

# Institutional entrepreneurship: collaborative change in a complex Canadian organization

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study adopts an institutional entrepreneurship perspective in the context of public–private partnerships (P3s) to highlight the role of social actors in enacting institutional change in a complex organizational setting. By studying the actions of two prominent social actors, the authors argue that successful institutional change is the result of dynamic managerial activity supported by political clout, organizational authority and the social positioning of actors.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The authors conducted a field-based case study in a complex institutional and organizational setting in Alberta, Canada. The authors employed an institutional entrepreneurship perspective to identify and analyze the activities of two allied actors motivated to transform the institutional environment for public infrastructure delivery.

**Findings** – The empirical study suggests that the implementation of institutional change is both individualistic and collaborative. Moreover, it is grounded in everyday organizational practices and activities and involves a coalition of allies invested in enacting lasting change in organizational practice(s), even when maintaining the status quo seems advantageous.

**Originality/value** – The authors critique the structural explanations that dominate the literature on public–private partnership implementation, which downplays the role of agency and minimizes its interplay with institutional logics in effecting institutional change. Rather, the authors demonstrate that, given the observed impact of social actors, public–private partnership adoption and implementation can be theorized as a social phenomenon.

**Keywords** Institutional entrepreneurship, Institutional theory, Public–private partnerships, Institutional change, Social actors, Agency

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

The treatment of agency in organizational settings has been of interest to scholars. While early institutional theorists were interested in why organizations resemble each other, the last 20 years have seen a continuing attempt to explain agency (Abdelnour *et al.*, 2017; Battilana, 2006; Battilana *et al.*, 2009; Pacheco *et al.*, 2010). A few studies (Chung and Luo, 2008;



Greenwood *et al.*, 2002; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006) have examined the roles, motivations and dynamics of change agents in different institutional contexts. This study undertakes an empirical investigation into the role of two allied social actors in implementing institutional change within the government of Alberta, Canada, through the innovation of public–private partnership (P3) in infrastructure delivery between 2001 and 2021.

Drawing on institutional theory, we adopt the institutional entrepreneurship perspective (Ahrens and Ferry, 2018; Battilana *et al.*, 2009; Covaleski *et al.*, 2013; DiMaggio, 1988; Hardy and Maguire, 2017) to investigate how motivated actors deploy their authority, organizational profile and social position to effect changes in institutional structures and practices. According to Maguire *et al.* (2004), institutional entrepreneurship refers to the “activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who leverage resources to create new institutions or to transform existing ones” (p. 657). This perspective is supported by Carter *et al.* (2020) who argue that institutional change is possible with the strategic commitment of a transformational actor. Recent literature emphasizes the salience of agency in reinterpreting existing rules aimed at transforming organizational practices (Ahrens and Ferry, 2018; Covaleski *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, we are motivated by Battilana’s (2006, p. 671) call “to empirically identify individuals who are more likely to be leaders in implementing organizational changes that challenge well-established, traditional models and practices.” We seek to understand how these social actors or agentic forces mobilize their resources in bringing about institutional change (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008, 2017). We suggest that the recent changes made by the Alberta Government in public infrastructure delivery have been largely neglected and merits rigorous empirical analysis (Opara *et al.*, 2017; Opara and Elloumi, 2017). Our study addresses two related research questions: (1) What roles did two allied social actors play in the initiation and implementation of P3 in Alberta, Canada? (2) How did their roles transform the complex institutional environment in Alberta to accommodate P3? Therefore, we investigate the institutional entrepreneurship activities of the Minister and Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoT&I) in Alberta between 2001 and 2021. Essentially, this is an empirical study of the role of then Minister (and later, Premier) Ed Stelmach and his Deputy Minister Jay Ramotar and their policy collaboration to introduce a significant and permanent shift in Alberta’s public infrastructure institutions.

P3s involving the collaboration of the public and private sectors have become an increasingly popular policy mechanism for many governments motivated to accelerate, expand and diversify the delivery of public infrastructure (Andon, 2012; Boardman *et al.*, 2016; Hodge *et al.*, 2017; Opara and Rouse, 2019; Opara *et al.*, 2017). However, P3s remain a deeply contested and controversial model of public infrastructure delivery (Opara and Rouse, 2019; Shaoul, 2005; Shaoul *et al.*, 2012; Stafford and Stapleton, 2017). Governments’ attempts to implement P3s are met with resistance and often fail for a variety of reasons, including improper actions and decisions by partners, prevailing socioeconomic factors, lack of political support and the nature of the overall institutional environment (Soomro and Zhang, 2015, 2016). Thus, governments keen to fast-track infrastructure delivery are usually confronted with the conventional public asset procurement model with its several drawbacks, including delayed delivery, budget overruns, inefficient procurement processes, poor risk management/mitigation, absence of a guaranteed maintenance budget, lack of a sole recognizable entity as project lead and inability to meet taxpayer performance expectations (Bildfell, 2018; Demirag *et al.*, 2011; Grimsey and Lewis, 2004, 2007; Khadaroo, 2014; Opara, 2014).

In 2001, the Alberta Cabinet began debating the most efficient and effective way(s) to reform the province’s infrastructure policy to include private financing, following a memorandum for P3 adoption from Minister Stelmach and Deputy Minister Jay Ramotar to the Executive Council. Subsequently, in the same 2001, the Executive Council formed the Financial Management Committee (FMC) to make recommendations to government (see

Appendix 1 for Alberta's P3 program roadmap). While Alberta had previously attempted collaborating with the private sector, the renewed effort following the FMC recommendation in 2002 was decidedly different. Having engineered a shift in policy of the Klein government, Minister Ed Stelmach and his deputy Jay Ramotar mobilized resources to effect a paradigm shift in the institutional landscape, thus reforming the institutional environment to accommodate P3s. Drawing on the institutional entrepreneurship perspective, this study investigates the dynamic collaborative roles played by Minister Stelmach and Deputy Minister Ramotar towards the transformation of a complex institutional environment for infrastructure delivery in Alberta. We adopted a study period of 2001–2021 to investigate the two prominent institutional entrepreneurs and the impacts of the P3 policies and practices they initiated and implemented in Alberta, Canada. This window covers the collaboration period of the two actors culminating in the last P3 project scheduled for completion in 2021.

We found the allied institutional entrepreneurs deployed their political clout to convince local legislators to enact a statute change allowing government to partner with the private sector to deliver public infrastructure. They used their organizational location and social network as the leading public officers to exert influence on the MoT&I and created a dedicated P3 unit within the government. Furthermore, they mobilized a coalition of internal supporters to advance and institutionalize the P3 policy model as part of the infrastructure delivery options within the regional government. Finally, they successfully mobilized major stakeholders (e.g. urban residents and the local construction industry, Alberta Society of Engineers and Alberta Road Builders Association) to buy into the logic that citizens care more about infrastructure availability than how it is procured; thus, the government cannot be held solely responsible for public infrastructure provision and private partners must be part of the infrastructure delivery mix, especially with dwindling tax revenues. The new P3 policy led to the delivery of several P3 projects.

This study makes three key contributions to the literature on P3s and institutional entrepreneurship. First, it goes beyond prior P3 research that focuses on mechanistic P3 adoption strategies that ignore the impact of *social actors* on P3 initiation and implementation (Boardman *et al.*, 2005; Grimsey and Lewis, 2004, 2005; Opara, 2014; Opara *et al.*, 2017). It responds to the call by Biygautane *et al.* (2019, p. 196) to recognize the role of social actors in P3 implementation and for researchers to account for social actors in the P3 enactment process as a *social phenomenon*. This study provides empirical insights into the role of “allied” or “joint” actors (Tracey *et al.*, 2011) in advancing P3 as an infrastructure delivery model and deepens/broadens our understanding of that process.

Furthermore, while the institutional entrepreneurship literature has documented the “heroic” efforts of lone actors in enacting divergent institutional change (e.g. Maguire *et al.*, 2004; Micelotta *et al.*, 2017) or of organizations (e.g. Greenwood *et al.*, 2002; Carter *et al.*, 2020), this study provides insights into the collaborative agency of (two) actors who shared leadership in transforming the institutional environment in a complex organization to accommodate an alternative infrastructure delivery model. Consistent with Biygautane *et al.* (2019), this could be considered a theoretical shift from *individual agency*, which has dominated institutional entrepreneurship literature, to *collaborative agency* (Battilana, 2006; Battilana *et al.*, 2009; Dacin *et al.*, 2002; Maguire *et al.*, 2004; Micelotta *et al.*, 2017).

Second, our study underlines the salience of understanding the nature and peculiarities of the institutional environment prior to P3 policy adoption and implementation (Jooste *et al.*, 2011; Opara *et al.*, 2017). Jooste *et al.* (2011) document that even though P3s share certain commonalities, P3s are implemented in diverse ways by various jurisdictions to fit their context, suggesting that a deeper and nuanced understanding of the local institutional context is critical to a successful P3 initiation, implementation and institutionalization.

Third, the P3 literature lacks relevant theoretical frames that facilitate an enhanced and nuanced understanding of the context of the adoption and implementation of P3s. By

contrast, this study embraces a theory-informed approach that draws on the institutional entrepreneurship perspective. Importantly, we recognize the *cognitive* and *social* pillars that institutional entrepreneurs must address to overcome institutional, technological and organizational constraints towards a successful P3 implementation and institutionalization (Biygautane *et al.*, 2019).

