-based NGOs

In light of the above arguments—i.e. that what we believe influences the shape of our economy and constitutional democracy—it is critical that we also realize that what we think and believe will also influence how we engage in ***public advocacy***. It is important that churches and faith-based NGOs develop practices and strategies for public advocacy within a ‘constitutional democracy,’ that reflect their convictions. In the context sketched above, therefore, I close with several suggestions for shaping our ongoing practice of faith-based public-policy advocacy:

- 1) ***Humility***: we are all implicated, to some degree, in current economic and political practices! Almost everyone here today, including myself, probably lives a lifestyle that somehow reflects our growth-obsessed society! We may drive more fuel efficient, less polluting cars, but then drive further because of suburban sprawl, and thus still produce more GHGs and pollution! On average, items in our meals travel 1500 km, using disappearing fossil fuels to do so. Thus, our complicity means we ought never to speak to

political officials as though we are on the righteous side of a deep chasm and they on the ‘wrong’ side.

- 2) The first assumption opens up avenues for “*relational advocacy*.”¹⁴ Advocacy happens between people. It is, therefore, a political relationship that requires ongoing conversation, a measure of sympathy for the challenges of the dialogue partners, and a sense of trust, that each one is truly seeking the best for the political community, although perhaps out of different frameworks.
- 3) We need to *de-ideologize* policy debates as much as possible, that is, intentionally work to escape the ISMs of nationalism, materialism, militarism, racism, individualism, rationalism, scientism, and so on. It is important to start this process with ourselves. One way to initiate this between dialogue partners is to assume the best of the other. Not in a naïve way, of course, but when a dialogue partner uses good ‘value’ words—for example, justice, equity, peace, stewardship, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and so on—we should begin by presuming they are genuinely meant. We can zero-in on these words, explore how the dialogue partner thinks and argues these norms will help guide society towards greater human and environmental flourishing, and enter into deeper dialogue and debate in this fashion.¹⁵
- 4) Build *networks* by identifying where elements of a policy *overlap*. Politicians and other interest groups may support a policy position we advocate, but do so for quite divergent reasons. It’s not necessary to have full agreement on all justifications and reasons for a policy, in a diverse political community, in order to recognize places where preferred policies overlap, and then craft a just solution based on that overlap.
- 5) Advocacy takes a lot of *painstaking work*. It requires immersion into the problematics and structural realities of a policy area. It requires development of the political reasoning, explanation of why the political principles work into the policy proposals you forward, careful elaboration of policy instruments and bureaucratic organization.¹⁶
- 6) We should advocate *re-orienting policy steps*. Too often, when we fail to take “a view from the outside,” we accept the current situation as a necessary stage en route to progress, and thus only offer technical adjustment steps. We accept the societal system, or economic system, or military system, or globalized trade system, or transportation system, admit it has ‘problems,’ but then simply prescribe a *technical adjustment steps* to patch up symptoms, but fail to address the deeper integrated reality. What we need are *re-orienting*, integrated policy-steps that open up possibilities for society to think and act in new sustainable directions.¹⁷
- 7) Policy advocacy can be done occasionally, but it is best treated as a *vocation*. It’s a form of work and expertise that takes time, practice and commitment to hone and perfect.

CONCLUSION

The constraints and challenges facing the development of a sustainable economy are immense. Some fellow citizens counsel pessimism, others optimism. We should reject both of these attitudes, however, since they are so strongly influenced by the Enlightenment faith in progress, e.g. we are either optimistic that progress will necessarily win out, or pessimistic that it will fail.

Hope, on the other hand, is a different matter. It is grounded in the firm conviction that Christ goes before us! Hope is rooted in the biblical narrative of the Spirit of God busy redeeming creation, bringing in a future of faith, hope and love, and inviting us to build a sustainable society and economy that supports the flourishing of all humans in a blossoming creation. Hope provides solid ground for the ongoing practice of public advocacy that seeks to re-orient current economic and political structures, and reigning public beliefs, in healing and liberating directions.

Endnotes:

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- ¹ This description is based in part on “The G8 - G20 in Canada: A Time for Inspired Leadership and Action,” by Peter Noteboom, Monday, April 26, 2010, accessed May 16, 2010 at <http://www.cpj.ca/en/content/g8-g20-canada-time-inspired-leadership-and-action>.
- ² Government of Canada, “Canada's Economic Action Plan,” January 27, 2009, accessed May 16, 2010 at <http://www.actionplan.gc.ca/eng/feature.asp?pageId=90>.
- ³ Amartya Sen, “Capitalism Beyond the Crisis,” *The New York Review of Books*, Volume 56, Number 5, March 26, 2009.
- ⁴ Chandra Pasma, “Bearing the Brunt: How the 2008-2009 Recession Created Poverty for Canadian Families,” Ottawa: Citizens for Public Justice, May 3, 2010, accessed May 15, 2010 at <http://www.cpj.ca/en/content/bearing-brunt>; this paper details the rise in poverty and economic insecurity caused by the recession.
- ⁵ David T. Koyzis, “The Calgary School and the Future of Canada,” *Comment*, September 30, 2005, at <http://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/277/>, and Marci McDonald, “The Man Behind Stephen Harper: The new Conservative Party has tasted success and wants majority rule.” *The Walrus Magazine*, Oct. 2004.
- ⁶ Bob Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress: A Diagnosis of Western Culture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, p. 116. Applied to the financial collapse, see Bob Goudzwaard, “The Depth of the Global Economic Crisis: Peeling an Onion” *Catalyst*, Volume 32, Number 2, p. 1, 5, 6 and “A paper God: how the out-of-control buying and selling of money led to our current crisis,” *Sojourners*, Vol. 38, No. 6, p. 22.
- ⁷ Drawn from Bob Goudzwaard, “A Christian-social perspective on the global economy,” lecture for the annual meeting of the European Christian Political Movement, Bern, June 10, 2009, edited by Mark Vander Vennan. Accessed July 30, 2009 at http://www.evpev.ch/uploads/media/2009_ecpm_referat_goudzwaard.pdf.
- ⁸ Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of knowledge*, London: Routledge, 2002, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith.
- ⁹ N. Stern, 2006, “Stern Review on The Economics of Climate Change,” accessed May 31, 2010 at <http://www.webcitation.org/5nCeYJr>.
- ¹⁰ What we disclose as the church’s role—service, justice and imagining liberating futures—must, I underline, go hand in hand with revised understandings of government’s role, corporations’ role, and other civil society actors’ roles! This is why its so important for the church to have a committed ‘brain thrust’—Christian universities, Christian scholars in mainline institutions, think tanks, and so on—so we can develop deep critical insight, in tune with scripture—e.g. a social ontology, political philosophy, and economic thinking—with which to engage in faithful service, advocacy and public dialogue.
- ¹¹ See Nicholas Wolterstorff account, “Are There Christian Foundations for Political Liberty?” March 21, 2005 at University of Virginia, accessed May 15, 2010 at <http://www.veritas.org/Campus/Recordings.aspx?cid=16#e423>, David T. Koyzis, *Political Visions & Illusions: A Survey & Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies*, Dowers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003, and James W. Skillen, *In Pursuit of Justice: Christian-Democratic Explorations*, Rowman and Littlefield and Center for Public Justice, 2004.
- ¹² The roots of this practice can be found in the popular “interest group pluralist” theory. It attempts to explain how public policy is made, particularly in the United States. The theory argues: free rational individuals spontaneously form interest groups when they have issues that require lobbying of government. It assumes that every individual can participate in democratic policy making in this way. The government responds to multiple interest group pressures, and like a weathervane, points to a policy solution in the direction of the most pressure. This policy outcome is considered a mechanical response to the expression of the will of the people, through interest groups. An important problem, one of many, is that not all individuals have equal resources. Some interest groups are powerful, others are weak or are not even created. Thus government policy-making will inevitably be biased. The solution proposed within the confines of this way of thinking, is to fund interest groups created by weak and marginalized persons, so they too could pressure government, and secure fair policy outcomes.
- ¹³ See, for example, the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) case, 2005, involving *Chaoulli/Zeliotis vs. Quebec and Canada*.

¹⁴ An idea suggested by my friends Mike Hogeterp and Gerald Vandezande. See Gerald Vandezande, *Justice, Not Just Us: Faith Perspectives and National Priorities*, Toronto: Public Justice Resource Centre, 1999, and *Let Justice Flow! Taking healing steps in a wounded world*, Toronto: CJL Foundation, 1994.

¹⁵ This could open up possibilities, in the long run, to examine policy at the depth-levels of structures and of beliefs and assumptions. This should grow into a practice of sharing truthful accounts of what each participant thinks is really going on in our contemporary globalized society, economy, culture and environment, and what government might do about it.

¹⁶ We should not, Jonathan Chaplin states, simply declare that “because ‘the earth is the Lord’s’ government should therefore ‘deal with global warming.’” See “Response to the Theos lecture ‘God and Government’ by Bishop Tom Wright,” speech given 10 February 2010, Portcullis House, Parliament, accessed March 10, 2010 at <http://campaigndirector.moodia.com/Client/Theos/Files/JCResponse.pdf>.

¹⁷ See for example the idea of “sustainability wedges” in Chris Hedges, *The Geography of Hope: A Tour of the World We Need*, Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2007, p. 48.