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. We contextualize Alberta's P3 program, review the literature on P3 policy and revisit Alberta's engagement with P3s in Section 2. In Section 3, we outline the theoretical framework and discuss the institutional entrepreneurship perspective in framing the broad contours of the study. We explain our methodology, beginning with a brief *dramatis personae* in Section 4. In Section 5, we present the findings from our empirical field study, focusing on the activities of the joint actors. In Section 6, we conclude with contributions, implications and reflections on the institutionalization of Alberta's P3 program.

## 2. Public–private partnerships

### 2.1 Alberta's P3 program context

With the election of Ralph Klein in 1993, the Government of Alberta began balancing its budget by cutting back on infrastructure procurement. Nearly a decade later, the resultant infrastructure deficit was now visible and threatening economic progress. Beginning in 2002, following the recession induced by 9/11, the economic outlook for Alberta was bleak. The Klein Cabinet debated a revised governing strategy given the impending 2004 general election. One substantive outcome of this debate was a policy shift regarding the delivery of public infrastructure. Meanwhile, this (policy shift) was initiated with the establishment of the Financial Management Commission (FMC) to review the provincial financial/fiscal situation and propose policy options to the government. One of the recommendations of the FMC was that the government and its agencies engage private financing arrangements for capital projects (Opara, 2014; Opara and Elloumi, 2017; Alberta Treasury Board, 2011; Government of Alberta, 2003).

The policy shift required an amendment to the *Fiscal Responsibility Act* to allow private financing for public infrastructure. Ramotar worked hard to convince local legislators to enact the FMC recommendations into law. Following legal authorization, operationalization within the government and its agencies faced several hurdles and needed a champion. With the MoT&I at the center of public asset procurement, Stelmach and Ramotar engaged the levers of this new policy to transform Alberta's infrastructure delivery. They not only collaborated to achieve successful P3 policy adoption but also engaged their organizational position and network to effect the necessary changes.

Overall, Alberta's involvement with P3 was motivated by its growing dissatisfaction with the slow pace and the unaffordable cost of conventional infrastructure delivery. Given the government's limited fiscal room, P3s held promise as a mechanism to attract private financing and accelerate public infrastructure delivery (Opara and Elloumi, 2017). Within this institutional and organizational context, Stelmach and Ramotar began actively collaborating to reengineer the institutional environment and expand the toolkit for public infrastructure delivery in Alberta by pushing for the adoption and implementation of P3 as a new policy tool.

### 2.2 The policy debate

As a public policy tool, P3 was introduced in the mid-1990s in the United Kingdom (UK) (Grimsey and Lewis, 2004). Even though there is no consistent definition, we consider P3 as a contractual arrangement involving the public and private sectors for the design, financing, construction and operation of public infrastructure and services, anchored on the sharing of

risks and rewards derived from such relationships (HM Treasury, 2016). In this model, a privately formed consortium is involved in designing, building, financing, operating and/or maintaining public infrastructure for a defined duration, characteristically 20–30 years. Typically, multiple field actors are involved in the execution of P3 projects (Jooste and Scott, 2012). The public sector (a government department/agency) can also act via a coordinating P3 unit. From a project finance perspective, private actors include a special purpose vehicle (SPV) consisting of a contractor, participating financial institution(s) and the lead operator (Grimsey and Lewis, 2004; Hodge and Greve, 2017).

An informed understanding of P3 begins with a close examination of its often-invisible characteristics. P3s represent “a fundamental social and political paradigm shift” in the way governments serve their citizens (Opara and Rouse, 2019, p. 80). Their continued deployment has brought about an increase in private sector participation in delivering public infrastructure and services (Andon, 2012; Hodge *et al.*, 2017; Opara *et al.*, 2017; Shaoul *et al.*, 2012). However, there is growing concern and controversy regarding the true nature and performance of P3s.

Governments offer various reasons for implementing P3s, such as the ability to secure private sector financing and limiting public sector borrowing, on-budget on-time project delivery and improved quantity of asset supply (Boardman *et al.*, 2016). However, the main reasons for adopting P3s seem to revolve around the inter-related concepts of efficiency, value for money and risk management (Andon, 2012; Boardman *et al.*, 2016; Opara, 2018; Siemiatycki, 2013). We argue that the resistance to P3s could be attributed to its inconsistent performance.

*2.2.1 Value for money and risk transfer.* The proponents of P3s argue mainly that these deliver value for money by transferring project risks, such as construction-related risks, from the public sector to the private contractor (Boardman *et al.*, 2016). However, evidence suggests that the transfer of such risks comes at a significant cost to the public sector (Boardman *et al.*, 2016; Opara and Rouse, 2019). Pertinent literature documents that often such risk transfer is incomplete (Boardman *et al.*, 2016; Opara and Rouse, 2019), prone to “inherent complexities and subjective judgments” (Khadaroo, 2014, p. 154) and difficult to mitigate, given the problems associated with contracts as a tool to manage future contingencies (Sclar, 2015). Furthermore, Shaoul (2005, p. 464) argues that concepts such as value for money and risk transfer lack objectivity and are not value-free.

*2.2.2 On-time, on-budget delivery.* A structural feature of conventional infrastructure delivery involves the sequential nature of contractual arrangements. Furthermore, conventional contracting is complicated by the cost-plus approach that favors the lowest-cost bidder and is, thus, prone to systemic cost underestimation (Flyvbjerg *et al.*, 2002). This arrangement has been the source of cost overruns, contested negotiations and delayed project delivery. By bundling all aspects of the project into one contract, P3s solve the fragmented nature of conventional contracting and strategic cost underestimation. However, these advantages result in a higher overall project cost and an extended period of contract negotiations. Boardman *et al.* (2016) note that governments conveniently ignore this extended contract negotiation period, preferring to start the clock from the signing of the P3 contract. This ignores the significant cost incurred by the public sector in the pre-contract negotiation and signing period. Essentially, the notion that P3s are delivered on time and on budget is simply an accounting/time gimmick.

*2.2.3 Governance, accountability and distributional issues.* Further complicating the P3 policy debate is attendant governance, accountability and distributional issues. The structures of governance observed in P3 implementation appear in disregard of the interests of ordinary taxpayers (Opara and Rouse, 2019). Specifically, the accountability frameworks and policies adopted for P3 implementation and operations are inconsistent with established public accountability rules (Shaoul *et al.*, 2012). For instance, Agyenim-Boateng *et al.* (2017) discuss how social actors interacting with P3 structures could impede financial disclosures

and public accountability through measures that undermine transparency. According to Whiteside (2015; see also Sclar, 2015), what P3s demonstrate in practice is simply an expansion of private sector business opportunities and the marginalization of other stakeholders. With the state's reduced impact on society and role reimagined and reconceptualized, its operating agencies are reconfigured to become more business friendly and to function like a corporation (Whiteside, 2015).

Considering the absence of a trusted P3 governance model anchored on and prioritizing public interest protection measures (Xing *et al.*, 2018), there is a need for embedded social actors to preserve the public interest. This remains, in our view, a central argument/motivation for an institutional entrepreneurship approach/perspective to the initiation, implementation and operationalization of P3s. The current *structural approach* to P3 implementation cannot resolve these problems. The institutional entrepreneurial approach is better suited to deal with and overcome institutional, technological and organizational constraints and resolve the governance, accountability and distributional problems associated with P3s as currently operationalized (Bygautane *et al.*, 2019). Given the persona of both joint institutional entrepreneurs (JIEs) and their ability to mobilize their network and bring major stakeholders together, the agentic impact of these individuals becomes a critical component in building trust, consensus and the capacity to advance the common good using the instrumentality of P3s (Xing *et al.*, 2018). Within this organizational context, Alberta's JIEs sought to engage with and advance the new P3 policy.

### 2.3 Alberta's engagement with P3s

Alberta's engagement with P3s started much earlier than has been documented (Opara, 2014; Opara and Elluomi, 2017). In 1987, the Alberta Government, together with Bovar Inc., formed its first partnership to build and operate the Alberta Special Waste Management System in Swan Hills. However, the partnership collapsed in 1996 when the government found it burdensome and paid off Bovar Inc. \$140 million in a negotiated settlement to assume full ownership, eventually closing the facility (Opara and Elloumi, 2017). The taxpayer cost, adverse publicity and loss of public goodwill from this deal meant the project could not be considered a partnership success (Poschmann, 2003).

Beginning in 1993, the Klein government pushed to balance government finances to “remake the economic and social landscape in much the same way that Thatcherism and Reaganism did for their jurisdictions (Neu *et al.*, 2001, p. 8). The restructuring, part of the broader New Right agenda that rose to prominence in the 80's and 90's [1], involved major scaling back of infrastructure investments, creating a significant infrastructure deficit. Over time, rebounding economic growth and changing demographic dynamics began to exert pressure on limited and dilapidated infrastructure. According to the Finance Minister, the signals started in 2001:

This time last year, we anticipated that revenues would start to decline, but the shock was how fast and how deeply they fell. Weaker energy prices, lower investment income, and lower corporate income tax revenue resulted in a loss of \$1.6 billion. The harsh reality is that resource revenues fell by 44% last year and are expected to fall again this year (Former Finance Minister, Patricia Nelson, Budget Speech, March 19, 2002)

The fiscal outlook presented during the 2002 budget was sobering, with declining revenues and growing healthcare costs (GoA, 2002). This dismal fiscal outlook can be considered a tipping point, as, during the 2002 budget presentation, Finance Minister Patricia Nelson disclosed:

Total revenue of \$20 billion for 2002–03, a drop of \$1.2 billion or 5.6 per cent from 2001–02 fiscal year. The total expense for 2002–03 will be \$19.2 billion, a decline of \$1.7 billion or 8.1 per cent from 2001–02 fiscal year. Spending on Health and Wellness in–2002-03 will be \$6.8 billion, an increase of 7.3 per cent (Former Finance Minister Patricia Nelson, GoA, 2002).

With mounting pressure and an eye on the 2004 elections, Ed Stelmach as Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure, together with his policy ally Ramotar, initiated and implemented P3s in Alberta. As of 2021, Alberta has executed several P3 projects, in transportation, education and water/wastewater management sectors, cumulatively valued at \$7.8 bn (Table 1). The actions of these two allies have received little or no empirical analysis. Therefore, we draw on the institutional entrepreneurship perspective to guide our investigation into the nature and extent of their role in advancing institutional change in a complex organizational setting, such as the regional government of Alberta.

### 3. Theoretical framework: institutional entrepreneurship

#### 3.1 Institutional theory, agency and institutional entrepreneurship

Institutional theory has become a dominant framework for organizational analysis by scholars (e.g. Dillard *et al.*, 2004; DiMaggio, 1988; Phillips and Tracey, 2007; Weik, 2011; Zucker, 1987). Initial formulations emphasized that organizations are influenced not only by rational considerations but also by their institutional environment (Carpenter and Feroz, 2001; Scott, 1987). Organizations exhibit passive conformity to, or proactive manipulation of, their institutional environment (Oliver, 1991), implying that organizational actors take institutions for granted. Such formulation discounted the role of agency in effecting institutional change. However, emerging evidence indicates that centrally located, resource-endowed and sufficiently motivated actors play a role in bringing about institutional change from within (Micelotta *et al.*, 2017).

In response to the missing account of agency in institutional theory and its role in enacting institutional change, DiMaggio (1988) introduced the concept of institutional entrepreneurship and revived interest in agency as a central plank of institutional theory. Hardy and Maguire (2017) joined the call for empirical research that captures the role and participation of agencies in change processes. Several recent studies have deepened our understanding of the forces and mechanisms behind the endogenous transformation of institutional environments (Garud *et al.*, 2007; Hwang and Powell, 2005; Micelotta *et al.*, 2017; Pacheco *et al.*, 2010). Generally, institutional entrepreneurs have been described as actors who mobilize resources to transform existing institutions or create new institutions (Battilana, 2006; Battilana *et al.*, 2009; Dacin *et al.*, 2002; DiMaggio, 1988; Garud *et al.*, 2007; Maguire *et al.*, 2004). What needs to be better understood, however, is the context and dynamics in which embedded social actors mobilize to overturn the status quo. Studies suggest that organizations and/or individuals attempting to enact institutional change face a paradox

Project name	Sector	Contract price (Can\$)	Completion date
SouthEast Anthony Henday Drive (SEAHD)	Transportation	493 m	2007
NorthEast Anthony Henday Drive (NEAHD)	Transportation	1.82 bn	2016
NorthWest Anthony Henday Drive (NWAHD)	Transportation	1.42 bn	2011
Stoney Trail Ring Road – NorthEast	Transportation	650 m	2009
Stoney Trail Ring Road – SouthEast	Transportation	770 m	2013
Stoney Trail Ring Road – SouthWest	Transportation	1.42 bn	2021
ASAP Phase 1 – Alberta Schools Alternative Procurement	Education	634 m	2010
ASAP Phase 2 – Alberta Schools Alternative Procurement	Education	253 m	2012
ASAP Phase 3 – Alberta Schools Alternative Procurement	Education	289 m	2014
Evans–Thomas Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant	Water/Wastewater Management	60 m	2014
<i>Total</i>		<i>7.8 bn</i>	

**Table 1.**  
Profile of Alberta P3 projects (2001–2021)

**Source(s):** Compilation: Authors

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(Seo and Creed, 2002), the paradox of *embedded agency* (Battilana, 2006; Battilana *et al.*, 2009; Englund and Gerdin, 2018; Garud *et al.*, 2007).

Several studies have examined the concepts of *agency* and institutional determinism (see Battilana, 2006; Battilana *et al.*, 2009; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Seo and Creed, 2002). Institutional determinism refers to the dilemma actors confront in their attempt to change institutions, even when their actions and motivations are conditioned by the same institutions they seek to change (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Holm, 1995; Seo and Creed, 2002). Recent advances in institutional theory have deepened our understanding of how institutional change is enacted in organizations, given the problem of embedded agency. Analysts have also attempted to address institutional change by advancing the concept of *institutional work*, which focuses on the purposive work of individual actors in influencing the institutions around them by affecting the emergence, maintenance and displacement of institutions to achieve desired outcomes (Bisel *et al.*, 2017; Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence *et al.*, 2009, 2011).

Furthermore, the continuing search to understand and explain the dynamics of institutional change has advanced with ideas from advocates of *social movement*. These ideas are deliberately disruptive change strategies that identify, categorize and target institutions ripe for change (Micelotta *et al.*, 2017). The strategy of social movement is to segment change agents as “challengers” to existing institutions to dismantle the foundations that anchor institutional reproduction and continuity. Fligstein and McAdam (2011) explicate strategic action fields as operating arenas for conflict/change and stability/order (p. 5). Consistent with Fligstein and McAdam (2011), we conceptualize fields as strategically organized and consisting mainly of incumbents and challengers in their ongoing interactions/engagements to secure advantageous positions and resources. Furthermore, *institutional logics* have also attempted to tackle the paradox of embedded agency in institutional theory (Micelotta *et al.*, 2017; Qin, 2014). In advancing this perspective, Friedland and Alford (1991), Thornton and Ocasio (2008) and Thornton *et al.* (2012) argue that the contradictions between multiple institutional logics are the answer to this paradox. They suggest that different logics motivate individuals and organizations to have different interests and behaviors. Relatedly, institutional logics help to shape how “social actors construct and reconstruct their institutional existence” (Okafor *et al.*, 2020, p. 1341). Thus, institutional logics provide organizational analysts with another tool to explain the heterogeneity and agency of both individuals and organizations that encounter contradictory but interrelated institutions (Greenwood *et al.*, 2011).

While these approaches to resolving institutional theory’s agency problem have been beneficial to institutional analysis, we believe that the central dilemma of (embedded) agency in institutional analysis remains unresolved. Therefore, our study presents a perspective that draws on the active engagement of embedded social actors (referred to as JIEs) who harness the advantages of their privileged positions and network resources to effect institutional change in the infrastructure delivery apparatus of the Alberta Government. By investigating the roles of the two dominant social actors in P3, this study sheds some light on the apparent paradox of embedded agency. In sum, we perceive the institutional entrepreneurship effort in Alberta to be motivated by, and strongly associated with, the institutional change projects driven by these two allied actors exercising agency in pursuit of their interests (David *et al.*, 2019).

According to Battilana *et al.* (2009), institutional entrepreneurs can leverage their social position to influence others, bridge a diverse set of stakeholders and assemble a powerful coalition. An important dimension of institutional entrepreneurs is their ability to *mobilize resources and allies* to advance their interests. In addition to political clout, wielding organizational authority is essential to building and maintaining a coalition of organizational allies, and vast resources are needed to undertake institutional change. Battilana *et al.* (2009)



note that implementing any change is costly and challenging, and resources help mitigate the negative impacts. Interestingly, while the current literature depicts beneficiaries of the status quo as *incumbents*, potential institutional entrepreneurs (*challengers*) are depicted as low-status, resource-poor and marginalized actors highly motivated to pursue beneficial change.

Drawing on Fligstein's (1997), Hensmans' (2003) and Fligstein and McAdam's (2011) *incumbent-challenger* analysis framework, we identify incumbents as actors who are the current beneficiaries of the status quo. With access to resources, authority and power, incumbents are invested in sustaining the current institutional arrangements, but these institutional arrangements marginalize the challengers who seek opportunities to change them. Remarkably, under the existing infrastructure delivery arrangements in Alberta, the incumbents were dissatisfied with the accepted conventional delivery model, and in their efforts to initiate and institutionalize P3, their mobilization of resources (social position, authority in the public sector and political power) was sufficient, if not overwhelming.

In sum, while studies suggest that peripheral, lower-status organizations and individuals, acting as challengers, are instrumental in mobilizing and enacting institutional change to benefit them (e.g. Hwang and Powell, 2005; Leblebici *et al.*, 1991; Palmer and Barber, 2001), we note the opposite in Alberta's P3 program, where institutional change was initiated and enacted by incumbents with high status, extensive network and abundant resources. This begs the question: why would incumbents who are beneficiaries of the current arrangements seek to change the status quo? The answer lies in the convergence of forces that threatened the long-term interests of the incumbents at the time and, thus, their power as the governing party. We view the actions of the JIEs as motivated by the desire to reengineer the institutional environment to institutionalize the new infrastructure delivery model in Alberta and effectively reconstitute the enabling environment.

### *3.2 Enabling environment for institutional entrepreneurship in Alberta*

With a significantly diminished fiscal room, arising from low energy prices and a recession, the GoA began to consider the reintroduction of the P3 model in 2001. Stelmach and Ramotar organized to innovatively reconfigure the institutional environment and fast-track infrastructure delivery using the P3 policy. As embedded agents with vast resources to advance their interests, they can be considered incumbents (Fligstein, 1997; Hensmans, 2003). Meanwhile, the notion of disadvantaged or marginalized challengers as primary instigators or initiators of institutional change remains contested. Greenwood and Suddaby (2006) found that elite individuals in the Big Five accounting firms championed and funded the idea of institutional reconfiguration/restructuring in Canada. Greenwood *et al.* (2002) demonstrate the critical role played by central, resource-rich and highly embedded organizational actors acting as institutional entrepreneurs. The current literature seems to converge on the idea that resources are needed to successfully initiate and enact institutional change by motivated actors (Battilana, 2006; Battilana *et al.*, 2009; Dacin *et al.*, 2002; DiMaggio, 1988; Pacheco *et al.*, 2010). Beginning in 2001, we observed an increasing mobilization of resources by the ministers toward P3s in Alberta. This is akin to what Ahrens and Ferry (2018) characterize as politicians and bureaucrats who become institutional entrepreneurs seeking "change from within" as a way "to change the functioning and meanings of a highly institutionalized field" (p. 12).

## **4. Research methodology**

### *4.1 Dramatis personae*

*Edward Stelmach* is a progressive conservative politician who served as the 13th Premier of Alberta during 2006–2011. As a farmer operating the family farm on the outskirts of Edmonton, Stelmach does not conform to the image of a populist politician. Starting as the

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county reeve, he slowly and methodically worked his way into the provincial parliament in 1993. He is known for his low profile and managerial competence in public office. He gained experience serving as the Minister of Intergovernmental Relations, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

*Jay Ramotar* is a professional civil engineer specializing in road engineering, a graduate of the University of Alberta and he worked for the City of Edmonton as an engineer prior to joining the provincial government. A consummate policy expert and one of the longest serving Deputy Ministers in the Alberta Government, Ramotar worked in various government departments prior to retirement in 2013 after 37 years in public service (1976–2013). He was the deputy minister for the Departments of Solicitor General and Public Security, Health and Wellness, Treasury Board (TB), Transportation and Infrastructure. He was reputed to bring a practical/pragmatic leadership approach, “roll up the sleeves” style and innovative management thinking to his roles.

#### 4.2 Research setting

In this study, we revisit the P3-related innovation activities of two prominent allies within the regional government of Alberta. We adopt a case study approach (Yin, 2018) that offers the advantage of capturing the nuanced and unique institutional setting/context of Alberta’s public sector, a huge and complex organization. With almost 210,000 employees across ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), the Government of Alberta is one of the largest public sector employers in Canada (Blue Ribbon Report, 2019). With P3 projects covering transportation, education, water infrastructure and wastewater systems, we examine how Alberta’s P3 policies were initialized, legitimized and eventually established as normal infrastructure delivery practice.

#### 4.3 Object of analysis

The object of analysis is the implementation strategy of the Alberta Government’s \$7.8 bn P3 program between 2001 and 2021 (see Table 1 for details on Alberta’s P3 project). We investigated the activities of the social actors involved in these projects. The complex nature of our object required us to simultaneously analyze all the nested components involved – the P3 program, project(s) and social actors. Thus, we conducted a longitudinal case study (Yin, 2018) of the P3 project(s) in which our interviewees were involved (see Table 2). We combined insights from our interviews with evidence from archival data sources to assess their impact on the evolution of the institutional environment leading to P3 institutionalization.

As Alberta’s P3 policy documentation fails to outline how P3s should be implemented, P3 implementation details are left to government employees to determine (see also “Challenges and Opportunities Series: P3s in Transportation Delivery” 2012). For instance, Alberta’s P3 legislation as part of the *Fiscal Responsibility Act* (2004) states that “P3s are permitted in Alberta for the purpose of procuring public infrastructure” (Alberta Treasury Board, 2011, p. 9). The overall implementation strategy and implementation decisions are left unspecified and at the discretion of public servants. Examples include what standards must be met for the environmental eligibility/approval of a project; what minimum project cost should trigger a P3 consideration (set at \$50 million in Alberta); how to confront the negative perception that P3s are more expensive than conventional delivery; what criteria should be used to select the successful P3 contractor, and how to identify, quantify and allocate risks between the government and the private contractor? This lack of policy details regarding how to implement P3, perceived organizational resistance and the intent to bring about changes in organizational practices using the opportunity presented by P3, in our view, partly motivated Stelmach and Ramotar to collaboratively reshape the institutional environment for public infrastructure delivery.

**Table 2.**  
Interviewee profile  
(government  
employees)

Alberta, Canada	Title/Position	Role	P3 Project Participated
Interviewee 1	Premier of Alberta (2006–2011)	Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (2001–2006). Premier (2006–2011)	SEAH, NWAHD, NEAHD, SEST, SWST, NEST, ASAP 1-3
Interviewee 2	Chief of Staff to Retired Premier Ed Stelmach (2006–2011)	Coordination of policy for the Government of Alberta, Canada	SEAH, NWAHD, NEAHD
Interviewee 3	Deputy Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (2001–2013)	Administrative head of MoT&I. Most senior staff in the Ministry and appointed according to civil service rules. Reports to the Minister – political head of the Ministry	SEAH, NWAHD, NEAHD, SEST, SWST, NEST, ASAP 1-3
Interviewee 4	Executive Director, Alternative Capital Financing (P3) Office, (the Alberta Finance and Treasury Board)	Responsible for coordination of all active and planned P3 projects in Alberta, Canada	SEAH, NWAHD, NEAHD, SEST, SWST, NEST, ASAP 1-3
Interviewee 5	Director, Alternative Capital Financing (the Alberta Finance and Treasury Board)	Assists the Executive Director with coordination of all P3 projects in Alberta, Canada	SEAH, NWAHD, NEAHD, SEST, SWST, NEST, ASAP 1-3
Interviewee 6	Executive Director (P3 Capital Projects – the Alberta Ministry of Transportation)	Responsible for policy initiation and coordination of all P3 projects in Alberta, Canada	SEAH, NWAHD, NEAHD, SEST, SWST, NEST, ASAP 1-3
Interviewee 7	Director, Alternative Procurement – P3 (the Alberta Ministry of Infrastructure)	Works with the Executive Director, and exercise responsibility for policy initiation and coordination of all P3 projects in Alberta, Canada	SEAH, NWAHD, NEAHD, SEST, SWST, NEST, ASAP 1-3
Interviewee 8	Senior Manager, Alternative Procurement – P3 (the Alberta Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation)	Works with the Director and Executive Director, and exercise responsibility for policy initiation and coordination of all P3 projects in Alberta, Canada	SEAH, NWAHD, NEAHD, SEST, SWST, NEST, ASAP 1-3
Interviewee 9	Executive Director, P3 Facilities and Alternative Procurement (the Alberta Ministry of Infrastructure)	Responsible for facility identification and procurement activities and coordination of all P3 projects in Alberta, Canada	SEAH, NWAHD, NEAHD, SEST, SWST, NEST, ASAP 1-3
Interviewee 10	Senior Manager, Alberta Union of Public Employees – AUPE (the Government of Alberta Employee – the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation)	Employee of the Government of Alberta, representing Union interests	SEAH, NWAHD, NEAHD, SEST, SWST, NEST, ASAP 1-3
<b>Source(s):</b> Compilation: Authors			

#### 4.4 Data collection

We collected data from two main sources: an archival dataset and field-based interviews (Bailey, 2018; Yin, 2018). Our archival dataset consists of official publications from the Alberta Government. These include the Alberta P3 Guide (2011, and its two predecessor documents), requests for quotations (RFQs), requests for proposals (RFPs), ministry annual reports, auditors' reports, strategic capital plan reports, value for money reports, archived P3 contracts and news releases by relevant ministries. Adopting an interpretivist/constructivist perspective (Ahrens *et al.*, 2008; Baker and Bettner, 1997; Baxter *et al.*, 2008; Lukka and Modell, 2017) to address our research questions, these documents were analyzed not only to establish the nature of the JIE's activities but also as historical evidence of the approach to establish P3s.

Next, we collected and analyzed reports in local and national media outlets and on the Internet on infrastructure development in Alberta. We systematically analyzed these documents to determine the actions of the JIEs in influencing the emergence, evolution and institutionalization of a P3-enabling environment (see Table 2 for a profile of the government interviewees). We then categorized the data by major actors and their actions over time. This enabled us to better understand the specific role of the two institutional actors as the P3 program evolved.

Furthermore, we conducted one-on-one, in-depth semi-structured interviews that lasted between 1 and 2 h with the two central actors (JIEs), government employees and outside stakeholders. Our interviewees participated in all of Alberta's P3 projects during the years under review. Specifically, we inquired into the detailed legislative, organizational and advocacy activities undertaken to enable the establishment and acceptance of P3s.

Based on our review of institutional entrepreneurship literature and archival data sources, we inquired how the two JIEs leveraged their social positions to advance P3s. Further, we asked about the need for, and how they effected, organizational changes (e.g. formation and structuring of Alberta Capital Finance Office) as part of overall P3 implementation. We interviewed 35 project participants between 2013 and 2018. Our interviewees included 10 senior Alberta Government officials, 12 industry executives, 4 consultants/advisors, 6 policy analysts, community activists and journalists, and 3 labor union leaders. These interviews were taped, transcribed and analyzed, both individually and collectively. The researchers also took private notes and made inferences about the projects, participants, project context and P3 evolution and institutionalization. We verified our data by corroborating and validating the authenticity of our sources, including a rigorous check against published media reports by established outlets, independent analysts (e.g. Parkland Institute, Canada West Foundation; Conference Board of Canada, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Fraser Institute), academic journals and the Alberta auditor-general's reports. Table 3 shows the sources of archival data for each P3 project.

#### 4.5 Data analysis

We analyzed the interview data along with the archival dataset to help us understand the specific roles played by Stelmach and Ramotar and how these transformed the nature of the institutional environment, enabling the emergence and establishment of P3s. Working iteratively between the interview data, archival dataset and institutional entrepreneurship literature allowed us to identify and categorize the coded data and later reconstitute these into themes that summarize our findings. First, we deployed a piece of qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) to assist in coding and analyzing our data to detect patterns. While reading and working with primary (interview) and secondary (archival) data, we identified and coded our data into more general categories (*first-order categories*) such as legislation, political support, organizational capacity, internal coalition/allies, consultant engagement, community outreach, mobilization of other resources and mobilization of social networks (e.g. the DMs' Consultative Group) (Battilana *et al.*, 2009).

Jurisdiction	Project	Data sources	Year published
Alberta	Anthony Henday Drive – Southeast (2004–2007)	Fiscal Resp. Act (2004)	2004
		RFQ/RFP/P3 contract	2003/2004
		Capital plan manual	2003 (V1)
		VfM report	2004
		AG report	2003/2004
		Strategic capital Plan	2010
	Anthony Henday Drive – Northeast (2012–2016)	Alberta P3 framework and guide	2011
		RFQ/RFP/P3 contract	2011/2012
		Capital Plan manual	2003 (V1)
		VfM report	2013
		AG report	n/a
		Strategic capital plan	2010
	Anthony Henday Drive – Northwest (2008–2011)	Alberta P3 framework and guide	2011
		RFQ/RFP/P3 contract	2007/2008/2009
		Capital plan manual	2006 (V2)
		VfM report	2009
		AG report	2010
		Strategic capital plan	2010
	Northwest Stoney Trail Rina Road (2007–2009)	Alberta P3 framework and guide	2011
		RFQ/RFP/P3 contract	2006/2007
		Capital plan manual	2006 (V2)
VfM report		2007	
AG report		2010	
Strategic capital plan		2010	
Southeast Stoney Trail Rina Road (2010–2013)	Alberta P3 framework and guide	2011	
	RFQ/RFP/P3 contract	2009/2010	
	Capital plan manual	2006 (V2)	
	VfM report	2010	
	AG report	2010	
	Strategic capital plan	2010	
Alberta Schools Alternative Procurement (ASAP 1) (2008–2010)	Alberta P3 framework and guide	2011	
	RFQ/RFP/P3 contract	2008/2009	
	Capital plan manual	2006 (V2)	
	VfM report	2008	
	AG report	2010	
	Strategic capital plan	2010	
Alberta Schools Alternative Procurement (ASAP 2) (2010–2012)	Alberta P3 framework and guide	2011	
	RFQ/RFP/P3 contract	2009/2010	
	Capital plan manual	2006 (V2)	
	VfM report	2009	
	AG report	2010	
	Strategic capital plan	2010	
		Alberta P3 framework and guide	2011

**Table 3.**  
Archival data sources **Source(s):** Compilation: Authors

Next, we identified *second-order categories* (overarching themes) such as mobilization of political support, mobilization of organizational authority, activation of social networks, coalition building and stakeholder support/engagement strategies. We adopted an inductive

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analytic process based on both the interview and archival datasets while engaging the institutional entrepreneurship literature to trace the role of JIEs in transforming the infrastructure delivery environment, together with our interpretation of the role played by the two JIEs, thus enabling a better understanding of the emergence and evolution of P3 implementations. The major analytical categories (overarching themes) adopted for this study emerged from our reading of the P3 literature, the institutional entrepreneurship perspective and our analysis of field-level archival/interview data (see [Appendix 2](#)).

## 5. Findings

This section discusses how the JIEs mobilized their resources by engaging political levers to enact a change in legislation permitting private sector participation in project delivery, deploying their organizational authority to build internal capacity and allies for P3s. They also drew on their extensive social network to legitimate P3 policy and implementation. Furthermore, their reputation for competence, consensus-building and managerial competence helped to mobilize stakeholders and public support for P3 deployment in Alberta.

### *5.1 Mobilizing political power for P3 legislation and legitimacy*

Through legislation, parliamentary support and various stakeholder engagements, the social actors built political support for P3 in Alberta. From his first election into parliament in 1993 until becoming premier in 2006, Stelmach developed a reputation for hard work, competence and consensus-building. His visible political advocacy work ([Lawrence et al., 2009](#); [Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006](#); [Perkmann and Spicer, 2008](#)) focused primarily on publicly providing justifications as a legitimization argument for Alberta's P3 program:

In Alberta, there was a need to invest in more infrastructure to accommodate the tremendous inward migration experienced in the province, as well as facilitate economic growth. P3s were not suitable for all projects. However, it is suitable for ring roads because of its size, complexity, etc. This process not only yielded significant savings, but also delivered each project two years earlier than conventional delivery [Former Premier Stelmach].

Furthermore, Stelmach was equally involved in nonpublicly visible political advocacy work ([Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006](#); [Perkmann and Spicer, 2008](#); [Lawrence et al., 2009](#)). At the governing party caucuses, Stelmach worked with his colleagues' political circles. At inception, he had to convince them of the necessity of P3s and periodically update them on P3 progress and performance, in a bid to build and maintain program momentum and legitimacy ([Deephouse et al., 2017](#)).

On assuming the premiership in 2006, Stelmach acknowledged the challenges the government faced as a premise for the new policy direction:

At the time, we underestimated migration into Alberta, and so we needed infrastructure, among other things. When we looked at the money available, there was little left for infrastructure, as more money went to social spending. It was a question of how we package this on-budget and on-time? By presenting it as a P3, we will have a consistent amount available annually. Therefore, in comparison to the conventional model, it was better to use P3s for all of these. We had an exceptionally good team, which is crucial. My DM [Deputy Minister] assembled an excellent team to implement this policy. We performed the first road component and later the second component. Because of the success of the road program, we went to school P3s (Former Premier Stelmach).

Stelmach's reputation for competence and his personal commitment to innovate in the face of a difficult economic and fiscal outlook galvanized political support from the top leadership of the governing party, who entrusted him with the challenge of delivering on the promise of the party to the electorates. Our interviewees argued that the political leadership support

received was so strong that there was no alternative to making P3s successful. Alberta was a latecomer to P3s; Ramotar attributed this to initial skepticism about P3 performance and confirmed in the interview that he studied P3s as operationalized in the UK and in the Canadian provinces of Ontario and British Columbia and became a P3 policy champion. According to Ramotar, his conversion stemmed from his realization that Alberta was in a difficult place regarding infrastructure supply, that the demographic shift underway was a new and unprecedented dynamic, and that limited infrastructure could derail the prospects for economic growth in the province, if left unaddressed.

His first task was to secure political support from rank-and-file Alberta politicians. Interviews with him revealed the nature and intensity of the challenges associated with convincing a parliamentary committee comprising skeptical politicians/legislators of the merits of P3s in 2002–2003. He shared some of his reflections on how he eventually won political approval to enable P3 legislation in Alberta:

Parliamentarian: Are you [Deputy Minister] not wasting government money, if you look at all the payments we have got to make; it's like a mortgage payment. Therefore, a \$400m project is going to cost us \$800m.

Deputy Minister: Once we build it [the road], the asset value goes up just like your house, and you are also stimulating the economy because now you have a transportation system, and the backbone of any economy is the transportation system. Once you start to build it, a whole bunch of people will build around it, there's going to be a whole bunch of commercial activity. People will come and put businesses around them.

We did not secure approval the first time. Thus, we went back and changed a few things, came up with better answers for them, and then we got approval to proceed and use the Southeast as a pilot P3 project (Former Deputy Minister Ramotar).

Ramotar used cabinet committee meetings to build political support for Alberta P3s. He was invited to select governing party caucus meetings, and he was a regular attendee at the quarterly TB meetings. These provided him with the opportunity to brief govern party politicians on the progress and challenges of P3 projects. At the TB meetings, he worked to obtain approval for the proposed projects and to provide updates about ongoing P3 projects. This routine political advocacy work enabled P3s to secure political support and build legitimacy, while advancing the P3 policy toward institutionalization (Suchman, 1995; Deephouse *et al.*, 2017).

### *5.2 Mobilizing authority to build organizational capacity*

Building a robust internal organizational capacity was critical for the successful implementation of Alberta's P3 program. Here, we sketch the initial steps of the Alberta P3 process, which include employee training, engagement of outside consultants, the development of standard documentation/workflow practices and the creation of a central coordination office and organizational restructuring:

Identifying and delivering successful P3 projects depends on the cooperation and knowledge of a number of employees within various ministries with a range of skills. The initial identification of potential P3 projects commences with the capital planning process (as set out in the Capital Planning Manual used internally by Goa). The capital planning process is a key starting point for identifying potential P3 projects and evaluating them in a timely manner (Alberta P3 Framework and Guidelines, 2011, p. 13).

Alberta Government interviewees confirmed that the public sector lacked the capacity to implement P3s at the start of the program. Therefore, a small group of government employees were trained by outside consultants to undertake project evaluation and assessments prior to the first P3 approval. The outside consultants also trained Ministry staff in engineering, legal

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and financial matters. Our interviewees confirmed that the government was committed to continuous knowledge acquisition. However, given the limited range of P3 projects in progress, this capacity-building effort is now in jeopardy. A senior Ministry interviewee explained:

Capacity enhancement is now a challenge, given that retaining experienced hands is a factor in getting them work to do. If no P3 projects are proceeding, experts will go to other locations where P3 projects are proposed or underway. This complicates future capacity, as there is no opportunity to groom and develop the P3 managers of tomorrow. We are trying to create depth and breadth through P3 projects. The challenge in raising a new crop of skilled and experienced public sector managers is the fact that there is currently a limited pipeline (Interviewee #8: Executive Director, P3 Facilities, and Alternative Procurement, Alberta Ministry of Infrastructure).

Another interviewee focused on the recent progress made on employee training:

Excellent transition plans have been implemented over the last couple of years. We have good succession. On the technical side, we have younger, new staff members. We have excellent training and in-house arrangements to ensure knowledge internalization. Teams were formed for this purpose (Interviewee #5: Executive Director, P3 Capital Project, Alberta Ministry of Transportation).

However, another senior Ministry official was more cautious regarding P3 implementation challenges:

First, we need to do a good job of educating the whole team about both P3s and conventional model, especially the costs involved. At the moment, the handoffs between teams worry me, as we are still cross-learning (Interviewee #7: Manager, Alternative Procurement – P3, Alberta Ministry of Infrastructure).

Consultants have become entrenched in Alberta's P3 program. We observed that while the Ministry intends to limit their use, it is struggling to transition into complete reliance on internal staff resources, as outside consultants seem to lend objectivity and validity to their P3 practices. Meanwhile, internal staff competencies have greatly improved over the two decades of P3 implementation. For instance, there is a standardized P3 contract that is only amended to meet the needs of any P3 project. There is also a comprehensive *P3 policy framework and guide* (for contractors/third parties). These documents represent intentional and detailed activities created to embed, legitimize and institutionalize P3s within the Alberta public sector.

The Alternative Capital Financing Office (ACFO) (headed by one of the Deputy Minister's policy allies) took the initiative to develop and publicize these policy documents in the media, especially the *P3 Policy Framework and Guide* (2011), to engage both internal and external stakeholders. We note that these documents covered several objectives, including providing policy justification and rationale for P3s, such as adopting a consistent definition of the new P3 practice, identifying intra/inter-governmental approvals and formalizing the scope of the new practice while locating responsibility for its implementation within and outside the government.

The following excerpt from the *Alberta P3 Policy Framework and Guideline* (2011) outlines the justification/rationale behind Alberta's P3 policy:

Encouraging innovation, collaboration, and appropriate risk sharing with the private sector; drawing on the expertise and strengths of the public and private sectors; maximizing value for money by considering life-cycle costs, opportunities for third-party provision of ancillary services (e.g. caretaking, food service, etc.), risk allocations and third-party revenue opportunities, and enhancing the ability to deliver projects on time and on budget ([Alberta P3 Framework and Guidelines, 2011](#), p. 17).

**5.2.1 Organizational restructuring.** This involves the allocation of staff, office accommodation and budget resources solely dedicated to P3 implementation. While the



literature documents a P3 unit as a dominant and structural P3 enactment feature (Istrate and Puentes, 2011), Alberta's approach was rather different. In the province, a small coordinating unit was conceptualized and implemented within the MoT&I (and later transferred to the Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board). We interpret this as part of the strategy to maintain control by Ramotar and his policy allies over the entire government P3 architecture.

For instance, in early 2006, with more P3s planned, a proposal for the creation of a semi-autonomous coordinating P3 agency was foiled by Ramotar on the ground that the ministries must take ownership of their own P3 project. He argued that it made more sense to decentralize P3 implementation, given the limited capacity that was available. We infer that Ramotar may have considered it a political risk to approve the creation of a semi-autonomous P3 agency, as in the summer of 2006, Stelmach was poised to become party leader and premier in the fall (Opara and Elloumi, 2017). As a compromise measure, a small P3 coordinating unit, ACFO, was formed under Ramotar's supervision and headed by a trusted P3 policy ally.

The new Premier Stelmach moved Ramotar to the flagship Finance and Treasury Board Ministry, who then took ACFO with him to his new post. With the benefit of hindsight, we suggest that the two were intellectually and policy-aligned in a way that facilitated the initiation and implementation of P3s, protecting the program from government-derived political uncertainty while conferring legitimacy to Alberta's P3 program. This provided the small but lucrative Alberta P3 market with stability and attracted major construction industry actors to the province. There is a case to be made that their departure may have discouraged major private sector participants, as subsequent rounds of project bidding were unsuccessful, notably the cancellation of a \$2.4 bn P3 schools project for lack of contractor interest.

Collectively, the joint efforts described above in building an enabling P3 organizational capacity are consistent with the phenomenon Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) and Lawrence *et al.* (2011) described as the convergence of actors to attain a critical mass to enable a change in the environment, facilitating the creation of conducive institutional environment. According to Lawrence *et al.* (2011, p. 53), individual "intentionality and effort" lies at the heart of institutional change. We infer that the alliance between Ramotar and Stelmach was intentionally matched to transform existing institutional structures and/or create new ones. The strength of their relationship and the magnitude of the resources available to them facilitated their success in transforming the institutional environment for public infrastructure delivery in Alberta (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008, 2017).

### *5.3 Mobilizing/building an internal coalition of allies*

Ramotar engaged in internal coalition-building through conscious staff selection (Radaelli and Sitton-Kent, 2016) aimed at mobilizing sufficient employee buy-in for P3 implementation. This not only minimized internal opposition but also ensured that any changes made (policy, personnel, organizational, etc.) would be sustainable in the long term and difficult to reverse. For instance, Ramotar and another senior executive director confirmed that this involved specifying *ab initio* what was intended to achieve, targeting those staff necessary to mobilize as allies and arranging meetings involving these targeted employees to secure their support for the P3 policy. The process of building internal support and minimizing resistance is necessary to ensure successful P3 implementation. Carter *et al.* (2020, p. 73) on BBC's operational reform argue that "The importance of a cadre of Birtists [allies] is difficult to overstate as it provided strong support in the implementation." Similarly, the allies took steps to secure the support of external stakeholders, such as the construction industry, unions, the community around the projects and taxpayers.

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An illustration of the targeting and mobilization of potential policy allies comes from Ramotar:

After a Treasury Board meeting, I phoned my office, and said: “I want these 5 people [lists them] in the Board Room when I get there and tell them I want to talk about something called “P3s”.

When I got there, they were already in the board room. I said: “Guys, I want to talk about P3s. Anybody knows about P3s?” “No.” “Anybody heard about P3s?” “No.” I said, “Okay, so here’s a chance for us to build something brand new, made in Alberta for Albertans.” Start by getting anything we can find from Europe and what I want you guys to do is not only to come back and tell me what works. More importantly, I want you to tell me what did not work and why – because I do not want to fall into those traps. This was the beginning of Alberta’s P3 program implementation (Former Deputy Minister Ramotar).

Ramotar opposed the creation of a semi-independent P3 office because he did not consider the proposed head of the office as an ally or supportive of the P3 model.

An assistant deputy minister (ADM) was proposed to be responsible for it. Both of us did not get along. I wanted and pooled a small group of people [mentioning some former subordinates]. Eventually, I selected one who was leading the transportation area. I brought him over and told him to (temporarily) hold this tight, to do the oversight of a scaled down P3 unit (Former Deputy Minister Ramotar).

Using routine organizational engagements, such as staff training, corporate picnics, annual Ministry barbeque and monthly staff meetings, the deputy minister and his P3 allies educated and engaged Ministry staff in conversations around P3s. While these were considered voluntary employee events (only staff training was mandatory), they were implemented to acculturate employees, build internal support among government employees and thus institutionalize P3 practices both within the Ministry and the wider public sector. One interviewee recalls that it was framed as building internal capacity for both P3s and the conventional model. He suggested that the Ministry must do a good job of cross-training staff to handle both models, as the cost structure and collaborative skills required for both models are different.

#### *5.4 Mobilizing actor social position/network*

At the time of their P3 collaboration, Stelmach and Ramotar occupied the apex of the organizational hierarchy in the Ministry, a critical department in terms of its ability to deliver visible government patronage via infrastructure approval and location in the province. The Ministry’s budget (an indirect measure of its ranking in the bureaucratic order and importance) is second only to that of health and education. Therefore, the social positions of these top public servants gave them significant social status within and outside the government’s institutional and organizational architecture to legitimize P3s. Regarding Stelmach, an executive director said:

Our Premier was very supportive of P3s. Stelmach was the Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure, and later went on to be Premier, which helped push P3s in Alberta. Stelmach had the vision that it would work. He pushed P3s to a successful end. We could not have done anything without him (Interviewee #8: Executive Director, P3 Facilities, and Alternative Procurement, Alberta Ministry of Infrastructure).

The literature suggests that the multiple embeddedness of an actor is a prerequisite for engaging in institutional entrepreneurship (Battilana *et al.*, 2009). We suggest that the multiple embeddedness of both actors served to amplify their capacity to enact institutional changes in infrastructure delivery in Alberta. In other words, Stelmach presents a clear case of an actor straddling both political and organizational arenas. This positive perception was a

key factor that helped build legitimacy with key stakeholders that would later become involved with the P3 program. This included the Alberta Association of Road Builders, the Alberta Association of Engineers, the local construction industry in Alberta and labor unions. Stelmach had cultivated his moniker—Steady Eddy or Eddie—for years. Media and public commentators regularly described him as follows:

He's a guy that does not like to make sudden moves. They do not call him 'Steady Eddie' for nothing" (Political scientist Marco Navarro-Genie, [CBC News, 2006](#)).

I think there is an appetite for competence. I think there is an appetite for a kind of managerialism [...]— where Alberta is going with its economic and social future (Public Affairs Commentator/ Political Scientist Keith Brownsey, [CBC News, 2006](#)).

Mr. Stelmach, who is known affectionately to most Albertans as Steady Eddie or Honest Ed, was successful in his bid to become the compromise candidate [for Premier] (Katherine Harding and Dawn Walton, [Globe and Mail, 2006](#)).

The team of Stelmach and Ramotar, a renowned road engineer and respected senior bureaucrat with extensive public policy experience, cemented their collective social position within the network of critical stakeholders that would deliver Alberta's P3 program. Thus, the ability to bridge a diverse set of stakeholders while drawing on their access to both political and organizational resources proved pivotal in establishing P3s in Alberta at a time when the stakes were high for the governing political establishment ([Maguire et al., 2004](#)). Furthermore, as strategically located actors, both orchestrated the logic that citizens were not interested in how infrastructure was procured but whether it was available ([Chung and Luo, 2008](#)). The P3 proponents then argued that the private sector must become part of the Alberta solution to an Alberta problem. With this logic, they advanced the idea that the province was more progressive than it appeared to the outside observer. Given the little opposition to the P3 program at the time, it appears that their estimation of the average taxpayer's position was valid. The Alberta P3 may have experienced the least visible public opposition to its emergence in Canada ([Opara, 2014](#)).

### *5.5 Mobilizing public and other stakeholders' support*

Stelmach's central focus was mainly on the *political* advocacy needed to advance and legitimize P3s in Alberta. Part of that advocacy involved a concerted outreach to key stakeholders whose support would be relevant in implementing and institutionalizing P3s. He shared his outreach strategy with us:

We engaged with many stakeholders. For instance, as Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, we engaged with the Alberta Consulting Engineers Association, Alberta Road Builders Association, and via press conferences and media availability on ways to enable and deepen acceptance of P3s and find innovative ways of maintaining Alberta roads post P3s. We did not actively engage unions. Frankly, because they did not raise P3s as an issue (Former Premier Stelmach).

While the government engaged the communities near the P3 projects, the labor (represented by the Alberta Union of Public Employees, AUPE) disagreed with the way consultations were conducted, considering them a routine process that disregarded input from citizens in favor of predetermined decisions. As one representative described:

The government has mastered the art of meaningless consultations. This was perfected during the Klein years, and we have gone through the same motion, without any substance. There is no clear definition of choices outside the ones they bring to the table. Consultations are set up to obtain a predetermined conclusion. These conclusions were reached by the government. Their engagement with stakeholders is simply to go through these motions (AUPE Senior Manager).

Furthermore, a critical part of public mobilization involved a government-designed and approved tagline appended to all public communication, government stationery and signposts on public buildings, highways and construction sites. This tagline was “*The Alberta Advantage*.” Using this tagline, the public was constantly reminded that residing in Alberta conferred several advantages, including the lowest tax regime obtainable in Canada. However, the notion of the Alberta Advantage remains unclear.

The term “Alberta Advantage” was popularized during the Klein government years, used so frequently it became like a mantra, but never clearly defined. In a 2015 *Edmonton Journal* OpEd, Jack Mintz described the Alberta Advantage: “No doubt, it is a combination of low taxes and good public services, especially education, health and infrastructure” (P. Precht, *The School of Public Policy, University of Calgary*, 2019).

We suggest that the public mobilization included this tagline in a bid to remind the public that supporting the new P3 program will further consolidate the already existing *Alberta Advantage*. It was a creative way to reinforce the frontier spirit that has defined Alberta as a prairie region in Canada, with a *can-do spirit* that motivates citizens to find unique ways to solve a unique Alberta problem.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

### 6.1 Discussion

This is an empirical study of the roles played by two prominent actors, as JIEs, in the Alberta P3 innovation program, and how these roles helped to advance the emergence and implementation of P3s within the regional government in the period 2001–2021. We argue that given the magnitude and scope of the transformation they initiated and legitimized, their actions as JIEs have been neglected and thus deserve further empirical inquiry.

Alberta was late to the P3 market emergence in Canada. However, the nature and extent of its involvement, starting in 2001, was transformational. We locate the reasons for Alberta’s entry into P3s as driven by economic self-preservation. In 2001–2002, the urgency to deliver infrastructure and the slow pace of doing so under the conventional model provided the impetus to attempt an innovative P3 approach. Furthermore, the fear of a previously failed attempt and the prospect of electoral defeat provided a convergence of factors that were seized by Stelmach and Ramotar to mobilize all their resources to initiate and institutionalize P3s in Alberta, framing their argument as part of the *Alberta Advantage*.

With the strength of their political resources, both actors were successful in mobilizing the political establishment to change the Fiscal Responsibility Act to permit the involvement of the private sector in the delivery of infrastructure in Alberta. They also mobilized their organizational authority to build internal staff capacity to deliver P3s and created a coalition of allies within the Ministry and across the entire government, while exploiting their advantageous social network position both within and outside the bureaucratic hierarchy to obtain and build legitimacy for their actions. Furthermore, they appropriated another existing “nativist” public mobilization mental frame (“Alberta solution for Alberta problem”) to ensure public and critical stakeholder support for their plans. We interpret their public rhetoric and use of recognizable and popular Alberta imagery as part of a coordinated effort in symbolic public engagement (Hardy and Maguire, 2017; Brown *et al.*, 2012).

A central argument of Battilana *et al.* (2009) was to understand *the embedded (social) actor* motivation in initiating and sustaining institutional change. In the case of Alberta, several forces converged to create an enabling environment to undertake P3s. The literature suggests that marginalized low-status individuals (organizations) have the greatest incentive to mobilize their limited resources as institutional entrepreneurs. However, another stream suggests that centrally located and resource-endowed actors are better placed to become institutional entrepreneurs (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006; Greenwood *et al.*, 2002).

We consider that Alberta JIEs belong to the latter group. Further, we aver that with the actors' strategic political, organizational and social network advantages; they are imbued with the resources that served their interests (DiMaggio, 1988).

However, what was unclear to outside observers was why they were intent on overturning a system that appeared to privilege them. A closer examination suggests that they faced an existential problem with a looming general election that needed new actors, new ideas and new vision. Given voter fatigue with the governing progressive conservatives, it was clear that Stelmach was best positioned to provide the type of leadership needed to revive the electoral fortunes of the governing party when he became premier in 2006. Actors could use "cultural reconstruction" to turn around a gloomy political landscape and retain power (Alexander and Jaworsky, 2014). According to Alexander and Jaworsky (2014), there was a revival of fortunes for the Obama administration, driven by "cultural reconstruction," after they suffered a devastating defeat in the 2010 US midterm election. Similarly, we argue that team Stelmach essentially engaged in a *cultural reconstruction* in Alberta that involved the crafting of a new campaign narrative aimed at retaining power for the Progressive Conservatives in the next election. We further argue that, even as an underdog going into the 2006 party leadership contest, Stelmach's natural attributes of trusted leadership, consensus-building and managerial competence were crucial to both his victory and the successful restructuring of the infrastructure delivery arrangements in Alberta. Carter *et al.*, (2020, p. 87) recently highlighted the importance of managerial competence in a study of the complex organizational reform of the culturally iconic BBC, noting the crucial role played by *managerial agency* as it converges and interacts with an accounting technology (producer choice) to introduce strategic organizational change in a public sector setting. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Stelmach helped his party attain the largest governing majority in the 2008 general election and effectively cementing his legacy.

The *decisions* of actors in a P3-implementing jurisdiction are critical to program success, as these actors' choices are further undergirded by their role as social actors (Marrewijk *et al.*, 2016; Opara *et al.*, forthcoming). Thus, social actors must be trusted and perceived as competent. While some aspects of the institutional environment may have been legislated to favor P3 emergence, the gatekeeping role of trusted social actors is the catalyst that activates/mobilizes important stakeholders, such as the private industry, to engage their resources to participate in the P3 process. Given the high cost of P3 bids (Boardman *et al.*, 2016), the private sector must be convinced that the government and its agents are not part of the risks they must contend with. A construction industry interviewee said, referring to Stelmach and Ramotar, "In Alberta, political leadership support is one area we do not have to worry about. Political stability, given more than 40 years of one-party government, has established Alberta as a jurisdiction of political stability."

### 6.2 Contributions to institutional entrepreneurship perspective and P3 literature

This study contributes to the literature on institutional entrepreneurship and P3. First, it makes visible the saliency of *social actors* or the social aspects of P3 initiation and implementation (Biygautane *et al.*, 2019). Contrary to the predominant P3 literature that focuses on a mechanistic or structural approach to successful P3 implementation (see Kwak *et al.*, 2009; Boardman *et al.*, 2016 for P3 critical success factors), this study emphasizes that the social actor or element cannot be neglected in any attempt to transform P3 policy into visible action and empirical success. This is consistent with what Fligstein and McAdam (2011, p. 7) calls a *social skill* – how social actors engage their "cognitive capacity for reading people and environments, framing lines of action, and mobilizing people in service of these action frames."

Second, the study highlights the significance of the social position of the actor as a critical factor in initiating and sustaining organizational changes in the institutional environment.

This is consistent with the empirical findings of Battilana (2011), who suggest that actors with enhanced social status within their organizational hierarchy have a greater capacity to access and mobilize resources to initiate and sustain changes to the institutionalized model within their organization's institutional environment (p. 829).

Third, the literature indicates that peripheral, but resource-poor, individuals and organizations disadvantaged by the existing institutional arrangements are motivated to undertake institutional change (Smets and Reihlen, 2012; Micelotta *et al.*, 2017). This study lends credence to the idea that individuals at the top of the organizational hierarchy and seemingly advantaged by the existing institutional arrangements could also be involved in attempts to change the status quo to meet their needs (Greenwood *et al.*, 2002; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Furthermore, in rejecting their current status as institutional defenders and taking on the role of institutional reformers (Levy and Scully, 2007), Stelmach and Ramotar were able to connect their change project with the interests of other potential players, especially the local construction industry that had fallen into hard times following infrastructure spending cuts since the mid-1990s. With the bridges between them now being rebuilt, it is no surprise that the first P3 contract was won by a local Edmonton-based company (PCL Limited).

Fourth, while institutional entrepreneurship has been accused of typifying individuals as “masculine,” “heroic,” or “hyper-muscular” actors (Levy and Scully, 2007; Suddaby, 2010), this study challenges that claim by highlighting the joint effort of not one but two individuals, who built a coalition of allies to enable change in their institutional environment (Micelotta *et al.*, 2017; Biygautane *et al.*, 2019). While accounts of institutional entrepreneurs as extraordinary individuals able to defy institutional constraints to achieve their objectives may be true, we suggest that such accounts must be complemented by accounts of collaborating actors and their allies who share policy goals and objectives and collectively mobilize and work toward enacting a new institutional outcome (Biygautane *et al.*, 2019).

Fifth, an important theoretical validation is the adoption/mobilization of an alternative (infrastructure delivery) logic and widely accepted schemata dominant in Alberta – “*The Alberta Advantage*” and “*An Alberta Solution for an Alberta Problem*.” By doing so, the actors consciously courted and gained support from key stakeholders. This also ensured that recognizable symbols and discursive artifacts sufficiently compatible with the dominant institutional arrangement signified continuing faithfulness with their beliefs in enacting institutional change and their efforts to build and maintain support among important stakeholders (Munir and Phillips, 2005; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005; Tracey *et al.*, 2011; Hardy and Maguire, 2017; Brown *et al.*, 2012). This is consistent with and further validates the literature suggesting that institutional change agents/actors are more successful when they adopt existing symbolic schemata from the environment rather than invent new ones (Coule and Patmore, 2013; Alexander and Jaworsky, 2014).

### 6.3 Reflections on Alberta's P3 program

While this study focused on the role of the JIEs in facilitating P3 innovation and enabling institutional change to support a new form of asset delivery, the role of accounting, especially the related risk assessment, value for money calculations and the long-term fiscal sustainability impacts that motivate P3 accounting research and practice were issues of concern to us. We felt that Alberta could face long-term fiscal challenges associated with meeting its contractual obligations. Furthermore, we were concerned whether adequate and effective accounting controls were implemented to ensure that the stated value for money assessments were free from material misstatements and reported in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards. Accordingly, we reviewed some audit reports of the Alberta Auditor General. We note that the Auditor General's Report (2010) was critical of the government's limited capacity to undertake evidence-based risk and value for money

assessments given many years of experience in implementing several P3 projects. However, the report indicated that the procurement processes were fair.

We recommend that the Department of Treasury Board and Infrastructure improve processes, including sensitivity analysis, to challenge and support maintenance costs and risk valuations ([Alberta Auditor General's Report, 2010](#), p. 22).

Our second audit objective was to determine if a fair, open and transparent process was used during the procurement. We concluded that the processes used for ASAP 1 resulted in a fair and open procurement. However, transparency to Albertans could be improved. The ASAP 1 team did not publish a report to inform Albertans how value for money was achieved ([Alberta Auditor General's Report, 2010](#), p. 13).

Alberta's P3 program has recently stalled ([Opara, 2020](#)). However, with the current government elected in 2019, Alberta is expected to return to P3s. In doing so, Alberta needs to adopt institutionalizing structures that will properly anchor its P3 program for the long term. Notably, the absence of a robust P3 coordinating agency in Alberta does not engender much confidence in the wider P3 market. We argue that Alberta's P3 program requires significant structural and organizational reform using the semi-autonomous P3 agency model ([Istrate and Puentes, 2011](#); [Opara, 2020](#)). The lack of a detailed roadmap to P3 resumption signals hesitation to the market in the near term. With Alberta again experiencing economic distress, now is the time to revisit and substantially reform its P3 program in a way that not only responds to the market needs of today and proactively anticipates its future needs but more importantly secures Alberta's prosperity by guaranteeing its infrastructure needs.

#### *6.4 Limitations, reflexivity and future research*

This study has some limitations. First, Alberta's unique institutional environment makes it difficult to generalize the outcomes of this study to a wider or global P3 population. However, the broad outlines of the P3 concept and the implementation approach documented in the literature thus far make the lessons from Alberta sufficiently compelling for inclusion in the evolving literature on the *agency* impacts of reconfiguring the institutional environment for P3 implementation and institutionalization ([Opara et al., 2017](#)). Second, we recognize that interviewees' recollection of some events regarding Alberta's P3 program may be unintentionally presented to appear more attractive. However, we took steps to carefully triangulate our data sources from an extensive array of interviewees and independently published research materials from reputable sources.

Reflexivity considerations suggest that researchers pay close attention to the unstated inclinations and invisible biases they bring to their research ([Mauthner and Doucet, 2003](#)). While adopting an interpretivist approach, this study must acknowledge the researchers' proximity to and familiarity with the research setting. Thus, we took steps to minimize any possible preconceived notions or biases based on our chosen research lens, professional affiliations and/or status as taxpayers. While our close knowledge of and proximity to some of the interviewees granted us unique access to their work and network, we distanced ourselves from conflicts with these organizational participants. Finally, even with the steps taken to avoid researcher bias, we recognize that our training as interpretivist scholars and view of the world may not adequately insulate us.

Lastly, in the absence of detailed instructions in P3 policy documents on how to implement P3s, the role of social actors in actively working and developing systems and processes for successful P3 implementation and institutionalization becomes even more salient ([Bygautane et al., 2019](#)). We encourage further research that makes visible the role of social actors in P3 adoption and implementation in diverse institutional settings. This offers the opportunity for a nuanced and contextualized understanding of the nature and extent of agentic intervention in P3 policy actualization at the field level.

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## Appendix 1

Year	Policy interventions/Frameworks	Projects
2001	Establishment of the Financial Management Commission (FMC)	
2002	Publication and Acceptance of the report of the Financial Management Commission (FMC)	
2003	Amendment of the <i>Fiscal Responsibility Act</i> to include use of P3s Creation of the Advisory Committee on Alternative Capital Financing Cabinet established a process for approving capital projects and alternative capital projects, including P3s Publication of the first P3 guidelines	RFQ for the SouthEast Anthony Henday Drive (SEAHD) published RFP for the SEAHD published Contract for the SEAHD signed
2004		Commissioning of the SWAHD (Conventional model)
2005	Publication of the second P3 guidelines	Commissioning of the SEAHD
2006	Establishment of the Alternative Capital Financing Office (ACFO)	Award of the NE Stoney Trail, Calgary, as a P3 contract
2007		Award of the NorthWest Anthony Henday Drive (NWAHD) contracta Award of the first P3 contract for 18 schools
2008		Commissioning of the NE Stoney Trail, Calgary
2009		Commissioning of the first 18 P3 schools
2010	Publication of the third and most comprehensive P3 guidelines	Commissioning of the NWAHD
2011		NEAHD, RFQ and RFP out to tender Award of the contract for the NEAHD Construction begins on the NEAHD
2012		Commissioning of the SE Stoney Trail, Calgary
2013		Commissioning of the NEAHD, Edmonton
2016		Award of the SouthWest Stoney Trail contract – Calgary
2021		Estimated completion of the SouthWest Stoney Trail contract – Calgary

Source(s): Compilation: Authors

**Table A1.**  
Alberta's P3 program  
roadmap (2001–2021)

First-order codes/Categories	Second-order categories (overarching themes)	Theme #
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislation – Fiscal Responsibility Act</li> <li>• Parliamentary/leadership political support</li> <li>• Deputy Ministers' Consultative Group</li> <li>• Fiscal Management Commission (FMC)</li> <li>• Treasury Board/Cabinet/Governing Party Caucus</li> </ul>	<i>Mobilizing political support for P3 policy enactment</i>	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational capacity/Ministry staff</li> <li>• DM of MoT&amp;I (hierarchy advantage)</li> <li>• Outside P3 consultants</li> <li>• Employee P3 training</li> </ul>	<i>Mobilizing authority to build organizational capacity</i>	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal allies/coalition: Ministry and government-wide</li> <li>• Meeting with trusted reports only</li> <li>• Employing routine Ministry activity to reinforce P3 policy</li> </ul>	<i>Mobilizing/building an internal coalition of allies inside the government</i>	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting allies</li> <li>• Premier is supportive of P3s</li> <li>• Stelmach helped push P3s in Alberta</li> <li>• Steady Eddie – a guy that does not like to make sudden moves</li> </ul>	<i>Mobilizing actor social position/network</i>	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consensus-building and competence</li> <li>• Stakeholder outreach</li> <li>• Consensus building with stakeholders</li> <li>• Capacity building among major stakeholders (especially construction industry)</li> <li>• Alberta Advantage</li> </ul>	<i>Mobilizing public and other stakeholders' support</i>	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Alberta solution for an Alberta problem</li> <li>• New infrastructure logic: Albertans care about infrastructure, not how it is procured</li> </ul>		

**Table A2.**  
Turning codes/  
categories into themes

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